

Approved Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held 21 January 2020

- Present:** Marion Baker (Chair), Phillip Colfox, Rev Jim Corrigan (to item 16), Hilda Dumpleton, Robert Ince, Rev Lynne Readett, Rev Dr Robert Whiteman
- In attendance:** Rev Celia Cartwright (President), Elizabeth Slade (Chief Officer), Andrew Mason (Minutes), David Joseph (Items 11-13), Gavin Howell (items 15-16)
- Apologies:** Peter Hanley

Robert Ince read the Tao of Pooh, from AA Milne, and the meeting started.

Session 1**1. Checking in**

The Check-in took place.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Peter Hanley.

3. Resignation – Matthew Smith

Rev Matthew Smith had resigned from the Executive Committee and a new member would need to be co-opted for the year to the next election. It was **AGREED** to go ahead with the process of co-option and people would be asked to volunteer, and to send in resumes, to allow for the possibility of seeking particular skills. The Chief Officer would try and find the previous skills matrix (believed to be 2015) and update. **ACTION: Liz**

4. Minutes of 28 November 2019 meeting (Document EC2/20)

The Minutes of the meeting held 28 November 2019 (Document EC2/20) were **AGREED** and signed by the Chair. The text of the statement about the Chief Rabbi's comments would be included with today's meeting.

"The Executive Committee of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches welcome the Chief Rabbi's affirmation (25 November) of the importance of recognising the "dignity and respect for all people". We value his call that all should vote as their conscience dictates and are alarmed that any feel unable to express their culture and faith freely in our country. Unitarians stand on a tradition of freedom, reason and tolerance and see religious liberty for all as essential.

We ask that all involved in political discourse are mindful of the language that they use, the intent in its use and the impact that it can have at all times, but particularly during the period of a General Election campaign. We thank all who have stood for election and ask that they are treated with courtesy so that all can campaign in safety and hope that such a spirit continues in the next Parliament."

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

Neville Kenyon's letter to The Inquirer about the structure of the Executive Committee would be considered under Any Other Business.

Questions on the Youth Programme would be put to Gavin under the Youth Programme Strategy agenda item.

6. EC Action List (Document EC3/20)

25 Jan 2019

Page 6, Item 13: Investment Policy – This would be covered in the Finance agenda item.

Page 7, Item 14: Safeguarding – This would be covered in the Safeguarding agenda item.

28 Nov 2019

Page 2, Item 4, Strategic Matters – Liz would speak to the Inquirer Editor. This was ongoing.

Page 3, Item 6, Red Cross – Robert and Jim had spoken to Feargus, and the next action was unclear. This would be taken off the list.

Page 4, Item 9, Sustentation Fund Legacy Campaign – The Ministry and Congregational Support Officer had not yet had a chance to pick this up, and this item was therefore ongoing.

Page 5, Item 10, Supporting Vulnerable Congregations – There was a need to look at the scope and speak to interested people. EC members should feel free to do so. This was ongoing.

Page 6, Item 12, Finance Update – This would be reported on under the Finance agenda item.

Page 7, Item 13, Investment Policy – This was ongoing

7. The Year Ahead (Document 04/20)

A YouTube video on Transformative Innovation from Kate Raworth was shown.

The Chief Officer had given a paper on strategic initiatives (Document **EC4/20**).

Background

The Chief Officer was looking to build connections between people. Good people are already doing good things and the GA has a role in connecting and enabling. The Art of Hosting events were a good example of this.

We are at the scoping and engagement phase of many of our projects, knowing we do not currently have all the answers. The first step would be to create conditions where we get a clearer sense of what might follow, and the paper was therefore intended to be indicative of direction.

Expressing who we are

Art of Hosting – 60 people had applied for the 40 places on the Art of Hosting event. The selection process for those accepted had been based on an application form, and there was a good spread of people reflecting geography, age, experience, diversity etc.

Sharing what we have

Communications – Further engagement was needed before changing our website etc. We would also aim to enable people across the Movement to use communications creatively.

Forming new groups

The Chief Officer felt that it would be good to have an advisory panel on this.

Reinvigorating existing congregations

There is some work needed to create guidance so that the Ministry and Congregational Support Officer can work with congregations before they get to a crisis point. Engagement was needed upstream.

Ensuring Good Leaders / Supporting Vanguard

A Hibbert Trust meeting on Lay Leadership took place at Hucklow in November, and this would be followed up at the end of January with a smaller group to develop the themes identified in the November meeting. A similar small group was being convened to think about the role of the Colleges and imagine the future.

Reviewing Youth Strategy

This would be discussed later in this meeting.

8. Ministry Strategy Group Student Recommendations

Rob Whiteman declared an interest and left the room for this item. It was recognised that the EC were approving the process, rather than the specific individuals.

The following recommendations of the Ministry Strategy Group (Document **EC5/20**) were **APPROVED**:

- Arek Malecki and Marta Pacini were accepted for ministry training with Unitarian College.
- Revs Claire MacDonald, Shammy Webster and Rob Whiteman were accepted onto the Roll of Ministers with Full status, having completed their probationary periods.

9. Risk Register

Document **EC67/19** had previously been circulated. In November, The Treasurer and Chief Officer had reviewed and added their comments (shown in red). They felt the Risk Register was due for a refresh, to reframe the risks. It was identified there were a mixture of different types of risks, relating to the overall Movement, and some to do with particular projects. There were also a number of items that were known issues, or management issues, which were not technically risks. Risks were items over which there was uncertainty and no real control (beyond mitigation).

It was **AGREED** that Robert Ince, The Treasurer and Chief Officer would review the Register to eliminate the non-risks, and identify where they would be dealt with.

ACTION: Peter, Robert & Liz

10. EC Activities at the Annual Meetings

The EC needed to communicate the GA's strategic direction. The Art of Hosting event was a tangible story to tell, as part of the bigger story. The Chief Officer envisaged a space to present different strands of the direction, with a rationale and expected tangible items to come.

It was felt important to enable more attenders to speak, not just the usual people. In the workshop, it was suggested that new people be specifically asked to offer their questions first, with a message being given at the Newcomer event that we want to hear from them, to encourage them to speak (both at the workshop and the plenary sessions).

Session 2

11. Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held 10 January 2020

David Joseph (Finance Manager) attended for the finance items.

The Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 10 January 2020 (Document **EC6/20**) were **APPROVED**.

The drawdown of £144K from investments was noted, reflecting that we had not actually transferred drawdowns from the Bowland Trust Growth and Sustainability Fund. A cash-flow document had been drawn up. The 'COIF' bank account would be closed, with the balance expended.

It was queried as to why the Auditors were requesting a visit to the Nightingale Centre. This was due to the fact that they are giving an opinion on the consolidated accounts, and this was a due diligence visit to check one of the larger assets, as we are a new client. This was not expected to be an annual visit, and the cost was included in their original quote. As Chair of the Nightingale Management Committee, Marion was confident that the Committee would be happy with this.

12. Annual Accounts

A draft version of the Accounts (Document **EC7/20**) had been circulated, along with the Management Report (Document **EC17/20**). Various text changes had been made at yesterday's meeting with the Auditors, but there were no changes in the figures. A layout change was noted on page 35 of the Accounts where Note 26 regarding cash-flow would move to the top of page 10 for clarity.

Rob Whiteman (as a Minister in receipt of contributions from the James Speed Trust) and Marion Baker (as Chair of the Nightingale Centre Management Committee) declared a potential conflict of interest and refrained from voting on accepting the Accounts.

There were concerns that it was unclear whether some sections were consolidated or non-consolidated, for example 'Charity balance sheet' referred to the GA only, and the notes did not always say whether they referred to the consolidated sections. It was clarified that we were required to have consolidated Accounts.

In response to a question on whether the Auditors had expressed an opinion on the Nightingale Centre not having been revalued since 1999, it was remarked that this had been mentioned, but they were content with this.

It was suggested that being able to read across the page to compare income and expenditure, for example for Summer School, would be helpful to make it clearer what the position was. David would ask the Auditors about this and email the trustees. He would also query with the Auditors where the Summer School expenditure was in the Accounts, though the Management Accounts could provide better information. The Finance Committee was looking at this.

ACTION: David

The Statement of funds on pages 30-31 reflected the previous decision to run down the restricted and endowment funds. David was providing a description of the purposes of the various funds to the Auditors and would send this to the trustees.

ACTION: David

David was asked about the performance of the Auditors. He found the audit team professional but intensive. A negative about the process was that the Audit Manager did not come on site with the audit team. There had been a large number of questions from the audit team, some very similar to questions that had already been answered, which took up a lot of time. Further delay had caused by our backlog of work, and errors in the system. The Auditors wanted to help us with improving, and were encouraged to put items in the Management Letter. Overall, there had been a good outcome to switching Auditors, as this gave a fresh perspective, and David would be happy to work with them again. He would recommend them to other organisations, but with the caveat that the organisation be prepared for additional work in the first year.

Some changes to our accounting procedures are planned as a result of the audit discussions and the new finance team will be built with this in mind.

David had previously indicated there was an amount of amount which had not been reconciled. The majority had now been identified, and would be logged, and the first quarter's management accounts would be corrected.

The Gift Aid for 2014/15 has been claimed. Three of the four quarters have been paid, and the other quarter would be queried with HMRC. The records for the 2015/16 Gift Aid would need to be located, as the intention was to reclaim all past Gift Aid items by the end of this financial year.

The Annual Report and Accounts were **APPROVED**, subject to the textual changes mentioned.

Copies of the engagement letter were circulated at the meeting for information.

David was thanked for his hard work and commitment.

Cash-flow

A cash-flow statement (Document **EC16/20**) had been circulated. Cash-flow projections were needed as much of our cash had been used to make some large payments, and there were liquidity concerns. The projection incorporated various assumptions, and would therefore be changed with more accurate information.

Immediate needs identified were:

- January - £6K Hilton deposit; £18K Sustentation Fund payments, plus Ministerial grants and Staff Salaries. Income: liquidation of COIF deposit account and monies from having completing the annual quota invoicing in the first week of January.
- February - The Art of Hosting event will have a large balance to pay.
- March –£72K (half the agreed drawdown) will be drawdown, to try and keep a balance of £25K-£30K in our HSBC current account.

The Quota process had been changed to try and get money in at the beginning of the financial year rather than the end. We were also trying to identify the quota figure due earlier, to give better control of cash-flow.

Gift Aid – Gift Aid recovery income had not been included, as we did not yet have the figures, but would have a positive effect on cash-flow when received.

It was noted that the proposed youth event changes would also affect cash-flow.

13. Annual Report

- Trustees' formal Report (circulated as part of the Accounts)

Liz recapped. The glossy Annual Report goes to the members. The Auditors indicated that we should submit a shorter Trustees' Report with the Accounts, which would be the formal Report. The glossy report is for communication and engagement to members, but is separate to the EC accepting the formal Report included with the Accounts.

- Main report

A difficulty in obtaining reports was reported, which suggested a potential lack of engagement. It was queried whether Unitarian College should be included in future.

Headings – It was suggested that the section headings be looked at.

The glossy Annual Report would be circulated to the Trustees when more complete. The timing of the January EC meeting had made it slightly difficult to provide a draft copy but the printing / circulation deadlines were partially set by the Annual Meetings. It had not been long since the last EC meeting, particularly with the long Christmas / New Year break.

14. President's Report

The President had provided a report (Document **EC9/20**). She felt less concerned for the denomination at the end of the year than the start. The West Country was probably struggling most, as this was a large area with relatively few people. The Ministry and Congregational Support Officer had helped Torquay, who were on the verge of closing.

Overall, Celia felt there was a sense of determination, with lots being done and a will to build not just continue. Younger people were watching sermons on YouTube, and might not attend churches.

She felt some disquiet about the number of churches taking on Interfaith Ministers who had not necessarily had any Unitarian input in their training. While we were lucky to have many of these Interfaith Ministers, she felt we should encourage congregations to get them to do Unitarian modules through the Worship Studies Course. A mechanism was needed to bring Interfaith Ministers 'into the fold'.

Celia was thanked for her report and work during the year.

Session 3

15. Youth Programme Strategy

Gavin Howell (Youth Coordinator) attended for this item and presented document **EC15/20**.

Background

Gavin recapped his November 2018 presentation, which identified a context of declining numbers, and the questions of whether it was time for a reset of programming, and what was the ultimate mission of the Youth Programme.

Way ahead

The provision of national youth programming needed to be more creative and inventive. The local level needed to be looked at. Our current youth provision is dependent on drawing from the local level. If there are not children at the congregational level, we cannot draw from this. He wished to offer to assist collaboratively, assessing local needs, to put something in place to bring in young people and families. It appeared that only 6 of our 162 chapels were currently using Chalice Award, which suggested it did not meet their needs. Gavin wished to work more collaboratively with other organisations. Other groups

were in a similar position, so it was better to share expertise than tackle these issues alone. A collaborative approach was a key theme.

Comments and queries:

It was asked whether we had consulted young people, and if so, what they said. Gavin replied that it was difficult, as there was a wide area and he was contracted to work 14 hours per week on youth, of which 9 hours were devoted to delivery. Inters and Seniors have feedback sheets. Environmentalism was a growing concern for them, so the March Weekend would be on a theme of 'Faith in Action'. This feedback does have a role, but he would like us to introduce them to new ideas and concepts as well.

The approach of Gavin looking at what needs should be addressed, including those of people who are not yet Unitarians was welcomed. Gavin intended to try and improve our current programme, and to start having conversations with local congregations, while exploring this with other groups.

A question was raised on what needs of parents we could satisfy (nationally as well as locally) while meeting the needs of kids. Gavin indicated that this was already happening with the UniFest event. Junior weekend had evolved into UniFest. The October 2018 Junior Weekend had 13 kids, 7 adults (and 4 volunteers). Parents were there but were not getting spiritual nourishment. This was added in the March 2019 Junior Weekend with a first exploration into adult programming. It had gone from a pure children's programme to sections of children's, adult and intergenerational programmed. This had then evolved again into UniFest where we had brought other expertise in for adult programming. There were 49 participants at the March 2019 Junior Weekend (26 kids, 17 adults and 6 leaders), and 74 (35 kids, 26 adults and 13 volunteers) at the October 2019 UniFest Weekend. This weekend would move again to different timings and would keep evolving, as it was still being worked out. There would be two UniFest events during the year. This had not been communicated well, and had caused complaints. Gavin identified this as an issue of capacity.

Young adults – Gavin had been supporting Elizabeth Rosenberg in creating provision for eight young people aged under-35 to attend the Foy Conference and learn what starting a Society looks like. Religions for Peace were also wanting to work with an 18-35 group.

The following comments were made:

- More work was needed in how we could create the conditions for spiritual needs of young people and families to be met, and other funds might be needed.
- Working with local congregations would need more resource, and it was likely that Gavin would initially attempt to work with two congregations for a year.
- Top-level strategy needed to be addressed, and a decision what priority should be given to this going forward.

It was **AGREED** that The Chief Officer and Youth Coordinator would progress this

ACTION: Gavin & Liz

The EC would respond in Key Messages on the evolution of Junior Weekend.

ACTION: Liz

16. Safeguarding

Gavin had to submit a response to the Independent Enquiry into Sexual Abuse. He had used this as a reflective exercise, internal to the GA, thinking about what Safeguarding might look like in congregations and affiliated organisations.

The Safeguarding role is currently 0.1 full time equivalent (half a day a week) with no budget for travelling. This was mostly processing Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. He does not currently do much training and only tends to be involved with congregations when there's a significant issue. This was stressful for everyone involved. By that stage, we had already failed to prevent an issue. In administering the DBS process he felt that 31:8, formerly known as the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) gave a great service for the support provide and should be used more.

Recommendations:

- Churches be signposting to 31:8 for safeguarding issues.
- We update our policies and procedures – 'Safety First' was now out of date (the last revision being in 2013).
- Administering the DBS clearance process – Gavin wanted to undertake more training.
- Provision of safeguarding training – we move to support training provision, rather than delivering the training.

Gavin had a positive conversation with 31:8. They could audit what we do and test elements of it, then give a plan for improvement. The cost was estimated at c£3K for 7 days' worth of work. They could then instead point us to auditing documents, but there was a capacity issue with this. They could also offer an additional service, where we pay them for an additional level of support to the Safeguarding Officer, for example running a workshop in collaboration, such as a Safeguarding workshop (and stand) at the Annual Meetings.

Comments and questions:

- The approach was worthwhile.
- It was important that Gavin have the necessary training.
- The biggest Safeguarding risk came from those congregations least likely to engage.
- If people go directly to 31:8, is there a danger we don't hear about these things?

Gavin would be keen to ensure that safeguarding is seen to include vulnerable adults as well as children. Gavin indicated the calls he received were about 50-50 between children and vulnerable adults. He wanted to give out the message that this process was happening to lots of other groups, and hoped that the process would give people in congregations the confidence to tackle safeguarding issues.

It was **AGREED** that the Youth Coordinator and Chief Officer would work on progressing this.

ACTION: Gavin and Liz

Jim Corrigan left the meeting at this stage.

Session 4

17. Chief Officer's Report

The Chief Officer gave a report (Document **EC8/20**).

The Stipend Review Committee's Report (Document **SR01/20**) was included. Rob Whiteman presented concerns from the Ministerial Fellowship that they were not invited to attend the meeting.

Consideration of the rates had been delegated to the Stipend Review Committee, and the recommendation was for a stipend increase of 3.2%. It was **AGREED** that the Church of Scotland stipend values would be added to the comparisons. The report was otherwise **ACCEPTED**.

Anne Mills will become President in April, so the Chief Officer would convene a meeting to bring her fully up-to-date on strategy etc. Anne would also be invited to the May meeting.

18. EC Link Reports

The EC Link Reports (Document **EC10/20**) were reviewed.

Merseyside District – The District had met on Saturday morning. Overall funding was now at £1.4M reserves because of strategic changes to their investment policy. They had been made aware of the GA fossil fuel divestment motion, and they planned to enquire as to how their investment portfolio was constituted in this respect.

Les Gabriel had taken over as the District Secretary.

The Worship Studies Course would be taking place in February.

CIO status – The district was reminding congregations of the deadline on church registration.

The district was proposing to employ a youth coordinator for the entire district. There are two paid youth leaders at Ullet Road, and other volunteers.

Sheffield District – Would be meeting on Friday.

East Cheshire District – Had not met since the last EC meeting.

19. Minutes of Annual Meetings Panel Meeting

The Minutes of the Annual Meetings Panel held 18 November (Document **EC11/20**) had been circulated and were accepted.

In response to a question about whether the Annual Meetings would be rethought, the Chief Officer answered that they were already being rethought, though it felt hard to change. The Meeting Objectives document was useful, but the Meetings would be designed differently if they were being created from scratch. The 2020 Meetings were being tweaked on the existing format. The Chief Officer was positive about the large number of first timers (there were 35 newcomer bursary applications against 25 last year) and the great keynote speaker.

20. Nightingale Centre Annual Report & Accounts (Document EC12/20)

The draft Annual Report and Accounts of the Centre (Document **EC12/20**) were reviewed.

Comments were:

- Page 3 – In the Financial Review section, the multiple explanation marks should be removed.
- Page 4 – Under the list of trustees list, Rob asked for his title to be amended to ‘Reverend Dr R Whiteman’
- Sheila McKinnon and Christina Smith had both retired rather than ‘resigned’.
- Page 6 & 7 – The columns headings were marked ‘2019 unrestricted funds’ and ‘2018 Total funds’ which were not comparative.
- Page 9, Note 3 – ‘Deposit account interest’ should be changed to ‘Dividend and deposit interest’.

As Chair of the Nightingale Centre, Marion indicated that she would ensure all changes were made, declared a potential conflict of interest, and abstained from voting.

Subject to the above changes, the Accounts were **approved**.

21. Minutes of the Nightingale Centre Management Committee held 30 Nov 2019

The Minutes of the Management Committee meeting held 30 November 2019 (Document **EC13/20**) were reviewed.

The Centre Management Committee recommended changing the current capital depreciation period of 40 years for buildings to 20 years. At present, outstanding depreciation was less than 20 years. Therefore, it was feasible to implement this policy with effect from the financial year commencing October 2019. This was **AGREED**.

The Nightingale Centre have changed to cloud computing with Sage Accounting and the RoomMaster booking system, and hoped to integrate these applications.

22. Key Messages

The following were the key messages:

- UniFest / Junior Weekend Evolution & Youth Strategy
- Safeguarding and 31:8
- Acceptance of the new Ministers and Students
- Approval of the GA & Nightingale Centre Accounts
- Matthew Smith’s Resignation & the Co-option plans

23. Any other business

Neville Kenyon’s Inquirer letter – Discussion was held on the effect of the structure on continuity, skills, diversity and team-building. Ultimately it was not felt to be the right time to review this. The Chief Officer suggested the weekend meeting which takes place at the Nightingale Centre could be moved from October to the first meeting after the Annual Meetings, which would then allow a new team to have more time together.

Cardiff Unitarians motion on disinvestment in fossil fuels published in The Inquirer – the GA’s investment policy was not well-publicised, and it was not clear whether or not we were already compliant with the terms of this motion. The next investment Panel meeting was in February. The Convenor would also be attending a training session from Newtons about disinvestment versus engagement and would circulate information. The Finance group would next meet in March and would look at this further.

Ministerial death – The Very Rev William McMillian had passed away on Sunday.

24. Dates of future meetings

- Tuesday 12 May 9.00 – 4.00pm
- Tuesday 21 July 9.00 – 4.00pm
- Sun - Tue 20-22 September Nightingale Centre
- Tuesday 24 November 9.00 – 4.00pm

25. Non responsive check-out & Closing Devotions

The check-out took place. Hilda Dumpleton gave Closing Devotions and the meeting closed.

Approved Minutes of GA Executive Committee Call, 21st April 2020

Conducted by videoconference.

Attendees:

Marion Baker, Lynne Readett, Rob Whiteman, Philip Colfox, Hilda Dumpleton, Jim Corrigan, Robert Ince, Jo James, Peter Hanley, Liz Slade

- The EC agreed that we should pursue the option of a loan from the Essex Hall Trust instead of releasing cash from the Bowland Trust Fund for this year's budget
- Agreed to set up a Finance Group meeting in the next couple of weeks, with Rob Whiteman and Robert Ince joining
- EC members to follow up with congregations that did not have correct contact information, asking congregations to get in touch with Essex Hall to provide up to date contact details
- GA staff to follow up in sharing key government guidance on pandemic support, including around furloughing for key staff
- EC supported and encouraged building on Being Together to provide connection across the movement
- EC recognised the importance of seeking out what funds may be available for the GA and congregations
- EC support the principle of the Whitby congregation becoming a CIO, but that further work may be needed on refining the proposed CIO objects in order to be compliant with the Charity Commission and alignment to the Unitarian movement
- Suggestion for May EC meeting agenda: how to use the EC creatively / how to work on key strategic issues
- The EC noted that with effect from 18 March 2020 the Nightingale Centre closed to guests as a result of the UK Government's instruction that hotels and hostels close for business because of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Eleven of the centre's staff were furloughed from 24 March 2020 and the Centre Manager and her assistant were furloughed from 1 April 2020. The day to day management of the centre is being maintained by the Centre's volunteer management committee.
- The minutes of the EC call held on 2nd April were approved

Approved Minutes of GA Executive Committee meeting 12th May 2020

Present (via videoconference) – Marion Baker, Rob Whiteman, Robert Ince, Hilda Dumpleton, Lynne Readett, Philip Colfox, Jim Corrigan, Peter Hanley, Jo James, Liz Slade

1. Chief Officer's report, including reports from programme staff was received
2. An update on the approach of the presidential team was received
3. An update on the status of the Nightingale Centre was received
4. A report on the end of the 2020 Project was received
5. An update on the annual report and accounts was received
6. A discussion was started about the 2021 EC elections, and how we might seek a good mix of skills and backgrounds in new members

Key decisions and agreements:

- Agreed to pursue the offer of an interest-free loan from the Essex Hall Trust of £150,000 which will aid GA cashflow while releasing cash from investments would result in a loss in investment value.
- Agreed to seek advice from the Nightingale Centre's legal counsel on the terms of the legacy to be received from the estate of Mark Anthony James
- Peter Hanley volunteered to be involved in the safeguarding audit; Gavin Howell will be asked to provide more information on the specific responsibilities of a trustee on this audit for a second trustee to be involved.
- Support for the Chief Officer's approach to work in conversation with engaged leaders, rather than via formal structures, in navigating our collective response to the pandemic
- Noted thanks to the GA staff for their reports and continuing work
- Noted support for the work to provide guidance to congregations on how buildings might be opened up
- Agreed support for the Presidential team's collaborative approach and focus on compassionate communication in support of the movement
- Noted that the Nightingale Centre staff are furloughed until at least the end of June, and that the Centre is in a financially strong position for now
- Recognised that we are still waiting for the GA's year end accounts to be signed off by the auditors, and that some communication to the movement will be needed on this in the interim, including the circulation of the Stipend Review report
- The report on the end of the 2020 Project was received, and agreed that a report should be put together to review the financial position on the funds that supported this project. More detail should be sought on the request for financial support from the East Midlands Union.
- The Chief Officer will clarify the constitutional position on the need for one EC member to step down ahead of their term ending, so balance the number of members in each of the staggered terms. EC members agreed to review the skills audit to identify what changes may be needed to the mix of skills we are reviewing against
- Minutes of the January EC meeting were approved. Agreed that minutes from the last interim EC calls should come to the next EC meeting for approval.
- It was agreed that the EC should meet again in June.

For next meeting:

- Update from Ministry strategy group
- Risk register

Approved Minutes from June 2020 Executive Committee meeting

Present: Marion Baker, Jo James, Philip Colfox, Hilda Dumpleton, Lynne Readett, Jim Corrigan,
Robert Ince, Rob Whiteman, Peter Hanley, Liz Slade

1. The majority of the meeting was spent in discussion of Unitarian strategy, including exploration of the need for change in how we operate as a movement, the need for change in how we gather as a movement, and the need for sustainable, spiritually healthy communities. A summary narrative of this discussion was produced after this meeting.
2. The EC agreed to nominate Derek McAuley as Vice-President of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists
3. The EC agreed that the finance subgroup would make a decision on the request from the East Midlands Union for funding for Derby Unity.

July 2020 Executive Committee meeting

Held via Zoom.

Present: Marion Baker, Lynne Readett, Peter Hanley, Philip Colfox, Hilda Dumbleton, Rob Whiteman, Robert Ince, Jim Corrigall, Jo James, Liz Slade

1. There was discussion of the GA's role and goals.
2. The EC agreed to the proposal to explore how to hold the 2021 Annual Meeting in light of the coronavirus pandemic, separating the business meetings to the community gatherings.
3. JC and LR to follow up with ES around the process of communications to ensure that information on the website remains up to date
4. It was agreed that ES should move forward with the plans to review the role of the Ministry Strategy Group and the proposal for a year long inquiry into the role of leadership in spiritual communities
5. EC members to follow up with ES with their thoughts on in-person EC meetings as the usual two-day September meeting won't be possible to be held at Hucklow
6. There was agreement to go ahead with the offer of organisational consultancy to. This is available to us at no cost, although there is an invitation to make a donation to a charity of our choice. The objectives of the proposal are:
 - 1) To help the Chief Officer and the Executive Committee to:
 - i. Gain insight into factors which may be impeding engagement with the changing nature of society, understand and explore resistance to change.
 - ii. Identify feasible actions, based on the collected feedback, to shift the system towards action and sustainable change.
 - 2) To help to create a sense of shared understanding and commitment within a cross-section of the movement on the 'real challenge' and required steps to address it.

Minutes of GA Executive Committee meeting, 20th August 2020

Attendees: Marion Baker, Celia Cartwright, Peter Hanley, Philip Colfox, Lynne Readett, Jo James, Rob Whiteman, Robert Ince, Jim Corrigan

Apologies: Hilda Dumbleton

1. Discussion of GA role and focus

There was general agreement with the focus of the GA being

- **Working collaboratively with allies to develop a fresh and relevant spiritual culture in the UK**
- **Creating the conditions for spiritually healthy communities to flourish**

There was also acknowledgement that defining this more fully or more permanently is a longer term piece of work, which must be preceded by work to develop the vitality of the movement.

Other themes that came up in this discussion included the need to focus on spiritual depth, that our social justice work is rooted in this, that our role includes helping people to have access to spiritual health,

There was also discussion of the 'why', or the overarching purpose that lies above these areas of focus.

It was acknowledged that the exact terms used to define this would differ according to people's spiritual perspectives and beliefs, but there was general agreement around the idea of enabling more people to be connected to life force /spiritual depth / being happy / living fully / have access to spiritual health, for them as individuals and as communities and wider society. Without trying to define the terminology completely, there was a sense of agreement that it was clear enough to be able to move forward knowing we are aligned.

There was also an acknowledgement of our role in helping people have access to the insights and spiritual practices that they may not have learnt.

It was recognised that the congregations that are flourishing the most tend to be clear on their mission/purpose, and that there may be a role for the GA in helping leaders/congregations to find their focus. This could be combined with the current design/branding work, as it is rolled out to congregations.

LR suggested that in order to help let people know what the GA is up to, there could be a feature in the Inquirer. **ES** to follow up with Colleen Burns.

It was agreed that working with interfaith organisations is important, and that we should also be working with those outside of the faith sector. **ES** to create a map of the landscape of our connections beyond the traditional faith domain.

2. The minutes of the July EC meeting were approved

3. The EC agreed that we should support the Reset the Debt campaign, and explore opportunities to connect with other areas of the movement, eg the Penal and Social Affairs Panel, and the Women's League.

The EC thanked Jim Corrigan for championing this work and work with Radar and other interfaith social action groups.

Minutes of GA Executive Committee meeting, 22nd September 2020

Attendees: Marion Baker, Philip Colfox, Jim Corrigan, Hilda Dumpleton, Peter Hanley, Gavin Howell (items 1 and 2 only), Robert Ince, Jo James, Lynne Readett, Liz Slade, Rob Whiteman

1. Youth update

Gavin Howell presented an updated on the current youth activities, including:

- Bad Coffee Club – an online forum for and led by 14-17 year olds, that is under development
- Congregational support for local youth activities – a group of representatives of congregations who are active in running or developing youth activities to innovate and share best practice.
- A virtual GA youth event – development of an online gathering for youth and families

These are all being led by volunteers, with an approach to let the plans unfold according to the needs of the group.

There has also been a meeting with the youth leader from the UUA to identify areas of collaboration, particularly around the Our Whole Lives programme.

There was support for the approach being taken to youth activities, and a discussion of whether the GA should put further resources towards this area.

2. Safeguarding update

Gavin Howell shared the audit of the GA's safeguarding work conducted by the independent safeguarding organisation 31:8.

There was recognition of the importance of prioritising safeguarding in the GA and across the movement. There was agreement that safeguarding should be seen as an enabler, rather than taking a 'compliance' approach.

There was support for the recommendation that GA safeguarding resourcing to be increased.

Liz and Gavin to follow up on next steps, including putting in place a working group to move forward on addressing the issues raised in the safeguarding audit.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the August EC meeting were approved.

4. Ministerial roll

The EC ratified the recommendation from the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel for Stephanie Bisby and Michael Allured to be added to the GA ministerial roll, and for Rev Andy Phillips to be made a full member of the roll following the successful completion of his probationary period.

5. Group dynamics and culture

The EC agreed to have two follow up meetings with Mirka Packard to hear the findings from the interviews she has held with representatives across the movement.

6. AOB

Jim Corrigan has approached Jo O'Sullivan to represent the GA at RADAR meetings.

A finance group meeting will be set up to review the proposed 2020/21 budget, and also take a look at the longer term financial sustainability of the GA.

There was a suggestion to clarify EC governance and decision-making, and it was agreed to follow this up after the sessions with Mirka Packard, as this would include an exploration of these issues.

Minutes of GA Executive Committee meeting, 27th October 2020

Attendees: Marion Baker, Celia Cartwright, Hilda Dumbleton, Peter Hanley, Philip Colfox, Lynne Readett, Jo James, Rob Whiteman, Robert Ince, Jim Corrigan, Liz Slade

1. 2020/21 Budget

The proposed 2020/21 budget was presented along with a brief overview including the paper that had been shared at September's finance group meeting. There was support for the finance group's recommendation to bring in fundraising expertise.

The EC voted and agreed to approve the budget presented.

2. GA open forum

The EC agreed to the proposal of hosting an online open forum as an opportunity to engage with the wider movement in dialogue about our plans for the future. There was the suggestion to build on the Art of Hosting work in the shaping of the forum.

3. Chief Officer's report

There was discussion of the data presented around the size of congregations, and how the GA might best support the movement as a whole – supporting and encouraging the leading edge of flourishing congregations, and helping those congregations that are at the end of their lifespan to close well, and help to ensure that any assets support new growth in the movement. There was recognition that not all District Associations have the capacity to support congregations in their area with the sometimes complex work of closure or renewal. Simon Bland has been working with some members of the EC to explore new ways of providing funds and support for closing chapels, and this work will continue.

Philip Colfox encouraged a focus on innovation, and working with those who are already innovating.

There was discussion of the challenge of congregations and other Unitarian organisations that have poor governance and procedures, and the associated risk to the movement. It was agreed that the Chief Officer would bring a paper to the next EC meeting for the group to look at what role the GA might play in improving standards.

4. EC elections

The EC discussed the approach to re-equalise the number of EC members serving in each term, as five EC members joined in 2019, with a view to one of the five stepping down after two years.

As none of the five members volunteered to step down, the EC voted and agreed that the person who had received the fewest votes in the 2019 election should step down. This was

Robert Ince, and it was agreed that the Convenor would follow up to discuss this with him after the meeting.

5. Minutes of previous meetings

The EC ratified the amendment to the minutes of the May EC meeting that was agreed over email in September: “Agreed in principal to the request to honour the conditions of the codicil relating to the legacy from the estate of Mark Anthony James, subject to seeking advice from the Nightingale Centre’s legal counsel on these terms”

6. AOB

There had been email discussion about the code of conduct for ministers, and it was agreed that Liz Slade, Lynne Readett and Rob Whiteman would have a separate call to talk about this ahead of the next EC meeting.

There was brief discussion of Mirka Packard’s work and agreement to continue the threads of discussion that were started, particularly around clarity of roles and responsibilities.

Jim Corrigan reported that Jo O’Sullivan has agreed to be the GA representative of RADAR.

The Penal and Social Affairs Panel and others have taken up the EC’s support of the Reset the Debt campaign.

There was brief discussion of the possibility of Torquay and how the GA might support development there – Simon Bland has put together a paper to explore options, and this will be followed up with the EC.

Minutes of GA Executive Committee meeting held 24th November 2020 on Zoom

Present: Marion Baker (Convener), Hilda Dumpleton, Peter Hanley (Treasurer), Philip Colfox, Lynne Readett, Jo James, Rob Whiteman, Robert Ince, Jim Corrigall, Liz Slade

Marion led Opening Devotions.

The Convener reported that Rob Whiteman had offered to take the minutes while meetings remained on Zoom. This was agreed.

Further to the statement made by the Treasurer prior to a previous meeting he clarified that his term of office could not be extended beyond 2022. It was noted that the Hon Treasurer is pointed annually by the GA on the recommendation of the EC. The maximum term is 7 years. He noted that new auditors had been appointed and that this led to inevitable change. It was agreed that succession planning for a new Treasurer be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

1 Minutes of previous meetings

1.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2020

These were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

1.1.1 Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2020

Item 2 – Safeguarding Liz reported that she and Gavin Howell were continuing to work on this.

AOB – Marion reported that the Finance Committee had met.

1.2 Minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2020

Item 1 - 2020/21 Budget This was amended to read “fundraising expertise on both legacies and ongoing funding”. With this amendment the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

1.2.1 Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2020

Item 1- 2020/21 Budget Philip expressed concern that the budget read as an extrapolation of previous activity rather than a presentation of future plans. Liz outlined the process if no budget was approved. It was agreed that the agreed budget be seen as a ‘holding’ budget in these uncertain times.

Item 4 – EC elections Marion reported that she had not spoken with Robert yet but hoped to do so soon. Liz reported that the process was in hand and the call for nominations would be circulated in the next few days.

AOB Liz reported that she had met with Rob and Lynne concerning the Code of Conduct. It had been recognised that it would be necessary to circulate any draft to all ministers, as well as the Ministerial Fellowship, as not all ministers were members of the MF. It was recognised that the EC had a locus in this as the guardians of the Roll of Ministers. Liz reported that Simon Bland had a draft of the Guidelines that included, but was not limited to, a Code of Conduct. It was hoped that this could be circulated soon, for comment, prior to hoped for approval by the EC at a subsequent meeting.

Marion reported that she had been contacted by Jo O’Sullivan about positions that might be taken and communications arising from RADAR. Marion had encouraged Jo to consult the list of motions passed at the GA and the GA objectives and contact the EC if she felt that there were initiatives that should be supported. She was also pointed in the direction of Rory for Uninews and Colleen Burns for the Inquirer.

Philip expressed concern that a section on land banks had not been included in the minutes, a concern shared by Jo James.

2 Ministers Pension Fund

Marion reported that the MPF was to hold future meetings on Zoom. It was agreed that Lynne represent the EC on the MPF.

3 Investment Panel

This had met the previous week with Stephen Lingwood in attendance. It had included a long discussion on Fossil Disinvestment. There had been discussion of the ideas of positive and negative screening including the concept of sustainability. Following the meeting Philip, Peter and Robert were developing ideas to be presented to the EC.

Jo reported that Mill Hill had been involved with Epworth Investments, a consortium that included the Methodist Church and others and used positive screening. (<https://www.epworthinvestment.co.uk/>) Marion rehearsed the history and development of the Investment Panel noting that currently it reviewed Newton’s performance but that it did offer possibilities to look at wider activities and issues around investment. Peter noted that the Investment Guide had been produced in recent years to support this wider work.

It was agreed that the Finance Group would pull together the various strands of action and inquiry in investment management within Unitarianism and bring recommendations for action to the EC.

4 Nightingale Centre

Marion spoke to the previous circulated email. It was noted that the portfolio statement, rather than the accounts, had been circulated and Marion offered to circulate the accounts. She reported that the staff were still on furlough and, with no bookings for December, this was expected to continue. The Centre has many bookings for 2021 if it is allowed to open. The Centre is in a good physical state with repairs, maintenance and inspections up to date. It was noted that the furlough scheme and grants have kept the cashflow situation viable.

The next meeting of the Management Committee was to be held on 28th November and the minutes would be provided to the EC. The accounts were currently being finalised and would be presented to that meeting and forwarded to David Joseph for consolidation, if approved.

5 Governance and collaboration

Liz spoke to the circulated paper that she had prepared. After a period in small break out groups each member was invited to make comment. A verbatim account of this section of the meeting is to be prepared. The paper was broadly welcomed and the diagram particularly valued. It was felt that the paper would be a valuable addition to the induction of new members of the EC following the forthcoming election. Liz agreed to reflect on the discussion and present on those reflections to the next meeting.

6 Chief Officer's Report

Liz spoke to her circulated report. On the 2018-19 accounts she reported that she, David Joseph and Peter would be meeting with the auditors. It was agreed that the accounts be approved, subject to a satisfaction being achieved on the outstanding points at that meeting. She recognised that the process for the 2019-20 accounts would be less condensed as there were no printing deadlines. It was expected that the Finance Group would meet to review the draft 2019-20 accounts.

It was recognised that, during the time of pandemic, management accounts had not been seen for some time and that, in future, they would be presented quarterly.

Philip asked that future CO reports included Objectives in each of the areas covered.

7 AOCB

Jim asked about preparations for the 2020 GA. Liz reported that Andrew Mason was looking into how sessions might be done on line in April 2021. It was recognised that being on line meant that the constraints of time involved in face to face meeting would be removed and that other events might be more spaced out than heretofore. The next step would be to discuss this with the Annual Meetings Panel in December.

Lynne led closing Devotions to close the meeting.