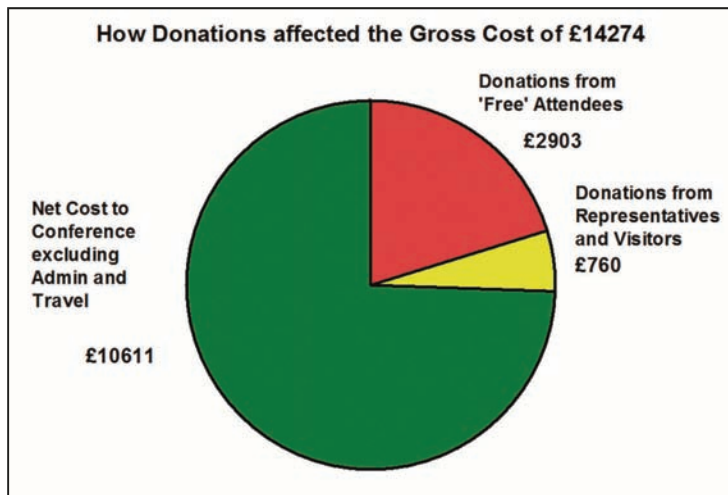




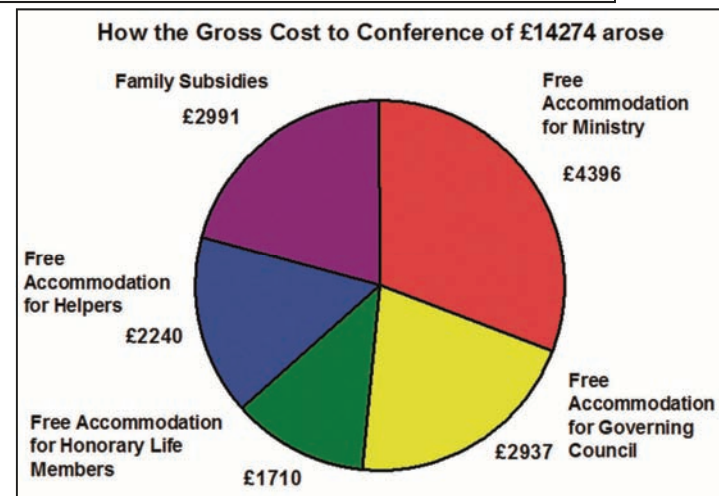
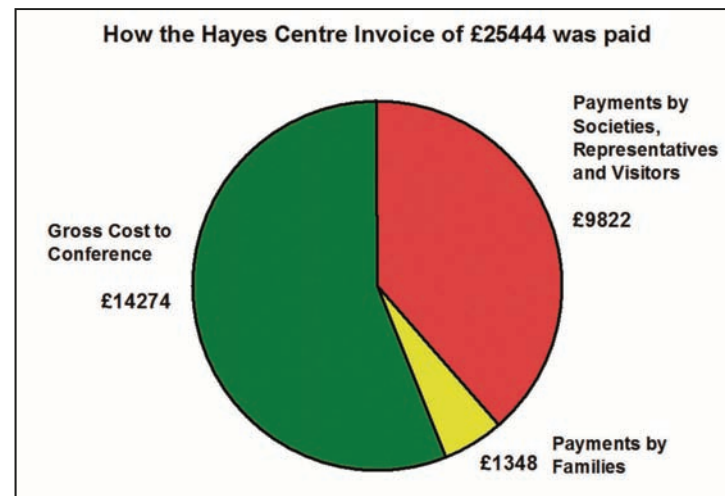
Cost of the Annual Meeting

(see page 16)



Cost of the Annual Meeting

To help explain the cost of the Annual Meeting in 2009 three diagrams are printed in this issue. The first, towards the top of page 1, shows how the overall Invoice for £25444 from the Hayes Centre, Swanwick, was effectively paid leaving a Gross Cost to Conference of £14274 or 56% of the total. The second one on page 1 shows how this Gross Cost arose. The final diagram on this page shows how donations affected the Net Cost to Conference which ended up as £10611 before the addition of administration and travelling costs.



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.

From Christmas to New Year

We seem able to change from being very busy preparing for and anticipating Christmas into a much more reflective state as we move on towards the New Year. Among all the festivities and distractions it is good to be able to take some time to consider again the actual reason for Christmas in the first place - the birth of Jesus.

I find the way we celebrate Christmas and then begin a New Year the following week ties things together very well. Having had the anticipation and preparation for Christmas itself there is often a feeling after the event that things have now gone quiet - so much effort and planning goes into the day itself that we can find some sense of "was that it?" once we have cleared away the meal and investigated the presents.

There is always a part of us which is able to step aside from the situation we are in and try to visualise a different life. If our dreams are unrealistic then they simply stay as dreams - how to spend a major lottery win isn't likely to trouble me in practice. But I can, and do, try to make plans for doing things differently.

The New Year Resolution is often a well intentioned hope that we'll be able to either give up a bad habit or start doing something we consider to be better. The membership and attendance at fitness classes goes up for a few weeks in January and February - followed by a falling off after about six weeks once enthusiasm has worn thin but the body is still the same shape as before. Keeping up with our grand intentions is just too difficult for us to manage.

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

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

Chase and the current programme is seen as one part of this, but (from attending several Governing Council meetings in the last few months) I don't sense that Governing Council believes that it's the only way forward.

Because local churches are all different and have their own individuality, the Council can't decide what to do at the local level. Those in local churches are the ones who have to decide this. I have had chance to talk at Governing Council meetings about my passion for supporting and encouraging local churches, which the Bristol letter also talks about. Knowing what form this should take is far from easy and I think Governing Council also struggles with this.

I hope that others have experience to share of overcoming anxieties and difficulties and that they will respond to this letter. I personally have seen that it is possible to build up a local church community, but it does require time and commitment. Perhaps most of all, in my opinion, it requires a radical openness which takes its inspiration from the Jesus of the Gospels, who shows us how to be out in the world and yet rooted spiritually in a way that gives us the nourishment to take on this type of task.

Yours sincerely,

David Lomax

Committee for Auxiliary Ministry Worship Together by Pamela Ryder

CAM is delighted to announce the publication of a collection of eight predominantly family services produced by Mrs Pamela Ryder. They include talks, hymns, prayers and ideas for children's presentations. Worship Leaders may feel free to adapt them to suit their own style.

The set costs £4.00 if you require printed copies. If you prefer to receive copies by email these are available at a cost of £1.00 per set and CDs are also available at £2.00 per set. If you would like to receive this new collection please send your order to:

Jan Millar 41 Victoria Chase, Bailiff Bridge, Brighouse
West Yorkshire, HD6 4DE
Telephone: 01484 401910
Email: jan.millar@generalconference.org.uk

Cheques should be made payable to 'The General Conference of the New Church'.

Letter

Dear Editor,

I was pleased to see the letter from Bristol in the October issue of Lifeline and feel I want to respond. I was very disappointed that the motion which Bristol submitted to the 2009 Annual Meeting of Conference about the uses of ministry failed to be debated. This and the letter raise some really important issues for the church. I'd really like to see us discuss them as a whole church organisation. Perhaps that will happen in Lifeline's letters page or perhaps we will need to do so at next year's Conference Annual Meeting (or maybe both).

In trying to consider these issues for myself, I found myself writing something that went on to three A4 pages. I've tried to summarise this more briefly in what follows.

It seems to me that there are three levels for these issues:

Changes in our congregations
Changes in our national church
Changes in society at large

It strikes me that it is impossible to separate these three as they are so inter-related, although they can be looked at one by one. Our local churches are affected by many changes in society (e.g. changes to what people do on Sundays). Changes at the local level have a "knock on" effect at the national level and vice versa (e.g. lower numbers of

people involved at local level may make it more difficult to find resources – human, financial or whatever – for the national church; the national church responding to changes in how charities have to operate by law affects local churches).

Many of our local churches, as is the case at Bristol, consist of a handful or two of extremely committed people, still trying to present the church's message, however much of a struggle that may be. Part of that struggle may be a lack of ministerial service, as has been highlighted in the Bristol letter, but it seems to me that this is only a small part of the story. I believe that most of our difficulties stem from the fact that the culture we represent to the outside world (i.e. church) looks old-fashioned and "out of touch" when viewed from outside. Using modern technology may be one response to this, but I believe we need to look equally at the words we use, the assumptions we make about what people want spiritually, what "turns people off", what goes on in our local communities that we can connect with and so on.

Even if Governing Council could provide a minister for each local church, the above issues wouldn't go away. Governing Council has many responsibilities, including legal ones, as touched on above, but perhaps the most difficult is to endeavour to find a way forward for the church into the future. The building work at Purley

One thing we could do is to look a little more closely for where we can find the Christmas story reaching into our life. A stable is hardly fancy or extravagant; it is very much an everyday place but necessary as it sheltered the working animals which were important for carrying loads and made daily life work better.

It is in everyday life we can find the Lord, and we have to allow him to work there too. It's no good expecting to find the Lord once we achieve our high ambitions; He is where we are now. Our good intentions need to be brought out as helpful actions, as kindness, as caring and more loving responses to our situation.

"*Lord, give me patience, but give me it now*" is how we feel - but to acquire patience we have to wait, we have to practice what it is we want to become. We don't receive patience out of nowhere; it is something we acquire gradually and it is often very frustrating to be unable to change things and to learn about making the best of our situation.

2010 will bring us unexpected things to cope with, but today and every day we are assured of the constant presence of the Lord in our stable of mundane and routine things as well as at our highest moments.

Rev Christine Bank

I have spoken to angels about the memory of things of the past and about consequent anxiety concerning things of the future, and I have been informed that the more interior and perfect angels are the less do they care about things of the past or think about those of the future, and that this is also the origin of their happiness. They have said that the Lord provides them every moment with what to think, accompanied by blessing and happiness, and that this being so they have no cares and no worries. This also is what is meant in the internal sense by the manna being received 'day by day' from heaven, and by the 'daily [provision] of bread' in the Lord's Prayer, as well as by the statement that they must not worry about what they are to eat and drink, or what clothes they are to put on.

Arcana Caelestia 2493

For your diary

The fourth Gathering Leaves event 'A Feast of Friendship' will be held at the Lord's New Church, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, USA from July 8th-11th 2010 for New Church/Swedenborgian women from around the world. Further information available soon.

United Search for Divine Providence

Session 15



Everyone may be reformed and there is no such thing as Predestination.

Everyone may be reformed and there is no such thing as Predestination. (DP 322-330)

This Session, more than any other, makes you feel that this is really about you personally : What you are. Why you are. What you always will be. In other words, what you will decide to be.

Paragraph 324:2 deserves to be made into a beautifully illuminated manuscript in large letters, so that we could have it in every home because it is one of the noblest passages in the Writings, nay in the world's Literature, and it is one which every reasonable religion could agree with it. It is the finest insight into the mind of our Creator.

Section 1 (322-324) What could be more important for each one of us than to know that everyone may (and can) be reformed or as we often say 'saved'? And the next important concept is to be assured that there is no such thing as Predestination – meaning, that it has not been preordained where we shall go at the end of our earthly life. This does not mean that the Lord does not know which path we shall freely follow, but the decision will be ours. Everything we do or say today is a step in that direction. That is why we need to examine our thoughts and motives and to see what their quality is. While we are still in this world, we can change the direction in which we are heading.

It is reassuring to read in 322 that civil and moral laws of society do actually point us in the right direction if we learn to obey them. But we should obey them not to avoid a fine or a prison sentence, but because we wish to live in harmony with God's laws.

The Purpose of Creation! You certainly can have a wide choice from the

7. If you were to imagine the church were a Bible story or character, what would it be?

42/51 answers – some with two points

Happy:

Jesus = 7

Moses = 4

Parable of the Sower = 3

Would like it to be different:

Israelites wandering in wilderness = 4

Far more positive than negative images seemed to have come out. Jesus, Moses, Sower are the most frequent images that people seem happy with. The Israelites feature as most frequent negative image. I found it interesting that an element of Moses features strongly in both positive and less happy responses.

8. What are the top 5 values that the church has?

47/51 answers, most with 5 points

123 (I think!) different values

Love = 13

Fellowship = 11

Teachings = 10

Inclusivity = 9

Heaven/spiritual world = 9

Truth = 9

Love is the highest-scoring answer, and one that features in the responses to other questions. I found it very interesting that fellowship is second on the list, which is something certainly not unique about the New Church!

It is also fascinating that there is such a great variety of what people in the church believe it to have as top values – 123 different choices of answer. It is good that we have this variety and allow people to have their own points of view. It has made me wonder whether or not we have a clear message. Perhaps the teachings are so vast it is impossible to have this message.

Do the top 6 - love, teachings, fellowship, inclusivity, heaven, truth, encompass the church?

Becky Jarratt

Editor's Note:

The second part of this summary will be printed in the February issue of Lifeline. Don't forget that fuller information can be found through the Resources page at www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

5. What is unique about the church?

50/51 responses, many with multiple points

Some people detailed specific things within the Writings, and if they stated that these points were from the Writings, I did not add each point separately.

The main point, with 21 answers, was that the Writings/teachings of the New Church are what are unique about it.

7 further responses spoke about the inner meaning of the scriptures.

6 responses mentioned life after death.

5 talked about our spiritual development and regeneration.

4 were about the unity of the Godhead.

I feel that the vast majority of responses to this question included the Writings, a specific teaching, or that there is an internal meaning to the scriptures, which again comes from our teachings.

6. If you were to imagine the church was a car, or a business person, or a famous person, or an animal, or a country, or a colour, what would it be and why?

43/51 answers – some with two points

Total Answers = 46. Positive = 37; Negative; 7; Both; 2

I am only going to include the answers that mentioned cars and colours here.

Car = 15; Happy = 12; Would like it to be different = 3

There was a strong emphasis on there being room for family – people carriers, family cars, etc. A number of answers relate to unusual cars – the church is not what it first appears, and some to old, out-of-date cars that are still going, surprisingly. A few suggest the church is out of date or has broken down.

Colour = 16; Happy = 16; Would like it to be different = 0

3 x white; 2 x blue, green, and purple. Also, there were some changing colours plus a rainbow. Strong feelings have come out here – soothing, warm, positive and optimistic. Purity, spirituality, inclusivity, and reflective of God all are mentioned.

I feel that asking people to visualise the church in this way gave them an opportunity to think about what they love about the church.

materialistic “There is no purpose in creation” to “It is to show the Glory and Majesty of God”. These are the two extremes and both are wrong! The real reason is much simpler and corresponds perfectly with our experience. You may ask yourself, “Why did I want to have children?” The real motive is Love, and as the saying goes, ‘Love has its reasons!’ And there the explanation ends. If you cannot understand this within yourself, no rational explanations will make it any plainer. Love is the sole motive!

Notice the bold statement 324 that Divine Providence is none other than predestination to heaven, meaning that this is the Divine Intention, but this has to be qualified by the fact that every person is born free to choose how to live and how to love. Without freedom, we would be meaningless dolls without any humanity. The truth is that we may not wish to go to heaven and prefer to create our own environment.

I mentioned 324:2 in my introduction. It gives a very clear reason why creation was inevitable. It is due to the nature of Love which desires to communicate its own to others. Without having any ‘others’ love would grieve in agony and impotence. It is as if a musician had no one to play to, or woman could not have a child. Notice how the deepest questions have the simplest answers, because they proceed from love. Read, think about and also discuss John 12:24-26.

If we do not understand love, we understand nothing at all. Intellectual or purely rational explanations are just around the perimeter, not at the real core of any situation.

Section 2 (325-330) Let us not pretend otherwise: these 13 pages contain the most profound theology on Divine Providence. What it is, how it operates and how it is disposed towards the human race whether good, or evil. It will change our views on Providence and Divine Love. We may have heard many stories about God’s anger with the human race, His desire to punish the disobedient, and let’s face it we can understand that. In fact, much of the bombing and killing in the world today is done from a mistaken religious fervour. That is very sad since it completely perverts the right understanding of God in people’s hearts and minds. Yes, it is often very difficult to understand how God could be so loving, so forgiving even towards the perpetrators of great cruelties and murders. We may feel this is weakness and even abdication of authority. And yet, on a much smaller scale, I have often noticed that the naughty boy in the family, who is always getting into mischief is, underneath it all, mum’s favourite! I do not mean to suggest that God has any favourites, because in the end, He loves us all equally, and towards the evil may feel some sorrow within that love, but never anger or rejection.

In 326 there are 13 subsections and each one has a real gem in it. Let us skim through them, but each one is so valuable and important and goes to the core of

our relationship with our heavenly Father. A most useful tip in 326:1-5. In the spiritual world, if we think of anyone with love, we shall have that person's presence with us. Equally if we think about the Lord intellectually, there will be His presence, but if we think of Him with love, there will be conjunction. And of course this also applies in this world. I remember a very earnest man. I was reading a prayer and glanced at him and his face was screwed up so tight! Clearly he was trying to reach the Lord intellectually. I nearly said, "Relax, think of the Lord with love, feel Him near!" But there were others in the room. The New Church prides itself on the marvellous doctrines we have, and rightly so. But we must also learn to love the Lord and perhaps smile a little as we do. We should not be grim when He is close! These paragraphs are constantly bringing us back to the infinite love of God which never changes towards us. This should fill us with happiness. Think of it, feel it: Infinite Love! The only thing that can spoil this is when we sin and act selfishly. Shunning evils is always essential. Especially, when we are in this world where sin is so commonplace. And the message is hammered home constantly: We are entirely at fault, and no one else - if we are not 'saved'. We seem to be so clever at twisting the image of God, into the one into which we were born: one of selfishness and greed.

But equally, the truth is hammered home over and over again: By the Lord everyone has been predestined to heaven and it is our own fault if we choose another path. That is not to say that the right path is easy. Our natural inclinations year for it and we need to overrule them deliberately and follow the path to heaven.

Prayers without words and Meditation.

Something to be happy about and to smile in your heart! Read Matthew 7:7-11. But this must not be a matter of pride, but true humility. Read Luke 18:9-14 and also Psalms 125-127. Give the Lord wordless thanks.

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.

1. Describe in one sentence what the church does.

51/51 responses!!! Many have more than one point

There are many different answers here, so I want to focus on those with the most points. Some points seem to be about different things, but I would like to put them together.

God/Lord = 20	Fellowship = 8
Worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ = 14	Spiritual = 6
Teachings = 12	

The above five things feature the most highly on the list of responses, even if they are spoken about in different ways.

3. Where would you like the church to be in 5 years time?

50/51 responses, some with multiple points

Still here – not necessarily in present format
 More people, young people and families
 Church more widely known
 Sounder financial footing
 New initiatives (within our means)
 Modern technology usage

I think this question has been a useful exercise because of the number and varied nature of the answers. There are many ways in which people see the church moving forward. Not many seem to want it staying in exactly the same format.

4. Who are the key beneficiaries of the work the church does?

50/51 responses, some with a number of points

For me, this has been a very interesting question to compile!

- The members/us – 39 points mentioned this
- The people we come into contact with – 13 points

The first part of the answers to this question may seem fairly obvious – the people who go to the church or church events are those who benefit.

13 points also stated that anyone who comes into contact with those who have something to do with the church also benefit from this. The influence of the church is greater than it may first appear. Do we know how great it actually is?

Vision Questionnaire Results

part 1

I found the questionnaire in a book on church finances. This was a few days after Conference, and the questions that were being asked seemed, to me, to be things we should be asking people within the New Church – not just to try and find ways to improve our finances, but to see if the church is meeting people's needs.

I distributed the questionnaires in a number of ways. I emailed it to those Conference members who have email addresses in this country. I sent copies out with the October edition of Lifeline. Copies were also sent to secretaries of each society to distribute. The questionnaire was put on the Lifeline website in case some people had not received one another way. I hoped that by doing this, as many people as possible would have the chance to give their views.

I was humbled by the responses I got. The questionnaire was anonymous, but out of the 51 responses I received, only 9 people chose not to put their names. These people shared with me some of their deepest feelings about the church, and I am honoured to have been given the chance to look at them and explain what the general feelings are. Some of the questionnaires were answered by couples, and some by groups of people, so more than 51 people responded.

I experienced enormous highs and lows whilst compiling the responses. I wrestled with my own emotions whilst reading those of other people. To me, it felt like some people had been given an outlet to express themselves when they had not previously been asked. If nothing else, I truly think that many of the people who responded seemed to get something off their chest, and were given the opportunity to open their hearts about things that are important to them.

Something I feel I must mention is that in analysing the results, I have had to use my judgement on what I think people are saying. I am conscious that I may have got it wrong, and may have put people's answers into categories that they would not have chosen, but I have tried to do this honestly and without prejudice.

I did not want to limit people's thinking by giving them tick-box answers, so the analysis has been a challenge! Question 2 asked people to describe what the church does in a paragraph. I decided not to try to tackle the responses to this question and use it as a warm-up as I found it almost impossible to analyse it in any sensible way. I have included how many people answered each question to give you a flavour of whether people felt able to, or strongly enough about the question, to put their feelings down.

A fuller analysis can be found on the Lifeline web site.

Auxiliary Ministry Weekend

23rd - 25th October 2009

Good company, fabulous food and glorious autumn colours enhanced the weekend as the worship leaders came together at Purley Chase.

We enjoyed impromptu singing and recitals as well as being energised by our co-ordinator and leaders. Together we explored the potential in worship, sharing experiences and discovering new depths and ideas. Christmas came early in the form of resources to be explored and utilized. Eventually they helped to produce work that could be taken away, developed and used in our local churches or groups. Hopefully helping you to discover something new and different during Advent, Christmas or Epiphany.

Big questions such as - who is worship for? - What can worship do for us? - and what can we do for worship? were debated. We explored varied uses of the Word in worship. From five key themes, there was the potential for using the Word in over twenty different ways. We also looked at what could be developed outside worship, such as group meetings or discussion groups.

It was a fully and busy weekend, but importantly, there was space and time to relax, to meditate and enjoy our surroundings. All very necessary not only for our well being, but also in our acts of worship. As worshippers being able to be still and give time for the Lord to speak and be heard, for even the quiet was uplifting and energizing. It is important to know that our ordained ministers as well as lay people can be enabled and energized by each others' insights and ideas, all through the Lord's wonderful gifts to us.

On behalf of all present, thanks are given to Anne and David for their hospitality; to Jan Millar for co-ordinating the weekend so perfectly. Again thanks to Jan and to Mary Burnley for leading the earlier sessions; to Rev David Lomax for bringing his experiences to the latter sessions and at the same time firming up the earlier ones. Last but not least to all the worship leaders who contributed so much to the weekend, making it both enjoyable and inspiring.

Peter & Thelma Wilson

Address Change

Jan Millar 41 Victoria Chase, Bailiff Bridge, Brighouse
West Yorkshire, HD6 4DE
Telephone: 01484 401910

Conference 203 26th - 29th July 2010

Dear Families,

I am writing to you to invite you to the 203rd Conference next Summer at Swanwick Conference Centre in the Midlands.

We are now in the fourth year of families attending Conference and families with children or young people up to the age of 21 continue to be subsidised. This welcome decision helps to allow families to join in, meet and integrate with the wider church family and have a say in the future of the Church. (We do manage to have a bit of fun too!) It is a bit too early to tell you much about the program but, as per usual, there will be children's and young people's groups in the mornings of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. We then try to bring everyone together in the afternoons with workshops, services and fun events.

Conference will be in the same large hall as last year with accommodation for babies and toddlers as close by as possible. We hope there will also be a family room provided for play and relaxation.

All young people up to 21 are offered free places with up to 2 accompanying adults able to receive a half price rate of £99 for the full Conference (Monday after lunch till Thursday after lunch) If you wish to come for part of the week the cost has to remain the same as the centre does not let rooms for part of a week. Included are en-suite accommodation, drinks and 3 good meals a day! If you are unable to come all week then you will be able to come along as a day visitor. Please let me know if you are interested in this option and I will keep you informed of prices and details.

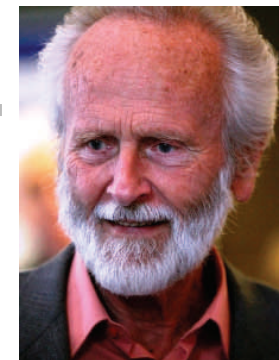
If you are able to join us at Conference next year then please send me a deposit of £35 per adult before the end of January 2010 (made payable to The General Conference of the New Church). I will send a reminder about the other £64 next April/May. A deposit is needed with your booking in order to book enough family rooms. Please use the booking form available on the Resources page of Lifeline Online at www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

We look forward to you being able to join us at this important, forward looking Conference where you can have a say in the future of our church and where your family can have a great time meeting old and new friends.

With best wishes and love,

Jenny Jones 19 Grenomoor Close, Grenoside, Sheffield S35 8SD
0114 257 6015 Email: oban@jsj16.wanadoo.co.uk

Fred Kaan inspired hymn writer



Rev Fred Kaan died on October 4th 2009 at the age of 80. He was born in the Netherlands, and became a Congregational minister. Doubtless the years of his childhood spent under the Nazi occupation of his homeland had a great effect upon him, and he always wished to support people robbed of their liberty. It was probably the source of his pacifist views.

He was an internationalist, an ecumenist and a linguist. He was a prolific hymn writer, and his hymns have become included in hymnbooks the world over. They often reflect Fred's desire for a spirituality that unites men and women of all backgrounds, and his intense desire for peace.

We have 9 of Fred Kaan's many hymns, some of them translations, in our Songs for Worship. Probably the most well-known and popular of those is no.385 - *The love of God is broad like beach and meadow*, sung to Finlandia. A powerful and evocative poem, translated from a Swedish hymn, it brings man's capacity for destruction face to face with the love of God, which is broad like beach and meadow, wide as the wind, and an eternal home. We also enjoy singing the 2 communion hymns: no.83 - *Father, who in Jesus found us*, and no.224 - *Let all who share one bread and cup*, the footnote reminding us that Fred has translated this 18th century German hymn. No.98 - *For the healing of the nations* is a brilliant expression of human rights, reminding singers that true peace brings freedom.

If you are interested, look up Fred Kaan in the author index, and find his hymns in our hymnbook. Read them through, and you will be reminded of some striking and very contemporary expressions of how our Christian beliefs need to be rooted in our attitudes and actions. Many of them were written to illustrate his sermons, set to well-known tunes, and introduced by Fred to his congregation. You might even ask for some of them to be included in services over the coming months!

We give thanks for Fred Kaan's life, and especially for his gift of writing inspiring words for Christians to sing.

Bruce Jarvis

Editor's Note: All four of the Fred Kaan hymns listed above, 83, 98, 224 and 385 are available to download as PowerPoint presentations from the Lifeline web site - go to the Resources page at www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk