

## **Progressive Christianity Network Britain**

### **Draft Minutes of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held at 11am on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012, at St Columba's URC, York**

**Members Present:** There were 39 members present. Members may apply to see the list of attendees

#### **1. Appointment of a chair for the Annual General Meeting**

John Churcher, PCN Britain chair, welcomed everyone noting with pleasure the presence of the founder of PCN Britain, Hugh Dawes. Vice chair Mary McMahon was nominated to take the chair of the AGM and this was agreed by all.

#### **2. Appointment of Tellers**

Mary McMahon reiterated a welcome. Sandra Griffiths and Gerry Leake were appointed as tellers. The tellers were asked to count the number members present, 46 being needed for a quorum. They reported 35 a figures which was later revised up to 39. The meeting proceeded without the quorum, as a business meeting of members with no power to change the constitution.

#### **3. Apologies**

50 members sent their apologies. Members may apply to see the list.

#### **4. Minutes of the seventh Annual General Meeting held on 17th July 2010 at St Columba's URC, York.**

The minutes had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. Mary McMahon invited comment from the floor. Nothing was raised. Acceptance of the minutes for the 2010 AGM was proposed by Paul Onslow and seconded by Paul Dawson and agreed by a show of hands.

#### **5. Matters arising from the minutes**

There were no matters arising.

#### **6. The Annual Report of PCN – Britain 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011**

John Churcher spoke to his annual report. He paid tribute to PCN's treasurer, Terence Cooper, who died suddenly last September. He thanked the new treasurer, Andrew Burrell for his skill in picking up the threads without the usual handover. He referred to the major conferences of 2011, noting in particular the visits by bishop Jack Spong and Dominic Crossan. He welcomed the presence of Helen Fisher as trustee link with the Centre for Radical Christianity. He also highlighted the Strategic Review consultation of 2011 and noted that PCN was currently engaged in another consultation, over a submission to the Home Office on gay marriage. He thanked the committee for their hard work and paid special tribute to Mary McMahon for her wisdom and good humour over 6 years on the committee and three years as vice chair. He expressed a personal debt to her for her support.

There were no questions. Acceptance of the report was proposed by Sandra Griffiths and seconded by John Hetherington and passed by a show of hands.

#### **7. The Financial Statements of PCN – Britain 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011**

Introducing his first Treasurer's report, Andrew Burrell paid tribute to the excellent work done by PCN in 2011. He said events had run at an overall loss but felt that this was money spent doing what PCN was about, and therefore no cause for concern. Increasing membership helped to balance the books. He paid tribute to his predecessor, Terence Cooper.

Martin Dodds asked whether PCN needed an auditor. AB said that for a charity of our size that was not necessary. PCN used an Independent Examiner. In the past this had been Peter Stribblehill. This year the accounts had been late, as a consequence of the death of Terence Cooper, and Peter Stribblehill had not been available to examine them. The role was given by the Officers to Andrew Wright a businessman in Cumbria. AB paid tribute to the many years of service that Peter Stribblehill had given PCN Britain, as Independent Examiner and the meeting agreed to put on record its thanks to Mr Stribblehill. Monty Lynds, a former treasurer, offered to become the Independent Examiner in

future. Mr Dodds asked for confirmation that it was acceptable for a member to serve in this role. AB agreed to check with the Charities Commission.

Michael Hell asked about the absence of Gift Aid in this year's accounts, which he said would have covered the revenue deficit. AB agreed and said the omission was purely due to a lack of time and that he had checked that the missing claim could still be legitimately made in the future.

#### **8. Vote on a set of PCN "Aims" to be added to the constitution**

Andy Vivian, Administrator, explained that the decision to add some *Aims* had been made after Terence Cooper had drawn to the attention of the committee the fact that the existing *Object* of PCN was phrased in very general terms and made no mention of progressive Christianity nor of the local groups network. The committee had asked Mr Cooper to draft some *Aims* with the intention of rectifying this and the resulting three *Aims* were now being presented to the meeting.

Hugh Dawes, the former chair of PCN, said that PCN had in fact created a set of *Aims* back in 2004. Their absence in the constitution was on the advice of the Charities Commission but they had been used for a while in official documents. He read out the 2004 *Aims* to the meeting. He felt that these five *Aims* embraced the three *Aims* contained in the current proposal and commended the original version to the meeting as preferable to the current offering.

Pat McCulloch said she preferred the current proposal – the wording was useful and easy to understand. John Hetherington liked the phrasing of the current proposal but saw value in the original set of five. He suggested trying to bring the two together. Phil Sudworth felt that the current proposals were more theoretical while the original ones were specific and preferable for that. Maureen Foxall liked the use of the words *radical* and *liberate* in the original version.

Martin Dodds and Paul Dawson suggested that the current proposal should be withdrawn to allow further discussion in order to take into account the original *Aims* which were not available when the new ones were drafted. Hugh Dawes said that he would like to be part of such discussion. Paul Dawson also offered to join a working group. Later Maureen Foxall added her name. Paul Dawson proposed that the working group should use the Newsletter and Website to facilitate feedback during their deliberations.

Andy Vivian summarised the amendment namely that a working group would be convened to draft a new set of *Aims* taking into account the versions offered by Terence Cooper and Hugh Dawes. They would publish progress as they went along giving the membership a chance to comment. The meeting voted in favour by an overwhelming show of hands with no votes against. The matter was referred back to the Management Committee to set up the working party. It was also agreed that the Hon Sec Paul Onslow would check with the Charities Commission about their current policy on Objects and *Aims* in constitutions.

#### **9. Vote on new quorum rule to replace the current constitution clause 17.2**

Paul Onslow, Hon Sec, explained the reason for asking for a reduction from 10% of membership to 5%. There was discussion about replacing a percentage with a specific number or having a combination of the two but no consensus was reached that either of these options would be preferable. Paul Dawson suggested a vote be taken on the current proposal and this was given an overwhelming approval by a show of hands. Maureen Foxall said she would try to find out how Iona deals with the issue. The meeting referred the matter back to the Management Committee.

#### **10. Vote on whether PCN Britain should become a Charter for Compassion Partner**

It emerged in a short discussion that nine of the members present were already affiliated to the Charter as individuals. A vote was taken and there were 30 for and 1 against and 4 abstentions. It was therefore agreed that a working party would be convened by trustee Angela Smith to draft PCN's application. Pat McCulloch, Gerry Leake and Gabrielle Ayerst volunteered to serve on the working party.

#### **11. Proposal to review the wording of the 8 points and how to go about it.**

Martin Dodds queried whether PCN needed both *Aims* and the 8 points. Hugh Dawes thought that the 8 points should only be reviewed by collaboration between all the international partners who compiled it in the first place. Angela Smith pointed out revisions of the 8 points were going on around the world, and that the US and Canada had

already adopted new versions. The chair noted the discussion and referred the subject back to the Management Committee.

#### **12. The use of the word *Progressive* in the title of PCN Britain**

Andy Vivian, Administrator, read out an email from member Ian Leck questioning whether the word *progressive* was the best one available. He said that it implied that other Christian groups were *regressive or reactionary* which made PCN seem arrogant. AV suggested there were two further issues for PCN: *recognition* and *consistency*. The organisation had become known under its present name and to abandon it may lead to confusion and obscurity. Within the English speaking world our sister organisations have all used the term *progressive*, the only exception being Ireland which has an *Open Christianity Network*. Paul Onslow said that *progressive* in our title was used in the sense of moving on, in which case the opposite was *conservative*. He did not think that conservative Christians would feel offended by that description. Sandra Griffiths agreed that she had never seen *progressive* in PCN as being the opposite of *regressive*. Brain Parr said that if the name needed some explaining that was no bad thing – it gave members a chance to communicate what we are about. Richard Tetlow made reference to other faiths such as Judaism where the term *progressive* is also used in the same sense as PCN. He also said that a word like *progressive* carried less historical baggage than some of the alternatives.

#### **13. Proposal to have an annual PCN residential retreat**

Several members felt there was a need for spiritual refreshment as well as theological enlightenment and that PCN should look to offer both. There was agreement that the recent Swanwick weekend with Mark Townsend had been appreciated by most because it was so spiritual. A show of hands indicated that of the 46 present, 23 would like to see retreats offered by PCN. Richard Tetlow reminded the meeting that members of PCN were at different stages and for some the need was for theological exploration and discussion. Sonya Brown and Paul Dawson agreed, making the point that while other organisations provided the spiritual side, PCN local groups were unique on the theological discussion side. John Hetherington and John Churcher spoke of the next stage of their personal transformation. The theological insights had been a starting point, but their journey had since turned more spiritual, a return to feelings they recognised from their evangelical days.

#### **14. Confirmation of the three candidates nominated for the Management Committee**

Mary McMahon, in the chair, thanked everyone for their support over her six years on the committee, and three as vice chair of PCN. She was the first non-English member of the committee and had enjoyed much banter about the Scottish influence. She had enjoyed being a part of the committee, the graciousness and fun. She expressed appreciation for her contact with John churcher. She will remain convenor of the Edinburgh group. Paul Onslow called for a round of applause to thank Mary. He went on to read out the names and proposers and seconders of the nominees to the committee. There being three vacancies he asked for a show of hands to confirm all as Trustees. This was duly given by all members present. The new Trustees are Alison Morley, Andrew Burrell and Alan Race. The AGM ended at 12.20pm.