

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

Approved Minutes - Executive Committee

Friday 13th November 2015

Essex Hall, London

Present: Robert Ince (Convenor), Marion Baker, James Barry, Philip Colfox, Joan Cook, Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer), Gwynn Pritchard, Lynne Readett, Jacky Woodman.

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

Friday

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Gwynn read the poem "Ode to Autumn" written by John Keats

1. Apologies - none

2. Minutes of the meetings held on 18th & 19th September 2015 (DOC EC90/15) - the Minutes were signed as an accurate record of the EC meeting on 18th & 19th September 2015.

3. Matters arising for noting or to include in Agenda for later discussion:
- none

4. EC Action List (DOC EC91/15) – noted with the following:
17/18 July

Page 2 – item 4 – EC Bios – the Chief officer has edited all bios and has all photo's apart from Peter's - **Action: Peter to provide.** Would be placed on the website by the next meeting – **Action: Chief Officer**

18/19 September

Page 9 – item 18 – UCM – contact between MSG and UCM to be raised with Rev Daniel Costley as there seems to be a difference in opinion with regard to communication. Agreed to retain on the Action List.

5. Reports from Strategy Groups:

5.1 Local Leadership Strategy Group (DOC EC92/15) - noted with the following:

The Convenor commented that this document is a useful summary.

The Chief Officer noted that the Summer School had not been mentioned in the document and that we need to ensure that an emphasis is placed on this

very significant programme. – **Action: Marion to bring this to the attention of Louise.**

5.2 Ministry Strategy Group (DOC EC93/15) – noted with the following:

EC approved -

- 1) the appointment of Jane Couper to the Ministry Strategy Group.
- 2) the recommendation of the Ministry Strategy Group with regard to Bob Janis Dillon a UUA Minister, to would work towards inclusion on the Roll under route 3c of the Policy.

Joan has noted the change of time of the Ministry Strategy Group meetings, (from 12.30pm to 11.00am) which will pose a problem for her as an EC link person travelling from Scotland and suggested an EC Link be someone closer to London. She also voiced concern that the new time will limit their membership as it may place constraints on people volunteering for the Group. Joan will remain as the EC Link for the time being. James asked whether the Group had considered online meetings and if so, more work would be needed to enable this to happen. It was however felt that this was not the correct method to conduct meetings for this particular Group given its responsibilities.

It was noted that no time scale was yet in place for the implementation of Stage 2 of the training review in progress.

5.3 Visibility Strategy Group - Verbal Report

James repeated that there was no point proposing new projects until the new Strategic Plan was in place. UNICOMS had gone well with 24 people attending and resources had been gained through this. A similar event would be held in 2016.

5.4 2020 Leadership Team (DOC EC94/15) – noted with the following:

It was noted that Andy Phillips had resigned from the Team due to Ministry Student training. Concern was expressed at the high turnover of Team members.

The Convenor has had a conversation with Rev Martin Whitell about concerns raised by James with regard to the use of the word “Unitarian” in the Derby Unity Project. This had also been raised with the Rev Andy Pakula who noted that there were a number of Unitarian Churches who do not have the word Unitarian in their church name. This was acknowledged by the EC, but the issue related to this being a GA funded programme. The Chief Officer commented that when the original Terms of Reference were drawn up this should have been made a requirement of any project undertaken by the 2020 Leadership Team if that was the intention and this was not done. It should be noted that their website now does acknowledge a Unitarian presence. The GA President brought to the attention of the EC that there are a number of religious movements already using the name “Unity” and in particular a religious movement in the USA. He asked about the quality of links with the Derby Unity Group and the Derby Unitarian Church and Marion reported that Christina Smith of Derby Unity had informed her that there was clear communication between the two groups. **It was agreed that the Chief**

Officer request a more detailed report from the 2020 Leadership Group for the January EC meeting, which is to include their performance measures.

Philip reported that the Team had two areas of work;

- 1) New and rekindled congregations
- 2) Training for existing congregations. Rev Andy Pakula had also offered a free consultation (subject to a mandatory donation to a named Charity) on how to grow your congregation.

Action: Philip as EC link to the Team was asked to convey the concerns of the EC to them.

An email had been received from Ken Howard on 2020 (DOC EC95/15) and was noted. **Action: The Convenor and the Chief Officer to liaise with regard to a response.**

6. Nightingale Centre – (23 October 2015) – (DOC EC96/15) – minutes of the meeting of 23 October 2015 noted with the following:

The Nightingale Centre Budget 2015-16 was approved.

7. Nightingale Centre Delegation -

- a) **Paper from Nightingale Centre Management Committee (DOC EC97/15) –**
- b) **Current Delegation Arrangements (DOC EC98/15) –**

Proposals to amend the current delegation arrangements were considered. A number of further changes were made and it was agreed that the revised document be updated and forwarded to the Nightingale Centre Management Committee for their view with an intention of finalising the issue at the January 2016 EC meeting. **Action: Chief Officer**

Session 2

8. Constitution Review Group Report (DOC EC99/15) – noted with the following:

- Recommendations could be short term if we go down the CIO route.
- The group considered the issue of an eight year maximum length of time in office, however, reaffirmed the current approach of two successive terms, which would include a co-opted term.
- The Chief Officer to draft a proposal as a Constitutional Motion.
Action: Chief Officer
- Constitution Review Group to be thanked for their report.

9. President and Vice-President 2016/17 (DOC EC100/15)

Dorothy Hewerdine was unanimously agreed as the nominee to be proposed to the Annual Meetings as President for 2016/17.

John agreed to produce a paper on the difficulties of being the GA President without the help of a Vice-President as this is the 3rd year that the Movement will be without a Vice-President. **Action: John Clifford**

10. Fees for Organists/Musicians (DOC EC101/15) - noted

The Report was accepted and the recommendations of the Unitarian Music Society were agreed for presentation to the Annual Meeting. **Action: Chief Officer to notify the Society and progress.**

11. Financial Review Report – Verbal

The Convenor reported that the group had met twice since the last EC meeting. They were seeking professional advice on legacy management and a suitable Consultancy had been identified but no financial commitment has been made. EC agreed that this could be progressed. Investment management had also been discussed.

12. Annual Meeting Panel meeting – Verbal Report

The venue for the 2017 GA had been agreed as the Hilton Metropole, Birmingham from 10 – 13 April 2017. A small surplus of £3,000 was reported for the 2015 GA, mainly as a result of 22 more attendees than was budgeted for. The budget for 2016 is similar to 2015 with the large fees for IT support, which was now expected by attendees, to be recognised.

13. Annual Report – Verbal Report

Apart from a section on Vision added to the beginning of the Report by the Chief Officer, the EC report is very similar to that of 2013/14. Achievements were identified. It was agreed that the Convenor, Chief Officer and Hon Treasurer would have delegated authority to approve the final text of the document as it had to go to print before the next meeting.

Session 3

14. President's Report (DOC EC104/15) – noted with the following:

The President reported his disappointment at the poor attendance at some events, especially at District meetings. He has noted that some congregations appear to have given up on growth and were concentrating on maintenance. We needed to create motivation and to involve new people with new thinking. On the positive side, congregations have responded to social responsibility, eg; the immigration crisis.

15. Chief Officer's Report (DOC 105/15) – noted with the following:

It was reported that the all Trustees of the CC Grundy Trust want to resign and pass on the responsibility to a similar Trust in Lancashire and a due diligence report had been undertaken. At some point after January 2016 the EC will be asked to appoint new Trustees.

The EC was asked to endorse a proposal for Celia Midgley to stand again on the ICUU Nominating Committee which was agreed. **Action: Chief Officer to progress.**

The Chief Officer reported that he had spoken briefly to Sanderson Jones of Sunday Assembly at an event at St Paul's and was asked to follow-up.

Action: Chief Officer.

16. EC Link Reports (DOC EC106/15) – noted with the following:

- **LDPA – James**
Reported that they are reviewing priorities following the appointment of Rev Martin Whitell as District Minister and he has been invited to one of their quarterly meetings. It was agreed to fund his attendance at the FUSE weekend as an EC Link.
- **Yorkshire and Sheffield – Robert**
Attended the YUU AGM. Reported that at the last two Sheffield District Meetings the formal Agenda was abandoned and discussions took place.
- **UALM – Joan**
The clash of dates with the Vision Day and the Annual UALM Conference had not been well received.
- **Wales – Gwynn**
The last Welsh Department meeting on 7 November 2015 had been cancelled but there is still a planned conference to follow the 21 November Vision Day and prepare for the 2016 GA.
- **Eastern Union – James**
A proposal to dissolve the District Association was scheduled to be discussed at their meeting on the 23 March 2016. There were concerns that this may have a domino effect on other Districts.

Session 4

17. Vision preparation

A lengthy discussion took place on who would be doing what and how on the 21 November 2015.

- It was noted that so far 82 people have officially registered to attend, but these numbers could increase or decrease on the day.
- Simon Wilson, the facilitator and the Convenor would open the day.
- It was agreed that all six subjects would be treated as of equal value.
- Philip to put together a commitment/skill/feedback sheet.
- It was agreed that live streaming would take place from 10.30am – 11.00am, 12.45pm – 3.30pm and the final half hour. – GA President to help James with online feedback. James to direct people to the YouTube site which will only be available to those who have signed on with details on Uni-news.
- Marion to produce a map to help those find the Chapel.
- Evaluation sheet to be developed.

- As agreed at previous EC meetings, it is hoped to empower people on the day to implement their ideas immediately. If there are going to be major costs involved this would require a proposal to be developed.
- The Chief Officer and GA President will have a twitter presence.
- Media - Rachel Skelton will be attending as the Editor of the Unitarian. Robert was in touch with Colleen Burns Editor of The Inquirer.
- EC members were allocated to put together snapshots of current situations and develop prompt cards for the six subjects to get to MJ by Tuesday for printing and laminating.
- Plan to be developed by EC for distribution before the GA for approval at the GA –the Convenor and the Chief Officer to liaise with regard to putting a Motion to the GA in this regard. Early draft document for the Jan EC meeting with final draft for the February EC meeting.
- EC meeting to take place 4.30 – 5.00pm to discuss success of the day

18. Letter from Stephen Lingwood (DOC EC102/15) – noted

Views on EC priorities discussed. **Action: Chief Officer to respond**

19. Strategy Groups (DOC EC103/15) – some initial thoughts (re-issued paper from July 2015 EC) – Noted – with the following:

It was thought that it was premature to discuss this paper before the Workshop. Certainly looking at the term “Strategy” in group titles and a reduction in the number of tiers should be prioritised. There will be guidance and mentoring needed for volunteers with a focus on completing tasks.

A.O.B.

20. Sustentation Fund

The Convenor reported that discussions had been initiated by the Stipend Augmentation Fund (Liverpool Fund) and the Sustentation Funds to move towards a common set of trustees which would reduce administration costs. The Sustentation Fund Trustees meeting on 21 October 2015 had given their full support which would be taken to the Liverpool Fund in May 2016.

It was noted that the Chief Officer and Marion are Trustees of the Stipend Augmentation Fund.

21. Key Messages to be distributed separately

22. Confidential Items – The Chief Officer and Mary-Jean left the meeting at this point

Chief Officer’s Appraisal

23. Non responsive check-out

Closing Devotions – The Convenor read from 'The purpose of Religion' from Cliff Reed's book Carnival of Lamps.

Note – the meeting did not convene on Saturday 14th November 2015 as scheduled to avoid difficulties with access to Essex Hall due to the Lord Mayor’s Parade and was extended on Friday to deal with the items on the Saturday agenda.