



CONFERENCE COUNCIL MEETING

held on Tuesday 25th November 2025 Via Zoom Video Conference Call

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

Start time: 10.00am

End Time: 16.00pm

25	Opening Revd Jack Dunion opened the meeting with reading from Revelation 3:7-8 and Apocalypse Revealed 178, followed by a prayer.	
26	Apologies – Apologies for absence were received from Barry Friend. It was also noted that Michael Lock, who was invited to attend the meeting as a guest, sent his apologies.	
27	Minutes from meeting held on 21st October 2025 <i>Confirmation of the Minutes of the Conference Council Meeting held on 21st October 2025.</i> The minutes were approved by all present with John Ford proposing and Revd Bruce Jarvis seconding.	
28	Finance Update Paul Mehew, Company Accountant, gave an update on the current position of the accounts. Investments Bank Accounts- Paul Mehew reported on the recent Finance Advisory Committee meeting held at Newtons in London at the beginning of November. The FAC advice is to consolidate the smaller poor performing investment accounts held with CCLA and M&G into the two larger investment accounts held with Newton's and Rathbones. <i>Resolved:</i> This proposal was discussed and approved by all present. Financial Policy - The draft Financial Policy, which followed on from the discussion at the meeting held on 21st October, was presented. The suggested amendments raised during that	

	previous meeting have now been fully incorporated, and the revised policy was put forward to the Conference Council for final approval. <i>Resolved:</i> Following discussion, the Conference Council unanimously approved the revised Financial Policy <i>Signatories on Investment Accounts</i> – At present there are only two signatories on the investment accounts. Margaret Cowie and Nigel Sutton. The advice is to have at least three, and as Nigel Sutton is no longer a Trustee it was agreed that his name would be removed. Barry Friend will replace Nigel Sutton and Paul Mehew will be added as a non-trustee signatory.	
	<i>Paul Mehew left the meeting</i> <i>Revd Lynne Griffiths joined the meeting</i>	
29	Committee of Ministers <i>Note on Reports:</i> The Committee of Ministers provided a written report to the Trustees prior to the meeting. While these items were not discussed at length during the session, the following updates are recorded here for the purpose of a complete record: <i>Support at Bradford:</i> As noted in the pre-meeting report, the Committee has been reviewing support options for Bradford New Church. It was agreed that Revd Jack Dunion will meet with Shannon Fitzgerald to discuss specific requirements. Revd Lynne Griffiths has also offered her support. Additionally, the following commitments were noted: • Revd Becky Jarratt is available to conduct two services per year (one early in the year and one later). • Revd Brian Talbot and Revd Mary Duckworth are available to conduct services on an occasional basis. <i>Inclusive Language in the Rules:</i> The report also included an update from the Ministers' Seminar regarding the use of inclusive language within the Rules (specifically replacing "he/she" with "they" or "the individual"). It was recorded that following an anonymous vote, the proposal was not carried. Consequently, any further consideration of these changes would need to be formally proposed by the Trustees. <i>The Ministers' Committee had proposed a new website for The General Conference of the New Church.</i> Revd. Lynne Griffiths, on behalf of the CoM, presented the Conference Council with a proposal and supporting presentation for this project. The proposal is directly informed by the Ministry's strategic aims, particularly the need to strengthen digital ministry and provide diverse approaches to worship while becoming more accepting and inviting. The Ministry reviewed the current website and concluded that while digital outreach has grown organically, the current site does not adequately serve as the "window to our world." A new, modern, accessible, and vibrant online presence is essential to reflect the organisation and support strategic goals. The Ministry's proposal is supported by an independent professional review from marketing specialist Richard Cawood. The proposal included the following steps for project implementation: • Engage Richard Cawood, whose review of the existing website was presented to Conference Council, to lead and oversee the website redevelopment project.	

	- Establish a small project group consisting of Ministry members (to ensure spiritual integrity) and Richard Cawood (for expert guidance and project management). - Commission a professional website designer, sourced and overseen by Richard Cawood, to build the new website. Revd Griffiths presented the following details: - Full website design & build (8-12 weeks) - £6,960 + VAT - Project coordination, consultancy and oversight (10 days) - £1,600 (no VAT) - Total costs overall £9,952.00 (inc. VAT) - Annual hosting, backups, and security (from year 2) - £295.00 + VAT <i>Resolved:</i> The proposal was approved by all present for a project group to be formed to start the website redevelopment process. It was agreed that the IT Manager would also be involved in the project group. The Council urged the project group to consider how links could be made to other New Church websites. <i>Action:</i> The Council thanked Revd. Lynne Griffiths for her enthusiasm and work in this matter. She will send a progress update to Conference Council. <i>Revd Lynne Griffiths left the meeting</i> <i>Proposal for additional Hours for Emma Daniels, Acting Secretary to the Committee of Ministers</i> – The Committee of Ministers (CoM) put forward a proposal to increase the contracted hours for Emma Daniel, Acting Secretary to the CoM. Emma Daniel's work has been invaluable in her acting role, and the Committee requested approval to increase her hours to better support the workload from 8 hours per week to 14 hours per week. <i>Resolved:</i> The proposal to increase Emma Daniel's hours to 14 per week was approved to commence from 1st November 2025. Also approved were an additional 4 hours per month for ad-hoc work. <i>The Church is in crisis:</i> The Committee of Ministers raised a critical concern regarding the potential failure to recruit sufficient Trustees for Conference Council by the next Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Ministers emphasized that the most important task right now is to inform the wider Church membership about the serious implications of failing to appoint new Trustees. While members know more Trustees are needed, they may not understand the consequences of failing to meet the minimum required number. The Ministry suggests informing the membership of the severe potential outcomes, which may include: - Significant job losses. - The closure of churches. - The complete cessation of the organisation's activities. The Council members also discussed potentially the possibility of restructuring as a Community Interest Company (CIC). A CIC is a type of limited company established primarily to operate for the benefit of the community it serves, rather than for private profit. Examples provided included organisations offering direct welfare services or activities that generate profits used solely to support a specific community purpose (e.g., running a profit-reinvesting community cafe). <i>Action:</i> Natalie Welch, Company Secretary, will immediately seek definitive legal advice regarding the consequences of failing to meet the minimum number of legally required Trustees.	RLG NW
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	And will report back to Conference Council on the findings of this legal advice as a matter of urgency. Scheduling of Meetings: The Committee of Ministers requested that the November Conference Council meeting be the very last week of November in 2026 to give CoM time to get items ready for the Conference Council meeting. Natalie will liaise with the CoM Secretary to ensure this works moving forwards. Brave Spaces: At the recent 21st October Conference Council meeting, the Committee of Ministers had proposed introducing a "Brave Space Meeting" to include two representatives from the Council, the Ministers' Committee and New Church College. Further details were presented at this meeting. The venue would be central to those attending. CoM specifically requested that the meeting be facilitated by Gayle-Anne Drury (Baobab). The aim is to have the first event in January although confirmation of who would attend was required. The Council further discussed the proposal, including who should attend. It was agreed that the following individuals would attend the first Brave Space Meeting: Margaret Cowie (Chair), Trevor Millar (Trustee), Revd Jack Dunion, Revd Becky Jarratt, Robin Wooldridge and Chris Chambers. <i>Action:</i> Revd. Becky Jarratt will arrange a date and liaise with everyone attending.	NW RJ
30	HR Purley Chase Centre Manager – Natalie Welch, Company Secretary, provided an update on the progress of recruiting a new Purley Chase Centre Manager and confirmed that all possible avenues for advertising the position have been explored. The recruitment agents have advised that January is the period when job seekers typically begin looking for new employment. This follows a general pattern where individuals do not usually seek new roles in the weeks leading up to Christmas. It is hoped that suitable applicants will come forward in the new year. <i>Action:</i> Natalie will keep Conference Council updated. Programme Director at Purley Chase Centre: The recruitment status for the Programme Director role at Purley Chase Centre is still ongoing. Conference Council acknowledged the critical importance of filling this role. The task and finish group consisting of Margaret Cowie, Natalie Welch, Chris Chambers will discuss the recruitment strategy further at a meeting that will be organised for January 2026 and report back to the Conference Council.	NW NW
31	Spiritual Leaders Update Revd. Jack Dunion provided an update on the progress of the Ministry and expressed thanks to Conference Council for formally allowing the commissioning of the three strategic aims, which the Committee of Ministers (CoM) is now actively working hard to implement.	
32	Safeguarding As Safeguarding Officer, Sue Chesworth expressed the need for greater mindfulness and understanding within the church community. She stressed the importance of individuals being fully aware of their actions towards others and how those actions could be perceived, emphasizing that this vigilance serves to protect everyone involved.	
33	Property Update <i>Chester - Church and Manse at Chester</i> – John Ford reported on the properties at Chester. The legal process for both the Church and Manse remains delayed as the solicitors are still awaiting a formal reply from the Charities Commission regarding the application for a Cy-Près Scheme. <i>Kearsley Manse</i> – Work is still ongoing to clear the property and prepare it for sale on the market.	

34	Constitutional Revision Group (CRG) Conference Council reviewed the report from the CRG, dated 25th November 2025. <i>Ask, Seek and Find:</i> version 6 will include a section on Votes and Ballots and will be published in E-News and on the General Conference of the New Church website <i>Membership Application forms:</i> Revd Bruce Jarvis reported that the CRG has determined that the General Conference only needs to deal with two types of membership application forms for adults wishing to join the Conference: • Membership Application Form for persons who are <i>not</i> already members of a local society. • Membership Application Form for persons who are already members of a local society. As previously agreed: • The Youth Membership Application Form for young people aged between 14 and 17 years to become a Member of Conference. Membership applications for individuals wanting to join a local society or individual church should remain the responsibility of the society or individual church itself to deal with. This matter is currently being addressed by the Constitutional Revision Group (CRG) to develop and refine the necessary forms.	
35	Bradford New Church – Grant for Security Shannon Fitzgerald, Outreach Coordinator at Bradford New Church, requested approval to apply for a grant from the Home Office’s Places of Worship Protective Security Scheme. Funding is available for approved security measures at the church. The application would require use of the Conference’s Charity Commission reference number. Grants are available for eligible sites who can apply for fully funded physical security measures such as: • CCTV • Secure fencing/gates • Stronger doors and locks • Window protection • Intruder alarms • Entry systems (keypad, fob, intercom) • External lighting • Secure mailboxes The application portal is open and will close on 8th December 2025. Conference Council agreed that the application should go ahead and asked if Shannon could find out if our other Churches would also be able to apply for this grant. <i>Action:</i> Natalie Welch, Company Secretary, will ask Shannon Fitzgerald to investigate whether other churches/properties belonging to the Conference would also be eligible to apply for this grant scheme.	NW

36	Conference Council Natalie Welch, Company Secretary, presented a comprehensive proposal outlining several measures to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's operation and governance. The recommendations are designed to shift the Council's focus from operational detail to strategic governance, concentrating on: • Aligning the Council structure with the organisational Vision and three strategic aims. • Optimising communication and information flow. • Enhancing decision-making processes. • Maximising Trustee engagement and accountability. The proposal emphasized that introducing clearer structures for preparation, role allocation, and meeting management will enable the Council to make more effective use of collective time and expertise. Improved information flow will also support Trustees in making well-informed decisions and providing appropriate scrutiny to operational leaders. Conference Council discussed the proposed process and provided several suggestions for inclusion and refinement. <i>Action:</i> Natalie Welch, Company Secretary, will incorporate the Council's suggestions into the detailed report and bring the revised document back to the Conference Council for final approval to implement.	NW
37	Conference Council Meeting Dates 2026 January 13th, 10am – 15.00pm – Zoom March 24th, 10am – 15.00pm – Zoom May 7th – 8th, 1.30pm at Purley Chase Centre July 28th, 10am – Hayes Board Room at the Hayes Conference Centre September 8th, 10am Zoom November 30th, 10am Zoom	
38	The meeting closed with a short prayer	