

**Minutes of Annual General Meeting of
Association of Christian Counsellors
On-Line Zoom Meeting
Saturday 10th July 2021**

Present: Board: Sue Monckton-Rickett, Peter Barraclough, Gathoni Hamilton-Foster Phil Martin, Tony Ruddle, Chris Williams

Members: 80 Members attended

Apologies: Board: Peter Roberts, Fiona Sherburn and Wien Fung and 5 members

1) Agree Minutes of previous meeting

- The minutes were accepted as a true record of the previous meeting
- There were no matters arising.
- 26 attendees approved the minutes and NIL votes not to approve.

2). To accept the Annual report and to approve the Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2020 Sue Monckton-Rickett (SMR) explained that Peter Roberts ACC finance Director had sent apologies for the meeting and so she would be presenting the Annual Accounts, which again have been available on the website. The key elements are:

- The Statement of Financial Activity, which shows ACC's income and expenditure for the year. ACC Net Surplus in General Funds for the Year was £36,103

General Fund Income

For 2020 was £194,011, which was significantly less than income for 2019. This is due to the pattern of having a National Conference every other year. In the years without a conference income is significantly down. Apart from this however, generally income was slightly above the 2019 and for that ACC are truly grateful knowing that many charities have suffered financially in the last year. ACC membership grew slightly and donations had been received from organisations and individuals. Income that had decreased from 2019 was the levy on Affiliate training courses and ACC training courses, both due to Covid-19. However, in general ACC income was not impacted by COVID-19, which was amazing.

General Fund Expenditure

For the year was £157,908, significantly lower than 2019. Again partly due to the pattern of National Conferences, but also due to staff costs savings. The recruitment of a CEO and other appointments were all delayed, as we dealt with the impact of Covid. This did however, mean that a very small team carried an awful lot of work and thanks especially to t Kathy Spooner for the work that she carried during 2020.

SMR asked if there were any questions.

The following were asked:

- **Do the accounts are they sent to the Northern Ireland Charities Commission?**

Answer No, because although ACC can do work in Northern Ireland, it is not a registered charity in Northern Ireland.

- What are restricted funds?

ACC has some funds that were given to ACC by Marriage Resource. The majority of the expenditure for this year was to part fund couples counselling courses that ACC ran and also to fund work in

Kenya and Uganda, where the Marriage Version of the PCUK Resourcing Pastoral Care Course is run.

The Balance Sheet

ACC's Total Funds at the end of 2020 were £149,635. ACC has no fixed assets so this is effectively that is the cash position taking into account our debtors and creditors. There was also £4,099 in our restricted funds as at the end of 2020.

SMR said that 2021 will be significantly different in that ACC have recruited staff to boost the team and Covid has meant that the Conference has been postponed to 2022. In 2021 there has been investment in the website "Find a Counsellor" facility, there is probably more work to do and there has been investment in developing pastoral care support groups. So the surplus of 2020 is not likely to be repeated in 2021, funds are sufficient to absorb a deficit. ACC retain a contingency of £45,000, which is in line with the charity commissioner's requirement to keep three months of normal regular expenditure.

3). Resolutions

- A poll was taken on the following resolutions.
- To adopt the Charity's accounts and the reports of the Directors and External Examiners for the 12-month period ended 31 December 2019. Of those present 63 stated Y, 0 stated N. All proxy votes state Y. Motion carried.
- To appoint Stewardship Services to act as independent Examiners until the conclusion of the next general meeting at which the accounts for 2020 are laid before the Company. Of those present 64 stated Yes, 0 stated NO. All proxy votes state Y. Motion carried
- To authorise the directors to fix the remuneration of the Independent Examiners. 64 stated Y, 0 stated N. All Proxy votes state Y. Motion carried

Election of Trustee.

There are currently three board vacancies places in addition to the re-elections / elections in this meeting, as both Helen Vipan and Marlene Forsythe-Gidharry have recently stood down for personal reasons. SMR thanked them both for all of their work. Pleased that although they are stepping. ACC will be looking for new board members in the coming months and the roles needed. ACC want to strengthen the board because it is an active board and there is a lot of work that the Board want to do. However, at this AGM, there were just two nominations which are both for re-election Tony Ruddle and Sue Monckton-Rickett and one Board Member, Gathoni Hamilton-Foster, who was co-opted earlier in the year and needs to be officially voted onto the Board.

Voting for each candidate took place and the results were:

- Sue Monckton-Rickett – 69 in favour, 0 against and 3 proxy voters in favour, Sue was voted onto the board for another term.
- Tony Ruddle - 68 in favour, 1 against and 3 proxy voters in favour, Tony was voted onto the board for another term.
- Gathoni Hamilton-Foster - 53 in favour, 0 against. Gathoni was voted onto the Board for her first term.

CHAIR REPORT

SMR shared some of the important events of 2020 and into 2021. In a year like no other ACC grew through the challenge of the pandemic by:

- adapting the way how we worked, including working remotely and then permanently closing the offices and supporting staff through change
- supporting members in changing circumstances – through on-line training and forums, providing guidance for changes in practice provided free access for counsellors to Online Events, being flexible in terms of fee payments
- supporting the public through the counselling service that was provided to the bereaved, residential care home workers and NHS staff. engaging in radio and other media events about the pandemic and mental health
- holding a staff / board prayer meeting every week to pray for each other and concerns that members have raised

SMR also shared some feedback from members and said that ACC may not get everything right all of the time, but it always tries to do it's best to serve members well.

Probably the most significant achievement in terms of public support was the counselling service, the crisis counselling service for the bereaved, for people working in residential care and NHS staff. The board had met very soon after the pandemic lockdown was announced and asked "what should we do?" and following the suggestion from a member, it was decided to set up the service. Within a month of lockdown, 240 counsellors and students had volunteered to be part of the service, plus people volunteered to act as supervisors, case managers and service coordinators. To date we have we have seen approximately 321 clients and delivered nearly 2,500 hours of counselling. Thanks to everyone who volunteered. The Board felt that the voluntary service needed to close in January 2021, but the NHS were keen to maintain it and so funded it and funding will continue until March 2022. This is an amazing achievement. The service has shown that the NHS value ACC the importance of spirituality in people's mental wellbeing. It has opened new conversations and opportunities for ACC. SMR then quoted some client feedback.

CEO REPORT

Kathy Spooner (KS) started by acknowledging the importance of pastoral care and counselling and the difference it makes in people's lives.

A positive changes brought about by the pandemic is working on-line - the opportunities for connection, connecting in different ways, removing location barriers for attending training, etc.

The number of training events and forums in 2020 had increased significantly from 2019 due to on-line ability. In 2020, there were 3 training events on Zoom, 4 forums and 1 retreat. Professional Development Groups were also established – opportunities for counsellors to come together to talk about how their faith intersected with their counselling practice.

The PCUK RPCC training was adapted to on-line, which had greatly increased the number of courses that can be delivered. The increase in training, forums, RPCCs, retreats and professional development groups has continued in 2021. People have valued the content of training, the community that has been built and learning from one another. In November this year there will be ACC's first On-Line National Conference.

KS said that in 2020 the ACCEnT Forum had been established and there were hopes for other member led forums for members working with children's and young people, memebtrs working with couples and members working with clients with disability. KS said that these would all be member led and ACC were open to ideas and suggestions. As a small team not everything can be done from the centre, but ACC are keen to facilitate others.

KS said that the Churchill Framework had been published, which is an incredible competency framework for working with religious and spiritual interventions in counselling. It was not intended just for ACC or Christians, but for all counsellors. KS thanked Heather Churchill for her amazing work and encouraged members to use the framework.

Within PCUK, with Teresa Onions developing a pastoral support pilot scheme.

There is a new team of assessors with a desire to support and help people positively through audits and accreditation rather than be restrictive. The aim is to encourage people to grow in their practice and not and not to think of all these things as just tick box exercises.

KS said that throughout the whole year, a new complaints process has been developed and piloted, which again is focused not on an adversarial system, but on listening, dialogue, reparation, learning and development. It has also been a learning process for ACC, but it is hoped that the new process will be published in 2021.

HEAD OF MEMBERSHIP SERVICES REPORT

Gillian Stuart (GS) introduced herself and spoke about her background in both pastoral care / church leadership and counselling.

spoke about the new Find A Counsellor (FAC) facility on the ACC website, which had been implemented in 2020. There has been a few teething issues, but most of these has been sorted now and she encouraged members to make use of it , as it was of benefit to them and potential clients to find the counsellor that they need whether they search directly or via an enquiry to the office. Members would be contacted to encourage them to join the new FAC and ACC would provide any technical help needed.

GS reported that ACC were making improvements in communications with members and others. MailChimp was now being used for all bulk emails, which has improved the readability and clarity in addition to presentation. ACC were also in the process of updating and reformatting much of documentation, especially that which members have to engage with. Advertising and promotion of ACC has also improved by increasing use of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. GS encouraged members “like or follow” ACC, as this help to promote the organisation and to contact the office team if they need help to do this.

GS encouraged members to provide feedback and said that the aim of the office team was to help members develop and feel supported through being a listening ear, providing guidance, creating a community where issues can be discussed, etc.

KS continued her CEO Report by welcoming Gillian Stuart and Yineng Hart, who has taken on responsibility for communication and training. KS thanked them for the differences that they have already made.

KS reported that about 18 months ago she started contacting the head of NHS IAPT Services on behalf of one of our members, and as a result of that, ACC accredited members are now become eligible for involvement in IAPT services. In addition, ACC are now part of the psychological profession stakeholder group in the NHS, which has always been dominated by psychologists and now for the first time has invited counselling bodies.

These changes mean that it has become easier for ACC to challenge services / employers that exclude ACC. ACC have also now got full involvement in the SCoPEd project. KS that there was a lot of misinformation about it and encouraged members to raise any questions with her. SCoPEd had

enabled the different counselling bodies to learn from one another and build relationships and trust. There is a sense amongst all the CEOs of the membership bodies that this project goes beyond self interest and building their membership. They are interested in clients being able to be placed with counsellors who are properly trained, ensured, competent, signed up to code of ethics. And they are also committed to employment opportunities, being able to come away because we have a published framework.

KS also reported that ACC are part of the Diversity and Inclusion Coalition that has been meeting for a few years. The intention of the coalition is to address the barriers for some people entering the counselling profession and also benefiting from the counselling profession. The initial focus has been on gender and race and looking at training. The Coalition are about to tender for authors to write a toolkit for training organisations to better address issues of race. It has been a very good coalition for ACC to be part of.

KS said that ACC had continued to have a good relationship with the Professional Standards Authority and they are very supportive to ACC.

ACC have also had invitations from the Cabinet Office and the BBC to speak into issues to do with mental and spiritual health and issues of the day around i.e. LGBTQ. ACC have also continued to work with other organisations.

KS thanked all members for how they have responded to the pandemic to ensure that clients could continue to get the counselling they needed, trainees could carry on studying and that pastoral care and much needed support for church congregations and communities continued throughout the pandemic. She also thanked those involved in PCUK development, the NHS counselling service and the setting up of the various forums and groups.

KS said that membership has been growing slowly and welcomed new members and hope that they would be able to contribute and build the community. She thanked all the staff who had adapted to completely new ways of working.

KS said that for the future there were plans for more forums, more training including the Four Winds Online Conference in November, improvements the content and the navigation of the website, a rewrite our ethics and practice guidelines and changes to the audit process to make it more of a resource for counsellors.

PASTORAL CARE UPDATE BY TERESA ONIONS (TO)

TO said that in these challenging times, one of the things that seemed to be needed were pastoral support groups for pastoral carers to build up resilience, have connection and help their wellbeing so that they can serve well. The idea is to go beyond RPCC training and for those on the course and existing members. PCUK have launched a pilot from March to December 2021 offering people some free training and some facilitated online support groups. The training s, looks at self care, reflective practice and how a pastoral support groups might work. 21 people have completed the training and ready to join a pastoral support group. There have trainers and facilitators being equipped to take this pilot project on and groups will be able to meet about ten times a year, and that there will be about 4 to 6 members in each group. The purpose of the groups is to provide space, to calm, to offload and unburden, to think about and notice some of the things they're struggling with, to share encouragement, to learn and grow and share wisdom together.

All of the pilot work is being evaluated so that it can be refine and developed.

There is also a desire to create other pastoral care training courses and PCUK would like to hear from members of their ideas and any expertise that they may have to do this. PCUK really think that there's a place for short courses where we can bring psychological and spiritual understandings into the church. There will continue to be forums for pastoral care members to come together share in that community.

KS continued to say that ACC still had the desire to develop new membership streams, to become a central source where people can come if they're looking for someone to help them in different areas and so the aim is to have a register Christian coaches and mentors and for spiritual directors. It would make ACC more sustainable because with more membership income and it would also be of great value to the public who are looking for help to know that there's a one stop shop to come to and be able to find people and the different professions can all learn from each other.

CHAIR SUMMING UP

ACC is not just here to administer things, but to further the mission of God's Kingdom through supporting pastoral care and counselling and hopefully coaching and spiritual direction as well. ACC wants to increase membership through promotional activities and but one of the best ways is through word of mouth and so SMR encouraged members to tell others about ACC and PCUK.

SMR said that she believe that all members have something to offer in mental and spiritual health not just in their work as counsellors or pastoral carers, but as people who come with their own faith and want to really integrate that into everything that they doing.

ACC's desire is to follow God's lead in everything, to look to Him to guide, encourage and challenge. She encouraged members to be part of the restoration work and said that ACC wanted to always look to improve the services it provided

ACCENT GROUP REPORT – LEROY HARLEY (LH) AND SANDRA POWELL (SP)

LH said that 25th of May, 2020 was a turning point for him. George Floyd, a black man, was murdered by a person whose job it was to serve and protect. And on this occasion, the police officer did neither. It was no longer an option for him to be angry and do nothing. So he wrote an e-mail to ACC and BACP asking how they were going to support black counsellors. Kathy Spooner responded with a phone call. At the time of writing the email he was no longer a member of ACC, as he left, as he could not see himself ever represented in the Accord, etc. They spoke about how he could help in shaping ACC and from that phone call, the Diversity, Inclusion, was formed, now ACCEnT. LH then provided some information about each of the members of ACCEnT, which includes both counsellors and pastoral carers: Bridget Brookes, Dr. Charlotte Johnson, Sandra Powell, Sharon Hastings, Sharon McClane, Wien Fung.

The first meeting of ACCEnT was held a year ago today when members shared experiences of being black in the UK, discussed expectations from the group and from ACC. Sadly, most of the group have experienced physical and emotional attacks at school, work and in local communities. A member of the group posed the question " How do I fit into this country?". The group have also shared our experiences of being in white majority churches where one in one church they were told to sit at the back. The group felt that their experiences felt very much like the Windrush generation who were also not welcome into the churches when they arrived in the UK in the fifties and sixties. The group talked about the constant battle to be heard and being tired of fighting this battle for decades. Dr. Aisha McKenzie Mavhinga in the introduction to her book The Challenges of Racism in the Therapeutic

Practice, starts with a question from a client. When will I be able to live a life without having to think about being black?

Sandra Powell shared an experience. She attended her first ACC conference with excitement in 2019. She said that the conference overall was wonderful and she came away empowered and equipped with a vast amount of knowledge and enriched with praise and prayers and fellowship. Sadly, however, there was only a very small percentage of people from diverse backgrounds. She said that she shared Leroy's feelings about a lack of representation not just at the conference, but throughout our years of study and training. She said that her reason for joining ACCEnT was to change and a belief to act and be part of positive change. ACCEnT had experiences a unified and productive year together as diverse and inclusive group for the ACC and would continue to contribute with ideas, articles in Accord, attending board meetings and recently producing a six monthly report, which was published in Accord.

ACCEnT plan to do outreach work which includes reaching out to churches and communities - creating open forums for people to have hard talks in a safe space. to expand training and be part of ACC National Conference, to use social media to expand the network and to attend exhibitions, including colleges and training resource centers. ACCEnT want to break the stigma of emotional and mental health issues in our cultures, churches and communities and to shine a light on the ever growing need for positive therapeutic support that should be available for everyone.

SP recalled the death of George Floyd and sharing with God the bittersweet of a man having to die for change to happen. God had reminded her that His Son had to die for a great change to take place. As a group, they had taken time to reflect and asked " Have we witnessed any real change since then? Has the change made a difference to our lives?"

ACC accepted the request for change, so ACCEnT are now calling on members, people of diverse backgrounds and inviting them to join with an organization that has given a platform for change to finally come. She encouraged members to find out more and join ACCEnT, as change can happen when people work together, create a supportive circle, and stand in strength and resilience to make the voices heard.

SMR thanked Sandra and Leroy, for all that they had shared and encouraged members to support ACCEnT and get involved. She said that at the start of the work she had a conversation saying that ACC didn't want ACCEnT just to be tokenism it certainly isn't. ACC real want it to make a difference and she thank ACCEnT for working closely with ACC to make a difference, not just for our members, but for mental health in ethnic groups more widely.

SMR closed by thanking everyone who had participated in the day and especially to Sharon for leading the training. Thanked Gillian, Yineng and Kathy for pulling it all together in the background, as well as the presentation. She thanked everyone who had joined the day and for all of the support from members throughout the year. She closed the meeting in prayer for the past and the future of ACC.