



THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW CHURCH

CONFERENCE COUNCIL MEETING

**held on Friday 12th May 2023
at Purley Chase Centre.**

Trustees Present: Mrs M L Cowie Chair
 Mrs P Grimshaw
 Mrs S Chesworth
 Mr R Taylor – Via Zoom
 Revd R A Gill – Via Zoom
 Revd B R Jarvis

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

12th May 2023 Start: 14.10 - 17.57

69	Opening The Revd Jack Dunion opened the meeting with a reading from the Word, Exodus 30:5,6 and a second reading from Arcana Caelestia AC 9521	
70	Welcome The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were two apologies from Mr N K Sutton , Vice – Chairman and Revd H Brown, Spiritual Leader who were not able to attend the Council Meeting.	
71	Minutes 71.1 Confirmation of the Minutes of the last meeting held on 22nd & 23rd March 2023. The minutes of the last meeting were approved by all present with Robert Taylor proposing and Revd Bruce Jarvis seconding. 71.2 Revision of Articles and Rules – Constitution Revision Group Revd Robert Gill explained that the CRG are continuing to work through the Memorandum and Articles of Association to bring them up to date and to simplify them where possible. Following consultation with the Conference solicitor, the group had eventually decided that no changes to the Memorandum were necessary at the present time. When changes to the Memorandum and Articles are reported to Companies House, both the Memorandum and the Articles should be submitted together to Companies House, even	

	<p>though the changes might affect only one of them, so that both would be filed together on the website.</p> <p>The group are currently putting together a two-column version of the Articles showing the existing text in parallel with the proposed revised wording; it was hoped that this would help voting members to grasp easily the changes being proposed to the Articles. Copies of this will be sent out with the Conference Circular not less than six weeks before the Annual Meeting (see Rule H4).</p> <p>Revd Robert Gill explained that the group are also working on a basic explanation and guide to help people understand the constitution and why it is in three sections, namely Memorandum, Articles and Rules. He also reported that the CRG were soon to begin reviewing the Rules; these were easier to deal with because there is no requirement to seek the approval of either the Charity Commission or Companies House for changes to Rules.</p> <p>Margaret Cowie expressed her thanks to Revd Robert Gill and the Constitution Revision Group for all the work they have been doing which the Council very much appreciate.</p>	
72	<p>Conference Programme 2023</p> <p>Margaret Cowie explained that the subgroup has almost completed the Conference programme for July 2023 with just a few things needing to be finalised before it is ready to send out at the end of May 2023.</p> <p>The results from the survey that was carried out at the 2022 Annual Meeting will be sent out with the rest of the Conference information 6 weeks before the Conference AGM (31st May 2023).</p> <p>Revd Robert Gill's term of office as a Trustee will be completed at the 2023 Annual Meeting. He informed the Council that he would not be seeking election for a further term. It was recognised that this would leave two vacancies and as yet no new nominations had been received. It was decided that a reminder will be put in E-News encouraging people to consider joining the Council.</p> <p>Normally, Hayes Conference Centre is booked 4 years in advance, and we currently only have up to 2025 booked. The Hayes Conference Centre is becoming a popular venue and numbers are limited. John Ford wanted clarification if the Council felt we should book for the 2026 AGM.</p> <p>All present were in favour and approved.</p> <p><i>Action: Margaret will inform John Ford to go ahead and book for 2026</i></p>	MC
73	<p>Trustees Report</p> <p>The Council read through the Trustees Report to finalise details so it will be ready to submit to Charities Commission and Companies House together with the End of Year Financial Statement.</p> <p>Revd Bruce Jarvis expressed thanks to all involved in compiling the Trustees Report.</p>	
74	<p>Company Accounts Report</p> <p>The Company Accountant presented the Conference Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st March 2023 to the Council. Bates Weston who are auditing the Company accounts should have the first report of their findings available soon for the Council to see and approve.</p>	

	<p><i>Action: Rachel Jaggs will Contact Bates Weston to get a better idea of when the final accounts will be ready</i></p> <p>Racheal Jaggs explained that she is putting a budget together representing 12 months expenditure and income so it will be easier to see what to expect going forward.</p>	RJ
75	<p>Insurance Update</p> <p>The insurance renewal has been held up due to an overdue Liability Survey which was requested on all properties to ensure all information is up to date, enabling Conference to be sure the insurance cover is appropriate and covers our requirements. Our policies with Ecclesiastical are on extension until 31.05.2023. when the Survey should be completed by the Surveyor.</p>	
76	<p>Human Resources</p> <p>IT Manager – Margaret Cowie explained that she had a conversation with Gemma Mclean, and it was suggested that the recruitment process for the new IT manager should get started to enable a sufficient time scale for a handover with Gemma. It was agreed that a sub committee should look at the job role, and where to advertise and report back to the Council.</p> <p>The sub-committee will consist of Natalie Welch, Revd Jack Dunion and Rob Taylor.</p> <p><i>Action: The committee will have a meeting to start gathering the information week commencing 15/05/2023</i></p>	NW, JD,RT
77	<p>Policies and Manuals</p> <p>Natalie Welch explained that she is currently working on updating the employee handbooks and Health & Safety manuals with the advice from Croner who are expert consultants in Employment Law, HR, and Health & Safety. This is a very big task although once they are all completed it will be a simple task of reviewing them on a yearly basis. Once they are complete they will be available on the website, and hard copies sent to all churches.</p>	
78	<p>New Safeguarding Manual</p> <p>Natalie Welch and Sue Chesworth have updated the Safeguarding Manual. The new manual is very detailed and once it is finalised it will be sent in hard copy and an electronic copy to all church/societies. It will also be available on the website under a new heading ‘Safeguarding’.</p> <p>Sue Chesworth explained that Jenny Jones had agreed to be the new Deputy Safeguarding Officer. The Council wanted to thank Jenny Jones for her support and welcomed her to the role.</p> <p>Sue Chesworth explained that all in leadership roles should complete safeguarding training which is a free online course via Bright HR. Anyone requiring training should contact Natalie Welch who will send a link to Bright HR.</p>	

	<p>Safer Recruitment</p> <p>It is best practice that any recruitment process now should have a Safer Recruitment trained person on the interview panel. Currently Sue Chesworth has completed the course through her role as Chair of School Governors, but it was suggested that another person should be trained also. The training is completed via an online course and takes a couple of hours. Natalie and Sue had looked at various companies who offer the course and have found a suitable one called 'CPD Online College' which is reasonable in cost at £20 + VAT. Revd Jack Dunion offered to complete the course and sit on an interview panel and share the role with Sue Chesworth</p> <p><i>Action: Natalie Welch to enrol Revd Jack Dunion on a Safer Recruitment training Course.</i></p>	NW
79	<p>Purley Programme Director Position.</p> <p>The position is now being advertised. The closing date for applications is 1st June 2023 with interviews taking place the week commencing 19th June 2023.</p> <p>Revd Helen Brown had asked the Council which Council Member would be the Line Manager for this position.</p> <p>The Council discussed this and Sue Chesworth volunteered to be the Line Manager to the new employee for 12 months.</p>	
80	<p>Conference Membership Forms</p> <p>The Council reviewed the membership applications forms and it was agreed that no changes in the wording are required at present.</p>	
81	<p>Review of £1,000.00 Sponsorship Funding for SOLCe Courses.</p> <p>The Council agreed to continue to match the £1,000 sponsorship funding provided by SOLCe, making the total available £2,000 to assist people wishing to study at SOLCe.</p>	
82	<p>Vision for the Church – Report from Revd Jack Dunion</p> <p>Revd Jack Dunion explained that over the past couple of decades, it has been the greatest honour and privilege for him to have worked alongside many dedicated and highly committed people, both paid and voluntary, within our church organisation.</p> <p>Over the years Jack felt he also had been fortunate enough to have been invited to sit on various committees, attend thousands of meetings and be a part of many active and productive groups within the church sphere. Although a working knowledge of the Lord's Providence left him in no doubt that everything that has been done in the past, and in the Lord's name, has not been at all wasted, he felt that the time has come for our organisation to review the fundamentals regarding: who we are, where we are going, and what the Lord is calling us to do, in a world that is in such desperate need of His guiding light!</p> <p>When the Conference was first formed there were no railways, no motor cars, no aircraft; travel more than just a few miles from home was not possible for most people. Furthermore, there was no internet, television, radio or telephone; instant communication beyond one's own local community was impossible. These circumstances lasted for most of the first century of the life of Conference. It is very understandable therefore that in the early stages of our church's existence and mission we adopted many of the long held Christian practices of forming local congregations with their own buildings. Having spent the first century establishing this organisation, we then put a great deal of effort into preserving it. No doubt</p>	

influenced by the heavenly doctrines, we adopted what we might call the “Societal Model”, where all the individual societies could mirror the form of the angelic societies of the heavens. This was perhaps based on the perception that our own organisation would gradually expand globally to become what Swedenborg declared was to be a New Church on earth.

However, in a rapidly changing world, it is now becoming increasingly evident that this is not, the way in which the New Church will grow. Despite our best efforts to take things in one direction, the development of the New Church seems to have been moving in a different, and completely unexpected direction, yet still much of it has developed through the great efforts, and skills, of all those who have in the past contributed to all that has thus far been achieved.

Clearly, the Lord has fostered a love of His New Church in us and permitted us freedom to bear witness to it on earth. However, almost despite our efforts things have not turned out quite the way we expected. Despite any feelings of failure that we might be experiencing, when seen in the light of Lord’s Providence, we have in fact, in potential at least, become an important cog in an expanding alliance of Swedenborgian organisations, which today happen to be springing up all over the world!

Further, it seems that this macro global perspective, which is now slowly emerging, is being mirrored within our own organization here in the UK. During all our efforts to maintain our original societal model, all the while, we have seen the emergence, much of it from within our organization, of over a dozen active groups, and another half dozen associated groups, all diverse and actively filling different roles. This surely highlights for us how the Lord’s Providence has been at work, and that He is graciously allowing us to feel very much a part of what He is building. It is worth reminding ourselves of the Lord’s words in Matthew 6:33 “seek ye first *the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*”.

All this confronts us with a clear choice, we either continue trying to maintain the goals we have set in the past, which looks to be “rowing against the stream of Providence”, or, we can step back, look at the direction the Lord is asking us/prompting us to take, and embark on a new strategy. This will involve putting ourselves fully behind supporting and enabling newly emerging diverse groups, without them being hindered by the way we have done things in the past.

In conclusion: the theme of the AGM this year will be “Let Go and Let God”. As Spiritual Leader, Jack would like to present a way forward encapsulating this theme through 3 key concepts, which he thinks will help express what needs to be considered/changed if we are to make the fundamental cultural shift needed in order for us to get back into/remain in the stream of the Lord’s Providence. The 3 concept headings he will use in endeavoring to express these changes are included below:

- Allow for a more **diverse range** of views to be expressed through the ministry
- Move away from our **insular approach**
- Allow/support current and new members to **individuate**.

The Council discussed this, and it was decided that Revd Jack Dunion and Natalie Welch would work together. Natalie, being new to the organisation, brings a fresh vision free of our past traditions and perhaps better able to envision new ways of working to develop our

	New Church mission. The Council was confident that working together they could develop fresh ideas to stimulate the future life and growth of our church.	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Meeting closed at 17.57pm on Friday 12th May 2023 with a prayer from Revd Bruce Jarvis.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Fix Council meeting dates for year ahead</p> <p>2023 July 25th 2023 10.00am (Council meeting at Hayes Centre) July 25th – 28th 2023 Annual Meeting September 8th 2023 (Zoom Meeting) November 24th 2023 (Zoom Meeting)</p> <p>2024 March 15th 2024 April 2024 – Finance Meeting (DTBC) May 17th 2024 – Purley Chase Centre July 23rd – 26th 2024 Annual Meeting September 6th 2024 (Zoom Meeting) November 22nd 2024 (Zoom Meeting)</p>	