



Rev Christine Bank Rev Rita Russell Rev Catherine Lauber
 Rev Clifford Curry Rev David Gaffney

Family Holy Supper Service Ministers
 (see page 8)



Rev Helen Brown Rev Jack Dunion

New ministers ordained at Conference 2009
 (see page 17)

Lifeline

Lifeline is published in the first week of the month by the General Conference of the New Church. Articles and notices should reach the editor by the end of the second week of the month prior to publication.

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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.

On your feet!

Senior Minister's Address to Conference

Three years ago I focussed on the heart of the matter, then breath of life, balancing the heart and the lungs, love and wisdom. Last year we expressed these in use by stretching forth our hands. This year we shall stand on our feet. Where are they taking us?

When we met yesterday, we had fun standing up introducing ourselves, getting to know the children, their families and each other, whom the Lord had called together. We lived out our Conference theme from Mark 10:49, 'Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.'

During the year I have to admit to not feeling cheerful, to feeling rather low, downhearted, as the severity of the high deficit Conference is carrying hit home. By continuing to sell investments to meet the shortfall, Conference's income would not be sustainable in just a few years. How could we drastically reduce costs and dramatically increase income? Our efforts seemed merely to be nibbling at the edge. The Church seemed to be crumbling! Yet the real Church does not need money to exist. It lives in our hearts and minds. We do need to learn about the Lord and his Word and dedicate our lives to him. The real Church is the Lord's. He will not let it fail. There will always be a Church.

It is so easy to be like the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, sitting by the roadside. We can be blinded by the demands of the world and our own selves. I think I know what's needed and rush off to do it. I don't see clearly. Bartimaeus somehow became aware of Jesus approaching. He must have known something about Jesus - that he could make a difference - because he suddenly started shouting, 'Jesus, have mercy on me!'

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After the evening meal there was another choice of sessions available – 'Watch your language' with Rev Michael Stanley, 'Short courses available for groups or individuals with Helen Newton', 'Scared Dance with Rev Rita Russell'. The day closed with a beautiful meditative service led by Rev Helen Brown.

Friday 31st July

At the beginning of Friday morning's sessions it was announced that the offertory taken during the Conference Ordination Service had amounted to £2532. The Report of the Committee for Auxiliary Ministry was presented by Jan Millar. During her review of the work of CAM she congratulated Geoffrey Cunningham, Stephen Russell-Lacy and Norman James Brown who had become Recognised Worship Leaders in 1979 and had now completed 30 years in the role. Jan was thanked for her wonderful work for CAM but her presentation was cut short to allow a return to the issue of the 2010 Annual Meeting.

Since the debate late Thursday morning, the Governing Council had reviewed the possible ways forward and came back to the meeting with a new motion that Conference 2010 should be held next year from Monday 26th July to Thursday 29th July at Swanwick. More discussion followed but Conference as a whole was delighted with the motion and it was passed. A second motion was also passed allowing the Governing Council to talk about a future Conference at Purley Chase.

Following a review of the 2009 Conference closing Family Worship was led by Rev Jack Dunion during which all the children present showed what they had done during the week (see pictures on page 18).

Although the above report chronicles the main events of Conference it omits details of all the events put on for children and young people every day which enabled their parents to take part in the main Conference programme. The whole Church owes a debt of gratitude to the many organisers and carers who made this possible and ensured that Conference 2009 was an excellent family occasion with good integration across all the ages present.

Conference Pictures

To view a more complete set of pictures from Conference 2009 go to
www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk
Click on Image Gallery and follow the instructions to find the
'Conferences' folder and then 'Conference 2009'.



Some of the children's work presented at the end of Conference



We are like Bartimaeus at times, unable to move from our stuck position. We can't see where to go, until somehow we get a sense of the Lord's presence and we cry out to him for help. We won't be discouraged. As soon as he calls, we are on our feet, dropping our preconceived ideas, alert, ready for whatever he wants us to do. Jesus asks, 'What do you want me to do for you?' Bartimaeus did not hesitate. 'I want to see,' he said. 'Go, your faith has healed you,' Jesus replied. And Bartimaeus followed him.

What do we want Jesus to do for us? Do we also reply, 'I want to see. I want to know what to do, where to go.' Do we trust that he can heal us, make us see? We don't know how far Bartimaeus followed Jesus, whether just a little way out of Jericho or all the way to Jerusalem. At times we might follow a short distance and get distracted, at others we might make it to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem! 'Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem.' These words from Psalm 122 kept coming to mind as I thought about this address. They wouldn't leave me. 'Jerusalem...where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to praise the name of the Lord.' Jerusalem, the place of pilgrimage and worship, because of the temple housing the holy of holies, where the ark of the covenant rested containing the two tablets of stone, on which the ten commandments were written. The place of meeting with God.

The reason Moses gave to Pharaoh for letting the Israelites leave their bondage in Egypt was to go and worship their God out in the desert on Mount Sinai. It was at the top of that mountain where Moses met with God and was given the ten commandments written on two stones. God had brought the Israelites to freedom, to Him. The commandments were the means of staying in that freedom, of staying with Him. So a wooden box, the ark of the covenant, was made to keep them in, and a tent, or tabernacle, in which to keep the ark according to the Lord's instructions. This was carried through the wilderness to Canaan, the Promised Land. It was by the ark that Moses met with God during the journey. It was always a powerful symbol of God's presence with his people. King David brought it into Jerusalem and his son, Solomon, built a temple for it there when he became king. So the temple in Jerusalem became the focus of worship. Three times a year the people went to offer sacrifices and celebrate the feasts.

Jesus likewise went to Jerusalem to celebrate for the last time. We might follow with Bartimaeus on the long road up through the brown wilderness of Judea with few shrubs in sight. We might enter Jerusalem with Jesus as he was acclaimed with palms spread at his feet and shouts of 'Hosanna!' Such excitement! But can we stay the course? Are we, too, prepared to 'drink the cup' that Jesus knew lay before him? Can we suffer betrayal, condemnation and stay true to our Lord, offering ourselves totally to Him and in so doing gain everlasting life? From being regarded as the 'Highest' he soon became the lowest, crucified with thieves and robbers. This 'end' brought about a new beginning. For us such a journey brings new birth, new life. When we allow the Lord to reign in our hearts, this also brings

peace.

Psalm 122 continues,

'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within you walls and security within your citadels.'

Jerusalem, city of peace. 'Salem', peace. 'Salaam', 'shalom'. 'Peace be with you.' How ironic that Jerusalem, the city of peace, must be the most fought over city on earth. The Babylonians destroyed it and it was rebuilt when the exiles returned. The Romans held sway in Jesus' time. Holy sites have been fought over and changed hands many times between the Jews, Muslims and Christians. Atrocities have been perpetrated in the name of religion. The temple mount, where Solomon's temple and then Herod's temple stood, is now an Arab Muslim stronghold with two mosques. The Dome of the Rock now stands there gleaming, The Jews are left with nothing but a wall, the 'Wailing Wall' to link them to the temple, their most holy site. Christians follow in Christ's footsteps along the Via Dolorosa, retracing his last twenty-four hours.

We still need to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and to say with the Psalmist, 'Peace be within you.' Meaningful as it is to follow Jesus to Jerusalem, Jesus did say to the woman at the well in Samaria, 'A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.' [John 4:21-24].

So we move from the earthly city of Jerusalem to the heavenly city, 'the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.' [Revelation 21:2]. We don't need a temple or a church to worship in. We can worship wherever we are 'in spirit and in truth'. The teachings of the New Church, symbolised by the Holy City, can open up God's Word to us and reveal spiritual, heavenly life, so that we have a great desire to enter the bright city, to live in its light and drink of the water of life freely. Wherever we are, we can be in that city loving and praising the Lord for all his good gifts and constant provision for us, for giving us all we have and for the ability to love Him in return.

We can share in his joy, expressed in Psalm 122, which Swedenborg describes as expressing 'the joy of the Lord over the New Church where he reigns.' [Prophets and Psalms]. We can certainly cheer up, get on our feet and respond to his call. Then our feet can indeed stand 'in your gates, O Jerusalem.' 'Peace be within you.'

Rev Mary Duckworth

feet to speak, often with great emotion, about the need to continue with the style of Conference that had developed over the past few years involving children and families. Some looked for a compromise solution involving a short business meeting and a separate spiritual and inspirational assembly perhaps biennially. Others felt that it was essential that an annual meeting of the type now enjoyed by all should be continued as a priority and the funds found to support it. Unfortunately it was impossible in the time before lunch to conclude the debate so it was scheduled to continue again on Friday morning.

At 2.30pm it was time for the Conference Ordination Service held in the Chapel at the conference centre. Worship was led by the Senior Minister, Rev Mary Duckworth, with a children's talk given by Rev David Lomax who also gave the Address on the subject of 'Dust' (printed in the August 2009 Lifeline). The Ordaining Ministers were Rev Robert Gill who ordained Jack Dunion and Rev Ian Russell who ordained Helen Brown. Following ordination the new ministers Rev Helen Brown and Rev Jack Dunion were presented to the congregation by Rev Mary Duckworth who led them on a walk round the chapel. During the service the choir sang a beautiful rendition of 'In Your Presence' by Ken Madema. At the close of the service a large number of photographs were taken and the congregation filed out of the Chapel to greet Helen and Jack. This fine and uplifting service was concluded by tea in the conference hall for Helen and Jack's families and Conference attendees.



Rev Jack Dunion **Presentation to the Congregation**
Rev Mary Duckworth **Rev Helen Brown**

then moved onto the issue of Non-Stipendiary Ministry before turning to the Policy Statement on Sexual Orientation. He commented that the statement (page 13 June 2009 Lifeline) was “a statement of the blindingly obvious” but it nevertheless took a great deal of time to obtain an essential unanimity within the ministers’ committee. With regard to the two key issues remaining (see earlier note on Tuesday morning) he couldn’t say that the ministers’ committee would reach ‘essential unanimity’ in the near future. However in considering the way forward it was vital that the ministry remain true to the Lord, charitable to the neighbour, and respectful of each other. Robert expressed his delight at the appointment of two Lay Pastors during the year and acknowledged the debt of gratitude we owe the Auxiliary Ministry generally who have taken on an increasing workload. It was important, he said, to recognise this fact by bringing together in some way the three separate lists that currently exist of Ordained Ministers, Auxiliary Ministry and CAM Celebrants. Robert concluded by talking about Helen Brown and Jack Dunion, due to be ordained later that day, who were two people with very different styles, backgrounds, routes to ministry and visions for the future and he was delighted that they had now reached ordination.

After coffee there was a presentation by Rev David Lomax on the work of the Swedenborg Open Learning Centre (New Church College). He commenced by presenting a Level 1 certificate to Helen Newton and Graduation certificates to Jack Dunion and Helen Brown. He then went on to talk about the foundations of SOLCe in terms of the buildings, the Word and the Writings, the precious gem stones of truth. He explained how the curriculum had been developing and changing from a substantially knowledge based curriculum to one which involved far more skills training and development of awareness. Awareness involves trying to get a hold on what goes on within a person when called and preparing for ministry and how their vision of ministry develops and then to use this self-awareness to help develop awareness of other peoples states. He concluded by



Rev David Lomax

Helen Newton

talking about the work underway to forge greater links with the wider community and to extend the use of the college building.

It was then time to consider the proposal to hold the Annual meeting at Purley Chase in 2010. The proposal was for a 2 day business meeting at Purley Chase which would help reduce costs. Many people got to their

United Search for Divine Providence



Session 11

The laws of permission are also the Laws of Divine Providence

There are no laws of permission by themselves, separate from the Laws of Divine Providence – they are in fact the same!
(DP 234-274)

It is difficult not to call each section ‘the most important in the book!’ Again, look carefully at the *TABLE OF CONTENTS*, so that you do not get lost in the details. But something in this chapter is really very important, especially after the political storms we have been following recently. It is as if in the 18th century the Lord said, I will open all my ledgers and accounts, so that you can see how I work and the full reasons for it. This is really something unique and extraordinary. Make sure you don’t miss the point!

Section 1 (234-247) All of us have been puzzled at some time with the things that happen around us: disasters, financial crises, terrible diseases, wars with extreme cruelty and dreadful weapons. We wonder, “Why doesn’t God interfere to stop it?” It would be good, before we start, if you were to sit quietly for a few moments to think about such questions or even doubts you may have had. Write some of these questions down now. I promise, you should have the answer when you reach 274. The present section is really a resume of what will be explained in greater detail as you read on, but it is good to be aware that there are many possible angles of approach. Also there are many things which may cause us doubts or worries; and some are in the Bible itself.

Section 2 (241-248) There are many biblical contradictions, which make people throw their arms up in despair. In the New Church we are blessed in knowing that there is a spiritual sense in the Word, so that we do not have to take everything literally. No, there was no such person as Adam, who in fact represents many generations in their gradual decline. Cain and Able represent

the dual and continuing conflict of faith versus charity. The development unfolds; and yet the Lord does not seem to interfere or we would have no freedom, and we would cease to be human. Evils need to be seen, even experienced, before they can be overcome. Even the strange story of Solomon and his many foreign women represents that the Lord can unite with many strange religions without rejecting them. So here is a quite different explanation of what we might regard as degrading.

Section 3 (249-253) The wide-spread wickedness in the world worries all of us, and yet, the Lord does not step in. He “permits” such dreadful things to go on. Let us look at it from a more personal experience. If you are a parent (or uncle or auntie) your youngsters’ behaviour may upset you very deeply and you know that what they are up to is wrong and will bring them a lot of trouble and suffering. But you do not stop loving them (sometimes the opposite!) : you grin and bear it, hoping that in the end it will all come right. If you did reject them, because they are disobedient, you would not be allowing them the freedom to develop – often through making mistakes. The Lord also gives us time and opportunity to learn, and He never takes our freedom away from us. “Evils are permitted for the sake of the end which is salvation.” Read 249:4 with special attention: it is particularly applicable to our times. The point being made is that we should not seek status or wealth for their own sake, but only as means of opening doors of opportunity of greater service to the neighbour. You may like to discuss this in a group, but keep the focus on yourself, not the wicked world outside!

It is of course a bit of a shock to learn that the wicked at heart often perform uses with greater zeal than the pious. They have greater motivation! In fact, the Lord has to use the wicked to get things done. That is often how He “provides”. Note 250:4 and read Luke 16:1-12 in full - a parable, which often puzzles us. In brief, we owe everything we have to the Lord, and there is no way we can repay Him; but we can please Him by sharing what He has given us with others. 251:2 is very sobering : from birth we are a little hell, in perpetual discord with heaven! Alas, we can see flashes of hell fire in a child’s eyes when things do not go his/her way. That there are a lot of battles described in the Bible we should not be surprised. This is going on within us, and every battle is the concern of Divine Providence. So fight on!

Section 4 (254-261) This is a universal problem with most religions. A Christian may wonder why God allowed Islam to appear in the 7th century AD to challenge Christianity. Muslims may be puzzled why Allah does not do away with all unbelievers. 254 reminds us that religion is spread from person to person, not directly from God, so there are a lot of opportunities to get human concepts mixed up with the message.

But it has already been explained that the Lord makes use of our selfishness to

age party with a range of games and hilarious items including an amazing version of Goldilocks and the Three Bears which captivated both children and adults alike. To see Rev Michael Stanley as Goldilocks was indeed a revelation. Finally Rev David Gaffney brought us together for evening worship.



Children entranced by
'Goldilocks and the Three Bears



Rev Michael Stanley as
'Goldilocks'

Thursday 30th July

Rev Clifford Curry captivated and entranced the children during morning worship with their use of hands. He showed them that if they raised their hands everyone in the room stood up and if they lowered them everyone sat down! He talked about how we can serve God with our hands and how we can use them for prayer.

At 10am Rev Robert Gill started his presentation of the Report of the Ministers’ Committee. Robert first thanked Rev Mary Duckworth for her work and pastoral care as Senior Minister. He then referred to the fact that Rev Bruce Jarvis had withdrawn his acceptance of the role of Senior Minister to follow Mary Duckworth due to health reasons. As a result a new nomination for Senior Minister is being sought and the opportunity is being taken to review the role and to consider the essential uses of the job. Robert



Rev Robert Gill

'good' in the world but people are hungry for the truth to know what really is good. There is a huge gap between society and the church and we need to find clever ways of getting the message out there and getting the heart back into society. Above all in our work with young people we mustn't say "You need to do it our way".

Jack then showed a music DVD of the Black Eyed Peas singing "Where is the love". Here are some extracts from the song.

*But if you only have love for your own race
Then you only leave space to discriminate
And to discriminate only generates hate
And if you hatin you're bound to get irate
Yeah madness is what you demonstrate
And that's exactly how anger works and operates
You gotta have love just to set it straight
Take control of your mind and meditate
Let your soul gravitate to the love y'all*

*People killing people dying
Children hurtin you hear them crying
Can you practice what you preach
Would you turn the other cheek?
Father Father Father help us
Send some guidance from above
Cause people got me got me questioning
Where is the love?*

*Whatever happened to the values of humanity
Whatever happened to the fairness and equality
Instead of spreading love, we're spreading animosity
Lack of understanding, leading us away from unity
That's the reason why sometimes I'm feeling under
That's the reason why sometimes I'm feeling down
It's no wonder why sometimes I'm feeling under
I gotta keep my faith alive, until love is found*

After a break for tea the 'Stepping Forward' session continued with a choice of special issues groups – Youth with Christine Sutton, Innovative worship with Judith Wilson, Purley Chase with David Gaffney, Social Involvement with Esther Byrne, Spirituality Centres with Michael Stanley. These sessions were followed by some free time and then the evening meal.

At 7.15pm a children's party commenced which gradually transformed into an all

get something achieved. A pious hermit who keeps silent in his cave will not reach many people! And yet, those who can reach many will often misuse the opportunity, and choose to get rich or gain a great personal following. In the end, people will prefer to follow a person they can see and hear, than to follow an invisible God. Notice the interesting point in 260 : Judaism continues because the Jews still read the Hebrew Scriptures and when this takes place there is a conjunction of heaven and the Lord with the human race.

Section 5 (262-274) This is the most extraordinary part of the book we are studying. It is all of 10 pages long, but it is perhaps the shortest and clearest explanation of the Trinity we have in the Writings. In itself, This is one of the reasons why many turn away from Christianity and become atheists. They cannot accept the Trinity of three Persons! It is really worth a careful study and discussion. It hinges on a simple conundrum : who conceived Jesus Christ if, as the orthodox Churches maintain, there already was a Son from eternity? If it was God the Father, then He would have two sons - one from eternity, one born in time!

Please read carefully, and discuss if possible in your group, the following texts: Isaiah 7:14-15; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:34-38; John 14:15-31. Be aware that this is the highest knowledge you can attain in this world. Give thanks for it! But also have sympathy for those who genuinely love the Lord, yet cannot really sort out the Trinity; and so they put it aside because, quite rightly, they know that the clergy do not understand it either, saying it is all a mystery. But it isn't : the orthodox view is a mistake and misunderstanding! The glorious truth is that God is One, and always has been. This One God had revealed Himself and we can see Him in our minds face-to-face, because in Him we see the One and Only God!

Prayers and Meditation

Keep thinking about the terrible state of mankind, and ask the Lord to strengthen your faith in Him. Accept that He is far more concerned than you are, but is not feeling helpless. He is gradually influencing us to recognise our mistakes and fight against them. We can't do more than that to help.

Psalm 16 shows 'The Lord's trust in Himself when He was on earth, because He was delivering the good, whom evil was infesting.'

(Quoted from Prophets & Psalms)

Read also: **Psalms 96-98**.

Christopher Hasler

Conference 2009 Report

Monday 27th July

Following the signing of the roll Conference began at 3.30pm with 'All age Family Worship' led by Rev Christine Bank on the theme of the importance of feet. After a break for tea the Senior Minister, Rev Mary Duckworth, ran a session in which all sorts of groups of people and families introduced themselves. This led into the first formal session of Conference including a welcome from the Chairman, David Sharrock and special introductions for a number of people. After the evening meal, this session continued with condolences for Edith Ayre and Rhoda Holmes and a range of announcements.

At 7.45pm a session on 'Strategic Planning' was introduced by Michael Clubb who gave a presentation on 'Conference Stepping Out' in which he commented that he felt the Lord was urging us to look at new ways of stepping out in new forms of ministry. Jack Dunnion talked about the 'Paisley Project' where it is hoped a completely new approach can be taken using the premises for a range of youth and other community groups. Rev Catherine Lauber spoke about the success of the 'on-line church' in America - www.swedenborgiancommunity.org - which provides a very different approach to 'church'. Helen Newton talked about the 'Soul Symbols' workshops and their success in interesting new people. Peter Wilson talked about the encouraging new start for Preston in hired premises.

Discussion followed on whether there should or should not be a strategic plan for the church and there was very mixed opinion as how to proceed. Further time for this subject was allocated later in the week.

Monday closed with a gentle reflective period of worship led by Rev Ian Johnson.

Tuesday 28th July

At 9.30am, after breakfast, there was Family Holy Supper Worship. This was a radical departure from previous years when children were generally not present at the traditional Holy Supper Service. Rev Rita Russell formed the service around the theme 'Love is' and she involved the children right from the start. Revs Clifford Curry, Catherine Lauber, Christine Bank and David Gaffney assisted Rita as servers and the whole atmosphere was joyous and worshipful with the children being offered a blessing or the elements depending on what their parents had previously indicated.

A number of questions followed David's presentation including a request that the role of Training and Development Officer, which will lapse at the end of the year, should be considered a priority appointment in the future. Mr Alan Benson spoke of the decision of the Accrington church to relinquish its role of trusteeship of its own property and to transfer the responsibility to Conference. Alan said, "This morning I have handed over the Title Deeds to the Chief Executive". Other speakers commented that leaving the debate about the Annual Meeting in 2010 at Purley Chase to Friday did not allow enough time and prevented those most affected to take part. A decision was therefore made to move the discussion to Thursday midday. Another important problem raised was how the absence of any guarantee of support for training and employment in ministry, because of the current financial difficulties, might deter new people coming forward.

At 2.45pm Conference returned to the subject of strategic planning which had been discussed first on Monday evening. Very different opinions were expressed on this subject but some of the things said were as follows:

- "We need to be open to other people's needs on their journey in this world."
- "We need to be open in our hearts to the Lord's leading."
- "There is a paradox of helping to maintain the local community of the church against the need to 'go out' – this leads to a very difficult dilemma."
- "To operate on the assumption that we can keep going with all the things we love and also go out and do new things is not realistic."
- "There is a need for local vision statements or 5 years plans that can interact with the Governing Council's overall strategic plan."
- "We are reaching out to satisfy others' needs not our own."



Jack Dunnion

At 3.15pm Jack Dunnion gave a presentation on 'Stepping Forward'. He started by showing a formula he had found in a Christian book:

$$d + Pr + r x Hw + pL = n/c$$

He went on to explain that 'd' represented the diagnosis of the current problem or issue, 'Pr' the prescription, 'r x Hw' resources times hard work, 'pL' the power of the Lord, and the result 'n/c' a new church. He commented that it was very telling that in an age when the Bible is available in ever increasing numbers and translations less and less young people are going to church. There is plenty of

priorities because we need to understand our priorities and the costs involved. We need to be able to say – “What is it we want to do?” – “What is the price tag?” – “Where are we going to find the funds?”

After coffee the Chairman, David Sharrock, introduced the Report of the Governing Council. The written report runs to 21 pages but David went through it highlighting some of the key points of particular interest or importance. He included reference to the:



David Sharrock

- Membership and work of the Governing Council.
- Forthcoming changes relating to Child Protection.
- Development of web sites..
- Success and progress of Purley Chase in increasing the range of events held there and attracting new people.
- Problems associated with inquorate societies.
- Difficulties in working through the current financial situation.
- Role of the Training and Development Officer. Helen Newton is coming towards the end of her final third year in this role and a great deal has been achieved especially in the development of workshops, marketing support for Purley Chase and production of new resources such as the Soul Symbols book and cards.
- Adoption of a non-stipendiary ministry with the same status and expenses as employed ministers.
- Proposal to hold the 2010 Annual Meeting at Purley Chase.
- Work of the Overseas Secretary, Rev Norman Ryder, who continues to keep in close contact with many New Church organisations and groups around the world.
- Change in the format of Lifeline which is proving popular.
- Vital use of the Home Worship scheme which continues to provide weekly services to people in this country and abroad.
- Introduction of Lay Pastors, with Trevor Millar serving the Dalton church and Stephen Thomas serving the East Sussex group.
- Sponsored events at Purley Chase for children, young people and families which often involve the very demanding task of providing 24 hour care for children with no parental supervision.
- Publication by Miss Gwendolen Rowe of ‘Sunrise’, a magazine for children and young people.

At 10.10am Rev Mary Duckworth, Senior Minister, commenced her address to Conference on the theme ‘On Your Feet’ using the text “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” This is part of the New International Version translation of the story of blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52. The address can be found in this issue of Lifeline on page 2.

After coffee Rev David Lomax introduced a session ‘Where shall we stand? Spiritual Principles as a guide for Morality’. David talked about the background to the studies on homosexuality (reported in Lifeline in the June 2009 issue) and how it had become necessary to document a ‘Formulation of Spiritual principles to aid further discussion’. There were two as yet unresolved issues on homosexuality – church ceremonies for same-sex unions and the eligibility for ordination of those in same-sex relationships. These were being considered by a group of four ministers, Rev Mary Duckworth, Rev Catherine Lauber, Rev David Lomax and Rev David Gaffney. Conference was given a copy of the principles and members of this group described them.

Spiritual Principles prepared for General Conference Annual Meeting

Universality

1. Love and compassion to all people
2. Non-judgement of internal states of another human being
3. Need for discernment

Principles of creation (including the conjugal principle)

1. Conjugal principle: union of love and wisdom in God, and the marriage of goodness and truth in people
2. Creation of masculine and feminine and bringing these together
3. Uniting love and wisdom bears good fruit
4. Conjugal principle flows through the feminine
5. The Lord's desire for us, and what the Lord allows
6. Variety within order is part of the Lord's spiritual design

Behaviour/morality

1. Inability to derive a moral code solely from revealed scripture without seeking enlightenment
2. Making assessments of external behaviour based on spiritual principles so that order is preserved
3. Consideration of exceptions to agreed moral norms in order to maintain spirituality

For the second half of this session Conference split into groups of three or four people and Rev Catherine Lauber encouraged the groups to try to use these principles to discuss two scenarios we might face. The first scenario related to Geoffrey and Sandra, who were living together, but with no talk of marriage, and

the idea that they might have a child. The second scenario simply changed Geoffrey's name to Jennifer.

After lunch there was a Bible Activity based on either Blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52 or Psalm 122. Eight different groups were available to choose from – singing, art, sacred dancing, hymn writing, drama, discussion, meditation, music – and each group encouraged its members to produce something based on the choice of readings. The result was amazing. New hymns, songs and music were composed and a new sacred dance put together. Art and drama was produced involving all ages and meditation and discussion took place. All these exiting activities were then presented back to Conference to great acclaim.



Lara Nicholls with some of the children's' work from the Bible Activity session.

Immediately prior to the evening meal Marion Curry led the whole of Conference in 'Singing Together', which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone despite the complexity of some of the pieces. At 7.30pm a choice of three sessions was available – 'Sailing through Swedenborg's Country', a talk and slide presentation by Rev Clifford Curry – 'Computer resources for worship leading' by Alan Misson – and 'Labyrinth' with Rev Rita Russell. The evening worship was led by Rev Michael Stanley and was a lovely meditative service on peace.

Wednesday 29th July

Family worship at 9.30am was led by Rev Gillian Gordon and she invited all the children to come forward and find a series of model vehicles such as an ambulance or a lorry to show how we all have different jobs and roles to play but yet can make up one 'body'. She then quoted from 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 about all the parts of the body working together.

At 10.00am the Treasurer of Conference, Nigel Sutton, commenced his review of the financial situation facing the organisation. Some of the key figures presented were as follows (all figures £'s):

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10 forecast
Expenditure	632449	617859	572000
Income	384183	437513	393000
Operating Deficit	-248266	-180346	-179000
Net Exceptional Items	-4793	+150202	-88000
Net Deficit	-253059	-30144	-267000

Note that in the 2008/9 year the exceptional items included £242964 proceeds from Closed Society/Institutional funds.

Nigel explained that the real problem facing Conference was the level of Operating Deficit, which if you put together the two years 2007/8 and 2008/9 came to £428612 (248266+180346). In the face of this scale of problem difficult decisions have had to be made in an attempt to reduce costs. Nigel continued by saying that our financial policy must be to move towards balancing income with expenditure so that the operating deficit is near zero.

In summarising the financial situation the Treasurer quoted from Genesis 45 and the story of when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and says "For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest." (Genesis 45:6). Joseph then looks after his brothers until at last they are able to return to their father Jacob and collect him – "and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived." (Genesis 45:27).

During the question and answer period that follows Nigel was thanked for his inspired and enjoyable report. The key point that emerged was the issue of