

**Minutes of the LifeRing Board of Directors Meeting:**  
**Annual Conference, June, 2019**

It was determined that a quorum of Board Members was present: Lorraine Hull, Dan Carrigan, Mary Beth O'Connor, Donal Breen, and Byron Kerr. General Manager, Robert Stump, was also present.

**Annual Conference**

**Bylaws review:** Mary Beth reviewed the chart outlining the proposed bylaws changes and fielded questions. This chart, the proposed bylaws, and a redline are on the website and will continue to be there through the election. By unanimous vote, the Bylaws were approved to be on the ballot.

**Board Structure:** a discussion occurred as to the expectations that Board members contribute reasonable hours to board projects and activities, as well as the importance of continually developing new leaders.

**Board Nominations:**

The following were nominated for the open Board seats, of which there are four:

- Rick Thompson, nominated by Dan Carrigan
- Scott Judkins, nominated by Mary Beth O'Connor
- Leigh Justison, nominated by Byron Kerr
- Fergus Cantwell, nominated by Kathleen Gargan

Scott and Leigh described their backgrounds, recovery history, and ideas for their tenure on the Board, should they be elected. Rick is a current Board member but was unable to attend; several board members spoke in his support and described his contributions to the Board. Donal spoke about Fergus, who is also a member from Ireland.

**Board Meeting:**

No consent agenda, but this will be prepared for the July meeting.

Kathleen Gargan spoke about the struggles of WFS and SOS, contrasted with SMART and Refuge Recovery, which are thriving, with a caveat that many SMART meetings are in institutions. Discussion about what distinguishes LifeRing included that we are self-structured, but do have a philosophy in our literature and our workbook provides practical guidance. SMART meetings in practice are more similar to LifeRing than it might appear on paper, because the larger meetings mostly do a check-in. Byron emphasized that LifeRing is less hierarchical and our convenors are non-professionals, because we offer peer support. Smart has a lot of therapist facilitators, which has both

pros and cons. Discussed better marketing LifeRing's strengths and unique attributes, such as the value of cross-talk.

Discussed possible grant options, related in part to the presentation from the Religious Freedom Foundation on Saturday. Discussion of the importance of local outreach, developing long-term relationships with professionals, courts, and political leaders. Mary Beth suggested some growth could occur via a coalition with other secular options, because we have similar challenges in these areas. Discussion about how even federal money also is distributed at the state and then local level.

Discussion around ensuring that LifeRing is described accurately as being inclusive to all, rather than being seen as exclusively an atheist organization. Discussion of options to target Facebook ads to individuals more likely to be attracted to LifeRing's philosophy, which Steve G believes can be done. Jenny S and Dan suggested that the new website will be a better entry point for potential members and public relations. Also discussed the goal of getting more members to speak to the media on LifeRing's behalf. Mary Beth suggested a project to create media content, such as news articles, that could be distributed to convenors for use in the local community.

Jenny S raised the issue of the difficulties in starting new meetings and whether the central organization could do more to assist. Robert said there used to be a New Meetings Committee to help new convenors. Discussion about the benefit of targeting a geographic region for growth and linking up with friendly groups, such as UU.

Discussion about the need for the new board to look at the available funds and decide how best to use that money. Scott suggested Google ads, and described his efforts to get LifeRing out of the treatment facility category and into its proper non-profit category. Mary Beth suggested that a 5 year plan and the budget are inter-related, because to decide where to spend the money, the Board needs to define its strategies and priorities. There was discussion about the plan the Colorado students developed last year and reviewing that for the strategies discussions. Whether to rent space on our website to treatment centers was discussed, because groups contact us and SMART does this, but concerns were expressed about the commitment of these organizations to evidence based practices and equal treatment of secular options; the consensus was that the Board should evaluate this further.

The Board will review the suggestions as to what our members would like from LifeRing's leadership. Discussion of distributing the skills inventory so we can engage more members in order to handle more projects, of developing a convenor workshop, and reviewing the appropriate financial reserve level. Byron indicated the chat platform needs to be changed and he has a volunteer for this project. Robert mentioned that the Yahoo convenor list has problems and we need a better way to communicate. Craig suggested a better communication structure as well.

Discussion of a problematic Sacramento member handling some correspondence for LifeRing while simultaneously badmouthing LifeRing, which is a problem generally and is inconsistent with LifeRing's philosophy.

Discussion about Byron's role as Executive Director, with a reminder that he has no executive power, which rests with the board, per his job description. Also discussion that the Board requires at least two sets of eyes on any official writing.

Jenny S described a midyear fundraising campaign that will occur once the new website is up.

Dan thanked everyone for their efforts in putting on the conference, particularly Byron and Steve G who organized all the events.

### **Adjournment**

Motion was made to adjourn. It was seconded and carried unanimously.

Submitted by Ewa Conroy  
LifeRing Deputy Board Secretary  
July 13, 2019

