

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting
Monday 20th February 2017
Essex Hall, London**

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

In Attendance: Dot Hewerdine (General Assembly President), Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Rev Charles VanDen Broeder (GA President Designate) and Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute taker).

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Marion read an extract from Waiting to be Discovered written by Penny Quest – “Each new morning”.

1. Apologies

Lynne Readett.

Rev Charles VanDenBroeder was welcomed to his first meeting as an observer. It was recognised that this would be the final meeting for three members and the current President and they were thanked for their contribution to the work of the Executive Committee.

2. Minutes of the meetings held on 13th & 14th January 2017 (DOC EC19/17) - the Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting on the 13 & 14 January 2017.

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

4. EC Action List – (DOC EC20/17) - noted and updated

- It was agreed to appoint Martin Ternouth as a member of the MPF Committee.
- The Chief Officer was asked to liaise with Rev Andy Pakula regarding the future of the 2020 congregational development programme in order that there would be some clarity for the Annual Meetings. **Action: Chief Officer.**

5. Training and Education Development Report - (DOC EC21/17) - noted with the following:

The progress and preparation for the presentation at the Annual Meetings was highlighted. It was recognised that more needed to be done to promote the project and it was agreed to reiterate the first paragraph of the key message from the September EC meeting.

Further discussions had been held on the Web Project and the proposal of starting with “permanent beta” state was queried. The Convenor agreed to raise this concern at the planning meeting with the Contractor on 3 March 2017.

6. Next Steps Update - (DOC EC32/17) – noted and updated

Robert helpfully summarised “Next Steps” as having four cornerstones:

1. Our identity.
2. Communication – the web project is part of this.
3. Education and Training.
4. Sustainability.

Priority	Update
1. Develop a comprehensive response to explain our identity	Kate Eden, a former head of brand with Cancer Research has been appointed to assist following a competitive tendering process. The Convenor would be meeting her on 24 February 2017 to discuss the project objectives, initial thinking and a revised timetable. Between 4 and 7 stakeholders have been identified for Kate to have individual conversations with to enable insight to the Movement. The need for a wider age range of interviewees was highlighted.
2. Support a web based spiritual learning resource with UCM	A meeting was planned with Electric Putty, web designers 3 March 2017 and the timetable to present at the Annual Meetings would be achieved. The EC would then need to consider the longer-term sustainability of the project.
3. Engage with the wider community on today’s issues	Still waiting for funding application for engagement group training. It was suggested that a member of the new EC needed to champion this priority.
4. Increase collaboration with other like minded organisations	Comprehensive report received from Rev Dr Ralph Catts with regard to Findhorn. Nearing the £100,000 mark for the British Red Cross Clara Barton Fund.
5. Promote more Unitarian thought and writing	A guide to publishing work will be launched by the Lindsey Press at the Annual Meetings.
6. Formulate a plan to undertake Campus Ministry	Joan had attended the meeting of the Manchester District Association with the President as one of the speakers. There remains the possibility of a bid for funds to move forward some form of “outreach” but it will probably not be chaplaincy or campus ministry.
7. Support a new congregational	The Chief Officer to liaise with the Rev Andy Pakula with regard to the future.

development	
8.Grow our volunteer pool	Pool information Handed over to Simon Bland to manage.
9.Find more flexible ways of training for Ministry	See TED project
10.Develop and integrate different forms of ministerial training (including recognised lay ministry training)	See TED project
11.Work with the Districts to create a new forum for national involvement	Will be progressed after the Annual Meetings.
12.Understand and reduce threats to building and financial sustainability	Simon Bland to take the opportunity at the GA to introduce his role and outline proposals to assist congregations.
13.Review the effectiveness of our organisation	Work in progress. It was suggested that there was a need to integrate the spiritual with the organizational if we were to succeed.
14.Update "Help is at Hand" as an on-line resource	In-house IT resources will be able to offer support. No additional funding required, however, how it would be promoted was an issue to consider?
15.Reduce our carbon footprint	Building Advisory Panel workshop to be held at the Annual Meetings

7. LLSG Update – a verbal update of teleconference of 14 February 2017

LEAP - the introduction to LEAP has been posted on Facebook and will be circulated in a general mail-out. It will be launched at the GA by Margaret Robinson and Rev John Harley.

Help is at Hand – Louise Rogers working on this and will be doing a presentation at the Annual Meetings. It was suggested that it would be a good idea for Louise and Simon Bland to discuss and that information on Governance with regard to behaviour at meetings should be included. **Action: The Chief Officer to follow-up.**

Safeguarding – LLSG were organising a one day conference with safeguarding as one of the items on the agenda. They were asked to look at the language being used as safeguarding was not a health and safety issue but a part of Unitarian mission. It remains the highest risk area. **Action: The Chief Officer will contact CCPAS to enquire about a video on Safeguarding that could be shown during the plenary session at the Annual Meetings. The Convenor will also include this issue in his report.**

8. MSG Notes - (DOC EC22/17) – noted with the following:

It was noted with regret that the Rev Daniel Costley has resigned from the MSG due to other work commitments and he was thanked for his contribution.

The Recommendations of the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel were approved

1. that the following be approved for Ministry training commencing September 2017:
 - Michael Allured - to be trained for the ministry based at Harris Manchester College, Oxford over 3 years
 - Melda Grantham – to be trained for the ministry based at Harris Manchester College, Oxford over 3 years.

2. that having successfully completed their probationary period; the Rev John Carter, Rev Dr Maria Curtis, Rev Jo James, Rev Anna Jarvis, Rev Matthew Smith and Rev Kate Whyman be added to the Roll of Ministers with Full Status.

Discussion took place on the wider implications of the TED project outcomes for the current structures around Ministry. Greater clarity about standards and delivery would be valuable. There were organisational and governance issues which needed to be looked at. It was agreed that EC and the MSG needed to work together on these issues as they emerged. **Action: Chief Officer to co-ordinate.**

Session 2

9. Executive Committee Co-option Process

The outcome of the EC election process and the process required to fill the three vacancies that remained were discussed. A lengthy discussion took place on a response to the lack of EC candidates. It was agreed to initiate the process for co-option to enable nominees to be considered by the EC at the May meeting. This would include a trustee skills audit of the incoming EC to identify any skill gaps which would be used to encourage those with particular skills to come forward. The need for nominations to be supported by congregations (s) with ten or more members was reinforced. **Action: Chief Officer**

10. Executive Committee Motion on Governance

A discussion took place on the failure to secure sufficient nominations to ensure an election was held. It was recognised that this was a denominational problems with congregations, districts as well as the national movement finding it difficult to fill positions on committees. This required positive actions and therefore was reflected in the “Next Steps” priorities about sustainability and volunteering. It was noted that any changes to the appointment processes would require Constitutional amendments to be agreed and submitted six months before the Annual Meetings in 2018.

It was also felt that there needed to be greater understanding more widely within the Unitarian Movement of the purpose of the Executive Committee and

the commitment required and all the efforts of the Committee members over many years to improve this had not been successful. The legacy of the past was highlighted. There was general acceptance that the suggested Motion was not likely to be the best way to achieve its objective of engaging the Movement in the wider problem and it was withdrawn.

11. Annual Meeting Report – (Future arrangements) – (DOC EC23/17)

The report of the Annual Meetings Panel in support of the Motion was approved for submission to the Annual Meeting. It was agreed that Jacky would propose and Rev Martin Whitell second.

12. Stipend Committee Report - (DOC EC24/17)

The Report of the Stipend Review Committee was approved for submission to the Annual Meetings.

13. Update on Annual Meetings – 2017

The Chief Officer reported:

- There were no major changes to the programme.
- The absence of Motions will create space for various other presentations reporting back on past Resolutions::
 1. British Red Cross – talking about their work in Syria and with refugees in this country and a Q&A session.
 2. Rev Feargus O'Connor on Dr Hadwen Trust.
 3. Gold mining in Transylvania– Rev John Midgley had been approached to report back.
- Simon Bland would speak to his role and Rev Sarah Ascher would have more time to speak on ICUU.
- Chairs for the various EC slots were chosen as follows:
 - Identity – Robert
 - TED - Jacky
 - Campus Ministry – Joan
 - EC “Next Steps” – Robert
 - Visibility – Philip to ascertain the position.
- All EC members to attend the newcomers reception – **Action: Chief Officer to invite Rev Matthew Smith to this session.**
- Dot and Marion to liaise with regard to the EC handover section.
- EC has identified someone to do the Anniversary Appeal – Marion to liaise.

Session 3

14. Follow up on Investment Management - (DOC EC33/17)

The Honorary Treasurer presented a report commissioned from Barnett Waddingham on “Investment Advice and Portfolio Objective Considerations” dated 17 February 2017.

A lengthy discussion took place on the recommendations in the report and the next steps suggested. It was agreed that the charges that might be incurred

to placing funds with Newton would be checked as it was understood that these would in fact be zero. **Action: Hon Treasurer/Chief Officer.** Marion reported back on the meeting of the Unitarian Investment Panel held on 15 February 2017 and the defensive strategy adopted by Newton in this very uncertain period.

The relative performance of the Newton SRI Fund for Charities and the Newton Growth and income Fund for Charities. There are also other Newton funds available. The risks in the short-term were highlighted, particularly as the General Assembly would need to draw down funds over time to support current and anticipated spending on "Next Steps". In the current year up to £150,000 was budgeted on the former and it was likely £100,000 on the latter; although this may slip into the 2018/19 financial year.

It was agreed to invest £1.2 million in the Newton Growth and income Fund for Charities.

It was also agreed that the Executive Committee would retain Barnett Waddingham as investment adviser.

It was noted that the Honorary Treasurer would bring forward proposals for ethical investment to the next Meeting. **Action: Honorary Treasurer.**

It was agreed to appoint the following as authorised signatories for Newton for both the General Assembly and the Nightingale Centre:

- Derek McAuley
- Peter Hanley
- David Joseph
- Marion Baker.

and to remove Robert Ince and Martin Whitell.

The Convenor, Chief Officer, Hon Treasurer and Marion were thanked for their considerable work over recent months.

15. Nightingale Centre Minutes – (DOC EC25/17) – noted with the following:

It was agreed to appoint John Rowland to the Nightingale Centre Management Committee.

16. Nightingale Centre Accounts – (DOC 26/17) – noted

The achievements and performance report was commended. The Nightingale Centre Accounts were formally approved by the EC.

17. Sustentation Fund Accounts – (DOC 27/17) - noted

It was reported that the merger of the Fund with the General Assembly was proceeding with legal advice having been obtained.

18. Management Accounts to 31 December 2016 – (DOC EC28/17) – noted with the following:

The Finance Manager had included in the report additional information with a balance sheet and a note showing the movement affecting designated, restricted and endowment funds. This would enable the draw-down of the Bowland Trust donation to be tracked.

It was highlighted that the substantial increase in funds held by the General Assembly, with an anticipated further restricted donation, reinforced the responsibilities of the Executive Committee members as trustees.

Session 4

19. Presidents Report - (DOC EC29/17) – noted with the following:

The Convenor thanked Dot for attending the EC meetings and for her valuable input and advice.

20. Chief Officer Report – (DOC EC30/17) – noted with the following:

The Chief Officer highlighted item number 6 in his report. Support was given to the Assembly of Unitarians in Europe (AUE) 2-5 June 2017 and it was agreed that an Executive Committee member should attend and that the H Winder restricted fund be used to offer two bursaries for young people.

21. EC Link Reports – (DOC EC31/17) - noted.

The Convenor gave a short update from Sheffield District Association who had agreed to meet annually. Jacky reported that she had received thanks from several people in NELUM for her work as EC Link.

22. Report from Findhorn Unitarian Network (FUN) Experience Week – (DOC EC32/17) – noted with the following:

It was noted that the project highlighted the importance of collaborative working and that Matthew Smith had attended and may have feedback for the May EC meeting.

23. Key Messages – to be distributed separately.

24. Non responsive check-out

Closing Devotions – Jacky Woodman

meditation on a poem by NP van Wyk Louw.

*Ek sit 'n klippie op 'n rots:
- mens moet jouself vergewis:
'n beitel moet kan klip breek
As hy 'n beitel is –'*

*Loosely translated as:
I place a stone, upon a rock:*

*I need to satisfy myself:
A chisel must break stone
If it is a chisel.*

The GA President, GA President designate and Mary-Jean left the meeting at this point.

25. Confidential Items