

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting  
Friday 17 May 2013  
Essex Hall, London**

**Present:** Rev Martin Whitell (Convenor), Joan Cook, Louise Rogers, James Barry, Rev John Clifford, Alison Thursfield, Jacky Woodman (from 2pm)

**In Attendance:** Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute-taker)

Before the opening of the meeting commenced the Convenor gave the EC an update on the condition of Rev David Usher, (immediate past member of the EC) and David had sent his greetings to the new EC.

**Session 1**

*Opening Devotions: John Clifford read from the book "The Source of Power" by John Heider – Power comes from co-operation*

1. **Apologies:** Robert Ince, Jacky Woodman for the morning session.
2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd & 23rd February 2013 (Document EC32/13)**

With an amendment to page 7. recognizing that the Chief Officer had given evidence to the House of Commons Committee, not simply been present, and a few minor amendments the Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2013.

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

- Item 14. James asked about the use of depreciation and the Chief Officer explained that its use in funding IT projects was being investigated.
- Item 2. Louise noted that at the 2011 and 2013 Annual Meetings prominence was given to the districts that fell within the catchment area of the venue, whereas in her view this was not the case in 2012 and asked the Annual Meetings Panel always to consider district involvement.
- Item 3. Louise queried the Terms of Reference for the Strategy Groups. The Convenor explained that these were given to the Strategy Groups when they were established but that they needed to be kept under review, particularly in light of new activities.

- Item 6. The Convenor reported that the 2020 Congregational Development Programmes was now led by the “2020 Leadership Team”.

#### 4. Reports of Strategy Groups (Document EC33/13)

##### 4.1 Local Leadership Strategy Group (LLSG) Report – noted with the following:

- Whilst the Minutes of the meetings that the EC receive were very valuable as they gave considerable detail on LLSG activities it was considered beneficial if this could be accompanied by a progress report on delivery of the objectives.
- It was noted that Kate Buchanan would be stepping down as co-chair of the LLSG in September 2013 and would have to be replaced. The Chief Officer would follow-up. **ACTION: CO**
- It was understood that there is a proposal with regard to changing the current internal arrangements of the LLSG. This could help achieve clarity around their objectives, particularly on leadership. One area of risk identified was untrained lay-people-in-charge in congregations and it was noted that the Ministry Strategy Group had begun its work of ministerial categories.
- The Chief Officer referred to point 14.4 of the LLSG Minutes which highlighted that they would be preparing a 5 year plan in response to the discussion at the last EC meeting.
- Correspondence received on 15 May 2013 was considered on improving communication and future financial requirements. The Chief Officer to write to the LLSG Chair stating that the EC were positive about the progress and should they wish additional support from the EC by means of mentoring (offered by Louise Rogers), this would be made available and that funding requests would be considered as part of the budgetary process in September 2013. **ACTION: CO**
- Uni-doodles – James had concerns about copyright issues and was asked to raise these concerns with Kate Taylor of the Lindsey Press Panel. **ACTION: JB**

##### 4.2 Ministry Strategy Group (MinStratGp) – noted with the following:

- EC **approved** the appointment of Richard Gaines as a member of the MinStratGp.
- EC reiterated its support for the initiatives on ministerial training and engagement with the two Colleges noting that final approval for admission to the Roll of Ministers and Lay Pastors lay with the EC.
- Point 17 -Request from Sustentation Fund for a meeting – The Chief Officer reported that the meeting had taken place on Wednesday 15 May 2013, attended by Sustentation Fund members and Rev Sarah Tinker, Rev Margaret Kirk, Rev Stephen Lingwood and himself, and that a paper produced by Jeffrey Teagle proposing changes to the Fund will be circulated in due course,

- The MinStratGp was congratulated on the work that they have done with a very clear focus.

#### **4.3 Visibility Strategy Group (VSG) – noted with the following:**

- In response to item 9. the Chief Officer had added the VSG Chair, Dorothy Haughton to the news distribution list to keep her informed of publicity issued by him. The Chief Officer was asked to liaise with her on how local media could benefit from national initiatives. **ACTION: CO**
- It was observed that in minutes correct titles and/or full names should be used if non-members were referred to.
- The group were commended for the progress they were making.

#### **5. 2020 Congregational Development Report (Document EC34/13) – noted with the following:**

- EC **approved** the appointment of Claire MacDonald to the 2020 Leadership Team.
- It was noted that there is still no fund raising group in place and that the Rev Andy Pakula was leading in this area however sufficient funds were being raised to progress. The breakdown was outlined.
- The Convenor reported on the outcome of the recent workshop offering support to those who might apply and that more work needed to be done.
- Louise asked for clarity about who would make the final decisions on the awarding of funds and it was confirmed this was the EC. She asked that this be made clear on the 2020 website. **Action: Convenor**
- The Leadership Team were congratulated on the website and video which had been produced.

## **Session 2**

#### **6. Unitarian College Manchester (UCM) (Document EC35/13)**

The Chief Officer introduced the letter that had been received from UCM on student funding and highlighted that there needed to be clarity for new students considering applying for the Ministry/Lay Pastorship in summer of 2014 on what the financial parameters were. John emphasised that UCM were clearly under financial pressure, however, they were an autonomous body. They had looked at various options in light of possible institutional changes. The Convenor said that a view had been expressed that the EC release funds from the Ministerial Students Fund, however, this fund was primarily for student related expenses and raised funds on this basis.

It was recognised that UCM's timetable to resolve their financial issues might not match that of the Ministry Strategy Group for change to training and that there is a need to find a way to manage this period of change. Louise suggested that there were various models and that this needed to be part of a wider discussion. It was also recognised that GA resources are limited.

EC accepted the need for UCM and the MinStratGp to continue discussion with regard to the letter from the College Committee. It was **agreed** that a meeting between the EC, MinStratGp and the UCM Management group should take place. The Chief Officer to write to the MinStratGp and UCM offering a meeting to explore issues. The EC team will comprise Joan, John, Alison and the Chief Officer. **ACTION: CO**

The EC reiterated its support for Rev Stephen Lingwood and the Ministry Strategy Group in addressing important issues for the future.

## 7. Unitarian Strap-line (Document EC36/13)

A proposal was received from the Visibility Strategy group with a number of proposed strap-lines in order of priority. EC **agreed** to the Strap-Line recommended by the VSG - "Nurturing Faith, Embracing Life, Celebrating Difference".

James asked how it would be launched and it was **agreed** that it would be the responsibility of the VSG. Alison and John were of the view that it should be revisited in 2 years time and this was **agreed**. It was agreed to launch in September 2013 in a "soft" manner. It was noted that this decision allowed progress on Motion 5 which had been withdrawn at the Annual Meetings. **ACTION: CO to inform VSG**

## 8. Finance

### 8.1 Management Accounts end of March (Document EC37/13) – noted with the following:

The Chief Officer reported that Essex Hall Trust has agreed to increase their Grant to the GA by £5,000 more than budgeted. Despite this the forecast deficit was £14,000 although there were likely to be under spends. Figures from the Annual Meeting were not yet available, but due to a good attendance at the meetings, they should be on the positive side. The Chief Officer has spoken with Martin Sarbicki with regard to reporting on dedicated and restricted funds to the EC at a future meeting. The Honorary Treasurer would bring a proposal for funding development to the July EC meeting. A new push on legacies was suggested. Finance Dept will be more pro-active on collection of outstanding Quota payments.

James suggested that the Youth Panel figures were not accurate as expense claims were not being processed in a timely fashion due to lack of expense forms at Youth events. The Chief Officer replied that there were several issues which impacted on the Youth programme and that it was the responsibility of all volunteers to submit timely expense claims in line with the policy.

**8.2 - Unitarian Investment Panel (Document EC38/13)**  
– noted with the following:

The Chief Officer reported on proposed changes to the service provided by Newton. An email has been received from Martin West who met with Ken Johnson and John Cook to discuss the implications. The Unitarian Investment Panel on 25 June 2013 is looking to arrange a “beauty parade” of various Investment Management Groups to review their options. It was suggested that an EC member might wish to attend if the Honorary Treasurer was not available. It was **agreed** that Investment Managers should be reviewed on a regular basis. **ACTION: The Chief Officer was asked to contact to Alan Goodwin from Newton Investment management Ltd to discuss issues.**

**9. Governance –****9.1 – Welsh Department Terms of Reference (Document EC39/13)**

Proposals for revised terms of reference were **adopted**. It was suggested that the focus needed to be on “promoting” good governance using nationally available advice. It was noted that one EC member could attend as an observer. Carwyn Tywyn, the Welsh Secretary was congratulated and thanked.

**9.2 – Nightingale Centre Charity Commission Scheme (Document EC40/13)**

It was noted that the Scheme Point had been agreed. Louise was surprised that the trustees had the power to delegate “all or any of their powers” which was in contradiction to other guidance. It was suggested that it meant “powers of management”. **ACTION: LR to circulate information on “reserved powers”.**

**9.3 – Nightingale Centre Minutes (Document EC41/13)**  
– noted**9.4 – Steering Group Appointment of New Member**

Consideration was given to the membership of the Steering group and it was **agreed** that the policy that one member stands down each year be continued to ensure some continuity of membership. **ACTION: CO to pursue**

**10. Partnership with UUA Congregations (Document EC45/13)**

A paper was presented by the Convenor and Chief Officer proposing the development of formal partnership arrangements between British and US congregations following an initiative by Rev Jim Robinson. It was **agreed** to support the proposal, acknowledging that there was no

staff capacity available to be involved but that it had to be volunteer led.  
**ACTION: CO and Convenor to discuss with Cathy Cordes.**

**11. Other reports (Document EC44/13)**  
**- noted**

The reports of the President and Vice-President were welcomed. It was noted that there was a guide for presidential visits and that they were invited to the EC meeting in March.

**Session 3**

**12. Annual meetings Report**

**12.1 Feedback from Annual Meetings Panel:** – an oral report from the Chief Officer was given on the meeting held the previous day. There has been very positive feedback via email, letters and items in congregational newsletters. The organisation of the meetings went well, apart from a few technical issues. There is an on-line survey which will be advertised in Uni-news. John suggested that a survey form be handed out at the actual meetings to be filled in and returned before leaving the meeting. The total cost remained a concern. James asked about the responsibility for young people after 6.30pm. The Chief Officer understood that the Foy Society were reviewing their safeguarding responsibilities in running GAette.

Jacky Woodman joined the meeting.

**12.2 Planning for future Annual meetings: -**

**2014** – Arrangements well in hand as venue, keynote speaker and Anniversary preacher all booked. Anniversary service will be held on the first day (Sunday). Event “celebrating community” would be held on the Monday night. Robin Ince, a comedian, will be the entertainment on Tuesday night at the social event. Because the venue is an hotel there are shared rooms and the implications of numbers attending are being looked at. MUA had agreed to prepare the quiet room. Copyright issues had been reviewed and additional licences would be required to ensure compliance with legal requirements. John Clifford agreed to overview disability access. The Annual Meetings Panel would be approaching UKunitarianTV on how they might be involved.

**2015** – Discussions were taking place regarding a venue for 2015 at a very similar price to 2014.

**12.3 Report from Press Officer** – noted. Kate Taylor to be thanked.  
**ACTION: CO**

**12.4 Taking forward issues arising from keynote address.** The address was on communication and the growth of social media and raised many questions for a congregationally based movement. It was

recognised that whilst there were cultural differences between the US and the UK there were many issues which needed to be explored around building relationships (online and off) and community. It was **agreed** that the Chief Officer would circulate Therasa Cooley's address. **ACTION: CO**

#### **12.5 Taking forward issues relating to measuring membership.**

The Convenor referred to a discussion at the EC workshop and the inadequacies of the current quota number as a measure of "health" and agreed to do some initial work on this issue and bring something back to the July EC meeting. **ACTION: Convenor**

Louise was of the view that the responsibilities of congregations as members of the General Assembly and of the General Assembly to them was unclear and needed codifying.

#### **12.6 Guidelines on Motions.**

It was noted that both the Steering Group and the Visibility Strategy Group were looking at different aspects of this question. It was **agreed** that Motions should be monitored after being passed at the GA. The Chief Officer was asked to report on what actions had resulted from Resolutions for the July EC meeting. **ACTION: CO**

#### **12.7 Bullying**

The John Reilly Beard Lecture had raised many issues concerned with bullying which could and did take place in different situations not just with ministers. Jacky proposed that guidance and information be issued by the General Assembly, as they had done on safeguarding. It was **agreed** that an anti-bullying Policy should be developed and members were asked to email the Chief Officer with any information or model policies they might have. **ACTION: ALL EC members**

### **13. Appointment of Convenor**

Rev Martin Whitell was re-elected as the Convenor on the proposal of Alison Thursfield and seconded by Joan Cook. He indicated that he would step down in 2014 as his EC term of office finished in 2015.

It was agreed that the "Role of Convenor" paper should be reviewed in light of his experience and he would discuss with the Chief Officer and bring back to a future meeting. **ACTION: Convenor**

### **13. EC Business Arrangements**

- Code of Conduct. Discussion took place on aspects of the Code of Conduct; particularly the references to governance and operational responsibility and attendance at Essex Hall and the Nightingale Centre. Five members signed the Code of Conduct with two members declining and one member absent. **ACTION:**

The Convenor agreed to discuss further with James Barry and Louise Rogers who were unable to sign the Code.

- Conflict of Interest forms were handed to the new EC members for completion and copies in Word would be made available
- Selection of member to serve a two year term – Louise Rogers agreed to step down after two years served on the EC
- EC links – the following was agreed:

Name:	Committee:	District:
Robert Ince	Nightingale Centre	Sheffield, Yorkshire
Jacky Woodman		NELUM, East Midlands
James Barry		Western Union, LDPA
John Clifford	Welsh Department	SE Wales, S Wales
Louise Rogers		Manchester, East Cheshire
Alison Thursfield		Midlands, Merseyside
Joan Cook		Northern, Scotland
Martin Whitell		Southern Union, Eastern Union

- Diary Dates:

#### 2013

July – 12<sup>th</sup> 9 – 5 & 13<sup>th</sup> 9 – 12 – London

Sept – 13<sup>th</sup> 9 – 5 & 14<sup>th</sup> 9 – 12 – London

Nov – 15<sup>th</sup> 2 – 9 & 16<sup>th</sup> 9 – 12 – Manchester

#### 2014

Jan – 17<sup>th</sup> 9 – 5 & 18<sup>th</sup> 9 – 12 – London

Feb – 21<sup>st</sup> 2 – 9 & 22<sup>nd</sup> 9 – 12 – Manchester

May – 16<sup>th</sup> 9 – 5 & 17<sup>th</sup> 9 – 12 – London

- Ways of working

Discussion took place on online working. The Chief Officer reported that the Charity Commission guidance state that a trustees' meeting by electronic means can be conducted provided that attendees can see and hear each other. Telephone conferencing facilities can only be used if there is specific provision in the governing document. There were a range of paid providers, however, online meetings are not appropriate for lengthy meetings.

Jacky agreed with the need for six physical meetings as planned but suggested that meetings by electronic means could be held for when preparatory information needs to be disseminated and no formal decisions made. This could involve smaller groups or when an invited guest could not attend an EC meeting.

- Minutes

It was agreed that once drafted the minutes would be circulated and comments invited. If these were non contentious minutes would be



circulated, however, minutes could only be agreed and signed at a formal meeting.

- Agenda

The deadline for circulation of the agenda and papers was one week before the meeting and therefore any suggestions for agenda items needed to be with the Chief Officer one week before then.

## Session 4

### 14. Chief Office's Report (Document EC43/13) - noted

The Chief Officer highlighted the fraud identified at Newport IoW and the sentencing of the offender. The risk register would be on the agenda of the next meeting.

James said that he had suggestions for corrections to the website and he was asked to send to the Chief Officer for consideration. **ACTION: JB**

John reported that the IARF Congress would take place in Birmingham in August 2014 and he hoped the General Assembly would give its full support. The Chief Officer confirmed that he had already discussed the Congress with the organisers. It was also noted that the International Association of Liberal Religious Women would also be meeting in Birmingham.

John asked for an update on involvement with ICUU in a future report. **ACTION: CO**

### 15. Key Messages to be distributed by the Chief Officer

Key points were identified

### 16. A.O.B.

- Business/Strategic Plan? – this is reviewed at the September EC Meeting. **ACTION: LR and CO to liaise.**
- What are expected response times to emails received? – as Essex Hall is a small team emails are responded to as appropriate
- Could mailing documents be emailed? Was being reviewed
- It has been noted that the Quakers are thinking about opening their own Bank and is this a possibility for Unitarians? **ACTION: the Chief Officer to liaise with Paul Parker of the Quaker Yearly Meeting to find out more information**
- An up to date organisational chart will be circulated. **ACTION: CO talk to Andrew Mason**

**17. Confidential Items – Mary-Jean was not present for this item**

**Ministerial Roll**

The Rev Tom McCready was added to the Roll of Ministers with full status.

**18. Staff Remuneration – the Chief Officer and Mary-Jean were not present for this item**

It was agreed following consideration of fairness and affordability that staff be awarded a salary increase of 1.75% from 1 July 2013.

**19. Non-responsive check out**

*Closing Devotions: Martin Whitell*