

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee meeting  
Friday 21<sup>st</sup> & Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2014  
The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**

**Present:** Rev Martin Whitell (Convenor), Joan Cook, Louise Rogers, Rev John Clifford, Alison Thursfield, Robert Ince, Jacky Woodman

**In Attendance:** Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute-taker). Marion Baker and Gwyneth Roper for Session 1 – item 3.

**Friday**

**Session 1**

*Opening Devotions: John Clifford read quotes from the following:*

- *Martin Luther King jnr - "The true measure of a man"*
- *Mother Theresa – "Life is a challenge, meet it!"*
- *Helen Keller – "Security is mostly a superstition!"*

**1. Apologies: James Barry, Bill Darlison (GA President) for the Session on Annual Meetings, Stella Burney (Nightingale Centre Manager) for Session 1 – item 3**

**2. Minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> January 2014**  
After minor amendments on:

- page 2 item 4 – Appointment of Vice- President nomination (Doc 03/14) - "of seven" was deleted.
- page 2 item 5 – Reports of Strategy Groups (Doc EC01/14) – Ministry Strategy Group – "Kathy Forder" was amended to "Kath Forder."
- page 7 item 19 – IT update – (Doc EC19/14) – "It" was amended to "IT"

the Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

It was agreed that the Nightingale Centre Presentation by Marion Baker would be presented before item 3 – Matters arising.

### **3. Nightingale Centre Presentation – Marion Baker**

Apologies from the Centre Manager Stella Burnley were received, but before leaving on holiday she had put together a display for the EC.

Marion then gave the following report: The Centre has improved immeasurably in the past five year and this is probably the most successful period since it became the responsibility of the General Assembly in the 1960's. Finances had been well managed with net income increasing and tight control of expenditure. Targets for salaries and food costs were in place with tight control of bookings. The re-valuation of property and land requested by the Executive Committee would take place on 4<sup>th</sup> March. Matters relating to staff contracts had been addressed and ongoing staff training helps to maintain high level of performance of the staff.

Activities within the village were outlined such as supporting the Great Hucklow School, use as a polling station, fibre optic broadband and Women's Institute and school use of the Peach Room.

With regard to the property and land a feasibility study was underway for upgrading bedroom 13 to an en-suite bringing bed capacity to 69. An all weather overflow car park would be developed. Various other repairs have been done in and around the Centre with improved visibility in the front access and notice boards and directional signs.

The Management Committee have concerns that the EC's Risk Management model does not quite fit with the needs of the Nightingale Centre's business and they are exploring getting the services of a Business Risk Consultant to carry out a full risk management assessment on behalf of the Centre. They wish to see improved communication with the Executive Committee. Marketing will include a new Nightingale banner, a new range of Nightingale Centre products and a new website will hopefully be launched at the 2014 GA.

There are approximately 150 Friends of the Centre who are kept up to date on the Centre, as well as craft groups, active gardeners and art groups, with approximately £9,000 per annum donated to the Centre by supporters.

Advice on the tax position had been obtained and was circulated.

There was a Q&A session held after the presentation which addressed governance risks, staff contracts and staff retention strategy. The Convenor thanked Marion and Gwyneth on an excellent presentation and asked them to convey to Stella Burney and all Members of the Management Committee their thanks.

**4. Matters arising for noting or to include in Agenda for later Discussion:**

- Page 2 item 5 a – Jacky had spoken to Stephen Lingwood on the competency framework
- page 4 item 7 – Youth Strategy Group update – positive responses have been received from Cathie Masztalerz and Helen Mason who were approved and three other individuals were approved if they accepted (Katie Millard, Vanessa Rothwell And Jen Hazel subsequently confirmed). The Group would be launched at the Annual Meetings.
- page 4 item 8 – Nightingale Centre – Mike Tracey and Louise will be meeting on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2014.
- page 4 item 9 – EC Communications – the Convenor passed around a draft of a response to the letter in the Inquirer from the Rev Andrew Hill, and after minor revision he would send to the editor for publication.
- page 6 item 14 – Millennium Fund Bid – Simple Gifts – Rob Gregson has been in touch with Louise on evaluation and he was very grateful for the support from the EC.
- page 6 –item 16 – Report on Congregational Survey – paperwork had been included in the mail out for those who did not complete the survey in March 2013 to use.

**Session 2**

**5. Annual meetings**

**a) AM Panel Minutes (Doc EC24/14).– noted**

**b) AM update:**

The Chief Officer outlined the key elements of the Annual Meetings arrangements and circulated the following papers for discussion.

- The Draft Agenda with proposed timings for each event.
- 2014 Annual Meetings Schedule – it was agreed that the EC will meet at 11.30am on Sunday 13 April (before the meetings are officially opened) for a brief meeting.
- Plan for Business sessions
- Schedule for the meetings, business sessions, Motions, EC and related business.

Discussion took place on volunteers and outstanding aspects of the programme.

The Executive Committee sponsored workshops were discussed. The Convenor and Chief Officer to lead at congregational survey workshop. Rev Gary Kent will speak at the UUA Partnership workshop.

**6. Stipend Review Committee Reports****a) Stipend 20 January 2014 - (Doc EC25/14) – approved for presentation to the Annual Meeting.**

Robert Ince noted that although the increase agreed was quite substantial it is still quite a way behind other denominations and that we were still playing “catch up”. He referred to guidance on the use of the manse allowance in rental situations. An addition to clarify the mileage allowance section was agreed.

**b) Pulpit Supply – (Doc EC26/14) - approved for presentation to the Annual Meeting.**

It was explained that the issues of the Stipend and the Pulpit Supply would be treated as separate items to give an opportunity for a full discussion on the latter issue.

**7. IT Update - (Doc EC30/14) – noted with the following:**

It was reported that the CRM system went “live” earlier that week as planned. Its possible use for targeted marketing was highlighted. In relation to the website it was reported that revising content was an issue and it was **agreed to** allocate a budget of £4,000 to commission external work on the “Who we Are” section which was crucial in retaining seekers on the site. Significant progress is expected by the next EC meeting. Thanks was expressed to all those involved, led by Martin Sarbicki.

**8. 2020 Congregational Development Group Report - (Doc EC28/14) – noted with the following:**

Jacky Woodman declared an interest and left the meeting.

The Convenor reported that it was likely five bids would come forward but all were for rekindling rather than new starts. If one was approved at the Leadership Team meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014 a special meeting of the EC would be held to consider it prior to the GA (11.30am on 13 April) to enable the 2020 Group to make an announcement.

The EC considered the progress to date with the hope that new innovative ideas would emerge at the next round of bids for growing Unitarianism, including new starts. It was noted that several proposals were being assisted with development and that there was a robust process in place to govern allocation of funds. The Convenor would convey this to the 2020 Development Group leadership.

**Session 3** - Mary-Jean was not present for this Session

**9. Confidential Items**

## 10. Non-responsive check-out

*Closing Devotions: Robert Ince*

## Saturday

### Session 4

*Opening Devotions: Alison Thursfield read from John Heider – The Tao of Leadership – “Unbiased leadership”*

## 11. Strategy Group reports

### a) MSG – (Doc EC27/14) – noted with the following:

page 1 item 4 – Ministry in the making – Louise asked about this item and it was explained that this is a Hibbert Trust sponsored event to be held in June/July for new students, probationers and prospective students.

page 1 item 6 – Mentoring Training – the question was asked as to whether there is a list of Mentors? This was confirmed but was not an appropriate document for wider circulation.

page 3 item 17 – Competencies – there had still not been any communication between Stephen Lingwood and Jacky and this is a matter of concern as a final framework needed EC approval. Jacky agreed she would comment on each section of the document in writing if a face to face meeting could not be arranged. A lengthy discussion was held on competencies and the **Chief Officer would liaise with the Strategy Group** to ensure a final proposal was presented to the next EC. It was noted that the planned meeting between UCM and MSG with EC members had been postponed until 14 March 2014 due to the disruption caused by the weather on 14 February.

### b) LLSG:

The Chief Officer and Louise are attempting to convene a meeting of all interested in the work of the LLSG during March.

c) VSG: A skype meeting was held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2014 and notes were handed out at the meeting – noted with the following:

- Philip Colfox has still not been put forward to the EC as a member of the VSG – **James to action** (as per page 3 item 5c of Appendix A Doc EC23/14).
- Louise has completed the Terms of Reference for the Web Presence group.
- There has been no letter of resignation from the VSG received by the EC from Phil Tomlin.

An email has been received from James requesting that as the VSG meet via Skype rather than physically that the £1,200 budgeted for meeting expenses for the VSG be transferred to their general fund to support new initiatives. The EC indicated that they were in principle sympathetic to the request for a transfer and required a proposal for this and the £2,000 already allocated to them to the May EC meeting. In relation to social responsibility it was noted that Simple Gifts had been funded to undertake some national work and therefore bids for social responsibility should be left to 2014/15. There was a need to liaise with the Chief Officer on any plans that impacted on staff, particularly at this time of major change to the website and approaching Annual Meeting. **The Convenor will respond** to James's email.

A discussion was held on the apparent over-reliance of the Group on James and whilst his enthusiasm and hard work was acknowledged, it was reinforced that it was not appropriate for an EC member to be an active member of any particular strategy group and this role would have to end in May 2014 as agreed at the previous meeting.

As Diane Bennett is the only original member of the VSG it is deemed appropriate that she delivers the VSG report at the GA in April.

More generally, the need for a strategy for each strategy group and clear leadership was emphasised.

Louise raised the possibility of paid staffing resources being used to take forward the activities of both the LLSG and VSG however it was accepted that this would have major budgetary implications.

The Chief Officer suggested that a common template for the development of a strategy by each of the Strategic Groups, with support to help them develop the strategy, would bring coherence to the process for 2014/15. This suggestion will be discussed further at the May EC meeting.

- 12. Management Accounts- (Doc EC29/14) – noted with the following:**  
The reason for the large deficit of £38,000 is the deposit paid to Whittlebury Hall for the April 2014 Annual Meetings with little income. Quota payments received so far are normal for this time of the year - 18%. Martin Sarbicki to be thanked for the report.

## Session 5

- 13. Chief Officer Report – (Doc EC31/14) – noted with the following:**  
Under the heading of Ministry the Chief Officer outlined the current position in relation to the target of 50 ministers by 2015. This was achievable, however, there is an increasing, and in some cases surprising, numbers of vacant pulpits. He highlighted the positive contacts with the United Reformed Church and the implications of the

“Lobbying Act. It was noted that a recent Court case involving the Church of Scientology had implications for the definition of religion and this would be investigated. It was suggested that the 2015 Annual Meetings feature a video on the work of the Chief Officer. The Convenor thanked the Chief Officer for his report.

**14. President & Vice- President Report’s – (DOC EC32/14) – noted with the following:**

**President’s Report –**

It was **agreed** that it would be useful to produce a diary each year of significant dates, including the Edict of Torda for the web-site. It should also include interfaith dates.

**Vice-President’s Report –**

EC were pleased to have the full diary for the presidential year from Marion and looked forward to receiving a summary of each of the presidential visits from May 2014.

**15. Key Messages – key items agreed and to be circulated separately.**

**16. Date & time of next meeting:**

**April – Sun 13<sup>th</sup> 11.30am – Whittlebury Hall (Special Meeting on 2020). Apologies from Jacky Woodman.**

**May - Fri 16<sup>th</sup> 9.00 am – 5.30pm & Sat 17<sup>th</sup> 9.00am – 12 noon – Essex Hall, London. Apologies from Louise Rogers.**

**July - Mon 14<sup>th</sup> July 9.00am – 6.00pm – Essex Hall, London**

**Sept - Fri 5<sup>th</sup> 9.00am – 6.00pm – LKH, Manchester  
Sat 6<sup>th</sup> – Strategic Planning Day – Cross Street Chapel, Manchester (tbc).**

**Nov – Fri 14<sup>th</sup> 9.00am – 5.30pm & Sat 15<sup>th</sup> 9.00am – 12 noon – Essex Hall, London**

**Jan 2015 - Fri 23<sup>rd</sup> 9.00am – 5.30pm & Sat 24<sup>th</sup> 9.00am – 12 noon – Essex Hall, London.**

**17. Non-responsive check out**

*Closing Devotions: Martin Whitell read from Thomas Gordon an American psychologist – Conflict Resolutions – “Credo for my relationships with others”.*

