

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting
Monday 11th & Tuesday 12th January 2016
Essex Hall, London**

Present: Robert Ince (Convenor), Marion Baker, 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).

Monday

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Joan does not believe in New Year resolutions but rather makes a to do list and read from the list that she used during a sermon she gave during the Christmas and New Year period, she then read from the writings of Jovanka Caires- "Opening your mind"

1. Apologies – Peter will be leaving the EC meeting at 10.30am after Session 5 on Tuesday.

2. Membership

The Executive Committee received with regret the resignation of James Barry on 16 November 2015. They thanked James for all his work on the Executive Committee since April 2013.

The Chief Officer and Mary-Jean then left the meeting and a confidential session was held.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 13th November 2015 - (DOC EC02/16) – after a minor alteration – removing "Rev" before John Keats" from the opening devotions read by Gwynn – the Minutes were signed as an accurate record of the EC meeting on 13th November 2015.

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

- a) Interview Panel meeting held in first week of January 2016
- b) Replacing the EC Link to the Visibility Strategy Group.

5. EC Action List - (DOC EC03/16) – Matters Arising

17/18 July 2015

Page 2 item 4 - EC bios – Updated 13/11/15 to be placed on website by next meeting - **Ready to proceed.**

Page 5 item 7 - Risk – safeguarding audit repeated in 2016 – **Keep on the Agenda.**

18/19 September 2015

Page 6 item 10 - Enquire at Annual Meeting Panel if numbers attending can be increased? – As a result of an approach by a donor an 80% increase in the discount is to be offered to the age group up to 39 years old.

Page 8 item 18 - Wales – document protection consider how Pdfs for online completion could be produced – **Still outstanding.**

Page 9 item 18 - UCM – contact MSG and UCM to be raised with Rev Daniel Costley – Joan has had a conversation with Daniel – **it was agreed to invite a member of the Ministry Strategy Group, Rachel Skelton and one other along with a member from Harris Manchester College to the February EC meeting to progress this item.**

13 November 2015

Page 1 item 5.1 - Emphasis on summer school to be included in plan – Marion has had an email contact with Louise Rogers.

Page 4 Item 9 - Produce a paper on the difficulties of being the GA President without the help of a Vice-President – Still to be completed.

Page 5 Item 15 - Sunday Assembly – to follow-up – **Action: Chief Officer.**

Under Matters arising, a short discussion with regard to the Ministry Strategy Group, the Local Leadership Strategy Group and the 20202 Leadership Group was held.

MSG – Joan reported that phase 2 of the Competency project is not yet progressed as the remit had not yet been agreed, and the accredited Unitarian studies element should be removed as they are unlikely to be delivered by an external provider.

MSG to be asked to forward an updated version of Phase 2 to the next EC meeting to enable a decision to be made. **Action: Jacky to review.**

Local Leadership Strategy Group – Marion has been in email conversation with Louise who had raised the recent meeting that had been held between the Chief Officer and Summer School. It was explained that this had initially been about finances and the Chief Officer has suggested that Louise contact him directly. All agreed that LLSG should be kept up to date with what is going on with regard to the “Vision”.

2020 Leadership Group – Philip is in contact with the Rev Andy Pakula of the 2020 Leadership Group.

6. General Assembly Annual Report (Doc 05/16) – noted with the following:

- A few omissions and corrections were noted for Andrew Mason’s attention and correction, before going to print.
- A question was raised as to whether the details of the EC Links should be included – the Chief Officer noted that these details are on the Unitarian website already.
- It was noted that the Local Leadership Strategy Group had sent an incomplete report as Worship Studies course seems to have been omitted and this would be pursued.
- The allocation of investment gains was queried and would be reviewed.
- It was noted that the quality of the photographs was quite poor (this could be because the copies at the meeting were from the office printer), however it was felt that this issue should be considered for the future. The Chief Officer to organise the photographs of EC at the GA. for next year’s report.
- The Report will be going to print on Monday 18 January 2016.

7. General Assembly Accounts – (DOC 04/16) – noted with the following:

- Colin Farey the Finance Manager joined the meeting. He has received an email from the Auditors declaring that version 4 of the GA Accounts (the above numbered document) have been agreed as the final audited accounts.
- Philip queried the “withdrawal penalty for leaving the staff pension fund” and it was explained that that the figures in the report are correct.
- Philip inquired whether the table on page 20 showing the consolidated staffing costs of the GA and Nightingale Centre could be separated [Colin produced a table later in the day separating the two for the EC].
- Subject to the changes discussed, the Accounts were **agreed**.
- Colin was thanked for attending the meeting and thanks were extended to him and John Crosskey for their work on the GA accounts.

8. Sustentation Fund Accounts (DOC 06/16) – Received by the EC, accepted and noted.

9. Nightingale Centre Accounts (DOC EC07/16) – noted

The Nightingale Centre Accounts were **agreed and signed**.

Colin Partington and Michael Tracey were thanked for their work on the Nightingale Centre Accounts.

10. Nightingale Centre Minutes – (DOC EC08/16) – noted with the following:

- Delegation arrangements - The Delegation arrangements between the EC and the Nightingale Centre were **agreed**.
- The Centre has now received the outstanding Bowland Trust funds which will enable them to move forward with the capital projects. The Bowland Trust was thanked for their support.

11. 2020 Leadership Team Report – (DOC EC09/16) – noted with the following:

- The question is – where do we go from here? Philip to ask the 2020 Leadership Group what their next step is now that Derby has been launched?
- The Chief Officer reported that he has received a request from the East Midland District requesting reimbursement of funds spent by Derby during the launch.

Session 2

12. Millennium Fund Bid – Dukinfield - (DOC EC10/16)

It was **agreed** to award Dukinfield Old Chapel, £5,000 from the Millennium Fund. **Action: Chief Officer to inform Dukinfield.**

13. Finance Update -

Bowland Trust

It was reported that following discussions between the Bowland Trust and the Executive Committee that it had been agreed that the funding from the Bowland Trust will come to an end this year with a single donation of £1.5M. This represented an amount slightly in excess of what the General Assembly might have expected to receive over the full term of the original agreement. Discussion took place on the opportunities this presented and how this related to the Vision process. In view of the implications it was agreed that an announcement would be made in Key Messages. **Action: Chief Officer**

Investment:

Notes of the Joint Unitarian Investment Panel were received. Peter proposed a review of current investment practices, including the role of the Unitarian Investment Panel as it pertains to the General Assembly. The Chief Officer has identified a financial advisor to the charity sector who was not a broker or investment manager and it was **agreed** that an approach be made. A Budget of £2/3k was set. **Action: Chief Officer**

Legacy Management:

The Chief Officer had identified a consultant who specialises in Legacies and will have a meeting with him on the 26 January 2016 and would bring a proposal to the February 2016 meeting. **Action: Chief Officer**

Building Sustainability:

The Chief Officer would be meeting Historic England (formally part of English Heritage) on a survey of the significance and sustainability of buildings similar to that undertaken recently by The Quakers and would report to the next meeting. He was asked to copy details of this work to EC. **Action: Chief Officer**

14. Joint Unitarian Investment Panel Minutes - (DOC EC11/16) – noted**Session 3****15. Annual Meeting Panel Minutes – (DOC EC12/16) – noted with the following:**

There will be Annual Meeting Panel meeting on 12 January 2016.

16. MSG paper – Reception & Welcome of New Ministers – (DOC EC13/16) – noted and accepted by the EC.**17. Constitutional Review Group – (DOC EC14/16) – Motion was agreed as recommended****18. Vision Follow-up – Peter was invited to facilitate this section of the meeting.**

The EC considered what their objectives were. Currently the Movement stands at +/- 3,000 members; the objective must be to reach a substantial number of people outside the Movement. If this was to be achieved this would need a major rethink. The following ideas being discussed drawing upon the feedback from the Vision Day:

- How the EC organises itself and pulls everything together.
- To spend or not to spend.
- Sales/marketing/product development/project management.
- Skills development with volunteers.

- The continued use of the title “Strategy Group” to deliver activities. If the groups are created as a result of the Vision document, then there will be a need to relook at who reports to whom in current structures.
- A paper was received – Ministry in all its forms – and discussed. This raised the issue of where the boundary was between Professional Ministry and other forms of Ministry. There was a need to include UALM in discussion. Should we separate training and development including the Colleges from other Ministry issues such as the Rolls?
- The Convenor noted that £5,000 had been raised at the Anniversary Service Appeal at the 2015 GA, this was treated as general income. He proposed that at the 2016 GA the appeal should stipulate a specific project and that an appeal be made to create a “Spiritual Learning Web” which could be used by anyone not just Unitarians. He has already had a discussion with UCM in this regard and been advised that they were also prepared to put some resource behind this idea. It was agreed that a proposal be brought to the February EC meeting. **Action: Robert Ince**
- It was noted that the Visibility Strategy Group had no Chair and the whole issue of how we addressed communications and social action needed review as they were different issues.
- Changes around learning would affect the remit of the LLSG which would be reduced quite considerably. **Action: Marion to review the report received from Louise Rogers to look at current activities.**
- Lindsey Press the Convenor suggested that the Lindsey Press remit should be expanded to encourage Unitarian thought and writing. The Chief Officer considered that The Linsey Press were producing high quality books with limited volunteer capacity and that there were also other publications that would welcome contributions.
- In terms of future structure should all groups report directly to the EC as opposed to being sub-groups of a main group?

Session 4

19. Vision Follow-up continued:

Mary-Jean left the meeting at this point.

Discussion took place on the implications of the Vision for the staffing capacity. It was noted that several proposals for additional staff posts had been made at the Vision Day during feedback. It was **agreed** that the current staffing complement merely allowed the maintenance of the current activities and whilst some changes could, and indeed had been, made over time that there was no room for major reductions if we wished to maintain and indeed expand the support we gave centrally.

20. Non-responsive checkout

Closing devotions – Jacky sang a Gospel Song – Blue Grass style – “Two Coats”

Tuesday

Session 5

Opening devotions – Lynne read from “The Uncarven image” written by Phillip Hewett

21. President’s Report (DOC EC15/16) – noted with the following:

The President reported his positive experience at the MDA event. He was developing his online presence, including using twitter, and learning about new developments. The Chief Officer explained that he kept abreast of Unitarian online activities via his Li paper and as few British Unitarian twitter accounts were active we had a limited profile, His google alert on the term “unitarian” confirmed this.

22. Chief Officer’s Report - (DOC EC16/16) – noted with the following:

- **Ministerial Pension Fund** – Three GA appointees were retiring in April 2016 and only one had agreed to continue. Marion agreed to be appointed Action: EC to make a decision at the February EC meeting and explore who might also be appointed.
- **ICUU** – The Chief Officer has received an email from Rev Steve Dick and Jill McAllister with regard to the crisis affecting the Unitarian community in Burundi asking for advice on whom to approach for support for any refugees who might enter the UK. The GA President has a contact in Scotland whom he has agreed to liaise with before responding to Rev Steve Dick. **Action: John Clifford**

Philip has agreed to set up an internal mailing list for volunteers working with refugees. **Action: Philip Colfox**

23. EC Link Reports - (DOC EC17/16) – noted with the following:

Welsh Districts –

Gwynn reported that the Welsh Department is holding an extraordinary meeting on the 28 January 2016 to discuss the Vision document and will be holding a one day conference on the 5 February 2016 bringing the two Districts together – the two topics of discussion will be “Communication and Service to humanity” The theme for the Welsh slot at the GA has been agreed – a “Celebration of the life of Rev Jacob Davis” who will be celebrating his centenary in 2016.

NELUM –

Jacky reported that she will be unable to attend the next two meetings of NELUM, and asked whether there would be any scope in cross cover while

EC members are unable to attend District meetings. It was agreed that it is important to keep the lines of communications between the EC and Districts open.

MDMA -

It was agreed that the issue of transparency would be explored in detail at a future EC meeting. There was merit in building upon the recent efforts to involve grass-roots Unitarians. **Action: Lynne to inform the MDMA that this item is under review.**

The Chief Officer noted that he was working to ensure that the EC Minutes from 2012 were all available on the GA website in an easily accessible form from the governance page under the new bios of EC members.

Eastern Union – a special meeting will be held on 19 March 2016 – either the Convenor or the Chief Officer will be in attendance.

LDPA and Eastern Union – with the resignation there was now no EC Link for these two Districts. Jacky has agreed to be the named EC link for the LDPA and the Convenor will be the named EC link for the Eastern Union until a new member of the EC is co-opted.

24. Vision follow-up continued -

The Convenor reported that a 12/15 minute video had been commissioned for the Annual Meetings from a professional film maker, West Creative. Gwynn would be working closely with her providing oversight and he was impressed by her previous work. The film will be available for use after the Meetings and be broken down into smaller elements. There will be cost implications but it will be done professionally and in a very tight timescale.

Marion, who had been asked to review the LLSG strategic plan, highlighted the implications of changes to learning and development. **Action: Marion to report back to the EC feedback from the next LLSG meeting**

It was agreed that promotion was needed to get the Vision off to a start – firstly need to clarify the Unitarian identity and the how we explain ourselves? A task group with a professional input should be put together.

It was agreed that during the period of transition, groups should carry on to avoid disruption to the work already being done, without the need of the Strategy Groups getting involved, with EC as ultimate decision-maker.

Action: The Convenor to draft a “The Next Step” paper and circulate to EC members for views to be in a position to agreed at the February EC meeting

