

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

Annual Reports

2015

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
Nightingale Centre

Sustentation Fund

www.unitarian.org.uk



Participants at the 2015 Annual Meetings

Photographers

We would like to thank everyone who provided photographs for these Reports, particularly Roy Clark.

Cover image:

Stained glass window at Kendal Unitarian Church, by Rev Celia Cartwright

The Eighty-Seventh

2015 Annual Reports



General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

Registered Charity No. 250788

The Nightingale Centre

Registered Charity No. 242256

The Sustentation Fund

Registered Charity No. 235449

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Please note: the content of the section previously entitled 'Our Heritage' is now on our website.



GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT'S REPORT

General Assembly President 2015-2016, John Clifford

As I write this it is almost 8 months into my 12 months as your ambassador to Unitarian and Free Christian communities at home and abroad. It has been a busy time for both myself and my wife, Barbara, who attends visits when she can manage.

Meeting people in our congregations, districts, and societies has been an important opportunity for me to discuss numbers, health, attitudes, organisation, hospitality, finance, etc. Optimism has been much in evidence even when problems were shared. And friends, we do face real problems. As Rev Bill Darlison reported two years ago, "numbers are low and our age-profile is high, but the spirit of our members is buoyant and commitment is strong". During the intervening two years members have been trying to enter the electronic age and most congregations are trying to build safe communities for the vulnerable. It's a long difficult path but we have started.

I believe firmly in value-oriented communities that foster, nurture, and complement individual spirituality and practical ministering to a suffering world. In our various communities, I have met, thankfully, many examples of commitment, vigour, growth, and creative endeavour. I love this community, but we would be fooling ourselves if we were blinded by the brightness of these examples and did not see our continuing gradual but very definite decline – not just in numbers but in robustness.

Last year I sent delegates home with a question:

"What do you really love about our faith? Not what do you think about Unitarianism; what do you love about us? ... what do you love enough that you want to share it, to nurture it, to make it flower in your life and impact other peoples' lives for good? What is the hook that pulls you to commit time, energy, resources, perhaps even money to make our faith more effective in people's lives?" In addition to the practical impediments to vigour and creativity listed below, our spiritual health as a community depends on each of us finding and sharing our answers to this question.

There have been many suggestions on how we could reverse this trend in our beloved community. I summarise my convictions that we: (1) require rotation of officers at all levels; (2) must contribute substantially to local budgets; (3) need to escape the tyranny of old, large, often inflexible buildings; (4) need to recognise the importance of trained, properly appointed, accountable leadership, both "lay" and "ministerial", including secretaries, treasurers, and chairpersons; (5) need to be more open to young people and to change. The GA tries to provide help and guidance in these areas, but the volunteers must appear locally – along with changes in attitudes and in procedures. Latterly I have described the need for Unitarians to include heads, hearts, and hands in dynamic balance. Our individual and collective spiritual health depends on this in order to do our ministry and witness effectively.

We exist as part of a larger world. Global warming; Mass migration and refugees; Economic Inequality; Exploitation of the Vulnerable; and the threats to our personal liberties posed by governments and businesses under the banners of Security and Convenience have been well-used topics in conversations. Recently terrorist threats have moved up the agenda. I have been encouraged by the reports of many local activities exercising practical care and love. In response to major world events, the EC and I have issued public statements on our values of compassion, rationality, and inclusive community. We have also called British Unitarians to solidarity with overseas Unitarians who struggle with these same issues.

I am a strong supporter of the Vision Process as a means to help us clarify our modern identity and forward practical goals. The Executive have genuinely tried to involve active Unitarians in not just consultation but collaborative creative work.

As your President I attend Executive Committee Meetings and receive all the papers. Naturally those with the breadth of experience to serve as President will often also have served the GA as Executive or Council members during their careers, so there is an element of poacher turned gamekeeper in this process but I can report to you that your Executive operates with genuine and sincere commitment to marshalling the GA's meagre income towards practical ends and to enhancing the quality of GA services and communication with members and outsiders.

Finally, I know Unitarians do not watch the annual Cenotaph service merely to see a Unitarian at a public event, but I have been gratified by the number of those who have told me of their pleasure at seeing me there and a few with eagle eyes even managed to see my white poppy on my white stole. It is an important Unitarian message that respecting those who have died in service to our country is compatible with a determination to work for a world without war.

The Presidential year is a real privilege, pleasure, and hard work. We have managed to visit Unitarians and Free Christians in England, Scotland, Wales, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand, with a visit to Ireland scheduled. The international dimension to our community has been one of my enduring interests, as most of you will know. Barbara and I thank everyone who has arranged visits for us and shared their local situations and hopes.



*Rev John Clifford,
President*



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - TRUSTEES' REPORT



EC Members (L-R): Marion Baker, James Barry, Sir Philip Colfox, Joan Cook, Peter Hanley (Hon. Treasurer), Robert Ince, Gwynn Pritchard, Rev Lynne Readett, Dr Jacqueline Woodman

The Executive Committee (EC) acts as the trustee body of the General Assembly and is responsible for determining the overall direction and development of the Assembly in line with the decisions and policies agreed at the Annual Meetings and the requirements of charity and other legal requirements. The Executive Committee provides strategic leadership and is responsible for ensuring the effective use of the assets of the General Assembly. Executive Committee members are not representatives of individual districts or areas of the country but must act in the best interests of the General Assembly as a charity.

The members of the Executive Committee during the year were: Marion Baker (from April 2015) James Barry, John Clifford (until April 2015), Phillip Colfox (from May 2015) Joan Cook, Robert Ince, Gwynn Pritchard (from April 2015), Lynne Readett (from May 2015), Louise Rogers (until November 2014), Alison Thursfield (until April 2015), Martin Whitell (until April 2015) and Jacqueline Woodman.

A Vision for Our Future - "Always start with a vision not action"

(www.thoughtfortoday.org.uk/create-vision/)

The most significant work of the Executive Committee during the year has been to seek to involve the wider Unitarian and Free Christian community across Great Britain in exploring a vision for OUR shared future. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18).

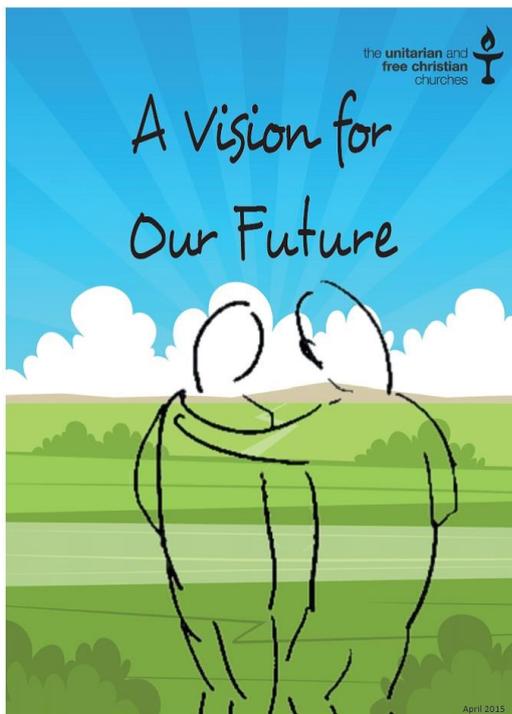
In September 2014, a Vision Day was convened at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. Many ideas were discussed and we tried to be creative in working with pictures of the future as well as words. Out of that day came "A Vision for Our Future", symbolised by the image drawn on the day of a couple walking together across green countryside with an overarching blue sky. Our aspiration is set out in five themes:



We want to be:

- A faith that matters
- A reflection of the world's complexity bound together by our many different views
- A spiritual feast for each person to bring and share ideas and experience
- A promoter of social justice for all, listening and responding to the needs of others
- There for everyone

Actions were identified and the resources: energy, people, technology, empowerment and capacity for change; explored.



At the Annual Meetings a Vision Document was published drawing out the implications of the ideas that had been identified at the workshop. Copies were sent to all congregations, districts and affiliated bodies, all Ministers and Lay Pastors and attendees at the Annual Meetings and comment invited. It is pleasing to see that congregations have used the document to discuss not only the future of the General Assembly but their own aspirations. Subsequently copies have been sent out on request. The paper was also made available on

the GA website with opportunities to comment online on the specific sections. We would thank all those who contributed to the publication and who helped in its design, production and distribution as well as those who have responded with comments and observations.

At the end of the year planning was underway for a bigger workshop which took place on 21 November 2015 at Upper Chapel, Sheffield on "Vision into Action" which was designed to focus our efforts on key actions to implement the Vision.

Highlights

The highlights for the year include:

- An excellent Annual Meetings in a new venue in Birmingham (Hilton Metropole) which achieved very positive feedback from attendees
- Recognition of seven new Ministers and one Lay Pastor at the Anniversary Service
- 2020 Derby launch (which took place on 17 October 2015)
- Significant efforts to promote Safeguarding arrangements within congregations, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) review process in place for those on GA Rolls and undertaking a safeguarding audit of compliance with good practice
- Congregations registering their premises for same-sex marriage in England and Wales and celebrants offering services in Scotland, often resulting in positive local media coverage
- Raising the public profile of the Unitarian Movement using social media, such as promoting use of Twitter, Facebook and UKUnitarianTV
- Building stronger relationships with like-minded liberal religious communities and other progressive organisations.
- Summer School and Worship Studies courses pioneering adult RE
- Completion of 2nd REvolution programme

- Ministerial Competencies Framework developed
- Completing the final elements of the upgrade of IT facilities at Essex Hall.
- Finances remained under control and a Financial Review Group was established to plan for the future

Aims and Objectives

This year saw the conclusion of the current five-year strategy for the period 2010 – 2015 based on building “sustainable and thriving Unitarian and Free Christian communities”. The achievement of this objective involved close working together at congregational, district and national levels and can be divided into four aims.

The four aims were:

- encouraging and supporting leadership at local level (“Local Leadership”).
- developing Ministry within the denomination (“Ministry”).
- raising the visibility of the Unitarian Movement (“Visibility”).
- improving the services to the Movement provided by staff and volunteers (“Improving services”).

Targets

The Executive Committee had set out targets against which the achievement of the aims could be measured:

- We will increase our membership by 20%
- We will increase the number of qualified and active Ministers to at least fifty
- We will ensure that all Unitarian congregations can have access to professional Ministerial or recognised lay leadership and support
- We will ensure that all volunteers have access to training and support”

How are we doing against the targets?

With the end of the five-year period we have taken the opportunity to reflect upon the performance of the Movement against these aims.

We will increase our membership by 20%

We know that quota membership is a poor indication of the health of congregations or the Denomination as a whole but there is no evidence of substantial increase in overall membership although activities often draw in larger numbers of people. The quota returns for 2014/15, which drew on membership in mid-2014, show a decrease from 3,181 to 3,095. It is clear, however, that declared quota membership continues to fall with long-term financial implications that will have to be addressed in a future financial strategy. It is with regret that we report the closure of one of our member congregations, Horwich Free Church. We also note the formal merger of London Newington Green and Islington congregations to form ‘New Unity’.

We will increase the number of qualified and active Ministers to at least fifty

The number of active Ministers currently working in congregations is kept under regular review and the target of 50 ministers by 2015 was substantially achieved. The Ministerial Vacancy List, despite our success in producing eight new ministers and lay pastors, has however not reduced. Other ministries are now part-time which make them more difficult to fill. The issues raised in the report last year will need to be addressed in ongoing work on “Ministry that enables ministry”. The Ministerial Competencies developed by the Ministry Strategy Group will underpin future work on training and development.



We will ensure that all Unitarian congregations can have access to professional Ministerial or recognised lay leadership and support

The number of vacant pulpits illustrate that congregations desire professional trained leadership. Lay leadership (known as “lay people in charge”) is in place in a growing number of congregations and other roles have been developed. An increasing number of people have undertaken the Worship Studies Course, enabling them to lead worship and perform rites of passage.

We will ensure that all volunteers have access to training and support.

Professional support to Congregations and Districts from GA headquarters staff is provided across a range of areas, particularly on governance and safeguarding. This focus on safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults will remain.

Last year we identified the need for further efforts to encourage more volunteers, and we aimed to put in place a group primarily representing District Associations to encourage and develop new volunteers. This remains under discussion and we will return to this issue with a change of emphasis likely towards more use of time-limited task groups rather than “standing” committees which may prove more attractive to potential volunteers.

The Local Leadership Strategy Group has re-organised itself and presented a detailed plan of activities for the forthcoming year to develop its current programmes. The Ministry Strategy Group completed the first stage of its work on ministerial competencies and training. The Visibility Strategy Group

again helped financially the Unitarian Communication Coordinators’ (UCCN) conference.

Governance

The election process for four positions only produced two Executive Committee members and before seeking two co-opted Members, the Executive Committee undertook a Trustee Skills Assessment. This identified that a gap would exist in two areas:

- Faith and spiritual areas – Minister
- Fundraising/income generation/campaigning

This exercise proved invaluable in assessing how the two vacancies were ultimately to be filled after public advertisement, with the co-option of Rev Lynne Readett and Philip Colfox.

2020 Congregational Development Programme

The Executive Committee last year approved a project in Derby for funding which had the full support of East Midlands District Association and the year was one of preparation and development with the official launch on 17 October 2015 at Derby Multi-Faith Centre. A Millennium Fund grant was given for 2020 to organise a series of learning events on “10 Ways to grow Your Congregation”.

Youth Strategy Group

Some initial proposals were presented to the Executive Committee for a three-year project to enrich and grow the presence of young people within the Unitarian Movement. This will feed into the development work arising from the Vision. We would thank the members of the group for their work.



Financial governance

The Accounts of the General Assembly are set out later in this report in summary form along with those of the Nightingale Centre and Sustentation Fund. Spending has been controlled and income maintained. The General Assembly's reserves policy is to hold sufficient free reserves, not restricted by their purpose or by virtue of endowment, to ensure that it is able to service its annual budgeted expenditure and to ensure that its risks in relation to its pension fund obligations are mitigated. The financial review group was established as planned and has begun its work to plot the financial future of the General Assembly in order that funds are available on a sustainable basis to support the aspirations of our Vision.

During the year a number of grants were made from the Millennium Fund to support growth initiatives in congregations and these are set out later in the report. In September 2015 it was agreed that the Millennium Fund would be closed to new applications to make funding available for new growth initiatives that would be identified as part of the Vision process.

The EC would like to thank Rev Martin Whitell for serving as Acting Treasurer until January 2015 in addition to his trustee role. We are grateful for Peter Hanley agreeing to be co-opted as Honorary Treasurer which was confirmed by his appointment at the Annual Meetings.

Understanding what the EC is doing

Last year we said we would be actively seeking to find new ideas to improve communications with the Movement as a whole. The process of developing the Vision for the Future has engaged many more people and congregations in exploring key issues we face. We know that there has been enthusiasm for this throughout the Movement and some people are using the themes to look at their own local activities.

EC members have continued to undertake "link" roles to District Associations (details of which are available on the GA website. The GA President has attended the Executive Committee meetings as an observer, bringing an awareness of grass-roots views. An Executive Committee Question and Answer session was again held at the Annual Meetings.

Social Justice and Social Action

The implementation of same sex marriage produced local publicity as congregations in England and Wales have registered their churches and chapels under the legislation, although this has often been a time-consuming and complicated process.



Unitarians at the London 'Pride' March

The "Good Society" Vision of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland was supported in the run-up to the General Election. Work on education with the Accord Coalition, and on assisted dying, was taken forward. The Annual Meetings Resolution on access to books in prison was pursued by the Penal Affairs Panel. Links were further developed with our key faith and non-faith partners. The Chief Officer joined in a number of media initiatives to promote inclusive religious education and welfare reform.

Unfortunately the work to prepare a pack on climate change, after a motion was referred back for consideration by congregations, has not been able to be taken forward.

The partnership with the Red Cross Clara Barton Fund has continued and in late 2015 a further appeal was made by the General Assembly President on behalf of the Syrian Refugee Appeal. In total, as at 27 October 2015, the Fund had raised £65,469.75. Funding was made available for the Simple Gifts project in Bethnal Green to provide training and support to two congregations on social action.

Nightingale Centre

The Executive Committee are also trustees of the Nightingale Centre, which is a separately registered charity. A report from the Management Committee, who act under delegation arrangements, is included later in the Report. The Executive Committee met with members of the Management Committee when they were at the Centre in September 2015 and explored how they could together take forward the important work of the Nightingale Centre. The Management Committee members and the Centre Manager and Staff are thanked for their hard work and commitment

Risk Management and Public Benefit

The risk register was reviewed in July 2015 resulting in a number of changes reflecting an assessment of the current risks facing the General Assembly. The Executive Committee referred to the guidance given by the Charity Commission in relation to public benefit when reviewing their aims and objectives and in planning future activities. In particular the Executive Committee members, in their role as charity trustees, have a responsibility to consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

The importance of effective local arrangements for Safeguarding cannot be under-estimated and this remains the highest risk area. The Charity Commission in their Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy Paper 2014 outlines how (by law) trustees of charities working with children and other vulnerable groups must promote their welfare and protect them from harm, in both the UK and working abroad. They have made it clear that the failure of a charity to adopt and implement rigorous safeguarding arrangements is now considered to be a serious regulatory issue.

The General Assembly has continued to give support to congregations to improve safeguarding standards as well as maintaining a focus within the National Youth Programme. An audit of congregational practice was undertaken during the year and considered by the Executive Committee in May 2015. The response rate was disappointing and it was agreed that the requirements placed on congregations be reinforced and that the audit would be repeated in 2016. Arrangements are in place to ensure that all ministers, ministerial students and youth leaders have regular Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

The risk assessment revealed that, despite the success in recent years in increasing the number of new ministers, that there were a growing number of unfilled vacancies which combined with current ministers planning to retire mean that the numbers in training are not adequate to fill these positions. The Executive Committee also recognised that the falling congregational membership, as revealed by the quota and the congregational survey, was likely to lead to unsustainable congregations and overall greater denominational weakness. This has focused attention on what can be done to address the underlying issues as reported elsewhere in this report.

Annual Meetings 2015

The 2015 Annual Meetings took place at the Hilton Metropole, Birmingham from 29 March to 1 April 2015. This was again a new style of high-quality hotel venue rather than a university campus and the feedback has been very positive. We return in 2016 and decided recently to go again in 2017. We would thank everyone who contributed to the success of the event, in particular our keynote speaker Rev Jill McAllister on behalf of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) marking their 20th Anniversary.



The Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel

Staffing, Accommodation and Volunteers

“Improving Services” is the strategic objective led by the Executive Committee. Everything we have achieved this year would not be possible without the dedication of our staff, volunteers and supporters. The Executive Committee would like to thank the Chief Officer and staff at Essex Hall for their work

and commitment and also Rosemary Ruston, who continued to provide weekly support in a volunteer capacity at Essex Hall for the Associate Member scheme.

The Essex Hall building is owned by an independent body, the Essex Hall Trust, and the Trustees generously provide the General Assembly with free office space, including business rates, utility bills and service charges.

The General Assembly also receives a contribution towards staffing costs reflecting the management and financial services provided to the Trust and a substantial grant. The Executive Committee would thank the Essex Hall Trustees for their continuing support. The British and Foreign Unitarian Association Incorporated is also thanked for its financial support.

We would thank everyone who serves on the various bodies within the General Assembly or takes part in the various activities for their commitment in a voluntary capacity. We know that without their efforts much of our work to support congregations would not be possible. This report bears witness to what has been achieved.

Organisation

The Executive Committee met as follows during 2014/15:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 14/15 Nov 2014 | Essex Hall, London |
| 23/24 Jan 2015 | Essex Hall, London |
| 13 Feb 2015 | Essex Hall, London |
| 15/16 May 2015 | Essex Hall, London |
| 17/18 July 2015 | Essex Hall, London |
| 18/19 Sept 2015 | Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire |

*By Robert Ince
Executive Committee Convenor*

Investment Panel

By Michael Tomlin

We have met three times this year to review the investments made with Newton Investment Management (Newtons), who hold our funds.

No new Congregations / Trusts have joined the panel during the year and at 31.10.15 the total funds invested with Newtons was £13.6m

As before, the majority of the Unitarian funds have been invested with Newton Growth and Investment Fund for Charities and the results of the fund compare favourably with other similar funds. The latest review showed that this fund was at the top of a table of similar funds. The yield has dropped somewhat because of the world financial problems but the panel is satisfied at present with the Newton results.

We have continued to monitor to ensure that all of the funds are investing within the Investment Objectives set out by the General Assembly and Ministers Pension Fund.

The present system, where each individual Unitarian body is responsible for its direct investment with Newtons, seems to be working well - any problems that arise can be taken up with our contact at Newtons - presently Richard Sankey.

As stated in our last report we continue to monitor Newtons to ensure we are satisfied with their performance.

At present the members of the panel are: Ministers Pension Fund, Unitarian College Manchester, General Assembly Funds, Manchester District Association, Sheffield District Association, Widows Fund, Various Unitarian Churches, Ministers Stipend Augmentation Fund, Upper Chapel Sheffield, Sustentation Fund.

Sustentation Fund

By Michael Tomlin

The fund trustees met once during the year to receive the annual accounts (which had been produced by our Treasurer Alan Eastwood in record time), review our investments, consider our strategy and to make grants to the Congregations / Groups using the criteria laid down in our Constitution and in the light of the decisions taken at the GA Meetings in 2014.

The summary accounts and report by the Trustees and accounts examiner are to be found later in the Annual Report.

The income of the fund was almost the same as for 2014 which led to a surplus for the year of £3,000. After considerable discussion it was decided in the light of our revised policy that we should put this to a designated fund and then budget for a similar surplus in the coming year, together with a small reduction in the overall grants for 2015-6. This will then give us a small but significant fund to make a grant to a congregation / group which put forward a development plan for expansion and needing the help of a minister in this endeavour.

It was recognised by the meeting that the amount of a full grant this year of £1,500, with subsequent reductions for part time/ shared ministry, was only 5% of a full-time cost of ministry compared with years ago when the stipend grant formed a greater proportion of costs of ministry but we try to do the best we can with only limited resources.

We were not able to make grants to all those who applied and the secretary has written to all the congregations who were not awarded a grant with an explanation of the reason for the non making of a grant.

Finally I would like to thank all the trustees and our secretary for their contributions, to Louise Rogers and Dawn Buckle who have had to step down this year, and to the accounts examiner.

2020 Group

By Aleks Zglinska



Derby Unity

The 2020 Congregational Development Programme has been actively working to support the first rekindled congregation project: the growth of a bright flame in the Friargate Unitarian Chapel - Derby Unity.

Following the successful bid made in 2013 the many months of planning have resulted in the official launch of the new community. This has been rekindled with the support of the Friargate Chapel committee, East Midland Unitarian (EMU) District Association and the 2020 Congregational Development Programme.

On 17 October 2015 Derby Unity held its official launch party at the Derby Multifaith Centre. The use of this new location provides enormous new outreach opportunities and beautiful and ample space at low cost. Smaller community activities will take place at Friargate chapel, however the building complex in which it is situated will be undergoing extensive building works for the next 12 to 18 months and thus will not be available for Derby Unitarians/Derby Unity activities for the present time.

Under the leadership of Christina Smith, Derby Unity has been able to build a core team to help guide the community's growth. Training, mentoring and support are being

provided to Christina and this group by the 2020 Leadership Team.

The programme for the new community is shaping up well and the thanks of all involved in the leadership goes out to the supporters and donors of the 2020 Congregational Development Programme.

The 2020 Leadership Team

2020 has continued to be supported by many across the Movement. There have been some changes to the Leadership Team since our last report. A number of our team have stepped down to focus on other projects and pursuits. Our thanks go to Claire MacDonald (to November 2014) Ash James (to January 2015) and Andy Phillips (to October 2015).

We have also welcomed new members Winnie Gordon (from November 2015) and Angela Maher (from September 2015) who have brought with them many skills to add to the team.

Existing Team members remaining are Rev Andy Pakula (New Unity), Rev Martin Whitell (LPDA), Jane Couper (Evesham), Aleks Zglinska (Kidderminster) and Rev Susanne Skubik Intriligator (Bangor).

Training and Support

During 2015 the Leadership Team has made two successful bids for funds to support our work in sharing the valuable learning from the 2020 programme. 2020 is now well positioned to share both practical lessons learnt from supporting congregational renewal and the wide ranging research the team does in exploring proven methods for growth in a broad range of congregational and community contexts.

Two bespoke programmes for supporting the wider Movement have grown from these bids.



One supporting districts and individuals with exploring the context of growth for their congregations funded by the GA Millennium Fund, and an in-depth residential programme supporting leadership strategies for growth funded by the Fund for International Universal Unitarianism supported by The Unitarian Universalist Association.

Support and Fundraising

The leadership team would like to thank all those in the wider Movement who have supported our work over the last year. After our successful first round of funding Round Two is open for pledges from new or existing donors who would like to contribute to the future projects.

Plans are forming for fundraising drives in the next 18 months, but anyone who would like to share fundraising expertise with the programme is invited to contact Andy Pakula (RevAndy@New-Unity.org).



New 2020 Members, Rev Winnie Gordon and Angela Maher

CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

By Derek McAuley

The role of Chief Officer is varied and multi-faceted; embracing support for the Executive Committee in their strategic oversight of the Unitarian Movement, leading the staff team and acting as an ambassador and advocate in the public sphere.



I have been heavily involved in the considerable work that has been undertaken in supporting the Vision process initiated by the Executive Committee, particularly the follow-up from the Vision Day in September 2014, leading to the Vision Document and then the arrangements for the "Making Change Happen" event in November 2015. A Governance and Policy Manual has been produced - drawing together, for the first time, all the key documents related to governance. This will prove invaluable for members of the Executive Committee and staff and will be regularly updated.

The risk management processes underpinned much of my work, including Safeguarding which, with the establishment of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (Goddard Inquiry), will have to remain high on the agenda of us all. The Financial Review Group has been established to plan for the future sustainability of the General Assembly. Two new members were elected to the EC and, following a trustee skills audit, two further members were co-opted to fill the two remaining vacancies. All the new members of the Executive Committee were inducted.

The contribution of staff to the work of the General Assembly was illustrated by their commitment and hard work in arranging a successful Annual Meetings at a new venue,

the Birmingham Hilton Metropole. This is not to be underestimated involving most of the staff team at some point but ably led by Andrew Mason. We said goodbye to Martin Sarbicki, following his retirement at the end of April 2015 and welcomed Colin Farey. Martin led the IT project which proved complex and challenging to implement but has already produced many benefits.

Essex Hall remains the final point of contact when congregations want advice or assistance and this often involves co-operation with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association Incorporated, of which I am the Honorary Secretary. I would thank all the staff and Rosemary Ruston, who volunteers one day a week at Essex Hall. I managed the sale of a property jointly owned by the General Assembly as part of the Retired Ministers' Housing Scheme. We have been exploring the implications of pension auto-enrolment. I have also kept up-to-date with the changes affecting English Heritage.

Communications is a key part of the role of Essex Hall. Uni-news, the email newsletter, was issued regularly. Staff issued the regular GA Mailings, including the huge Annual Meetings distribution in December. The GA Directory and the Annual Report along with the Vision Document were published and circulated. Staff work with volunteers in various ways, often unsung and behind the scenes, to support and deliver the programme activities that are reported elsewhere in this Report.

The third area of my work is outward-facing, facilitated, of course by being based in the centre of London. 2014-15 has been a year of consolidation building upon the relationships I have developed over my now six years in office. I meet regularly with Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of The Quaker Yearly Meeting and



representatives of other smaller churches and Reform and Liberal Judaism. I represented the General Assembly at the re-opening of the former Large Meeting Hall at Friends House, now known as “The Light”. I also occasionally meet Andrew Copson of the British Humanist Association.

I regard influencing public policy on behalf of the Unitarian Movement as an important part of the Chief Officer’s role. I participated in the Annual Conference of the Cutting Edge Consortium on tackling faith-based homophobia and transphobia, chairing a plenary session and a workshop. I spoke at a conference on “Examining the Role of Faith in Public Services Delivery” organised by GOVKNOW Policy Knowledge. I continue to serve on an Advisory Group set up by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to support the preparation of guidance on key religion or belief topics in the workplace and service delivery. I was consulted by the Law Commission on their scoping study on the law on how and where people can marry in England and Wales.

I continue to develop networks with like-minded groups including the Progressive Christian Network, Sea of Faith, Christian Aid and Muslims for Secular Democracy; one of the outcomes of which was the acceptance from their Director to be our Keynote Speaker at the Annual Meetings 2016. The General Election in May 2015 proved an opportunity to support “The Good Society” initiative of the CTBI. They worked with the RADAR group of parliamentary staff of the main churches and other faith bodies and I would thank Karen Hanley who attends on our behalf. The Faith Communities Forum of the UK Interfaith Network remains an important forum for contact with leaders of other faiths.

In terms of media coverage this proved more difficult to achieve this year and success was usually the result of working with others. I participated in a letter, with Dr Rowan Williams as lead signatory, seeking to reverse the Government’s decision to exclude an annex on Humanism from the new Religious Studies GCSEs and preclude systematic study from AS and A levels. I signed a joint letter on the Welfare Reform Bill which was subsequently published. I have given advice to congregations on same sex marriage, both on processes of registration and dealing with the media when they wished to announce they had been successful.

I have over the year contributed to the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) at both national and regional levels and in September 2015 was invited to join a delegation to FYR Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania examining religious freedom issues for the Sufi Bektashi Order, an IARF member body.

I also continued to develop relationships across the wider Unitarian and Free Christian Movement, including speaking at the Unitarian Christian Association meeting in Bristol, contributing to the strategy day for Simple Gifts and attending the End of Year Proceedings at Unitarian College Manchester and the Valedictory Service at Harris Manchester College, Oxford. I regularly contribute a column to *The Unitarian* and articles to *The Inquirer*. The Chief Officer’s blog on the GA website continues to have a worldwide reach and I have now 1,400 followers on Twitter ([@Derekunit](#)). Facebook is a useful tool at reaching specific communities. We regularly host visitors at Essex Hall, including four students from the Hungarian Unitarian Church, Bahia’s from Paris and various Unitarians visiting London. All are welcome.

In terms of key issues for the future:

- Governance of congregations – it is pleasing to see committees looking at changes to improve the effectiveness of their governance, such as Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status but disappointing to hear of problems that could have been avoided. An area of concern remains those congregations with “excepted” status that do not send copies of their Annual Report and Accounts to Essex Hall. This requirement was reinforced in a Mailing.
- Sustainability – falling numbers generally and fewer congregations will ultimately place the viability of current denominational structures and ways of working under threat. It appears that the value of professional Ministerial and other paid support is being increasingly recognised, however numbers coming forward are inadequate.

- Achieving a public profile given our size will always be a challenge and capacity is limited. This requires working with others and being creative and recognising that reaching out through use of social media requires specific skills and knowledge. It is still true, however, as has been said to me many times, that “You Unitarians punch above your weight”.

In the end having confidence in our future must underpin all that we do. The Vision process has been crucial to achieving engagement with a larger group of Unitarians and Free Christians than ever before. If our Vision is owned and embraced by the wider Movement we will be able to galvanise the talent and resources we know exists and to draw others in. I look forward to playing my part in our future.

Derek McAuley



Chief Officer Derek McAuley with the World Leader of the Bektashi Sufi Order, Hajji Debebaba Edmond Brahimaj at the opening of the Odeon building in Tirana, Albania, plus IARF President, Rev Dr Wytse Dijkstra and Peter Le Poole, IARF Netherlands.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Support for Congregations

Local Leadership

By Louise Rogers

This year the Local Leadership Strategy Group (LLSG) has focused on developing the way that it works, how it relates to its working groups and how it relates to the other strategy groups. A local leadership strategy was written which reflected what was currently happening; the developments in the pipeline; and ideas for the future. The new GA Vision document was reviewed at the August meeting and the strategy was amended to take account of the priorities outlined.

All the working groups are developing their activities as per their own reports. REvolution, which sits with the LLSG itself, has run another successful course and is looking to organise one specifically for young people.

After a successful session at the Annual Meetings about dementia there has been a focus on developing resources. This coming year will see a range of information provided via the GA website and a worship pack produced. It is hoped that many local communities will get involved in dementia awareness week in May 2016.

The coming year will see developing relationships with other strategy groups – namely the Ministry Strategy Group with regard to the competences for worship leaders; and with the Visibility Strategy Group with regard to outreach initiatives. There will be exploratory discussions about how we can support the provision of music at services. The idea of a research group to make use of data about our local communities is being discussed with those with expertise and an interest in research.

It is hoped that there will be a mini-conference in 2016 to explore some of the issues that are shared with other parts of the national community.

Worship Studies Course

In the last couple of years, the action of five Districts facilitating the WSC Foundation Step, has paid dividends and resulted in an increase of participants registered on the Worship Studies Course Intermediate Step, and going on to the Advanced Step. At present, we have thirty-two Worship Studies (WSC) & Unitarian Studies (USC) participants. On the Intermediate Step of the WSC, there are twenty-two participants; five participants on the Advanced Step, and five participants on the USC Intermediate Step (two participants, of which, reside in South Africa). This year two participants on the WSC have been accepted and began training to become a Minister, at our Oxford College.

Under the vision of our very able and experienced tutors, and the leadership of Dawn Buckle as Convenor, the WSC has gone from strength to strength. It is with sadness and great reluctance that the WSC group said goodbye to Dawn upon her retirement on 9th October 2015. We wish to thank Dawn for over 20+ years of hard work. Her vision and her drive will be greatly missed. Dawn initiated and facilitated the Rites of Passage course, Pastoral Care Course, the Organisational Leadership Foundation Step, and the WSC Foundation Step, which has gone on to prepare many of our congregation members to fulfil the role of Lay Worship Leader. This has been increasingly important, as many of our congregations have no professional Minister.



This year, the WSC National Foundation Step ran in the North West Provincial Assembly, facilitated by Dawn Buckle, has been another success for the Movement, training and providing more Lay Worship leaders for our wider Movement. From this North-West training alone, four students have completed the assessments and graduated the Foundation Step, and three have moved on to the next step.

Nationally, twelve participants of the WSC Foundation Step have completed and received their Foundation Step Certificate in 2015. Six participants have moved from the Foundation Step to the Intermediate Step.

WSCG is pleased to announce the launch of an extended modular Advanced Step, and its new Tutors. This applies to both the WSC & USC. The Advanced Step furthers and deepens study of the four Intermediate Step modules and introduces four new modules, incorporating a broader subject range, and choice, ideal for worship in the 21st century. The modules are listed below, the first four modules, being first introduced at Intermediate level, and deepened at Advanced level.

The modules are:

- Unitarian theology/thought.
(Compulsory)
- Unitarian history - local / broader.
(Compulsory)
- Biblical studies
- Earth Centred Spirituality
- Intergenerational Worship
- Meditation & Contemplative Practices
- Women and Religion in a Unitarian Context
- World Religion within a Unitarian Context

A revised prospectus is now available and explains in detail, the Advanced Step new structure.

Finally, the WSCG wishes to express their gratitude for the continual service and good work of all the Tutors in training Lay Worship Leaders. Additionally, we wish to express our thanks to those who support the course and its work in numerous ways.

The Building Advisory Group

The Building Advisory Group [BAG] continues to be active, conducting most of its business by email. It met twice, at Styal and Mansfield. During the year a new member, Geoff Levermore, joined the group.

The Buildings Advisory Group's 'mission' is to offer practical guidance and suggestions on developing, financing, and maintaining our building stock. The main focus of the Group this year, as previous ones, has been on responding to requests for advice from various Unitarian places of worship and other denominational buildings. These are usually submitted via Essex Hall.

The main enquiries [new and ongoing] are listed below [in alphabetical order]:

Chatham: Advice has been given concerning the electrical rewiring of the premises.

Dukinfield: This architecturally important and listed Victorian chapel's ongoing problem of severe structural dry rot continues and has necessitated closure of the building. The chapel has received a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (in addition to others, including a much smaller one from the Gregson Trust). BAG keeps a watching brief, reminding the chapel that the problem of the leaking and corroded heating system still needs addressing.



Essex Hall, London: the Group continues to be represented with two members on both the Trustee body and Management Committee. Advice continues to be sought of BAG, and this included refurbishment of the building's cold water storage cisterns.

Great Hucklow: Advice on funding sources was sought.



Old Chapel, Great Hucklow

Mansfield: Advice was sought on heating options for the meeting house in view of the water leaks and corrosion in the existing Low Pressure Hot Water (LPHW) system.

Styal: The chapel installed a new boiler, but was disappointed with the resulting performance of the heating system. Advice has been given.

Plymouth: Ongoing advice has been given concerning disappointment at the performance of the new heating system. It is still hoped that a member of BAG will be able to visit to see the problem first-hand.

Warwick: On a visit to the chapel a member was asked for advice about preserving crumbling stonework.



Warwick Unitarian Chapel

York: BAG has been asked for advice and they intend to visit in early 2016

Activities at the 2015 GA Meetings: Howard Wilkins and Zoe Bremer attended and ran a stall showing videos and giving advice/leaflets.

Planned Activities at the 2016 GA Meetings: It is planned to hold a workshop session which will involve a number of BAG related topics including information about global warming and measurement of the energy performance of places of worship with a view to reducing the denomination's Carbon Footprint.

Hucklow Summer School



Hucklow Summer School 2015, on the theme 'Between the Dreaming and the Coming True', was a great success and kept up the very high standards that people have come to expect. The panel considered feedback from participants (via detailed evaluation forms) at a meeting in October and overall the comments were very positive indeed. The series of five outstanding theme talks were recorded and podcasts can be downloaded from: www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk.

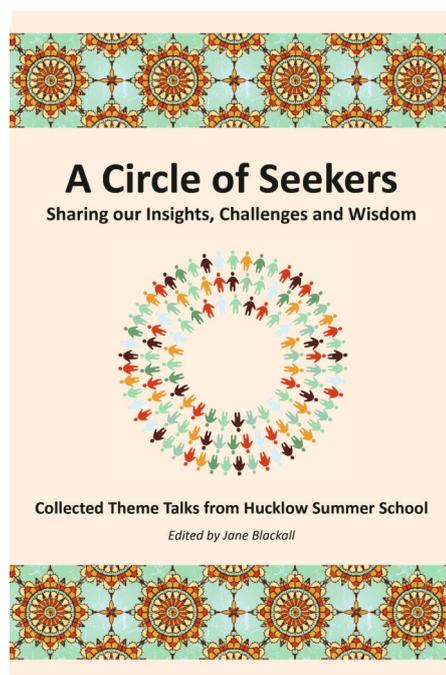
After a bumper year in 2014, our bookings were down somewhat this year, with 51 adults and 2 children. This may be simply due to natural fluctuations, as the event was vigorously promoted through all the usual channels, but we will keep an eye on this for next year's event. We usually aim to accommodate about 60 people but many participants commented that the centre was more comfortable for not being so full. Once again we achieved our target of one third of the people at Summer School being newcomers in 2015.

Kate Dean stepped down from the Summer School panel after this year's event, after four years of service, as she completed her ministerial training, and looked towards her new ministry in Lewisham.

Nick Morrice also stepped down after one year on the panel. We are delighted to have recruited a new member to the panel: Katie McKenna of Norwich Unitarians.

We have already decided on our theme for next year: 'This Changes Everything'. We are in the process of approaching theme speakers and engagement group facilitators. The dates for next year's Summer School will be 20-27 August 2016.

Aside from our regular activities the main achievement of the panel this year was the production of a book of theme talks from the last four years: 'A Circle of Seekers: Sharing our Insights, Challenges and Wisdom'. This was edited by Jane Blackall, funded in the first instance by Kensington Unitarians, and sold in aid of the Summer School Bursary Fund.



We are very proud of the high quality of these talks and are pleased that they can now reach a wider audience. Feedback on this book has been very positive and we understand that the NUF and several congregations are using the text for their own study groups. Copies of this book can be obtained for £10 + £2.50 P&P (cheques payable to 'Essex Church') via Jane Blackall, c/o Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8 4RT.



MINISTRY

A Wider View of Where We're Going

By Rev Daniel Costley

Mission Statement: To provide the General Assembly with excellent spiritual leadership with the skills and ability to develop and lead thriving religious communities.

The key area of project work for the Ministry Strategy Group in 2014/15 continued to be the work on the organisation and funding of Ministry training. We previously reported work on the new Ministerial Competencies, and these have since been submitted to the Executive Committee for approval. The Competencies, setting out the levels of attainment expected of Ministers in a variety of areas, were agreed this year, and have since been published on the General Assembly's website.

In considering the longer term options for Ministerial training, the Executive Committee asked the Ministry Strategy Group to review a number of different options through which training might be accessed. This reflects the changing circumstances of potential candidates for the Ministry, and is intended to consider opportunities for part-time study and distance-learning, alongside the more traditional routes we currently use. It also reflects consolidation that is taking place in training for other denominations. The Group engaged the services of an academic consultant to assist with this, and so far we have determined that there are a number of possible options to deliver various aspects of the training considered necessary if our new Ministers are to meet the necessary levels of competency.

This includes options both with and beyond existing providers, namely Unitarian College Manchester (UCM) and Harris Manchester College, Oxford (HMCO). In the period this report covers, we have not consulted directly

with any providers, focusing instead on scoping possibilities before entering into more structured discussion on how they might be delivered.

Work on the Categories of Ministry remains suspended as we gain a greater understanding of the opportunities and appropriate levels of recognition that a new Competency-based assessment might provide. Working closely with the Interview Panel, we hope to bring recommendations on this to the Executive Committee in 2015/16.

Our new Unitarian Ministers and Lay Pastors continue to be supported through the reinvigorated Mentoring programme.

A Ministry Inquiry Day was held in Manchester during the summer for people to find out more about ministry training and potential candidates are also encouraged to speak with our Director of Ministry about any queries they may have about training and about future work as a minister.

The Strategy Group is grateful to The Hibbert Trust for funding and organising another annual Ministry in the Making retreat for students. These retreats are clearly valued by those attending and form a useful opportunity for students from UCM and HMCO to get together.

All Ministers and Lay Pastors on the General Assembly Rolls are expected to behave with dignity and professionalism, and the Ministry Strategy Group and its members have continued to work with congregations where differences or concerns have arisen, ensuring satisfactory agreements and actions are achieved where necessary. We

are also responsible for the continuing Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks as part of our commitment to Safeguarding.

The Ministry Strategy Group would like to take this opportunity to voice its thanks to Rev Linda Phillips, the GA Director of Ministry, for all her support to the Group more widely, and her extensive work advising Ministers, Lay Pastors and congregations on a range of matters, but especially for the detailed work she undertakes around liaison with Ministers, Lay Pastors and congregations on vacancies, and safeguarding issues, as well as liaison with other denominational groups.

It has again been a busy year, and the busyness will continue for some time to come as we prepare, redraft, and rebuild our training agenda to ensure we and our Unitarian Ministers and Lay Pastors are ready for the future and the promise of thriving religious communities. Strong progress has been made over the twelve months, and we look forward to the next.

Interview Panel

By Rev Sarah Tinker

The Interview Panel has continued its regular cycle of work throughout the last year, meeting overnight in Oxford in early January to conduct interviews with potential ministry students and meeting in May in London for final interviews with students about to complete their training.

The role of Director of Ministry continues to be vital to our work and we thank Rev Linda Phillips for her effective management of so many varied tasks. This role often involves behind the scenes guidance to congregations and individuals. Much of the work of the Interview Panel has inevitably to remain confidential in order to respect individuals' privacy but our processes are regularly reviewed and candidates are offered verbal feedback if they wish.



*New Ministers after the Ceremony of Recognition at the Anniversary Service
(L-R): John Carter, Jo James, Maria Curtis, Shammy Webster, Anna Jarvis, Kate Whyman, Matthew Smith*



The Interview Panel is keen to let potential candidates for ministry training explore more about the call to the role of minister and the possibilities for training, at a Ministry Inquiry Day held each year. We also are glad to hear of a potential retreat for those interested in exploring their sense of calling to be led by the Ministerial Fellowship in May 2016.

In January 2015 the Interview Panel offered training places to Claire MacDonald and Andy Phillips to commence in Autumn 2015 at Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

During the academic year to the summer of 2015, 4 students were in training:

Harris Manchester College, Oxford: Kate Dean (formerly Buchanan), Kate McKenna

Unitarian College Manchester:
Philip Waldron, Rob Whiteman

Panel members were pleased to recommend that the Reverends Jim Corrigan and Helen Mills be admitted to the Roll with full status, following the completion of their probationary status. The Reverends Kate Dean and Philip Waldron were recommended for inclusion on the Roll with probationary status in Autumn 2015, following the successful completion of their academic studies.

In deciding on the number of training places available, the Interview Panel seeks prior guidance from the Executive Committee and the Ministry Strategy Group, to whom we report. We also encourage potential candidates to consider deeply their sense of calling to ministry and the many other ways that they might serve our Movement. Both those who conclude that their contribution to our Movement is not in trained ministry and those who do embark on ministry training deserve congratulations for their commitment and dedication and we would encourage our wider Movement to give them every support and encouragement.

Director of Ministry

By Rev Linda Phillips



As I approach retirement, I have been reflecting on the way in which this role has presented various different challenges in the years I've been in it, and the different types of work it has encompassed.

The role is essentially advisory. It involves, for example, talking to congregations who are preparing to go on the Vacancy List and those in ministry considering expressing an interest in a vacancy on the List, advising on safeguarding issues involving our ministry, and trying to ensure a mentoring partnership will be constructive, including helping with any difficulties that may arise with it. Of course, the role extends to all issues associated with ministry, and there are times when I find myself trying to assist in difficult situations.

On the other hand, there are elements of (sometimes testing!) administration included. Taking just the examples I've quoted: keeping the Ministerial Vacancy List up to date, distributing the safeguarding clearance documentation and sighting identity documents, checking that mentors and mentees are in active communication, and so on. This admin underpins what we do, and it's important to get it right.

I also support the Interview Panel and the Ministry Strategy Group in their work, which also encompasses both administrative and advisory elements – and similarly, some of this work can prove extremely challenging.

Every year brings its own project work. This year, it's been a real highlight to work with the unusual number of those newly-qualified in seeking their first positions, and to work with an abnormal number of congregations in preparing for potential new ministries. I see both as extremely healthy future signs.

Whatever I'm doing, however, the underlying purpose of all I do is to support our congregations and ministry. It has been a real privilege to have been able to fill this role.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Phillips".

VISIBILITY

Visibility Strategy Group

By James Barry

The established Visibility Strategy Group (VSG) projects have continued throughout the year with some hard working volunteers prepared to work on specific projects. It seems more difficult to recruit volunteers to the more conceptual work implied in a strategy group. Having said that, we are pleased to welcome two new members and hope that this will lead to some more imaginative ideas in the future. We look forward to the stimulus that should come from the action plans associated with the evolving vision project.

The VSG badge machine service (www.uccn.org.uk/badges) has been used by many Unitarian groups to help increase their visibility. I find wearing one often starts a conversation.

The Lindsey Press is a very important part of VSG and their year is detailed in a separate report.

The UKunitarianTV (www.ukunitarian.tv) film output has continued at a pace and there are now many different types of videos available online to help give a more up-to-date method of explaining who we are and what we stand for. Services appear online with increasing regularity, providing access to some worship for those who can't attend chapels and creating additional features for local websites. The YouTube account recently went through the 100,000 hits barrier indicating the value of the work. Recent donations have meant they have managed to develop a live broadcasting facility which will increase the accessibility of events which can be attended. There is also now a programme on the first Sunday of each month (www.sundaynightlive.tv).

The DUWIT (Development of Unitarian Websites & IT) team continues to assist with websites and now helps 140 Unitarian congregations, districts and societies. There are challenges ahead ensuring all the sites are fully 'mobile phone friendly' and coping with the increasing demand as groups understand the reality of the new digital age.



The 2015 UniComs Conference,
held at the Nightingale Centre

Uni-coms (formerly UCCN) continues to train people in various aspects of visibility at its annual gathering supported by VSG. We would like to thank the Hibbert Trust for additional funding for the November 2015 conference. (www.unicoms.org.uk)

Lindsey Press Panel

By David Dawson

The death of Kate Taylor in May 2015 was a severe blow to the Lindsey Press Panel. Kate had been the convenor of the Panel from its inception, in its present form, in 1997. She was completely dedicated to the cause of Unitarian publishing and tireless in the promotion of Lindsey Press publications. Kate would take on whatever jobs needed doing with good humour and meticulous attention to detail.

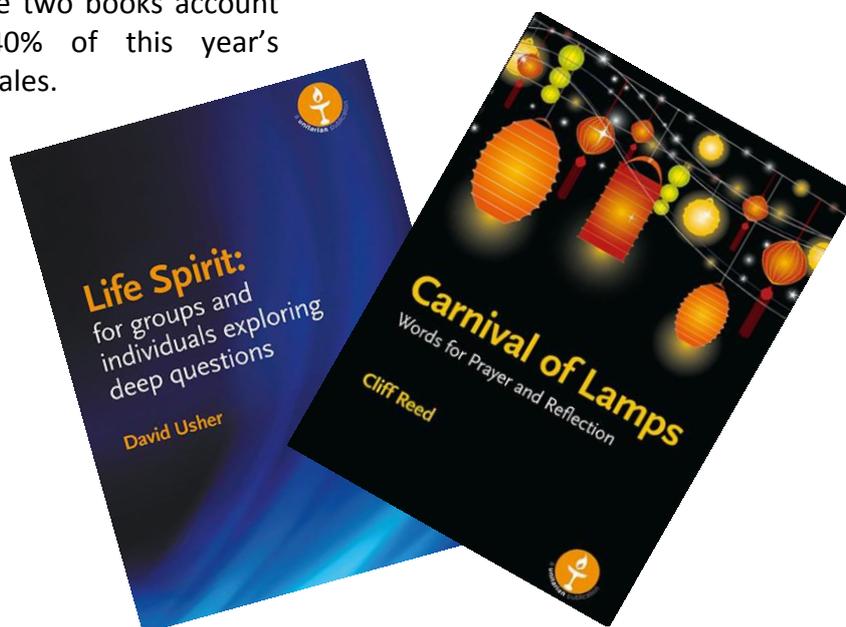
The Panel met three times during the year to monitor sales of existing books, to take forward books already in the pipeline and to plan for future publications. The books already available achieved satisfactory sales in 2014/15 with Essex Hall selling 669 and 185 sold on-line (854 in total). Two new books were launched at the 2015 GA meetings: *Life Spirit* (David Usher) meets the continuing need for accessible resources for exploring spirituality as part of a group as well as individually; and *Carnival of Lamps* (Cliff Reed) provides more useful worship material. These two books account for almost 40% of this year's Lindsey Press sales.

Unitarian? What's that?, *The Unitarian Life*, *Hymns for Living and Sing Your Faith* continue to sell well in spite of being available now for a number of years. These four publications account for just over 40% of annual sales. The Panel are striving to get better marketing and would welcome support in this from congregations. Please draw attention to Lindsey Press publications in your newsletters and notices.

Two books are at an advanced stage of preparation and will be launched at GA 2016. Kate Whyman has commissioned a wide range of authors to explain how they bring their Unitarian beliefs into the way they live (*Living with Integrity...*). Catherine Robinson has worked with historian Alan Ruston to bring a selection of his extensive writings to a wider audience (*On the Side of Liberty: A Unitarian Historical Miscellany*).

Andrew Hill's *Celebrating Life* has been a useful text for Unitarians marking rites of passage. It is now out of print and in some sections it no longer reflects current legislation. Working with the Ministerial Fellowship we hope to solve this problem in the longer term. Updated text regarding same-sex marriage has already been pasted into *Unitarian? What's that?*

We record our thanks to Audrey Longhurst for her management of book sales from Essex Hall, and providing us with statistical details; and also to Derek McAuley for his very active involvement in the work of this Panel.



The Penal Affairs Panel (PAP) is a social responsibility activity of the Unitarians.

By Bruce Chilton

The Panel was formed in 1992 out of the General Assembly's "great concern at the poor conditions and regime at many local prisons" and was directed "to investigate the current situation on... penal policy, to keep the denomination informed..., and to provide a liberal religious voice in response... to current legislation."

Deterioration of the conditions for prisoners in UK prisons and detention centres has continued in the year 2014 -15. The "austerity measures" required by the Coalition Government to May 15 have been increased by the new Conservative Government across most departments and not least in the Prison Service. There are continuing plans to increase further the number of prison places beyond 90,000, notwithstanding that this is more than double the prison population of under 45,000 in 1992 and most crime figures have now been falling steadily for more than five years. The number of persons in detention under the Immigration Acts rose by 16% in the year ended March 15 to 3,480.

There is some good news. The total number of prisoners has ceased to grow and has stabilised around 86,000. The numbers of imprisoned women and children have fallen. It may be good news that the Secretary of State for Justice appointed in May 15, Michael Gove MP, has demonstrated a liberal attitude by scrapping the restrictions of books in the Incentives and Privileges Scheme in UK prisons. Mr Gove has previously supported drug therapy counselling for prisoners and has indicated his willingness to review the changes to Probation hurriedly introduced by his predecessor as Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling MP.

The PAP has continued to inform Unitarians and provide "a liberal, religious voice in response..." It has met three times this year and issued two PAP Issues Papers, No.17 "Immigration – Myths, Perceptions and Reality" and No.18 "Probation's Rehabilitation Agenda – Can Organisational Change Produce Results?" Further PAP articles have appeared in The Inquirer. PAP News has now passed its 20th edition. All PAP publications are sent online to the PAP Network and so to Unitarian churches, chapels and meetinghouses. Do join the 300 Unitarians in the PAP Network. The past PAP Issues Papers and PAP News are available on the PAP webpage found at www.unitarian.org.uk.

The PAP's Presentation at the GA's annual meetings at the NEC in March was "Immigration Myths and Reality". It used electronic survey handsets to question a small and lively audience about their knowledge and perceptions about immigration to the UK. An obvious question is what proportion of the population does UK residents think were born outside of the UK. Ipsos-Mori and other surveys have found the UK public estimates 32% but the national Census in 2011 found about 12.1%. Why are UK attitudes so far from reality? You can find the major survey on www.ipsos-mori.com/DownloadPublication/1634_sri-perceptions-and-reality-immigration-report-2013.pdf

Two new members have answered the search by the PAP for more Unitarians to join in this important work of "informing" and "responding". We now hope our number of publications and other activities can increase. All the Panel's members see social responsibility and action as an equal and essential part of religious inquiry. Do you?



WELSH DEPARTMENT

By Melda Grantham

During the last year the Welsh Department has been as active and lively as usual, with the main focus being on raising the profile of Unitarianism in Wales.



Working in partnership with Addoldai Cymru (Welsh Religious Buildings Trust) offered many opportunities to promote the Movement in many different ways. Although the main focus was the restoration of Yr Hen Gapel, Llwynrhydowen, there was invariably an opportunity to draw attention to the Movement in general. The Faith Trail leaflet produced detailed a route from Penrhiw chapel which is at St Fagans National History Museum at Cardiff to Llwynrhydowen and Y Smotyn Du. These were designed for people outside of the Movement to learn about our history and to be able to locate our chapels, and have been very popular with tourists and those interested in the religious heritage of Wales.

The restoration of Yr Hen Gapel itself attracted a great deal of media interest and we were able to extend the interest by launching initiatives like "Sponsor a Slate" which kept the story going for longer. This also meant that there were "knock-on" opportunities for Unitarians to appear in the media. It was officially re-opened on 10 July 2015 when the broadcaster Huw Edwards handed the keys to Rev Wyn Thomas in front of an audience of invited guests which provided an excellent opportunity to raise the profile of the Unitarians and to bring the Movement to the attention of the wider world. The event was broadcast on the S4C programme Heno, and there were also interviews on many other programmes including the BBC English language news, Wales Today and the Coast and Countryside programme.

Although the chapel does not now belong to the Unitarians, Addoldai Cymru is always ready to include the Unitarians and to nurture the relationship between us.

Rev Eric Jones also hit the headlines this summer when he performed the first same-sex marriage ceremony in a religious building in Wales at Highland Place Aberdare. We hope that this will be the first of many.

Earlier this year the Rev Carie Johnsen, an American UU minister from Augusta Maine, took a sabbatical in Wales and built up such a good relationship with the congregations that she came back for longer in the summer. During this time she attended and took services at most of the chapels with the result being that several of the congregations are now being "partnered" with congregations in America.

The two District Associations have been busy as usual providing many opportunities for people to come together. The Unitarians have proved their generosity once again by supporting several different charities, and special mention must be made of the £4,000 raised by the South Wales District at their annual sponsored walk which this year was in aid of the Dialysis Unit at Glangwili Hospital Carmarthen.

The individual congregations are looking ahead and six of them are actively seeking a Minister. Rev Lewis Rees will be starting at Nottage shortly and we wish him every success. Bangor Unitarians are reaching a landmark 50 services in December and we congratulate them and wish them well for the future.



I have represented the Unitarians and taken an active role on the Inter-Faith Council of Wales during the past year, and have enjoyed attending many Inter Faith events. One of the highlights was being invited by the Muslim Council of Wales to a dinner at Cardiff City Hall where the guest speaker was the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We are also very pleased that the Inter Faith Council this year for the first time has decided to venture out of Cardiff to launch the Inter Faith week at Llwynrhydowen chapel. The Inter Faith Council was set up by the Welsh government and is the only body that the Government consults with on every issue. Other groups, bodies & organisations, such as the WCVA etc. are consulted on the areas that directly affect them, but the Welsh Government have wisely recognised that faith and religious leaders have a significant contribution to make in all areas.

Recently, I was pleased to sit on a focus group to respond to the draft Equalities Policy of the Welsh Government. Working behind the scenes to influence government policy and to ensure a

fairer world for everyone is a challenge and a responsibility that the Welsh Unitarians do not shy away from.

The Welsh Department will be creating a Development and Action plan in the coming weeks and months which will run in tandem with the Vision Papers published by the EC. The aim is that it will provide a focus, and determine priorities so that our efforts provide the maximum impact. It is envisaged that this will be fairly similar to the EC version but will no doubt have a Welsh "twist".

All in all it looks like being another very busy year with the members of the Welsh Department committee, the District Associations, the congregations and the individual members all playing their part in keeping the flame burning and ensuring that the Unitarian values of Nurturing Faith, Embracing Life and Celebrating Difference are always put in to practice in Wales.



Broadcaster Huw Edwards (L) hands the keys to the restored Yr Hen Gapel, Llwynrhydowen, to Rev Wyn Thomas (R)



YOUTH Our Future



The Children's Story at the Anniversary Service

There's been a **lot of change** within the Youth Panel this year. During the last 12 months the Panel has been composed of Sue Talbot (Chair), Vanessa Rothwell (Vice Chair), John Harley (Youth Coordinator), Claire Maddocks, Ella Field, Christina Smith, Jen Hazel, Sarah Atkinson, Bethan Branagh, and Emma Nichols acting as Marketing Officer. A number of people have, for personal reasons, decided to step down; Ella (Sept 2014), and Sue, Vanessa, Bethan, Emma and Sarah (Sept 2015). This, whilst sad to lose their input and expertise, provides a fantastic opportunity to allow a new team to form and shape the future of the Youth Programme. We welcomed Mattie Pugh to the team in September 2015, with others following shortly.

During this time of change, the Youth Panel/ Programme have continued to deliver high quality **annual provision** of 9 residential weekends, contributing to the GA programme, and a continual training and mentoring scheme for new leaders. During 2014-15 a total of 108 places were taken up on our successful and high-quality events (37 on junior weekends, 17 at inter weekends, 18 attended the senior weekends, 15 at bridging weekend, 11 at fun days away, and 10 at Unikids).

Early 2015 saw the third **youth leaders' conference**. This event was held with the generous support of the Wood Green Trust. It allows us to bring together all the youth leaders from across the country, who are ordinarily somewhat isolated by being spread across different teams; to train, share best practice/tools/tips, and equally as important - team build.

I think it says it all by quoting Jim Blair's feedback 'I left with new friends, a bigger tool kit, more confidence'. So many good ideas and bubbling enthusiasm come out of these weekends - many of which will no doubt be re-evaluated by the new Youth Panel, to assess what can be taken forward by the Youth Programme in the short to medium term. Plus we had a number of new volunteers join the team as a result.

Stone Soup delivered another superb session in the **Youth Panel slot at the GA** themed around 'life is like a box of chocolates' (playing on Birmingham's Cadbury's connection). Groups worked together to come up with a brand and strapline for their spiritual chocolate bar. Great feedback was received.

One of the new activities this year was a trip for several of our young people and leaders to visit **Prague Unitarian Church** late 2014, and returning the invite for a number of the Prague youth to join a very special Bridging weekend with the Brits at Great Hucklow this Summer (2015). During these events, ideas were swapped and friends were made. This marked the first, but hopefully not the last, international youth link to be forged. This type of trip/connection has repeatedly popped up as 'moments of magic' for previous generations, so is something we were keen to support. Three attendees from the UK applied and were awarded a Youth Panel Travel Grant, and all three provided feedback by sharing their experiences in the form of articles for the Inquirer, our newsletter, and social media outputs.

As I take some time out from both the Youth Panel and Youth Programme (as part of the junior weekend team and youth roadshows), I wanted to take the opportunity to thank all those who have, and continue, to so warmly support the work of the Youth Programme. Instead I now refocus my efforts on making more attendees for these events – only 5 years until my little girl Poppy can go on her first junior weekend. I hope she has as glorious a time as I did there when I was 7. I'm excited for her! Long may this wonderful work continue.

By Sue Talbot

THE NIGHTINGALE CENTRE

A Spiritual Home



By Dorothy Hewerdine & Richard Merritt

Once again, this has been a busy and productive year for The Nightingale Centre. The Management Committee is very aware of the additional work and patience demanded of the Manager and staff. As improvements are made to the standard of the facilities offered to guests, all staff members have to cope with major disruptions to their normal routines. They do this cheerfully led by Manager, Stella Burney, whose enthusiasm and creativity inspires commitment and flexibility to cope with the inevitable disruptions. The Management Committee wishes to express its deep appreciation for Stella and all members of staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure that guests leave the Centre wanting to return for more of the warm hospitality they have experienced.

There have been a few changes within the staff team. Julie Dadson left at the end of the summer after working hard to develop the garden. The Committee warmly thanks Julie for ensuring that the gardens are providing both a beautiful and peaceful environment for guests and also many supplies for the kitchen. The home-grown fruit, vegetables and herbs are much appreciated by guests and help the Centre to move forward in its quest to reduce its

carbon footprint by sourcing supplies locally whenever possible. This has also been helped by the funds raised through selling Kath Ryder's Ted puppets throughout the year and the sale of plants raised and potted up by Julie. Sam Bradwell has stepped in to continue Julie's work. There have been changes too in the kitchen and house staff and thanks are due to all who have contributed to the smooth running of the Centre during the year.

One of the highlights of the year was gaining the facility to offer bicycles for use by guests, a secure storage for guests' own bicycles and a cycle washing facility in the car park. The Roundhouse was completed and now offers a meditative space for groups to use as well as a learning opportunity for school groups staying at the Centre.



The Roundhouse



Visitors to the Centre have appreciated the new, improved notice boards and signage, especially when arriving in the dark.

Plans for the coming year include:

- ⇒ More en suite bedrooms
- ⇒ Changes to the dining room to allow more space for larger groups
- ⇒ Improving the heating system
- ⇒ An upgrade to The Hibbert Room
- ⇒ Updating of technological facilities for use by guests
- ⇒ Improvement of food storage facilities

The Management Committee considers very carefully the feedback from all users of the Centre and strives to make improvements that will enhance the experience of guests. This is essential in a competitive market. We look forward to continuing to make both small and major improvements during the coming year.



A look at the Centre's brochure each year provides a glimpse of the wide range of organisations which use the Centre. Primarily, in line with the Centre's underlying objectives, we provide a venue for twenty to thirty Unitarian events each year and a challenge is to help ensure people know about them. We continue to do this through our website,

our annual brochure, Uni-News, regular event lists in the Unitarian with occasional specific promotional articles in the Unitarian and Inquirer.

Some churches and districts have included information about Nightingale Centre events in their own magazines. If more did this, it would help further in putting Unitarians in touch with the raft of events on offer. The information to include is contained on the Centre's website under *What's On*.

There are many other organisations using the Centre, including several faith and other charitable organisations. Attracting new groups continues to be essential in ensuring the Centre has a viable occupancy level. Additionally it provides good outreach, an additional means of connecting Unitarianism to the wider world. Of course marketing the Centre to a wide range of different client targets requires a multifaceted approach. In consequence our website is structured according to different client groups. Likewise, within the groupaccommodation.com site we distinguish between commercial, youth and general groupings. Additionally we advertise through a number of sources of promotion, each aimed at a different client group, for example the *Walk* magazine, *Cycling World* and the Retreat Association's website. Geographically specific websites such as *Peak District Online* assist further. An article on the Centre appeared in the Christmas edition of *Derbyshire Life* following an interview with the manager.



A significant boost to our promotion has been the awarding of a four-star Visit England hostel award along with the license to use the *Walkers Welcome* and *Cyclists Welcome* logos.



In June, we again held an Open Day giving newcomers to the Centre and insight into what is provided and providing a chance to see the improvements made since their previous visit.

Thanks are due to the staff team, to the other helpers on the day, to Gwyneth Roper for co-ordinating the event and all those who came along to visit the Centre.

We remain indebted to many people in our promotion of the Centre. Apart from the Manager, staff and Management Committee, we are grateful to all those who from time to time have provided photographs or helped in other ways with the marketing effort. And our thanks go to all those who continue to spread the word about the Centre. This remains vital, and our best marketing tool.



Hucklow Open Day 2015

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S STATEMENT

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S STATEMENT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF UNITARIAN & FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

We have examined the summarised financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2015 set out on pages **37** and **38**.

Respective responsibilities of the trustees and the auditor

The trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law and the recommendations of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP).

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statements with the full annual financial statements and the Trustees' Annual Report.

We also read other information contained in the summarised annual report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statements.

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 2008/3 issued by the Auditing Practices Board.

Opinion

In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full annual financial statements and the Trustees' Annual Report of The General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches for the year ended 30 September 2015.

Shaw Gibbs Limited

SHAW GIBBS LIMITED
Chartered Certified Accountants & Statutory Auditor
264 Banbury Road
Oxford
OX2 7DY

TRUSTEES' STATEMENT

The auditor has issued an unqualified report on the full annual financial statements of The General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches for the year ended 30 September 2015 and on the consistency of the Trustees' Report with those financial statements.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Financial Summary - Income

By Colin Farey,
Finance Manager



The income of the General Assembly was £713,888 (2014: £713,783) in the year ended 30th Sept 2015.

This total includes income from the Annual Meetings and courses we run such as Summer School where there is an equivalent amount of expenditure.

Our real income comes from a number of different sources:

- Live Giving
- Bowland Trust
- Grants from Essex Hall Trust & the B&FUA
- Legacies
- Sales of Books
- Investment Income

Live Giving increased by 12% to £176,083. The year included a new donation of £3,000 for a Rosenberg Youth Travel Fund. A claim for Gift Aid for the second half of 2014-15 is yet to be submitted. The 2014-15 Associate Membership revenue figure was reduced by £1,817 to £14,202 due to an over estimate of Gift Aid in 2013-14. The number of Associate Members shown in the Annual Report 2015 is 288 compared to 271 in the Annual Reports 2014. Funds raised from the Congregational Quota were £108,305 compared to £101,275 the year before, an increase of 7%.

The **Bowland Trust** grant was £152,500, compared to £151,838 in 2013-14.

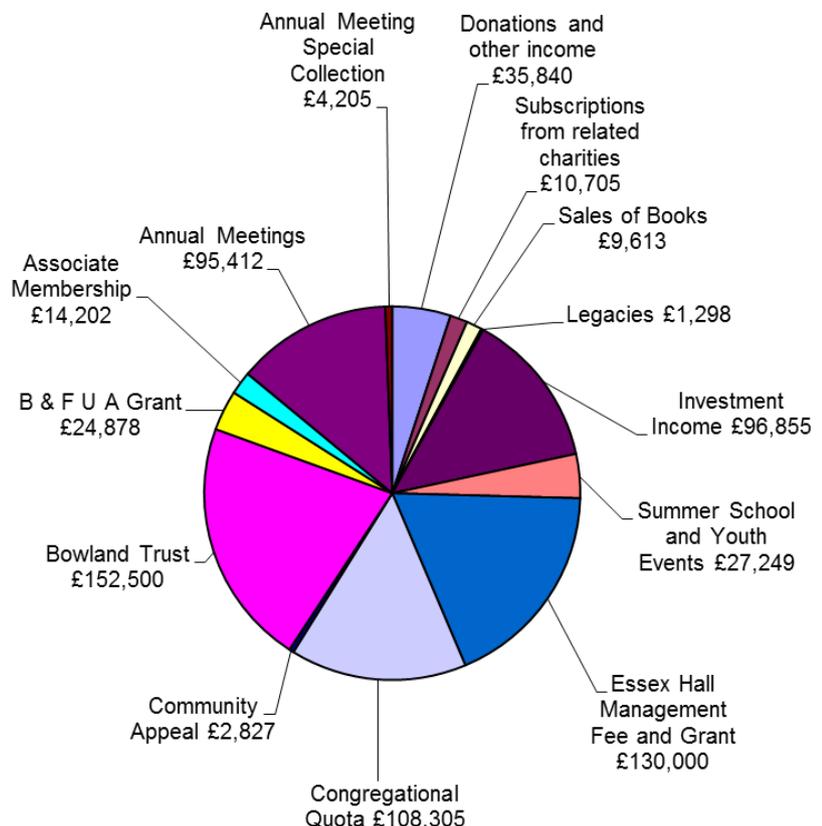
Grants from the Essex Hall Trust and Management fees charged to the Trust were £60,000 along with a gift-in-kind of free office space valued at £70,000. The overall grant decreased by £13,750 but there was an exceptional increase of £20,000 in 2013-14. The **B&FUA Grant** was £24,878 a decrease of £3,526 (12%).

Legacy Income was £1,298 in 2014-15 (£0 2013-14).

Income from the **Sales of Books** was £9,613 compared to last year's sales of £6,988.

Investment Income was £96,855 (£79,415 2013-14), an increase of £17,440 (22%). This includes a net gain of £15,739 from the disposal of a jointly held leasehold property. Overall, this represented a return on the value of investments of 5.3%.

Income



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Financial Summary - Expenditure

The expenditure of the General Assembly was £709,904 (2014: £794,115) in the year ended 30th Sept 2015.

This includes the expenditure from the Annual Meetings and courses we run such as Summer School where there is an equivalent amount of income.

Strategy Group Programme activities includes the Local Leadership, Visibility and Ministry strategy groups and also the Youth Programme and Welsh Programme and cost £212,686, 73% of which is GA staff time. This is a decrease of £36,006 (14%) on the previous year. Excluding salaries, the net cost of programme activities was £57,162. The cost of committee activities for these groups was £4,060, a decrease in costs of £3,862.

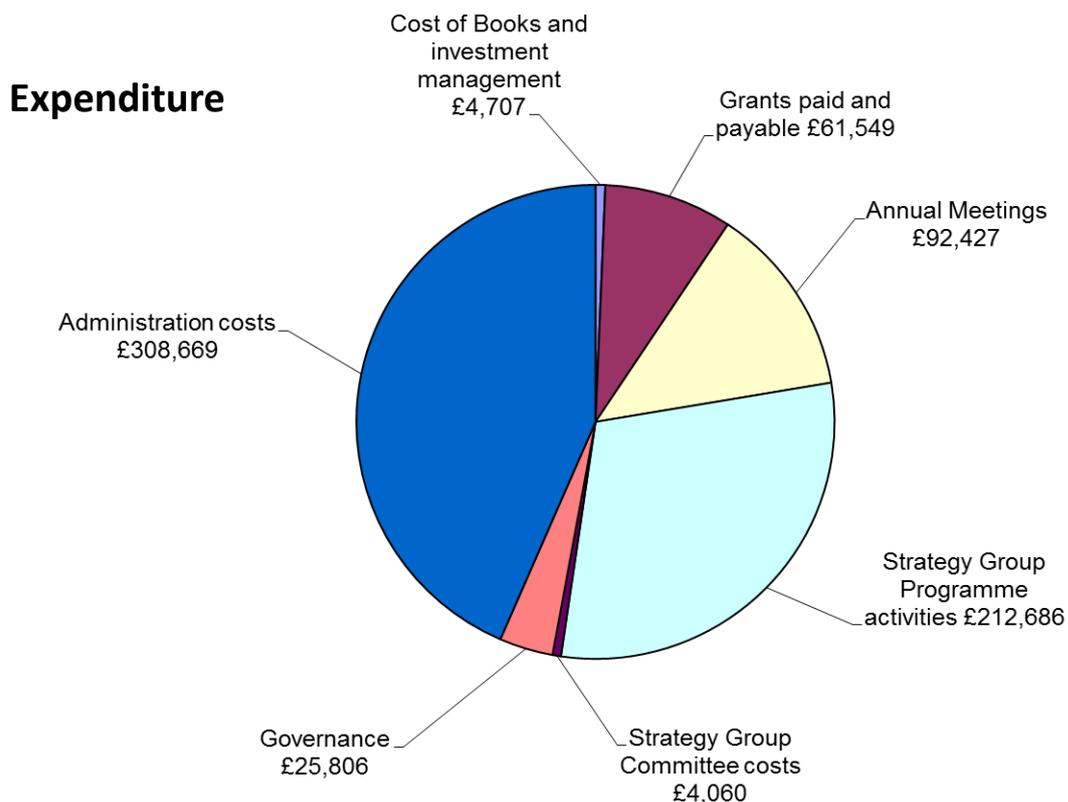
Grants were £61,549 - £46,524 (57%) lower than in 2013-14. However, grants in 2013-14 were £28,922 higher than in 2012-13.

Administration costs were £308,669, an increase of £7,710 (3%) on 2013-14.

The additional spend reflected the continued investment in upgrading the GA's IT resources during the year.

The cost of governance and EC activities was £25,806 compared to £20,221 the previous year, an increase of £5,585 (28%). This includes the retired ministers' costs at the Annual Meeting and support for the Safeguarding programmes together with the costs of the Executive Committee.

The withdrawal penalty payable to The Pension Trust should there be no contributing members in the staff pension plan has been accounted for as a liability in the balance sheet and the change in the liability has been shown in the Income and Expenditure report. The liability shown in the 2014 statements was estimated at £186,068. In the 2015 statements the liability had increased by £70,130 to £256,198 and this increase has been charged to the Income and Expenditure account.



Balance Sheet

Total Balance Sheet of the Assets managed by the General Assembly at 30 September 2015

| | 2015 | 2015 | 2014 | 2014 |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Fixed Assets | | | | |
| Tangible Assets | 118,959 | | 128,376 | |
| Investments | <u>2,394,522</u> | | <u>2,388,154</u> | |
| | | 2,513,481 | | 2,516,530 |
| Current Assets | | | | |
| Stocks | 5,053 | | 4,913 | |
| Loans | 1,388 | | 2,784 | |
| Debtors | 145,160 | | 174,190 | |
| Short Term Deposits | 25,511 | | 100,187 | |
| Cash at Bank and in hand | <u>109,569</u> | | <u>12,007</u> | |
| | | 286,680 | | 294,081 |
| Current Liabilities | | | | |
| Creditors falling due within one year | <u>(47,118)</u> | | <u>(67,920)</u> | |
| Net Current Assets | | 239,562 | | 226,161 |
| Long term Liabilities | | (256,198) | | (186,068) |
| Total Assets less Liabilities | | <u>2,496,845</u> | | <u>2,556,623</u> |
| General Funds | | 1,387,264 | | 1,455,200 |
| Designated Funds | | 151,819 | | 135,141 |
| Restricted Funds | | 334,703 | | 345,876 |
| Endowment Funds | | 623,059 | | 620,406 |
| Total Funds | | <u>2,496,845</u> | | <u>2,556,623</u> |

Income and Expenditure Report

| Where the money came from | 2014-15 | 2013-14 |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Voluntary Income | | |
| Legacies | 1,298 | 0 |
| Associate Membership fees received | 14,202 | 18,500 |
| Subscriptions from Related Charities | 10,705 | 9,775 |
| Congregational Quota | 108,305 | 101,275 |
| Community Appeal | 2,827 | 3,705 |
| Annual Meeting Special Collection | 4,205 | 7,161 |
| Bowland Trust | 152,500 | 151,838 |
| Sundry Donations and other income | 35,840 | 17,267 |
| Essex Hall Management Fee and Grant | 130,000 | 143,750 |
| B&FUA Grant | 24,878 | 28,404 |
| | 484,759 | 481,675 |
| Sales of Books | 9,613 | 6,988 |
| Furtherance of GA Objects | 27,249 | 38,605 |
| Investment Income | 96,855 | 79,415 |
| Annual Meetings Income | 95,412 | 107,701 |
| | 713,888 | 713,784 |
| Where we spent our money | | |
| Cost of Books and Investment Management | 4,707 | 3,744 |
| Grants paid and payable | 61,549 | 108,073 |
| Annual Meetings | 92,427 | 104,504 |
| Strategy Group Programme activities | 212,686 | 248,692 |
| Strategy Group Committee costs | 4,060 | 7,922 |
| Governance | 25,806 | 20,221 |
| Administration costs | 308,669 | 300,959 |
| | 709,904 | 794,115 |
| Net Incoming Resources | 3,984 | (80,331) |
| Gains/(losses) on investments | 6,369 | 162,887 |
| Recognition of "withdrawal penalty" on staff pension fund | (70,130) | 67,359 |
| | (59,777) | 149,915 |

Millennium Fund Grants 2014—2015

| | | £ |
|------------------------|--|----------------|
| Portsmouth | Equipment | £1,485 |
| Norwich | Professional fees | £6,000 |
| Brighton | Professional fees | £780 |
| SimpleGifts | Workshops to share Social Action knowledge | £5,540 |
| York | AV and Sound system | £,2000 |
| Ministerial Fellowship | Retreat for those considering ministry | £2,500 |
| Bridgwater | AV and Sound system | £1,000 |
| | Total: | £19,305 |



THE NIGHTINGALE CENTRE

Financial Summary

By Colin Partington MBE, Financial Secretary

This has been a good trading year with a healthy net surplus, despite the increasingly challenging financial environment.

Many new customers were attracted to the Centre partly due to our award of **Visit England** Four Star rating.



Wages expenditure is well controlled, but it is below the budget partly due to the difficulty of recruiting temporary staff, resulting in long hours for some of the staff during part of the year. Thus the low wages bill is likely to rise next year. Food costs were kept under good control, whilst maintaining high quality. Repairs and Maintenance costs were again higher than budgeted for, but resulted in improvements at the Centre. The investment in energy saving measures at the Centre have kept our Utilities costs lower than for several years.

Donations were the highest for several years (thank you) and overall the Centre made a net surplus of about £26,000. This will help us to further improve our national beloved home.

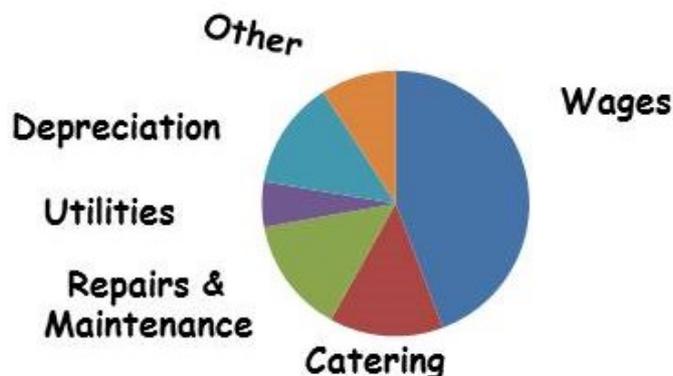
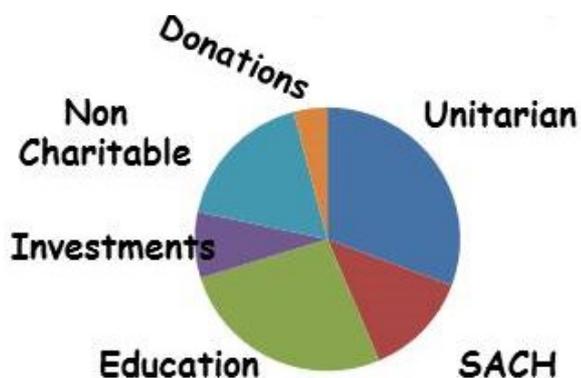
Income and Expenditure Report

| Where the money comes from | 2014-2015 (£) | 2013-2014 (£) |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Donations | 13,916 | 8,002 |
| Charitable Activities | 237,572 | 211,869 |
| Non Charitable Activities | 59,393 | 52,967 |
| Investment Income | 27,399 | 29,556 |
| Total incoming Resources | 338,280 | 302,394 |
| Where we spent the money | | |
| Providing the Services -Charitable | 247,757 | 242,708 |
| Providing the services -non-charitable | 61,939 | 60,677 |
| Governance Costs | 870 | 850 |
| Total Outgoing Resources | 310,566 | 304,235 |
| Net Incoming resources | 27,714 | (1,841) |
| Gains/losses on investment assets | (1,517) | 424 |
| <u>Net Movement of Funds</u> | <u>26,197</u> | <u>(1,417)</u> |



Where our money comes from:

How the money is spent



Balance Sheet

Total Assets of The Nightingale Centre as at 30 September 2014

| | 2015 | 2015 | 2014 | 2014 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Fixed Assets | | | | |
| Tangible Assets | 2,124,459 | | 2,152,878 | |
| Investments | 53,147 | | 4,664 | |
| | | 2,177,606 | | 2,157,542 |
| Current Assets | | | | |
| Stocks | 1,262 | | 3,029 | |
| Debtors | 148,433 | | 149,179 | |
| Cash at Bank and in hand | 204,291 | | 178,810 | |
| | | 353,986 | | 346,827 |
| Current Liabilities | | | | |
| Creditors falling due within one year | (60,154) | | (43,319) | |
| Net Current Assets | | 293,832 | | 287,699 |
| <u>Total Assets</u> | | 2,471,438 | | 2,445,241 |



THE SUSTENTATION FUND

Financial Summary

By Michael Tomlin – Chair

Sustentation Fund: The accounts for the year ended 30 September 2015 showed an operating surplus of £3,590 (2014: surplus £511). After a year-end market revaluation loss of £11,472 (2014: gain £19,240) there was an overall loss of £7,882 (2014: gain £19,751).

Lay Pastors' Fund: The accounts for the year ended 30 September 2015 showed an operating surplus of £517 (2014: surplus £480). After a year-end market revaluation loss of £890 (2014: gain £977) there was an overall loss of £373 (2014: gain £1,457).

Investments

Newton Investment Management Ltd continued as Investment Manager, but no longer on a discretionary basis, and participated with the Trustees in the Unitarian Investment Panel.

The Trustees pursue an investment policy that provides revenue for their current purposes and enhances income and capital growth over the longer term, thereby enabling them to meet their current and future objectives in accordance with the purpose of the fund.

Balance Sheet

Total Balance Sheet of the Assets managed by the Sustentation Fund at 30 September 2015

| | 2015 | 2015 | 2014 | 2014 |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| Fixed Assets | | | | |
| Investments | | 444,523 | | 456,885 |
| Current Assets | | | | |
| Cash at Bank and in hand | 27,390 | | 23,063 | |
| Income Tax recoverable | 157 | | 377 | |
| | 27,547 | | 23,440 | |
| Current liabilities | | | | |
| | 0 | | 0 | |
| Net Current assets | | 27,547 | | 23,440 |
| Total assets less liabilities | | 472,070 | | 480,325 |
| The Sustentation Fund | | 452,485 | | 460,367 |
| The Lay Pastors fund | | 19,585 | | 19,958 |
| Total Funds | | 472,070 | | 480,325 |



Income and Expenditure Report

| | 2014-15 £ | 2014-15 £ | 2013-14 £ | 2013-14 £ |
|--|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Sustentation | Lay Pastors | Sustentation | Lay Pastors |
| Where the money came from | | | | |
| Bank Interest and Income from Investments | 19,021 | 517 | 19,035 | 480 |
| Donations | 1,700 | | 1,751 | |
| Total Incoming Resources | 20,721 | 517 | 20,786 | 480 |
| Where we spent our money | | | | |
| Grants | (16,800) | 0 | (19,775) | 0 |
| Administration Expenses | (331) | | (500) | |
| Operating Surplus / (Deficit) | 3,590 | 517 | 511 | 480 |
| Gains/(Losses) on Investments | (11,472) | (890) | 19,268 | 977 |
| Investment Management Fees | 0 | | (28) | |
| Total Increase/(Reduction) in Funds Value | (7,882) | (373) | 19,751 | 1,457 |

The Congregations to whom we gave money

(Combined Sustention Fund and Lay Pastors' Fund)

| | 2015 | 2014 |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Bolton Bank Street | 1,600 | 1,500 |
| Bolton Unity | 0 | 750 |
| Bolton Egerton | 1,200 | 1,050 |
| Bristol Unitarian Meeting Group | 0 | 375 |
| Chorlton | 800 | 750 |
| Chowbent | 0 | 1,500 |
| Croydon | 0 | 1,500 |
| Cotswold Group | 0 | 1,500 |
| Doncaster | 0 | 1,050 |
| Edinburgh | 1,600 | 1,500 |
| Knutsford | 800 | 750 |
| Macclesfield | 1,600 | 1,500 |
| Monton | 1,600 | 0 |
| Oldham | 1,200 | 1,050 |
| Padiham | 800 | 0 |
| Portsmouth | 0 | 1,500 |
| Rochdale | 1,600 | 0 |
| South Wales Group | 3,200 | 2,000 |
| Stannington | 0 | 750 |
| Urmston, Queens Road | 800 | 750 |
| | 16,800 | 19,775 |



BEING A CHARITY

Operating Within the Rules

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

Registered Charity No 250788

The Nightingale Centre

Registered Charity No 242256

The Sustentation Fund

Registered Charity No 235449

The General Assembly :

- Is a charity in its own right
- acts as a 'supervisory charity' to many congregations with 'excepted' status
- Is considered a parent charity under law to the Nightingale Centre and the Sustentation Fund

The objects of the General Assembly:

Preamble

We, the constituent congregations, affiliated societies and individual members, uniting in a spirit of mutual sympathy, co-operation, tolerance and respect; and recognising the worth and dignity of all people and their freedom to believe as their consciences dictate; and believing that truth is best served where the mind and conscience are free, acknowledge that the Object of the Assembly is:

Object

To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition.

To this end, the Assembly may:

Encourage and unite in fellowship bodies which uphold the religious liberty of their members, unconstrained by the imposition of creeds;

Affirm the liberal religious heritage and learn from the spiritual, cultural and intellectual insights of all humanity;

Act where necessary as the successor to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and National Conference of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian and other Non-Subscribing or Kindred Congregations, being faithful to the spirit of their work and principles (see appendix to the constitution), providing always that this shall in no way limit the complete doctrinal freedom of the constituent churches and members of the Assembly;

Do all other such lawful things as are incidental to the attainment of the above Object.

In reference to the penultimate clause of Object, the following is a statement of the Objects of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, as set forth in Rule 2 of its Constitution:

The diffusion and support of the principles of Unitarian Christianity, including the formation and assistance of Congregations which do not require for themselves or their Ministers subscription to any doctrinal articles of belief; the publication and circulation of biblical, theological, scientific and literary knowledge related to Unitarian Christianity; the doing of all such other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects or any of them.



The following is a statement of the Objects of the National Conference of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian and other Non-Subscribing or Kindred Congregations, as set forth in Rule 1 of its Constitution:

To consult, and when considered advisable to take action, on matters affecting the well-being and interests of the Congregations and Societies on the Roll of the Conference, as by directing attention, suggesting plans, organising expressions of opinion, raising funds to carry out the foregoing objects.

The objects of the Nightingale Centre:

(1) The object of the charity is, for the benefit of the public, to further the religious and other charitable work of the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches including:

(a) the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, financial hardship or other disadvantage; and

(b) the provision of facilities for the education of students of educational establishments.

Subject to the provisions of clauses 5 (Power to dispose of purpose property) and 10 (Disposal of land), the land identified in the schedule to this scheme must be retained by the trustees for use for the object of the charity.

The objects of the Sustentation Fund:

To aid the maintenance of faithful and efficient Ministers and Lay Pastors serving congregations affiliated to the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

Trustees

The **Trustees of the General Assembly** are the Members of the GA Executive Committee, which comprises the Honorary Treasurer and eight elected Members (Members may be co-opted to fill vacancies) as listed below.

GA Executive Committee

Members: Marion Baker
(from April 2015)
James Barry
Rev John Clifford
(until April 2015)
Sir Philip Colfox
(from May 2015)
Joan Cook
Robert Ince
Gwynn Pritchard
(from April 2015)
Rev Lynne Readett
(from May 2015)
Louise Rogers
(until Nov 2014)
Alison Thursfield
(until April 2015)
Rev Martin Whitell
(until April 2015)
Dr Jacqueline Woodman
Honorary Treasurer: Rev Martin Whitell
(acting, until Jan 2015)
Peter Hanley
(from Jan 2015)

Secretary: Derek McAuley

Other Appointments:

Solicitors: Charles Russell LLP

Auditors: Shaw Gibbs Ltd

Custodian Trustee:

The British and Foreign Unitarian Association
(Incorporated)

The **Trustees of The Nightingale Centre** are the Members of the GA Executive Committee.

Day to day Management of the Centre is delegated to a Management Committee:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Chair | Marion Baker |
| Financial Secretary | Colin Partington |
| Secretary | Michael Tracey |
| Other members | Sue Cooper |
| | David Copley |
| | Dorothy Hewerdine |
| | Richard Merritt |
| | Gwyneth Roper |

EC Link
Independent Examiners
Custodian Trustee:
The British and Foreign Unitarian Association
(Incorporated)

The **Trustees of the Sustentation Fund** are:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Chair | Michael Tomlin |
| Hon Treasurer | Alan Eastwood |
| Hon Secretary | Jeff Teagle |
| Member ex Officio | Marion Baker (until 01 April) |
| | Rev John Clifford |
| | Peter Hanley (from 23 January) |
| | (from 01 April) |
| | Derek McAuley |
| | Rev Martin Whitell (until 23 January) |

Members appointed
by the GA

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| | Dawn Buckle |
| | Joan Cook |
| | Robert Ince (from 23 January) |
| | Rev Eric Jones |
| | Neville Kenyon |
| | Rev Jim McClelland |
| | Louise Rogers (until 23 January) |

Independent Examiner
Custodian Trustee:

KJ Johnson FCA

Being a Charity

Advantages

As a charity the General Assembly is exempt from income tax and corporation tax on its charitable earnings, and there are advantages involving VAT and rates.

Particular decisions on tax decisions are complex and need to be taken with professional advice.

Responsibilities

As a charity the General Assembly is subject to charity law which insists we behave in a prudent and reasonable manner and fulfil the obligations of the Charities Act and other legislation.

The General Assembly is subject to supervision by the Charity Commission, to whom an Annual Return, which includes our annual report and financial accounts, must be submitted.

The General Assembly has taken great care and professional advice in relation to its position as a parent charity to the Nightingale Centre and the Sustentation Fund and has concluded that at the moment the objects of all three charities are sufficiently similar and the degree of control exerted by the Trustees of sufficient magnitude that the General Assembly should be considered as a parent charity.

In accordance with this, the GA has fulfilled the requirement to publish consolidated accounts for all three charities.



STAFF MEMBERS

The following were members of the GA Staff during the financial year:

| | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Chief Officer | Derek McAuley | dmcauley@unitarian.org.uk |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|

PROGRAMME STAFF:

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Director of Ministry | Rev Linda Phillips | lphillips@unitarian.org.uk |
| Welsh Department Secretary | Melda Grantham | mgrantham@unitarian.org.uk |
| Youth Coordinator | Rev John Harley | jharley@unitarian.org.uk |

SUPPORT STAFF

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Operations Manager | Andrew Mason | amason@unitarian.org.uk |
| Administrator (Internal) | Mary-Jean Hennis | mhennis@unitarian.org.uk |
| Administrator (External) | Audrey Longhurst | alonghurst@unitarian.org.uk |
| IT / Communications | Aniuska Dominguez | it@unitarian.org.uk |

FINANCE:

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Finance Manager | Colin Farey | cfarey@unitarian.org.uk |
| Finance Officer | John Crosskey | jcroskey@unitarian.org.uk |

VOLUNTEER:

Rosemary Ruston

The following were members of the Essex Hall Trust Staff during the financial year:

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Isabella Clarke | Caretaker |
| Hepzi Lewis | Cleaner |

GROUP & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following people were members of GA Groups and Committees during the financial year:

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Convenor: Robert Ince

Members: Marion Baker (from April 2015), James Barry, John Clifford (until April 2015), Philip Colfox (from May 2015), Joan Cook, Peter Hanley (Hon Treasurer, from January 2015), Robert Ince, Gwynn Pritchard (from April 2015), Lynne Readett (from May 2015), Louise Rogers (until November 2014), Alison Thursfield (until April 2015), Martin Whitell (until April 2015) and Jacqueline Woodman.

Staff Support: Derek McAuley, (Chief Officer), Mary-Jean Hennis (Minutes)

STRATEGY GROUPS

Local Leadership Strategy Group

Members: Margaret Robinson, Louise Rogers (Chair)

Staff Support: Mary-Jean Hennis

Ministry Strategy Group

Members: Daniel Costley (Chair), Richard Gaines, Ant Howe, Melanie Prideaux, Wendy Sudbury, Sarah Tinker, Jane Williams (to March 2015).

Staff Support: Linda Phillips (Director of Ministry), Mary-Jean Hennis

Visibility Strategy Group

Members: James Barry (Chair), Diane Bennett, Philip Colfox, David Dawson, Lyanne Mitchell.

PANELS / ACTION GROUPS / OTHER GROUPS

Annual Meetings

Members: Penny Quest (until April 2015), Gwynn Pritchard (from July 2015), Alison Thursfield (until April 2015), Martin Whitell.

Staff Support: Andrew Mason (Meetings Organiser), Derek McAuley (Chief Officer).

Buildings Advisory Group

Members: Mike Barber (Convenor), Zoe Bremer, Geoff Levermore, Howard Wilkins.

Staff Support: Derek McAuley (Chief Officer)

Historic Buildings Consultants: John Goodchild, Graham Hague, Judy Hague.



Electoral Panel (until April 2015)

Members: Gavin Mason, Wade Miller-Knight, Howard Wilkins.

Staff Support: Derek McAuley (Chief Officer).

Hucklow Summer School

Members: Jane Blackall, Janet Costley, Michael Dadson, Kate Dean (until August 2015), Kate McKenna (from October 2015), Nick Morrice (until August 2015), Rita Woditsch.

Staff Support: Audrey Longhurst

Interview Panel

Members: Alex Bradley, David Dawson, Margaret Kirk, David Shaw, Arthur Stewart, Sarah Tinker (Chair).

Staff Support: Linda Phillips, Director of Ministry, Mary-Jean Hennis

Lindsey Press Panel

Members: David Dawson, Kay Millard, Catherine Robinson, Kate Taylor (Convenor, deceased May 2015), Kate Whyman.

Staff Support: Audrey Longhurst, Derek McAuley (Chief Officer).

Penal Affairs Panel

Members: Tony Cann, Bruce Chilton (Chair/Secretary), Phillip Jackman (from May 2015), Bernard Omar, Tony Rees, David Warhurst (from March 2015).

Welsh Department

Members: Diana Bianchi, Nans Davies, Hilda Dumbleton, Tony Foster, Eric Jones, Megan Jones (Chair), Cen Llwyd, Gwynn Pritchard, Wyn Thomas.

Staff Support: Melda Grantham (Secretary).

Worship Studies Course

Members: Dawn Buckle (Convenor, until October 2015), Rev Ernest Baker, Rev Alex Bradley, Rev Celia Cartwright, Rev Ant Howe, Rev Sue Woolley (Administrator from November 2015, Rev Winnie Gordon (Administrator, until November 2015; Convenor from November 2015), Rev Sheena Gabriel (from October 2015), Rev John Harley (from October 2015), Rev Dr Ann Peart (from October 2015), Alan Ruston (from July 2015).

Youth Panel

Members: Sarah Atkinson (until Sept 2015), Jen Hazel, Claire Maddocks, Emma Nicholls (until Sept 2015), Matty Pugh, Vanessa Rothwell (until Sept 2015), Christina Smith, Sue Talbot (Chair) (until Sept 2015), Eloise Williamson.

Youth Representatives: Bethan Branagh (until Sept 2015), Sarah Hall.

Staff Support: John Harley (Youth Coordinator), Andrew Mason (Minutes).

2020 Leadership Team

Jane Couper, Susanne Skubik Intriligator, Ash James (to January 2015), Claire MacDonald (to November 2014), Angela Maher (from September 2015), Andy Pakula, Andy Phillips, Martin Whitell, Aleks Zglinska.



Our Members

Honorary Members

Rev Dr Peter Godfrey
Mr Michael Tomlin
Rev J Eric Jones

Rev James McClelland
Mr David Dawson
Mrs Dawn Buckle

In accordance with rule 4 of the Constitution of the General Assembly the following persons, having contributed not less than £30 each to the funds of the Assembly in the financial year 2014-15, are Associate Members of the General Assembly. Names of Honorary Members and Full Members who have subscribed not less than £30 during the financial year each are also listed.

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Adkinson EB Miss | Calderara B Mrs | Doel DC Rev Dr | Haughton DP Ms |
| Allured M Mr | Callander GS Rev | Dolso, C | Hewerdine AJ Mr |
| Anderson EC Mrs | Camper A Rev | Dyson-Jones E Ms | Hewerdine C Ms |
| Arthur D Mr | Cann HA Mr | | Hewerdine DC Mrs |
| Ashworth J Mrs | Carter J Rev | Edwards J Ms | Hewis H Mrs |
| Atkinson JM Mrs | Cartwright CM Rev | Elder RC Mr | Hewis P Rev |
| Attfield R Prof | Catts LS Mrs | Evans D | Higgins M Mr |
| Aylmer V Mrs | Chilton CD Mrs | Evans S Mrs | Hill AM Rev |
| | Chilton GEB Mr | | Hill J Mrs |
| Bailey R Miss | Clarke HM Mrs | Faiers E Mrs | Hill M Mrs |
| Baker M Mrs | Clifford B Mrs | Fieldhouse AM Miss | Hills A Rev |
| Barber JM Mr | Clifford JC Rev | Fieldhouse S Miss | Hills E Mrs |
| Barbour R Mrs | Cockroft BS Rev | Firth RE Mrs | Hird JL Dr |
| Barlow EJ Mrs | Cockroft L Rev | Ford JM Ms | Hoskins DG Mr |
| Barlow H Mr (Dec'd) | Coldwell AH Mr | Foulkes RO Mr | Howarth J Mrs |
| Barry J Mr | Colfox P Sir | Fowler AM Miss | Howarth M Mr |
| Barwick S Mrs | Collier JS Mr | | Hughes M |
| Beck R Mr | Cook J Mrs | Gabriel S Rev | Hugill M Ms |
| Bennett DE Ms | Copley DW Mr | Gaines R Mr | |
| Birtles E Rev | Copley H Mrs | Gienke M Mr | Ince R Mr |
| Blair C Mrs (Dec'd) | Corrigan J Rev | Gillman DE Mr | Ingold J Dr |
| Blair J Mr | Costley D Rev | Godfrey PB Rev | Inkson J Mrs |
| Blake C Mrs | Crompton DF Mr | Godfrey S Mrs | Inkson RHE Mr |
| Boeke Rev J | Crompton J Mrs | Goodchild J Mr | Isaac A Mr |
| Boeke Rev R | Crosskey JM Mr | | Isaac RB Mr |
| Boyce S Mrs | Crosskey KSM Dr | | |
| Bradley A Rev | Cupper AM Mr | Hague G Mrs | Janes JA Mrs |
| Bradley J Rev | | Hague HR Mr | Johnson KJ Mr |
| Brooks B Mrs | Darling DF Mr | Hague J Mrs | Johnson PF Rev |
| Brown AHO Mr | Darlison JW Rev | Hankinson AS Mrs | Jones A Ms |
| Brown I Mr | Dawson C Mrs | Hardy SJ Dr | Jones A Mrs |
| Buckle R Mr | Dawson D Mr | Harris LA Ms | Jones AW Dr |
| Buckley D Mr | Day M Mr | Harrison A Mrs | Jones B Mrs |
| Burbage M Miss | Deas E Mrs | Harrison M Mrs | Jones JE Rev |
| Burns C Ms | Denby RN Mr (Dec'd) | Hartley LJ Mrs | Jones R Mr |
| Burns M Mrs | Delaforce P Mr | Hartley R Mr | |
| | DeSilva, M Mr | Hastie WJ Mr | |
| | Dobson A Ms | | |



Kay H Mrs
 Kenyon B Mrs
 Kenyon NA Mr
 Kerr DG Dr
 King L Ms
 Kirk M Rev
 Knopf B Ms

 Lake M Mrs
 Latta S Mrs (Dec'd)
 Laycock BA Mrs
 Lingwood S Rev
 Lloyd G Mr
 Lovis C Mrs

 Maher A Ms
 Maguire M Mrs
 Martin C Ms
 Mason CB Mr
 Mason GH Mr
 Mason JI Mr
 Maud G Mr
 McAuley D Mr
 McClelland A Rev
 McClelland J Rev
 McKinnon S Ms
 Meek J Mr
 Merritt H Mrs
 Merritt R Mr
 Midgley C Rev
 Midgley J Rev
 Miller-Knight W Mr
 Mitchell SCF Ms
 Moore TJ Mr
 Morais M Mrs

 Nuttall M Mrs

 Oates ADG Mr
 O'Brien E Mrs
 O'Connor F Rev

Ogilvie S Mrs
 Omar B Mr
 O'Neil SE Mrs

 Parker AR Rev
 Parsons H Mrs
 Partington C Mr
 Partington J Mrs
 Paxton MRH Mrs
 Payne B Mrs
 Peace I Mr
 Pearce G
 Peart A Rev Dr
 Pebody I Dr
 Pennington AC Mr
 Percy A Mrs
 Pilkington C Mr
 Price D Mr

 Quest P

 Ramage RW Mr
 Ratcliffe M Mrs
 Rathbone B Mrs
 Raymond G Mrs
 Raymond S Dr
 Reed CM Rev
 Reed P Mrs
 Rees AM Mr
 Rees C Mrs
 Reynolds HM
 Richards J Mrs
 Richards JCT Mr
 Richards W Mr
 Roberts D Rev
 Roberts J Dr (Dec'd)
 Roberts J Rev
 Roberts WM Mrs
 Robinson J Rev

Robinson M Ms
 Rogers L Ms
 Rogers J Mrs
 Ruston AR Mr
 Ruston J Ms
 Ruston M Mr
 Ruston R Mrs

 Sampson PW Mr
 Sanders N Dr
 Scott G Mrs
 Scott JA Mr
 Seal S Mrs
 Seccombe JA Mrs
 Sellman J Ms
 Sharpe S Mrs
 Shellabear RD Mrs
 Short A Mrs
 Silk J Mrs
 Silk PA Rev
 Simmons J Mrs
 Sinclair A Mrs
 Slaven S Ms
 Smith CF Mrs
 Smith J Mr
 Smith KJ Mr
 Smith MF Rev
 Soulsby P Sir
 Storey D Mr
 Sykes J

 Teagle JJ Mr
 Teagle SM Mrs
 Thompson C Ms
 Thompson J Miss
 Threlfall N Miss
 Thursfield A Mrs
 Tinker SM Rev
 Tomlin JR Mrs

Tomlin MJ Mr
 Tucker A Mr
 Tupman M
 Turnage C Mr

 Usher A Mrs
 Usher GR Rev
 Utley I Mt

 Varley R Mr
 Voegeli I Mrs
 Voegeli R Mr

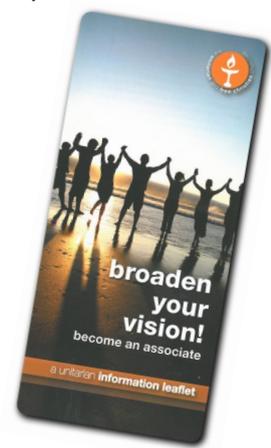
 Wagner E Mr
 Walker F Rev
 Warhurst DE Mr
 Warhurst H Mrs
 West J Mrs
 West MG Mr
 White R Mr
 Whitell M Rev
 Whitham P Mr
 Whitnell M Mr
 Wightman M Mrs
 Wightman R Rev
 Wilcox A Mrs
 Wilcox G Mr
 Wilkie C Mrs
 Wilkins H Mr
 Wilkinson J Rev
 Williams DA Prof
 Williams J Dr
 Williams RH Mrs
 Williams SR Mr
 Williams WM Mrs
 Wilson AM Mrs
 Winder JR Mrs
 Wood D Dr
 Woodhouse J Mr
 Woolley S Rev
 Wybrew M Mr
 Wykes DL Dr
 Wykes E Dr



Not an Associate Member?

Please consider joining. To see the many benefits of membership and also have your name listed here, please go to:

www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/get-involved



Congregational Contributions

1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015. Amounts are shown as at 30 September 2015 and contributions received after that date will ordinarily be shown in the next annual report.

| England (and Isle of Man) | Quota Members | £ | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|--------|-----------------------|----|------|
| Ainsworth | 6 | 210 | Derby | 3 | 105 |
| Altrincham | 41 | 1435 | Ditchling | 14 | 490 |
| Ansdell | 0 | 0 | Doncaster | 23 | 805 |
| Ashton-in-Makerfield | 43 | 1505 | Douglas (Isle of Man) | 6 | 210 |
| Atherton | 41 | 1435 | Dover | 5 | 160 |
| Banbury | 12 | 420 | Dudley | 1 | 35 |
| Bath | 7 | 245 | Dukinfield | 35 | 1225 |
| Belper | 13 | 455 | Eccles | 54 | 1890 |
| Billingshurst | 8 | 280 | Evesham | 25 | 875 |
| Birmingham Edgbaston | 20 | 700 | Framlingham | 6 | 210 |
| Birmingham Hollywood | 65 | 2275 | Godalming | 36 | 1260 |
| Blackpool | 12 | 420 | Great Hucklow | 12 | 420 |
| Bolton Bank Street | 58 | 2030 | Great Yarmouth | 9 | 315 |
| Bolton Chorley New Road | 13 | 455 | Hale Barns | 20 | 710 |
| Bolton Egerton | 30 | 1050 | Hastings | 13 | 455 |
| Boston | 5 | 175 | Hinckley | 40 | 1400 |
| Bradford Unitarians | 15 | 525 | Hindley | 9 | 315 |
| Bridgwater | 6 | 210 | Horsham | 31 | 1085 |
| Bridport | 10 | 350 | Horwich | 6 | 210 |
| Brighton | 45 | 1575 | Hull | 18 | 630 |
| Bristol Brunswick Square | 16 | 560 | Hyde | 2 | 70 |
| Bristol Frenchay | 15 | 525 | Hyde Flowery Field | 0 | 0 |
| Bury | 54 | 1890 | Hyde Gee Cross | 7 | 250 |
| Bury St Edmunds | 8 | 280 | Ipswich | 45 | 1575 |
| Cambridge | 36 | 1260 | Kendal | 55 | 1935 |
| Chatham | 8 | 280 | Kidderminster | 33 | 1155 |
| Cheltenham & Gloucester | 18 | 630 | Knutsford | 50 | 1750 |
| Chester | 5 | 175 | Leeds | 28 | 980 |
| Chesterfield | 11 | 390.50 | Leicester | 33 | 1155 |
| Chorley | 15 | 525 | Lewes | 1 | 35 |
| Cirencester | 12 | 420 | Lincoln | 14 | 490 |
| Coseley | 5 | 175 | Liverpool Gateacre | 20 | 700 |
| Coventry | 7 | 245 | Liverpool Sefton Park | 25 | 875 |
| Cradley | 12 | 420 | Liverpool Toxteth | 5 | 175 |
| Crewkerne | 13 | 455 | London Brixton | 16 | 560 |
| Croydon | 46 | 1610 | London Golders Green | 54 | 1890 |
| Cullompton | 4 | 140 | London Hampstead | 79 | 2765 |
| Dean Row | 52 | 1824 | London Islington | 41 | 1435 |
| Denton | 10 | 350 | | | |



| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----|--------|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| London Kensington | 50 | 1750 | Taunton | 11 | 385 |
| London Lewisham | 6 | 210 | Tenterden | 8 | 280 |
| London Newington Green | 42 | 1470 | Torquay | 8 | 280 |
| London Stratford | 5 | 175 | Trowbridge | 11 | 375 |
| Loughborough | 1 | 35 | Urmston | 25 | 875 |
| Lytham St Annes | 0 | 0 | Wakefield | 18 | 630 |
| Macclesfield | 28 | 980 | Warrington | 15 | 525 |
| Maidstone | 6 | 210 | Warwick | 16 | 560 |
| Manchester Chorlton | 10 | 350 | Watford | 11 | 385 |
| Manchester Cross Street | 28 | 980 | Whitby | 6 | 210 |
| Manchester Dob Lane | 14 | 490.20 | Whitefield | 35 | 1225 |
| Manchester Gorton | 3 | 105 | Wirral | 26 | 910 |
| Mansfield | 57 | 1995 | Wolverhampton | 2 | 70 |
| Mossley | 10 | 350 | Woodhall Spa | 1 | 35 |
| New Mill | 4 | 140 | Worthing | 2 | 70 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 22 | 770 | York | 40 | 1400 |
| Newcastle-under-Lyme | 20 | 700 | | | |
| Newport, Isle of Wight | 10 | 350 | Wales | | |
| Northampton | 5 | 175 | Aberdare | 25 | 875 |
| Norwich | 55 | 1925 | Alltyblaca | 2 | 60 |
| Nottingham | 12 | 420 | Bangor | 10 | 350 |
| Oldbury | 3 | 105 | Cardiff | 16 | 560 |
| Oldham | 12 | 420 | Cefn Coed y Cymer | 20 | 700 |
| Oxford | 42 | 1470 | Cellan | 1 | 34 |
| Padiham | 41 | 1435 | Ciliau Aeron | 0 | 14 |
| Plymouth | 26 | 900 | Cribyn | 3 | 104 |
| Portsmouth | 53 | 1855 | Cwmsychbant | 3 | 110 |
| Rawtenstall | 0 | 0 | Cwrtnwydd | 4 | 140 |
| Richmond | 38 | 1330 | Felinfach | 1 | 48 |
| Rivington | 20 | 700 | Lampeter | 9 | 312 |
| Rochdale | 23 | 805 | Llandysul | 3 | 100 |
| Scarborough | 7 | 245 | Llanwnnen | 5 | 168 |
| Sevenoaks | 26 | 910 | Nottage | 4 | 140 |
| Sheffield Fulwood | 34 | 1184 | Pontsian | 3 | 94 |
| Sheffield Norfolk Street | 45 | 1575 | Prengwyn | 4 | 142 |
| Sheffield Stannington | 25 | 875 | Swansea | 11 | 385 |
| Shelf | 10 | 350 | Talgarreg | 6 | 200 |
| Shrewsbury | 10 | 350 | Trebanos | 15 | 525 |
| Sidmouth | 5 | 175 | Wick | 5 | 175 |
| Southampton | 16 | 560 | | | |
| Southend-on-Sea | 4 | 140 | Scotland | | |
| Southport | 7 | 245 | Aberdeen | 16 | 560 |
| St Albans | 13 | 455 | Dundee | 18 | 630 |
| Stalybridge | 10 | 350 | Edinburgh | 60 | 2100 |
| Stockton-on-Tees | 22 | 770 | Glasgow | 34 | 1190 |
| Stourbridge | 6 | 210 | | | |
| Styal | 25 | 875 | Total: | 3,095 | £108,304.70 |

GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETINGS 2015 - PROCEEDINGS

The eighty-seventh Annual Meetings of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches were held from Sunday 29 March to Wednesday 1 April 2015 at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel. The programme of General Assembly and affiliated society meetings and workshops commenced during the afternoon of Sunday 29 March, preceded by the John Rely Beard Lecture which, due to the indisposition of the presenter, was a film of "The Gospel According to Jesus, Queen of Heaven".

The first plenary session commenced at 15.55 on Sunday 29 March 2015 with an opening welcome from the General Assembly President, Marion Baker and the lighting of the Chalice. The Standing Orders for the Conduct of Business, as set out on document AGM12/15, were adopted. The Steering Committee, consisting of Rev Peter Hewis, Gavin Lloyd and Rev Dr Ann Peart was confirmed.

Apologies were received from Shirley Fieldhouse, Mair Green, Megan Jones, Gwynn Pritchard (until Tuesday 31 March 2015), Rev Anne McClelland, Rev Gillian Peel and Rev Dr Leonard and Mrs Joan Smith. Overseas attendees; Rev Jill McAllister, Keynote Speaker; Inge Brandes and Rev Bob Janis-Dillon were welcomed and the contribution of the staff of the General Assembly was acknowledged, particularly that of Martin Sarbicki who was retiring as Head of Finance and Administration.

A report on Youth activities was presented by Rev John Harley on behalf of Sue Talbot and the Youth Panel, with new initiatives highlighted, including a youth leaders' programme and worship material for Youth Sunday and a short film shown. Jen Hazel presented the report of the Youth Strategy Group which had outlined a project for campus ministry which had gained the

support of the Executive Committee but now required development of a detailed proposal. The President thanked everyone involved with working with children and young people.

The report of the Visibility Strategy Group was presented by James Barry, who highlighted new posters and badges, Lindsey Press publications, DUWIT website team, the UNIComs conference and UKUnitarianTV. The work of Send a Child to Hucklow was highlighted. Rev Celia Midgley noted that ICUU was included in the Chief Officer's report in the Visibility section and thanked everyone who had contributed towards the recent Appeal. It was reported that the Twitter hashtag for the Meetings was #GAUK. The photographer for the Meetings Roy Clark was introduced and thanked.

The Report of the Ministry Strategy Group was presented by Rev Daniel Costley, who highlighted their mission statement to promote spiritual leadership and the adoption of a set of competencies to shape the future of Ministry. The mentorship scheme, the increasing number of part-time ministries and support for other types of ministry were raised. Jeffrey Teagle reaffirmed that Unitarian College Manchester was supportive of the ministerial competencies and looked forward to working closely with the Ministry Strategy Group and other partners. Rev Bill Darlison presented with enthusiasm the Anniversary Appeal. The evening closed with the Anniversary Service with Rev John Harley as Service Preacher on "The Conference of Birds".



The second plenary session commenced at 08.45 on Monday 30 March 2015 with Opening Reflections led by Rev Daniel Costley. Kingswood Chapel were thanked for arranging the Quiet Room and Mr Keith Laycock of Upper Chapel, Sheffield was thanked for undertaking the repair of the Presidential Medallion free of charge. The Executive Committee Convenor, Robert Ince, reported on their work during the previous year as we reached the end of the five year strategic plan. He thanked Andrew Mason and the Annual Meetings Panel for arrangements in a new venue. There had been varying degrees of success with the four targets set with ministry numbers being achieved yet quota membership continued to fall. He stressed the importance of safeguarding for all congregations. Identifying sufficient volunteers for key positions was a growing problem at local and national level. He addressed concerns about transparency and outlined how the Executive Committee operated in many ways as a “hands-on” team but had sought to involve others through the Vision process.

Rev Martin Whitell, Acting Treasurer from May 2014, presented the General Assembly’s Financial Review for the year ending 30 September 2014. Peter Hanley, co-opted as Honorary Treasurer in January 2015 challenged the Meeting to consider its priorities for the future.

A written question was received asking how long Shaw Gibbs had been Auditors and when this would be reviewed? It was thought that this was over ten years and acknowledged that this needed to be reviewed. An assurance was sought that the implications of the ending of financial support from the Bowland Trust in ten years’ time were being actively considered and it was explained that a financial review group was being established. The attendance of the President at meetings of the Executive Committee as an observer was welcomed. The role of the Essex Hall Trust in providing free accommodation to the General Assembly was outlined.



The Banner Parade at the Anniversary Service

Robert Ince presented the booklet “Vision for the Future” which had been prepared following the Vision Day in September 2014. He thanked everyone who had contributed and the editors of The Inquirer and The Unitarian for published material from it. It was intended to produce a video setting out the Vision at the next Annual Meetings. The Executive Committee looked forward to receiving comments of the document from congregations and individuals as a Vision would only work if it was owned by all, not just the Executive Committee. During questions comments were received on the need for a coherent message, the effectiveness of the current structures, the value of the document, how impressive the new GA website was and proposed changes to the GA Annual Report.

The British and Foreign Unitarian Association Incorporated was congratulated on its 100th Anniversary of incorporation and commended for producing an informative booklet on its various functions on behalf of the congregations and the wider Movement.

The third plenary session commenced at 10.45 on Monday 30 March 2015. The Report of the Stipend Review Committee was presented by Peter Hanley. A 4% increase to get closer to other Denominations was recommended. It was commented that this increase was timid if parity to the Baptist and eventually the Church of England was the objective. The Report was accepted. The Report of the Stipend Review Committee on Pulpit Supply was presented by Rev Martin Whitell, who commended lay preachers for their contribution to worship. After debate the Report was accepted. Motion 1. “TTIP” was proposed by Cross Street Chapel, Manchester and approved.

The fourth plenary session was held at 08.45 on Tuesday 31 March 2015 with Opening Reflections led by Rev Beryl Allerton. It was noted that the Women’s League had raised

£9,100 for the Alzheimer’s Society for their “Singing for the Brain” project. One minute of silence was observed for Geoffrey Head, former General Assembly President and Honorary Treasurer.

Motion 2. “Community Cohesion” was proposed by St Albans Unitarians. A procedural motion under 5.2 to “refer back” was rejected. The motion, after further debate, was rejected. The Report of the Local Leadership Strategy Group was presented by Louise Rogers. Dawn Buckle, Kate Dean, Margaret Robinson and Howard Wilkins introduced various programmes. Louise outlined plans for the future. Rev Vernon Marshall was thanked for his contribution as a tutor to the Worship Studies course for over twenty years. Roderick Ramage gave a short presentation on the implications for congregations of pension auto-enrolment.

The report of the Nightingale Centre was presented by Colin Partington, who announced that the Centre had been awarded 4* status. He thanked the Centre Manager, Stella Burney, Staff and the members of the Management Committee for their hard work and commitment towards another successful year. It was highlighted that the Stokes Croft Educational Trust could support travel costs to Centre activities and that the Centre was an excellent venue for special celebrations, including Weddings. Rev Andy Pakula introduced the work of the 2020 Congregational Development Programme and thanked Ash James for his major contribution. Autumn 2015 would see the launch of the Derby Unity project.

The fifth plenary session commenced at 11.00 on Tuesday 31 March 2015. On the proposal of the President, seconded by Dorothy Hewardine, the considerable contribution to the Unitarian Movement in the United Kingdom of Dawn Buckle was recognised by her being named to Honorary Membership of the General Assembly. Dawn



replied by thanking the General Assembly for the honour and also her husband and daughter for their support and understanding. Motion 5. "ICUU 20th Anniversary" was proposed by the Executive Committee and approved.

Rev Cliff Reed introduced Rev Jill McAllister, Programme Director of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU), who gave the Keynote Address which she entitled "Living in the Whole World". This was followed by a short question time. Jill was thanked for her stimulating contribution.



Rev Jill McAllister, Keynote Speaker

The sixth plenary session commenced at 09.00 on Wednesday 1 April 2015 with Opening Reflections led by Rev Lynne Readett. It was announced that the Anniversary Service Appeal had raised £5,300. The life-long contribution of Eila Forrester and Sheila Jones was acknowledged. Motion 4 "Dr Hadwen Trust" was proposed by 12 Full Members and Golders Green Unitarians and was approved.

The Sustentation Fund report was presented by Michael Tomlin and received. Alan Eastwood was thanked for his service as Honorary Treasurer. It was explained that the target of £250 was per member. Motion 6 "Payment of Musicians" was proposed by Westgate Chapel, Wakefield and was approved.

The seventh plenary session commenced at 10.45 on Wednesday 1 April 2015. The report of the Electoral Panel was presented by Howard Wilkins. The change in date of the election from before to after Christmas was commented upon, as was the failure to secure sufficient candidates. It was observed that the constant criticism of members of the Executive Committee, who were volunteers, could have deterred people from standing.

A Handover Ceremony for the Executive Committee took place and the retiring members - Rev John Clifford, Alison Thursfield and Rev Martin Whitell - were thanked for their service. New members Marion Baker and Gwynn Pritchard were welcomed.

The Closing Plenary session commenced at 11.20. The Procedural Resolutions were approved. Marion Baker gave her Presidential Address as outgoing President. Rev John Clifford was installed as President for 2015/16 and spoke to the Annual Meeting. The President conducted a closing service of worship and the Annual Meetings closed at approximately 12.30.



The Presidential Medallion is passed on

RESOLUTIONS

The following resolutions were agreed.

1. FROM CROSS STREET UNITARIAN CHAPEL, MANCHESTER

That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, in the spirit of those of our liberal religious tradition who have strived and strive currently to realise social justice in the world, whilst recognising the freedom of all to believe as their consciences dictate,

A: believes that the proposed Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP) treaty:

- Poses a threat to many of the hard-won social gains of the 19th and 20th centuries;
- Would hand over uncontested power and influence from democratically elected governments to multi- and transnational corporations and
- Would likely impact unfairly on many of the poorest in societies across the globe.

B: calls upon individual congregations and affiliated bodies of the General Assembly to inform their members of this issue, so that individuals may study it for themselves and, according to their consciences, take action on it, for example if they so wish by contacting their political representatives, and joining their efforts with groups campaigning against this treaty.

2. FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches recognises the considerable contribution of Dawn Buckle, MEd to Unitarians in the United Kingdom by naming her as an Honorary Member.

3. FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches congratulates the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) on its 20th Anniversary.

4. FROM TWELVE FULL MEMBERS AND GOLDERS GREEN UNITARIANS

That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, recognising the universal kinship of all sentient beings affirmed by the world's great religions, philosophers and sages, encourages fellow Unitarians and all people of goodwill to support the Universal Kinship Fund of the Dr Hadwen Trust and other humane research charities in order to advance non-animal medical research and in so doing help save human and animal lives.

5. FROM WESTGATE CHAPEL, WAKEFIELD

That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches asks the Executive Committee to devise, or cause to be devised, recommendations for the payment of the organists/directors of music and others who play for the services of its member congregations in much the same way as it provides guidelines for the payment of ministers and leaders of worship.

FURTHER RESOLUTIONS

- 1) That the Report of the General Assembly Executive Committee and the Accounts of the General Assembly be received and adopted.
- 2) That Shaw Gibbs LLP be reappointed as Auditors.
- 3) That Peter Hanley be appointed Honorary Treasurer for the year 2015-2016.
- 4) That the thanks of the Assembly be given to Robert Ince and Rev Martin Whitell for their service as Acting Treasurer during the year 2013-2014, and to district association and local officers for their invaluable services.
- 5) That greetings be sent to kindred churches and societies abroad.



- 6) That the thanks of the Assembly be given to Rev John Harley for preaching the Assembly Sermon.
- 7) That the thanks of the Assembly be given to Rev Sheena Gabriel, worship leader for the Anniversary Service, and to all those who provided music and other content for the Anniversary Service and on other worship occasions during these Meetings.
- 8) That the thanks of the Assembly be given to the members of the General Assembly staff and to all volunteers for their inestimable help in organising the Meetings.
- 9) That Rev John Clifford be appointed President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches for the year 2015-2016.
- 10) That this eighty-seventh General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches expresses its gratitude for the services provided by Marion Baker as President during the year 2014-2015.

Annual Meetings Birmingham 2015 Accounts

| | 2015 | 2015 | 2015 | 2014 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Summary of Financial Results | Income | Expenditure | Balance | Balance |
| Accommodation and Conference Fees | 87,347 | -73,403 | 13,944 | 8,950 |
| Group Registration | 4,270 | | 4,270 | 4,009 |
| Wood Green Trust | 2,500 | | 2,500 | 6,425 |
| Other Donations to Meetings | 1,294 | | 1,294 | 1,294 |
| Printing and Postage | | -2,382 | -2,382 | -2,849 |
| Pre-AGM Expenses | | -446 | -446 | -337 |
| Room Hire and Audio Visual | | -7,409 | -7,409 | -8,424 |
| Speakers, Fees and Social event | | -3,178 | -3,178 | -3,064 |
| Sundries | | -2,852 | -2,852 | -187 |
| Travel | | -1,764 | -1,764 | -1,904 |
| Youth Honoraria & Expenses | | -435 | -435 | -1,186 |
| Transfer for future Meetings | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Previous Year's transfer | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 95,412 | -91,867 | 3,544 | 2,728 |

Leaflets

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