



DRAFT MINUTES

WATCH AGM 2020

Saturday 17th October 2020
Online via Zoom

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received from thirty-two members.

Quorum. Eighty-two members were present (79 online plus 3 by proxy). A quorum was established (20 minimum). The following national committee members were present: Emma Percy (Chair), Felicity Cooke (Vice Chair), Esther Elliott (Vice Chair), John Briggs (Treasurer), Claire Creese (Secretary), Yvonne Clarke, Jenny Humphreys, Rosalind Rutherford, Michael Smith, Lizzie Taylor and Cath Williamson.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9.30 am

Chair's WELCOME: Emma Percy welcomed everyone.

MINUTES - 2019 AGM 5th October. The minutes had been circulated.

Motion. Proposed by Claire Creese (Secretary), seconded: That the 2019 AGM draft minutes as submitted be approved as a true record. *The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.*

CIO ACCOUNTS to 30 June 2020. John Briggs (Treasurer) thanked former treasurer, Mark Bennet, for his continued support during a challenging hand over due to Covid lockdown. He apologised that the Accounts, examined by Graham Cole FCA, were only distributed the day before. Philippa Blackwell will be assisting the treasurer with the bookkeeping of income and expenditures.

John confirmed that the reported figures reflect the receipt of Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) Gift Aid, noting that Gift Aid had not yet been claimed on non-CAF sourced income [HSBC and PayPal payment streams]. This was partly due to the logistic complications with the treasurer handover (lockdown etc) and partly because collecting on these accounts is time consuming. Using non-CAF methods to pay one's dues is more expensive as these have to be processed individually by the Administrator whereas CAF processes everything automatically.

The line item "Website cost" does not reflect what Orange and Blue do for WATCH and will be changed.

There was discussion about how the Rebecca Hodel-Jones legacy [unrestricted], intended to benefit lay women, was being used. Emma explained that the committee will develop guidelines for its use and will be looking into the type of research that is most needed.

Motion. Proposed by Mark Bennet, seconded: To receive the CIO Accounts to Year Ending 30 June 2020. The motion was adopted by an overwhelming show of hands.

2020 Annual Report

The report was submitted in advance. There were comments and discussion on the following items.

General Synod: Anne Stevens reported that there were no big debates in GS relating to women this year. The WATCH Synod group moves behind the scenes planning which questions to send in. There was discussion about the disappointing official Synod answers to questions about equal pay and the church's Dignity at Work policy (2010). Jenny Humphreys said there was an ongoing fudge, but she noted the importance of continuing to ask formal public questions, and of receiving public replies.

There was discussion about the upcoming GS and Deanery elections and the need to galvanise support. For example, in 2015 an inclusive candidate in Manchester was only elected by a three-vote majority.

Anne Stevens will check whether it is best to respond to the church commissioners or to General Synod about the grant awarded to St Wilfrid and St Hilda which was intended for a salaried position to grow society churches. Lucy Doherty will be requesting details about the plan and outcomes.

There was discussion on asking diocesan Secretaries to add a question about applicants' memberships in church-related organisations.

Transformations & TRIG - *Transformations Research Implementation Group.* The committee meets four times a year with Emma and Cath Williamson sitting on the committee. Emma commented that the November Lambeth day meeting was well attended and very important. Responding to presentations one diocesan bishop had said, "I thought everything was fine, but it is not." Oxford is developing a new Harassment policy which will draw attention to the fact of other dioceses lacking adequate policies. A number of issues raised by Transformations fall into a labyrinth between diocesan and general church responsibility. The church lags behind the rest of the [secular] world.

Rosie Harper noted that there are no proper whistle blowing policies. Emma said she would take the topic back to the committee.

April Alexander signalled that attention is needed on situations when lay people bully clergy. Emma raised the question of how such policies are framed in the context of both paid and volunteer roles. Oxford and Chelmsford have good policies. The key is to improve the culture and to ensure support for the policies.

Further questions were aired about Deans of Women's Ministry and instances of the lack of support for women clergy. Emma pointed out that there are big differences in the way dioceses support deans. Some have no budget. Some deans are not clear on their role. There is no consistency around the title; bishops are wary of making these appointments; given the institutionalized [legal] discrimination against women, it is appropriate to have salaried deans in place.

Emma noted that paternity leave is included in the church's new maternity leave policy.

WATCH's relationship to TRIG (made up of ordained women) has changed fundamentally to the good with the presence of Chris Goldsmith (Bishop of St Germans, Truro) as Director of Ministry, Ruth Worsley (Bishop of Taunton), and chair Revd Lis Goddard who have made a phenomenal difference.

Discussion on the Annual Report was paused to hold elections.

Elections

Re-election through trustee rotation. Claire Creese, Election Officer/Secretary, drew attention to the Constitution provision (l. a) that 1/3 of trustees [not including chair or two vice chairs] retire annually. *[Secretary note: the 2017 Charity Commission-approved Constitution did not allow for initial staggered terms, resulting in some trustees being asked to rotate sooner than the end of their term of office.]*

- Jenny Humphreys (2019). *Nominated by Sally Barnes. Second, April Alexander*
- Michael Smith (2018). *Nominated by Jenny Humphreys. Second, Lizzie Taylor*
- Lizzie Taylor (2017). *Nominated by Sally Barnes. Second, Christine Allsop*

Other elections.

- Esther Elliott, Vice Chair [re-election]. *Nominated by Emma Percy. Second, Felicity Cooke*
- John Briggs, Treasurer. *Nominated by Mark Bennet. Second, Emma Percy*
- Mary Kells. [Co-opted January 2020.] *Nominated by Lucy Thirtle. Second, Emma Percy*

With advance notification of nominations, all nominees were elected to a three-year term by unanimous consent.

Emma reminded members that with the (August 2020) deadline for nominations, the committee still has the option of co-opting members to vacancies on the committee, and would likely be doing so. *[Co-opted trustees stand for election by the members at the following AGM.]*

Discussion on the Annual Report resumed

Strategic Plan (SP). Felicity, Vice Chair, said she hoped members could see how comprehensive the Plan is. There would be an opportunity in the afternoon after the business meeting to discuss the SP further both in small groups and all together.

Chair's reflections – *Emma Percy.*

What has struck me this year is that we are not a special interest group, or a club which people simply join to be with the like-minded, though that can be important. We want to change the Church for the good of all and that involves preventing harm. If you have read the ICCSA report and found it shocking, there were sadly few surprises. The worst excesses came from parts of the church where women were excluded. Some theologies of gender are harmful for people.

And it is painful to acknowledge there is collusion of women in their own oppression. This surfaced in appointments made this year. On the website announcing the appointment of two suffragan bishops in the diocese of Chichester the new female bishop is asked how she will work with the new trad Catholic bishop, she responds “we both have dogs”. The elephant in the room is a problem. It is not fair, not to name the issues at hand. This week I heard of a parish that was told that they “lack grace in their hearts” in wanting to be open to women clergy and not amalgamate with a Forward in Faith parish.

WATCH is aware that intersectionality means women of colour can have an even more difficult experience of the Church. We are starting to work with AMEN (Anglican Minority Ethnic Network). Felicity and Emma will be talking with the chair about how to support the women in that

organisation and how AMEN can help us. But we must keep in mind what is manageable for our volunteers. We must know and be honest about our strengths and our weaknesses.

Jody Stowell stepped down from the committee in January 2020. She has been a wonderful committee member bringing coherent thinking about issues for evangelical women which are important to hear. We are delighted that Jody was elected chair of the House of Clergy in the diocese of London. And thank her for all her contributions.

Anne Stevens is stepping down. She is a church commissioner and sits on GS. She has also served as Vice Chair of WATCH. Her contribution has been invaluable. She will continue to coordinate the GS WATCH activities.

Lizzie Taylor wondered if WATCH can ask the diocese of Chichester to state its position on women clergy on its website. Emma responded that while we can ask, we cannot force the diocese to do so.

Rachel Moriarty (Chichester) asked if WATCH might take more notice of dioceses such as hers which do not accept women's orders. Could WATCH take this on? She had never accepted the 5GPs because it would be colluding with an untruth. She recognized that Bishop Martin's demeanour, however, was very good.

The meeting adjourned at 10.50 for a break and reconvened at 11.16

The Annual Report was received by unanimous consent.

The chair closed the business meeting at 11.18.

This was followed by the Programme

Programme

- 11.15 – 12.45 TALK with Q&A: Professor Linda Woodhead MBE,
“God-change: from God the Father to animism and more”.
- 12.45 – 1.45 *Lunch break*
- 1.45 WORSHIP led by Revd Mary Kells. Morning Prayer. Power Point. Theme, God our Mother...
- 2.00 – 3.15 DISCUSSION on WATCH's Strategic Plan, led by Felicity Cooke
Included 9 break-out rooms facilitated mostly by committee members, followed by closing remarks within the whole-group. Notes were taken for input to the national committee at its November meeting.