



Taizé Day at Seaburn Dene New Church

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Lifeline

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Lifeline



Good News from Chester

On Whit Sunday, members of the New Church in Chester witnessed the Confirmation of Grace and Adam Langan as Members of their Society. The Rev Norman Ryder, their grandfather, conducted the ceremony, introducing Grace as

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

In quietness and ...

I wonder if you can complete this Biblical quotation which comes from Isaiah 30 verse 15. Here it is, in full -

Thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; **in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.**'

I don't know about you but I rather like the level of quietness. I don't like silence going on for too long, and I'm not keen on a lot of noise either, although I do like a good loud ending to a Beethoven symphony. But quietness, to me, is very pleasant, very restorative, with subdued sounds going on around me in nature, or downstairs, or out on the road. It feels normal, like everything is happening as it should be, with a background hum to it all. One of the very first sounds I experienced in Australia was on a hot summer's evening - the 'sound of Australia', the quiet 'zinging' of insect life going on around and under the ground, a sound hanging in the warm evening air. Very enjoyable, very steady.

But there's also that personal quietness we need at times which I think is what Isaiah is talking about. A quietness inside us. Maybe an OK-ness. Isaiah puts the two words 'quietness' and 'confidence' side-by-side as if we are meant to be quietly confident about everything. That sounds like a good place to be in.

I had an interesting conversation with a friend over the phone and we got round

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Taizé Day at Seaburn Dene New Church

On Saturday, 30th May 2009 Seaburn Dene New Church held a Taizé-style day, led by Rev Bruce Jarvis.

What was all this about? Should I attend? All day Saturday? Things to do. Bring your own lunch! Give it a try, I thought, so I went along at 10.00 am, sandwiches packed, not knowing what to expect. I relaxed when I was welcomed with a choice of tea/coffee, and the relaxation increased as the day went on.

We were a small group, with people from different Christian backgrounds. Bruce gave us a brief introduction of what the Taizé spirit was all about. It was to be a day of harmony, spiritual reflection, prayer, Bible study, and singing some of the Taizé chants. The altar and sanctuary were lit by many candles to symbolise the light of God, giving a peaceful feeling as we sat in a semi-circle, listening to music while we meditated. We returned to this peaceful setting throughout the day for our worship times.

Another part of the Church was used as work area where Bruce patiently taught us Taizé chants, which we enjoyed very much and used later in the programme.

Our Bible Study was on John 20:19-23. We formed small groups downstairs to discuss the passage, and it was so interesting for us all to contribute our interpretation of Jesus' words.

The day was beautifully warm and sunny, so during the lunch break some of us went out into the Church grounds to eat our picnics. We also had time to look at the attractive display of books, CDs and other spiritual materials.

In the afternoon, after practising some more chants, we had our closing time of worship, which also included a reading from the Bible, prayers, and a period of reflection. We were each given a tea candle to light and place on mats in front of the lighted altar.

The day was such a contrast to the usual hustle and bustle that I felt completely at peace.

Thank you to Bruce and everyone involved for a very enjoyable experience.

Audrey Anderson

(see pictures on back page)

personal relations, and more, which make foresight exceedingly difficult. But have you and I such reasons, or excuses? Surely most Britons could and should be urgently concerned for the welfare of the next few generations!

Trust in God

The Bible seems to reassure us that God will let no harm come to faithful believers, and no doubt other religious traditions in some way encourage the belief that God will sort out the future, so it doesn't depend on us. The true promise can only be meant spiritually, for clearly good people are not protected from all bodily harm. To take such teachings quite literally, and use them to justify inaction, strikes most of us as weak-minded fanaticism, and now it could be even more destructive than attitudes which justify violence against infidels. Sadly though it does happen, and many decent religious people are affected by it to some degree. We must be wary of such naive trust in Providence – also of plain over-optimism.

Incredulity or bewilderment

The evidence is overwhelming, we are told, and the need to cut carbon emissions desperately urgent. Only fools and scoundrels (especially profit-seeking business and election-minded politicians) will deny it. Let's admit though that overwhelming evidence has been claimed for some pretty weird ideas before now. Is 'science' as authoritative as some claim for it? Then there are divergent opinions about the right solutions. Which form of renewable energy's best? Or can technology make fossil fuels OK? However sincere our wish to do what's right, we may be genuinely confused as to what that is just now.

Resignation and worse

What can I do about it? It's up to the government surely. Oh, it's too late already! Our fate's decided. Why should I bother when nobody else does? – There are various attitudes which make people evade responsibility, but behind them one suspects simple laziness or apathy. If we believe the evidence for this impending global emergency, and understand what we could do to prevent or at least mitigate it, yet do little or nothing, we are surely worse than stupid. We are damnably wicked!

Would you rather be thought stupid or wicked? Maybe the warning of stupidity is more effective with most of the cinema-going public, but for anyone with a religious or moral conscience isn't the accusation of wickedness worse?

Rev Ian Johnson

to talking about talking. I told her that sometimes, when I'm talking to someone, I feel I'm coming across too strongly at times and using up a lot of my energy trying to say what I mean. Not only that but it can be confusing for the listener to have to cope with it all. Perhaps it's the cost of being enthusiastic. My friend suggested I try saving my energy by using fewer words and to see how it goes. Quieten down and perhaps communicate even better.

One of the benefits of being able to be quiet is that we become better listeners, not only to each other, but to what is going on around us or coming into our mind. 'Be still and know that I am God.' Is that perhaps saying, Be still and then you might begin to know that I am God? And here are two other Bible verses about quietness: 'words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be those that are heard.' (Ecclesiastes 9:17) and from Paul's epistles, 'aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands.' (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

At an even deeper level than this, we're told that the Lord actually needs us to become quieter in order to be able to help us. Not slacker or slower, but quieter and less vociferous. Here's a telling passage from the Arcana:

Every time a person is engrossed in his own bodily or worldly interests, faith and charity do not exist. As a result he doesn't even think about spiritual or celestial things. But when these things in him quieten down, then the Lord acts from what is within him, and then faith and charity can be, and are, present. Arcana Caelestia 933

That's a sobering thought, isn't it, that when we get hot under the collar or bothered about things, we are preventing the Lord from acting on our behalf, and we take ourselves out of the overall co-operative flow of life that we are meant to be in with the Lord.

A group of us sat in a garden in the late evening, sharing ideas and friendship, jokes and pleasant company, remembering a mutual friend we'd lost. Suddenly it all went quiet and no one spoke - Hey, an angel has just passed by! - and still no one spoke. And it felt like it was meant to be quietly as it was, way beyond words, and much more in the heart.

Rev Julian Duckworth

The universe is like a theatre, upon the stage of which demonstrations of the existence of God and His oneness are continually being presented.

True Christian Religion 12

United Search for Divine Providence

Session 9



Divine Providence regards eternal and not temporal things, except so far as they can accord with eternal things.

Divine Providence always regards eternal things (DP 214-220)

Rather a formidable title! But a word of advice: before you start reading the text, first have a look at the *TABLE OF CONTENTS* at the beginning of the book and read carefully the headings for 214-220. You will then have a better picture of the ideas we shall be covering. This is rather like examining a map before setting out on a new journey - so that you don't get lost.

Section 1 (215) Please begin by reading Luke 12:13-21, which summarises this Session in a short parable. Take a few minutes to think about it, or discuss it if you are in a group. Take note of its simplicity, yet the punch line is very direct! (verse 20) Notice also that in ancient times people had values, which lasted beyond the grave. Those who were close to heaven looked to being useful to others. Our present ambitions are very different, yet 'ambition' should not be regarded as a dirty word! We would achieve nothing without it. No artist would produce great works; no teacher would develop necessary skill, etc. Think about your ambitions for a few moments. Can you identify them? There is no need to discuss them, as long as you know what they are! Sometime this month read Habakkuk chapter 2, which is a marvellous description of very wrong ambitions.

Section 2 (216-217) It is good to learn that dignities, honours and wealth are not in themselves a curse, but in the right circumstances, may be a blessing! Many millionaires have set up trusts which saved and healed millions of lives. This is a very practical section and a very important lesson for today's world. In fact in 217:4 we are told that 'trading and exchange of goods' go on between heavenly societies! That is not really so surprising, since our talents will blossom beyond our wildest dreams, and we shall want to share them with others. This is almost a necessity of our continuing development. Beautiful objects remind us of the

We can therefore see that the Lord *can* intervene in the natural world, and has done so, but as a general rule He does not. The heavens, therefore, will not intervene either, as they would never break the Lord's laws. But what about the hells? They certainly would love to break the Lord's laws. Does He let them?

The hells are certainly more aggressive than the heavens. Take this example from *Arcana Caelestia*:

Angels turn aside ends that are evil and introduce ones that are good. If this is not possible they withdraw; and the less possible it is, the further they withdraw and the more remote the position is from which they inflow, with the result that the evil spirits draw closer. For the angels cannot be present within evil ends, that is, within self-love and love of the world; even so, they remain present, but remotely so. **AC 5854**

There is nothing the hells would enjoy more than getting in amongst some good and truth, and perverting it into evil and falsity. Conceivably, therefore, appearing in the natural world as bacteria and viruses can be attributed to the hells. Both can evolve to protect themselves against antibiotics and vaccines. Both can suddenly appear, like the swine flu outbreak, or even popping up in locations remote from existing outbreaks when it's difficult to explain the transfer. Is this the hells physically present in the natural world?

To be continued next month

Stupid! - or What?

A recently-released film 'The Age of Stupid' looks back from a devastated world in 2055 to see that the human race in around 2009 was amazingly stupid in not recognising the urgent need to cut back the causes of global warming. This is effective and sobering in the extreme but I wonder, is 'stupid' the most appropriate word for such behaviour? What character traits are we collectively showing in our present half-hearted moves toward restraint?

Short-sightedness

Do we find it hard, even impossible, to look so far ahead? For many millions of people this is surely true and quite forgivable. All our fellow humans who are struggling every day to feed and protect their families can hardly be expected to show concern for next year, let alone 50 years ahead. Some of us who live in comparative luxury are also struggling with problems of health, employment,

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permitted by the Lord in order that mankind has the choice between good and evil. Only by opting for good, apparently of his own volition, can mankind attain heaven. However, the points do not go far enough. They seem only to try to justify the existence of natural evils, rather than look at the causes. We need to look deeper at the teachings of Swedenborg so that we can fully understand the incidence of illness and disease. Here are three different arguments that are based on Swedenborg's writings.

The presence of the hells

Swedenborg ties the spiritual world and the natural world closely together:

Whatever arises in the natural world has its origin and cause in those things that arise in the spiritual world; for to be sure the whole natural order is nothing other than a theatre representative of the Lord's kingdom. **Arcana Caelestia 8211**

What this is saying is that everything that takes place in the natural world occurs as a direct consequence of something in the spiritual world. This is totally acceptable and understandable when we consider moral evils, caused by mankind's chosen actions, but is more difficult to understand when it comes to natural evils. For example, evils caused by mankind can be seen and understood to be caused by the hells flowing into his mind, and then into his actions. We can picture this all the time when we see anger or jealousy in ourselves and our fellow human beings. Taking this a step further, can diseases like swine flu be physically caused by the hells? In other words, can the spiritual world act at, and be physically present at a physical level?

When the Lord created the universe, He established a whole series of natural laws, which we now call the laws of nature. By studying these laws and working with them, mankind can develop a sense of responsibility for his environment. The whole situation would become chaotic if the Lord kept changing or suspending or interfering with His own laws.

For example, we have laws for driving on motorways. One is that we always drive down the left hand side of the motorway. People driving in the opposite direction also drive on their left, and thus avoid head-on collisions. Imagine the chaos if people at random decided they would drive down the right hand side of the motorway. If the Lord decided randomly to break His own laws, chaos much worse than this would ensue. He has on occasion broken His own laws, though - when He came into the world as Jesus, He intervened, but this was in exceptional circumstances, and affected the whole of mankind, not just one specific person. Similarly, the laws of driving on motorways can be temporarily suspended in exceptional circumstances, such as allowing the emergency services to access the scene of an accident.

Lord's love and our gratitude to Him. But equally, notice the warning in 217:7 – in other words, 'You can't take it with you! Remind yourself from time to time about the Lord's 'ambition' for you! And isn't the present state of the world just the best time to look at it? Many people seem to hold on to their early goals and never change them.

Read Genesis 2:7 Just a single verse, but it sums up what we are! Abraham felt it when he was speaking in prayer: Genesis 18:27 and Psalm 103:8-18.

Section 3 (218-219) Surprising paragraphs, because they tell us that the Lord makes use of temporal things and in fact only He can bring them together with infinite things and that is good news from our point of view. In a sense, we shall always have *terra firma* under our feet. It will always be our foundation. It would be a great pity if we took a dislike to everything to do with the earth, our first home. Let us by all means love and cherish this cradle of our humanity. To reject it is like spitting into the face of our mother. These are two lovely paragraphs which establish our identity, but also remind us that only the Lord alone can maintain for us the right balance between the infinite and the eternal. When you consider such a thought it is as if you were filled with some other-worldly vibrations buzzing through you. Can you feel them? This is not simply an intellectual exercise; you are sensing the tremor of life itself! It is the way the 'Lord conjoins Himself to us by means of appearances.'

It is not as if the Lord was some sort of a filling station or a battery charger. His is a constant presence and continual influx of life, experienced as love and light. Without Him we would not just simply stop doing what we are doing. We would cease to be: Full Stop. And yet, we enjoy what is called 'real appearance'. This means that we really, really feel that life is our own. "It is me, that's what I am!" But there is a mention of something in subsection 219:6, which is remarkable because it is so very brief! This union, or conjunction we have with the Lord happens through correspondences! Now to us, who were brought up in the New Church, correspondences are those concepts by means of which we can begin to understand the spiritual meaning of the Word. For example, the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-9 and Mark 4:1-9 and explained in Matt 13:18-23 and Mark 4:11-15. What are we to make of these most important passages which are the key to understanding what the spiritual sense of the Word is all about? It is quite amazing that the Lord was by no means explaining to farmers how and where they ought to cast seeds to have a good harvest. They knew that better than anyone. And the disciples realised this and asked, "Now what is the real meaning of that story?" And they were rewarded with a very important key to all parables, and all stories in the Word. These are all about the inner realities of our life and how we can reap a rich spiritual harvest. Therefore everything has to do with 'correspondences', those inner vibrations as the Lord conjoins us with Him. We should all be buzzing with Divine vibrations when the Word is expounded! And that is dealt with in the next paragraph.

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Section (220) Please read first John 12:23-26, another of those passages which stir in your heart and lungs! And no, we should not be embarrassed by a touch of glory now and again! This natural shrine of our body was created for no other purpose but to sense the current of Divine Love passing through us. This is also the reason why no angel was created as such. We have first to enter through the natural gate so that we can really sense and appreciate what is spiritual and eternal. It is so much higher and better than we could ever be: in short it is the Divine Itself! And so our loving Father has created the optimum conditions for enjoyment and happiness. The Divine and temporal things are united, and that is only possible in people who can learn and understand this divine magic of human happiness and ecstasy! We are honoured by it. And that, in a nutshell is what the Divine Providence is all about.

Meditation and Prayers without words

This Session asks you to realise that you are the connection between the outermost material creation, and you can sense how your body is structured on a hard bony scaffold and crowned with the dome of the skull where the brain, the most complicated computer, lies. It connects you with most sublime thoughts and sensations of love that are too intense to be described adequately. We can sense eternity, and know that your Creator loves you infinitely, notwithstanding the fact that He loves every other person as fully. We can sense the real brotherhood of all people.

Mediation of the Prophet Haggai (only 2 chapters!). However, they are concerned with the rebuilding of the Church within us. This is represented by rebuilding the Temple, but we have to put material concepts behind us. Only the spiritual 'Church' within us can ever be truly everlasting. But to attain it, there has to be a lot of tearing down the old structures which need to be replaced by the New Temple, the New Jerusalem. Haggai becomes very personal. Read the prophet once a week this month and see if your attitudes change as you become aware of your inner development.

Christopher Hasler

This session is part of a complete course being published in Lifeline for use by individuals and groups. It is also available online as a leaflet which can be downloaded and easily printed.

To find out more go to: **www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk**

Click on Resources and then United Search for Divine Providence. You will find an Introduction and Invitation to the course and the Session notes as they become available.

of penicillin, many bacteria have evolved so as to become immune to its effect, and that of many other antibiotics. There is now at least one bacterium that is immune to practically every antibiotic - an alarming thought. This has ostensibly been brought about by the eagerness of doctors to prescribe antibiotics, but who would have predicted the rapid evolution of bacteria a mere tens of years ago?

Other illnesses are caused simply by our bodies deteriorating over our lifetimes. Examples of this are arthritis and rheumatism, where the sufferers have constant and unrelieved discomfort from these conditions. A different category of this kind of illness covers Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, with mental deterioration and physical incapacity. These are often due to our bodies failing to produce enough of the appropriate substances to prevent them.

A third kind of illness is brought about by our lifestyle - overindulgence in food and drink, or excesses of things we claim to do for pleasure can lead to heart disease, strokes, lung cancer and other life threatening conditions.

So the question arises, can we blame God, or the hells, or ourselves for these?

Other views

Outside the New Church, people struggle to explain natural evils. Various points are argued, for example:

- God cannot be all-powerful, or else He would stop all these evils.
- God must be cruel and vindictive to allow all these evils to happen.
- God uses these evils as punishment for our sins.

As the New Church believes the Lord to be an omnipotent loving God, these points cannot be accepted. On the more positive side, other arguments are made:

- Natural disasters teach mankind to protect themselves for their own benefit in order to improve their world, and learn from experience of the evils that need to exist to enable mankind to have knowledge of evil.
- These evils are necessary because there must be fear in order to have courage, there must be vice for there to be virtue, there must be suffering so that we can learn to bear it cheerfully.
- Mankind must have access to a full set of possible experiences, both good and evil. If suffering and pain were absent, the world would be less good than it is.

These points reflect a more Swedenborgian view. Evil has to exist, and is

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Now I would like to add a personal note. After just a day at home in Bournemouth I returned to Purley Chase (with 2 of my grandchildren) to help at Young Family's weekend from Friday 22nd to Monday 25th May. 48 people from most areas of the UK attended – 23 babies, children and young people, 18 parents and 7 helpers (including 4 'grannies'). The sun shone on us in all ways! Thanks must go to Jenny and Steve Jones for planning and leading a truly wonderful, inspiring weekend of workshops, play, an outing, team games, social time and worship. Thanks also go to Anne and her team for the massive effort made.

The subject was 'Spiritual Journeys'. David Lomax led the adults, and the 3 younger groups created varied experiences on the theme. Everyone's spiritual journey was enhanced by this event – a success to celebrate.

We have so much to be thankful for. Let us be positive as we walk our individual paths together.

Judith Wilson
May 2009

Some Reflections on Swine Flu

This is the first part of a two part article by Alan Bowie in which he reflects on the nature and source of disease.



Introduction

At the start of the 21st century, we see all sorts of events happening in the world that somehow defy explanation. The swine flu outbreak worldwide, and the recent earthquake in Italy when hundreds of people were killed are but two examples. Some people refer to these as *natural* evils which simply occur in the world round about us, as opposed to *moral* evils which can be attributed to acts of mankind.

If swine flu is a natural evil, who can we blame for causing it? Or can we blame anyone?

Illness and disease

Many diseases are caused by viruses or bacteria, which are living organisms with a remarkable capacity to mutate. In the sixty years or so since the discovery

Making Connections on the Madrid Metro

Our use of words often causes us to miss out on the deeper and more subtle meaning of them especially when we use them as theological terms.

Take the word *correspondence* for example. The Merriam-Webster Online dictionary defines *correspondence* principally as:

1. The agreement of things with one another
2. Communication by letters;
also: the letters exchanged

Now we are on solid ground here as I am sure everyone would use *correspondence* with either of these two meanings. But now consider what John Chadwick's Lexicon of Swedenborg's Latin has to say on the word translated in English as *correspondence*.

The Latin word used by Swedenborg is *correspondentia* which the Lexicon describes (in summary form) as follows:

1. A mutual relationship of one thing with another
2. The relationship between natural objects and spiritual ideas
3. An object which seems to convey a corresponding spiritual idea

And so when we come across the word *correspondence* in the Writings we immediately know that Swedenborg is not talking about letters but about the fact that something natural can have a *correspondence* with something spiritual – we can say simply for example that water corresponds to truth. But even the Lexicon fails to draw us towards a deeper or more subtle meaning of the word.

But this is where the Madrid Metro comes in! My wife and I were fortunate recently to spend a few days in Madrid, often travelling about on the inexpensive Metro system. As with most public transport these days there are visible and audible announcements of where the train is going and what the next stop will be. If you were travelling north on Line 2 and the next station was Cuatro Caminos, where you could change to Lines 1 and 6, you would hear and see an announcement with these words:



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Próximo estación, Cuatro Caminos, correspondencia con línea uno y línea seis.

Now when I first heard and saw this I was amazed at the use of the Spanish word *correspondencia*, which, although I had done some evening classes in Spanish, I had never come across before. Immediately I thought of the use of the word *correspondence* in the Writings but here the word was being used like we might use “*change for lines 1 and 6*” or “*connections to lines 1 and 6*”. Clearly Spanish had a meaning for this word beyond our normal meanings in English.

When I got home I looked up the Spanish definition for *correspondencia* and found the following:

1. Correspondence, mail
2. Equivalence
3. Connection, interchange

So whilst the first two definitions were similar to the English there was the additional meaning of connection and interchange.

So we can say that a *correspondence* is also a connection or interchange between one thing and another. But wait a minute, isn't that just what letter writing between two people achieves. Letter writing that turns into correspondence links two people together making connections between them, allowing them to interchange thoughts and feelings. Perhaps the meaning was there all along but had been overlooked.

A *correspondence*, as used by Swedenborg, is surely not just a matter of the relationship between natural objects and spiritual ideas as when we say that water corresponds to truth but a living link, a connection and interchange between two planes of life, one natural and one spiritual. Isn't it marvellous that our ideas about spiritual matters can be influenced by even a simple trip on the Madrid Metro!

Alan Misson

From the Governing Council ...

Purley Chase was again bathed in sunshine throughout our meetings on 18th and 19th May with the carpet of blue bells just beginning to fade but still glorious. Conference's 8 elected Trustees, CEO and Treasurer, Senior Minister, visiting Minister for communication purposes (David Lomax), and Conference Recorder (Noreen Simpson) gathered together after lunch for a prayerful time led by Mary Duckworth.

For Noreen this was to be the last meeting; she was appreciated then thanked. Noreen has served the church in this way for 5 years – would you like to help by replacing her to record Council minutes?

The purpose of the Governing Council is to ensure that policies are developed to enable the organisation to move forward. The challenges are obvious in times of falling membership and financial shortfall. These issues bring new priorities.

Plans are needed to support what we currently have. At this time 8 ministers are employed full or part-time, 5 in 'traditional' roles (others being the Senior Minister and SOLCe and Purley Ministers) with a similar number of retired ministers whose work is also supported. The result is that all but one congregation is served by an ordained person some times during the year. CAM is sustained by an employed leader, a team and training, so that the work of the church can continue week by week. Consultations continue with churches and groups who approach the Council for help and groups are being re-considered. Most churches remain financially independent and also support the above through the central payment scheme. Here the discussion of policy and finance merge for a while!

Purley Chase links what we now have with new ways ahead and the Council looks very closely at relevant plans and finance. With its colourful history it has been in Conference ownership for many years being as much loved by the churches' forefathers as it is today. In how many Council agendas has it featured one might ask! The programme is developing providing a wide choice of material and the facilities are demonstrably suitable for all ages. At many events church members share with newly-made friends so that its popularity is growing. Doubling up of events is proving successful – a new venture for Purley. Future policy is that it should pay for itself but currently investment income is used to the same extent as for the 'old Purley' - when depreciation and subsidies to the church are taken into account.

New ways ahead are supported in the same way, but are sadly temporarily threatened by financial constraints. Plans continue, but, sadly, with necessarily minimum support, for new workshops, websites and alternative ministries.

Every area of involvement is 'in the melting pot' including alternative ways to manage our charity in the future. Following last years' AGM discussions have taken place on the Committee of Ministers and between Ministry and Trustees: now the issues will be before members again at the AGM in July. The Council needs your involvement, help with ideas and support. Let us all work together at the AGM to bring about positive outcomes under the Lord's guidance.

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