**Background Paper for CIO Motion**

At the Annual Meetings in 2016, the membership passed the following resolution for the EC to look into the General Assembly becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO):

“That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, recognising the benefits of Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status, requests the Executive Committee to bring forward proposals enabling the General Assembly to convert from an Unincorporated Association to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.”

More information on CIO’s can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-types-how-to-choose-a-structure>

The Executive Committee and GA Staff have been looking into this over the last couple of years, to identify the best way forward. This was led by Robert Ince in 2021-2, working with a small consultation group including Simon Bland, Rev Winnie Gordon, Natasha Stanley, and John Bates. We are grateful for their input.

Most recently, John Bates, on behalf of the EC, has worked with VWW Solicitors, who have experience of working with Unitarian CIOs, to seek advice on the steps the GA should take.

The EC are in support of the GA moving to CIO status.

This will simplify some of our governance matters, enable the GA to hold property directly, and will mean that EC members as trustees of the charity will no longer hold personal liability. We hope that this removes a potential disincentive to people standing for election to the EC.

There was consideration during the process as to whether this was the time for substantive changes to our membership structures or motions processes. It is felt that although these could come under review in the future, now was not the time to make changes. Instead, the move to CIO is simply about bringing our governance structures up to date, and bringing together the GA’s existing constitution with the Charity Commission’s model CIO constitution. Therefore membership under the new constitution will be formed of the same groups and rights as given in the GA’s current constitution. Similarly, the existing GA Object will be unchanged.

If this motion is passed, the EC will continue the work to prepare for adopting CIO status. This will be put to the membership in a Special Meeting in late 2024, likely to be held online.