

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting  
Friday 23rd & Saturday 24th January 2015  
Essex Hall, London**

**Present:** Robert Ince (Convenor), John Clifford, Joan Cook, Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer), Alison Thursfield, Martin Whitell, Jacky Woodman

**In attendance:** Marion Baker (GA President), Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Andrew Mason (Minutes), Christina Smith (Item 14), Andy Pakula (Item 14) and Alex Zglinska (Item 14), Rev Daniel Costley (Items 15-18).

**Session 1**

*Opening Devotions: Jacky Woodman read a short story called 'The Rocks of Life' by Stephen Covey and a poem by Adam Small, taken from a 1957 anthology called "Verses of Love", written during apartheid.*

**1. Apologies:**

Apologies for absence had been received from James Barry.

**2. EC membership**

Peter Hanley was formally co-opted as the new Honorary Treasurer and was welcomed to the EC. It was reported that Louise Rogers had resigned from the EC, as of 23 November 2014. Louise was thanked for her service on the EC.

**3. Minutes of the meetings held on 14 & 15 November 2014**

The minutes of the meeting (Document **EC02/15**) were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record of the Meeting.

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

Joan Cook suggested that the confidential session be held on the first day rather than at the end of the Meeting and this was **AGREED**.

**Discussion:**

a) EC Action List (Document **EC03/15**)

Asset register – This had not yet been progressed. **ACTION: Chief Officer**

Resolutions – Derek has submitted an Inquirer article on last year's Resolutions.

Safeguarding adults – This was work in progress. **ACTION: Joan Cook & Louise Rogers**

Climate change – The consultation document was not ready, and needed to be more balanced in the presentation on the issues. Rev Feargus O'Connor has spoken to Rev Ann Peart about launching a document at the Meetings, but details were unclear. Any document would need to be provided in advance for printing and circulation.. The current idea was for a Motion to be brought back in 2016. Peter Hanley would be seeing Feargus tomorrow and would chase this up, pointing out the timing difficulty. **ACTION: Peter Hanley**

Ministry Strategy Group (MSG) –The MSG Minute Taker ordinarily puts private at the top of Minutes, and feels that this is correct. The highlights report is to be reinstated, probably in a slightly different form.

2020 Leadership Team – Ash James and Claire MacDonald have left the LT.

Annual Report – The final text was agreed

Red Cross Appeal – This had been an item in key messages.

LLSG sessions – Joan Cook was in discussion with Louise Rogers about the Vulnerable Adults session. Louise was aware of her actions.

**ACTION: Louise Rogers**

Safeguarding arrangements at the Annual Meetings – The Chief Officer raised the issue with the FOY Society, who had discussed this at their Council meeting, and want further clarification about roles and responsibilities.

Discussions continue.

**ACTION: Chief Officer**

Annual Meetings Risk Assessment – To be brought to the next meeting.

**ACTION: Annual Meetings Panel**

Certificates for New Ministers – The MSG had been informed but the idea was not met with resounding approval. They would like to look at the whole issue of recognition of Ministers. It was **AGREED** to go ahead with the Certificates for this year's Meetings. It would be clarified at the Ministers' Pre-conference that existing Ministers would receive certificates later.

**ACTION: Martin Whitell**

Proposal for Honorary Member – Robert had received support from 9 districts to recognise Dawn Buckle as an Honorary Member. This would be discussed under the Annual Meetings agenda item.

Youth Strategy group proposal: Speak to Jen Hazel re consultation arrangements – This was outstanding. **ACTION: Louise Rogers**

Youth Panel accountability to the Youth Strategy Group – This was outstanding. **ACTION: Chief Officer and Robert Ince**

Youth Strategy Group – No report had been received.

Awards for All – This was outstanding. **ACTION: Louise Rogers**

Nightingale Centre Attendance at Meeting – Marion Baker reported that the 27 February date wasn't possible but would look for another date.

Nightingale Centre Resale Value & Risk Register – These had been sent.

Nightingale Centre Investment – This had been done.

EC plan for implementing vision – This would be discussed at the next meeting. **ACTION: All EC Members**

Terms of reference for Nominating Volunteering / Group – A report had been produced and would be discussed later in the agenda.

Vice President – The deadline had passed with no nominations.

Good Society – The Chief Officer was staying in touch with the group, but as yet there was no launch date. **ACTION: Chief Officer**

Visibility Strategy Group (VSG) leaflet revision – This was in the VSG report and would be discussed there.

### Quota response

A letter had been received from Dean Row Chapel and the Chief Officer was congratulated on his reply. He felt there needed to be a discussion next year about the overall level of quota, as it might be nearing the maximum sustainable amount.

It was noted that the Glasgow congregation were considering drafting a motion on the definition of quota members. The Scottish Unitarian Association were in broad approval, but no progress had been made. They would be meeting on 30 January.

### 5. EC Election Report

As announced in Uni News, two nominations were received, and were therefore declared elected unopposed – Marion Baker and Gwyn Pritchard (Cardiff). They would serve from the close of the 2015 Annual Meetings. The candidate's statements had been passed to The Inquirer.

It was **AGREED** that the Electoral Panel should formally report to the Annual Meetings to whom they were accountable and Derek would incorporate this into the Business Meeting agenda. **ACTION: Chief Officer**

The following comments were made:

- The small number of nominations was disappointing.
- Election did not guarantee the skills and balance necessary and the possibility of having a proportion of elected and co-opted members could be considered.
- There are very limited grounds for the Electoral Panel to reject a candidate.
- More publicity of the Elections could be done to try and improve the number of nominations.
- The Friday / Saturday meetings could be seen as a barrier. It was noted that the EC meeting dates had been changed several times, and could certainly be flexible to new members but this could be highlighted.
- The move from January to November could mean that the information may have been lost in the Christmas rush.
- Rev Andrew Hill's comments in The Inquirer about lack of enthusiasm were pertinent.

The Constitutional Review related to possible CIO status needed to be progressed.

## 6. Recruitment and Support of Volunteers

The Convenor and the Chief Officer had met with the Volunteer Manager for a major national charity. One result was the paper on Recruitment and support of volunteers (document **EC05/15**) and considerable discussion was held.

It was felt that Districts could have a key partnership role and it was **AGREED** to write to the Districts, outlining the proposed process and asking them to consider assisting, and then go to the Annual Meetings with more information arranging a Question & Answer session. After this, Districts would be asked to consider further at their next meeting for responses by 30 June. The EC would then consider this feedback further at the July meeting.

## Session 2

### 7. Reports from Strategy Groups

#### a) Local Leadership Strategy Group (LLSG)

No report had been received. It was understood that Louise Rogers would be taking forward the group's re-structuring.

#### b) Visibility Strategy Group (VSG)

The Minutes of the VSG held on 13 January 2015 and a report on leaflets were distributed. It was noted that Lyanne Mitchell had resigned from the group.

Official Unitarian Facebook page – There was a capacity issue with the need for comments to be moderated. The Chief Officer had experienced a problem with his blog, where comments were placed with inappropriate links.

It was **AGREED** that Marion Baker would take over from John Clifford as the EC link with the VSG.

Leaflet report – There was a balance of £3,641 in the leaflet fund for reprinting. A communication strategy was still needed within to frame such proposals. Discussion took place on all the current leaflets produced by Essex Hall. It was **AGREED** that the current leaflets, apart from the four to be re-written below, would be re-printed when stocks ran out.

It was **AGREED** that the VSG would be asked to focus on the rewrite of the LGBT leaflet and the three Rites of Passage as these were considered to be priorities. The VSG was asked to submit the draft leaflets to the EC for endorsement. Printing costs would be funded by the Leaflets Designated Fund. All printing is to be procured via Essex Hall to enable ease of future reprinting.

The three other proposed new VSG leaflets ('Ethos', 'Why You Are Welcome' and 'Why We Are Different') would be considered at a later date. It would be clarified whether the VSG were doing the design work on any new leaflets themselves.

## c) Youth Strategy Group

No report had been received for this meeting. A report was needed in the next few weeks and this would be chased. **ACTION: Chief Officer**

**8. GA Accounts 2013 – 2014** (Document **EC07/15**)

From the Statement of Financial Affairs (SOFA) on page 9, the 'change in the "withdrawal penalty" for leaving the staff pension fund' item was noted. As a result of discussion with the Auditors, this would be brought into 2013 as a liability (£253,427) and there had been a positive change of £67,359 as a result of £16K being paid off, and the re-calculation of the debt resulting in a reduction. This was a change to last year's Annual Accounts.

The Accounts would be presented at the Annual Meetings by the Convenor, Martin Whitell, and Peter Hanley. Martin Sarbicki will also be in attendance.

The Annual Accounts were formally **approved** and signed, for presentation to the Annual Meetings.

**9. Management Accounts end September 2014**

A report on the changes since the end of September (Document EC08/15) was presented. The £9K advance deposit, paid in 2015, for the 2016 Annual Meetings was excluded. There had been an improvement of £180K overall in the general funds due to improvements in the value of investments and the revaluation of the pension liability. The previous year's budget had been for a deficit of £35K, though the actual deficit was only £11K, even without the £20K legacy figure planned for not having been received.

**10. Sustentation Fund Accounts - 2013-2014**

The accounts of the Sustentation Fund (Document **EC09/15**) were received, noting that the Fund was a separate charity.

It was noted that page 5, containing the details of grants, was missing from the printed copies.

The policy change this year has enabled the fund to be more explicit about development of the congregation as a factor in making grants.

It was **Agreed** that the Convenor would replace Louise Rogers as the new trustee appointed by the General Assembly.

**11. Nightingale Centre Accounts - 2013-2014**

Page 2, Risks - The Risk Register would be sent to Peter Hanley.

The Nightingale centre Accounts (Document **EC10/15**) were formally **approved**.

**12. Stipend Review Committee Report**

The Stipend Review Committee had met the previous evening and a written report was therefore not available. The Chief Officer reported verbally.

Comments, requested previously, had been received from: The Ministerial Fellowship, Stephen Lingwood and two congregations.

The Chief Officer reported that the aspiration within two years was to get to the same level as the Baptists (who had increased their stipend by 2.3% this year, leaving a shortfall of £900) and ultimately the Church of England (currently £24K per annum). This was against the challenge of reducing congregational income from bank interest and dividends.

Proposals for the report:

- Stipend – An increase of 4%, (£800) was recommended.
- Manse allowance – No change.
- To seek views next year on the level of the manse allowance and the differential between London and the rest of the country.
- Resettlement grant – Some change to the text but not the amount.
- Mileage allowance – No change.
- Pension – A change to the text.
- Pulpit supply – This would be presented as a separate report again. The rate would be increased from £45 to £50.

The report was noted for presentation to the Annual Meetings.

### 13. Annual Meeting Update

The Chief Officer handed out the draft motions from the EC (to appoint Dawn Buckle as an Honorary Member, and the usual procedural motions). Dawn's qualifications would be added to the motion if she wished them to be. Nine districts have supported this motion.

John Clifford reported that he had asked Rev Andrew Hill to second his Presidential nomination and make the speech.

The Chief Officer reported back that the other current likely motions were:

- From Cross St Chapel, Manchester on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) treaty between the USA and the EU, asking individuals to educate themselves.
- From Golders Green – Supporting the Dr Hadwen Trust on Animal Welfare. The proposers had been asked to explain in their Background paper the difference between this and the Resolution from two years ago.
- From St Albans – Asking the EC to bring forward a project with Simple Gifts supporting congregations to partner with local Muslim and other religious groups. Peter Hanley would take back some feedback from the EC to the congregation. **ACTION: Peter Hanley**

It would be the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Council of Unitarians and Unitarians (ICUU) this year. It was **AGREED** to have an EC motion on this.

The latest version of the schedule was circulated.

The Anniversary Service would be taking place on the Sunday. The Evening Celebrations would be taking place on the Monday, and the Organiser had spoken to Anna Jarvis.

EC activities:

- Study Motion Workshop – Stephen Lingwood would not be attending the Meetings. Carol Palfrey of Norwich, who was interested in this issue, would be coming. The EC needed to decide who is facilitating and how?

- Jill McAllister session – This would be on Multiculturalism and encouraging Social Action.
- Vulnerable Adults – It was **AGREED** to reduce this to a single session.
- Volunteering – It was **AGREED** to have a single session on this.

There were no plans to have an EC Meeting immediately before the Meetings.

### Session 3

#### 14. 2020 Congregational Development Update

Rev Andy Pakula and Alex Zglinska from the 2020 Leadership Team and Christina Smith attended for this item.

A report was circulated before the meeting. A detailed description of the situation with the Derby project was given. It was noted that the mechanism for releasing GA funds, and the owners of the bank account to which it would be released, needed to be firmed up. **ACTION: 2020 Group/Chief Officer**

Limitations on the 2020 group's capability for sharing the information gathered were identified. Suggestions were made, including an application to the Millennium Fund for the next EC meeting for a grant for this purpose.

It was noted that the EC needed to approve the membership of the 2020 Leadership Team, as with other groups. The EC then formally ratified Alex Zglinska, Susanne Intriligator and Winnie Gordon (joining Rev Andy Pakula, Andy Phillips, Jane Couper and Rev Martin Whitell as the current members).

### Session 4

#### 15. Ministry Strategy Group Notes

The notes of the meeting held 19 November 2014 (Document **EC11/15**) had been received.

#### 16. Recommendations of Interview Panel / Ministry Strategy Group

The following Ministers were **approved** as being granted Full status on the General Assembly Roll: Rev Sheena Gabriel, Rev Nicky Jenkins, Rev Sue Woolley.

The Interview Panel and MSG recommended that Claire MacDonald be trained for the Ministry at Oxford over two years commencing 2015 and that Andy Phillips be trained for the ministry with his ministerial training managed by HMCO but possibly including elements at UCM. Training will need to be flexible and would start in 2016, or 2015 if possible. The recommendations were **approved** that these candidates would be accepted for ministerial training.

It was noted that two other candidates withdrew before interview and that one other candidate was interviewed and the Interview Panel decided not to recommend them for training.

**17. Ministerial Monitoring Report**

The report (Document **EC13/15**) was considered. The target of 50 Ministers had almost been reached. It was noted that the two new students accepted this year would merely replace likely retirements and that there were at least 13 vacancies. Some of these were unexpected indicating that congregations were actively considering and value of Ministry and finding the means to fund it which was positive. Some roles currently filled by paid lay leadership could also ultimately appear on the Ministerial vacancy list.

There was a Ministry Inquiry Day and a Retreat being planned to attempt to encourage more people to consider Ministry, though more encouragement within congregations, particularly from Ministers, to identify people and support them in coming forward would have a part to play.

**18. Ministerial Competencies**

Rev Daniel Costley attended for this item.

An updated competencies document (**EC12/15**) had been provided, incorporating a report on implementation of what it would mean for the future of Unitarian ministry training and a statement of need.

After considerable discussion, the EC **accepted** and endorsed the competency framework for ministry training and accompanying Assessment Forms for use, with regular review. It was noted that the LLSG have already started work on adapting the competency document for use with lay training.

It was **AGREED** that the Ministerial Competencies and Assessment mechanisms be approved.

It was **AGREED** that external, expert support be brought in to assist the development of the next stage of the review of our training.

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

This was undertaken.

*Closing Devotions: Joan Cook read a New Year's prayer from Rev Harry Lismer Short.*

**20. Confidential Item**

Andrew Mason, the Chief Officer and Marion Baker left the meeting for this item.

**Session 5**

*Opening Devotions: Robert Ince read "We are all fellow pilgrims" by Marie Collins, from a book produced by the Kensington Church.*

**21. Chief Officer's Report**

The Chief Officer's report (Document **EC14/15**) was received. He highlighted:



- That the sale of a property part-owned by the General Assembly under the Retired Ministers' Housing Scheme had been completed. There were two properties left with part-GA ownership.
- The Ministerial Pension Fund does not qualify for auto-enrolment under the new auto-enrolment legislation which raises complex issues for congregations that was likely to cause confusion and could lead to financial penalties. It was **AGREED** that a five-minute presentation would be incorporated into the Plenary session. **ACTION: Chief Officer**
- The Safeguarding Audit had been issued and returns were being received.

## 22. ICUU Governance Review

A scoping document (**EC15/15**) had been received and was noted. The Chief Officer and Jacky Woodman were **AGREED** as the two GA ICUU representatives.

## 23. Welsh Department Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 21 June 2014 (Document **EC16/15**) were received.

## 24. President's Report

The President's report (Document **EC17/15**) was received. It was acknowledged that each President brought their own personal message and style to the position which was entirely appropriate and would have the full support of the Executive Committee.

## 25. Crisis PR & Media Training

A report (Document **E18/15**) was received from Rev Shammy Webster, Minister at Rochdale, about a media training course she had attended funded by the General Assembly.

## 26. Robin Hood Tax

An appeal letter had been received (Document **EC19/15**). It was **AGREED** to make a donation of £100 in support of the GA Resolution on this issue.

## Session 6

### 27. Arrangements for future meetings in 2015

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015 (one day only - amended)

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2015 – possibly Nightingale Centre (TBC)

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Saturdays finish at 12.00noon.

## 28. Key Messages

These would be distributed separately

**29. Any other business**

The contribution of Geoffrey Head was acknowledged. He had been a GA representative on the Management Committee of Unitarian College, Manchester and it was **AGREED** that Marion Baker would replace him.

EC Membership – There was a Constitutional requirement to co-opt two people, to serve for two years following the EC Election (see above). It was agreed to undertake a experience/ skills assessment of the EC body in order to identify any gaps which could then be addressed in the recruitment process.. **Action: Convenor/Chief Officer** to investigate and arrange.

At the next EC elections there would be six positions to be filled and of the existing members several will be ineligible to stand again. This would give some issues with continuity.

The previous interpretation of a co-opted partial term of whatever length had been that that it counted as one of the two 'terms'. This was not in the Constitution. It was suggested that it would be within the remit of the Executive Committee to interpret a full term as a four year period, this meaning a maximum of eight years could be consecutively served, but spread across partial and full terms. It was **AGREED** that this issue be discussed at the next EC meeting and that the Constitution be circulated to members.

**Action: Chief Officer**

**30. Further confidential Items**

Andrew Mason and Marion Baker left the meeting for this item.

The Chief Officer reported that Martin Sarbicki had tendered his resignation as Head of Finance and Administration and would be leaving at the end of April 2015. Martin was thanked for his contribution, particularly in project managing the major IT upgrade.

**31 Non-responsive check out & Closing devotions**

The checkout was completed, Alison Thursfield gave the closing devotions and the meeting finished.