E-News

The General Conference of the New Church

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Rise and Shine Radio Show

Revd Jack Dunion broadcasts his own online radio show every Sunday at 9am on Lomond Radio (formerly River Radio): https://lomondradio.co.uk/shows/rise-and-shine

The link below allows you to catchup Rise & Shine programs: www.mixcloud.com/RevJack/



New Online Sessions

Revd Lynne Griffths writes:

The Youth and Family Team is delighted to announce a series of new on-line sessions for children, teenagers and young adults to come together in between our physical meet-up events. We know it can be hard only seeing church friends and leaders at certain times across the year and we hope by offering fun online sessions this will keep both existing friendships and help develop new ones, across all ages.

The sessions will be run by Revd Lynne Griffiths and assisted by members of the youth and family team. Each session will begin with online games and fun as a group before moving to smaller age-related discussion groups culminating in coming together as one big group once again before ending.
Each session will be approximately 1 hour in length. This is a new initiative and we are excited to see old friends and welcome new ones. Information will be shared nearer the time both in Enews and via email to those families who have already engaged with youth and family team led activities.

Provisional dates for our online sessions are: -

Monday 25th January 7-8pm
Monday 15th March 7-8pm
Monday 14th June 7-8pm
Monday 11th October 7-8pm
Monday 13th December 7-8pm

Watch this space as they say for more information but put the date sin your diary now!

Join Us for 20 Minutes of Prayer

On the fourth Sunday of each month, we gather on Zoom from 3.00 to 3.20 pm as a prayer group, just before the national Zoom service.

It's a chance to pause in the middle of a busy week and pray together for people and situations on our minds. You're welcome to share a prayer or a concern or simply listen and join in quietly.

Whether you'd like to come regularly or just give it a try, we'd love to see you. To join the mailing list and receive the Zoom link, please email ministers.secretary@generalconference.org.uk

Gordon Kuphal – An Appreciation

Gordon Stanford Kuphal, BA, ALA : 15th October 1938 – 11th October 2026

Gordon Kuphal left this earthly life behind on Sunday, 11th October, just a few days short of what would have been his 88th birthday. For many, many people that will mean we have lost a valued and faithful friend. No more meet-ups, no more phone calls. For his widow, Viv, and his sister Rita and all her family, it will mean the loss of a beloved husband, brother and uncle, a man who has always been there, and who was dearly loved. For our Church, Gordon's experience, wisdom and great understanding of the Conference will no longer be available to us. Others must now take his place, but how to emulate all those wonderful qualities – the dedication, the calm, the balance, the level-headedness, and so much more?

Where to start? Since this a Church publication, the Church is the place to start. Gordon's family – his father, Billy, and mother, Iris, and sister Rita – all played their part in the life of the New Church community at Moseley Society in Birmingham. From a young age, Gordon was committed to his Saviour, the Risen and Glorified Lord Jesus Christ, and gradually entered into the life and heavenly teachings by which the New Church stands. When the Kuphal family, along with other people from the Midlands area of the General Conference, started attending gatherings at Purley Chase in the early 1950s, there began a precious association with this beautiful centre, set in the Warwickshire countryside, which persisted throughout the remainder of his life, including several decades as a member of the Purley House Committee. Indeed, his father played an important role from his professional background as a surveyor in bringing Purley Chase back to a state fit for the Church to use, following its occupation by the Army during WW2. It was a major blow for fifteen-year-old Gordon and his family when his father, Billy, who was dealing with a cancer diagnosis, died suddenly from a brain haemorrhage at the young age of fifty-seven on Easter Day in 1953.

It was not long before Gordon found himself playing a part in the British New Church Federation, which linked together the local youth groups scattered around the country, serving on the executive committee, editing their magazine The Plough, and taking on the role of President. In his early twenties he began attending the Annual Meetings of Conference, and before long was elected as a member of Conference Council. Beginning in 1960, he attended all but four Annual Meetings until his final appearance in 2025, being too unwell to travel to Swanwick in 2026.

Perhaps this is the point to write about Gordon's life outside the Church. From his schooldays in Birmingham, he established long-lasting friendships, some of which he maintained right up to the present day. In his early childhood he became an avid reader, and this gave him a lifelong interest in books. Linked with that was his ability in languages, which also served him well. His studies at King Edward's School led him to prepare for A-level exams in French, German and English Literature. In 1959 he began his studies in French and German at the University of Birmingham, graduating three years later. Gordon liked to tell the story of being presented with his bachelor's degree by the Chancellor of the University, former Prime Minister, the Rt.Hon. Anthony Eden.

Almost inevitably, he was drawn to a career in librarianship, working first for the University library. At the end of his first year he moved to London to take the postgraduate diploma course in librarianship at University College and, alongside his studies, took advantage of the cultural environment in the capital - museums and galleries, cinemas and theatres, concert halls and opera houses. On returning to Birmingham University, he was appointed as a Senior Library Assistant. However, his life was soon to change quite dramatically.

A number of new universities were being created in the 1960s, and Gordon felt attracted to apply for a post at Essex University on the outskirts of Colchester. Two factors influenced

his choice. A few miles from Colchester on the coast was the small town of Brightlingsea, and in the town was a society of the New Church. What's more, through the activities of the Federation, he had got to know several of the young people there - Frances Ellis (now Fisher), Chris Skinner, and the writer of these notes - so was assured of a warm welcome to north-east Essex. In October 1965, he took up the post of assistant science librarian at the University, living at first in a flat in Colchester. Gordon thoroughly enjoyed his time at Essex, forming lasting friendships and entering into the cultural life there. He was very grateful for the opportunity given to him and his colleagues to establish the Essex University Library.

Around the age of thirty, Gordon was looking to become a home owner, and at the time a local builder, Jarvis Builders, who also happened to be a New Churchman, was building new homes in Brightlingsea. The opportunity was there, Gordon grasped it, and a few days before Christmas 1968 he moved into his new home in Red Barn Road, his base for the next 25 years. He was especially pleased to have his beloved mother, Iris, stay with him there from time to time.

Meanwhile, another big change had come Gordon's way, this time in his commitment to the New Church. Locally, he had entered wholeheartedly into the life of the Church in Brightlingsea, joining its Church Committee, serving as Secretary from 1975-1981, and editing the Oasis newsletter for several years. Nationally, along with his responsibilities as a member of Conference Council, he served on the committee of the Missionary Society of the New Church, producing outreach books and leaflets; and became a vital member of Conference's Library and Archives Committee, work he was still doing through to the end of his life. He was a key member of the committee appointed to prepare a thorough revision of Conference's constitution. This was a work he took up again towards the end of his life when he served as the much-loved Secretary of the Constitution Revision Group. From early days Gordon's talent for record keeping shone through and he was the first choice when it came to taking the minutes of meetings. He did this work willingly and we became familiar with the sight of him sat at a desk jotting down his notes. He was well respected for his diligence in producing a full and accurate record. Not content with this, he would then proceed to catalogue the minutes under subject headings for easy reference. The Conference archives will be full of Gordon's minutes for future generations to enjoy.

In the 1980s Gordon served on the Committee appointed to prepare a new hymn book, Songs for Worship. His literary and musical interests (of which, more later) were put to good use in this work. I mentioned a big change. Well, in 1981 when the Secretary of Conference, W. Gordon Sutton, was due to retire, Gordon was nominated to become the second lay Secretary. The following 22 years up to his own retirement were a period of utter dedication to this vital role. His 13 years of service as an elected member of the Council had given him a thorough knowledge of the intricate workings of his Church, and he demonstrated his commitment by using all his talents, notably his capacity for impartiality, and all the thoroughness and faithfulness we associated with him. It's

sometimes said that our Lord is a God of surprises. Gordon had expected in 1981 that his appointment as Secretary of Conference would require him to leave his home in Brightlingsea to live somewhere more central. When he found that this assumption would not be necessary, he was delighted to retain his relationship with Brightlingsea and the Church there, but also to continue some of his links with colleagues at the university, and the cultural events there. What is more, he would be able to continue his membership of Colchester Choral Society. Shortly after arriving in Colchester, he had joined the Choral Society. His love for all things musical had begun in his childhood in the Kuphal family home Kings Heath, where he would listen to the BBC music broadcasts on the Home Service. Aged thirteen, he began violin lessons, and developed a modest skill which he was able to use over the coming years. He loved to sing with his deep bass voice, and joined in ad hoc choirs wherever there was a need, such as at the Conference Annual Meetings. Colchester Choral Society had become an important part of his life with its pattern of weekly rehearsals and the concerts given in Colchester. It was another community of which he could become a well-established and vital member during the more than sixty years since joining it. He served as the Society's President for a number of years.

A God of surprises? Well, certainly a God of love and wisdom, providing everything we need for the development of our character and personal life. You won't be surprised to learn that Gordon took on the role of librarian for the Choral Society! To fulfil that role, he had to liaise with the Essex County Music Librarian over the availability of scores for the choir. And who was that person? None other than Vivienne Sweeney. Yes, you've got it. Gordon's loving and devoted wife for the 36 years following their marriage in September 1990. Although Gordon had enjoyed several friendships with women over the years, his marriage to Viv was the greatest gift. Perhaps a surprise to Gordon, but certainly to his many friends. Praise be to the Lord!

In 1997 Gordon and Viv moved to a larger house Brightlingsea, giving them much needed space, not only for Gordon's office, his books, and his many files, but for them to have family and friends to visit.

I am very conscious that I have skimmed over so much, and omitted other interesting aspects of Gordon's life. I am personally grateful that in 2023 Gordon gave me, as well as other friends, a copy of his privately published memories of the earlier part of his life up to his marriage to Viv. Rummidging in the Past is a book I shall continue to pick up from time to time.

Along with other outstanding figures no longer here with us, all of us, from Viv outwards, now have to get on with our lives without Gordon's presence, and we turn to our Heavenly Father seeking His eternal presence and help. Undoubtedly, Gordon has been a major figure within the General Conference during the second half of the 20th Century and the first part of this one. One of life's special people, Gordon's personal qualities do not need listing. A truly Christian gentleman. We simply rejoice at having known him. Rejoice that

he is now safe and well in the Lord's keeping. And send our love and good wishes to his beloved Viv, to Rita and her children and all their family. Thank you, Lord, for giving Gordon to us, and for allowing us to be a part of his life.

Bruce Jarvis

The ceremonies to bid Gordon a formal farewell were held on 9th November. His Committal Service at Weeley Crematorium was conducted by his sister Rita Russell. Later the same day, a Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving was held at the United Church in Brightlingsea, conducted by the Revd Luke Smith and the Revd Bruce Jarvis. Following the closure of Brightlingsea New Church in 2016, Gordon had regularly worshipped at the United Church, as well as occasionally at St. James Church in the town, and at the General Church Society in Colchester. The Minister at the United Church, Revd Luke Smith, and members of the congregation, gave a warm welcome to the large number of family and friends who gathered to celebrate Gordon's life.

If any readers of E-News would like to see a copy of the Service, please would you contact Revd Bruce Jarvis at bruce.jarvis1942@gmail.com or by telephone at 07766 538755











Upcoming Events

11th December	Christmas Carol Service – Purley Chase
19-21st February	18 plus Weekend – Purley Chase
19-21st March	The Still Centre - Purley Chase
14-16th May	Dancing the Tree of Life - Purley Chase
28th May	May Family Weekend – Purley Chase
1st August	13-18 Summer Camp – Purley Chase
3rd September	Swedenborg Weekend - Purley Chase
29th October	October Family Weekend – Purley Chase
Full details	www.generalconference.org.uk/new-church-events