

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee
Friday 19th and Saturday 20th May 2017
Essex Hall, London**

Present: Marion Baker, Philip Colfox, Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer)
Matthew Smith

In Attendance: Charles VanDenBroeder (General Assembly President),
Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Robert Ince and Kate Eden (Session 3 item
14) and Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute taker).

Session 1

*Opening Devotions: Marion read from the poem "God knows" by Minnie
Louise Haskins"*

1. Apologies and Resignation of Member

Lynne Readett

The resignation of Gwynn Pritchard for health reasons on 15 May 2017 was
received and he was thanked for his contribution to the Executive Committee.

2. Appointment of EC Convener

Marion Baker was appointed as the Convener for 2017/2018

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 20th February 2017 - (DOC EC36/17)

The Minutes were signed as a true record of the EC meeting held on 20
February 2017

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

Appendix Q – (DOC EC52/17)

5. Co-option of members – Mary-Jean left the room at this point

Nominations were received and considered. It was agreed to co-opt Sheena
McKinnon, Christina Smith and Rev Dr Rob Whiteman.

The new vacancy arising from the resignation of Gwynn Pritchard was
discussed and it was agreed that Peter Hanley and Matthew Smith form a
nomination group to identify suitable candidates who would be required to
complete the nomination papers used in the recent co-option exercise. There

would not be a further round of public advertisement on this occasion. **Action: Peter Hanley and Matthew Smith**

6. EC Action List - (DOC EC37/17)

17/18 July 2015

Page 5 item 7	Risk – safeguarding audit repeated in 2016	CO	Re-scheduled for Spring 2017
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12/13 September 2016

Page 7 Item 13.	Ministerial Roll decision-making to be reviewed	Hon Treasurer and Philip	Delegated to Simon Bland
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14 November 2016

Page 4 Item 11.	Contribute 20% of the costs of the research report	CO	CO to check whether issue is still relevant
Page 4. Item 12	NC – Critical Incident Plan	MB	The Plan had been prepared and would be presented to July EC

13/14 January 2017

Page 5. item 8 (1)	Ethical Policy – investigate ethical investment policy expert for 2018 Annual Meetings	CO	To be raised at next AM Panel
Page 8, Item 15.	Nightingale Centre Accounts – SORP changes. Check with auditors	Marion	Marion has checked with the auditors, who had confirmed that due to the asset threshold, does not affect N/C

Updated 11 May 2017

7. Next Steps update - (DOC EC38/17)

The Chief Officer summarised the background to “The Next Steps” and lessons learnt from the previous strategy objectives. The “Next Steps” evolved from the two Vision days held in Manchester and Sheffield. After discussion it was agreed to amend the format of the update document to incorporate two further columns ie “Champion/Contact person” and “Actions “ and “people

involved” as part of the Project Plan” which should energise people to move forward.

Appendix Q – DOC EC52/17 – National Growth produced by Martin Ternouth was discussed at this point – **Chief Officer to respond to Martin consider how this might be further discussed.**

Priority	Progress	Agreed Funding
1. Develop a comprehensive response to explain our identity	Project progress with workshop at Annual Meeting. See reports on EC agenda and decisions required.	Robert Ince would continue as lead (see item 14.)
2. Support a web based spiritual learning resource with UCM	Demonstrated at a workshop at the Annual Meetings in April 2017 although there were technical issues. Need to consider the long-term sustainability of the project.	Robert Ince would continue as lead (see item 14.)
3. Engage with the wider community on today's issues (<i>today's issues, should be altered to read spirituality and social issues</i>)	Summer school Team asked to prepare a proposal for training in facilitation skills for running engagement groups Asked to send a request for assistance toward the cost of the February meeting to do initial planning for your “Facilitation Summit” within the next week. Template sent for completion but still not yet returned. Suggestion of EC Champion.	No progress as yet, The question is “how will it be different to facilitation in the past?” Matthew and Chief Officer to liaise.
4. Increase collaboration with other like minded organisations	Linked to priority 1. Findhorn Unitarian Network supported in leadership training Collaboration on fund-raising with Red Cross and Dr Hadwen's Trust successfully showcased at the Annual Meetings in plenary. Plaque from the Red Cross will be displayed in the Reception of Essex Hall. This was displayed as a news item on home page of GA website after the Meetings.	After the success of collaborating with Findhorn, which other organization could we collaborate with? We already work with Liberty as a faith body. It was agreed that a paper on current collaborations be prepared for EC. Action: CO
5. Promote more Unitarian thought and writing	Linked to priority 1. Lindsey Press view is that their focus is on high quality publications of which we can be proud. Current funding models enable costs to be covered on initial internal sales. The main challenge is marketing externally. An updated online version of “How to publish your work” was launched at the annual Meetings with review in the latest	

	Inquirer.	
6. Formulate a plan to undertake Campus Ministry	Cambridge Unitarian outreach project was presented at the Annual Meetings. Possibility of a bid from MDA for some form of "outreach" but not in form of chaplaincy or campus ministry	It was noted that the MDA will not now be making an application.
7. Support a new congregational development	Need to liaise with Rev Andy Pakula on future	Further discussion at next EC
8. Grow our volunteer pool	Volunteer Pool listing identified and handed over to Simon Bland to manage	Philip to lead and present ideas to July EC
9. Find more flexible ways of training for Ministry	See Training and Education Development Project (TED) report on agenda	See items 9 & 10
10. Develop and integrate different forms of ministerial training (including recognised lay ministry training)	Linked to priority 9.	
11. Work with the Districts to create a new forum for national involvement	A few responses to requests for views by Marion Baker. Will be taken forward after Annual Meetings in April 2017	It was agreed would be incorporated into Priority 8. (above)
12. Understand and reduce threats to building and financial sustainability (noted this issue is not just about the buildings but also about the people)	Support Officer to progress specific initiatives eg utility, financial software for congregations. See report Building sustainability being pursued by MCSO with discussions held with The Quakers and Historic England	Simon to be invited to the July EC meeting to talk about strategic opportunities as well as practical support.
13. Review the effectiveness of our organisation	Longer term priority.	Philip to resend his email to EC
14. Update "Help is at Hand" as an on-line resource	Update shown at workshop at Annual Meetings	Needs to be in place by Annual Meetings in 2018.,
15. Reduce our carbon footprint	Building Advisory Group workshop at Annual Meetings in April 2017	CO advised BAG to purchase one set of monitoring equipment as a pilot, to observe its effectiveness.

8. TED report - (DOC EC39/17) – noted with the following:

Update on TED and Web Project with the deadline of 30 September 2017 for current phase noted. A conference on assessment will be held on 12/13 June 2017, including the Chief Officer and the Convenor.

The proposal from the UCM Committee to the EC for a strategic direction for learning and development was approved. The importance of clarity for potential ministerial students was recognised.

9. LLSG Notes - (DOC EC40/17) - noted with the following:

The proposal to Safeguarding Training in November was discussed. **Action: Chief Officer to liaise with Rev John Harley regarding the programme.**

10. Worship Studies Course Proposal - (DOC EC41/17) - noted with the following:

Rev Winnie Gordon was thanked for her work as administrator on the Worship Studies Course.

It was noted that the assessment process was set out in the Ministerial Guidelines. **Chief Officer to respond.**

It was agreed that the EC should approve admission to the Roll of Lay worship Leaders as it did with the Rolls of Ministers and Lay Pastors. **The Convenor to report back to WSC.**

Session 2

11. Annual Meetings

a) Minutes of Panel held on 21 February 2017- (DOC EC42/17) - noted

b) Review of Annual Meetings 2017 – some points

- Good feedback generally
- Opening Celebration by Welsh Districts was outstanding and sets a high standard for the future
- Visibility session did not work as well as expected due to technical problems
- Disappointment that there was little coverage of the Business sessions in the GA zette which was raised by the FOY Society in their review.
- Resolution follow-up had worked well. The need for EC being more pro-active with future Motions was accepted if we were to have a real impact.

c) 2018 Annual Meetings:

- There were some thoughts about who will do the Anniversary Service, not confirmed.
- It was noted that there were not enough training sessions in 2017 and LLSG should lead on this in 2018.

- Rev Martin Whitell had again agreed to co-ordinate worship.
- The Chief Officer and Andrew Mason will visit the proposed venue to finalise the contract.
- It was agreed that Liz Button and Sue Catts be appointed to the Annual meetings Panel with Matthew as the EC link member.

12. Nightingale Centre Minutes of 11 February and 1 May 2017- (DOC EC43/17) – noted with the following;

- Bookings are well above budget with significant bookings from non-Unitarians and proportionally better from Unitarians than in the past resulting in a secure cash flow.
- Five year insurance check was 100%
- Renovations are being completed in BarleyCroft.
- A Grant of £18,000 had been received from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a World War I project.

13. Management Accounts - (DOC EC44/17) – noted with the following:

- Noted that there is now full occupancy in Essex Hall resulting in additional Grant support from the Trust to the General Assembly yet spending on professional fees, mainly due to investment management advice was above budget.
- It was noted that if a congregation is growing, it's quota payments should reflect this.
- David Joseph was thanked for his work.

Session 3

14. Identity project (Kate Eden and Robert Ince attended)

a) Cover report - (DOC EC45/17) - noted

b) Identity Guidelines - (DOC EC46/17) – noted with the following:

The most important aspect of identity was “What do we stand for? which then has to be expressed in words and images. The Guidelines needed to be widely available. There was also a need to be more pro-active on social media such as FaceBook.

The following seven points were highlighted and agreed:

- 1. Strapline:** It was agreed that a decision on the strapline would be made during session 5 item 18 on Saturday morning.
- 2. Lower case:** it was agreed to use lower case lettering in keeping with the current Unitarian logo.
- 3. Lower case:** It was also agreed to use lower case place names in the logo's eg “bristol unitarians”.

4. Website: Agreed to a budget to transition the website to the colours, graphics and messaging of the new identity, whilst preserving the website's underlying structure

5. Social media: EC agreed to look strategically at communication.

6. Testimonial campaign: It was agreed that Robert would explore and give the EC options on how this item can be implemented and how it would be linked to the roll out of the new identity.

c) Identity Proposal - **(DOC EC47/17) - noted**

Implementation and management: Robert was asked to prepare proposals for the July EC meeting.

The Convenor thanked Kate for her work.

Robert gave an update on the Website Project; the design was completed and he was concentrating on acquiring content and ensuring sustainability. The project will not require GA funds. He is bringing together six volunteers who want to be part of the project's development. Rachel Skelton is checking the modifications required after the GA before final payment is made to Electric Putty. Robert to report to the Chief Officer on progress.

15. Investment Management Update –

The Hon Treasurer updated EC on the meeting held with Counsel which he and the Chief Officer had attended. A Guidance Note for the Unitarian Movement on investment matters is being prepared which should also clarify the role of the Unitarian Investment Panel.

Session 4

16. EC ways of working

Discussion took place on how to encourage people to volunteer to serve. There was a need to be clear about which decisions needed to be made by the EC. Reducing the length of the meeting to one day (except in September) was agreed and would require better control of the Agenda with the Minutes from other groups generally taken as read, with points needing to be raised in advance. Action points to be produced within 2 weeks of the EC meeting. Papers to support Agenda items to reach MJ and Derek two weeks before the EC meeting.

District Links were discussed and will be confirmed after new EC members co-opted.

Chief Officer to produce an organisational chart, showing interconnection between groups.

15. Non – responsive check out

Closing Devotions – Philip read from Earl Morse Wilbur – “The meaning of the lesson of Unitarian History.

Saturday

Session 5

Opening Devotions: Peter read an excerpt from “Prism” by Robert Hooker – “Problem of the one and the many”

16. Follow-up to day 1

The Strap-line was accepted with the colour combination still to be agreed on. It was agreed that Kate would be asked to look at the colour combination already suggested to ensure that it does not trigger negative connotations and look at the palette.

17. Past Presidents Report - (DOC EC48/17) - noted with the following:

The Guidelines for President visits/role etc has been reviewed by Dot and the Chief Officer wished to consider it further before presenting it to the July meeting. **Action: Chief Officer**

. Dot was thanked for her work on this project.

18. Presidents Report - (DOC EC49/17) - noted

19. Chief Officer Report - (DOC EC50/17) – noted with the following:

Item 2 – Lancashire Collaborative Ministry CIO – Chief Officer’s recommendation to accept the invitation to become a nominating body was agreed.

It was observed that this proposal raised the question of how do you encourage further “live giving” from others after such a generous donation.

Item 4 – Joan Kereki Legacy – The need to be creative in developing the collaboration with the Hungarian Unitarian Church and the colleges was highlighted. The Chief Officer’s recommendation that the funds be placed in a Newton Growth and Income Fund for Charities separate account was agreed,

More generally it was agreed that the GA should levy a charge for the administrative costs for such larger restricted funds as the B&FUA currently does.

20. EC Link Reports - (DOC EC51/17) – noted with the following; The Convenor gave a verbal report on the ECU

- ECU have decided to develop their Facebook page.
- Mossley Church which has now closed had discussed the dispersal of funds and had appreciated the advice from the Chief Officer.

Session 6

21. Key Messages to be circulated separately (Matthew has volunteered to look over the key messages before publication)

22. Dates of future meetings - 2017:

July - Friday 14th 9.00 – 5.30 pm Essex Hall, London.

September - Monday 25th 9.00 – 5.30 pm & Tuesday 26th 9.00 – 12 noon.
(arrival at the Nightingale Centre Sunday evening 24th September).

November – Friday 17th 9.00 – 5.30pm Essex Hall, London

23. Non responsive check-out

Closing Devotions – Matthew read from “Towards Beloved Community” by Cathal Courtney

24. Confidential Items – Mary-Jean left the room at this point. The Chief Officer left prior to consideration of staff remuneration.