DUTIES OF COUNCILLORS

Overall Purpose of the Council

The Council is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity, i.e. The General Conference of the New Church, developing the aims, objectives and goals in accordance with the governing document and legal and regulatory guidelines.

Role of Councillors

Accountability

As the Council they are responsible and liable for the governance and functioning of the charity. They are also accountable in varying degrees to the Members of Conference, the Charity Commission and Companies House. Close attention must be given to the governing document to ascertain the type of organisational structure and the range of interested parties.

Main responsibilities:

- to ensure that the charity functions within the legal and regulatory framework of the sector and in line with the organisation's governing document, continually striving for best practice in governance;
- to uphold the fiduciary duty invested in the office of governing councillor, undertaking such duties in a way that adds to public confidence and trust in the charity;
- to determine the overall direction and development of the charity through good governance and clear strategic planning.

Main Duties and Obligations:

- acting in the best interests of the charity, beneficiaries and future beneficiaries at all times;
- promoting and developing the charity in order for it to grow and keep its relevance to society;
- maintaining sound financial management of the charity's resources, ensuring expenditure is in line with the organisation's objectives and that investment activities meet accepted standards and policies;
- interviewing and appointing senior staff and monitoring their work and activities;
- ensuring the effective and efficient administration of the charity and its resources;
- acting as counter-signatory on charity cheques and any application for funds;
- maintaining absolute confidentiality about all sensitive/confidential information received in the course of their duties as Councillors.

Code of Conduct for Councillors as Charity Trustees

Purpose:

The purpose of this code is to provide Trustees with clear guidelines as to their standard of behaviour and responsibilities and best practice in fulfilling their obligations to the charity. It should be read in conjunction with the role and duties of Councillors' prior to completing the charity's register of interests, if one exists, to avoid any conflict of interest. Further guidance is contained within the Charity Commission document Responsibilities of Charity Trustees.

Specific Responsibilities

- trustees must have a good understanding of and be sympathetic with the aims and objects of the charity and act in accordance with the governing document at all times;
- trustees must act and make decisions in the best interests of the charity and present and future beneficiaries and be aware of sector and object specific issues that may affect the present and future growth of the charity and its relevance to modern society;
- where professional assistance is required for the trustees to be able to make the most appropriate decision affecting the charity, that assistance should be sought and considered carefully;
- trustees must not receive any financial or non-financial benefit that is not explicitly authorised by the governing document;
- trustees should not exert any influence to gain any preferential treatment for themselves or their family in order to avoid any conflict of interest;
- trustees are jointly and severally liable for their decisions and therefore decisions should be taken together and in a unified manner;

- trustees are accountable to the Members of Conference for their actions and therefore decision-making and governance issues should be as transparent as possible, except where confidentiality is essential;
- trustees should be prepared to spend an appropriate amount of time reading background and other papers in preparing for council meetings;
- attendance at a minimum of three-quarters of the council meetings is required to ensure that best practice in governance is reached and maintained;
- should trustees feel they require further guidance or training in their role, they have a duty to actively develop measures for new training on an individual or group basis;
- trustees must ensure that any information of a confidential nature must remain so outside the confines of the council meeting.

These lists of responsibilities etc. largely mirror the specific models produced by the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators for charity trustees, amended to reflect the particular circumstances of The General Conference.