

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee
Friday 14th July 2017
Essex Hall, London**

Present: Marion Baker (Convenor), Philip Colfox,
Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer), Christina Smith, Matthew Smith,
Sheena McKinnon, Lynne Readett and Rob Whiteman

In Attendance: Charles VanDenBroeder (General Assembly President),
Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), and Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute taker).

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Lynne read from All the Gifts of Life written by Gary Kawolski – “Knots” – See things from another point of view.

1. Welcome to new EC Members

The Convenor welcomed Rob Whiteman, Sheena McKinnon and Christina Smith to their first EC meeting having taken up the position formally at the meeting.

2. Apologies - None

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 19th & 20th May 2017- (DOC EC54/17)

The Minutes were signed as a true record of the EC meeting held on 19th and 20th May 2017.

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

Pg. 4 item 7 – Next Steps – no 14 Help is at Hand – concerns about the timescales were noted at the Merseyside District meeting and could revision be possibly staff led?

Pg. 8 item 19 Chief Officer Report – (DOC EC50/17) – no 4. – Joan Kereki Legacy – the funds have been received and placed with Newton.

5. EC Action List – (DOC EC55/17)

Executive Committee Action List

17/18 July 2015

Page 5 item 7	Risk – safeguarding audit repeated in 2016	CO	To be included in forthcoming
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			mailing for return by end of 2017
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19/20 May 2017

Page 3.	Next Steps – engage with community	M Smith and CO,	Discussions have been initiated
Page 4	Next Steps – building and financial sustainability	CO	Simon Bland to attend Sept EC meeting
Page 4.	Next Steps – review effectiveness of organisation	P Colfox	To re-circulate his email
Page 5.	LLSG – WSC	CO	LLSG to discuss at August meeting

6. Identity

a) Implementing the Identity Project - (DOC EC56/17)

There was a lengthy discussion on the document submitted by Robert Ince on implementing the next stage of the “Identity” project. It was acknowledged that the identity guidelines would be helpful in initiating conversations within the wider Unitarian and Free Christian community and that there would undoubtedly be a creative tension which reflected our diversity. This was positive and EC links would be seeking to involve Districts in discussions on how we saw ourselves and then how this is reflected in the way we present ourselves to the outside world.

Two options were offered for consideration regarding professional help, it was agreed to support Option 1 (to employ an experienced person in brand management) with some caveats and a draft job description and person specification for a temporary staff position was requested for the September Executive Committee meeting. **Action: Chief Officer to liaise with Robert Ince.**

The other proposals were supported in the following order of priority; testimonial campaign, consistent identity, photo competition and updating leaflets.

b) Identity Guidelines – (DOC EC57/17) –

It was noted that the document has similar content to that previously distributed, but re-ordered. The fist image has been replaced with a scale.

c) Comments regarding Strapline – (DOC EC58/17) - noted

7.TED Project

a) Update - (DOC EC59/17) – noted

b) Proposal – (DOC EC60/17) –

A proposal from the TED Project Support Team was presented to take the project forward from October 2017.

It was agreed to:

1. Work with stakeholders, including the Ministry Strategy Group, in developing the Ministerial training pilot programme to begin in September 2018
2. Continue the work of the TED Project from 1 October 2017 for the financial year 2017-18 to further develop the Framework for Lifelong Learning encompassing ministerial learning and development.
3. Set up a Foundation CIO, independent of the General Assembly, and do the preparatory work required for the Foundation ultimately taking responsibility for all Unitarian Learning and Development.
4. Allocate Next Steps funding for the costs of this development work.

A detailed proposal for the governance of the development work was requested for the next meeting of the Executive Committee in September 2017.

It was noted that the CIO would be responsible for co-ordinating delivery of education and training and the GA would retain responsibility for assessment. The implications for current providers was highlighted and raised complex issues that needed to be carefully considered in any change process.

Session 2

8. 2020 Congregational Growth Report – (DOC EC61/17) – noted with the following: Christina declared an interest in this item

A progress report was received from the Leadership Team of the 2020 Congregational Growth Project on Derby Unity, an initiative supported by the East Midlands District. Over the first 16 months attendance has risen to between 16-22 and a core group of 8 has formed. The learning to date has been shared at the Annual Meetings. The views of the team on future expansion were presented.

It was recognised that to roll-out the 2020 Congregational Growth Project to other locations, which was an integral part of the original aspiration and now a “Next Steps” priority, required additional capacity and finance and this would be considered at a future EC meeting.

It was agreed that the 2020 Leadership Team would be asked to present a detailed plan to the November EC meeting. **Action: Chief Officer to liaise with Rev Andy Pakula and invite him to the November EC meeting.**

9. Next Steps – Collaboration – Presentation

The Chief Officer gave a presentation on current collaboration with other organisations, including key bodies and individuals. These had included BHA, ICUU, CLAS, Accord Coalition, Liberal Judaism, Liberty, the Quakers and RADAR. The key themes were education, religious freedom, penal affairs, LGBT, animal welfare, international and inter faith and ecumenical. He discussed what we were trying to achieve with these partnerships and given the likely impact, what should the priorities be?

It was recognised that we needed to do more thinking about maximising the potential of work with other like-minded groups.

The mapping was useful in identifying what is “missing” from the wider community dialogue and this could give Unitarians the opportunity to lead, as in Assisted Dying .

The Convenor thanked the Chief Officer for his presentation. It was noted that this work needed to be linked with a communications strategy being discussed at the September EC.

The Chief Officer circulated an update of the Next Steps Action Plan, re-formatted as requested at the last meeting.

10. Next Steps Volunteering

Philip introduced a short discussion on volunteers with the following issues being highlighted:

- There is a structural issue; are we going to use volunteers to manage volunteers? Or should we use paid people to manage them?
- Must pay attention to the needs of our volunteers as part of a strategy to manage them eg; follow up after projects.
- Matthew indicated that he had access to volunteering material through one of his congregations and he will ascertain if he can share this material with Philip.

11. Funding requests

a) Unitarian Theology Conference – (DOC EC62/17)

It was agreed to award the sum of £1,000 from the Chalice Fund CPD to support the forthcoming Unitarian Theology Conference at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds by funding “Faith and Freedom” journal to publish the papers that are to be presented. This would be a contribution to the “Next Step” priority of encouraging more Unitarian thought and writing. **Action: Chief Officer to inform Rev Jim Corrigan.**

b) Findhorn Unitarian Network – (DOC EC63/17)

Sheena and Peter declared an interest in this item.

It was agreed to award £990 to the Findhorn Unitarian Network from the Chalice Fund to provide three bursaries for people in leadership roles in Unitarian societies and districts to attend the Findhorn Unitarian Experience Week in January 2018. It was also agreed that the deposit of £2856 would be paid by the General Assembly to assist with cash flow and to be repaid in

December 2017. This would support the “Next Steps” priorities of encouraging collaboration with other bodies and providing enhanced training opportunities.

Action: Chief Officer to inform Riena Jackson.

It was agreed to give further consideration to grant giving processes and place on a future EC Agenda.

12. Management Accounts to end May 2017 – (DOC EC64/17) – noted with the following:

- New members of the EC were invited to have a briefing with the Chief Officer with regard to the accounts.
- The Chief Officer noted that the accounts show the General Assembly in a healthy and stable position. We are drawing down funds from the Bowland Trust donation as planned.
- There will be a more extensive discussion on the budget for year commencing 1 October 2017 at the September EC meeting.
- From the next report the Gabor Kereki Trust will appear in the list of restricted funds and be reflected in the balance sheet.

David Joseph, Finance Manager, was thanked for his work on the management accounts.

Session 3

13. Email from Bangor Unitarians – Constitutional Status - (DOC EC65/17) - noted with the following:

Correspondence was received from Bangor Unitarians on their position as a “small congregation” which meant they had no vote at the Annual Meetings yet smaller congregations of long-standing membership in fact did. It was acknowledged that this seemed unfair but is a consequence of the rules in the current Constitution.

EC accepted that this should be changed and would bring a Constitutional amendment to the 2018 Annual Meetings. **Action: Chief Officer was asked to present draft amendments to the GA Constitution to the September EC meeting to address the anomaly and to inform Bangor of this decision.**

14. MSG notes 7 June 2017 – (DOC EC66/17) – noted

15. President/ Vice- President

a) Thoughts on the Future of the Presidency – (DOC EC67/17) – noted with the following:

Dot Hewardine presented some reflections. Discussion took place on whether the focus should change to a “President –Elect”. It was recognised that the Vice-President position was a Constitutional requirement and any change should await more substantial consideration. The Chief Officer would be seeking nominations for President and Vice-President and EC Links should be looking for potential nominees.

b) EC Guidance for President and Vice-President – (DOC EC68/17) – revisions noted.

c) Guidelines on arranging a Presidential visit – (DOC EC69/17) – revisions noted.

16. Nightingale Centre Critical Incident Plan – (DOC EC70/17)- noted with the following:

Peter to liaise with Colin Partington with regard to the decision on when to seek help.

17. Annual Meeting Panel Minutes - 18 May 2017 – (DOC EC71/17) – noted

The Chief Officer gave an update on the Annual Meeting Panel meeting held on Thursday 13 July 2017.

The date and venue for 2018 have been agreed, Staverton Estate, Northampton from 4 – 7 April. The new venue is an alternative after three years at the Hilton Metropole, Birmingham. Discussions are however underway for a three years contract with the Metropole, taking into consideration that the GA has not yet decided on the length of future meetings. The Panel has agreed with this approach and the Chief Officer would proceed to finalise.

18. ICUU Council Meeting - February 2018 – (DOC EC72/17) – noted with the following:

The General Assembly normally funded two attendees at ICUU Council meetings and this was agreed. The Chief Officer would be attending and those EC members interested should contact the Convenor and Chief Officer. There will be a young adults programme and there are funds available to support the attendance of one British person.

Session 4

19. President's Report – (DOC EC73/17) – noted with the following:

The President had also attended the London Pride 2017 which was very well attended and successful.

20. Chief Officer's Report – (DOC EC74/17) – noted with the following:

- **Ministers Stipend Augmentation Fund** -the wish to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association to accept the funds and responsibilities of the MSAF was supported.
- **Sustentation Fund**– The Fund will be ending their separate Charity Status and transfer their funds to the General Assembly by a Deed of Gift.
- The Chief Officer to enquire whether Joan Cook and Robert Ince the two previous EC members who were two of the trustees of the Fund would stay on until 11 October 2017.

21. EC Link Reports – (DOC EC75/7) – noted with the following:

The EC District Links

Philip Colfox	Western & Southern
Lynne Readett	NELUM & Merseyside
Marion Baker	Sheffield & Cheshire
Matthew Smith	Midland Union & Eastern Union
Rob Whiteman	Scotland & Northern
Christina Smith	East Midlands & London
Sheena McKinnon	Yorks & Manchester
It was acknowledged that the resignation of Gwynn Pritchard left a gap on the EC and as a link to the two Welsh Districts. As an interim measure, until the vacancy was filled, the Chief Officer will work with the Welsh Department Secretary to ensure two-way communication is maintained.[Agreed with Convenor]	Wales

22. EC ways of working and future meeting arrangements –

Next EC meeting to be held on 25 and 26 September at The Nightingale Centre. Arrival on Sunday evening for dinner at 6.30pm followed by an informal session. On Monday evening there would be a session after dinner. Tuesday departure after lunch (12.30pm).

EC meeting 17 November at Essex Hall from 9am to 5.30pm.

EC meeting 19 January (may need a two day meeting tbc) at Essex from 9am to 5.30pm. There would not be a meeting in February, therefore, Stipend Review Committee had to meet in time for the January meeting.

Communication Policy will be on agenda of September meeting as would a review of structure and the pattern of how the EC works.

The Chief Officer and Convenor were meeting on 26 July 2017.

23. Key Messages – to be circulated separately.

24. Non responsive check-out

Closing Devotions – Marion read from Aleks Zglinska’s Chalice Lighting “A sacred flame burns in my heart”

25. Confidential Items – The President, Rob Whiteman (who declared an interest) and Mary-Jean left the meeting at this point

MSG – Interview Panel Recommendations – (DOC EC76/17)

Executive Committee agreed to the inclusion of Andy Philips and Claire MacDonald on the Ministerial Roll with Probationary status subject to confirmation from their Tutor/Principal that they had successfully completed the academic requirements of their course and that they had completed safeguarding training.

It was acknowledged that the processes for approval required further consideration with Sarah Tinker and Simon Bland.