

**RULES OF**  
**THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW CHURCH**

**Company number 00006039**

**A. MEMBERSHIP**

(See also Articles 2-4)

1. (a) Any receiver of the Doctrines of the New Church who is aged eighteen years or over may apply in writing to become a Member of Conference. Applications should be sent to the Company Secretary in such form as the Council may decide and should be accompanied by a signed Pledge of Commitment as in Article 2.  
  
(b) Any young person aged 14-17 years may apply in writing to become a Youth Member of Conference entitled to speak but not to vote at the Annual General Meeting. Applications should be sent to the Company Secretary in such form as the Council may decide and should be accompanied by a signed Pledge of Commitment. On attaining the age of eighteen, the Youth Membership will lapse.
2. (a) An application shall be supported by the secretary and another officer or Minister of the Society or Group with which the applicant is associated. The supporters must be satisfied that the application is being made in good faith.  
  
(b) An application from a person who is not a member of any Society or Group shall preferably be supported by two Members who are acquainted with the applicant. The supporters must be satisfied that the application is being made in good faith.  
  
(c) The Company Secretary, after consulting the Chairperson of the Council, shall then normally approve the application, but may consult the Ministers' Committee before deciding whether to do so. In the case of an application submitted without the signatures of two supporters, the Chairperson shall take reasonable steps to satisfy himself/herself that the application is being made in good faith.
3. When the application for membership has been approved, the name of the new Member shall be recorded in the Register of Members (see Rule H1), together with such other relevant information as may seem useful. The Company Secretary shall inform the new Member in writing that the application has been approved and shall advise the Society or Group with which the applicant may be associated.
4. The Company Secretary shall annually apply to each Society and Group in connection with the Conference for a list of changes in its membership as calculated for the purposes of Rules B5 and B6.
5. Any Member may at any time recommend to the Council the removal of a name or names from the Register of Members, and shall in doing so indicate the reason for the recommendation. Before taking any action the Council must investigate the matter in compliance with the provisions of Article 4.
6. Except by reason of death, or at the request of the Member in writing, or if the Member has failed to supply his/her current address, no name shall be removed from the Register of Members without the Company Secretary giving the Member concerned at least twelve weeks' notice of such intended action. The notice shall be counter-signed by the Secretary of the Ministers' Committee. If the Member concerned desires to remain on the Register of Members, he/she shall inform the Company Secretary and the Secretary of the Ministers' Committee accordingly. If the two parties do not agree on the action to be taken, then the Council shall be informed of the facts and take the final decision.
7. If Members of Conference who are not also members of a Society or Group have not responded to communications from the Conference for a period of three years, their names may be removed under the provisions of Rule A6, but taking account of health issues or other matters which might have prevented the Member from responding.

**B. CONNECTION OF SOCIETIES AND GROUPS WITH THE CONFERENCE, REPRESENTATION AT THE ANNUAL MEETING AND PROXY VOTING**

(See also Articles 5-8)

1. A Society or Group wishing to be received into connection with the Conference shall make written application to the Company Secretary and shall provide such information as the Council may require.
2. Every application for recognition shall be mentioned in the Circular (see Rule H.4) and shall be brought before the next Annual Meeting for its decision. If the application is complied with, the Society or Group shall be entitled to all the privileges of such Societies or Groups.
3. If a Society or Group ceases to fulfil the uses provided for in Article 5 or 6 its name may be removed from the list of Societies or Groups in connection with the Conference.
4. If the Conference, by a resolution passed in accordance with Article 8, has declared that it is undesirable that any Society or Group shall continue in connection with the Conference, that Society or Group shall, from that time, cease to be entitled to the privileges enjoyed by a Society or Group in connection with the Conference. At least three months' notice of any proposal to cease recognition of a Society or Group shall be given to the Society or Group concerned, and full opportunity shall be afforded to it to speak against the proposal. But nothing herein contained shall prevent any Society or Group from being re-admitted into connection with the Conference.
5. Every Society in connection with the Conference shall be entitled to send to any General Meeting one Representative if the number of its Members does not exceed twelve; two Representatives if the number is more than twelve but not more than forty; three Representatives if more than forty but not more than eighty; four Representatives if more than eighty.
6. Every Group in connection with the Conference shall be entitled to send to any General Meeting one representative.
7. Each Area Council shall be entitled to send to any General Meeting not more than two representatives of whom at least one shall preferably be a Member not actively associated with a Society.
8. The Preliminary Notice of the Annual Meeting shall include a reminder that every Voting Member has the right to appoint a Proxy being a Member of Conference to speak and vote on his/her behalf. Those wishing to exercise this right should complete and sign the "Appointment of Proxy" form included with the Preliminary Notice and return it to the Company Secretary as soon as possible and no later than forty-eight hours prior to the Meeting.
9. All those registered for a Proxy Vote will receive a "Voting Instructions" form from the Company Secretary along with the Annual Reports and Accounts not less than three weeks before the Annual Meeting. This form should be completed by the Voting Member and signed. Copies of the form should then be sent to the person acting as Proxy and to the Company Secretary to arrive at least forty-eight hours prior to the commencement of the Meeting.
10. Any Member appointed to attend a Meeting as a Proxy should speak and vote in accordance with the instructions given to him/her in the "Voting Instructions" form. In votes other than those listed in the "Voting Instructions" form the Proxy should normally abstain.

**C. ANNUAL MEETINGS ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS**

(See also Articles 9-26)

1. The Chairperson shall appoint two persons, who, with the Company Secretary, shall be a committee to examine the certificates of the Representatives and attend to the signing of the Conference Roll by the Voting Members.
2. The Annual Meeting shall open with a religious service, during which the Pledge of Commitment, as recorded in Article 2, shall be read. The Chairperson shall then take the chair.
3. The Auditors shall be appointed, following nomination by the Council.
4. Arrangements shall be made for the following purposes:-
  - (a) The place and time of the next Annual Meeting.

- (b) The ballot for membership of the Council, subject to Article 31. If there are more than the usual two vacancies, among those elected on the same day those who receive the most votes shall serve for the longest periods.
- 5. The Sacrament of the Holy Supper shall be administered at every Annual Meeting.
- 6. A service of worship shall be held at every Annual Meeting. Arrangements for this service shall be the responsibility of the Ministers' Committee. At the service an offertory shall be taken in aid of the funds of the Conference.
- 7. Should the Annual General Meeting be held electronically Rules C1, C4(b), C5 and C6 shall not apply.

#### **D. GENERAL MEETING DEBATES**

(See also Articles 9, 13, 20)

- 1. The Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson shall preside over the General Meetings of the Conference, but may delegate that duty to another Voting Member. When matters concerning the remuneration or terms and conditions of service of Conference employees are to be discussed, the Meeting shall be chaired by a Voting Member who is not remunerated by the Conference.
- 2. The chairperson shall preserve order in the discussions and shall not allow discussion where there is no motion before the session.
- 3. If any difference of opinion shall arise on any point connected with the business of the session for which no Rule is provided, the decision of the chairperson shall be final.
- 4. If the chairperson desires to take part in the discussion of any subject, he/she may do so only after first indicating whether he/she is speaking in a personal or in any official capacity. If speaking in a personal capacity, he/she shall vacate the chair. However, in no case shall the chairperson speak on a question after the mover of a resolution has replied to the debate.
- 5. The chairperson of a session shall not vote on any question at any General Meeting except in the case of an equality of votes, when he/she shall have a casting vote.
- 6. Any Voting Member who is remunerated by the Conference shall not vote on any matter concerning remuneration or terms and conditions of service. At any time during the debate and vote on such matters, a General Meeting may require Voting Members who are remunerated to withdraw from the Meeting.
- 7. Any Voting Member proposing a measure connected with a matter involving a question of law shall produce a written opinion thereon from a legal authority.
- 8. The proposer of an original motion shall have the right of reply but in such reply shall neither introduce new matter nor re-open the general subject.
- 9. Every Voting Member shall have the right to speak on an original motion and once on each amendment that may be proposed thereto. A second speech shall not be allowed unless permission is granted by the chairperson on special grounds. The proposer of the original motion shall have the right of reply when it or an amendment to it is to be put.
- 10. Every Voting Member shall be at liberty to propose an amendment to any motion under discussion; a second amendment shall not be proposed until the first has been disposed of. If an amendment is carried, the original motion as amended shall be the substantive motion, and shall be liable to further amendment; if an amendment is lost, any other amendment may be proposed to the original motion.
- 11. At any stage in the consideration of a question, any Voting Member may propose "That the Meeting pass to the next business". This proposition, if seconded, shall, without discussion, be immediately put to the vote; and if approved by not less than two-thirds of the Voting Members present, the Meeting shall pass to the next business accordingly. Such a proposition shall, however, not be permitted more than once on the same motion or any amendment thereto, without the consent of the chairperson.
- 12. At any stage in the consideration of a motion or an amendment thereto, any Voting Member may, with the consent of the chairperson, propose "That the question be now put". This proposition, if seconded, shall, without discussion, be immediately put to the vote and if approved by not less than two-thirds of the Voting Members present, the

chairperson shall call upon the mover of the original motion to reply, after which the vote shall be taken. If the vote is on an amendment, the substantive motion shall be open to further debate. Such a proposition however, shall not be permitted more than once on the same motion or on any amendment thereto, without the consent of the chairperson.

13. If less than one-quarter of the Voting Members of the Annual Meeting is present, the consideration of any proposition may be postponed when required by two or more Voting Members.
14. If in the opinion of the chairperson there are exceptional circumstances, the operation of a Rule may be suspended, provided that two thirds of the Voting Members vote in favour of such suspension.

## **E. FUNDS**

### **E1) BROADFIELD MEMORIAL BENEVOLENT FUND**

(Instituted in 1920 as a memorial to Edward John Broadfield of the North Manchester Society)

A non-contributory Benevolent Fund called the BROADFIELD MEMORIAL BENEVOLENT FUND on behalf of Ministers and their widows shall be managed by a committee of laymen appointed by the Council; its workings shall be confidential; and the names of the beneficiaries shall not be disclosed. The amounts collected and disbursed shall be included in the Council's report.

## **F. YEARBOOK**

1. A Yearbook, containing such matter as the Council may determine, shall be published annually.

## **G. COMPANY SECRETARY**

1. The Company Secretary shall ensure that the Register of all Members of Conference includes the names of Societies and Groups with which they may be associated. The Company Secretary shall also ensure that the minutes of the meetings of the Council are properly recorded.
2. The Company Secretary shall forward such reports and accounts as are required for the consideration of the Annual Meeting to every Voting Member not less than three weeks before the date of the Annual Meeting.
3. Societies, Groups, Area Councils, Ministers and Honorary Life Members shall be informed of the final date by which the Company Secretary must have received, in writing, the terms of any Notice of Motion or proposals for any alteration to the Articles or Rules intended to be placed before the Annual Meeting. Such information shall be included in a preliminary notice of the Annual Meeting to be sent by the Company Secretary not less than twenty-two weeks before the date of the Meeting.
4. Notices of Motion may be submitted by any Society, Group, Area Council, Minister or Member and they must be received by the Company Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the Annual Meeting. Provided that, except where the mover is a Society, Group or Area Council, they are supported by at least five Members in addition to the mover, they shall be printed in the Circular and shall be dealt with at a time decided by the Chairperson. Voting Members may submit Notices of Motion in writing to the Company Secretary at the Annual Meeting, supported by five other Voting Members, but, unless in the view of the Chairperson they are urgent and call for immediate action, the Company Secretary shall include them in the Circular for the next Annual Meeting.'
5. Not less than six weeks before the Annual Meeting the Company Secretary shall send a Circular, which has been approved by the Council, to every Society, Group and Area Council in connection with the Conference and to every recognised Minister and to every Honorary Life Member. The Circular shall ensure, as far as possible, that every recipient is informed of all major matters expected to come before the Annual Meeting.

## **H. CONFERENCE COUNCIL**

1. The Council shall conduct the business of the Conference and shall determine the policies designed to achieve the objectives of the Conference. To this end, the Council shall take such action as it considers necessary, including the appointment of a remuneration committee and other committees, agents or persons to whom any of its powers may be delegated. The quorum necessary for the transaction of business shall be at least one half of the voting members of the Council with a minimum of four.

2. The Council, in consultation with the Ministers' Committee, shall exercise a continuous survey of the Church and its needs, with a view to initiating action when it considers this advisable. Meetings of the Council may be held by suitable electronic means in which each participant may communicate with all other participants. Meetings held by electronic means must comply with the rules for meetings, including chairing and the taking of minutes.
3. Nominations for the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Elected Members of the Council shall be made on forms supplied by the Company Secretary. A candidate for Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson or Elected Member must be nominated by at least three other Members of Conference. Completed forms, together with a personal statement by the nominee, must be with the Company Secretary not less than eight weeks before the Annual Meeting.
4. Whenever there are vacancies for the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson or Elected Members and the number of nominees standing for a particular position equals or is less than the number of vacancies, a ballot shall be held in which any nominee shall need to obtain a simple majority of the votes of the Voting Members present at the Annual Meeting when the vote is taken in order to be elected.
5. Members of the Council who are remunerated by the Conference and officers appointed in accordance with Article 29 shall withdraw from a meeting of the Council whenever a vote is taken on matters concerning their remuneration or terms and conditions of service. They shall also withdraw from a meeting at any time during discussion of such matters if required to do so by the remaining members of the Council.
6. In the event of a vacancy occurring in any of the offices mentioned in Article 29, the Council shall fill the vacancy as it thinks fit, subject to consultation with the Ministers' Committee in respect of the appointment of the ministerial representatives.
7. All property belonging to, or held in trust by, the Conference shall be vested in the Conference.
8. Any Society, Group, body or person having the use of buildings owned or held in trust by the Conference shall comply with such conditions as the Council or the Conference shall determine.

## **J. THE MINISTRY**

1. The Ministers ordained under Rules J3 and recognised under Rule J5 and J6 and resident in the United Kingdom shall comprise the Ministers' Committee which shall meet as necessary to deal with all matters concerning their duties. A member of the Ministers' Committee, nominated by that Committee, shall be appointed by the Conference Council as Secretary of the Committee.
2. The Ministers' Committee shall:
  - a) give pastoral guidance to the General Conference;
  - b) have overall responsibility for such devotional and educational activities as may form part of General Meetings;
  - c) make arrangements for the conducting of inductions into pastorates; and
  - d) nominate a member or members to be appointed as leader or leaders by the Conference Council.
3. Procedures for the adoption of candidates for the Ministry, their training, examination and ordination, including those ordained for the service of societies, or groups, in countries outside the United Kingdom, shall be agreed from time to time by the Conference Council and the Ministers' Committee and laid down in Standing Orders.
4. The procedures for agreeing and varying the pastoral and any other responsibilities of the Ministers shall be laid down in Standing Orders approved by the Conference Council and the Ministers' Committee.
5. A minister ordained under the authority of any other organised body of the New Church and desiring to become a Minister recognised by the General Conference shall apply to the Ministers' Committee, who, after appropriate consultation, shall recommend to the Conference Council such action as may be deemed desirable.
6. A minister ordained under the authority of any other organised body of the New Church and employed under the auspices of the General Conference shall be included in the list of Ministers recognised by Conference and shall be entitled to vote at General Meetings of Conference.
7. The Council, in consultation with the Ministers' Committee, may take any necessary action to arrange for the ordination of Ministers specifically for the service of societies, or groups, in countries outside the United Kingdom. Ministers so ordained shall not be entitled to vote at General Meetings of Conference.

8. The Ministers' Committee, following approval by the Conference Council, may appoint a Minister whose prerogative it shall be to decide who shall perform each ordination, in consultation with the ordinand concerned. He/she may perform the ordination, or may appoint any other Minister to do so, whether inducted as an Ordaining Minister under the provision of earlier Rules or not.

The term of the appointment shall be decided at the time of appointment, but may be renewed subsequently. If the Ministers' Committee decides not to appoint an individual Minister to determine who shall perform each ordination, then the prerogative to do so shall remain with the Ministers' Committee.

9. A list of Ministers, including those ordained for service outside the United Kingdom, shall be printed in the Yearbook. Any addition to the list, or removal from the list other than by reason of death or resignation, shall be made by resolution at the Annual Meeting.

#### **K. AUXILIARY MINISTRY**

1. A Committee for Auxiliary Ministry appointed by the Conference Council shall be responsible for the organisation of Ministry by lay members.
2. Procedures for applications of candidates for Auxiliary Ministry, appropriate training and criteria for accreditation shall be agreed from time to time by the Ministers' Committee and the Committee for Auxiliary Ministry and laid down in Standing Orders.
3. The Committee for Auxiliary Ministry shall recommend applicants to the Ministers' Committee for recognition within Auxiliary Ministry.
4. The Committee for Auxiliary Ministry shall maintain a list of those authorised in accordance with Rule K3 and this list shall be printed in the Yearbook. Any addition to the list, or removal from the list other than by reason of death or resignation, shall be made by resolution at the Annual Meeting of the General Conference.
5. Where necessary, individuals recognised in accordance with Rule K3 may be authorised by the Ministers' Committee to administer the sacraments and ceremonies of the Church.
6. The Ministers' Committee shall maintain and publish yearly a list of those authorised in accordance with Rule K5.

#### **L. HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS**

1. The Honorary Life Members shall be lay Members and shall ex officio be Voting Members.
2. The Honorary Life Members may report to the Annual Meeting.

#### **M. AREA COUNCILS**

1. Geographical areas within the United Kingdom may be delineated by the Council to foster co-operation among members of the Church, both individuals and those forming Societies or Groups, resident within those areas.
2. When an Area has been delineated, the composition, method of election and responsibilities of the Area Council shall be agreed with the Council.
3. Each Area Council shall report annually to the Council.

#### **N. NEW CHURCH COLLEGE**

Note:

- (a) Under a Scheme sealed by the Charity Commissioners, now known as the Charity Commission, on the 13th July, 1977, the objects of the New Church College were widened and its Constitution was revised. This Scheme, varied on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1984, supersedes the Trust Deed of the New Church College dated 10th November, 1854.

- (b) The New Church College uses the working name of The Swedenborg Open Learning Centre (SOLCe) for its educational activities.
  - (c) The following Rules give effect to those parts of the Scheme referring to the General Conference and lay down the basis of the relationship between the General Conference and the New Church College. They complement the Rules of the New Church College which were approved by the Governors of the College on 16th July, 1977. Clause numbers refer to that Scheme.
1. The object of the New Church College shall be to promote the education of anyone with an interest in Swedenborg, with emphasis upon the doctrine and life of the New Church and the training of suitable persons for the Ministry of the New Church as well as other ministerial roles, in all or any of the following ways or in such other ways as shall be thought fit:
    - (1) the provision and maintenance of premises for use in furthering the said object:
    - (2) the provision of items, services or facilities calculated to further the said object:
    - (3) the assistance in cases of need of persons whose education is being promoted under the said object:
    - (4) the assistance of other charitable organisations or institutions having similar objects. (Clause 2).
  2. The General Conference shall be the Trustee of the New Church College. (Clause 3).
  3. The land and investments belonging to the New Church College shall be held in the name of the General Conference. The Conference shall administer and manage the said investments and shall pay the clear income thereof to the College Council for application in furthering the object of the College. The Conference shall permit the College Council to occupy the land specified in the Schedule to the Scheme for furthering the said object. During such occupation, the College Council shall be responsible for the maintenance and repair of the buildings on the said land and for the payment of all charges and outgoings payable in respect of the said land and buildings other than the insurance thereof which shall be effected by the Conference. (Clause 1 (2)).
  4. Sums of cash at any time belonging to the College and not needed for immediate working purposes shall be invested in the name of the General Conference unless the Charity Commission otherwise directs (Clause 5).
  5. The Conference Council shall ensure that proper accounts are kept by the College.
  6. The College Council shall consult with the relevant people and bodies concerning the use of non-retired Conference Ministers as full-time or part-time staff of the College and in other matters of mutual concern. (College rule 27).
  7. The General Conference shall arrange for students it has adopted as candidates for the Ministry of the New Church to be trained by the College. The Ministers' Committee will approve the core curriculum, though there will be flexibility within options, in order that the New Church College can endeavour to provide bespoke training depending on a candidate's vision of ministry."
  8. The President, Secretary and Treasurer of the New Church College must be Members of Conference, as well as Governors of the College. All other members of the College Council must be Governors of the College. Nominations for the office of Treasurer shall be approved by the Conference as Trustee. (Clause 15).

**P. PURLEY CHASE CENTRE**

Note:

Purley Chase Centre is part of the permanent endowment of the General Conference. Any sale of the property would require authorisation by the Charity Commission. Purley Chase was bequeathed to the Conference by Thomas Slack on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1952 and is held in memory of him and the Rev E J E Schreck, founder of the summer schools first held at Purley Chase in the 1920s.

1. The Council shall appoint a Management Team to supervise the running of the Purley Chase Centre in accordance with a general policy determined by the Council.

**Z. ALTERATION OF RULES**

1. No proposal for the adoption of a new rule or the amendment of any existing rule shall be considered by the Annual Meeting unless the Company Secretary has been informed at least twelve weeks before the Annual Meeting so that notice can be included in the Circular. All such proposals must be signed by no fewer than five Members.

Any such proposals made by the Council shall also be included in the Circular.

2. Such proposals for new Rules or for amendment of existing Rules, if approved at the Annual Meeting, with or without modification, shall take effect immediately.
3. If the Annual Meeting resolves that a new rule or an amendment to an existing rule is desirable, but notice has not been given in accordance with rule Z1, the Company Secretary shall include such resolution together with a draft of the proposed new or amended rule in the Circular calling the next Annual Meeting.

6.8.25