

I'll start with a personal note. I took over as clerk from Piers shortly after our last AGM back in December 2020 and I have loved it. My working life as a software engineer means I spend much of my days in online meetings, but even with that meeting fatigue the network's meetings I have been involved in have been a real joy.

At the last AGM we heard from members that we should change the way the network did its work, from relying on a large Steering Group to do most tasks to pulling together working groups to get stuff done. It was felt that these working groups could be short lived, or permanent. That new way of working has been an amazing success and we'll hear reports from several of our working groups in the AGM.

I think we will all agree that our Creative Conversations have been an amazing success, that's a great example of a long-lived working group, and our 2021 Summer conference was another, this time organised by a short-lived working group.

In the past, whenever I referred to our network I called us the Nontheist Friends Network (UK). David (Boulton) used to pick me up on that extra "UK" bit and this year we have seen just how right he was; we've had active involvement in the network from way beyond the UK—our Creative Conversations involve Quakers from Continental Europe and the USA as both speakers and participants, and our American Friend Kiera has been a key member of both our Steering Group and the Creative Conversations working group.

There has been sad news. We lost two members: Michael Wright passed away in June and Michael Rutter in October. Michael Wright served as clerk of our network for several years, and we are lucky to have lots of his writing preserved on our website.

This AGM sees Gisela stand down from the Steering Group. Gisela spent many years as clerk of our network and has been an invaluable member of the Steering Group and the Creative Conversations working group. We'll still see Gisela as a participant in our meetings, but I will miss her on the Steering Group.

The coming year promises to be an exciting one for our network. Friends generally seem to be more accepting of us nontheists and are starting to think hard about how to reflect our take on things. As a network we do still need to provide a home for those nontheist Friends who find themselves isolated, but we also need to get involved in these wider challenges.

Tim Regan

16/2/22