



E-News



The General Conference of the New Church

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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:
www.mixcloud.com/RevJack/



Conference... We Have a Problem

Members present at the recent Annual Meeting held at Swanwick will realise that, while there were several vacancies, only one nomination for election as a Trustee was received, and Mrs Sue Chesworth was re-elected to serve a further three years.

However, the Conference did not support the proposed amendment to Article 28 changing it to read

“.....up to six members....”, which means the Conference still has only three Trustees, plus the Chair and Vice-Chair – five out of a required total of eight.

There are situations when Conference Council is acting in a legal capacity, such as the sale of property, that there is a requirement for a full complement of Trustees, as laid down in the Articles and Rules of Conference, to authorise the action.

Last year we were fortunate that Phillip Brooks and John Ford responded quickly to requests to accept appointment as Co-opted Trustees. We are very pleased and relieved that both of them have once again agreed to serve in that capacity until the next Annual Meeting. (Our solicitors have confirmed that this is permissible.) What is more, Ms Joanne Walton of the Accrington Society has also agreed to be co-opted, meaning that we now have a full complement.

Whilst being delighted and very grateful to all three for their help, we cannot avoid drawing the attention of Conference Members to a potentially serious and critical situation for General Conference. For too many years now, the Annual Meeting has not provided a full Council to undertake the important and vital work of managing the Conference's affairs. We need the experience, gifts and talents of a full Council to provide the leadership appropriate for today's world.

Please read that first sentence in the above paragraph again – **“a potentially serious and critical situation!”** That is not a casual exaggeration. The Chair, Margaret Cowie, has made it known that she will not stand to be re-appointed to that role in 2026, though she is willing to be nominated as a Trustee. The vice-Chair, Bruce Jarvis, indicated last year that he would be standing down in 2026.

If we genuinely want our beloved Church to be the Lord's hands in this world, and to go on proclaiming the good news that, as He promised, He has revealed so much more of Himself, we have to put *our* hands up! Otherwise it could indeed be “situation critical”. We have to deal with the implications. To put it bluntly, we could be looking at the demise of General Conference, an almost unthinkable prospect for all of us who love and serve the Lord through its activities.

Report of Conference 2025

Carolyn Kennion writes:

Notes from the 218th Annual Meeting of the General Conference of the New Church,
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick 22-26 July 2025
Theme – Angels

Tuesday 22nd 2pm onwards

- Signing of the roll.
- **Family worship** led by Revd Brian Talbot on the theme of angels.
- **Greetings**, including from Revd Clifford and Mrs Marion Curry who were unable to attend at the last minute because of illness, Rev. John and Jenny Sutton in New Zealand, Rev. Ian Arnold in Australia and Rev. Robert Gill in Glasgow.
- **Memorial notices** for Jean Chadwick, Joyce Shepherd and Irene Woodhouse. (It was lovely that Irene's husband, Wilf, and son, Chris, were present to hear our appreciation for all that Irene, along with Wilf, contributed to Purley Chase during their time as managers.)
- **Safeguarding** presented by Sue Chesworth - emphasized that this applies to everyone as we should all give and receive respect and feel safe, valued and cared for. To achieve this we may need to support or challenge each other so that we respond appropriately to the needs and feelings of others. Sue gave advice about safe practices regarding keeping children's photos on IT devices.
- **Feedback from 'Working together to provide a balanced and sustainable future'**
presented by Revd Jack Dunion (Spiritual Leader). Jack reminded us of the 3 strategic aims drawn up after last year's conference – 1) Encouraging and supporting varied and diverse approaches to worship. 2) Applying doctrine based on personal conscience. 3) Becoming more accepting and inviting.
Feedback received from churches, groups and church organisations included the need for pastoral support, safe spaces for difficult and contentious conversations, new ideas being put into practice such as the Festival of Angels, young people's Instagram group, Seaburn Dene posts on Facebook, variety of styles of services of worship and social activities, engagement with local community.

Evening

Choice between 3 different activities or free time – New Church Children's Society AGM, Questions to a panel of ministers, Circle Dancing.

Wednesday 23rd Spiritual Day

Morning

- **Holy Supper service** led by Revds Christine Bank and Becky Jarratt.

- **Keynote address** by Revd Jack Dunion

- the 3 strategic aims are beginning to be implemented.

In the past the Christian church has insisted that everybody must believe the same things and express these in the same ways. No human person or group is in possession of the whole truth – only the Lord. As long as there is wise discernment of what the Lord is teaching there needs to be variety in how beliefs are externally expressed so that what is from the Lord is presented in ways different people can receive it. The Lord meets people where they are. Anybody who lives by principles of goodness and truth comes to the Lord. We do not have to be perfect – we all make mistakes. When we recognise our mistakes we can learn from them and the Lord will help us to resist making the same mistake again. That is how we regenerate.

The ministry are aiming to provide:

- safe spaces for difficult and contentious conversations,
- updates and information about goal-setting, keeping the Conference Council and membership informed,
- a new initiative – Meet the Minister – bookable opportunity to speak privately with a minister to ask questions, seek support or discuss new proposals etc.

Jack was congratulated for his honest, authentic style of leadership – very different from in the past.

The full address will be published in E-News.

Afternoon

New Ideas

- Revd Becky Jarratt encouraged everyone to put into practice new ideas for activities. Ministers cannot do it all themselves but will offer support in any way they can. We were invited to write our ideas/proposals/questions for Ministers on cards and post them into a box.
- Margaret Presland and Carolyn Kennion gave a short presentation about the process they are going through to create The Festival of Angels and how they are being supported by several ministers including Jack, Becky and Brian. Two displays in the conference hall showed some of the ‘angels’ received so far towards the festival.
- Several issues which may challenge many of us were introduced – worship without a church building, being guided by personal conscience in applying doctrine, using church or outside venues for our events, LGBTQ+ issues, assisted dying etc. We split into groups which provided a safe space to discuss our chosen topic.
- Revd Helen Brown introduced a session about **Angels** – their qualities, infinite variety and influence on us. The Lord’s aim is to create a heaven of angels from the

human race. A short video followed by a playlet illustrated how we are influenced by guardian angels but also evil spirits; we are free to choose a heavenly or hellish course of action in every circumstance in life. Each angel is unique and so are we.

- **‘Our Church family – why belong?’** introduced by Revd Mary Duckworth. Four people had been asked to give testimonies about what the church family means to them and four others also spoke about this. Feeling loved, accepted and cared for shone through as being important.

Evening

Choice between singing and playing, New Church Historical Society AGM, questions to panel of ministers or free time.

Thursday 24th Business Day

- Started with **choice between 3 different types of worship** – Taizé, (Revd Helen Brown), Lectio Divina adapted to include New Church teaching, (Revd Robin Wooldridge) or shared worship on the theme of ‘Light’ with participants contributing items such as a hymn, prayer, reading, picture (Jan Millar and Gwendolen Rowe).
- **Financial Report** – Paul Mehew – Company Accountant. Resulting from various measures, particularly relating to Purley, some savings have been made and more are planned but donations were lower. Generally, increased income from property sales but reduced income from investments largely resulting from USA policies. Surplus for the year £431k (2024: £2,183k surplus) Copies of the accounts are available on request from the Company Secretary.
- **Council Report** -Margaret Cowie – Conference Council Chairperson thanked Pauline Grimshaw and Nigel Sutton for service on council and everyone working for the church, especially volunteers.
A new Outreach Co-ordinator was appointed during the year – Shannon Fitzgerald based at Bradford.
Refreshed marketing strategy for the church.
Revd Jack Dunion’s radio show ‘Rise and Shine’ continues every Sunday morning 9-10am on Lomondradio.co.uk
Request from Seaburn Dene for Lynne Griffiths to be their minister following ordination.
The Constitution Revision Group had drawn up proposed amendments and changes to the Articles and Rules.
A new programme director for Purley is being sought but difficult to find suitable applicants.
- Mrs Sue Chesworth was re-elected onto the council.
- Voting concerning the proposed changes to the rules and articles took considerable time. New rules to enable proxy voting and 14 to 17 year olds to apply for Youth Membership of Conference were passed as was SOLCe council’s request to revise some rules to give greater flexibility with college courses. Proposed changes to

Articles relating to the number of elected Council members needed and the appointment of Life Voting Members to act as consultants were not passed.

Reports from other groups within the church were not read out but printed copies were available.

- Business continued after lunch and by the time that was concluded the tea break was most welcome.

There followed a complete shift in focus as we assembled in the chapel for the annual Conference Service which this year included the **ordination of Lynne Griffiths** conducted by the Spiritual Leader Jack Dunion. For me, and probably for many others, this was the major highlight of the Conference. Lynne had obviously been very involved in planning the service and it was very personal to her. Her parents, sister and family attended and her son and nephew lit candles on the altar, with the ministers adding to these. We enjoyed videos of the brass band in which Lynne plays baritone horn and also of her family engaged in various activities at Seaburn Dene church. The conference choir sang a beautiful anthem. Lynne and Jack both spoke very movingly. As we left the chapel we were each given a heart-shaped candle with a tag thanking us for celebrating this special occasion with Lynne and her family.

Evening –

Party time for everyone ably led by Jenny and Steve Jones

Friday 25th

Morning

- Revd Jack Dunion led a moving ceremony in which Connie Jones, Lizzie Taylor, Kayleigh Walker and Ellie Jarratt were made **Youth Members** and were presented with certificates.
- **Next steps for new ideas and brave spaces -**
The ideas which we had posted into the box on Wednesday were read out.
Revd Becky Jarratt – find what really matters to people and apply spiritual principles. Football Church already run by some other denominations eg. as after-school club but could be for any age– social and spiritual benefits – value of teamwork, working together to achieve a goal, enabling others to achieve etc
The world and our lives outside church should be our place of worship.
Chris Chambers – in the past there has been a top-down approach with the expectation that Ministry and Conference Council will do most of the work. A bottom-up approach is now needed - if we want to see change we have to be the agents of change. Chris quoted Gandhi ‘We must become the change we want to see.’

- **Review** – a few people were dissatisfied with some practical matters at the conference centre but the vast majority had experienced an enjoyable time.
- **Votes of thanks** - to the many people involved in enabling this conference to take place, run so smoothly and be a spiritually nourishing experience. Special thanks were offered to John Ford, who, after many years working as conference organiser, is now stepping down from that role.
- **Closing Family Worship** - Revd Lynne Griffiths
A video illustrated how, over the last few months, alongside her ordination studies, Lynne had been working on a tapestry kneeler depicting a rough sea and a lighthouse. It had been more challenging and time-consuming than expected, involving mistakes and setbacks, unpicking and resewing some stitches and receiving help from other people. Lynne likened this to our lives where the Lord just requires us to make 'one stitch' at a time, recognising our mistakes along the way and correcting them, sometimes with help from others and always from the Lord himself.

In addition to the events described above other positives were reuniting with old friends and making new ones, talented musicians playing for services, the beauty and peace of the grounds, having tasty food prepared for us and fine, but not too hot, weather! Sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to a happy, useful and up-lifting conference.

Seaburn Dene

Revd Lynne Griffiths writes:

Following a 'spring clean' at Seaburn Dene New Church we have identified a number of old hymn books of the New Church from the 1940s that are no longer required. It seems sad to simply dispose of these so we wondered if anybody would like them or knew where they could find a new home.

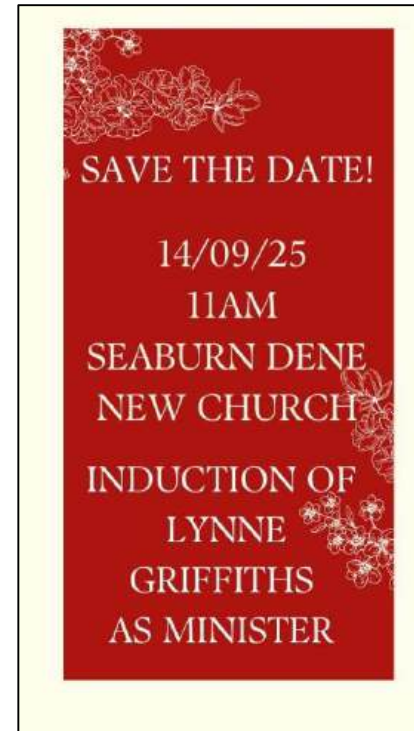
Space is at a premium at Seaburn church so sadly we can't just keep what we no longer need. We hope they can be of use to somebody else either in this country or elsewhere.



Seaburn Dene New Church is delighted to announce the date for our 4th 'A candle for Christmas' event. Events already in place have led us to an earlier meeting date this year. Whilst we are aware that many friends live some distance from Sunderland we wish to extend a warm invitation to all and if you are unable to attend perhaps you'll consider

lighting your own candle at home that evening and reflecting upon memories of loved ones and being with us in spirit instead.

Our service offers music from a live brass group playing carols, readings and thoughts on the Christmas Scriptures and a chance to remember those unable to be with us at Christmas by placing a memory tag upon the tree and lighting a candle in their memory. In what has been a moving and captivating event in previous years we look forward to welcoming friends old and new to a darkened church lit by dimmed lighting and of course much candlelight.



International Summer Camp 2025

Jenny Jones writes:



At the start of the school holidays, Purley Chase hosted our third International Summer Camp for young people; Purley was teeming with teenagers from the UK, Germany, Czech Republic and the USA for a week! Kurt Fekete, youth director at the Swedenborgian Church Youth League in Northern America, has kindly written an article full of information about what we all got up to. Please click on the link below to read about our adventures...

<https://newchurchcamps.org.uk/13-international-summer-camp-2025/>

Upcoming Events

14 th Sep	Revd Lynn Griffiths' Induction – Seaburn Dene
20 th Sep	Dream Workshop – Purley Chase
31 st Oct – 2 nd Nov	November Family Weekend – Purley Chase
17 th October	Leaders United - Keighley
3 rd – 6 th Nov	Autumn Fellowship – Purley Chase
14 - 17 th Nov	Festival of Angels - Kearsley
6 th Dec	A Candle for Christmas – Seaburn Dene

Full details www.generalconference.org.uk/new-church-events/