

**YEARBOOK OF
THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
OF THE NEW CHURCH: 2025-2026**

**INCLUDING THE MINUTES
OF THE 218th ANNUAL MEETING**

**Held at the Hayes Conference Centre,
Swanwick, Derbyshire
from Tuesday 22nd July to Friday 25th July 2025**

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THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW CHURCH

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to express, share and experience with others in life an inclusive, non-judgmental vision of God's kingdom.

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is of a network of individuals and groups interacting together to share spiritual insight and understanding in an open and non-judgmental way, in order to promote spiritual growth through the application to life of the Word, and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

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SPIRITUAL LEADER'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Rev'd Jack Dunion General Conference AGM July 2025

Introduction

It's so nice to see everybody here. It is wonderful to be here, and I hope you've enjoyed some of the slides that we've been showing, and we're going to have a wee bit more of that at this Conference. You'll be glad to hear though, that this year it is all going to be about implementation. In previous years, it's been about information gathering, listening to people, collating and processing your feedback from the facilitated groups, looking at planning, and so on. And you'll remember also in previous years how I described that process as being like a building site where all the infrastructure has been going in beneath the surface, and how it looks as if there's nothing happening, nothing being built. And then, someday, you go past and 'lo and behold' the houses are going up all over the place. Hopefully then, we have reached the point where all the houses will now be going up as we are moving to the implementation stages. The bad news, maybe, for all of you though, is that you will all need to be involved in this going forward.

Let me use the following analogy to describe the way in which we are going. You might like to think of it as being like getting on a bus and getting the bus going. We will then get on at the next stop. Because we want people to take the initiative with new things and take the lead on them, before we come in and see if and where people need support. By us, I mean the Conference Council, the Ministry, and the College.

New and Old Church

So, we've been doing all this gathering information and asking you to take part, and you have very graciously been patient with us. I know sometimes you've said, "Come on, we need the results!", and quite rightly too. That in fact has helped push us forward. Where it all began really was in the Committee of Ministers (CoM) while CoM were discussing an outreach project. Outreach is something that we've been trying, possibly for centuries now without much success, as the Church just keeps declining. Some of our analysis of that situation was that we inadvertently brought forward a lot of things from the "old church" thinking that that was going to be part of the New Church. Historically, we began building schools and things like that, thinking that we would just expand our church organisation till it would eventually take over all the other Christian denominations. The problem with that was, all the other Christian denominations were thinking the same thing, and everybody became more entrenched than ever before. Everyone was claiming that they alone had the truth. That I think was something from the old church, which we took over to this church.

It's All Good

With the benefit of hindsight, we can see how that was a mistake. But when I say a mistake, I'm not putting anybody from the past down. Because again, it's all under the Lord's providence. I'll use another analogy here, the analogy of the butterfly. Think about the way a caterpillar cocoons itself. It then starts to realize that it's dying. And what does it do? It has an extreme immune response. It has the instinct to survive and so it secretes a gooey chemical substance in an effort to stay alive. As does all-natural life. We all have this instinct to try to survive. The caterpillar, by trying to keep itself alive, over reacts and produces way too much of this chemical substance. It keeps on doing it until the whole thing turns into this strange mixture. I have no idea what that substance is. Perhaps somebody who's into physics might be able to tell us. It is after it turns itself into this gooey stuff, that it inadvertently and miraculously transforms itself into the butterfly. So, please get the point here. It's the effort to stay alive that actually turns it into a beautiful butterfly. This is a perfect analogy for what has happened in our church. All the things we've done in the past have not been wasted. On the contrary, it was that immune response, the continual quest for survival that will continue to turn us into the beautiful butterfly that the Lord intends for us to become.

Providence and Conveying the Vision

Although the transitional difficulties we have been going through are the result of the well-meaning choices we have and still are making, the Lord's providence is leading us through this process to something new, something beautiful, and, metaphorically speaking, this will allow us to escape the cocoon and fly up into the air like a butterfly. That's the analysis, and we have reached the privileged stage in our history where we can take all that has happened in the past, gather it all together, break free from that cocoon and move forward in the Lord's name. That's what I'm seeing and I hope upon hope that we can convey that concept across the church to reach everyone, because conveying it has been the problem from the beginning. It was difficult to get across the vision and the proposed way forward, and that has been frustrating at times. But the Lord sends helpers, and Revd Becky Jarratt has been absolutely amazing at helping with, not only helping articulate the vision, but also seeking out other people who could help us do so. It just wouldn't have happened without her. There's no doubt about that. With the support of Conference Council, Revd Becky Jarratt and I were also able to bring in facilitators and put things in place, as we began to form a picture of how we could present this new vision for our church.

Our Three Strategic Aims

You will recall having discussed what have become known as the 3 strategic aims in groups at last year's Conference. I recall it was Gayle-Anne who had said to me: "The best way to eat an elephant is one slice at a time". That was really brilliant to me as I love those kinds of analogies. To me they're like suitcases: you can open them up and just keep unpacking them. I think we've used that analogy to try and narrow things right down and get them into the three basic strategic aims that we could all work with. You very helpfully reflected back to us after discussing these aims last year.

So, that was a snapshot of the way we took the vision and found ways to articulate it, resulting in the three strategic aims for our Church. Something that we also had to keep in mind though is our Memorandum of Association, which you can find on our website. These memorandums state the purpose for our existence. They tell us that the main purpose of our existence is to spread the theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. But that does not mean we just distribute his books. We also spread their adoption by living by the principles written there, and setting examples for others to follow. I would say that was also Swedenborg's vision. Unless we keep the vision in the Memorandum of Association, we could be shut down by the Charity Commission. Did everybody know that? That is the purpose of our existence, the basis of our charity. If we don't use the funds that we are raising to meet such objectives, the Charity Commission could, potentially, shut us down.

Orderly Consultations

So, I think it is very important that our Memorandum of Association should play a central role in whatever vision we have going forward. You might hear us talking about how important it is to consult with the Ministry. That's not just a power grab. It is about helping us maintain our purpose.

There is something Swedenborg talks about in his Writings in regard to there being three different types of law: there is civil law, moral law and there is spiritual law. You can keep civil law, yet break moral and spiritual law. You can keep civil and moral law, yet break spiritual law. But, if you keep spiritual law, you keep all three! This is because all laws are designed to keep order and originate in the Lord who is order itself! Spiritual laws connect us directly to the Lord and all other laws are derived from spiritual laws. If, therefore, we obey the spiritual laws which are connected to the Lord, then we obey all the laws and we're safe, not only in spiritual and moral laws, but also in civil laws relating to our stated purposes. Everything we do then remains safe and within the law, and, the Charity Commission would therefore never have a reason to shut us down, because we're always meeting our purpose and objectives.

We appoint Ministers, do we not, in order to study the Writings of Swedenborg. Those Writings of Swedenborg shine a great light on the Word

of God. I say that with great reverence and emotion in my voice because the Word of God has instruction for the life that we need to live. Ultimately, that's the highest of the highest of the highest, the infinite God in his Word. Swedenborg's writings shine a great light on the Lord's Word. The Ministry is trained to find that light and shine it on the Word for other people. So, when I talk about the Ministry needing to be properly consulted, that's not for the purpose of maintaining a position of power, it's because it is vitally important for all to be able to stay within the framework of all laws, spiritual, moral and civil. Our Ministers are trained not just to become a light to shine on the Word of God, but also to become a living example of the life that the Word teaches us to lead. This requires a person to be wholly focussed, first and foremost, on emptying oneself out, in order to receive the Lord in its stead and become a channel through which the Lord can work. One thing I have learned in ministry, is that the best thing I can do to help people receive the Lord, is get out of the way myself and allow Him to work through me.

Working on Removing Self

As we all know, working hard on that is difficult. Everyone here has done that to an extent and knows what I'm talking about. It's difficult to stand by the principles that the Lord gives us. But, boy-oh-boy, is it rewarding! I guess I am a living example of what the Lord can do. I was a nothing when I came to the Lord. And, although I myself am still a nothing, at least now I am a nothing with something inside me from the Lord. I couldn't even begin to tell you where I was in my life. I was gutter nothing, and the Lord brought me to where I am today. It's a miracle. It's a great miracle. And if the Lord can save somebody like me, it's more obvious that, despite any appearance to the contrary, it is He who has done the work!

You know, when the Lord talks to the rich man in Matt 19:21, saying "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me". This is not about the man's wealth and his money in the physical sense. The Lord is referring to the knowledge that he thinks he has. If we think we know everything already, there will be no room to learn more. For this reason, it is often those who think they know everything, who actually know the least. Because, knowing anything requires us first to know the Lord.

Allow me here to quote from my wee brother Jim. Jim's got learning disabilities, he's got autism and he's got brain injuries. But he comes out with some really wise things sometimes. He once said to me: *"the older I get, the more I recall how little I knew when I knew it all"*. That was wonderful to hear because it said so much to me.

Anyway, I'm getting off track a bit. Please remember how important it is to consult the Ministry in order to keep our purpose and objectives by keeping

our connection to the Lord through our ministry.

Aligning with our Strategic Aims

So, getting back to our slides, I recall we were talking about trying to slice up the elephant, which resulted in us coming up with the three strategic objectives which you discussed last year, albeit in their draft form. We then took these forward and discussed them within the Ministry and the end result was that we took them to the Conference Council, who adopted them as the three strategic aims of the Church. What we are trying to do now is align as much as we possibly can with these three aims so that everyone has a purpose based on a good foundation moving forward. And so, we are all going in the same direction in pursuit of the same objectives. There will of course be a variety of different ways of doing that.

It is my belief that as we are all different then we should be able, and be enabled, to express our worship in a variety of different ways. I think we have seen something of that through the slides we have been showing today. You've seen all the different activities that are going on across the church. One of the things that was wonderful to see was the angel project that Carolyn Kennion and Margaret Presland brought to Conference. Not long after they began publicising their idea for this project, they had a phone call from someone who had not been to the Church for ages, nor had they been in touch with anyone from the Church. It turns out that they were very interested in angels. Although I remember them telling me this. Well, this seemed to light a torch in my mind.

Of course, if there are different things going on in our Church, and the people outside the Church are all different, then those same people are bound to be attracted to all the different things we have going on in the Church. So, the greater the variety being expressed within our Church, the greater the variety of people we will draw in. There is no denying that everyone of us have different preferences and find ourselves attracted to different things. Perhaps another mistake we made in the past, which we brought over from the old Christian Church, was an insistence that everybody should be the same and think the same way. The attitude of the old Christian Church was that if you don't believe precisely what we believe, then you can't join us. You weren't made to feel welcome into the Church unless you were willing to do this, or do that. So, even if it wasn't verbally said, anyone coming in from outside would experience that type of culture. So, having that different variety within our Church and accepting that we are all different, allowing this to be reflected in our different forms of worship, will surely help our Church thrive and grow. Simply because we will then attract the greater variety of people who are out there.

Disconnect between Church and Society

That in fact seems go to the heart of why the Church in the world today is failing. The crux of the matter is the disconnect between the church and society. The Church became so distanced from society because we have stayed the same. We have encouraged sameness within our societies and groups all adhering to the same selective passages and interpretations of the Heavenly Doctrines. If we can become a Church expressing our worship in a variety of ways, while still adhering to our Memorandum of Association, then the Ministry, the College and the Council, and you the members, can all have that continuity from the Lord, through everyone reaching out in a variety of ways and appealing to a wider variety of individuals. Variety in worship within the Church is surely a good thing! Because it is simply different ways in which we can worship the one true God. I like to use the analogy of milk. You can deliver milk in a glass, you can deliver it in a carton, you can deliver it in a bottle, in fact, you can deliver it in anything you like. It's still milk! It doesn't matter how we deliver or present what is in the Writings in regard to the Lord's love and wisdom. Surely, the most important thing is that we present it in ways in which people are able to receive it, and do so with joy! Surely then, the best way to help people receive what we are being taught through the Writings, is to present it in ways they are able to receive it, to meet them where they are.

Appearances

That brings me to something else I want to talk about. Something that we've not really spoken a lot about in the Church to date. And that is the doctrine of appearances. We so easily fall under the illusion that we know the truth. Well, that is indeed an illusion - we don't know the truth! None of us does! You don't know the truth. I don't know the truth. Human beings cannot possibly know the truth, not in its purest form. Swedenborg describes this as being like walking into the sun. If we were to experience the Lord's truth in all its glory, we would disintegrate. That's how powerful the Lord's love and truth are in comparison to us. What the Lord does do is allow us to be in what Swedenborg calls, "appearances of truth". We are allowed to be in appearances of truth, and the Lord is then able to work with us from within those appearances. As we read in the book of Isaiah "A bruised reed I will not break, a smouldering wick I will not snuff out." The Lord meets people where they are. He doesn't break them. He takes us from exactly where we are. Even the worst of the worst of us, people like I was at one time. He takes His people from where they are, and He gently moves them and guides them gradually towards good.

It's always going to be appearances that we are in, all of us! In fact, Swedenborg's Writings tell you that even the highest angels of heaven, (and any Minister here can correct me if I'm wrong!), are also still only in appearances of truth. None of them are in pure truths, because it would be

simply too much for any finite person or angel to be in the Lord's divine truths in their purest form. We are finite and the Lord is infinite. And, in case anybody ever thinks that they're better than anybody else, or that their truth is the final truth, just ask yourself this, "What ratio is there between what is finite and what is infinite?" The only answer you can possibly give to that is that there isn't one! In that regard, then, we are all the same. I'm conscious that I have strayed a bit from what I had intended to talk about. But I hope that I am also letting the Lord's spirit flow, too.

Voting from our own Conscience

So, getting back to our strategic aims. One of the things we were worried about was the middle aim in regard to voting with our own conscience. Providentially, it turned into what I would call a "positive sandwich". There was a really clear aim that everybody agreed with, and then there was a controversial one in the middle. The sandwich was completed by another really clear aim that everybody agreed with. So, it was like a sandwich, in that the more controversial aim was in the middle, and it is still is controversial for a small number of people. But I want people to express any discomfort they may have openly, because it makes us all think again about it. So, what I did was to go back to the Writings and find out more about what a conscience actually is, because the second aim is to allow and support people to vote with our own conscience. Initially, the voting with our own conscience was really referring only to the Ministry. Because, for spiritual issues to be implemented in an orderly way, they ought to first come through the Ministry. So, it was the Ministry I was initially talking about.

Consider this passage from Arcana Celestia, slightly abbreviated because of its length, but with all the main points included.

"What conscience is and where it originates: Conscience is formed by means of the truths of faith, for what a person has heard, acknowledged, and believed constitutes conscience with him. After that, acting contrary to those things is for him acting contrary to conscience, as may become quite clear to anyone. Consequently, unless it is the truths of faith that he hears, acknowledges, and believes, he cannot possibly have a true conscience. For it is by means of the truths of faith, with the Lord working within charity, that a person is regenerated, and so by means of them receives conscience. Arcana Celestia 1077

That's important! "with the Lord working within charity, that a person is regenerated" who by means of the truths of faith receives conscience". Why is the Lord working within charity important? It is because this tells us that we need to take the truths of faith and implement them in our life, before we can form a true conscience. People do all sorts of things outside of the influence of the Church and don't look at the truths of faith, and yet say they have a

conscience. But, as Swedenborg tells us, it's not a true conscience. Swedenborg is very clear about that. It may seem like a conscience, but it isn't really. Because a true conscience is only formed by the truths of faith that have actually been implemented in our lives, i.e. within charity. If we go against them, then we are going against conscience. So please remember this when we are thinking of the second aim, voting according to our conscience. It's a conscience based on the truths of faith we are speaking about. The truths which regenerate a person. Surely, all our decision makers ought to have such a conscience. A person will not be regenerated unless they seek out the truths of faith and implement them in their lives. Jack Ramsay posed an excellent question in the "Question the Ministers" session last night about people who don't know the Lord. If they don't know the Lord how can they believe in Him and still go to heaven? That was an excellent question, and one that made me think. An answer can be found within the Writings of Swedenborg.

A True Belief in the Lord

The Writings tell us that it's not just a verbal confession of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the goodness and truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is that needs to be believed. And belief means actually doing what is good and true. So, anybody anywhere in the world who lives by the principles of goodness and truth comes to the Lord. Because goodness and truth are literally what the Lord is. So, a verbal confession is only an external thing, but actually living a life of good and truth is the internal level and is what really matters.

This, I think, is extremely important, because another thing that happened with the old Christian church was the discouragement of people admitting that they can make mistakes and that we can all get things wrong at times. How was that discouraged? Well, it was discouraged by condemning people for getting things wrong. But think about this, who got to where they are now in life without making mistakes? Whoever did anything successfully without first making a mistake? When you first got on a bike, did you just do it? No, of course not, you fell off? When you first poured out your milk into your corn flakes, did you hit the bowl? No, you first hit the table. When you first started putting the food into your mouth, where did it go? Down the front of your clothes! So, we all got here on the back of our mistakes, and the Lord reminds us about that in the Gospels. One of the people who was brought before him was going to be stoned, and he said, "*Let the person who has never sinned throw the first stone.*" (John 8:7) Down went the stones and off they went - because there were none of them who hadn't made mistakes.

And there are none of us either who haven't made mistakes. Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know something, or that you've made a mistake, or to admit that you've done something wrong. Encourage each other to admit things. Because, unless evils are allowed to surface, we cannot see them, and therefore we cannot admit them. Only when we see and acknowledge our sins

can we be induced to resist them. How are we going to know that wrong things are in us if we don't have a safe place to admit them to each other. And how are we going to be able to admit it to each other unless we feel assured that we won't be condemned?

We could liken this to a tortoise. A tortoise would never emerge from its shell if it knew someone was waiting with a big club to hit it on the head as soon as they stick their neck out. The environment needs to be good in order to allow people to emerge and admit their faults. And having emerged, at least now the environment will be safe enough for them to admit their mistakes, acknowledge them and begin to desire to be rid of them. Finally, then, they can ask the Lord to give them the strength to resist.

A Cultural Shift

So, we need to adopt a cultural attitude which will encourage each other to admit our mistakes, not feel the need to hide them away. Because we all got here on the back of our mistakes! And I think that is another mistake the old church made in the past and which we inadvertently brought over to the new church. It was not encouraging people to admit when they get things wrong.

In the questions and answers session, David asked me an excellent question. It was a question I felt went over my head, I just didn't know the answer. I had to admit that I didn't know the answer, and the hells began to beat me up afterwards. I thought, "You're the Spiritual Leader, and you don't know the answer! Ha-ha, everybody's going to hate you for that." I don't think that would be the case at all though. Am I right? Please reassure me that it's okay for me to say I don't know, because I didn't know, that was the truth. I could have attempted to answer it, but I didn't. So, let's not be afraid of admitting our limitations, that we do get things wrong. Let's not jump on each other when we do get things wrong. Didn't the Lord say in Matt. 7:3-5 "*Don't look at the speck in your brother's eye before you remove the plank from your own eye*". Because whenever we criticize somebody else, we're forgetting something very fundamental: we fell off our bike, too!

From the Word

I just want to bring in some passages from the Gospels that confirm some of this for us and how we should encourage things to come out, where they can be seen and acknowledged. In Luke 8:17 "*There is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open*". Or, in John 3:21 "*Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God*". All these things make it very difficult to argue against having a transparent and safe environment where things can be brought to the fore.

Going Forward Together

So, moving forward, Conference Council adopted the three strategic aims for our Church and they have asked the Ministry to implement them. To this end, the Ministry met together and began to look at ways in which we could implement the aims. Here are some of the points the Ministry came up with:

- A need to uphold the teachings that form the foundation of our New Church faith.
- Provision of pastoral and emotional support for members who are feeling challenged by goal setting discussions.
- Provision of safe spaces for difficult, contentious conversations.
- Giving updates and information on the goal setting work.

I'm going to pause at the end of this talk to allow everybody to express their views or ask questions. And, I'm hoping that it's not just me who has to give the answers. Because, you know, we can all answer together. We have needed lots and lots of help to get here, so I'm going to need help with the answers to any questions asked as well. We, the Ministry, in meeting the 3 aims, also concluded that we would need provision for pastoral and emotional support for members who are feeling challenged by any goal setting discussions we make. Because these discussions are difficult for the very reason that we are all different. But we've moved forward knowing that we are all working in appearances.

I want to talk here about the “elephant in the room”. The most controversial issue the Ministry has ever faced is *same-sex marriage*, and this is a big issue for every church at the moment. It's probably the most contentious issue I think that the Church has ever faced. The reasons why people have great difficulty with such issues are quite obvious. On a personal level, there was a time when I would have described myself as being on the verge of homophobic. Not because I wanted to be, but because I grew up in my culture that taught me to be that way. Just like with many other things at that time I was doing things on a very superficial level, never actually having thought about them for myself nor formed my own opinions.

An Evolving Spectrum

But then, as you will all know, I lost my son Darren in 2021. Well, Darren was gay. I never knew this until he told me when he was about 18 or 19, a few short years before he died. That was something that radically changed my view on that whole issue. Darren was a really good guy. He was just such a lovely boy. I think some of you might have met him when he was much younger, at Purley Chase or here at Conference perhaps. When that happened with Darren, it helped move me considerably along the spectrum of thinking on this whole issue. Because we are all on that spectrum, aren't we? Some people are very comfortable with the issue. Some people are uncomfortable

with it. Others are very uncomfortable with it. We're all on a spectrum, and I have moved along the various stages of that spectrum. I would say that at various times in my life and ministry I have moved on that spectrum and moved well beyond the uncomfortable stage. Darren helped me move along that spectrum to where I am now because it made me think more about it. And then after Darren died - he took his own life, and because he had spoken to me about it before he died - it brought me to a new place on that spectrum.

Then, not long after that, I watched a film called "Joe Bell", which was a true story. It was about a guy in America called Joe Bell whose son was gay. His son wanted to cheerlead and express his own nature freely, be who he knew he was. And his dad stopped him because he was embarrassed. He didn't want people knowing he had a son who was gay, and he would shout at the boy and give him a hard time. But what his dad didn't know, was that he was also getting a hard time in school. He was getting a hard time from his teachers. He was getting a hard time from his peer group and from everyone else who knew him. Nobody would listen to him. He took his own life in a kid's playground.

This is a true story! After his son's death, Joe couldn't face what he had done. So, he set up a cart and he put some basic equipment in it, and he started walking, refusing to go home! He went around handing out leaflets on the dangers of discrimination. He began walking and ended up walking all over America handing out these leaflets telling people not to discriminate. He realized how much he hadn't been there for his son. He never went home again. He walked for over six months and in the end, he was hit by a truck on the road. Who knows if he wanted to be hit by the truck? He was phoning home, but refusing to go home. He couldn't go home, because he was so horrified by what he had done to his son. Watching that film, I felt that man's pain. And I thought about how so very glad I was that I had told my son just how much I loved him, and would always love him, no matter what, despite anything that he told me.

You see, I wasn't sure at the time if that was the right thing to do. But the Church and the Lord had taught me to love people, no matter what, I was to love people. That is what ultimately told me that the right thing to do was to tell Darren just how much I still loved him. I told Darren, no matter what happens, no matter what you do, no matter where you go in life, I will always love you. Do you see, if I hadn't said that to Darren, I would have been like that guy Joe Bell. I would have been so horrified with what I had done to my son that I wouldn't have been able to go on living without him. Please bear that in mind when you're thinking about this whole issue of homosexuality. So, there you have it, that's what moved me even further along the spectrum.

So, as your Spiritual Leader, what am I to do? I might be able to identify where I am on the spectrum, but it won't be the same bit you are on. The question is, who has any right to say that other people wouldn't be further

along that spectrum. And who am I to say no one should be beyond where I am? Does any one of us have the right to tell anyone else to get behind where they are on that spectrum? I should think not! What gives me, or anyone else, the right to tell anybody where they should be on that spectrum when we ourselves are on it? So, I do respect anyone's right to be further along that spectrum than I am. And that's one of the reasons why I advocate from within the Ministry for people to be able to vote with their own conscience. I simply do not see why I should have any right to tell anyone anything different, and that's what I feel, and I'm just being honest with you about that.

Safe Places and Brave Spaces

Another thing then that the Ministry came up with was the need to provide safe spaces where we could have difficult and contentious conversations about these difficult issues. We have seen a bit of that happen here at this very Conference, and you will be getting the chance to do more of that, when Revd Becky Jarratt introduces us to this concept of "Brave Spaces" a bit later on in this Conference. And please do give one another the chance to express yourselves without judgment. I think we're already there. I mean, I'm looking at everybody and I'm thinking that we're already there. I think everybody is already thinking along these lines. So, lots of good conversations and brave spaces and safe places to come, I hope.

Communication and Feedback

Another thing we thought was important was providing updates and information on goal setting and keeping Conference Council and the whole membership informed. So, we're setting up quite a few systems in order to be able to do that. I see this as being like a loop system. Gayle-Ann helped reinforce this idea by telling me about the time when she was working with the managers of a chocolate factory. The factory had a problem because there were lots of women working on the conveyor belts doing the chocolate packing and so on. They had suddenly started fighting among themselves, and the management couldn't figure out what was wrong. The whole place was in an uproar. So, Gayle-Anne went and sat on the line along with the other women and began packing the boxes with them. Well, to cut a long story short, the women who had previously only sat a certain distance apart were now sitting further apart. They had brought in new machinery, which meant they had to sit further apart and were no longer able hear one another nor to talk to each other.

What that story taught me was that if we are up the stairs looking down, we will not be able to figure out what's wrong. That you would need to get down on the ground floor and experience what it is like for the people working on the front line. Then you could figure out what was wrong. So, we are looking to have a loop system when it comes to assessing the needs of the Church. A loop system means that although decisions are made at the top, they must be

informed by those working on the ground. Information must come from the bottom back to the top, so the solutions and decisions reflect the true needs of the Church, from top the bottom, and from bottom back to the top. This way you've got a feedback loop. So, we have set up a few systems for that and one of them is "Meet the Minister", which I'll be talking about later. Another initiative is to give people the opportunity to approach other people by providing safe spaces where people can express things, and so on.

Your New Ideas for the Future

So, at this Conference, we all are going into groups where we can hopefully hear one another's different opinions on what needs to happen and how each of us feels regarding what happens now in the Church. And we've got to try to knit ourselves together in some way, and accept other people's opinions, even if they are completely different from ours. So, this is the bit where Revd Becky Jarratt is going to demonstrate how we all see the same things, but in a different way. It's about looking through different lenses and Becky's going to come up and help us with that demonstration.

Looking through different lenses

Revd Becky Jarratt is now going to come forward and give us a demonstration regarding why communication and consensus can often be so difficult within the church:

(Revd Becky Jarratt now speaking) Okay, can I have two volunteers please? I'm not going to ask you to do something awful, I promise. So, it'd be two people to come out to the front, Gwendolen, brilliant! And Carolyn, lovely! I saw another hand, but you were too slow. I've got a different job for you!

Would you stand on either side of me looking at each other please. And what I'm going to do is I'm going to put something between them. I'm going to ask, first of all, Gwendolen what she can see while looking through her lens. And then I'm going to ask Carolyn what she can see looking through her lens. I'm not going to be very slick! The Blue Peter presenter isn't in me today. So, if you wouldn't mind just closing your eyes..... You can open your eyes now, both of you. Carolyn, what can you see? "I see what looks like a grey pencil case." Gwendolen, please, can you tell me what you can see? (Gwendolen) "I can see a blue and grey pencil case with Red Bull on it. The moon and the writing that says Red Bull." Thank you. So, this is what Gwendolen could see. (Shows one side.) This is what Carolyn could see. (Shows the other side.) But basically, sometimes we're looking at the same thing, but we can see it completely differently. So, Gwendolen was describing something completely different from Carolyn, and we can't all see the same picture at the same time.

Lens appearances

I need some other volunteers. I've got some things in my bag for you to look

through. So, can I ask for people who are willing to come out and look through something and say what they can see or how things are different. Robert, you had your hand up earlier. Are you still willing? Yes, brilliant! Yes, Chris. Fantastic. Anyone else? Margaret and Christine, thank you.

Okay, let's start with Robert's. Can you put those on? (Robert puts on a pair of sunglasses.) What can you see?how do things look different now? "It's darker." So, he has the glasses on, and looks cooler!

Chris, can you take these out, please have a look through them and tell me what you can see? (Chris looks through a pair of binoculars.) "At the moment, all I can see are chairs and there's nobody on them. As I go up, I can see the smiling face of Jack Ramsay and Jason Nicholls. Graciously, I can see really clearly the NCYA display. Remarkable! Oh, and I can see, oh, no, I won't talk about that."

Christine, can you look this way please? What can you, what can you see? (Christine looks through the other end of the binoculars.) Well, the same sort of thing, but an awful lot further away. I mean, Brian looks like he's kind of beyond where the door is, and I know in my head he's not. But yeah, visually it's definitely messing around.

Thank you, Margaret, how do things look different? (Margaret puts on some glasses with pink lenses.) They look very rosy. Everything looks rosy and bright and lovely. Is it a nice sensation? Thank you!

(Robert puts on some yellow glasses.) So, anything you want to say, Robert? "Yes; most fashionable I've ever been". How does the world look different? "Well, it just looks bright. The future looks bright". Excellent, Chris (Chris puts on some yellow glasses): "No, it doesn't. It looks quite pale. It takes away quite a lot of the vibrant colours. My way of looking at it".

So, Jack and I have both moved into a new world with new glasses around a similar time. It is the world of varifocals. I was sitting next to Lizzie in the choir yesterday, and we stood up to sing. She looked over my head and laughed at how small I was. But, when I got this first pair of varifocals, they weren't quite right. I had never experienced myself as being tall and, when I got onto my bike it was so strange. I looked down and, on my bike, I seemed so tall. It was as if I was riding a penny farthing! I have no illusions of how tall I am, though!

Appearances of truth

I just want to finish by saying a little bit about "appearances of truth". We can often go back and watch a film or read a book. And it's really different the next time we see it or read it. I don't know if you've had that experience, you've gone back and read a book, perhaps a book that you loved, and you

think, oh, I don't remember it being like that last time. It's different this time. I find it the same sometimes when reading the Bible or something from the Writings. I read it one day and I think I know it really well, perhaps. I go back and read it at a different time, could be a week later, a year later, 10 years later, and it is very different. And, don't we so often pick up on something different depending on what state of mind we're in? But when I read the first time, surely that was the truth, wasn't it? So how come, if I go back and read it, is that not the truth now? What then is the truth? If I can read it differently on different occasions, how can I say which one is the truth? So, my truth on one day, even though I'm reading the same passage as somebody else, my truth may be different from somebody else's truth, but that does not make either of them wrong. Chris Chambers is nodding in agreement. Thank goodness! No, it doesn't make either of my feelings of truth wrong, it's just that we have different perceptions of truth and we need to have these, because we're all different. We're all in different places in our understanding and trying to impose our own version of truth on somebody else just doesn't work.

So, accepting that we're all different is really, really important. And just very quickly, I'm just going to go through the different types of ways we can look at things: If you look through a magnifying glass, are you just focusing on one person or on aspects? Looking through sunglasses, are you only seeing darkness? Or only seeing the positives? Through the telescope or the binoculars, are you looking too far into the future, or not far enough? I haven't got any bug glasses. I don't know if you've ever seen them, but it is like looking through insect eyes. It like you are just seeing confusion. If you've got a camera, are you just focusing on a particular time or a particular snapshot? And if you had a torch, are you highlighting some things above others? So, I think when we are trying to say, I've read this, it means this. This is the truth. But it is only MY truth. We need to be aware that other people see things in different ways. It's really, really hard, but try to embrace it. Thanks.

Love will sustain our unity

Thanks for that, Becky, excellent! When we think about how the Lord's providence is at work in all things, if everyone is united in love, then the Lord links everything together. I've seen many examples of this. I remember back when Robert Gill was taking services, when I first started going to the church, I was trying to watch everything "churchy" at the time. So, I was watching Songs of Praise as well. My kids were Catholic, so their Mother wanted the kids to be Catholic, so I supported them in Catholicism. This meant that I often attended Catholic services whenever they had an event on. Sometimes I would go to the chapel, then I would go to our own church, and then, later, I would listen to songs I praise, and the same hymn would be on Songs of Praise as was in all the services!

So, in my simple mind I thought that they all must communicate this and coordinate things. I remember asking Robert Gill if different denominations

communicated, or their ministers? Because all the songs were always the same. He said no. He says that no one communicates with anybody else on the matter. And I was like, well, why are all the hymns all the same? Of course, it's because when things are coming from a place of love, the Lord does the uniting for us, the Lord does the connecting. I feel that on that in that regard, there's something quite remarkable that you are going to happen at this conference. I'm not going to tell you what it is, you'll see it for yourself, but when it does happen you may think it was planned, but just know this, we did not plan it. You'll see what I mean.

Meet the minister

Anyway, let's move on to the new "Meet the Minister" initiative. This is new, and it's hopefully going to help with that feedback loop I spoke of earlier. So, Emma Daniels has helped us set up a system where we're going to be able to invite people to make an appointment with a minister. There will be a minister available once a month on a particular day or evening, dependent on the calendar that will be mapped out. But you'll get to know what that calendar is and it will enable you to book an appointment to speak with a minister about any controversial issue you may be worried about or any question you may have, or just about anything else that you want to speak to a minister about. And it will have several different uses, I'm sure, but one of those uses will allow for people to come and talk about ideas that they have for moving the church forward and their particular area, and this it is hoped will facilitate and allow everything going forward to align with our three strategic objectives or aims. Then the ministry will be able to take these ideas, discuss them and also bring them to conference council or the college, or whatever body is involved in what is being inquired about.

Going Forward

So, that is just one of the ways that you are going to be able to feed-back from the top to the bottom using the loop system that I was talking about earlier. Watch out for that being launched around mid-September. You will also be notified through the various communication channels we use. So, I'm sure you would agree that it will be quite an exciting development that it will enable people to be better supported and listened to moving forward.

Turning back to our slides on the overheads: Basically, it's a sort of method to the way we are doing things in regard to any new initiatives that you and others may ask to be supported. So, we have collated information on what things are happening around the Church at the moment, and measuring these against our three strategic objectives. This is a kind of map and a record of how these and any new initiatives are going to progress and how we are going about this. Basically, when people come forward with a new idea, which is in line with the three objectives, it will go onto this map. This will allow us to a) monitor how it is progressing, b) we will be able to review things and readjust wherever necessary, c) it will be available to see and update moving forward,

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH
ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW CHURCH**

Company Number 00006039

Tuesday 22nd July 2025

1. In accordance with Minute 30 of the last Annual Meeting, the Conference assembled, as arranged by the Council, at 3.00p.m. at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, on Tuesday, 22nd July 2025.

2. The Revd Brian Talbot led a family service of worship, during which the Pledge of Commitment was repeated as follows:

“I promise to honour the Lord Jesus Christ as the One God of heaven and earth, who is love itself and in whom is the Divine Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I will endeavour to follow the teaching of His Holy Word, contained in the Bible and revealed anew in the theological books of Emanuel Swedenborg.

I will seek to overcome all evils in thought, word and action, and strive to do what is good as if of myself, whilst acknowledging that the saving power to do so comes from the Lord alone.”

3. Mrs Margaret Cowie, the Chairperson of the Council, took the chair and welcomed members to the 218th Annual Meeting of the Conference. She announced that she had invited Mrs Jan Millar and Miss Gwendolen Rowe to check the credentials of Voting Members and to supervise the signing of the Conference Roll.

4. The Roll when completed contained the following names:-

CONFERENCE COUNCIL

Chairperson	M L Cowie
Vice Chairperson	B R Jarvis
Members	S Chesworth
	T Millar
	N Sutton

OFFICERS

Company Secretary	N Welch
Company Accountant	P Mehew

IT Manager	P Crone
Outreach Coordinator	S Fitzgerald

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

G Kuphal

MINISTERS

C A Bank

H T Brown

M Duckworth

J Dunion - Spiritual Leader

D Gaffney

R Jarratt – Deputy Spiritual Leader

M Stanley

B Talbot

R Wooldridge

SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES

Accrington

A Walton, J Walton

Bournemouth

L Habgood

Bradford

P Blomfield

Dalton

J. Millar

Kearsley

A Presland, M Presland

Seaburn Dene

N Ramsay

SOCIETY MEMBERS WHO ARE NOT REPRESENTATIVES

Bradford

G Rowe, S Fitzgerald, J Millar

Derby

J Jones, S Jones, C Sutton

Kearsley

J Ford, C Kennion, S Kennion

Keighley

A Clarkson

Seaburn Dene

T Jarvis, L Griffiths, S Griffiths, A Ramsay, J Ramsay

CENTRAL REGISTER MEMBERS

C Chambers

L Friend

MD Haseler

H Jones

L Jones

R Ogden

S Wilson

C Woodhouse

W Woodhouse

S Wooldridge

PROXY VOTING MEMBERS

Z Brooks

B Friend

R Gill

5. Ms Natalie Welch, Company Secretary, read out messages received from the Revd Robert Gill, Mr Barry Friend and Revd John Sutton and Mrs Jenny Sutton and pointed out that they are displayed on the notice board.

Resolved: That the Conference, through the Chairperson, sends greetings and best wishes at her discretion to those named above.

6. The Revd Christine Bank spoke about Mrs Jean Chadwick, Mrs Joyce Shepherd and Mrs Irene Woodhouse, all of whom had passed into the spiritual world during the past year.

Resolved: That the Conference expresses its high regard for these friends and their various services to the Lord's Church, and requests that a copy of the Memorial Notice be forwarded to the families, with the sympathy and goodwill of the Members of Conference.

7. There was a session including two topics: "Safeguarding", led by Sue Chesworth, and "Feedback from Working Together to provide a balanced and sustainable future", led by the Revd Jack Dunion and Revd Becky Jarratt.

8. At 8.00 p.m. there was a choice of free time or the following sessions:
- Circle Dancing led by the Revd Mary Duckworth and Gwendolen Rowe
 - Annual General Meeting of the New Church Children's Society.
 - Our Answers Questioned – panel of Ministers.

Wednesday 23rd July 2025

9. At 9.30 a.m. a Family Holy Supper service was conducted by the Revd Christine Bank and the Revd Becky Jarratt.

10. At 11.25 a.m. The Revd Jack Dunion delivered the keynote address entitled "Working together to create a balanced and sustainable future", followed by a discussion.

11. At 2.00 p.m. there was a session which included two topics: "New Ideas" and "Brave Spaces for Difficult Conversations". This was followed by group discussions.

12. At 4.00 p.m. there was a session on Angels led by Revd Helen Brown

13. At 5.00 p.m. there was a session on "Our Church Family – Why belong?" led by Revd Mary Duckworth.

14. At 8.00 p.m. there was a choice of free time or the following sessions:
- Evening of Singing and Playing led by Mrs Ruth Friend.
 - Annual General Meeting of the New Church Historical Society.
 - Our Answers Questioned - panel of Ministers.

Thursday 24th July 2025

15. The morning session was opened at 9.30 a.m. with a choice of three different services of worship led by the Revd Helen Brown, the Revd Robin Wooldridge, and Mrs Jan Millar and Miss Gwendolen Rowe.

16. Mr Paul Mehew presented the Report of the Company Accountant.

17. Resolved: That the Company Accountant's Report, the Balance Sheet and Accounts be adopted.

18. Mrs Margaret Cowie presented the Report of the Council.

19. The Revd Bruce Jarvis, chairperson of the Constitution Revision Group appointed by the Conference Council, introduced the Special Resolutions to amend the Conference's Articles of Association and Rules.

20. *Resolved:* That in Article 9 after "These Members shall be termed 'Voting Members' and shall each have one vote", the following paragraph be inserted:

"A Voting Member unable to attend a General Meeting in person shall be entitled to appoint a Proxy to speak and vote on his/her behalf. The appointment of a Proxy may be terminated by the Voting Member in writing no later than forty-eight hours prior to the Meeting or adjourned Meeting. No account shall be taken of any part of a day that is not a working day. On receipt of a valid termination of a Proxy's appointment the Voting Member will be re-instated with the right to speak and vote in person.

This was carried as a Special Resolution by a majority of more than 75%.

21. *Resolved:* That at the end of the first sentence of Article 32 "and determine and vary the quorum necessary for the transaction of business" be deleted.

This was carried as a Special Resolution by a majority of more than 75%.

22. *Resolved:*

(a) That at the beginning of the last sentence of Article 1, "Treasurer" be altered to "Company Accountant".

(b) That in Article 9(e) “the Treasurer of the General Conference” be deleted and “the Company Accountant of the General Conference” inserted instead.

(c) That in the first sentence of Article 29 “Treasurer” be deleted and “Company Accountant” inserted instead.

This was carried as a Special Resolution by a majority of more than 75%.

23. *Resolved:* That immediately before the last paragraph of Article 9 which begins "At the place and time appointed for the assembling of the General Conference" the following be inserted:-

"If the Company Secretary, the Council Secretary, or the Company Accountant are not Members of Conference, they shall have the right to speak, but not to vote, at any General Meeting."

This was carried as a Special Resolution by a majority of more than 75%.

24. *Resolved:* That in the final clause of Article 13 “but may not vote when he shall have a personal or pecuniary interest therein”, “he” be altered to “he/she”.

This was carried as a Special Resolution by a majority of more than 75%

25. A Special Resolution regarding Article 28 and the number of Elected Members on the Council that the words “up to” be inserted immediately before “six members” was defeated because the number of votes in favour did not reach a 75% majority. In the debate, concern was expressed that there was no stipulation about the minimum membership of the Council, which could mean that decisions might be taken by a tiny number of Trustees.

26. A Special Resolution regarding Article 43 to reinstate the appointment of Honorary Life Members was defeated because the number of votes in favour did not reach a 75% majority. The Revd Bruce Jarvis stated that the Council would not raise this issue again unless there was widespread pressure from Members of Conference to do so.

27. The Revd Bruce Jarvis introduced the resolution to amend the Rules of Conference.

Following discussion and the adoption of some amendments, *resolved:* That

(a) Rule A1 be re-numbered as A1(a) and that the following be added as Rule A1(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.”

b) The heading of section B be altered from “Connection of Societies and Groups with the Conference and Representation at the Annual Meeting” to “Connection of Societies and Groups with the Conference, Representation at the Annual Meeting and Proxy Voting”.

(c) The following Rules be inserted after Rule B7:-

B8. 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.

B9. 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.

B10. 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.

(d) In the first sentence of Rule C6 “public” be deleted before “service of worship”.

(e) At the end of Rule H1 the following be inserted:-

“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.”

(f) At the end of Rule H2 the following be inserted:-

“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”.

28. The Revd Bruce Jarvis explained that the College Council wished to make some changes which would update the Rules of Conference regarding the

College and that the Conference Council had given its approval to the proposals.

Resolved: That

(a) In the first sentence of Rule N1 “members of the New Church” be deleted and “anyone with an interest in Swedenborg” be inserted instead and after “for the Ministry of the New Church” the following be inserted: “as well as other ministerial roles,”.

(b) In Rule N6 “the Ministers’ Committee and the Conference Council in all matters” be deleted and “the relevant people and bodies” be inserted instead.

(c) In Rule N7 “on the basis of a curriculum approved by the Ministers’ Committee (see also Rule J3) but shall have the right to make alternative arrangements for such training in appropriate cases” be deleted and after this a second sentence be inserted as follows: “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.”

29. *Resolved:* That Bates Weston Business Services Ltd, of The Mills, Canal Street, Derby, be appointed auditors to the Conference.

30. *Resolved:* That Miss Lynne Griffiths be ordained as a Minister upon the satisfactory completion of her studies.

31. *Resolved:* That the Report of the Council be adopted.

32. Following a ballot Mrs Sue Chesworth was declared to be a Trustee of the Conference Council until 2028.

33. At 4.15p.m. the Conference Service was led by Revd Jack Dunion. During the Service, Revd Jack Dunion ordained Miss Lynne Griffiths as a Minister. The Revd Robin Wooldridge then presented Revd Lynne Griffiths with her Licentiate Diploma.

The offertory for the Conference funds amounted to £435.00.

34. At 8.00 p.m. a social evening entitled “Party Time for Everyone” was prepared and hosted by Mr Steve Jones and Mrs Jenny Jones.

Friday 25th July 2025

35. The session opened at 9.45 a.m. with announcements.

36. *Resolved:* That Miss Lynne Griffiths is hereby declared to be a Minister recognised by the Conference.

37. *Resolved:* That Mr Jonathan Millar be declared to be a Recognised Worship Leader.

38. In a short ceremony the Revd Jack Dunion welcomed four new Youth Members of Conference.

39. There was a short session on Next Steps for “New Ideas” and “Brave Spaces” followed by a brief review of the Annual Meeting.

40. *Resolved:* That, in accordance with the Council’s proposal, the 219th Annual Meeting be held at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, starting on Tuesday 28th July 2026.

41. *Resolved:* That the warm thanks of the Conference be conveyed to all those responsible for making arrangements for the Meeting, in particular Mr John Ford (the Conference Organiser); Ms Natalie Welch (the Bookings Secretary); the Revd Becky Jarratt and the Revd Jack Dunion for the planning of Conference; Mr Paul Crone, for Information Communication Technology arrangements; Mrs Jenny Jones and all those involved in enabling and planning for families to be present at the Meeting; Mrs Jan Millar and Miss Gwendolen Rowe for acting as the Credentials Committee; Mr Gordon Kuphal and Mr Sam Kennion for acting as Scrutineers; Mr John Ford, Mrs Hazel Nicholls and the Revd Christine Bank for arrangements for the Holy Supper service; those who undertook the live-streaming; Mrs Ruth Friend (Music Director), the musicians and the choir; and Mrs Jenny and Mr Steve Jones for the Social Evening.

42. *Resolved:* That the warm thanks of the Conference be accorded to all those unsung volunteers and church workers whose dedication to the Conference fills the 362 days of the year when the Annual Meeting is not happening. These include the members of the Conference Council, the Ministry, both active and retired, Worship Leaders, plus many others who keep the Societies and institutions of the church running.

43. *Resolved:* That the warm thanks of the Conference be accorded to the Chairperson of the Council, Mrs Margaret Cowie, and to the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons appointed by her, for their conduct of the Annual Meeting. To the Company Secretary, Ms Natalie Welch, for her work throughout the year and also the team at the Purley Chase Centre, the Company Accountant, Mr Paul Mehew, and to Mr Colin Skinner who continues in his role as Payroll and Pensions Manager.

44. The session concluded with closing remarks from the Chairperson, Mrs Margaret Cowie.

45. At 12 noon a closing service of family worship was conducted by the Revd Lynne Griffiths.

46. The Annual Meeting closed at 12.30 p.m.

Report of the Conference Council – Year to 31st March 2025

The Conference Council held twelve meetings during the year, ten of which were held via Zoom and two in person. Details of attendances are as follows:

Chairperson	Mrs M L Cowie	12 (possible 12)
Vice-Chairperson	Revd B R Jarvis	12 (possible 12)
Trustees:	Mrs S Chesworth	8 (possible 12)
	Mr N K Sutton	10 (possible 12)
	Mrs P Grimshaw	1 (possible 1)
	Mr T Millar	7 (possible 7)
	Mr B Friend	11 (possible 12)
	Mr P Brooks - CoOpted	1 (possible 1)
	Mr J Ford—Co Opted	1 (possible 1)

In attendance were:

Company Secretary:	Ms N Welch	12 (possible 12)
Company Accountant:	Mr P Mehew	7 (possible 7)
President New Church College	Mr C Chambers	6 (possible 7)
Spiritual Leader	Revd J Dunion	8 (possible 8)
Deputy Spiritual Leader	Revd R Jarratt	8 (possible 8)
Attended by invitation:	Revd C Bank	1 (possible 1)
	Mrs N Ramsay	1 (possible 1)

1. Mrs Pauline Grimshaw resigned for personal reasons in April 2024. Mrs Sue Chesworth's term of office concludes in July 2025, and she intends to seek re-election. Mr Nigel Sutton will be resigning for personal reasons in July 2025.

The Conference Council extends its heartfelt thanks to both Nigel and Pauline for their many years of selfless commitment and devotion to the service of Conference.

2. LINK MEMBERS

Details of the links between the Council and those engaged in ministerial work are:

Purley Chase	Mr N Sutton and Revd H Brown
Finance	Mr N Sutton and Revd C Curry
Youth	Mrs S Chesworth and Revd R Jarratt
Human Resources	Ms N Welch and Revd B Talbot
Training and Development	Mrs S Chesworth and Revd R Jarratt
CAM	Mrs M Cowie and Revd C Bank

3. STAFF & REMUNERATION

In 2024/2025 the total of stipends paid to ministers was £157,114.80. In the same year the total of salaries and wages paid to lay employees was £359,873.47. These figures include people employed for part of the year.

The salary increase of 4% for the year 2024/2025 and 3.9% from April 1st, 2025, which was determined by the rate of the average pay increase in the UK. The pay rise for hourly paid staff is based on the increase in the National Living Wage as determined by the Government. Both increases are in accordance with the Pay Policy which was implemented in May 2024.

4. RECRUITMENT

- **Marketing and Media Coordinator**

Sibby Mkoba, our new Marketing and Media Coordinator, was employed on a 40-hours a week, 2-year contract on 13th January 2025. The main purpose of this role is to develop and execute the organisation's marketing and social media strategies to expand engagement and traffic to our website, to create and curate engaging content for various social media platforms, promoting events throughout the organisation, analysing search engine optimisation, along with other duties.

- **Outreach Coordinator**

A new outreach coordinator, Shannon Fitzgerald, was employed on a full-time, 2-year contract, based at Bradford New Church on 17th February 2025. The purpose of this role is to organise outreach events, programmes and develop relationships with the local community and establish partnerships with local organisations to maximise resources, implement outreach strategies, to promote community engagement and services, working with other branches of the New Church organisation within the North of England, UK.

5. VOLUNTEERS

The Council extends its heartfelt thanks to all the dedicated volunteers who are vital to our organisation's success.

We particularly wish to acknowledge Mrs. Jan Millar, coordinator for the Committee of Auxiliary Ministry, and the Worship Leaders she supports. Their generous commitment to preparing, travelling, and leading services in the absence of a Minister is invaluable in spreading the Teachings of the Lord's New Church.

Our sincere appreciation also goes to Mr. Colin Skinner, our Payroll Manager, whose meticulous work is deeply valued by all. Furthermore, we thank our two Property Managers, Mr. John Ford (North) and Mr. Phillip Brooks (South), for their essential contributions.

Finally, we express profound gratitude to all other volunteers who tirelessly maintain our churches – from opening buildings and providing refreshments

to washing dishes and countless other 'smaller tasks'. These contributions are the lifeblood that keep our Societies alive and functioning.

To every volunteer, in whatever capacity you serve, we truly thank you. Your dedication is indispensable, and without your unwavering support, our organisation would be significantly impacted.

6. MARKETING AND MEDIA

Over the first half of 2025, the General Conference of the New Church implemented a refreshed marketing strategy designed to increase visibility, deepen engagement, and reflect the Church's values of openness, inclusion, and accessibility. This summary outlines the key actions taken, what worked well, the challenges encountered, and the priorities moving forward.

The year began with an audit of existing communication channels in January and February. Insights from this review guided rebranding efforts for SOLCE, the Purley Chase Centre, and the General Conference's digital presence. From March to June, new campaigns were launched, featuring short-form videos, seasonal messaging, and visually engaging content aligned with awareness days such as Easter, National Meditation Day, and World Environment Day.

Digital analytics demonstrated strong performance. Instagram reach increased by 5,200%; content interactions rose by 6,400%; and video views exceeded 2,700. On Facebook, reach grew by 786%; video views by 867%; and followers by 150%. These gains were supported by consistent posting, improved visuals, and community-focused messaging.

Simple strategies – such as daily invitations to follow the Church's Facebook page – showed measurable impact on follower growth. Offline, print campaigns helped raise awareness and improve attendance, confirming the effectiveness of a hybrid digital and regional print approach.

Key Metrics at a Glance

- Instagram: 393% increase in profile visits; 5,200% reach growth; over 2,700 video views
- Facebook: 203% increase in page visits; 867% rise in video views; 150% growth in followers
- Overall: 6,000+ video views and 1,300+ reach (March–June)
- Print: Increased engagement and event attendance in newly targeted areas

Some challenges included slower follower growth relative to engagement; a lack of boosted content to amplify campaign reach; limited user-generated content; and gaps in performance data such as impressions. These will be addressed in upcoming strategy phases.

For the remainder of 2025, the focus will shift to developing the General Conference social page as a central hub that unifies messaging across all Church branches. This includes increasing educational content that communicates the Church's values and teachings; capturing moments from the General Conference; and encouraging member-generated content, particularly on platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels where authenticity is key.

To support content management and scheduling across platforms, it is recommended that the Church implements a social media management tool such as Hootsuite – enabling more efficient planning, analytics, and engagement tracking.

The strategy will also expand to include YouTube and podcasts; improve accessibility through inclusive design and captioning; and distribute 5,000+ QR-coded leaflets to connect offline and online outreach. The July Annual Conference will serve as a pivotal moment to assess progress, capture new content, and align the Church's voice for the rest of the year.

CONFERENCE'S MEDIA PRESENCE - Rise & Shine on Lomondradio.co.uk

People can tune into Revd Jack Dunion's radio show, "Rise & Shine", every Sunday morning between 9 and 10am.

It began during lockdown in 2020 and has now been running for just over 4 years and has attracted people from far and wide. It has proven particularly popular among our isolated members, but others enjoy listening before heading off to their local church. With hymns/songs and some words in between, based on the Word and the Writings of our church, the hour long show usually presents on a specific spiritual topic.

Anyone wishing to listen to back-dated issues of "Rise and Shine" can download them from mixcloud.com/revjack

7. SPONSORED ORDINATION STUDENT

Lynne Griffiths is well into her third year of study with SOLCe. We look forward to Lynne's ordination during the Conference in 2025. A request from Seaburn Dene New Church for Lynne to be appointed as Minister at Seaburn Dene after her ordination was approved by the Council.

8. SAFEGUARDING

The Conference Council has taken up membership of Christian Safeguarding Services, an organisation which provides specialist training, consultancy and professional support to Churches and other Christian Faith Based organisations.

9. NOMINATIONS AND MOTIONS

1. NOMINATIONS

The Council proposes that Messrs Bates Weston Business Services Ltd of Derby be re- appointed auditors for the Conference.

2 .MOTIONS – Please see separate attachment

10. CONSTITUTION REVISION GROUP

The Group has again been very busy, meeting seven times via Zoom. In September we were delighted to welcome the Company Secretary, Ms Natalie Welch, to the Group. Her input is proving very helpful. Membership of the Group continued to be: Mrs Margaret Cowie, Revd Robert Gill, Revd Bruce Jarvis, Mr Gordon Kuphal, plus Ms Natalie Welch.

A further series of amendments and changes to the Articles and Rules, mostly minor, and including the modernisation of some terms, will be brought before the Annual Meeting in July. Among these will be a technical change to the election of Trustees, where a difficulty has arisen because it has not been possible to appoint the required six elected Members besides the Chair and Vice-chair. On the solicitors' advice it is proposed to change this to up to six Members.

Work has continued to tidy up the procedures for Proxy Voting within Conference; this has included the drafting of additions to the Articles and Rules, and the production of Proxy Application and Voting forms.

Following discussion between Conference Council and the Committee of Ministers, the Group was asked to prepare a new Rule enabling young people between 14 and 17 years to apply for Youth Membership of Conference. Accordingly, the Group has prepared a new Rule and Application Form.

Following discussion at last year's Annual Meeting, a Rule proposing the appointment of Life Voting Members will be placed before the Conference.

The New Church College/SOLCe Council has requested revisions to Rules N1, N6, N7, N8 to reflect the changing world we live in, and giving them greater flexibility in managing the College's affairs. The Group and Conference Council have agreed to these changes.

Unlike last year, it is intended that each of the Special Resolutions relating to changes to Articles will be presented individually. This will enable Conference to decline to adopt a particular measure without affecting the other SRs. Changes to the Rules will be presented as two omnibus Resolutions, the second of which will deal specifically with the Rules relating to the New Church College.

A set of Explanatory Notes is being prepared for circulation to Conference attendees together with the proposed Resolutions. Additional material for the 'User-Friendly Guide to the Conference Constitution' has been drafted but will need some final adjustments once the outcomes of the 2025 AGM are known.

11. FINANCIAL MATTERS

There was a surplus for the year of £431k (2024: £2,183k surplus).

This was driven largely by lower investment gains of £446k (2024: £2,421k) as a result of the adverse market reaction to the protectionist policies of the new US administration.

Other income highlights included an increase in property sales of £356k and an increase in Purley income of £78k negated by reductions in donations of £53k and dividends received of £39k (the latter partly due to the adverse market reaction noted above).

Expenditure overall increased by 5% (2024: 27% increase) which was largely due to a significant increase in energy costs following the November 2023 BG contract renewal.

Bequest

A letter has been received from a solicitor regarding a bequest of £30,000 from the late Arlette Pettersen. The funds are designated to 'support the Charity Day School of the Philippines New Jerusalem Church'. The monies will be held in a restricted fund until specific instructions are received from the nominated recipient

12 THE MINISTRY

The Committee of Ministers has been working on the implementation of tasks associated with the aims that were agreed by Conference Council at their meeting in November 2024.

13. CONFERENCE PROPERTIES

Bournemouth - The sale of the church building was successfully completed on March 31st, 2025. The Bournemouth Society received the proceeds of the sale, amounting to £518,556.80. The final closing service for the Bournemouth Society in that building took place on February 16th, 2025.

Chester - At present there is an Asset of Community Value attached to the church which means that it cannot be sold on the open market. Any Community Interest group have until 2nd July to express an interest in purchasing the property. If this happens, they have until 21st November to develop a bid.

Radcliffe – The sale of Radcliffe New Church was completed on 8th January 2025. The sale proceeds of £234,990.80 were divided in accordance with the cy-pres scheme dated 15th November 2023: 8% [£18,758.55] to the New Jerusalem Church Kearsley. 92% [£215,723.30] to the General Conference of the New Church.

14. PURLEY CHASE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

The post of Programme Director at Purley Chase remains vacant. The Conference Council and the Purley Management Team both acknowledge the need to appoint a Programme Director but are aware of difficulties in finding suitable candidates.

15. THE BRADFORD COMMUNITY PROJECT

The Bradford Grant payments ceased on 17th February 2025 when the new Outreach Coordinator, Miss Shannon Fitzgerald, was appointed.

16. Annual Report of the Purley Management Team 2024-2025

The Team

Chris Woodhouse	Chair
Dawn Scaife	Deputy Manager
Charlotte Gilsenan	Bookings Manager
Paul Mehew	Accountant
Nigel Sutton	Conference Trustee
Sibby Mkoba	Marketing and Media Coordinator

This past year has been exceptionally busy for Purley. We extend a warm welcome to Sibby Mkoba, our new Marketing and Media Coordinator, who joined the team in February 2025. Sibby brings a wealth of new and exciting ideas that are already helping Purley to flourish.

Events - Purley Chase experienced a full calendar of diverse events from April 2024 through March 2025. We continue to receive a high volume of event requests .

Looking ahead, our 2026 calendar is looking very busy, demonstrating strong demand. The 2026/2027 calendar is actively being structured to accommodate both church groups and our regular returning groups at their preferred times. Notably, some bookings are already scheduled as far out as 2030, highlighting the long-term confidence in Purley Chase as a venue.

We are actively exploring and expanding our event offerings. Recent successes include popular day and evening events such as our cream teas which remain increasingly popular and successful, and we plan to add more dates to meet demand.

We are immensely grateful for the continued support from the ministers who lead our Sunday services whenever possible. Their commitment, along with everyone else's ongoing support, is invaluable.

Marketing and Media

In 2025, marketing efforts at Purley Chase Centre focused on raising the Centre's profile and increasing event attendance through a combination of digital outreach and regional print activity. Social media activity was maintained across Facebook and Instagram with a consistent posting schedule, featuring engaging visuals and clear calls to action. A daily practice of inviting users to follow the page contributed to a 150 percent increase in followers and a 203 percent rise in page visits on Facebook. During the spring campaign, video content achieved over 2,700 views across platforms. To support offline visibility, the distribution of regional print publications, including Your Call and Grapevine Magazine, was extended beyond Atherstone into Coventry North and surrounding areas. This expanded reach aimed to improve awareness and event participation. Initial results were positive, with cream tea events fully booked and the June 5th event receiving multiple same-day registrations.

Looking ahead, the plan includes increasing the volume and consistency of content creation, with stronger alignment to event timelines and seasonal messaging. In addition, a leafletting campaign is underway, with the objective of distributing up to 5,000 printed leaflets by the end of the year to enhance community engagement and support promotional efforts.

Staff

All staff at the centre consistently completed their mandatory training throughout the year. Additionally, a comprehensive first aid training course was successfully completed by all attendees at the Purley Chase Centre on 3rd February 2025.

Buildings and Grounds

Maintenance spending at Purley Chase over the last 12 months has been comparable to the previous year. A larger-than-expected expense was incurred for the replacement of heating pumps. The mandatory five-yearly inspection of the electrics was completed, and all required upgrades have been successfully carried out.

Significant progress was made on the building's exterior, with the first-floor window repairs and painting being completed last autumn. This work has significantly improved Purley's aesthetic appeal. Future plans include repairing and decorating the second-floor windows and the gables.

Finally, continuous effort is being dedicated to maintaining the grounds, ensuring they remain tidy and welcoming for all visitors and guests.

REPORTS FROM AROUND THE CHURCHES YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2025

1. BROADFIELD MEMORIAL BENEVOLENT FUND

The Secretary-Treasurer, Mr Nick Skinner, reports:

All those who it is believed may be entitled to request assistance from the Fund were contacted.

Payments totalling £15108 were made to 13 recipients.

The balance on the bank account was £5679 as at 31st March 2025. The Fund also holds 7360 units in the Common Investment Fund on which quarterly dividends are received.

A summary of transactions for the year ending 31st March 2025 is as follows;

	£	£
Balance at Bank as 1st April 2024		4009
Donation - Homelands Trust	15000	
Dividends - CIF	1778	16778
		20787
Payments to Recipients	15100	
Bank Transaction fees	8	15108
Balance at bank as at 31st March 2025.		5679

2. COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Revd Christine Bank, reports:

1. **Meetings:** Zoom allows shorter and more frequent business meetings which are proving beneficial in addition to meeting in person at Purley Chase. We welcomed Emma Daniels from Tempus Fugit Solutions to support us with secretarial and administrative expertise. Meetings at Purley Chase can also include Zoom attendees.

Zoom meetings (3) were held: 6th June, 30th September 2024 and 9th January 2025.

Purley Chase meetings (2) 12th-14th November 2024 and 4th-6th March 2025.

Trustees Barry Friend, Nigel Sutton, Sue Chesworth & Margaret Cowie were invited to meetings across the course of the year. Lynne Griffiths, final year ordination student, attended the March 2025 meeting by invitation. Nine Ministers attended on 6th June, eleven were at all other meetings.

2. Spiritual Leader's Report: Unseen change

Much of the collective work the Ministry have been engaged in for several years has been focused on gradual change. Only therefore, by doing 'before and after' reviews are we perhaps able to see just how much progress we have made. "When in doubt, we can zoom out!" Much of the work has been foundational and enabling work, rather than up front and obvious. As we will now begin implementing the strategic aims, we expect that people will gain more confidence in coming forward with new ways of expressing their love of the Lord and the neighbour, finding and utilising previously "untapped" skills and talents. In an environment where people are encouraged to speak out it can allow more diversity to emerge which allows us to reach out to a more varied range of seekers. Keeping things hidden or unseen is inconsistent with the Word and the doctrines of our church. Having an open environment where people can speak freely can make for a more inviting and productive church.

Conference

This year at Conference, we aim to introduce what we hope will be a cultural shift for our church. We won't expect any direct outcomes from our discussions but based on what our members have shared in previous conferences we hope now to begin moving towards the creation of a new culture of freedom of speech, openness, and outreach through diverse ways of sharing what we have to offer.

Respectfully submitted

Revd Jack Dunion (Spiritual Leader)

Revd Becky Jarratt (Deputy Spiritual Leader)

3. Ministry

The Ministry are delighted that Lynne Griffiths is completing her course of study and will be ordained at Conference 2025.

Revd Brian Talbot was inducted into the pastorate at Kearsley on 2nd June 2024, a full report was in E News 191.

Colleagues are marking some significant anniversaries since ordination.

We are mindful the Lord has continually provided new people to serve the church in different ways and continues to do so.

Revd Ian Arnold ordained in 1965, 60 years

Revd Robert Gill & Revd John Sutton were ordained in 1970, 55 years

Revd Julian Duckworth ordained in 1980, 45 years

Revd Bruce Jarvis ordained 1985, 40 years

Revd Gillian Gordon ordained in 2000, 25 years

Revd Becky Jarratt ordained in 2015, 10 years

4. Churches

Bradford Centenary celebration June 2024 (E News 191) a service celebrating the anniversary of the Bradford & Saltaire New Church was well attended by local people and those from the wider Church community who joined them for a special day.

The Bradford-based appointment of Shannon Fitzgerald as Outreach Coordinator, formalising the work she has been doing to grow and develop the uses of the church within the community, is warmly welcomed.

Bournemouth closing service February 2025 (E Read 110)

Bournemouth church in Tuckton has closed and a moving final service was well attended with friends travelling to support and share the day with the congregation. The church has been sold as the numbers of people and essential work required around the building were increasingly difficult to balance. The congregation have relocated and now hold a monthly service in Christchurch. The closing sermon from Revd Clifford Curry is reprinted in E Read.

5. Committee for Auxiliary Ministry (CAM)

CAM's work is reported elsewhere, but the Ministry deeply appreciate the work of the CAM Co-ordinator and all those who lead worship and support other activity across the church. We are happy to support the Leaders United training events.

6. Discussions on Same-Sex Marriage

Ministry have held facilitated discussions to enable exploration of the range of views on same sex marriage. These took place at our face-to-face meetings at Purley Chase. A second statement on same sex marriage was included in E News 180 and we have continued to reflect and discuss this at our face-to-face meetings. Our experience of working together in this way has greatly assisted in reaching better appreciation and recognition of each other's viewpoints and understanding, but it is clear there is no unanimity of thought among the Ministry.

7. Vision and Strategic Aims

Following Conference 2024 and subsequent Conference Council decisions, the Ministry have begun the process of implementing the three Aims.

Aim 1: Encouraging and supporting varied and diverse approaches to worship

Aim 2: Applying doctrine based on personal conscience

Aim 3: Becoming more accepting and inviting.

The involvement of the wider church in considering how best to focus our shared activities and efforts to further the work of the church is being sought. E News 224 included an invitation to support this work and contribute ideas; the same was circulated to the church secretaries encouraging local responses and ideas which could be shared.

Aim 2 allows for doctrine to be understood and applied according to conscience. The Ministry have decided to adopt a new process for working through difficult decisions within our committee when our established pattern of working within consensus or unanimity of thought is not achievable. Our in person meeting at Purley Chase in March 2025 agreed the principle that on matters where the Ministry are unable to speak with one voice, and after a period of discernment and discussion, a vote requiring a simple majority of those Ministers present would be taken. The Spiritual Leader holds a casting vote if needed. A formal resolution to this effect was finalised in May 2025.

8. Festival of Angels

Kearsley Church has provided the inspiration for an Angel-themed project which has been welcomed around the church and supplied the theme of the 2025 Conference. This small idea which has grown and developed is an example of the model for ideas and development which the whole church wishes to embrace and support. New ideas flourish in different places and grow as they find openings to expand. The Committee thank Margaret Presland and Carolyn Kennion for their initiative and all those who have encouraged and developed a small idea into a church-wide inspiration.

9. Zoom Worship

The regular twice-monthly Zoom worship has established a regular congregation, with additional services for Christmas and Easter. Thanks to all who are involved in providing this valuable addition to our collective ministry, particularly in picking up the many gaps left after the departure of Muriel Morgan in August 2024. Unfortunately, it has become necessary to suspend the Zoom worship after Easter 2025 as our limited human resources are overstretched and the process of recruiting a dedicated Online Worship Coordinator is still ongoing.

10. Home Worship, Isolated Members and Prayer Ministry

The small team coordinating Home Worship reach many of our friends who are unable to attend a physical church with a quarterly email or letter which provides a theme and material for worship and reflection each Sunday. Revd Gillian Gordon is part of this team, and she also maintains

contact with isolated members, sending cards during the year. Sadly, as the number of physical churches decline, there are more friends who are unable to travel to worship together. Gillian also has a growing prayer ministry, particularly supporting those who are sick, dying or their relatives. Please contact her if this would be helpful to your situation.

11. Ordination Curriculum and application process

The Swedenborg Open Learning Centre (SOLCe) will report more fully, but work has been in hand to revise and update all aspects of the process for application and studying towards ordination. This is intended to more realistically reflect the world around us with less reliance on physical church buildings and greater variety of approach. The Committee of Ministers continue to be involved in this process and support the work of tutoring and updating course material.

12. Youth Membership

The introduction of a proposal to enable young people to have formal church membership without necessarily being a ‘junior member’ of a congregation is something the Ministry have supported. It is being brought to the 2025 AGM for approval by Conference and is intended to give young people the same connection to the national church as our Central membership register offers to adults.

13. Youth and Family

The work of the Youth and Family Team is reported elsewhere, but the Ministry take an active interest in this and their programme of events and are involved in leading sessions or events for young people and family groups throughout the year.

14. Safeguarding

The Ministers’ Committee join with the Council to affirm their commitment to this process and thanks Sue Chesworth and Jenny Jones for their work to ensure appropriate checks for all those working with children are completed and renewed as necessary.

15. Retired Ministers

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the work of ministers who do so much in retirement to support and lead congregations or groups and who continue to research, translate and write new material. Not all colleagues attend our committee meetings or the Conference AGM but we all benefit from their continued service to the Church in their own ways.

16. Salary Rates

Once again, the Committee agreed that the standard salary rate for ministers should be published in this report, and to record our thanks to the Council for their decision to increase the salaries of employed ministers.

Telephone Line and Broadband Allowance and ‘Office’ Payment Allowance both finished at the end of March. The money that would have been received during the year from these allowances has been added to the stipend and the total increased by 3.9%. As a result, the full-time salary (gross) for an ordained minister for the year 2025/26 is £44,964. The fees for work undertaken by self-employed ministers and retired ministers are still under review by the Council and will be finalised at the earliest opportunity.

17. Appointments

In addition to the Spiritual Leader and Deputy Spiritual Leader attending Council meetings we maintain contacts and links with the Council as below:

Youth	Revd Becky Jarratt
Purley Chase	Revd Helen Brown
Finance	Revd Clifford Curry
Human Resources	Revd Brian Talbot
CAM and Local Churches	Revd Christine Bank
Training and Development	Revd Becky Jarratt

3. THE EDWARDS JEGGINS TRUST

The Secretary, Revd Robert Gill, reports:

As a matter of courtesy, the Jeggins trustees are pleased to report that the affairs of the Trust are running smoothly again after the difficulties and changes of recent years. Our three trustees, Robert Gill, Helen Brown and Jack Dunion, maintain the life and work of the Trust, and our new bankers, the Co-operative Bank, are proving to be far more helpful and efficient than NatWest Bank ever was. We are also grateful to our auditor, Nick Skinner, who keeps a careful eye on our accounts to ensure that our finances are healthy and in good order.

Overall, this has been a quiet year for us. However, since the approval by the Charity Commission of some changes to the terms of the Trust, we have now included New Church residential centres in Great Britain as potential beneficiaries. As a result of this change, we are happy to report that we have recently made a grant of £1434 to Purley Chase Centre for the replacement of diseased and dangerous trees with a variety of young saplings.

As well as our residential centres, the Jeggins Trust remains ready to give sympathetic consideration to requests for financial help from New Church congregations in Great Britain.

This includes the replacement of old furnishings or equipment, as well as the repair or improvement of church premises. We are especially keen to help where issues of public safety, accessibility and comfort are concerned. Initial enquiries may be made to any of our trustees, who will be happy to offer advice and help in putting together an official application for financial assistance.

4. HOME WORSHIP

The Revd Gillian Gordon, reports:

After many years of loyal service to the New Church Home Worship scheme Linda Wells is retiring from sending out the date reminders to contributors. She has been steadfast and marvellous. Emma Daniels is taking over her duties. Conversations are continuing about making home worship more widely accessible since it has proved popular for those unable or unwilling to reach a New Church. This is an exciting new development. Thank you once again to everyone who contributes to the Home Worship sessions.

Prayer Ministry: 15 people have requested prayer, and I am delighted to report that after some time the Lord in His love has answered 5 of those prayers in the affirmative.

Cards: I am losing count of how many cards I am sending to isolated members as there has been a marked increase due to people ageing and going into homes. I use unused stamps which Howard Turner had purchased ready for sending the old Lifeline magazine which is now digital. I send them at Christmas, Easter, New Church Day and Harvest and recipients appear to appreciate being reminded of their New Church connections.

5. KILDWICK NEW CHURCH CENTRE

The Secretary, Mr Keith Sandiford, reports:

The Centre opened as scheduled at Easter 2024, following the completion of all planned decorating works, which included the exterior of the premises, the dining room, and the ceiling of the small front dormitory.

Bookings for the year were similar in number to 2023, with 16 bookings (compared to 17 in 2023). However, the total number of booked days decreased to 60 (from 80), reflecting some groups staying for shorter periods. Of these, 10 bookings spanning 43 days were for New Church parties (compared to 12 bookings on 47 days in 2023), including the 18+ group. Outside bookings accounted for 6 parties over 17 days (compared to 5 parties on 33 days in 2023), notably including the South Craven Health Walking group.

Generally, the Centre experienced few major operational problems. The main concern occurred on New Year's Day when prolonged heavy rain led to some floodwater in the dining room, which fortunately drained away quickly and was promptly cleaned and dried. Additionally, a new electric heater was required in one of the washrooms during the year.

On a positive note, the long-running issue with British Gas regarding the gas meter was finally resolved. After a 6-month delay in fitting a new meter that was readable (the previous one had no illumination and could not be read), the Energy Ombudsman's involvement compelled British Gas to install a new, readable meter. This resolution also included a letter of apology and compensation for poor service.

The cost of running the Centre has again increased. This rise is not only due to general repairs and service charges but also a 50% increase in grass mowing costs following the retirement of the previous gardener and the higher charges of his replacement. Despite these financial limitations, the Centre continues to be maintained in good condition.

6. THE LIBRARY & ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

The Secretary, Mr Gordon Kuphal, reports:

As indicated in last year's report, the Committee has not met during the past year. Maeve Hawkins found it increasingly difficult to travel to London for the meetings. Gordon Kuphal had intended to visit Swedenborg House to work on the archives but has not in fact done so owing to pressure of other church commitments and various personal matters. He hopes to be able to resume sorting the archives after the 2025 Annual Meeting of Conference, when the work of the Constitution Revision Group should be more or less completed.

We are very grateful to Alex Murray and the other staff at Swedenborg House for caring for the Conference archives. There are several significant matters which need joint consideration by the Conference and the Swedenborg Society, and we hope to make progress on these in the coming year.

7. MARKETING & RESOURCES GROUP

Mr Stephen Russell-Lacy reports:

During the last 12 months, we have continued to promote our teachings through www.spiritualwisdom.org.uk and www.spiritualquestions.org.uk. Unfortunately, Conference Council has had to deal with a commercial claim for historical infringement of copyright on an image mistakenly published on our website. The expensive lesson learned is not to use any image unless one can demonstrate clearly that it is freely useable under the Creative Commons or Public Domain license.

We have published one further booklet in the Great Questions of Life series available in print. The new title is Making Sense of Sex. We have also printed a leaflet containing inspirational material by Anita Turner.

8. NEW CHURCH YOUTH ASSOCIATION

The Secretary, Miss Gwendolen Rowe, reports:

All 3 Council Meetings have been held on Zoom during the last year.

NCYA Conference: This year's Conference was held at Keighley New Church, and we had a large contingent of children and their families attend from Bradford New Church for a joyful but busy creative session looking at Daniel in the Lion's Den.

Home Sunday Club: Home Sunday Club has been posted or emailed to 34 children and 2 adults every month. Members range in age from 5 to 18 years. Judith Taylor continues to write the Starters letters with Alison Presland writing the Junior letters. In addition to receiving a letter and Bible story leaflets, members also received birthday greetings, Christmas cards and letters to parents, Children's Day leaflets, Sunrise Magazines and exhibition materials. Helen Chambers has begun producing updated Bible Story leaflets for the 8plus age group.

Creative Exhibition: This year as per usual the Creative Exhibition theme followed the same theme as Conference. With this year being very much focussed on Angels our creative artwork very much picks up this theme. Carolyn Kennion has produced some colouring pictures and other activities on the theme and children and adults have been invited to take part. Entries will be displayed at Conference, in E-news and Sunrise Magazine. This year we decided to break away from giving everyone the same prize and have opted to give everyone a token prize and selecting the best entries in certain age categories to receive a gift voucher.

Sunrise Magazine: The number of Sunrise Magazines sent has dropped slightly to 105. These are sent out 3 times a year. This year, due to the Editor moving, the Christmas issue turned into a new year one instead and was met positively. We continue to send electronic copies to adults and also abroad and to upload the magazine to our website.

Children's Day: This was held on the third Sunday in January and Ministers, Worship Leaders and HSC families were invited to focus on children & young people. Our council member, Alison Presland, produced a useful leaflet, looking at the story of Joseph and his relationships, with a short talk and some prayers for those who wanted it.

Links with other organisations: We, as ever, continue to endeavour to improve our connection with other organisations working with children and young people.

Grants and Loans: We continue to offer financial assistance where appropriate when needed. We are always delighted to help fund an outing for the children and young people attending Family Weekend and Summer Camp. We have also worked in partnership with the New Church Children's Society to enable children to attend family weekends. We decided, again, this year to send a Christmas gift to each of the Sunday Schools for them to spend how they wish. These were sent to Bradford, Kearsley and Seaburn Dene New Churches. These were well received.

Website: Our website continues, and we do our best to keep it relevant. Keith Dunbar is being supported by other members of the council to endeavour to keep it up to date with news of recent and forthcoming events.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks and appreciation to all those who work so hard with the children and young people in our organisation.

9. COMMITTEE FOR AUXILIARY MINISTRY (CAM)

The CAM co-ordinator, Mrs Jan Millar, reports:

General: Once again it has been a quiet year for CAM but I continue to support lay people who do voluntary work for the Church in many capacities. I still try to keep in touch with people who are no longer active in the Church but who have been wonderful servants to Conference in the past.

Leaders United: There have been no face-to-face meetings this year although one is planned to be held at Keighley New Church in autumn 2025. Following the feedback given at last year's meeting with representatives of the Council and the Ministry, CAM has hosted a series of Online Bible Study Sessions. These have been very ably led by Revd. Becky Jarratt. Participants have looked at various passages from Acts and Epistles, comparing them to Swedenborgian teachings and also how they relate to our lives today. These sessions have proved popular and have generated a lot of lively discussion. CAM is very grateful to Revd. Becky for providing such interesting and stimulating sessions via Zoom.

Worship Leader Training: Jonathan Millar has been shadowing Revd. Christine Bank in the conduct of Funerals and Weddings.

Resources: CAM continues to hold a variety of resources which are available for anyone to use. They are obtainable free of charge either electronically or in hard copy.

Finally, CAM would like to thank the Conference Council and the Committee of Ministers for their continuing support for the work of all lay people within the Church. The committee would also like to give special thanks to all the Auxiliary Ministers who give so much to the life of the Church in many different capacities. Their dedication and commitment is greatly appreciated.

10. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE (YPC)

Mr Jack Ramsay reports:

The Young People's Committee consists of Jack Ramsay (Chairperson), Libby Jones (Secretary), Sharmaine Fitzgerald (Treasurer), Jason Nicholls (Digital Coordinator), and Lucy Friend (Social Media), in addition to being aided by Sue Chesworth.

This year, alongside either fulltime work or study, we have continued to do our utmost to meet the aims we originally set out too:

- To increase retention of over 18's
- To help young adults have a deeper understanding of more than just the religious aspects of the church
- To increase intergenerational links between our age group, and others
- To develop a social media presence
- To provide formal feedback/be a voice from the youth to the rest of the church
- To expand the church by getting young people attending events who don't usually

This has been achieved through a wide variety of means including in person events, social media, creation of resources, and more.

For example, our Working Party at Seaburn Dene New Church in January which saw 15 young people enjoying some water sports in the North Sea in the morning, followed by a whole range of DIY jobs around the church in the afternoon (with those over 18 having slept round the night before).

These included painting rooms, tidying under stairs, designing notice boards, and more – benefiting both the young people and Seaburn Dene!

We also had a group of roughly 20 people attend a day trip to Flamingo Land (a theme park) in order to meet up with friends they hadn't seen in a while. We managed to encourage a few not so regular attendees to come along and had planned some games throughout the day to subtly boost mingling between everyone – it was overall very well received!

In addition to in-person events we also trialled some more online events to see if these would work. This included running an online discussion session lead by Chris Chambers and planning an online film club led by Lynne Griffiths (which unfortunately had to be cancelled). Although the discussion session got good feedback, and the film club was well put together, neither unfortunately managed to garner the interest and attendance we had hoped – and so we made the decision to leave the online events idea for a bit. We also felt that with CAM doing their online bible study, these types of events were still an option open to those who had expressed an interest.

Our main event of the year will be our 18+ summer camp, where we hope to see a large mix of over 18's attending Kildwick Centre in late June/early July for an extended weekend of spiritual learning, outdoor activities, and voluntary work. Our 18+ summer camp last year got good feedback, and the points made for improvement have been built upon in order to better the coming event. One of the main selling points of the event is its 'drop in' nature – where if you are only able to attend for a couple of days then you only need to pay and be there for that period. Meaning those who are working are still able to attend the camp, see their friends, and stay engaged with the Church.

Also in the works is a collaborative event with the Youth and Family Team for an outdoor pursuits weekend in early April, located in Bath. This will hopefully garner interest from young people situated more Southernly, who may be less inclined to travel up North for events – thereby giving them a better chance to stay engaged with the church and spend time with friends.

In addition to all these events we have also been putting together a resource for Young People as they turn 18 – termed 'Faith Packs'. The idea stemmed from that fact the young people may find it harder to keep in touch with their faith when they get to this age, with becoming an adult, maybe moving city, or just generally having so much change around then – faith may end up being placed as a lower priority. This pack will hopefully serve as a gentle reminder, and act as an aid in helping them to keep in touch with their faith. All the contents have been thought of, and designed, by ourselves, and each pack is catered towards the individual, but in general they each include:

- * A Bible
- * A Bible verses 'cheat sheet'
- * Prayer cards
- * A bookmark with a Bible verse on it
- * Links to different resources and points of contact within the Church
- * A guide on how to pray
- * A guide on Churches around the country, and when their services are
- * A physical reminder of their faith, like a pocket cross or key ring

- *Tips on balancing faith and life, collated from various people throughout the Church
- *A scented candle
- *A Swedenborgian theology book (TCR)
- *A list of upcoming events in the church
- *Christian themed stickers
- *All coming in themed tote bag!

Furthermore, we have developed a plan for a hoodie which young people could buy (based on designs by Harriet Jones), these will be subsidised by the YPC and hopefully foster a sense of community and likeness amongst the young people – helping them to further feel included within their church.

This year we have also continued to develop our social media presence, by posting regularly on Instagram and TikTok. These posts include Swedenborgian quotes, Biblical quotes, short videos of ministers explaining concepts, and weekly prayers. These have so far been well engaged with, but we are hoping to develop our online presence further and increase engagement by having a more varied set of uploads which better encapsulate what its like to attend our events!

In addition to social media, we have also been developing an app of our own. Jason, as a part of his university course, had to design and build an app. For this he decided to create one a Church could use to show upcoming events and provide a more seamless experience for signing up to them – where instead of inputting your personal details each time, it was all already known via your account. This is all of course still in the early stages but is something we're hoping to keep developing and hopefully make a reality at some point.

All these projects and events were in addition to smaller things throughout the year such as recording readings for online services, contacting different local churches to 'steal' ideas, facilitating a game at May Family Weekend, and more!

Finally, alongside all the things we have already done, there are plenty of ideas ready to be implemented going forward – some large, and some small – and we hope to start designing and putting these into action as soon and as quickly as we can!

If you have any questions about anything we have done this year, or anything we plan to do, or even any ideas for us to do, please just ask us (YPC@generalconference.org.uk, or in person at any event we are at).

11. THE YOUTH & FAMILY TEAM

Mrs Jenny Jones reports:

The Youth and Family Team, comprising Robert Clark, Jenny Jones, Rev. Becky Jarratt, and Rev. Jack Dunion, continues its dedicated work to spread the teachings of our church and foster a strong sense of community and fellowship among children, young adults, and families. This is achieved through their events and the information they produce. Sue Chesworth serves as the team's link to the Council and acts as line manager for Jenny and Robert. She is also the designated Safeguarding Lead for the church, with Jenny holding the role of Deputy Safeguarding Lead. The team is further assisted by Emma Daniels with administrative tasks.

The team maintains a full programme of events across the country for children, young adults, and families. This year's activities have included popular bunkhouse weekends, All-Age Family weekends at Purley Chase, Walk and Talk get-togethers, and weekends at Wellspring House for those aged 18 and over, as well as Febru-rally. Many of these events have been fully booked, demonstrating their success and demand.

Additionally, the team continues to run the Summer Camp for 9-13 year olds and provides assistance with the Purley Summer Camp. The Facebook Group "Purley People" remains an active platform, used for advertising and reporting on events, and for church members generally to share local community happenings with the online community.

12. YORKSHIRE AND NORTH EAST AREA COUNCIL

The Secretary, Miss Gwendolen Rowe, reports:

In the last year the Yorkshire and North-East Area lost one of its members, Janet Woodhead of the Keighley Society.

Bradford continues to go from strength to strength. Alongside the Community Project there are many varied activities. All of which are still very much needed in the area. Services are very lively with around 20 children/adults attending. They're held twice a month.

In June both churchgoers and community united together to celebrate their centenary with a special visit from Mr Richard Kenyon (great grandson of Revd J R Rendell who laid their foundation stone). A service followed by a party brought 99 people into the building. Last summer Bradford members and friends arranged another event at Purley Chase which was very successful. Dalton continues to hold services each week and meet for Fellowship twice a month.

They have had a few new attendees. They have 2 individuals who attend with very limited English and assist with providing copies of readings from the Word so they can better follow worship there. They are looking forward to celebrating their bicentenary in August. Seaburn Dene have held 25 varied acts of worship over the last year and have been very busy involving themselves in the life of the community. They received a grant allowing them to get some major redecorating done and are looking for further funding to do some further work. They did a lot of publicity to promote their Poppy Project and also their Christmas events. They continue to promote their online presence. They are looking forward with great anticipation to Lynne Griffiths becoming their minister after her ordination at Conference this July. At Keighley services continue on a weekly basis, with refreshments afterwards being very much a key part of this. They benefit very much from the social connections and friendships they make. They continue to hold 2 fairs a year plus a regular Craft and Chat and Coffee morning which helps with their fundraising efforts. They appreciate the many individuals who support all aspects of church life.

As ever we are very grateful to our Ministers, Retired Ministers and Worship Leaders who lead our services and to all those who work hard to maintain the life of the church.

8. REPORT OF THE COMPANY ACCOUNTANT YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2025

The Company Accountant, Mr Paul Mehew, reports:

During the year the Company experienced a decrease in the net movement in funds of £1,752k. This was largely due to the following;

- A decrease in gains on investments of £1,975k driven by the market impact of US protectionist policies.
- A decrease in donations received of £53k.
- A decrease in dividends received of £39k which was broadly in line with market performance.
- An increase in property proceeds of £356k following the sales of properties at Radcliffe and Clayton-le-Moors
- An increase in Purley Chase income of £78k driven largely by additional bookings and the annual price increase.
- An increase in Purley Chase costs of £54k largely due to an increase in electricity unit prices.
- An increase in Outreach and education costs of £45k due to the timing of the Bradford grant payments

During the year the Company also experienced an increase in the CIF market value per unit from £11.23 to £11.40. This increase was largely driven by the US market outperformance in the first half of the year.

Income and Expenditure Accounts

For year ended March 31st 2025

	£k	£k	£k
Income	2025	2024	2023
Donations	32	85	98
Government Grants	0	0	0
Legacies	0	20	63
Trust	55	60	68
Society Contributions	105	113	111
Purley Chase Centre	208	130	81
Property Sales	356	0	0
Rents	1	1	1
Dividends	706	754	688
Interest	36	43	12
	1,499	1,197	1,121
Expenditure			
Investment Management Fees	(163)	(154)	(147)
Publishing	(5)	(4)	(2)
Purley Chase Centre	(457)	(403)	(314)
Ministerial	(285)	(284)	(195)
Outreach and Education	(90)	(45)	(234)
Management and Administration	(356)	(337)	(282)
Societies Income on CIF	(140)	(127)	(130)
Societies Withdrawals from CIF	(15)	(80)	(20)
	(1,513)	(1,435)	(1,124)
Investment gains/(losses)	446	2,421	(897)
Net Movement in Funds	431	2,183	(900)

Balance Sheet as at March 31st 2025

	£k	£k	£k
	2025	2024	2023
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible Assets	1,850	1,917	1,974
Investment Assets	32,366	32,085	29,819
	34,216	34,002	31,793

CURRENT ASSETS /(liabilities)

Cash at bank and in hand	1,682	941	838
Other current assets/(liabilities)	(540)	(17)	112
	1,141	924	950

35,357	34,926	32,743
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CHARITY FUNDS

Endowment Funds	2,268	2,256	1,946
Restricted Funds	24,381	24,008	22,575
Unrestricted Funds	8,708	8,662	8,222

35,357	34,926	32,743
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CIF Market Value Per Unit	11.40	10.43	10.48
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STATISTICAL TABLE

	Society Members	Non-resident	Total new members	Deceased	Removed	Increase	Decrease	Members of Conference
Accrington	27	7	0	0	0	0	0	20
Bournemouth	24	4	0	1	0	0	1	#27
Bradford	10	0	0	0	0	0	1	#13
Dalton	32	2	0	1	0	0	0	#11
Derby	37	25	0	2	0	0	2	37
Kearsley	25	7	0	2	0	0	2	14
Keighley	26	12	0	1	0	0	1	#15
Paisley	17	0	0	0	2	0	0	15
Seaburn Dene	25	6	0	0	0	4	0	17
West Wickham	18	8	0	1	2	0	3	14
Total 2024/25	241	64	0	8	4	4	10	183
Totals 2023/24	262	66	4	8	1	4	8	179

Members of Conference on database 366

Central Register Members on database 157

Last year's figures, as no details were provided from that Society for members of Conference.

	Baptisms	Marriages	Funerals	Sunday School No. of children	Average attendance of 16 year olds and under	Holy Supper Administrations	Holy Supper Average Attendance	Overall Average Attendance
Accrington	0	0	0	0	0	3	8	8
Bournemouth	0	0	1	0	0	4	14	16
Bradford	0	0	0	18	39	11	20	22
Dalton	1	0	0	0	0	12	12	12
Derby	0	0	0	0	0	7	6	6
Kearsley	2	0	1	3	2.5	10	18	18.5
Keighley	2	2	2	0	2	11	13	20
Paisley	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	6
Seaburn Dene	2	0	0	1	2	2	11	15
West Wickham	0	0	1	0	0	10	9	9
Totals 2024/25	7	2	5	22	45.5	72	117	132.5
Totals 2023/24	2	1	12	29	26.02	70	109	133

THE NEW CHURCH COLLEGE REPORT OF THE COLLEGE COUNCIL 2024 - 2025

**Below is a summary of the full report.
The full report has been sent to all Governors of the New Church College
and copies are available on request from the Treasurer of the New
Church College.**

This Report covers the work of the College Council for the year ended 31 March 2025. The New Church College uses the working name of The Swedenborg Open Learning Centre [SOLCe] and is based at Wellspring House.

1. COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

1.1 Attendance at Council Meetings

The Council met, in person for one full Council meeting and on Zoom for 2 full Council meetings making a total of 3 occasions during the year in April 2024, October 2024 and January 2025. There was also an AGM in July 2024. This was held at Wellspring House.

Membership and attendance at meetings were as follows:

Council Members	Council Meetings	AGM (July)
Mr C Chambers, President	3	1
Mr RJ Nicholls, Treasurer	3	1
Ms Gwendolen Rowe, Secretary	3	1
Revd M Duckworth	3	1
Dr P Isherwood	2	1
Mr R Kennion	3	1
Mr S Kennion	3	1
Revd MW Stanley	3	1

The Administrator, Melanie Bennett, attended 2 full Council meetings (3 possible) by standing invitation.

The Leader of Education, Revd Robin Wooldridge attended 3 full Council meetings (3 possible) by standing invitation.

2. EMPLOYEES

The New Church College currently employs 1.27 full time equivalent (FTE) staff:

2.1 Name	Job Role	Hours	FTE
Revd Robin Wooldridge	Leader of Education	20	0.5
Melanie Bennett	Administrator	35	0.87

2.2 Linda Stoney undertakes House Keeping duties on a casual basis, averaging around 2 hours a week.

2.3 The work of the Leader of Education is supported by a team of tutors who are engaged on a consultancy basis to assist with module writing and delivery.

3. EMPLOYEE REMUNERATION

It is the current policy of the Council to follow the lead of General Conference in determining salaries. In line with this, the Council awarded an increase, to the salaries of the Leader of Education, Leader of Wellspring House and the Administrator by 3.9% from 1st April 2024. Both the Telephone Line and Broadband Allowance for Conference employees finished at the end of March 2025. It was agreed this would also apply to Revd Robin Wooldridge and the money that would have been received was added to his stipend before the raise was applied.

4. GENERAL REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE COLLEGE

4.1 Performance of the Charity

With the building now being open more events have been taking place.

- Easter Rally – April 2024
- 160th AGM - July 2024
- Summer Gathering -July 2024
- Summer Camp - July 2024
- Adventure into Lower Earth Workshop – August 2024
- 18+ group - November 2024
- Where am I headed after I die? Workshop - November 2024
- Committee of Ministers - January 2025
- Teen weekend - February 2025
- Adventure into Lower Earth Workshop - March 2025

4.2 Highlights of the year:

- One of the highlights is how much Wellspring House is starting to be used by other groups. It is very popular among the young people who have attended for Easter Rally, Summer Camp, 18+ and a Teen weekend. We are really pleased to see them returning again and again.
- The College has run two sets of workshops with mixed results. However we have reason to hope. Conference has employed a new Marketing and Media Officer, Ms Sibby Mkoba, who we hope may be

able to help advise us once she has settled into her post. This may help us to improve our marketing campaign and have much better attendances at these events.

4.3 Future Development

The College has continued to provide online courses. Workshops have been run in the Autumn and Spring and further workshops are planned for Autumn 2025. An Holistic Health and Wellbeing is being planned for August 2025, inviting people to have a stand at the College. In October an Awakening the Inner Self event is being run aimed specifically at newcomers to capture their interest in what we offer. This will include short presentations based on the Workshops and Stepping Stones courses.

4.4 Staff

Leader of Education

Revd Robin Wooldridge has now completed his fourth year as Leader of Education he has continued working on Stepping Stones Courses. He has been considering the area around training and development for those within the Church and also providing a taster day for new people and keeping these as two separate events. As a result he has organised a Summer Gathering following the AGM aimed at those within the church and in October an Awakening the Inner Self event is planned as a day for newcomers to come and find out more about what we offer. Further to these a Holistic, Health and Wellbeing day (similar to the idea of a Mind, Body & Spirit Day) is also being planned for August. He has been in communication with Sibby Mkoba, who is going to be marketing one of the Stepping Stones courses as a test to look at the best way to advertise events and Courses for the College.

Administrator

Melanie Bennett has continued to work on behalf of Wellspring House, splitting her time between home and Wellspring House. She provides administrative support to the College but is also working hard to cover Wellspring House not having a Centre Leader. The Council, as ever, is greatly thankful for her continued work keeping in contact with people and continuing to administer to the College, going above and beyond.

Facilities Management

The building and grounds continue to be maintained and we are grateful to the team of volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure this happens. They continue to flourish and the college benefits from their dedicated work. Our thanks must go to all who work in this area to ensure the building and grounds are maintained.

Support Staff

The College continues to benefit from the invaluable work Sue Chesworth does within her role supporting students and working with the youth leaders'

training. We are deeply grateful to her for her continued work in this area.

Volunteers

We value immensely the many lay people who volunteer at the college and provide so much support to the team. We warmly thank them all for their commitment and dedication to the college.

4.5 SOLCe

Sponsored Students

Miss Lynne Griffiths is now in her third year. She is doing really well and is extremely enthusiastic. She is on course with her studies. Other students have been doing some courses alongside her this year which has been very beneficial for her. She is set for ordination at Conference 2025.

SOLCe Students

Between April 2024 and March 2025 there have been 11 people completing Stepping Stones Courses and 1 completing an Introductory 5 Credit Module. 3 Students also study buddied with Lynne on Year 3 Modules.

4.6 Outreach

The College advertises its open learning courses and events programme on the website www.swedenborg-openlearning.org.uk. They are also advertised on Social Media and more recently the workshops have also been advertised in colourful booklets produced by Miss Gwendolen Rowe. Revd Robin Wooldridge has been working with Ms Sibby Mkoba to look at how best to publicise College courses, workshops and events. Initially she is working on advertising one of the Stepping Stones courses and assessing the effects and benefits of this. All courses and workshops are available to the general public and to church members. Our endeavour is to provide a welcoming sphere for people to learn, to come together and to share in spiritual matters in a nurturing environment. We continue to reach out to the wider community to build networks and to establish new relationships whilst always aiming to reach a wider audience.

4.7 Related Party

The Trustee, The General Conference of the New Church, is a registered charity. The General Conference is entitled to a proportion of the net income resources from the Jersey Fund and provides payroll facilities for which the College pays a service charge. The College also relies on the support of Conference for tutors, examiners and module-writers.

4.8 Governors

There are currently:

Honorary Governors - 3

Life Governors - 4

Honorary Life Governors - 5
Annual Governors - 38
Making a total of 50 in all.

5 FINANCE

5.1 Annual Accounts

The Treasurer reported a net decrease in resources of £31,534 before capital movements and an exceptional legacy for the year to 31st March 2025. (decrease of £33,351 in 2024). During the year, profits on the disposal of investments of £14,763 were realised with notional losses of £21,155 arising from the revaluation of investments.

The budget for 2024–2025 projected a surplus of £7,000 (before investment management fees) but the actual deficit for the year was £16,187 before investment management fees and a deficit of £31,534 when these are included. The deficit was caused in the main by a one-off cost relating improvements to the fire alarm, security and new fire doors being fitted.

During the year the College received a legacy from the estate of Rev I Russell of £50,000. Currently the College Council is considering how best to allocate this to ensure it is done in a way, that we believe will be, sympathetic with the wishes of both Ian and Patricia.

A budget for 2025-2026 projects a deficit of £7,000 before any adjustments arising on the real and notional gains and losses or charges for managing our investments.

5.2 Investments

The unrestricted funds, including the Jersey Fund, are amalgamated to minimise trading costs and to form a larger portfolio. The funds continue to be separated from an accounting point-of-view.

Brewin Dolphin, continue to follow the agreed investment policy statement which provided additional flexibility to the managers around our investment categories to hopefully improve income from our investments.

TRUSTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The charity trustee is responsible for preparing an annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice). This activity is managed by the Treasurer (whose nomination for the post must be approved by the Trustees) and with the College Council on behalf of the Trustees.

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the charity trustee to prepare financial statements for each financial period which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing the financial statements, the trustee is required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply these consistently.
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- Prepare the financial statements on the ongoing concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustee is responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enables it to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011 and the provisions of the charity's constitution. It is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Structure, governance and management

The College is a charitable incorporated organisation registered with the Charity Commission, which is managed by the College Council on behalf of its trustee, The General Conference of the New Church.

Members of the College Council who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were

Mr C Chambers
Mr R J Nicholls
Ms G Rowe
Revd M Duckworth
Dr P Isherwood
Mr R Kennion

Mr S Kennion
Revd M W Stanley

The College Council report was approved on behalf of College Council on 5th July 2025

LEADER OF EDUCATION - ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025
Revd Robin Wooldridge, reports:

I am pleased to announce that Lynne Griffiths, our ordination student, has successfully completed her studies and will be ordained at this conference. We extend our warmest congratulations to Lynne as she embarks on this meaningful new chapter in ordained ministry.

We are also excited to share that our new three-year Licentiate curriculum has been carefully developed and approved, marking a significant advancement in our educational programmes. This updated curriculum offers a more comprehensive and structured approach to theological education, equipping students for effective ministry and leadership within the New Church.

In addition to our existing online courses, one-day seminars and online groups, we are introducing two new annual workshops:

Doctrine and Dialogue Training Day – Designed for ministers and active members of the New Church, this event will explore Swedenborgian doctrine, encourage interfaith dialogue and examine comparisons with other Christian traditions.

Awakening the Inner Self – Aimed at those new to the Teachings, this workshop will offer interactive mini-sessions drawn from Solce's workshops and Stepping Stones courses, introducing the Teachings in an accessible and engaging way.

These new initiatives offer valuable opportunities for learning, spiritual growth, and self-discovery both within the New Church community and beyond. Through Solce, Swedenborg's teachings are reaching a new generation of spiritual seekers, becoming more accessible and relevant than ever.

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The New Church College
Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

	Unrestricted funds general
	2025
	£
<u>Income and endowments from:</u>	
Donations and legacies	64,690
Other trading activities	6,165
Investments	80,966
Other income	259
Total income	152,080
<u>Expenditure on:</u>	
Raising funds	11,968
Charitable activities	131,606
Total resources expended	143,574
Net gains/(losses) on investments	(1,454)
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers	7,052
Gross transfers between funds	22,112
Net movement in funds	29,164
Fund balances at 1 April 2024	1,260,444
Fund balances at 31 March 2025	1,289,608

Unrestricted funds Jersey	Restricted endowment funds	Totals	Totals
2025 £	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £
-	-	64,690	16,499
-	-	6,165	3,572
13,339	-	94,305	87,884
-	-	259	11,434
13,339	-	165,419	119,389
3,379	-	15,347	14,290
-	-	131,606	138,451
3,379	-	146,953	152,741
414	(5,352)	(6,392)	293,231
10,374	(5,353)	12,074	259,879
(12,920)	(9,192)	-	-
(2,546)	(14,544)	12,074	259,879
445,527	1,722,597	3,428,568	3,168,689
442,981	1,708,053	3,440,642	3,428,568

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

Balance Sheet
As at 31 March 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
Fixed Assets		
Investments	3,376,610	3,400,722
Current Assets		
Debtors	11,209	8,421
Cash at Bank and in hand	75,440	42,270
	86,649	50,691
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(22,617)	(22,845)
Net Current Assets	64,032	27,846
Total Assets	3,440,642	3,428,568
less current liabilities		
Capital Funds		
Endowment funds	1,708,053	1,722,597
Income Funds		
Unrestricted funds - Jersey Education	442,981	445,527
Unrestricted funds - general	1,289,608	1,260,444
	3,440,642	3,428,568

The accounts were approved by the College Council on 5 July 2025

C Chambers [President]

NEW CHURCH COLLEGE

Names of people who have successfully completed accredited Courses, other than those who have been recognized as Ministers.

Certificate holders

Ruth Duckworth	1979
David Fitzjohn	1979
Margaret Presland	1989
Alan Bowie	2002
Bev Johnson	2004

Diploma holders

Raymond Kennion	1990
Paul Morgan	2024
Trevor Millar	2024

Swedenborg Open Learning Centre

Certificate in Swedenborgian Studies (Level One)

Marion Curry	2004
Bev Johnson	2004
Lenka Machova	2004
Judith Wilson	2004
Thelma Wilson	2006
Anna Woofenden	2007
Trevor Millar	2007
Stephen Thomas	2008
Helen Newton	2009
Alan Misson	2015
Paul Morgan	2020

Graduate in Swedenborgian Studies (Level Three)

Rita Russell	2001
Alan Bowie	2006
Lee Differ	2019

LAST 40 ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Year	Place	President/ Senior Minister/ Spiritual Leader	Preacher	Members
1986	Swanwick	N.Ryder	J.O.Booth	85
1987	Manchester	N.Ryder	J.C.Duckworth	91
1988	Hoddesdon	N.Ryder	J.E.Elliott	77
1989	Durham	N.Ryder	B.R.Jarvis	82
1990	Swanwick	R.A.Gill	R.A.Gill	86
1991	Birmingham	R.A.Gill	C.V.A.Hasler	82
1992	Swanwick	R.A.Gill/N.Ryder	J.D.Allsopp	80
1993	Glasgow	N.Ryder	J.M.Sutton	72
1994	Hoddesdon	N.Ryder	B.J.Presland	77
1995	Swanwick	N.Ryder	B.M.Talbot	78
1996	Lancaster	J.M.Sutton	J.M.Sutton	83
1997	Hoddesdon	J.M.Sutton	O.C.E.Jackson	81
1998	Swanwick	J.M.Sutton	N.Ryder	72
1999	Swanwick	J.M.Sutton	G.Clarkson	79
2000	Hoddesdon	J.M.Sutton	D.A.Moffat	77
2001	Swanwick	I.Russell	R.P.Brugler	83
2002	Swanwick	I.Russell	I.Russell	68
2003	Swanwick	I.Russell	C.Curry	76
2004	Hoddesdon	I.Russell	M.E.Duckworth	70
2005	Swanwick	I.Russell	R.A.Gill	79
2006	Swanwick	M.Duckworth	G.L.Gordon	86
2007	Swanwick	M.Duckworth	J.C.Duckworth	98
2008	Swanwick	M.Duckworth	R.A.Gill	87
2009	Swanwick	M.Duckworth	D. Lomax	88
2010	Swanwick	M.Duckworth	M.W.Stanley	88
2011	Swanwick	M.Duckworth	G.Gordon/D.Gaffney	82
2012	Swanwick	G.Gordon/D.Gaffney	J. Dunion	74
2013	Swanwick	G.Gordon/D.Gaffney	R.Russell	76
2014	Swanwick	D.Gaffney	C.Curry/C.Bank	72
2015	Swanwick	D.Gaffney	C.Bank	76
2016	Swanwick	D.Gaffney	J.Dunion	83
2017	Swanwick	D.Gaffney	H.Brown/J.Dunion	77
2018	Swanwick	D.Gaffney	M.E.Duckworth	69
2019	Swanwick	D.Gaffney	C.Bank/J.Dunion	67
2020	Via Zoom	J.Dunion	None	-
2021	Swanwick	-	-	52
2022	Swanwick	H.Brown/J.Dunion	M.E.Duckworth	54
2023	Swanwick	H.Brown/J.Dunion	J.Dunion	56
2024	Swanwick	J.Dunion	J.Dunion	56
2025	Swanwick	J.Dunion	J.Dunion	

MINISTERS, WORSHIP LEADERS, LAY PREACHERS AND CELEBRANTS

1 MINISTERS

The following are the Ministers recognised by the Conference:

*Retired or not in active service

#Overseas

Ordaining Ministers	ORDAINED	INDUCTED
* Robert Arthur Gill	June 30,1970	July 25,1990
* Mary Elizabeth Duckworth, B.A	July 10,1996	July 27,2006

Ministers	ORDAINED
* John Edward Elliott, B.A., B.D.	June 23,1954
*# John Emanuel Teed	June 23,1954
*# Ian Allan Arnold	June 30,1965
*# John Maitland Sutton, B.Ag.Sc.	June 30,1970
(served as an Ordaining Minister 1996 to 2001)	
* Michael William Stanley, M.Sc., Ph.D.	June 27,1971
*# Trevor Alexander Moffat, B.A.	July 15,1978
# Julian Clayton Duckworth	July 19,1980
* Clifford Curry, B.Sc	July 22,1983
* Bruce Roger Jarvis	July 30,1985
Brian Mark Talbot, B.A., DipEd., B.Sc.	July 26,1989
*# David Allan Moffat, B.Mus.	July 23,1997
* Gillian Lindsey Gordon	July 5,2000
* David Edward Gaffney, B.Sc	July 29,2004
Christine Anne Bank	July 31,2008
* Helen Thelma Brown	July 30,2009
Jack Dunion	July 30,2009
Rebecca Mary Jarratt	July 30,2015
Robin Wooldridge	July 25,2017
(Ordained by the Revd D. Gaffney on behalf of The New Church in Australia on August 7, 2016)	
Lynne Griffiths	July 24,2025

(Ministers in the following categories are not entitled to vote at General Meetings of Conference by virtue of their office)

*James Alan Bowie	2001
*Constance Thelma Wilson	2001
*Judith Margaret Wilson	2003
*Pauline Ann Grimshaw	2004
Jan Millar	2004
Trevor Millar	2004
Recognised as a Lay Pastor	2008
Stephen Thomas	2005
Recognised as a Lay Pastor	2009
*Kittie Methuen-Jones	2006
*Jean Mrozek	2006
Nigel Sutton	2006
Helen Newton	2007
David Haseler	2007
Gwendolen Rowe	2013
Richard Cunningham	2018
Jenny Jones	2020
Jonathan Millar	2025

Accredited Worship Leaders

*Enid Nicholls	2000
*Diane Lewin	2002
*Jonathan Armitage	2003
*George Hunt	2003
Janet Benson	2003
*Dorothy Margison	2004
*Linda Wells	2006
Grant Brackley	2006
David Brooks	2006
David Sharrock	2008
* Tonia Jarvis	2012
*Susan Wilson	2012
*John Harris	2014
*Philippa Peacock	2014
Christine Mrozek	2018
Shannon Fitzgerald	2022

Lay Preachers recognised for service in Mauritius

Clifford Phanjoo

Authorised

1991

3 CELEBRANTS

The following are the Authorised Celebrants for the Sacraments and Ceremonies recognised by the Conference:

*Retired or not in active service

Mr Alan Misson - Baptism, Holy Supper and Funerals.

Mrs Anne Clarkson - Holy Supper.

Mr Phillip Brooks - Holy Supper and Funerals.

Mr Stephen Russell-Lacy - Holy Supper and Funerals.

Mr David Sharrock - Holy Supper and Funerals.

*Mr David Friend - Holy Supper.

Mr Trevor Millar - Baptism, Holy Supper and Funerals.

Dr Geoffrey Bentley - Baptism, Holy Supper and Funerals.

*Mr Michael Clubb - Baptism, Holy Supper and Funerals.

*Mrs Thelma Wilson - Baptism, Holy Supper and Funerals.

Miss Gwendolen Rowe - Holy Supper.

*Mrs Kathryn Brooks - Funerals.

* Mrs Pauline Grimshaw - Baptism, Holy Supper, Funerals and Marriages.

* Mrs Jean Mrozek - Funerals.

Mrs Marion Curry - Holy Supper and Funerals.

Mr Stephen Thomas - Holy Supper and Funerals.

Mr David Brooks - Holy Supper and Funerals.

*Mr Alan Bowie - Holy Supper.

Mr Nigel Sutton - Baptism and Holy Supper.

Mr Gordon Kuphal - Holy Supper.

Mr Jonathan Millar—Holy Supper.

LAND AND BUILDINGS HELD IN TRUST BY CONFERENCE

Insurance of buildings (excluding contents)

B Conference Block Policy

M AMP

+ Index Linked

Held in trust for the Embsay Fund

Conference maintains with Ecclesiastical a combined insurance policy for employers, public and products liability on the properties listed below and also for other Societies and associated institutions

In London and the South of England

West Wickham Church and Rooms at

High Street BR4 0LZ

B £1,238,063 +

General Conference.

House at 18 Pollard Road, Whetstone,

London N20 0UB Freehold.

B £579,891 +

Bungalow at 80 Broadway, Southbourne

Bournemouth BH6 4EQ Freehold.

B £492,341 +

In the Midlands and West

Derby. Church and rooms at

Horwood Avenue DE23 6AN

B £2,212,445 +

House at 409A Burton Road, Derby DE23 6AN

B £467,621 +

General Conference.

Bungalow at 215 Coventry Road, Nuneaton,

Warwickshire CV10 7AX Freehold.

B £420,241 +

Purley Chase Centre, Atherstone Freehold.

B £7,010,195 +

In North Lancashire

Accrington. Church at Hargreaves Street BB5 2BB

B £1,056,782 +

General Conference.

House at 5 Whittycroft Drive, Barrowford,

Nelson BB9 6AS Freehold. #

B £414,061 +

In North-West (Manchester) and Cheshire

Chester. Church and rooms at Brook Lane, Newton CH2 2BT	B	£502,740,00	+
House at 51 Woodlands Drive, Newton CH2 3QQ	B	£443,931	+

Kearsley. Church and rooms at Bolton Road BL4 9DD	B	£1,746,884	+
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General Conference.

House at Church Street, Kearsley BL4 9DD Freehold.	B	£463,501	+
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In Yorkshire and the North-East

Bradford. Church and rooms at Ashfield Avenue, Frizinghall BD18 3AL	B	£1,252,483	+
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Dalton. Church and rooms at Grove Place, Dalton, Huddersfield HD5 9LH	B	£1,357,149	+
Flats at 111 and 113 Long Lane, Dalton, Huddersfield HD5 9LL	B	£1,547,063	+

Keighley. Church and rooms at Braithwaite Road, Braithwaite BD22 6PX	B	£1,127,852	+
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Seaburn Dene. Church and rooms at Shields Road, Seaburn Dene, Sunderland SR6 8ND	B	£918,065	+
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General Conference.

House at 22 Wimborne Drive, Keighley Jointly owned freehold. #	B	£384,191	+
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Kildwick New Church Centre, Main Road, Kildwick BD20 9BD Freehold. #	B	£1,012,492	+
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New Zealand

59a Balmain Road, Birkenhead, Auckland, 1310 (Conference share 86.7647%)	M	NZ\$615,037	
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Property of the New Church College

25 Radcliffe New Road, Radcliffe, M26 1LEB		£1,348.413	+
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**SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS OF
NEW CHURCH INSTITUTIONS AND
CONFERENCE COMMITTEES**

	Secretary	Treasurer
Broadfield Benevolent Fund	Mr.N.Skinner	Mr.N.Skinner
New Church College	Miss.G.Rowe	Mr.R.J.Nicholls
Committee for Auxiliary Ministry	Mrs.J.E.Millar	
Examining Board (College Education Studies)	Leader of Studies	
Home Worship Scheme	Rev.G.L.Gordon (Organiser)	
Jeggins Trustees	Rev.R.A.Gill	Rev.J.Dunion
Kildwick Committee	Mr.K.Sandiford	Mr.K.Sandiford
Library & Archives Committee	Mr.G.Kuphal (Acting Secretary)	
Marketing and Resources	Mr.S.Russell-Lacy	
Ministers' Committee	Mrs.E.Daniels	
New Church Children's Society	Mrs.S.Chesworth	Mrs.C.Rowlands
New Church Historical Society	To be appointed	Miss.J.Walton
New Church Youth Association	Miss.G.Rowe	Miss.J.Walton
Purley Chase Centre	To be appointed	Mr.P.Mehew
Swedenborg Society	Ms.D.Prentice (Admin)	Mr.A.Morley
Yorkshire & North-East Area Council	Mrs.L.Brooks	Mr.T.Millar
Young People's Committee	Miss.L.Jones	Miss.S.Fitzgerald

LIST OF SOCIETIES IN CONNECTION WITH THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
(For addresses and telephone numbers see Address List)

City, Town, etc.	Situation of Church	Minister or Lay Leader	Treasurer	Secretary
Accrington	Hargreaves Street Accrington BB5 2BB		Miss.J.Walton	Contact the Treasurer
Bournemouth	The Druitt Hall, High Street, Christchurch BH23 1AB	Rev.C.Curry	Mrs.J.Pike	Rev.G.Gordon
Bradford and Saltaire	Ashfield Avenue, Shipley W Yorks BD18 3AL	Contact Secretary	Ms.P.Blomfield	Mrs.D.Nolan
Dalton, Huddersfield	Grove Place, Dalton Huddersfield HD5 9LH	Mr.T.Millar	Mr.R.Jessop	Miss.C.Mrozek
Derby	Horwood Avenue Derby DE23 6AN	Mrs.C.Sutton	Mr.N.K.Sutton	Mrs.R.F.Delderfield
Kearsley (07913 121119)	Bolton Road Kearsley Lancs BL4 9DD	Rev.B.Talbot	Contact the Secretary	Mrs.C.Kennion

LIST OF SOCIETIES IN CONNECTION WITH THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
(For addresses and telephone numbers see Address List)

City, Town, etc.	Situation of Church	Minister or Lay Leader	Treasurer	Secretary
Keighley	Braithwaite Road Braithwaite Village Keighley BD22 6PX	Rev.C.Bank	Mrs. K Higgins	Revd. C Bank
Seaburn Dene, Sunderland	Shields Road Seaburn Dene, Sunderland SR6 8ND	Rev L Griffiths	Mr.G.Nicholls	Mrs.N.Ramsay
West Wickham (07534 702887)	142 High Street, West Wickham Kent BR4 0LZ	Mr.A.C.Misson	Mr.C.V.Skinner	Mr.D.E.Brooks
Mauritius	Remono Street, Curepipe Road and 2 Rue Champ de Lort Port Louis		Mr.R.Sookeah	

AREA COUNCIL

This Council comprises a Secretary, a Treasurer and as many Ministers and Lay Members as are deemed necessary.

The numbers in brackets after the names of the Societies denote the number of representatives which the Society is entitled to send to the Annual Meeting of the Conference.

An asterisk indicates that the property of the Society is in Conference Trust.

Yorkshire and North-East

Ministers: Rev.C.Bank, Rev.B.Jarvis, Rev.R.Jarratt, Revd.L.Griffiths

Secretary: Mrs L Brooks

Treasurer: Mr.T.Millar

*Bradford and Saltaire (2); *Dalton (1); *Keighley (2); *Seaburn Dene (2)

WEB SITES

General Conference	www.generalconference.org.uk
New Church Youth Association	www.ncya.generalconference.org.uk
Purley Chase Centre	www.purleychasecentre.org.uk
Spiritual Wisdom	www.spiritualwisdom.org.uk
Apocalypse Awakening	www.apocalypseawakening.org.uk
Spiritual Questions	www.spiritualquestions.org.uk
SOLCe	www.swedenborg-openlearning.org.uk
Swedenborg Society	www.swedenborg.org.uk
New Church Camps	www.newchurchcamps.org.uk