



THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW CHURCH
CONFERENCE COUNCIL MEETING
held on Monday 5th February 2024 via Zoom

Trustees Present:	Mrs M L Cowie Mr N K Sutton. Mrs S Chesworth Revd B R Jarvis Mr B Friend	Chair Vice-Chair Co-opted Council Member
Also in attendance:	Ms N Welch Revd J Dunion Revd B Talbot Ms Joanne Walton	Company Secretary Spiritual Leader Secretary, Committee of Ministers Accrington New Church

Start time: 10.00am
 Finish Time: 12.45pm

	Opening Revd Bruce Jarvis opened the meeting with readings from Luke 16:19-31 and Arcana Caelestia 904.2.3, followed by a short prayer.	
25	Welcome Apologies were received from Pauline Grimshaw. Margaret Cowie welcomed Joanne Walton from Accrington New Church to the Council meeting. Joanne had been invited to the Council meeting to see if she would be interested in becoming a Trustee.	
26	Minutes Confirmation of the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 24th November 20224 Following the amendment of minute 22, the minutes of the last meeting were approved by all present with Revd Bruce Jarvis proposing and Barry Friend seconding. New Action List – Natalie explained that she had introduced a new action list. The idea of the action list is to make sure tasks do not get forgotten about and are carried out and completed within a reasonable time frame. The action list would be sent out a few days after a Council meeting so everyone can see what tasks they must complete. Natalie will ask for an update on actions before the next Council meeting and the action list would be discussed at the next Council meeting.	

	3.2. 1 Matters arising from the minutes. Pay Policy Review Group (minute 20) It was agreed that the pay policy draft should be sent to the Ministry for comment and further discussion will continue at the Council meeting March 2024. Ministry Expenditure (minute 23)– Jack explained that he had completed a quick calculation on the expenditure of the Ministry Fund which currently is nowhere near £10,000. Once a new Company Accountant is in post, the figures can be studied and keep an accurate record of what the Ministry is spending. The Fund is provided to encourage Ministers to undertake initiatives without the burden of too much bureaucracy.	BT
27	Annual Conference 2024 Two Council members’ term of office are due to end at the next AGM 2024, Revd Bruce Jarvis and Nigel Sutton. At present there is only one known nomination, but the Council are hoping that more will be forthcoming. Conference 2024 Programme The draft programme was presented and work is continuing Pricing for Conference – The Council decided that the pricing will stay the same for 2024 although the members would be informed that next year, there would need to be a review of the pricing structure. The new Company Accountant would be tasked to look at the expenditure for Conference so pricing could be discussed for 2025.	
28	Constitution Revision Group The current Council Standing Order no.4 Ballot for Trustees requires a 75% majority of Voting Members to confirm the uncontested election of Trustees. The Constitution Revision Group (CRG) recommends that this requirement should be amended to a simple majority. The Council approved this amendment. The CRG also recommends to the Council that, rather than continuing as a Standing Order of the Council, this measure should be included in the current revision of Articles and Rules additional Rule. The Council approved this amendment. <i>Resolved;</i> Margaret Cowie will inform the CRG of these decisions The Group suggested a Special Resolution for the changing of the Articles, and a further Resolution for the changing of the Rules, to be brought before the Annual Meeting on Thursday 25th July. The full text of the proposed Articles and Rules, with the changes clearly marked, will be circulated by the Company Secretary along with the pre-Conference Circular not less than six weeks before the date of the Annual Meeting. All recipients of these documents will be urged to read them carefully before the Annual Meeting so that the Conference can make the most efficient use of the limited time available for discussion.	MC

29	Bradford New Church Following an application from Bradford New Church for a grant to support their community project, the Council had many discussions, including with Bradford representatives. On 1st August 2023 the Council decided to award a grant of £31,600.00 to Bradford New Church on a 12-month pilot scheme, to be paid quarterly using money from the Embsay Fund, which is available for “educational, outreach and development purposes” in the Yorkshire and North-East Area. The Council would have quarterly meetings with Bradford to review progress and receive updates. The first meeting took place on 22nd January 2024. Phillippa Blomfield explained that the Bradford New Church Project is going from strength to strength, and more people are wanting to be part of the Project. A group called Family Hubs and Start for Life programme have funding for outdoor structures and want to construct a facility within the church grounds. A written agreement is not yet in place, though a verbal agreement, in principle, has been agreed. Bradford New Church have to arrange planning permissions, and authorised builders for the work, and are working together with the Family Hubs to arrange this.	
30	Sale of Chester New Church The Chester Society of the New Church formally closed in 2020-21. For some time before that it had been considering its future. There had been a wish amongst some of the remaining members to sell the building to a local Baptist Church at less than market value, but this was disallowed by the Charity Commission. Many years have gone by, and much correspondence between Conference’s solicitor and the solicitor acting for the Chester society has been ongoing. The most recent communication from Chester is that they wish General Conference to do whatever is necessary to complete the sale of the building. In order to do this General Conference needs to apply to the Charity Commission for a cy-près scheme, similar to that applied to the Radcliffe church building. This is because the church is closed and the land can no longer be used for the purposes specified. Margaret Cowie presented a daft application, which, if approved by the Chester Society, would be sent to the Charity Commission and development awaited. There were no objections and all present agreed. A cy-près scheme is the legal document which provides for the transfer of an asset intended for one charitable purpose to another charitable purpose which is as close as possible to the original. <i>Resolved : That the General Conference, with the approval of the Chester society, applies to the Charity Commission for a cy-près scheme,</i>	
31	Finance Update Nigel explained that although initially agreed, Conference auditors, Bates Weston, were unable to supply anyone to cover the vacancy until a new Company Accountant was recruited. Natalie has been working through the accounts to get the Sage accountancy system up to date with all invoices and get the bank accounts all reconciled. The Council expressed their thanks and appreciation for all the hard work Natalie and Nigel had been doing with the accounts.	

	Company Accountant Natalie explained that the recruitment process was in place. The interview panel, consisting of Natalie Welch, Nigel Sutton, Andrew Bentley and Sue Chesworth (as safer recruitment officer) were meeting on Monday 5th February 2024 to plan and prepare for the interview. Reed Recruitment had been appointed and had already started interviewing to select suitable candidates for the role which they would forward onto Natalie. Natalie had instructed the recruitment agents to thoroughly vet the candidates before passing them on, and the applicants will be given certain accountancy tasks to complete in the first stage of the interviewing procedure. The Council will be updated accordingly on the progress. Bequest A bequest of £20,000.00 was received from the estate of Dr Edward Reginald Palmer, who we believe, was connected with the New Church in Bath	
32	Spiritual Leaders Update Revd David and Pam Moffat – David and Pam are visiting the UK and whilst over here would like to take the opportunity to attend the whole Conference. The Council agreed that General Conference would cover the costs of accommodation whilst they attend the Conference. Jack Dunion would get in touch with David to inform him of the Council’s decision and send him an official invitation to take part in the programme. Letter from South Africa - Jack Dunion explained that The New Church of Southern Africa had been in touch, and they are keen to improve contact with the UK. The Council agreed this was a positive step, and were happy for Jack to follow this up with them. Statement from the Ministry – The statement from the Ministry regarding homosexuality was discussed and it was agreed that the statement should be sent to the members of the Church. Action: Jack Dunion to send to the Members via E-News	JD JD
	Meeting closed at 12.45pm with a short prayer from Revd Jack Dunion.	
	Fix Council meeting dates for year ahead 2024 March 15th 2024 – (Zoom Meeting) May 17th 2024 – Purley Chase Centre July 23rd – 26th 2024 Annual Meeting at Hayes Conference Centre September 6th 2024 (Zoom Meeting) November 22nd 2024 (Zoom Meeting)	