



E-News



The General Conference of the New Church

About Us

To find out more about The General Conference of the New Church, including the locations of our Churches, visit our web site at: www.generalconference.org.uk

Send Us Your News

If you have any news that you would like to share in a future issue of E-News, please send it via email to: paul.crone@generalconference.org.uk

Share E-News

Feel free to print and share this publication.

Sign up

Sign up for E-News and E-Read email notifications at: generalconference.org.uk/signup

Local News

View local Church newsletters at: generalconference.org.uk/resources/newsletters

Home Worship

To download the latest Home Worship material please visit: generalconference.org.uk/resources/home-worship

To subscribe via email, please sign up: generalconference.org.uk/hwsignup

Donations

E-News and E-Read are provided completely free of charge.

If you would like to donate to support this ongoing resource, please do so here:

<https://www.generalconference.org.uk/resources/donations>

Rise and Shine Radio Show

Revd Jack Dunion broadcasts his own online radio show every Sunday at 9am on Lomond Radio (formerly River Radio):

<https://lomondradio.co.uk/shows/rise-and-shine>

The link below allows you to catchup Rise & Shine programs:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/RevJack/>

Paul Morgan's Placement

Helen Brown writes:

Paul's placement at the Derby Society has been extended to the end of December 2023, which the Derby people are very pleased about. He will continue to do voluntary work at Derby City Mission and the Padley Day Centre. Both these initiatives support those who are at risk of homelessness, poverty, and hunger.

Rev Helen Brown, Rev Christine Bank and Sue Chesworth.

A Candle For Christmas Service

Seaburn Dene New church is delighted to announce the date of our 2nd A Candle For Christmas Service – Saturday 16th December 2023 at 7pm. Last year this event was well received by the community as well as welcoming friends from new churches across the country. This service offers a chance to reflect and remember loved ones no longer with us by placing tags on the Christmas trees and lighting a candle in their memory. All against the backdrop of Christmas carols and readings in preparation for the big day. Music will be provided by a small brass group and refreshments will be available to all afterwards. We will also be welcoming donations of new nightwear, toiletries and gift cards for the woman and children supported by Wearside Women in Need. Donations are welcomed but it is not a requirement to attend the service. All are welcome for what we are sure will be another moving and memorable service.

Seaburn Dene New church would like to announce a 50th anniversary service of thanksgiving on Sunday 17th March 2024 at 11.30am. This commemorates 50 years since Seaburn Dene New Church moved into its current building on Shields Road on 16th March 50 years ago. Join us on Sunday 17th for a thanksgiving service followed by an afternoon tea and chance to chat and reminisce amongst friends old and new. More details to be added nearer the time!

216th Annual Meeting of the General Conference of the New Church,
25th - 28th July 2023
held at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Carolyn Kennion writes:

Tuesday 25th

As we arrived in the conference hall on Tuesday afternoon to sign the roll we were greeted by the sound of melodious singing - the choir having their first practice.

The opening family worship was led by Revd. Brian Talbot. Brian said that the theme of the annual meeting - 'Let Go and Let God' made him think of stillness, which can be a good or bad thing. We can be still, frozen, inactive for negative reasons such as not being willing to make an effort, through fear or being stuck in our ways. But the Lord invites us to 'Be still and know that I am God' – to let go of our busyness which is often focussed on ourselves and what we want and to be still with Him so that we can hear His voice.

Following the service we all read the pledge of commitment together.

Margaret Cowie, the chairman of the governing council, welcomed everyone - approximately 60 adults and 17 children and teenagers. Margaret introduced the newly appointed company secretary, Natalie Welch, who read greetings from people unable to attend - John and Jenny Sutton, David and Susan Friend, Robert Gill, Linda Wells, Ruth Ogden.

John Ford explained the reasons behind the problems of insufficient places at The Hayes this year. Happily more places became available just 2 weeks before the meeting, meaning that everyone who wanted to attend eventually had a place.

Revd. Brian Talbot read memorial notices for 6 members – Mary Pulsford, Madeleine Taylor, Revd. Geoffrey Clarkson, Mary Burnley, Barbara Stanley and Maurice Garnett. He suggested that they were all linked by teaching roles- either as professional teachers, Sunday School teachers, ministers, group leaders or by the example of their lives.

A new way of presenting group reports was trialled. Displays and/or video presentations by the Committee of Ministers, the Committee for Auxiliary Ministry, The Swedenborg Open Learning Centre (New Church College), the New Church Youth Association and the Youth and Family Team were set up around the hall. We were allocated to groups to move round and visit each presentation. I enjoyed the visual nature of these presentations and

the opportunity to informally ask questions but there were some disadvantages such as being unable to see a computer screen because of other people crowding round. There followed a number of presentations of a different kind. Revd. Jack Dunion presented Jonathan Millar with his certificate and medallion on becoming an accredited worship leader. Revd. Robin Wooldridge presented certificates in Youth Ministry (an American University course) to Jack Dunion, Jenny Jones, Becky Jarratt, Robert Clark and Sue Chesworth. Brian Talbot presented a card to Revd. Clifford Curry to mark 40 years since his ordination. Finally, prizes were given to an adult and a child who had spotted letters on the group displays and correctly worked out that they were an anagram of 'PEACE'

In the evening there was a choice of Circle Dancing or free time. The dancers ranged in age from 4 to about 84 but under Marion Curry's skilled and calm leadership we were all able to enjoy dances to varied music from around the world.

Wednesday 26th- Spiritual Day

A peaceful and moving Holy Supper Service was led by Revd. Helen Brown and Revd. Christine Bank. Christine showed how, just as a dry sponge and chamois leather need water to be useful we need the Lord flowing into our lives with His love and truth. We sometimes put up a 'spiritual umbrella' which prevents the Lord's goodness from reaching and benefiting us or is a barrier to other people.

.

The keynote address was given by Revd. Jack Dunion (the church's spiritual leader). The full address will appear in E-read but some main points were as follows:

The world today looks as if it is getting worse – this is an appearance and it is actually good that disorderly things are now being uncovered and recognised for what they are. Unless evils are manifest and we see them we will not turn to the Lord for help. Rather than doing what we think is right in **our** sight, we need to turn to the Lord and His Word as our point of reference, raising our understanding into the light of heaven so that we can see what is wrong and what is the Lord's will. Nothing is more important than to know how the will and the understanding make one mind. Perfection is when the will and the understanding work together. Every unity has its existence from diversity and it is good to be able to express diverse opinions rather than having an 'I'm right, you're wrong' attitude. Love to the Lord and the neighbour unites us. Man-made doctrine divides us. Swedenborg said that the church would be one if all people had charity (love of good in

others), although they differed as to worship and doctrine. The world thinks of freedom as doing whatever we want, whereas Swedenborg says true freedom is compelling yourself **not** to do certain things.

There was considerable lively discussion about all this. Several people, who were unable to attend the annual meeting, listened from home on Zoom to this keynote address and they were also able to participate in the Conference Service and the Business sessions in this way.

Afternoon – choice sessions ‘Nothing off limits’ question and answer session with a panel of three ministers, Prayer, reflective Taizé-style worship, Colouring as a spiritual practice.

I attended the Taizé-style worship where, to begin with, we spent a little time learning 5 short, repetitive chant-like songs, some of which were accompanied by a quartet of musicians. The period of worship consisted of 3 Bible readings with short periods of silence for meditating on them, interspersed with the songs and prayers. It is impossible to convey the beautiful meditative atmosphere that this created.

After the refreshments break there was a second set of choice sessions – ‘Nothing off limits’, Prayer, Psalms, Nature Walk, Colouring. Ray and I had planned to go on a walk but rain started just as we were setting off and so we chose to have some free time instead.

A ‘News on Purley Chase’ session, presented by Helen Brown, rounded off the afternoon. It has been a busy year with monthly services, a variety of residential events, and upgrades made to the premises. The highlight of the year was the Garden Party and opening of the summerhouse which has already been reported on in E-News and elsewhere. After the presentation Margaret Presland made a request for people to send her their memories of Purley, which she and Muriel Morgan would compile into a booklet.

There were more choice sessions in the evening with singing and playing led by Mrs Ruth Friend and also the AGM of the New Church Historical Society. Pauline Grimshaw gave a fascinating account of the history of the Springhill New Church Society in Accrington.

There will be an Historical Society get-together at Purley 17th -19th October to which all are welcome. Muriel Morgan has succeeded Maeve Hawkins as convenor of the society.

Thursday 27th – Business Day

Family Worship was led by Revd. Becky Jarratt who started by showing us a Darth Vader mask, a shield and two crabs and asking us how they are linked – protection. After reading from Isaiah 35, Becky spoke about how we need to allow ourselves to be vulnerable by identifying and admitting wrong thoughts and actions, fears etc. to the Lord. He loves us no matter what.

The Financial Report was efficiently presented by Rachael Jaggs, General Conference company accountant. Briefly, income has increased slightly, mainly due to a legacy and income from investments. However, expenditure has also risen as wages have been increased to help with the rising cost of living, there have been increased travel costs and fewer donations. Concern was expressed about the costs of running Purley and whether this is sustainable. It was suggested that outside bookings should be charged at a higher, more competitive rate than at present but bookings from New Church groups should continue to be subsidized to allow as many people as possible to attend events at Purley. The full accounts are available for anyone who wishes to see them.

The distribution of ballot papers was not needed as no council members were due for re-election. Revd. Robert Gill has stood down from the council which leaves two vacancies.

Margaret Cowie (Chairman) presented the report of the Conference Governing Council, and those joining on Zoom were welcomed. Paul Morgan is continuing his ordination studies and Lynne Griffiths has completed her first year. Three church premises are in the process of being sold – Chester, Bournemouth and Radcliffe. These sales are often complicated by various legal requirements from the past.

A lot of questions were asked about various matters such as the arrangements for replacing Gemma McLean, who is moving on from her role as IT Manager to take a university course. Gemma was warmly thanked for her excellent work and IT support over several years. There was some criticism of how the council and chairman had responded to certain matters such as bereavements. It was pointed out by several people that the council have an enormous workload and are all volunteers giving up their own

time to serve the church. Also they are constantly bombarded with matters requiring immediate attention which makes finding time for strategic planning very challenging. Proposed changes to some of General Conference's articles and rules had been circulated several weeks before the meeting. Four of these were passed allowing, for example, the New Church College president to attend council meetings and council members to remain in office for another year, if for any reason a ballot is not possible. One proposal was rejected – to reinstate honorary life members but with the new name of 'Elders'. Some people disliked the new name while others objected to people being singled out in this way. Others, though, thought that it was very useful to have experienced people to turn to for impartial advice, as was the case two years ago, and so this will probably be discussed again next year.

Afternoon – 'The Future of the Church' session was introduced by Becky Jarratt, who, in her usual imaginative way, illustrated how different we are from each other in our reactions to certain situations and to change; what scares one person is exciting to another. Activities in small groups followed where we were asked to think about the relative difficulty of making some everyday changes, such as changing our diet, mobile phone or bank account. Our individual responses were often different but each group had to come to a consensus. We were also asked to record what 'church' means to us, what would we find easy to do without and what would be hard to lose; what 'makes your heart sing' and how could that be incorporated into worship? This all emphasized that, though we have very different needs and preferences, we can help each other to cope with changes and work through them together.

After a short break the Conference Service was led by Jack Dunion. He read and explained in an interesting way passages from the book of Joshua 6,7 &8, with the story of Achan disobeying the Lord by taking and hiding things from the city of Jericho when it was defeated. We should not, and indeed cannot, hide things about ourselves from the Lord. We need to bring everything to the Lord for Him to help us.

Thursday evening was much more light-hearted as we all enjoyed quizzes, lively games and country dancing.

Friday 28th

John Ford's announcements included the 'retirement' of Margaret Presland as bookings secretary after 12 years. Margaret was warmly thanked for her work. Natalie Welch will take on this role. The many other people whose work had enabled the annual meeting to take place were thanked, including a group of young people whose help as stewards, carrying luggage and showing people to their rooms, had been much appreciated.

Revd. Bruce Jarvis paid tribute to Revd. Robert Gill, who is unable to attend the annual meeting or physical council meetings but is still serving the church in many ways.

Gemma McLean thanked everyone for her leaving gifts and said that she would use the money to pay for an I-pad to help her in her university studies.

Next, we heard from the children and young people about what they had been doing in their groups on the theme of 'Peace', under the leadership of Jenny Jones, Robert Clark and Sue Chesworth. This presentation included asking us all to hand over our mobile phones and, then, how we felt about it. The young people had created some video clips of various scenarios illustrating the negatives and positives of mobile phones in helping them achieve peace. They had also created 'Peace' posters and studied Psalm 91 and its meaning in their lives. Everyone was delighted when four of the young people announced that they wanted to form a Youth Committee to contribute to church life.

A closing service was led by Revd. Robin Wooldridge on the appropriate theme of returning home. Do we 'wear a mask' outside our home and is our true nature revealed when we are at home? In all the services the skilled playing by the musicians and the singing of the choir enhanced our worship.

During the review session a few areas where improvements could be made were mentioned but the over-riding feeling seemed to be that this year's annual meeting had been inspiring, hopeful and left people feeling optimistic about the church and its future. For me it was summed up in the first lines of two hymns which were sung in services that week – 'In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear...', and 'Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy.....'