

**Approved Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held 17/05/19**

- Present:** Marion Baker, Phillip Colfox, Jim Corrigan, Hilda Dumbleton, Peter Hanley, Robert Ince (by Video), Lynne Readett, Matthew Smith and Rob Whiteman.
- In attendance:** Celia Cartwright (President), David Joseph (Finance Officer, Item 10) Elizabeth Slade (Chief Officer), Andrew Mason (Minutes), Sarah Tinker (Items 1-7)
- Apologies:** Lynne Readett

**Session 1**

Rob Whiteman conducted Opening Devotions by reading a small piece from a discussion on the concept of success in ministry, followed by a short reflective silence.

**1. Appointment of EC Convener**

Marion Baker was appointed as the EC Convener.

**2. Checking in**

This took place and the meeting started.

**3. Apologies**

Robert Ince was not present, but was video-conferencing in to the meeting. All other members were present.

**4. Minutes of the 25 January 2019 meeting**

With a minor amendment under item 13, the Minutes of the meeting held 25 January 2019 (Document **EC26/19**) were **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Convenor.

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

Page 9, item 21 – A full report of a meeting the Tutor of Harris Manchester College was still required from Simon Bland.

Page 10, Item 28 – The Bridport Citizen's Charter item would be covered under Any Other Business.

GA Contribution of £3K for legal affairs relating to investment advice – This would come up under the Finance item.

Safeguarding – the practicality of Gavin Howell going out to do training to areas requiring long travel periods was raised.

**6. EC Action List (Document EC27/19)**

The Convener noted that there were several historic items.

**25/26 Sept 2017**

Pg 3, item 6b Organisational Effectiveness would be removed.

**17 November 2017**

Pg 7, Item 18 Grant form – a larger conversation on grants was needed, and this item would be dropped from the action list. The Chief Officer would look at the Minutes and the policy and come back with her thoughts.  
**ACTION: Chief Officer**

### 23-25 September 2018

Pg 7, item 8 – Small initiatives fund. This linked to other items. The Chief Officer would speak to Simon Bland.  
**ACTION: Chief Officer**

### 16 November 2018

Pg 1, item 4 – Tabulated issues and requirements list – A wider discussion on strategic direction would be undertaken, with checking and monitoring of this list following on an ongoing basis to pick up on unfinished projects.

Pg 6, item 15 – Youth Programme journeys for young people to adulthood. The Chief Officer would chase this.  
**ACTION: Chief Officer**

Pg 7, item 22 – AM Panel EC Member – This was on the agenda for this meeting.

### 25 January 2019

Pg 3, item 6 – Role of Districts – This was complete.

Pg 3, item 8 – Financial update – This was complete.

Pg 5, item 9 – Accounts issues with Auditors – This was complete.

Pg 5, item 9 – Gift Aid Progress – This was on the agenda for this meeting.

Pg 5, item 11 – Consultant's Report – Marion had asked the Nightingale Centre Treasurer to send this report on to her, but it had only been sent to the GA Treasurer. Marion would chase this.  
**ACTION: Marion**

Pg 6. Item 12 – Strategic Decision-making – This was work in progress.

Pg 6. Item 13 – Investment Policy Amendment – The amendments had been made and an updated version of the document provided to EC members.

Pg 6. Item 13 – Investment Policy Recommendations 2-6 – The Finance Committee needed to meet.

Pg 7. Item 14 – Safeguarding Report, External Support Options for Safeguarding Lead – The Chief Officer would follow this up with Gavin Howell.  
**ACTION: Chief Officer**

Pg 7. Item 14 – Safeguarding Report, Annual Meetings slot – This was ongoing, as the Annual Meetings Panel had not met since then.

Pg 7. Item 14 – Safeguarding Report, The Register needed designing – This was ongoing.

Pg 8. Item 17 – Stipend Review Committee Report, recruit two new members – This would go on the agenda.  
**ACTION: Chief Officer**

Pg 9. Item 21 – Ministry Strategy Group (MSG) Update – This would be covered later in the meeting.

Pg 9. Item 22 – Revision of Guidelines for Ministers and Congregations – This was ongoing.

### 7. EC ways of working

#### Declaration of non-disqualification

All EC Members were required to sign the form confirming they were not disqualified from action as Trustees

#### Declaration of interests

Trustees were required to sign the form declaring their interests. As the form was lengthy, some trustees would complete this after the meeting and email these to Andrew Mason.

**ACTION: All**

#### Timing of meetings and papers

Meeting dates to Jan 2020 have been decided. The Convenor highlighted the importance of sending papers by the required deadline, so that they can be collated and distributed in good time for them to be reviewed properly. Also when papers are submitted, recommendations or actions should be clearly included so that they can be considered.

Communication between the EC and the wider Movement could be improved, in addition to the key messages, and the confidentiality of items not mentioned in the key messages was slightly unclear. Some of these questions would hopefully be answered in the next session, but good communication was essential.

#### Allocation of EC roles

District Links:

Marion Baker – East Cheshire and Sheffield

Matthew Smith – Midland Union

Hilda Dumpleton – S Wales and SE Wales (and Bangor).

Peter Hanley – None at present

Rob Whiteman – Scottish and Northern

Phillip Colfox – Southern and Western (and Salisbury)

Lynne Readett – Merseyside and NE Lancs

Jim Corrigall – London & East Midlands.

Robert Ince – Manchester & Yorkshire Union

Another way of coordinating with districts might be needed to reflect the major differences between districts. This would be considered under strategic direction.

#### Links on other groups

Ministry Strategy Group (MSG) – Lynne Readett

Local Leadership Strategy Group (LLSG) – Marion. The group hadn't met for a year and Marion would therefore speak to the LLSG to see how they could be helped in their future direction.

**ACTION: Marion**

Visibility Strategy Group (VSG) – The main functions of the VSG were now being met by the Communications Officer, so there was no need for a link at this time.

Stipend Review Committee – Following feedback, there was a desire to include lay people from the North and South respectively, particularly at Treasurer level. The GA Treasurer would speak to The MSG Chair, Sarah Tinker about this.

**ACTION: Peter**

Finance Sub Committee – This consisted of the Treasurer, Convenor, Chief Officer, Finance Manager and one appointed EC member. It was **AGREED** that Phillip Colfox would be the EC appointed member.

### Location of Meetings

It was **AGREED** that the EC members found it most convenient to meet in London for the majority of their meetings.

It might be possible for people to contribute to meeting electronically, though face to face meeting was still seen as the main medium.

### Facilitated session

Sarah Tinker had been asked to facilitate a discussion as this was a new group of EC members working together, and a new Chief Officer. The EC was responsible for detail, as well as strategy and vision – both were needed.

There were two main aspects for the session:

- 1) Establishing the quality of how the EC works together; and having a conversation about a covenant to guide its work (a code of conduct was known to be in place already).
- 2) Small group discussion in groups of 3 or 4 as to how this would effect our Movement.

### 1. Qualities suggested for a behavioural covenant

- |                                |   |  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| • Listening                    | • Openness / Honesty  | • Role of convening  |
| • Joy / enthusiasm             | • Determination   | • Self-moderating of contributions.  |
| • Acknowledging Success        | • Creating space for something to emerge                              | • Awareness of representing people who are not in the room.                          |
| • Respect                      | • Patience  | • Integrity of group   |
| • Confidentiality / Discretion | • Different perspectives, skills and ways of thinking                 | • Behaviour for input and output modes. Bringing together instead of how to produce. |
| • Tradition vs innovation      | • Shared objective  |  |
| • Service                      | • Safe place – free to speak out                                      |  |
| • Clarity and Purpose          | • Underpinned by Unitarian values, tradition, narrative and practices |  |
| • Focus                        | • Empathy and compassion  |  |
| • Ambition                     |   |  |
| • Share / collaboration        |   |  |
| • Walking together / team work |   |  |
| • Thinking of others           |   |  |

### 2. If the EC is satisfied / successful, what will it look / feel like for.....

This was recorded in a separate document and would be circulated for the next meeting.

## Session 2

## 8. Strategic direction

Update from the Chief Officer

The Chief Officer gave a PowerPoint presentation of her initial reflections after the first three weeks in post, and having made visits to various districts and congregations.

- We tend to hold on to a 'status of outsiders'. There was a confidence issue in knowing we needed to change, but not knowing how. This could lead to being collectively constrained by being inward-looking, and it would be useful to look outward for new ideas on our future direction.
- Role of districts – there was still some dissatisfaction over the Executive Committee direct election model replacing the geographical representation model of the old GA Council. They had some anxiety as to what their role was. There was a question as to whether districts were still the main connector between congregations, or whether other factors better linked churches (e.g. size, rural v urban location etc.).
- There was a need to foster feeling of togetherness as a larger group. Being inward looking creates imagined boundaries, which then constrain, and make it harder to be bold. We were presently looking at an overall picture of decline, and it was therefore time to act if we were to survive and thrive. There had been a cultural context of fewer people going to church for several decades, but this was a reflection on how well faith organisations were servicing needs, rather than there not being needs.
- Need to focus on our mission and purpose, and be outward-looking.
- There was a need to grow. The obvious target was the 50% plus of the population who are not religiously-affiliated but have spiritual needs. In order to this, we would need to focus on our mission and purpose, and be clear about who we are in a way that seems exciting, generous and relevant to those people. New thoughts were needed, and to plug into the wider conversation in society about how we live.

## Important factors:

- Getting the message out: The GA Website was trying to do many things, but looked dated. Uni-News would benefit from more inspiration as well as information. In general communication, the overall language we use, expressing the sacred to the non-religious, and being positive about our ethos were important.
- Being welcoming: This was a journey we invite others to come on with us; we need to remain welcoming and inviting.
- The way we work: There was a risk to having a small number of people involved in them running out of energy. We should therefore help give support and inspiration. Good chairing of meetings is a practical skill we could help with.
- Supporting our people: Staff, Ministers and Lay People are all undertaking roles which can be emotionally or physically draining, and need support.
- Money: The Essex Hall Trust grants and investment income hide weak quota income, which is more closely linked to how well we're doing as a Movement. We need to look ahead and consider sustainability when the Bowland Trust grant money runs out.
- Importance of growth: If we are not trying to grow, we are simply managing decline.

### Perspectives from EC members on vision and strategy

The following comments were made during the discussion:

- The people we tend to attract at present are not young people.
- The delivery mechanism is also important. The committee and strategy group system is not working well. How do we better engage with activists?
- Individuals start their own initiatives, which can sometimes work well because they capture the mood. We need to find mechanisms to capture what's happening that will help with growth, communication etc.
- Growth requires an alignment of passion and purpose.
- Our denomination often lacks a common voice, due to our focus on autonomy, are there common positions we can speak on?
- We were doing a lot right, but cannot do everything at once. Following initiatives through hadn't always been done well.
- Effectiveness – was the use of churches for worship on a Sunday the best measure of effectiveness? Or did other activities (and other user groups) enabled by our churches help people live a more Unitarian life?
- Was worship an obstacle to people? Were there other methods, such as tuning into the spiritual side of life in other ways, or enacting social justice?
- The Chief Officer wanted us to be effective in improving the spiritual health of communities and individuals.
- Districts have a role, though it wasn't fully clear what it should be, particularly with the divergent strength of districts.
- Plans going forward need to be achievable in the initial period.
- There was need to meet people's unmet needs. It could take work to find these, as the UK was culturally poor in expressing needs.

### Planning towards September meeting focussing on Budget and strategy

It was suggested the EC put Strategic Direction on every agenda until we had an outcome, though some mechanism was needed to eventually convert direction into action.

When coming to implementation, the Chief Officer remarked that it was important to note the differences between volunteers and Staff – volunteers were more about emergence and influence, which contains more uncertainty, including communication with the wider Movement. It was important to be responsive to volunteers, balanced against our need for forward momentum.

It was noted that plans, while needed to inspire volunteers and imagine desired outcomes, must be fluid as in our context reality tends diverge from ideal plans.

It was **AGREED** to have a session on strategic direction which focusses on our passions, leading into the planning for the September meeting.

### Unitarian College

Opportunities and risks were discussed. It was noted that the GA and Unitarian College were separate organisations, and there was therefore a risk that they could diverge in the future.

There were questions about our future relationships; the GA’s role providing back-office services; and the dual roles in setting strategy and vision, and also providing practical support.

Harris Manchester College Oxford (HMCO)

A fuller report on progress in respect of the competency framework, as per the action item, was still needed for the next meeting.

**Session 3**

**9. Annual Meetings**

a) Minutes of January’s Annual Meetings Panel

The Minutes of the Meeting held in January (Document **EC30/19**) were accepted.

b) Minutes of the 2019 GA Meetings & List of Resolutions

The Minutes of the 2019 Annual Meetings (Document **EC31/19**) were noted. Any corrections should be sent to Andrew.

The 2019 Resolutions (Document **EC32/19**) were noted.

c) Review of the 2019 Annual Meetings

Members were asked to feedback using the categories ‘I Like’, ‘I Wish’ and ‘What if’. The following feedback was given:

‘I Like’	‘I Wish’	‘What if’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced time. More manageable</li> <li>• Shorter meetings</li> <li>• More people in a younger age-profile this year.</li> <li>• Average age of attendance coming down (subsidies).</li> <li>• Speaking and debate.</li> <li>• 1 hour slots.</li> <li>• Energy the reducing days gave (though more tiring).</li> <li>• Freedom to deliver the accounts in a different way.</li> <li>• Sense of there being 370 committed people and the energy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silent breakfast table,</li> <li>• It wasn’t in holy week. Week after Easter.</li> <li>• Resolutions process was clearer and had more energy.</li> <li>• Knife crime debate could have put in to Unitarian context. More discussion before set policies. Had an ‘against’ debater for all motions.</li> <li>• We could revisit the notion of the plenary session, which seems archaic.</li> <li>• The Anniversary Service were not a lecture.</li> <li>• Greater engagement with the finances.</li> <li>• Values in what we’re eating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We videoed multiple sessions.</li> <li>• We used video in the right way. Looked at how use volunteers.</li> <li>• Have smaller meetings all around the UK like this.</li> <li>• We didn’t have motions but had a debate instead.</li> <li>• Had same lunchtime setup at dinner.</li> <li>• Formalise a ‘ministry of money’ to do things differently.</li> <li>• Felt more open to new people, less of an insider’s club, more opportunities for new people to connect.</li> </ul>

d) Appointing an EC member to the Annual Meetings Panel  
Jim Corrigan was appointed as the EC representative on the Annual Meetings Panel.  
Christina Smith was also approved as a Panel member.

### 10. Finance update

David Joseph, Finance Manager, attended for this item.

#### a) Management accounts

The Management Accounts to 31 December 2018 (Document **EC33/19**) had been circulated. David drew the Committee's attention to a revision of a number and had provided a replacement page for the report. There has been a backlog of transaction processing, and therefore the accounts were as at December 2018. He had included the November figure to give context, though there were few changes between November and December.

Income: Quota balance outstanding had been increased to £97K due to the issuing of quota requests in December, and there was more work to be done on that. Dividends had dropped as the Bowland Trust dividend had been moved to the Bowland Fund total.

Expenditure: Grants payable – the six-monthly grant to The Inquirer had been made.

Payroll: This was split 50% in principle between administrative costs and programme activities.

It was believed that a professional fee needed to be transferred to Unitarian College.

#### Outlook

The B&FUA grant income has dropped by £2K.

Administration costs – had risen to £386K as audit bill from last year has gone in to this year (£1K) plus allowance for fees for legal advice in respect of Unitarian Investment Panel.

The balance of the TED fund brought forward at 1/10/2018 will be treated as a donation to the Unitarian College. It had been agreed with the Director of Unitarian College that we would reconcile the balance on the fund and transfer the sum due at the end of May.

A request for a contribution from the GA towards its share of professional fees for legal advice given to the Unitarian Investment Panel was received by the Treasurer in February. The Treasurer had been sent a note from 2017 agreeing we would pay a 20% share of the fees. The GA's share was anticipated to be £6K but the final request was for £3K. The Treasurer recommended that this sum was fair and that the GA should settle it when a proper invoice for payment was submitted to the GA. This was **AGREED**.

#### Balance Sheet

The balance sheet was considered healthy with positive net current assets and a strong net assets position backed by healthy investments.

The main items were Debtors (£160.5K) and Cash (£165K). Of the Debtors (£160.5K), the key components were £49K of accrued income and prepayments (including £36K from

B&FUA), £17.5K of Gift Aid debtors, and £94K other debtors. Of the other debtors, £93K was for Quota income – which had been recently invoiced. The current position on Quota debtors is £40K due. A Quota collection exercise is in process to recover the outstanding sums.

There was a balance of £164K cash in the COIF and HSBC accounts.

The Creditors figure was £32K (£9K owed to HMRC and pensions, £20K accruals and £3K mainly expenses to volunteers).

The Endowment Funds totals were shown on the 'Funds movement note' page. It was budgeted to transfer £120K for the year from the Bowland Development Fund for breakeven on normal expenditure. This year, we would be making a £35K donation to Unitarian College from Restricted Funds.

There was need to consider our use of Restricted Funds. A new Restricted Fund would be created with a balance of £4K in time for the next financial report resulting from a successful grant application to the Hibbert Trust from the Ministry & Congregational Support Officer for 'Appreciating Church', to promote interaction between congregations. This would initially be used to support appreciative enquiry in Lewisham and a North West congregation.

### Summary

There was a strong balance sheet, anticipating few risks and good returns on investment. Reserves were considered to be at an appropriate level. Financial processes needed to be updated.

#### b) Update on Gift Aid

David Joseph gave an update on the status of Gift Aid collection. At the start of the financial year, approximately £21K awaited collection. Three claims had been made, totally £3.7K, leaving an approximate balance of £17.5K. Of this, £3.8K needed to be collected by the end of this year as it related to income from 2014-15. The balance was from the 2015-16 year.

Proposed Gift Aid recovery plan:

- 1) Finalise the 2014-15 claim by June.
- 2) Claim the remaining 2015-16 year by Dec 2019.
- 3) Later gift aid to be claimed after the new Finance Officer is appointed, then develop a process to claim Gift Aid by the corresponding financial year end.

David was thanked for the recovery plan and the report and left the meeting.

### **11. Nightingale Centre minutes (Document EC34 & 34b/19)**

The Minutes of the Nightingale Centre Management Committee Meetings held 09 February 2019 (Document **EC34/19**) were noted. The draft minutes of the meeting held 06 May 2019 (Document **EC34b/19**) were also received. Sue Catts had resigned and it was **AGREED** to appoint Cathy Masztalerz as a Committee Member. It was **AGREED** to add £6.2K to the investments as an endowment resulting from the sale of land for the school (land price £3.5K and £2.7K interest).

**12. Confidential Items**

Andrew Mason and Elizabeth Slade left the room for discussion of this agenda item.

Staff remuneration

A paper (Document **EC35/19**) had been circulated and Staff remuneration was discussed.

**13. Paper on assisted dying (Document EC36/19)**

A paper on The Assisted Dying Coalition (Document **EC36/19**) had been circulated, along with the text of the 2013 GA Resolution on the topic.

Robert Ince reported on the paper. Robert declared an interest, as a Director of 'My Death My Decision'. We had been offered the chance to join this new coalition on assisted dying. At present, 'Dignity in Dying' was the main assisted dying organisation, and they will only support a change in the law for people who are terminally ill with only six months to live. He felt that joining other groups in the Coalition, even if we did not agree with all individuals statements, would put us in the campaign.

The following comments were made:

- Our resolution refers to 'intolerable existence', the coalition referred to 'incurable suffering' – slight variations of wordings could have life or death impacts. The Quakers were currently using our wording, though every organisation would express itself slightly differently.
- Members were not in full agreement as to whether the resolution, as worded, gave the EC the authority to join a coalition.
- Wider consultation might be required (though it was noted that there had been discussion on the resolution for two years, and resolutions from the Annual Meetings are considered to represent the view of our Movement).
- In response to a question as to what the Coalition wanted from us, Robert indicated support and momentum, as Brexit was currently occupying parliamentary attention.
- A discussion paper for circulation and comment would be useful.
- The positions of other groups in the Coalition, and possible new groups joining, were important.

It was **AGREED** that Robert would go back to the Coalition and speak to them about wording, collate the stated position of Coalition members, and bring this back to the next meeting.

**ACTION: Robert**

**Session 4****14. Paper on conflict of interest (Document EC37/19)**

Rob Whiteman submitted a paper to attempt to define conflict of interest, to be attached to the Conflict of Interest Policy as guidance. This was **AGREED**.

**15. Decision on EC member to serve for two years**

Derek McAuley had emailed the five people elected to see if anyone wished to indicate they were willing to serve for two years. No-one had offered to do so. The GA Constitution stated that the procedure is that four people stand down and four new members join.

There had been five during this term due to a resignation. Members are ordinarily elected for four years.

### 16. President's Report

Celia Cartwright gave a verbal report. She indicated that it would be useful to know the approximate timings around occasions like the Cenotaph, and asked whether there was a dress allowance for such occasions. Having delivered her report, Celia left the meeting.

Outgoing President Joan Cook had submitted a Report (Document **EC38/19**). Joan was thanked for her report, and for her year working as President.

### 17. Chief Officer's Report

Liz had submitted Report **EC39/19**. This was noted. It was suggested that the next report be put in the 'I Like, I Wish, What If', format.

### 18. EC Link Reports

The Link Reports (Document **EC40/19**) were taken as read.

- NELUM – would meet on Monday, and were looking at their purpose.
- Midland Union – Were planning to be creative about their own working practices.
- S Wales – Had raised the issue of safeguarding costing in having Youth Officer due training. It was suggested that remote training would be more appropriate.
- Sheffield – Had run a session on Rites of Passage with 12 attendees. Great Hucklow had previously suspended regular services, but the District had now agreed to provide worship support to enable a congregational service to take place from July on the first Sunday of the month at 3pm As a result of a conversation with the Unitarian College Tutor, the students would arrange a Christmas Carol Service on 13 December.

### 19. Unitarian Discovery Holiday (Document EC41/19)

A report on the winding up of the Unitarian Discovery Holiday group, requesting the outstanding monies be passed to the Send a Child to Hucklow fund, had been received. Their Constitution dissolution clause mandated that the funds pass to the GA to use in line with the Objects of their charity, which did not accord with the objects of SACH. After discussion it would go with the Unrestricted Fund. The Chief Officer would respond to the UDH group.

**ACTION: Chief Officer**

### 20. Key Messages

Key Messages could be passed to districts verbally then circulated via Uni-News. These were:

1. Convening as a new fully-elected EC.
2. Appointment of Marion as Convenor, Welcoming new President, Appointment of EC Link people & other Committee Members.
3. Exploring EC Covenants and ways of working.
4. Chief Officer gave initial impressions.
5. A preliminary review of the Annual Meetings had been held but people were reminded to complete the AM feedback survey.
6. Mark Hutchinson had been accepted on to the GA Roll of Ministers with probationary status.

**21. Any other business**

It was **AGREED** that Rev Mark Hutchinson be added to the GA Roll of Ministers as a Minister with Probationary Status.

The Bridport Paper would be added to the agenda for next time.

**22. Dates of future meetings**

Meetings at Essex Hall unless otherwise stated:

15 July 2019 (9-5); 12-14 September 2019 (Evening of 12th to lunchtime on 14th, Nightingale Centre); 28 November 2019 (9-5); 21 January 2020 (9-5).

**23. Non responsive check-out**

This took place.

Hilda Dumpleton gave Closing Devotions with a short reading and the meeting closed.