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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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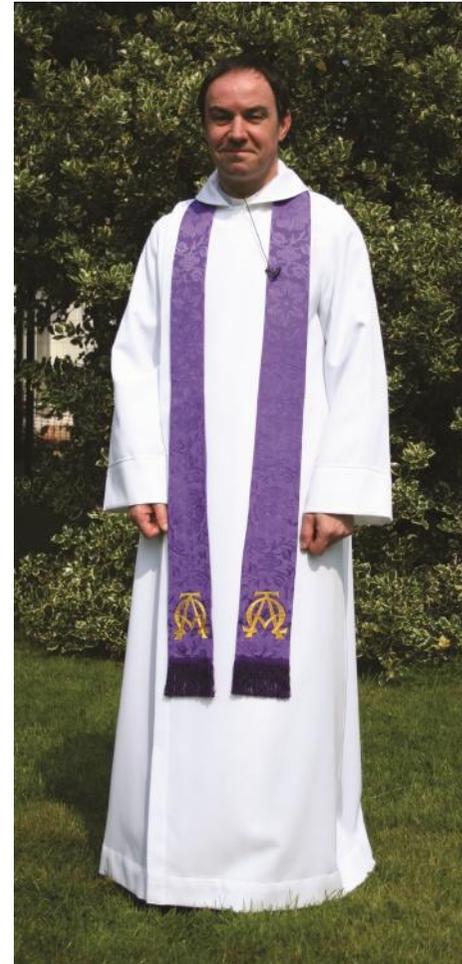
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ISSN 0308-3624



new church

Lifeline



Rev Jack Dunion
Conference Preacher
(see page 2)



Becky Jarratt
Her Vision for Ministry
(see page 12)

September 2012
Number 413

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

Conference 2012 - Conference Sermon

The Psalmist in 37:7 tells us: *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.* I wonder if you share my sense of what a great privilege it is to be alive in these extraordinary times. Many of our ancient ancestors have pointed to this as being a time of significant change. Whether it be the I Ching; the Maya; the Hopi; the Hindu's; the Aztec's, the Inca's, the Samaritan's, all suggest that we are approaching a time of spiritual change. Even on a material level I think we are witnessing a sense of that change now. But what about our Christian church, which today is facing enormous challenges, challenges that go right to the very heart of what we hold sacred; at times it can seem as though we are a city under siege; with the outside world pounding away at the walls of the Church.

For many people the decline of the Church is a very deep and painful experience, it's especially painful for those who have worked hard to nurture and preserve the Church; along with the strong principles it's built on. Not surprisingly we can become strongly attached to our church, seeing that it is a means by which we can preserve a sense of the Divine among the people. It hurts to see the church becoming disabled in performing this essential role in society. Our own Church is very much a part of that overall experience of decline, and we can well relate to other church organisations who struggle with the same problems. The early expectations within our Church were that the New Jerusalem would grow from our organisation and eventually supersede the traditional Church built up over two millennium. Our Church, though a separate organisation, took on the same outward form as the old Christian church. And with the benefit of hindsight, we can perhaps see that it was inevitable our church would not be immune to this general decline.

So what happened? Why did the Lord allow the Church He established to grow and then decline? It's a question I would like to try and address here. It's worth noting that the Lord Himself, while on earth, never gave any specific instructions about the form the church should take. He left that in our hands. So we might say the way the

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For the current issue of Lifeline, back issues and other resources visit:

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

Human Sexuality - Online Library

It became obvious both before and during Conference 2012 that the volume of letters, articles, reports and statements being made about the issue of Human Sexuality and its impact on Church Ceremonies could not be handled in printed editions of Lifeline without it dominating every issue for months to come. At the same time there is a great need for the laity to have the opportunity to consider the matters involved in depth in the same way that has been available to the Ministry.

To resolve this I am establishing an Online Library of relevant documents that readers can download and dip into as they require. However, I am well aware that not all readers of Lifeline or those interested in this subject have access to the internet. To try to mitigate this problem I would urge all readers who do have internet access to be aware of those who do not and if possible to make available local printed copies if they are required.

Whilst I already have some material ready to go into the library I would like to invite anybody who has written on this subject in the recent past or wishes to write on it now to let me have a copy of their document to place in the online library. It would be very helpful if any documents sent to me were in Word format. And if you are aware of any other documents that you think would be relevant please let me know so that I can see if it is possible to incorporate them also. The direct address of the online library is:

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk/human-sexuality.htm

To reach this indirectly go to **www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk** and then go to the Resources page where you will find a link to Human Sexuality.

Elsewhere in this issue I have made reference to two statements by the Ministry:

Committee of Ministers' Statement to Conference 2012
Statement of Unity from the Ministry

These documents will not be in the Library but will be available via links on the home page of the Lifeline website. The recording of the 'Any Questions' session will also be available from the home page.

I will provide a regular update on the contents of the online library in the printed issue of Lifeline.

Editor

our lungs and heart work hard to clean the blood and push it round our bodies. At the same time he invited the adults to read some projected text from the Writings on the role of the church as the heart and lungs of the universal kingdom of God. During the service the choir sang 'On eagle's wings' a devotional song by Michael Joncas loosely based on Psalm 91 and Isaiah 40:31. You can find the sermon Jack preached on page 2 of this issue. At the close of the service there was a beautiful piece of violin music played by Ruth Friend followed by David Glover playing 'You'll never walk alone' on the piano.

After a break for tea Rev David Gaffney briefly talked about Purley Chase and gave a summary of how activities there were growing and the work expanding. Purley Chase was no longer a green shoot - it had become a green stalk. This was followed by a session led by Kathie Brooks on the work of the Vision Team. This included a presentation by Cathy Mahmood on the web site developments taking place as part of the Vision Team work. The site can be found at www.spiritualfriends.org.uk

Rev Clifford and Marion Curry then presented an illustrated talk of their recent visit to the New Church in South Africa at Soweto. After the evening meal there were three sessions to choose from: Historical Society, 'Who do you think you are?' led by Rev Michael Stanley and Scared dance led by Rev Rita Russell.

Friday 27th July 2012

The two sessions before coffee on Friday morning encompassed All Age Days and Families and the activities of the children at Conference. It was very clear to see the tremendous work undertaken and the great commitment shown by Steve and Jenny Jones in developing the programme of All Age Days and related activities. This is a growth area for the church and needs to be encouraged and supported. Lara Nicholls had worked very hard with the younger children and they showed a lot of their very different work arising from the story of Noah. This included the 'Arky Arky' song. If you don't know it, it can be easily found on YouTube and is the story of Noah to the tune of 'Rise and Shine and Give God the Glory, Glory'. Tonia Jarvis had worked with the older ones using the theme of Jubilee. The children had been asked to say what they would do if they ruled the world and to mark the Olympics they made biscuits for the 5 rings. There was a musical slot in the feedback to Conference using 'Journey of Life' and a dramatic version of The Good Samaritan.

Very many people are involved with the organisation of Conference and before the closing service led by Rev Mary Duckworth there was an opportunity to thank them all.

See I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

Isaiah 49:16

Christian Church formed over 2 millennia wasn't necessarily the Lord's will, but more; what He allowed us to build, for the sake of the end in mind.

The Lord tells us: *The Father's will be done, as in heaven, so upon the earth.* So it's only to the extent we understand the Lord's will and His teaching about heaven that we can truly come to understand what the church on earth should be like. The Lord has led us to where we are today, in freedom according to "our" reasoning. We build the Church on earth according to what we think it should be like. It's not necessarily what the Lord wanted, but rather, what He permitted. And it's by understanding the providential laws of permission that many mysteries can be understood.

It shows why many things have been allowed to happen, both within the Church, and outside of it and the laws of permission can also throw light on why the Church; even our church, is in decline at this day. In Divine Providence 234 we hear how the laws of permission come about, not because the Lord wants something to happen, but because He cannot prevent it. We know the Lord must allow us to reject Him if we are to be in a position to freely choose Him. But how could an all powerful God not have prevented the apparent decline of the Church on earth; one which He Himself established? Well lets just think; what is the Lord's overall plan? It's to form a heaven of angels from the human race, is it not.

In His infinite wisdom, He could not prevent anything which would eventually progress that overall aim. It's imperative that the church and the world understands this; if, by preventing any pain in this temporary world, harm would be done to what is of eternal benefit, the Lord will not and cannot prevent it. We might think for example of those who have been tortured and murdered down the centuries by those establishing the Christian Church. People were treated horribly, but the Lord - who is infinite love and wisdom - couldn't possibly will such things.

But, if something eternally better will be the result, the Lord wouldn't be able to prevent it. He couldn't prevent it, because to do so would cause a far worse outcome for us all. Anything which progresses the Lord's eternal plan needs to be permitted, because it would be unwise to prevent it, and how could the Lord, who is Wisdom itself, act unwisely? He would then be acting against Himself.

But nevertheless, the dim light of this world demands an answer to the question "where does this leave the innocent people who suffer as a result"? Well we could never justify the many wicked things that have been done in the name of the church, many were obviously wrong. But, if we see it from an eternal perspective, where will those who have suffered be now? Won't the cruel things of this world be long forgotten and far behind them? Through the Gospel of Matthew The Lord gives us this assurance; 19:29

everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life

Our difficulty in understanding why the Lord must allow evils to happen, even within

His Church on earth, is due to our tendency to think about things from the light of this world. We can't fully comprehend eternal things from the light of this temporary world. Let me use this illustration: a small child, who is cutting teeth, is in no way concerned about the later years ahead of them. If possible they would have their parents get rid of the teeth without hesitation. "Never mind the future, I'm in pain now!" But if their parents listened to their complaints and had their teeth removed, what might be their child's reaction when they get to their teens and begin thinking about relationships? "Why didn't you just leave my teeth alone? All my friends have teeth and I don't; because of you!" Of course, any right minded parent would allow the teeth to grow, despite the pain it causes, knowing the long term benefits for their child. Most of you know better than I do that the older we get, the further ahead we are able to see and act accordingly. We are growing towards the Lord's eternal wisdom. If, having grown in wisdom for a few decades, we become wise enough to know we need to allow temporary things that our children don't yet understand, how much more does wisdom itself. The Lord doesn't just see a few decades ahead, nor a few thousand years, He sees everything! Be assured, we are in better hands than we often realise. The verse from Isaiah on the front page of our conference programme reads:

See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me

As our spiritual leader pointed out earlier, this speaks of an intensely personal relationship between us and our creator. He has us engraved on the palms of His hands; and our walls are ever before Him. 'Our walls' shaped by our own hands perhaps; protect our inner city from invading armies. The walls themselves take all the pain while protecting what is within. The walls, we are told, are the external truths of the church; even as it seems people are breaking down the walls; the Lord gives us this assurance - *I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.*

During a time of crisis the appearance is altogether different from the reality; in reality, we could not possibly be in safer hands. The Lord would never permit that which is spiritual and eternal to come to any harm; because that is the real reason He created all this in the first place.

It sometimes looks as if the Lord has abandoned His Church, because we cannot but reason from the dim light of this world. The Lord has allowed His Church to develop as it did, for eternal purposes. It had to be that way; till now. But the Church we Christians have built is merely the outer walls of the Lord's New Church. Some of the things that have been done in the name of the Church, even today challenge peoples' faith; and we know of course that all the good things in the Church won't make the press in this world. But whether through loyal service or through super ego, the Christian message has now spread to every corner of the globe. Before the Christian Church was even born, the Lord told us through Matthew:

this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come Matthew 24:14

problems. At the current rate she is able to undertake her studies she will not be in a position to be ordained for several years. Some suggestions were made that some interim form of recognition might be possible short of full ordination if this was really required. What does seem clear is that Becky's commitment and vision for ministry needs the establishment of some sort of project in the York area that could be sufficiently resourced to enable it to get underway prior to her ordination.

Jan Millar led the next session on the work of the Committee for Auxiliary Ministry (CAM). She invited Rev Gillian Gordon to come forward to present certificates to two new Accredited Worship Leaders, Tonia Jarvis and Susan Wilson. Following this there was a short play showing how some people welcome a new visitor in church and what can go wrong. This was an excellent presentation covering situations familiar to many people and showing how easy it was for those welcoming new people to push their views and ideas rather than simply listen to why the individual had come into the church. Are we really welcoming, do we listen to why they have come? Jan concluded by emphasising that one of the roles of CAM was to respond to and support requests for help from churches, groups and individuals - so, if you need help in auxiliary ministry, please ask!



Rev Gillian Gordon Susan Wilson



Tonia Jarvis

Rev Helen Brown then talked about the work of the Workshop Planning Team and the workshops that had been planned, resourced and offered over the past few years. She also gave some insight into how she had used the available materials. The latest production was 'Journeying Home' - a workshop about finding your true self based upon Exodus chapters 1 to 18. The structure is broadly in three parts, 'Breaking Free', 'Barriers and Saboteurs' and 'Sustenance for the Journey' and a beautifully illustrated book has been produced.

Thursday morning sessions concluded with Judith Wilson asking 'Who will do it?' She talked about two things - the need for a Child Care Coordinator to plan and encourage carers to come forward for next year's Conference - and the parlous state of the Council where there was a very serious shortage of key people.

After lunch it was time for the Conference Service led by Rev Jack Dunion. Jack commenced by bringing the children forward to tell them a story about an eagle and a mole. He then went on to get the children running hard on the spot to show how

present and possible future of activities for older children and young people. In particular she said that there was a need for children and young people to be involved in some practical way at a local level and she urged those present to identify possible activities. Alison also explained that although, very sadly, the Summer Camp last year was not held this year's Camp was expected to be a great success.

The next session did not turn out very well. A presentation was made by David Haseler on the principle of One Member One Vote (OMOV) in which he argued that with the rising number of members of Conference on the central register there was a need to lift the limit on the number who could vote at Conference. He also wished to remove the restriction on Society voting members. A presentation opposing the proposal was then made by Zoe Brooks. Unfortunately the concept of OMOV had been interpreted differently by the two presenters and as a result it was not possible for the debate to continue and the proposal was therefore withdrawn.

After the evening meal there was a fairly traditional Conference Social hosted by Jan Millar, which managed to combine games for the children, a brief pantomime which brought together Little Red Riding Hood and Robin Hood, a duet, a monologue and some poetry and then finished with country dancing.

The day closed with a very thoughtful act of worship led by Becky Jarratt who used part of John 17 as her theme. Becky also played and sang her own composition at the piano.

Thursday 26th July 2012

Family Worship on Thursday morning was led by Rev Gillian Gordon on the theme of Zacchaeus. As with the other family services the children were involved in acting out the story and everyone joined in singing '*Zacchaeus was a very little man*' and then watched a cartoon of the story with the same song but with the words '*Zacchaeus was a wee little man*'.

The first session on Thursday was on the work of the Swedenborg Open Learning Centre (SOLCe). Rev David Lomax introduced the session and then explained that Becky Jarratt would be talking about her vision for ministry. Becky's presentation was full of emotion and straight from the heart. She explained how following her families move to York she had been attracted to the approach taken at the Gateway Centre and the Global Centre which both provide different forms of 'church'. She had become convinced that the way forward for her ministry was to try to establish a type of community church which operated mainly during the week and in which she could use New Church teachings to support people in their everyday lives. She also felt that her main focus would be working with families and children. Becky also mentioned that, in a way, her proposal was a little bit like the church growth trial that had been proposed in the Renew Programme.

Needless to say everyone at Conference seemed to be highly supportive of the approach Becky wished to take but there was also recognition of some practical

Centuries ago, if those who seized the reigns of power within the Church hadn't been allowed to do so, ego or not, would the vital message of the Gospels be as widespread as it is today? The whole Christian Church may well have become attractive in the past to corrupt or power hungry men. But the Lord's wisdom shines through Luke's Gospel when He said: *the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind, than are the people of the light.*

To date, there have been over 6 billion Holy Bibles produced and distributed throughout the world in some 2000 languages. I ask you; would simple humble servants on their own be capable of spreading the Christian Church in such a way, with all its crusades and conquests? I seriously doubt that. The Lord has to allow the Church to be formed partially through our self love and love of the world; He couldn't prevent it due to knowing the eternal outcome. And so regardless of how we got here, here is where we are. As the church declined, those who would have enjoyed only the power; perhaps now find it elsewhere, maybe in business, politics or crime; or maybe all three.

The Lord tells us in Matthew 9:17 *No one puts new wine into old wineskins, else the skins burst and the wine is spilled, but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.*

People in the Lord's New Church aren't much interested in worldly power; there is not much to be had now anyway. The Lord's church is becoming more interested in spiritual power; Spiritual power which is found shining through the letter of the Word; and which can be made known only to those who genuinely and sincerely love the Lord and the neighbour. Through the Lord's providence, the foundations have already been laid for the Church of the future, because the literal sense of the Word is now known all over the world. A glorious dawning will soon be emerging into human consciousness; it's been concealed for a time through the Lord's Providence; behind the clouds of human reason; but we are beginning to see people waking up all over the world. We should not be disheartened by the decline of the church; the Lord needs those of His Church to trust Him and remain committed to His Church, even through the very difficult times, even when we just cannot see what He is doing.

And soon enough, we will see His glory. We are told in Apocalypse Revealed 24:

Behold He comes with the clouds of heaven, signifies that the Lord will reveal Himself in the literal sense of the Word, and will open its spiritual sense in the end of the church.

In the mean time, the Psalmist tells us:

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.

Amen

Rev Jack Dunion

Conference 2012 Report

The following report of Conference is intended to give an overview of what took place from day to day and to highlight the main issues that were considered or which arose during the sessions. Details of the children and family sessions are not included but are referred to in the account for Friday morning.

Monday 23rd July 2012

The opening Family Worship was led by Rev Clifford Curry on the theme of keeping a promise or making a commitment. Clifford gathered together all the children who wanted to be involved and guided them through an enactment of the story of Daniel in the Lion's den - a story which shows Daniel's promise or commitment to the Lord. As with all family worship during Conference it was lovely to be part of an all age worship experience.

During the past year three members had passed into the spiritual world - Eric Yates, Susan Blomfield and Christopher Jackson. Rev Christine Bank, as Secretary to the Committee of Ministers referred to the memorial notices for these three people and Conference stood in silence to remember them.

There then followed a series of three presentations by Rev David Lomax, Rev Michael Stanley and Stephen Russell-Lacy on the subject '*Our church in a changing culture*'. The presentations were short and acted as an introduction to small group discussion on the following four questions:

- What holds us together as a body?
- Where does our authority, individually and collectively, as members of the church, come from?
- What is the role of the church/the ministry?
- How do we communicate effectively with people outside the New Church?

Each group of about 8 people tackled these difficult questions in the priority they felt appropriate and fed back the outcomes to a plenary session at the end. In a way this was not a session about coming to any particular view or decision but rather to encourage reflection on the issues involved.

After the evening meal an Extraordinary General meeting was held, led by the Company Secretary, Zoe Brooks. During this some important alterations to the articles were made in order to simplify the way in which minor changes could be made in the future. All changes were voted through as proposed.

Readers will be aware of the problems that have been reported in Lifeline over the last 12 months concerning the previously expected ordination of Helen Newton at the 2012 Conference. In order to clarify the situation for Conference Rev Christine Bank

Questions and points made from the floor of Conference included:

- The need to quickly pursue the appointment of a Youth Worker taking as much advice as possible - the job description will be finalised at the September Council meeting.
- The need to make financial support available for further ordination students.
- The possibility of reducing in some way the burden of managing property, maybe by outsourcing some responsibilities.
- The problems arising from a lack of a single vision for the future and the strategy to accompany it with the result that we are no longer clear about how to spend our money.
- The importance of making available resources to encourage and enable more people to increase their knowledge of the Word and the Writings and how these could be used to inspire people in an increasing auxiliary ministry.
- The difficulty of encouraging people to take on training in group leading.

There was also considerable discussion on a statement in the report on page 3 which included the words:

The Council recognises that whilst there is a need to support existing churches they must also consider new areas where potential new ministers might wish to put their energies.

No ballot was required for nominations to the Council. As a result Richard Cunningham was duly appointed to the Council.



Gwendolen Rowe

After a break for tea it was time to hear from the New Church Youth Association with a presentation by their President, Gwendolen Rowe. Gwendolen talked about changes in teaching methods and to illustrate this should gathered the children together on a rug and used the 'story box' technique to involve the children in the story of Noah. This certainly demonstrated how the bringing out of characters and props from a 'story box' can really enliven a story and fully engage the children's attention.

This was followed by a presentation from Alison Presland who described the past,

huge dilemma that faced the ministry and others applauded them for their openness despite their diverse views. Some people felt the need to express their own personal convictions on the subject whilst others hoped that the debate would now involve the laity as well. This period of questions and debate ended with a very moving comment by Rev Leslie Chambers on how he was personally coming to terms with the issues involved.

The treasurer's report followed after coffee. It was very sad to hear from Nigel Sutton that he had resigned as Treasurer because he felt he could not work with the Council any longer. Nevertheless he presented the summary accounts pointing out that for the first time in many years there had been an Operational Surplus. Key figures from the summary are shown below:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Income	543	592	585
Expenditure	601	570	541
Operational Deficit/Surplus	-57	23	44
Other Receipts/Costs	144	654	583
Net Surplus/Deficit	87	677	627

All figures £000

Income from Societies and Donations has declined whilst investment income has increased helped by the growth in Net Assets arising from the sale of properties. Costs have reduced mainly due to the move to greater voluntary working and the retirement of ministers. The net effect is that an improvement in the Operational Surplus is forecast giving scope, for example, for the support of further ordination students and the proposed youth worker. Capital is also available for new projects although account needs to be taken of the reduction in investment income that would follow such capital expenditure.

Nigel thanked the following for their hard work and personal support - Sally Ross, David Friend, Colin Skinner, David Sharrock and Andrew Bentley.

Michael Clubb, as Acting Chairman, then presented the Report of the Council by highlighting a number of issues in the report. He then made a statement regarding Nigel Sutton's resignation and the arrangements that were now in place to cover his work as Treasurer. From 1st August 2012 Sally Ross, Company Accountant, will take responsibility for the day to day control of finances that were the function of the Treasurer. She will also be a non-voting member of the Council. Andrew Bentley will be joining as Finance Manager with responsibility for the broader financial issues including investment and strategy but will not attend all Council meetings.



Sally Ross

read out a 'Committee of Ministers' Statement to Conference 2012'. This statement concluded with the following words:

There has been a significant failing within the processes and procedures of the Committee to identify and address some key issues in appropriate and timely ways; something which the individual members feel very deeply. As with any organisation, the people are a valuable resource and we know and sincerely regret that considerable hurt has been felt by many individuals. For that personal hurt we apologise, and we are determined to work together under the Lord's guidance and offer the best assurances we can that we as a Ministers' Committee have learnt lessons for the future.

No questions were taken after this statement had been read. Please see page 15 of this issue for details of where to find a copy of this statement.

The day closed with evening worship led by Phillip Brooks on the subject of time. Phillip read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and then talked about all the ways in which we allow time to dominate our lives.

Tuesday 24th July 2012

The Family Holy Supper service at the beginning of Tuesday's sessions was led by Rev Bruce Jarvis and Rev Christine Bank. In essence this service was in two parts. It began with a wonderful new hymn by Becky Jarratt – 'I am the Vine' and then Christine talked to the children about 'The Bread of Life'. Following prayers the elements were consecrated and then offered to the children and their carers. This was immediately followed by a celebratory thanksgiving led by Becky Jarratt. The Conference Choir then sang Confitemini Domino [Give thanks to the Lord – based on Psalm 118] and the congregation joined in Bind us together Lord. The children and their carers then left and Bruce read from John 17:6-19 and True Christian Religion 347. Bruce then used John 17:11 'That they may be one as we are one' as the theme of his talk. After this the congregation joined together in reading a number of Gospel verses and then took part in the Holy Supper. The service concluded with rousing singing of 'Guide me, O though great Jehovah' and then a blessing of all the children who had by then returned.



Alan Misson signs as Honorary Life Member

After an early break for coffee, Conference returned for the Keynote Address given by Rev Gillian Gordon - please refer to the August issue of Lifeline for the printed version of this address.

At this point Michael Clubb, Acting Chairman, invited Alan Misson to come forward to sign the relevant books as the newly appointed Honorary Life Member. Having done so, Alan made a brief speech of thanks especially to his wife, his parents and the Lord. He also gave an example of all those people who had

influenced him in the past by referring to the Purley Chase Summer School of 1967.

The next session 'Any Questions' was focused on the issues surrounding Human Sexuality and its impact on Church Ceremonies. Prior to the session Conference attendees had been invited to provide written questions to Alan Misson who then chaired the session. The 'Any Questions' panel comprised Rev Michael Stanley, Rev David Gaffney, Rev Jack Dunion, Rev Mary Duckworth and Rev Bruce Jarvis. The following five questions were posed to the panel, each question being addressed to a different minister, with supplementary responses being solicited from other members of the panel. The questions asked were as follows in this order:

- Have you met more Lesbian and Gay people in recent years than formerly? If so, has this much affected your view of homosexuality?
- In view of our mission to 'express, share and experience with others in life an inclusive, non-judgmental vision of God's kingdom', how does your position on the offering [or not offering] of a blessing ceremony for same sex couples fulfill our mission?
- Swedenborg seems to suggest that what makes us really human has nothing to do with our physical bodies but rather with our internal spiritual qualities. In considering the homosexual issue have we placed too much emphasis on the physical issues involved and not enough on the spiritual?
- Pharmacists who feel they do not want to supply the 'morning after pill' on moral or ethical grounds refer clients to a different chemist who will. Why can't the New Church adopt a similar approach and refer applicants for same sex marriage or blessing to another body rather than alter the whole position of its Ministry?
- In relation to acceptance of same sex couples and blessing their committed relationship, do you have any insight into what Jesus would have done?

It is not possible to give any simple summary of what was said by all the ministers. However David Glover recorded the whole session and the audio sound track has been made available online – please see page 15 of this issue.

What can be said is that this session showed the complexity of thought and the depth of feeling present within the Ministry on this subject and the diverse views that are held with conviction. Although there might have been some surprise or even shock felt by Conference as to the extent of the diversity of views nevertheless there was grateful recognition that individual members of the panel had not held back and had openly and firmly expressed their views.

After lunch the next session, led by Rev Helen Brown, was on the subject 'Any Answers?' This was session in three parts, the first a statement read out by Helen on behalf of the Ministry, the second, discussion in groups and the third part a plenary session to hear feedback.

The statement was entitled '*Statement of Unity from the Ministry*'. This was in two parts, the first concerned *with the essence of our living connection with the Lord, the neighbour and ourselves* and the second part concerning ordination. The statement concluded with these quotations:

And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. John 10:16

Please see page 15 of this issue for details of where to find a copy of this statement.

The group session with around 8 people in each group encouraged people to air their own views on the subjects of ordination and the impact of human sexuality on church ceremonies. It is not possible in these pages to make any summary of what was reported back in the plenary session although it is possible that Helen may plan to consolidate the feedback received and make it available in some way. What the session did allow was for many people to express views other than in the formal context of a Conference debate.

The final session before the evening meal was led by Rev David Lomax on the subject of Passion, Change and Values. This took the form of a series of discussions in very small and then larger groups. One of the difficult questions posed was this: 'what would we do if the whole church organisation broke down and there were no churches?'

In the evening there were four sessions available to choose - Spiritual Geography with Alan Bowie, New Church Children's Society AGM, Conjugal Love with Rev David Gaffney and Meditation with Rev Helen Brown.

Closing worship on Tuesday was led by Rev David Gaffney.

Wednesday 25th July 2012

Family Worship on Wednesday morning was led by Rev Helen Brown who led us in thinking about 'Belonging' and involved the children in discovering the contents of a 'lost property box'.

The first session was the Report of the Committee of Ministers presented by Rev Christine Bank - the first occasion that Christine had reported as Secretary. Because there had been little time the previous day for questions and debate on the floor of Conference on the subject of human sexuality it was inevitable that in responding to the Committee's report that this subject would be raised. Several speakers urged Conference to take time on the matter of Human Sexuality and Church Ceremonies noting that the issue of women ministers had taken many years to work through. Others noted that the 'Any Questions' session the previous day had revealed the