



THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW CHURCH
CONFERENCE COUNCIL MEETING
held on Wednesday 22nd & Thursday 23rd March 2023
Via Zoom

Trustees Present Via Zoom: Mrs M L Cowie Chairman
 Mr N K Sutton Vice - Chairman
 Mrs P Grimshaw
 Mrs S Chesworth
 Mr R Taylor
 Revd R A Gill
 Revd B R Jarvis

Also in attendance Via Zoom: Ms N Welch Company Secretary
 Mrs R Jaggs Company Accountant
 Mr C Chambers President New Church College
 Revd H Brown Spiritual Leader
 Revd J Dunion Spiritual Leader
 Revd B Talbot Secretary to the Committee of Ministers

22nd March 2023 Start: 19.00 - 21.15
23rd March 2023 Start: 19.00 - 21.10

57	Opening The Revd Helen Brown opened the meeting with a reading from Psalm 27 and offered a prayer and a minute's silence in memory of Mr Maurice Garnett of the Bradford Society who sadly passed away peacefully on 22nd March 2023.	
58	Welcome The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies.	
59	Minutes 59.1 Confirmation of the Minutes of the last meeting held on 18th January 2023. The minutes of the last meeting were approved by all present with Revd Bruce Jarvis proposing and Revd Robert Gill seconding. 59.2 Matters arising from the Minutes. <i>Email received from Kurt Fekete (see minute 56)</i> The Council had received an email from the Director of the Swedenborgian Church of North America Youth League, requesting permission to revive and use the cover art of "The Strange One" a graphic novelette produced by Conference in 1982. Natalie contacted the Swedenborg Society and found that the Conference owned the copyright <i>Action: Revd Jack Dunion has agreed to contact Kurt Fekete to let him know they are able to use the image as requested.</i>	

	<p>59.3 Revision of Articles and Rules – Constitution Revision Group</p> <p>Revd Robert Gill explained that the CRG are continuing to work through the Memorandum and Articles of Association to simplify the documents where possible and make them easier for people to understand.</p> <p>When changes to the Memorandum and Articles are reported to Companies House, they are required to be signed by the Trustees. Revd Robert Gill will check with Anna Hay whether this meant all the Trustees or just the Company Secretary or the Chairman and Company Secretary and report back to the Council and Company Secretary.</p> <p>Availability of Rule Book.</p> <p>Revd Robert Gill explained that the CRG had discussed the best way of making the Rule Book available to Members. The Rule Book is currently available on The General Conference website although not everyone has access to the internet so it was suggested that printed copies of the Rule Book could be made available upon request and printed copies could be available at the Annual Conference/AGM.</p> <p>59.4 Conference Programme 2023</p> <p>Margaret Cowie explained that the subgroup has almost completed on the Conference programme for July 2023. Comments from the survey carried out at the 2022 AGM and Annual Conference have been taken into consideration in an attempt to improve the programme for everyone.</p>	
60	<p>Human Resources</p> <p><i>Employment contracts</i></p> <p>Margaret Cowie explained that Ministers contracts are currently based on a 40-hour week and the Ministers would like this to be altered to 35 hours. The Council discussed this, and it was decided that Natalie Welch would seek advice from Croner.</p> <p><i>Yearly Pay Increase</i></p> <p>The Council discussed the yearly pay increase. It was decided that it will be held off until later in the year as staff have just received an increase in salary in January 2023. There is a Finance Meeting on 19th April 2023 where the Council will discuss the pay increase further. It was also agreed that it would be a good idea to invite Colin Skinner to the Finance Meeting as he is the Payroll and Pension Manager.</p> <p><i>Action: Margaret will inform Colin Skinner of this decision. A letter will be sent out to all paid employees to make them aware that the pay increase is on hold until a later date.</i></p>	<p>NW</p> <p>MC</p>
61	<p>Company Accounts Report</p> <p>The Company Accountant produced a provisional Conference Income and Expenditure Account using actual figures up to February 2023 and estimated ones for March 2023. The Council discussed the figures, and Rachael Jaggs will bring the full detailed accounts to the Finance Meeting which will now be held on 19th April 2023 via Zoom for the Council to discuss and approve.</p>	
62	<p>Funding Request</p> <p>The Committee of Ministers had sent in a request to the Council for consideration. They have a meeting at Wellspring House in May 2023 and whilst most Ministers would be attending in person some will be attending via Zoom. There will be at least one person staying overnight and they would require catering for breakfast and lunch. At this stage they are not sure if there would</p>	

	<p>be a charge for the overnight accommodation and room hire. The Committee wished to ask the Council for funding towards this meeting. The Council discussed this and it was suggested and agreed that the funding for the meeting should come out of the Committee of Ministers funds. <i>Action: Revd Brian Talbot will give the final costs to Rachael Jaggs who will then reimburse the College out of the Committee of Ministers Funds.</i></p>	BT & RJ
	<p>Meeting Closed at 21.15pm on 22nd March 2023 with Revd Jack Dunion offering a reading from Psalm 134 followed by a short prayer.</p>	
	<p>Meeting continued Thursday 23rd March 2023 at 19.00pm with Revd Bruce Jarvis opening the meeting with a reading from Psalm 84 followed by a short prayer.</p>	
63	<p>Review of Safeguarding Policy</p> <p>Sue Chesworth explained that previously Thirty-one Eight was used for all safeguarding issues and guidance. They provided training although at a cost. Natalie Welch is currently getting all employees and volunteers set up on Bright HR who we currently use for any employment/HR and Health and Safety advice and guidance. Bright HR offer free online courses including safeguarding courses which we will be using. Sue Chesworth is going to complete all the safeguarding online courses to make sure they are adequate for the needs the Conference.</p> <p>DBS checks – Natalie Welch has taken over the processing of DBS checks using a company called Care Check. Their system is easy to use and cheaper than Thirty-one Eight who we previously used. Sue-Chesworth explained that we need clarity on who pays for the DBS checks, and who is responsible for checking that all are completed.</p> <p>This was discussed and it was agreed that Natalie Welch would check with Care Check that everyone who works for the societies and church are covered if they have a General Conference DBS check, or if they should have separate checks .</p> <p>It was also decided that the Conference would pay for DBS checks and that everyone must have both a child and vulnerable adult DBS check .</p> <p>The Council thanked Sue Chesworth for all her hard work and input into Safeguarding.</p> <p>Sue Chesworth explained that since Rita Russell resigned as Safeguarding Deputy the position had not been filled, and yet it is a very important role that needs to be filled.</p> <p>Sue Chesworth explained that all safeguarding training and procedures need to be reviewed and it was suggested that a subgroup is formed to enable the review process to be a thorough one.</p> <p>It was agreed after discussion that the subgroup would be Sue Chesworth, Natalie Welch and Chris Chambers. They will arrange to have a meeting to get the process started.</p> <p>Sue Chesworth will seek a replacement for the role of Safeguarding Deputy.</p>	<p>SC</p> <p>SC</p>
64	<p>Purley Programme Director Position.</p> <p>Revd Helen Brown explained that the committee had now drawn up the job advertisement and have selected the best places to advertise the position of Programme Director. The advertisement will be published on, or as near as possible to the 1st May 2023 and the closing date for applications will be 1st June 2023.</p> <p>Revd Helen Brown wanted a budget to work on for the cost of advertising and suggested up to £1,000.00 would be adequate. All present agreed and approved £1,000.00 to go towards advertising costs.</p>	

	<p>It was explained that Natalie Welch will receive applications and filter out those who are not suitable, then the task group will vet those to be considered for interview. Prior to interview candidates will be asked to present or submit a reflective piece concerning their personal spiritual path. Interviews will take place the week starting 19th June for either face-to-face or Zoom interviews. Revd Helen Brown wanted to confirm who the interview panel would be.</p> <p>The full job package that would be offered needs to be considered and it was suggested that Natalie Welch should contact Croner to seek advice on relocation grants and other things to consider, especially if an applicant is currently overseas.</p> <p><i>Action: Natalie to get advice from Croner regarding offering re-location grants, temporary accommodation, and salary range.</i></p>	NW
65	<p>Marketing and Resource Group</p> <p>The Marketing and Resource Group had put together a document on a 5-year strategy for outreach and wanted the Council to approve “Reaching out to People”: Consultative Document towards a 5-year Strategy for Outreach</p> <p>The Council suggested that the document needs more thought and that the proposal is very vague.</p> <p>New member Revd Brian Talbot</p> <p>The Group would like the Council to approve the appointment of Revd Brian Talbot to the Marketing and Resource Group.</p> <p>All present approved.</p>	
66	<p>Committee of Ministers</p> <p>Revd Helen Brown explained that she will be standing down as spiritual leader after the AGM 2023.</p> <p>All present thanked Helen for all her hard work and support throughout the years. Revd Jack Dunion expressed his appreciation and thanked Helen for her support.</p> <p>Helen will continue with her work at Purley Chase.</p> <p><i>Action: This will be announced in E-News</i></p> <p><i>Flow Chart</i></p> <p>The committee had put together a communication flow chart for the Council to consider. In the past information had not been communicated properly so the idea was that the flow chart would show the routes for communicating important information received. The Council discussed the flow chart and it was suggested that to keep things simple all information of members deaths etc should go to the Company Secretary and the Chair in an email with all the relevant details which can be passed around. The Company Secretary will then pass the information on to Church secretaries and the Honorary Life Members, and then it will be announced in E-News if appropriate.</p>	
67	<p>Property Sales</p> <p>Chester Church</p> <p>Margaret Cowie explained that John Ford has been in touch with Adam Langan who is the point of contact for the sale of the Chester church. There has been a change of solicitor since Adam took over and this has caused a delay in the process. John Ford is keeping in regular communication with Adam.</p> <p>Radcliffe Church</p> <p>The sale has been held up because there is a piece of land at the rear of the church building which is in the process of being registered. Once that is completed the sale can be completed.</p>	

	<p>Bournemouth Church</p> <p>The Bournemouth church is documented as being built on “designated land” which means when applied to the church, that the money raised by the sale of the land and buildings should normally go towards the purchase of new land and building to continue the work of the church. As Bournemouth have voted to hire a building and not purchase it, the Charity Commission may believe this is not an appropriate use of funds. Consequently, Conference’s solicitor is asking the Charity Commission to review whether what we are doing is OK or if they must officially review and then change the designated land characteristic of this site. Given that there are many other Christian churches that have sold their building and land and not continued active worship, where the sales income would have gone into the HQ of those churches, she believes that her request should not be unfamiliar to the Charity Commission.</p> <p>There is an interested party, a local Christian organisation. Mr Phillip Brooks Property Manager South will contact the Lead Elder informing him of our intention to sell, the current difficulty we are experiencing, and offering them the exclusive opportunity before it is put on the open market.</p>	
68	<p>AGM/Conference 2023</p> <p>The Council meeting before the AGM will take place at 10.00am on Tuesday 25th July 2023 at Hayes Conference Centre.</p>	
	<p>Meeting closed at 21.10pm on Thursday 23rdth March 2023 with a short reading and a prayer from Revd Robert Gill</p>	
	<p>Fix Council meeting dates for year ahead</p> <p>2023 April 19th 2023 (Finance Meeting via Zoom) May 12th 2023 (Purley Chase) July 25th 2023 10.00am (Council meeting at Hayes Centre) July 25th – 28th 2023 Annual Meeting September 8th 2023 November 24th 2023 (Zoom Meeting)</p> <p>2024 March 15th 2024 May 17th 2024 July 23rd – 26th 2024 Annual Meeting September 6th 2024 November 22nd 2024 (Zoom Meeting)</p>	