



CONFERENCE COUNCIL MEETING

held on Tuesday 22nd July 2025
at the Hayes Christian Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Trustees Present:	Mrs M Cowie	Chairperson
	Revd B Jarvis	Vice-Chairperson
	Mrs S Chesworth	
	Mr T Millar	
	Mr N Sutton	
	Mr J Ford	Co opted
Also in attendance:	Ms N Welch	Company Secretary
	Mr P Mehew	Company Accountant
	Revd J Dunion	Spiritual Leader
	Revd B Jarratt	Deputy Spiritual Leader
	Mr C Chambers	President, New Church College

Start time: 10.00am
End Time: 12.30pm

	Opening Revd Jack Dunion opened the meeting with a reading from Psalm, 67, followed by a prayer	
	Apologies –Barry Friend and Phillip Brooks sent in their apologies	
79	<i>Confirmation of the Minutes of the Conference Council Meeting held on 8th May 2025.</i> The minutes were approved by all present with Trevor Millar proposing and Sue Chesworth seconding. <i>Confirmation of the Minutes of the Conference Council Meeting held on 19th May 2025.</i> The minutes were approved by all present with Revd Bruce Jarvis proposing and John Ford seconding. <i>Paul Crone, IT Manager, joined the meeting</i> Matters arising from the Minutes Minute 66.2 <i>Company Emails</i> - It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be formed to address the request for all employees to have personalised email addresses, to determine the most effective way for confidential information, such as 1-2-1 forms and pastoral issues, to be directed to these individual addresses. The group will consist of Margaret Cowie, Natalie Welch, Revd Jack Dunion, and IT Manager Paul Crone. A meeting will be arranged hopefully whilst at the Hayes Christian Conference Centre whilst everyone is present. <i>Paul Crone left the meeting</i> Minutes 78, <i>Retired Ministers Fees</i> - The Committee of Ministers are still looking at this and will report back in the Council meeting in November 2025.	

80	Spiritual Leaders Update Revd. Jack Dunion reported on the completion of appraisals and updated Ministers' Allocation of Duties for all paid ministers. These have been submitted for Conference Council's consideration and ratification. Jack then offered a reflection on the challenging journey of the past few years, acknowledging the significant infrastructure work and planning that has taken place. He emphasised the importance of a future focus on healing, regaining a sense of the Divine, and ensuring this remains central to all activities. He concluded by thanking the Conference Council for their hard work and support, expressing a hopeful outlook for continued collaboration.	
81	Committee of Ministers <i>Trustees attending Committee of Ministers Meetings</i> Becky Jarratt explained that it has been extremely helpful having Trustees attend the Committee of Ministers meetings, and that they value their contributions. We discussed the continuation of this new development, and the Trustee present at our June meeting was keen that we could be frank about problems in front of them and reassured us that they would keep what was discussed confidential and constructive. <i>Four-year plan for residentials</i> Jack and Becky have developed a four-year residential plan to ensure leadership is distributed and planning aligns with leader availability. The Committee of Ministers (CoM) agreed to continue spiritual sessions for older teenagers (ages 14+) and adults, led by Ministers and senior lay people. Ministers will no longer be responsible for entire residentials but can attend at the point of need. For example, at the 13-18 Summer Camp, different Ministers or senior lay people may lead for different parts of the week. This approach has increased the willingness of Ministers to lead residentials. Jack will share this information with the Youth and Family Team <i>Process for ordering new laptops</i> To address previous confusion, the following process for ordering new laptops for Ministers and employees performing ministerial tasks (e.g., Online Worship Coordinator) will be adopted: • The IT Manager determines if the old laptop requires replacement. • The Minister informs the IT Manager of their requirements (e.g., specific software needs) and seeks advice on appropriate laptop models. • The IT Manager provides recommendations. • Ministers may spend up to the new budget of £800. If a higher specification is desired, the Minister can contribute additional funds. • The chosen laptop is ordered either by the Minister (for reimbursement) or via the Company Secretary. • The laptop can be set up by the IT Manager and posted to the Minister, or sent directly to the Minister (e.g., home address, Click and Collect) for remote setup by the IT Manager. This process was agreed by all present. <i>Review of Committee of Ministers processes</i> It was agreed by the Committee of Ministers, that the new processes that Emma Daniels has introduced have been a success and have streamlined our work. The Deputy Spiritual Leader will continue to chair meetings. They will continue to meet for regular business twice in person at Purley Chase and meet on Zoom in between.	

82	Safeguarding Sue Chesworth explained that she was giving a talk at Conference on Tuesday 22nd July regarding safeguarding, to remind people of the Code of Conduct that forms part of Safeguarding Procedures Manual.	
83	Property Update <i>Manse at Chester</i> – John Ford reported that we have received an offer of £375,000 on the Manse at Chester. The interested buyer is currently having a survey carried out on the property. Our solicitors have requested that we also engage chartered surveyors to confirm that the sale price aligns with comparable properties in the area, for the information of the Charities Commission. <i>Church at Chester</i> - We have received approximately 10 bids for the property, ranging from £105,000 to £200,000. Initially, an offer of £200,000 was received from another church body, but this has since been withdrawn. The remaining five higher offers (ranging from £130,000 to £200,000) are not from churches and are from buyers who do not intend to use the property as a church. Hoole Baptist Church, who are currently using the property for community purposes and have shown continued interest, have submitted a lower offer of £130,000. The original valuation obtained by the Chester society for this property was £113,000. This situation presents a challenge as the property is intended to be used as a church. <i>Manse at Kearsley</i> – John Ford has been preparing this property for the market. Estate agents have suggested listing the property at £295,000.	
84	Company Policies Clarity was needed regarding the procedure for situations where a society/church, primarily composed of volunteers, does not follow guidelines or policies set by the Conference Council. It was decided that an educational approach would be most effective, given that local officers are all volunteers. This will be carried out by the Company Secretary, Natalie Welch, who will make annual, pre-arranged visits to each church/society. During these visits, Natalie will ensure clarity on all policies and guidance, utilising a checklist to complete for each church/society. <i>Action:</i> Natalie will implement this new procedure and communicate with secretaries in due course.	NW
85	HR Consultancy - Conference Council discussed recent incidents that had led to a loss of faith in Croner and the guidance and advice they had provided. Natalie explained that she had contacted Croner to obtain a copy of their contract, initially signed by the previous Company Accountant. It was discovered that the contract with Croner had automatically renewed for a further five years in March 2025 because the agreement which was taken out at the time did not contractually require Croner to send a renewal reminder. Natalie spoke of her difficulty in getting Croner to understand the organisation's operations. This lack of understanding has consistently caused issues with HR and Health and Safety advice, particularly regarding volunteers. Natalie has been speaking with an HR consultancy that works with other church charities. The Council agreed that Natalie can actively search for other HR consultancy options, and this will be discussed further.	NW

86	Paid Time Off for Bereavement - The Conference Council discussed and clarified the policy for paid leave for employees in the event of the death of immediate family members (parents, siblings, or children). It was agreed that 6 paid days of leave will be allocated for bereavement, and this includes the day of the funeral. Employees wishing to take additional time off beyond these 6 paid days may do so, either as unpaid leave or by utilising their annual holiday entitlement.	
87	Marketing and Media Coordinator. The recent departure of the Marketing and Media Coordinator, Sibongile Mkoba (Sibby) was discussed. It was explained that this position will be reviewed by a Task and Finish Group after Conference. It was agreed that Becky Jarratt would obtain the necessary passwords from Paul Crone, IT Manager, to access the social media platforms. This will ensure the advertising of events can continue in the interim. Additionally, a marketing budget of £1,000 was agreed upon. Any expenditure exceeding this amount will be flagged by Paul Mehew, Company Accountant.	NW
88	Finance Update Paul Mehew, Company Accountant, gave an update on the current position of the accounts. <i>Pricing at Purley Chase Centre</i> Paul Mehew explained that pricing for events at Purley Chase Centre will be standardised for particular event types. This change aims to simplify the current system, which has varying prices and causes confusion. <i>Deposits for Events</i> Paul Mehew proposed discontinuing deposits for events and taking full payment upfront instead, believing this would be simpler. However, further discussion is required to assess the impact of this change on family events, where deposits are currently standard practice. Sue Chesworth and Paul Mehew will discuss this further to determine the best approach.	PM/SC
89	Ordination Student The final SSMG meeting was held the week commencing 14th July, 2025. Lynne Griffiths has successfully completed all of her studies and is now ready for her Ordination at Conference 2025. The Conference Council congratulates Lynne on this significant achievement and wishes her well for her future as an employed ordained Minister.	
90	Departing Council Members and Trustees Margaret Cowie, on behalf of the Conference Council, expressed sincere thanks and appreciation to Philip Brooks and John Ford for their valuable contributions as co-opted members. The Conference Council also extended its profound appreciation to Nigel Sutton, who is stepping down as a Trustee after many years of dedicated service.	
91	Appreciation for David and Anne Gaffney The Conference Council extended warm thanks and appreciation to David and Anne Gaffney for their generous help in managing the Purley Chase Centre in the absence of a manager during a busy period of bookings.	
	Conference Council Meeting Dates 2025 September 2nd, 10am – 15.00pm - Zoom November 25th, 10am – 15.00pm - Zoom	

	2026 January 13 th , 10am – 15.00pm – Zoom March 24 th , 10am – 15.00pm – Zoom May 7 th – 8 th 1.30pm at Purley Chase Centre July 28 th , 10am - Writing Room at the Hayes Conference Centre	
	The meeting closed with a short prayer	