

THE GENERAL CHURCH COUNCIL LTD

A SHORT HISTORY BY THE SECRETARY, MARY WARWICK
(Third in a series on General Church Corporations)

The financial affairs of the General Church in England back in 1935, were administered by the Assembly and Extension Committee. This body held a fund for Traveling Expenses of Priests visiting British Assemblies, a fund for Extension Work, an Assembly Expenses Fund, and a General Purposes Fund. The total sum of money involved was about £165, a hundred pounds of that being a recent donation from a generous benefactor. The Colchester and Michael Church Societies had their own executive boards which were independent of the Assembly and Extension Committee.

It was the receipt of this gift of £100 which prompted the committee to formalize their authority. Their original appointment had been made by the Bishop at the request of the British Assembly and the committee members had gained 'a hearty response of cooperation and satisfaction' (extract from the Minutes). Still acknowledging that their authority be derived from the Bishop, a solicitor was approached to draw up a Deed of Appointment of Trustees; and a document from Bishop N.D. Pendleton was received appointing the first members of the British Finance Committee. The B.F.C. held its first meeting on 13th March 1936, and carried on overseeing fiscal duties, which are the concern of the laity, with provision for consultation with the clergy. With time, the responsibilities and the assets of the British Finance Committee grew.

After the death of yet another Trustee in 1967, the British Finance Committee was faced with the trouble and expense of registering a new Trustee for their investments. At this point, Mr. Roy Griffith suggested, not for the first time, that they should consider setting up an incorporated body. He was asked to prepare documents for consideration, which he did, endeavoring

to provide a Memorandum and Articles of Association which ensured acceptance by the Charity Commission, and which ensured the Inland Revenue accepted its religious, educational and charitable status. He envisaged providing a body in the United Kingdom comparable to the General Church Corporation in the U.S.A.

At the British Assembly in Colchester in July 1968, it was agreed that three representatives of each of the Board of Finance of Michael Church, Colchester Society Executive Committee, and the British Finance Committee should meet to discuss the proposed formation of a corporate body to undertake the secular administration of the Church, and to circulate a report in good time, with a view to a decision being made at the next British Assembly in 1969. This committee unanimously agreed to recommend that 'the British Finance Committee be asked to proceed with the formation of a corporate body, and to settle details with the Authorities concerned.' It was the view of Bishop Willard D. Pendleton that a self-perpetuating body of the kind proposed should be formed in Great Britain.

After much work, consultation, and discussion about the title of the Company, and its Memorandum and Articles of Association, the General Church of the New Jerusalem Council Ltd. became a registered company in September 1971 and a Trust Corporation in February 1972. A huge debt of gratitude is owed by the Church in England to Mr. Arthur Atherton and Mr. Roy Griffith who had much correspondence over several months with solicitors, ensuring compliance with regulations set out in company law, and the wishes of the Charity Commission, and the Inland Revenue.

The first meeting of the General Church Council was in October 1971, when it was resolved that all who in the UK had been members of the General Church for three or more years should be invited and urged to become members of the Council. It is the Members who appoint Directors, and each year receive

the Directors' Report and Accounts, discuss them, and approve or reject them.

The present responsibilities of the Council include acting as Custodian Trustees for the Colchester Society, Michael Church Society and the British Academy in respect of their properties and investments. From humble beginnings, when the assets of the Assembly and Extension Committee stood at £165, the assets managed by the General Church of the New Jerusalem Council Ltd. have grown to over £1,000,000.

72nd BRITISH ASSEMBLY

22-24 June 2007

Please join us for an inspiring and enjoyable programme suited to all ages.

Hosted this year by Michael Church, London, this will include a pageant, separate programmes for adults and children, and great entertainment on the Saturday evening.

We're making a special effort this time to invite friends from Europe and North America.

- No need to pay in advance. You can pay our Treasurer, Roy Evans, during the weekend.
- The Assembly will be held at the High Leigh Conference Centre Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, England.
- For online booking, please email *fred.elphick@virgin.net* or phone 011 44 20 8658 6320
- Fees:
Adults £88 [standard] £108 [en suite]*
Children 12-15 £25, Under 12 by donation
*50% discount for students