

**Approved Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held  
Sunday 23 to Tuesday 25 September 2018  
at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**

**Pre-Meeting, Sunday 23 September 2018**

**Present: (EC)** Marion Baker (Convenor), Philip Colfox, Hilda Dumbleton, Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer), Lynne Readett, Christina Smith, Matthew Smith and Rob Whiteman

**In attendance:** Dot Hewerdine and Richard Merritt, Management Committee and Stella Burney, Manager Nightingale Centre  
Joan Cook (President) and Derek McAuley (Chief Officer)

Opening Devotions: Marion Baker gave a reading by Bill Neely "Change You Must"

**1. Meeting with the Nightingale Centre Management Committee and Manager**

A report was received on the outbreak of Norovirus during Summer School and the measures taken to manage it which ensured the event could take place. All Centre staff were thanked for their positive and compassionate response in difficult circumstances. The Centre had been commended by the local GP and Public Health England for the actions taken.

An update was given on developments relating to the Centre and plans for the future, including additional en-suite accommodation. Financially, it had been another positive year with Unitarian and other groups who use the Centre expressing great satisfaction with the quality of the service received. The Management Committee and the Centre Manager were thanked for their contribution.

Discussion took place on working closely with the Great Hucklow Chapel Trustees following the suspension of services.

**2. Minutes of Management Committee 21 July 2018 (Document EC60/18)**

The Minutes of the Nightingale Centre Management Committee meeting held 21 July 2018 were **APPROVED**.

## Monday 24 September 2018

**Present: (EC)** Marion Baker (Convenor), Philip Colfox, Hilda Dumpleton, Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer) (Monday only), Lynne Readett, Christina Smith, Matthew Smith and Rob Whiteman

**In attendance:** Simon Bland (Ministry & Congregational Support Officer), Joan Cook (GA President), Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Andrew Mason (Minutes)

Opening Devotions: Hilda Dumpleton gave a reading by Elwyn Davies.

### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

Sheena McKinnon had resigned from the Executive Committee for health reasons and this would be communicated in Uni-News in phrasing of her choosing. The Committee's thanks and best wishes for the future were sent to Sheena. It was felt, with only two meetings left in the current term, a co-option would not be appropriate.

### **2. Minutes of the meetings held on 20 July 2018 (Document EC58/18)**

The Minutes of the meeting held 20 July 2018, with an amendment to line 1 on page 5, were then **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

There were no matters arising which were not already on the agenda.

### **4. EC Action List (Document EC59/18)**

The EC Action List was reviewed. The following were noted:

#### 25-26/09/17

Page 3, item B – Organisational Effectiveness. This was ongoing.

Page 6, item 16 – MPF Valuation:

a) Legal advice had been sought on trustee liabilities, b) The 2008 signed guarantee had been circulated) Jeff Teagle would be attending the November EC meeting to explain the background to the report.

#### 17/11/07

Page 7, item 18 – Grant form. This was ongoing.

#### 19/01/18

Page 3, item 10 – Strategic Communications – this was on the agenda

Page 5, item 10 – UALM and Bullying. The Chief Officer would review.

Page 5, item 21 – EC ways of working. Peter Hanley would present on this later in the meeting.

#### 18/05/18

Page 1 – Feedback from AM Workshop – this was on the agenda

Page 4, item 8 – Management Accounts – The Chief Officer had emailed the Hungarian Unitarian Church in August on the Gabor Kereki Trust, but had not yet received a response.

Page 4, item 1 – Strategic decision making – The Treasurer would produce a paper.

Page 5, item 15 – Growth Paper – The Chief Officer had circulated the '20-40 report' of the United Reformed Church, which covered many of the same issues.

20/07/18

Page 3, Item 5 – Unitarian College CIO Business Plan – The plan had been done. A Three Year GA Budget incorporating the grants to the Unitarian College CIO had been circulated and would be discussed later in the meeting.

It was noted that Rev Ant Howe had been appointed as the College's Ministry Tutor from 01 January 2019 which would be featured in a forthcoming article in The Inquirer.

Page 4, Item 6 – Unite – Derek had responded and a meeting was planned for 15 October 2018.

Page 5, Item 10 – Complaints Policy – This had been revised and was on the GA website.

Page 5, Item 12 – Findhorn Unitarian Network – The Chief Officer had replied.

## **5. Agenda and process for remainder of Meeting**

A process for the remainder of the Meeting was discussed.

The following were noted:

- A dilemma in making definitive decisions before appointing the new Chief Officer yet a need to make progress.
- Next Steps document – greater clarity was required on how particular priorities were being dealt with.
- The need to engage with individuals, congregations and districts and whether the EC's current arrangements facilitated this?
- The GA's role as both a servant and leader of the Movement in different areas.
- The importance of a coherent vision and integrity in being what we purport to be.
- The need to communicate, both internally and to the wider world, to nurture growth.
- The need to engage with our wider Movement to see how they want to communicate, in particular with individuals.
- Some criticism of the cycle of EC initiatives and structures.
- The implications of the new Unitarian College CIO.
- The Ministry Strategy Group needed to be re-tasked.

An update was given on the appointment process for the Chief Officer. Derek McAuley's leaving date would be 30 April 2019 and it was intended to have an overlap. The post had been advertised on the GA website, in The Inquirer and on Third Sector Jobs. The timetable was noted:

24 October - shortlisting

15 November -Interviews

16 November - recommendation to the EC Meeting.

It was **AGREED** that the three sessions of this meeting would focus on:

- Vision, Values, Culture and Identity
- Quality Framework for training ministerial Leaders
- Congregations and Communication

**Session 1 – Vision, Values, Culture and Identity**

Two short films were shown. ‘The Cookie Thief’ by Valerie Cox illustrated the dangers of false certainty. ‘The Golden Circle’ by Simon Sinek proposed an alternative approach, starting from the point of our ‘Why’ (the purpose), rather than ‘How’ (the process) or ‘What’ (the product), and the importance of integrity and shared beliefs. Members broke-out into pairs to discuss.

The following comments were made:

- ‘Love and Justice’ is a “How”, not a “Why” statement.
- We need to promote our ‘Why’ at the local level.
- There is sometimes a disconnect between what we claim and what we do, which can cause problems.
- The importance of clarity and optimism as a way of living.
- We need to help people seeking to have a higher purpose in their lives, by providing a space to nurture people’s spirit – ‘Be more, do more, make a difference’ is Derby Unity’s mission.
- Community is a key aspect, as we cannot have the same impact as individuals.
- The EC Link and President’s roles were important, as face-to-face contact is key to building trust and making connections in the wider Movement.
- Is the “Why” for the whole Movement or the GA? Should we focus on promoting our existing communities or promoting Unitarianism? Can it be both?
- Training is needed to facilitate growth.
- We should help people to understand what it means to be truly human, and also how to sit with uncertainty.
- There is a need to be responsive to a secular culture yet aware that our focus on words may sometimes mean we miss out on emotions.

**Session 2 – Quality Framework for Leadership**

Simon reported on the work of the Ministry Strategy Group (MSG) as the TED Project had been progressed but now was an opportunity to realign the MSG to a focus on ensuring quality in congregational leadership.

Issues identified were:

- The small number of ministerial students, with anticipated retirements, will cause issues with filling vacancies.
- New systems are required to maintain the integrity of the GA Roll.
- A review of the policy on Ministers from Overseas and Other denominations.
- Supporting Lay Leadership and its relationship to a GA Roll.
- Ensuring a common quality standard for different educational approaches in the Colleges.
- The timing of the process - need to ensure the MSG and Interview Panel reflect the timetables for new systems.

**Unitarian College**

Notes of the TED Project Governance Group Meeting held 15/09/18 were circulated. The following were noted:

- The CIO Application had gone in to the Charity Commission. The Business Plan was not required for this application, and had therefore not been submitted.
- An Assessment Subgroup meeting had been held.

- The first residential event had taken place, with positive feedback.
- An Academic Committee would be set up.
- The TED Project ends on 30 September 2018 and delivery of the pilot will transition into the new CIO.

### Quality framework

The EC recognised its need to be satisfied with the quality of training that supported a recommendation for inclusion on the Roll of Ministers. It was recognised that the Unitarian College training was built on the agreed competencies framework and included a process for the assessment of candidates against those agreed ministerial competencies. It was **AGREED** to ask the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel to ensure that those agreed ministerial competencies would apply to all training institutions and to enquire of the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel how this might be demonstrated to be the case. It was particularly noted that it was essential that this system flagged up any issues as they came up, rather than an end of training assessment. **ACTION: Simon**

### Timing

Simon flagged up timings issues with the process, which he would discuss with the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel. **ACTION: Simon**

### Ministers from Overseas and other denominations / Lay Leadership / Interfaith Ministers

It had been suggested that we could bring Ministers from Overseas and other denominations on to the GA Roll more quickly than presently occurred, though there were some risks with this. Congregations wished to fill vacant pulpits and were increasingly willing to appoint Ministers not on the GA Roll or lay people. Existing policies were presently being revised for discussion at the Ministry Strategy Group and would then come back to the Executive Committee.

### Students at the Ministerial Fellowship Pre-Conference

Rob Whiteman raised a question about the Ministerial Fellowship Conference. New students had come to the conference and there had been confusion about who would meet the attendance costs. Rob declared a conflict of interest in his capacity as the Fellowship's Treasurer, and left the room for the discussion and vote. It was **AGREED** that the Unitarian Ministerial Students Fund would pay for accommodation and travel (with the Fellowship paying the conference fee) for students to attend both the Ministerial Fellowship conference and the pre-Annual Meetings Ministers' Pre-conference.

## **Session 3 – Congregations and Communications**

The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer was asked to give an overview of his experiences of congregational support. Simon was generally invited to congregations because of a vacancy, financial or building issue or combination of the above.

He felt that growth was impacted by a deficiency of the 3 c's – Capacity, Competency and Confidence, and that by and large financial resources were not the constraint. The issue was more likely relating to needing the confidence to invest in intentional growth. A micro grants initiative would be helpful to assist with organic growth. The whole issue of growth was being overshadowed by numerical measure, but growth in resilience, values and communications were also important. Growth seems an impossible task, when actually it can happen slowly and incrementally. It was **AGREED** to create a 'small initiatives' grant fund which the MCSO would manage.

Welcoming was an issue. This should be fairly straightforward, as it was easy to acquire the necessary skills.

By and large, Simon was having positive interactions with congregations, He occasionally needed to explain that his role was to support, not audit, congregations. It was important to go and meet people to be valued and trusted. He had now started meeting with districts and was looking for the right issues and language to connect in a way that would add value. Visiting shows that the GA has an interest in congregations beyond collecting a quota. Simon had been using the anticipated changes to “excepted” status to encourage congregations to refresh their governance documents to ensure fitness for purpose going forward. These changes were highlighted as giving a risk that trustees might leave at that point through miscommunication.

There was an opportunity for more shared back office functions within districts or between districts, although he did not favour centralisation per se, only when it made sense. An example being actively looked at was partnerships and grants to support the sustainability of buildings and an expression of interest would be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their new scheme.

## **6. Background papers**

### **6.1 Organisational Effectiveness (Document EC61/18)**

The report was noted.

### **6.2 Report on 20-40 (Document EC62/18)**

The report was noted.

## **7. Management Accounts to the end of August 2018 (Document EC63/18)**

The management accounts were noted. Substantial changes before the September Year End were not anticipated.

The Finance Manager had highlighted the staffing implications of managing large investment funds and it was agreed that such funds be charged a 5% management fee from the 2017/18 financial year (as the B&FUA Inc currently do).

Overall, income was still down, though there were also some programme savings on expenditure from Local Leadership Strategy Group items which had not been carried out.

It was **AGREED** to drawdown funds from the Bowland Trust Development Fund sufficient to have a small surplus.

Summer School – it was noted that both income and expenditure had risen due to a larger number of people attending. For next year’s budget it was noted that this should not affect the subsidy given.

### Balance sheet

The Debtors figure was £164K. This was high, though they were generally low risk, such as the B&FUA which owed a grant at that date. £34K had since been transferred for the 2017 period.

The Cash figure was also high at £262K. Some of this was income from dividends, which still needed to be allocated to specific funds. Additionally, cash had been retained as the Summer period is traditionally one of expenditure but low income. The Finance Manager had identified the need to improve our management of cash.

8. **Budget 2018/2019 and 3-year Plan** (Document **EC64/18**)

The key assumptions were:

- Legacies – no legacies were assumed due to their variable nature.
- Quota – It was **AGREED** to keep the quota at £35 per capita.
- Essex Hall Management Fee – a revaluation of the gift-in-kind had been made, from £64K to £111K. This would increase both income and expenditure, so there was no net effect.
- British & Foreign Unitarian Association grant – This was maintained at £30K.
- Chief Officer recruitment and handover costs – These were estimated at £31.5K.
- Drawdown of the Bowland Trust Development Fund – would be c£120K.
- Kingswood works – The works would now take place next Autumn, so a provision of £6K was needed.

General issues identified were:

- Falling quota numbers.
- Non-diverse sources of income and no legacy expectation
- Bowland Trust Fund monies – diminution of reserves, and consequential decrease in dividend income.

Rob Whiteman declared an interest as a recipient of James Speed Fund grants.

The following comments were made:

- The Budget for the outcomes of the TED Project was based on a five-year strategy. The EC would decide what it felt should be funded strategically going forward.
- As new possibilities were identified, some existing items would need to drop down the priority list, and not everything would be possible.
- There was a long- term strategic concern as Bowland money ran down.
- A deeper discussion was need on how to manage money flows from investments to meet expenditure needs over different periods .This would be on the agenda for the November EC meeting.

It was **AGREED** that the remaining £5K uncommitted in the Chalice Fund be used as a starter for a ‘small initiatives fund’, with Simon Bland to be asked to prepare grant criteria.

**ACTION: Simon**

The budget was **APPROVED** with the addition of the £5K small initiatives fund and the £45K instead of £50K for the Unitarian College grant, as per previous Minutes.

9. **Risk Register** (Document **EC65/18**)

The Risk Register had been updated with the following:

- Item 2 – External advice on the legality of our operation and investment approach had previously been received from Charles Russell Speechleys and Barnett Waddingham.
- Item 4 – The risk position on the GA’s position as guarantor of last resort for the Ministers Pension Fund (MPF) was being reviewed and more needed to be known about the MPF’s investment strategy.
- Item 7 – The Annual update report on the Pension Trust employer debt on withdrawal liability will be provided to the Treasurer. The likelihood of this risk coming to fruition had reduced, as all new staff had joined the fund. **ACTION: Derek**

- Item 9 – This had changed to reflect the Chief Officer’s announced resignation.
- Item 17 - The delivery of the new Unitarian College institution to deliver training in ministry, lay leadership and lifelong learning would pose challenges. The capacity of the new organisation was being built by putting in place the Director post.

The Risk Register was **AGREED**. It was suggested that future annual updates should have changes track-changed for ease of identification.

**10. Response to Investment Guidance (Document EC66/18)**

A response had been received from Martin Fieldhouse, which commended the group for the guidance, and offered a number of comments. This was reviewed. The EC were pleased to have started the debate on this.

Questions raised were:

- How will the General Assembly know whether trustees have taken the suggested steps in the investment guide?
- How do we incorporate responses?
- Could we collaborate with The Quakers, who have more resources in this area, and is there a way we could provide access for Treasurers to more investment information?

Fossil fuel investments

Hilda Dumpleton had been asked by her district to bring up Ethical Investment in respect of fossil fuels. It was noted that, with the pooled investment funds, it was extremely difficult to disinvest entirely from fossil fuels, whether we wished to or not. It was noted that the Unitarian Investment Panel were taking this issue seriously, and had discussed this with Newton at their last meeting and further information was being provided on options to assist discussions.

It was noted that Investment Managers could engage with common investment funds to influence company policies. In response to a question about the Quaker policies, the Chief Officer replied that they had ultimately disinvested from fossil fuels, but that it had been a long and difficult process for them. It was noted that the Ethical Policy was a component of our Investment Policy, which in turn was considered as part of the general financial plan.

**11. Non – responsive check out**

This took place.

Closing Devotions - Matthew Smith gave a reading on Autumn by Rudy Nemser.

An informal session took place in the evening. Andrew Mason was not present.

Tuesday 25 September 2018

Opening Devotions: Lynne Readett read from “Many Coloured Glass” by Vina Curren, and Peter Sampson.

Apologies: Peter Hanley had given his apologies for 25 September as he had a prior speaking engagement with the Honorary Treasurers’ Forum.

**12. Review of Progress and agreed agenda**

Next Steps Jan 2018 Report

1. Comprehensive Response on explaining who we are – We had appointed a Communications Officer from 1 October 2018. Some actions, like having testimonials added to the website, could be taken forward. However, the overall strategy would require buy-in from our community and would require significant time and effort. As such, it was felt that this had been taken as far as possible at this point, and would be revisited after appointment of the new Chief Officer, who would have strategic communications as part of their remit.

2. Support web-based spiritual learning resource.  
This was intended to be part of the TED programme but needed to await development of the Unitarian College for online lay training in 2020. The Space to Search website had been built, but without content, and was not online. How it fitted with the GA website and social media needed consideration and the Communications Officer would be asked to review.

3. Engage with the wider community on today’s issues – wording since changed.  
This was about Engagement Groups. Summer School had requested training and they were asked to bring a proposal but there had since been training in London. There was a need to re-engage with them on the current position.

4. Increase collaboration with other like-minded organisations  
We were involved in collaboration with a number of groups; such as Liberty, the Accord Coalition, Equality Trust etc. The Chief Officer would provide an update of the grid of organisations we interact with, particularly referencing GA Resolutions. **ACTION: Derek**

5. Promote more Unitarian thought and writing  
Sue Woolley’s book had been published. The Lindsey Press were struggling attracting volunteers with relevant skills. This would be added to the Risk Register. **ACTION: Derek**

It was noted that there is a lot of Unitarian thought on the internet in the form of blogs. The North West Provincial Council were running a creative writing course. It was suggested we could put links on our website to external Unitarian’s blogs and the Communications Officer would be asked to consider this. It was also suggested we could have Welsh publications.

6. Formulate a plan to undertake campus ministry – there had not been any further approaches. The Cambridge pilot had not proved successful although there had been learning. This was a difficult area to engage with and we were no longer pursuing any action on this.

7. Support a new congregational development

The limited capacity of the 2020 Project was focused on Derby. This was a strategic area to explore with the new Chief Officer.

8. Grow our volunteer pool

This was felt to be a local rather than national issue. It was suggested that organisations be encouraged to get together to support each other as with the Worship Studies Course. It was further suggested that we run training in how to be Officers. The idea was to grow confidence and capacity, by giving our existing wider Unitarian Community the skills to volunteer, rather than try and find new people.

9. Find more flexible ways of training for ministry

This had required significant focussed energy to achieve. 33 volunteers had been involved in work to produce the competencies framework, progress the TED project and the pilot run by the new Unitarian College.

10. Develop and integrate forms of ministerial training (including recognised lay ministry training)

See item 9 above.

11. Work with the Districts to create a new forum for national involvement.

It was concluded that another forum was not what people wanted and this was on hold for now, pending more discussion on how to make people feel involved. We would need to consider what to consult on and how and the timing impact for this process. This would be an agenda item for the next meeting. We would also need to consider whether districts were the best (or only) medium we should use, as there were options to consult with districts, other organisations and / or individuals directly.

**ACTION: Derek**

12. Understand and reduce threats to building and financial sustainability

The Ministry and Congregational Support Officer position had been given additional hours to give more support.

13. Review the effectiveness of our organisation

A paper had been received and this issue would be discussed with the new Chief Officer after their appointment. Education and Training functions would move to the new Unitarian College. The GA was moving to support other organisations (e.g. The Sustentation Fund, providing financial administrative services to Unitarian College). Progressing to CIO status was a further step, given governance changes affecting other bodies were being concluded.

14. Update "Help is at Hand" as an online resource

Updating had been done, and the amended version was currently being proof read with the expectation that this resource would be completed and online by the Annual Meetings.

15. Reduce our carbon footprint

Mark Hutchinson had offered to look at the Hilton's environmental policy regarding the impact of the Annual Meetings.

**Session 7****11.00 – 12.30**EC Membership

The forthcoming EC elections were noted and the opportunities would be promoted more widely, for example, on social media.

**13. Chief Officer's Report (Document EC67/18)**

The Chief Officer's report was noted.

Grundy Trust – The EC were asked to rescind the appointment of the Manchester District Association as Custodian Trustee of the Grundy Trust. This was **AGREED**.

The Faith Forum for London were holding a consultation for the Government on widening the attendance at the National Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday.

Closure of the Banbury Fellowship – this was noted with regret.

Equality Trust – It was suggested we invite someone from the Equality Trust to report back at the Annual Meetings.

Eisteddfod – This had been a week of public engagement by Unitarian volunteers facilitated by Melda Grantham, Welsh Department Secretary. All were congratulated.

Staffing – Gavin Howell had taken up the post of Youth Co-ordinator/Safeguarding Lead on 01 August 2018, and Rory Castle Jones would start as Communications Officer on 01 October 2018.

International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) – Matthew Smith attended the IARF Congress. The current Inquirer edition has a report, which Matthew circulated. Robert Ince, as new President of IARF, was compiling a vision booklet for consultation to provide a shared vision of the organisation.

**14. President's Report (Document EC68/18)**

The President's Report was noted. Her attendance at the Cross Party Group on End of Life Choices at Holyrood was highlighted.

**15. EC Link Reports (Document EC69/18 with addenda)**

The EC Link Reports were noted.

Southern Unitarian Association report – The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer would be given the report and be asked to speak to Lucy Harris as SUA President. It was suggested that a joint enterprise between the Southern, Western and London Districts could be helpful.

Merseyside – The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer had delivered a workshop at Ullet Road, Liverpool.

North East Lancashire – The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer had delivered a governance workshop at Rochdale Church.

Wales – The Eisteddfod had been very successful. 50 Unitarians had raised funds to support registration for same-sex marriage and grants to other charities. The Swansea Church had a license for same-sex marriage granted and a wedding was now booked for February.

East Midlands – The District were continuing to support the 2020 Derby Unity Project, which had a year left to run on the original project. Rev Maria Pap had been appointed to the Mansfield congregation. The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer had attended the last district meeting. A very successful joint service had been held between Hinckley and Belper (at Hinckley) and it was intended that this would be repeated.

Sheffield – A new District Secretary had been appointed, working in tandem with Ed Fordham. A Rites of Passage course had been started. There was a feeling of momentum in the district. Three congregations had come to Underbank Chapel, Stannington for the GA President's visit.

**16. Key Messages**

As circulated.

**17. Dates of future meetings**

**2018 - Friday 16 November – 9am-5pm**

**2019 - Friday 25 January – 9am-5pm**

- **Friday 17 May – 9am-5pm**

- **Friday 26 July – 9am-5pm**

- **Sun 22 – Tues 24 September at the Nightingale Centre? This was to be confirmed**

**18. Confidential Items**

There were none.

**19. Non responsive check-out**

This took place.

Closing Devotions – Christina Smith read “The Invisible Powers That Sustain Us” from ‘In the Holy Quiet’ by Richard Gilbert and the meeting closed.