

Society for the Study of Christian Ethics

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 3rd September 2011 Westcott House, Cambridge

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jeff Bailey, Bernd Wannewetsch and Matthew Arbo.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed and seconded as accurate.

3. President's Report

Reflecting on the past year, Robert Song noted that thanks were due to the Secretary and Conference Secretary for their diligence in preparation of a very successful conference. He also expressed thanks to Matthew Arbo for overseeing the SSCE Postgraduate Forum in the past year.

4. Financial Statement and Membership Report

In the absence of Michael Black, the Treasurer, his financial report was presented by Robert Song.

The Society continues in sound financial condition with no pressing issues to be resolved in this area. Some details of interest:

- Our cash balance as of 31 Dec 2010 was £10418 compared with £9300 in the previous year.
 - During 2010 we largely recovered the £2300 loss of the previous year.
 - However, our income stream to date for this year (2011) is down about 50% from last year due to reduced conference attendance (The approximate conference fees to date are £7,388) Consequently our year to date (i.e. September to September) cash balance is substantially lower (£15,655 vs. £21,400 last year). Since our conference costs are largely *per capita*, this raises a temporary cash flow rather than long-term balance sheet problem.
- The issue of outdated direct debits for subscriptions has yet to be entirely resolved. Although the Membership Secretary has been addressing this issue, we are still short on subscription income by approximately £1000.

Sources and Uses of Funds 2010 [2009]

Sources

Membership fees	£ 950.00	[£1000.00]
Conference fees	£14,207.66	[£9339.00]
SAGE	£ 2000.00	[£1000.00]
Interest	£ 10.29	
Total Sources	£17167.95	[£11539.00]

Uses

Conference Expenses	£12624.32	[£12152.00]
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Of which:		
Westcott House	£6,595.63	[£7071.00]
Sydney Sussex	£1,593.50	
Jesus College Dinner	£3,061.08	[£2777.00]
Speaker and other expenses	£1374.11	[£2304.00]
Graduate Forum	£ 504.00	
Studies in Christian Ethics	£2000.00	[£1000.00]
Website design	£285.00	[£679.00]
Total Uses	£15413.32	[£13831.00]
Net change in Funds Available	£ 1754.63	[-£2292.00]

Robert Heimburger, with the intention of starting a new tradition, welcomed those who had joined the Society in the past year. He drew members' attention to the new rates of the membership fee. In relation to conference payments, he explained that the preferred payment methods for UK-based delegates are cheque and bank transfer – rather than PayPal, which tends to be costlier and is reserved for non-UK delegates paying in foreign currency. Robert also announced a new bursary scheme for postgraduate students and other non-waged, which the committee had decided to launch in order to help people attend SSCE conferences and Postgraduate Forums who would otherwise be unable to do so.

Questions were asked about the current membership of the Society. Robert Heimburger explained that around 20 percent of those on the membership database were 'active' (paying) members. It was suggested to distinguish in the database between active and former/sleeping members, which would allow certain membership benefits to accrue to active members only. Robert promised he would explore this with Jeremy Kidwell (IT Support Officer) before handing over to a new Conference Secretary.

5. Membership of Committee

Bernd Wannewetsch reached the end of his second term on the committee, and the by-laws require retirement. Carys Moseley was nominated as his replacement, and accepted for his first three-year term. Robert Heimburger (co-opted member) announced he would step down as Conference Secretary soon after this year's conference, once the administration relating to this conference will have been completed. The committee will seek to appoint a new Conference Secretary (to be co-opted as committee member). Matthew Arbo stepped down as the Coordinator of the Postgraduate Forum. Jeremy Kidwell, who had already been serving the Society as IT Support Officer, had been found ready to take over from Matthew, and was co-opted by the committee.

6. Feedback on 2010 Conference

The general feeling of the meeting was that the papers thus far had been excellent: while coming from very different angles, they complemented each other very nicely, facilitating a conversation that was sustained through the various parts of the conference programme. While turnout was markedly low, it was pointed that the theme 'sport' had been chosen by the Society in full expectation that it would not draw large numbers – if only because few theologians and ethicists have done little reflection in this area.

Similarly, it was pointed out that, by publishing the key papers in *SCE*, the Society would do the larger scholarly community a valuable service.

7. Discussion of Future Conferences

The initial discussion concerned the dates of future conferences. While the SSCE has traditionally held its annual conferences in the first full weekend of September, it had been brought to the committee's attention that as a result these conferences tend to clash with the respective annual meetings of the Catholic Theological Association and the British New Testament Society. After some discussion it became clear, however, that there was little room for manoeuvring: a weekday conference proved unpopular, and would make no difference to North-American delegates (for whom term starts in late August); and holding the conference a week (or two) later in September would be problematic for those working for theological colleges and courses. It was left to the committee to explore further options, and perhaps to organise an email survey. It was confirmed that next year's conference would be held on 7th-9th September 2012.

During last year's Annual General Meeting 'theological anthropology' was chosen as the topic for the 2012 conference. Robert Song said that in the coming few months the committee would seek to fix (at least) a skeleton programme.

Robert Song reminded the meeting that conference themes had traditionally alternated between 'concepts/methods' and 'applied ethics' each year, and that on this basis the sequence of the 2010 and 2011 conferences (climate change and sport respectively) had been exceptional. It was agreed to continue the usual pattern, and to have next year's 'conceptual' theme (anthropology) followed by a more 'applied' one in 2013. Various proposals were tabled for such a theme:

- 'Just War' (with a focus on new and/or unmanned techniques of warfare)
- 'Working Life' (work and rest, professional ethics)
- 'Security & Surveillance' (espionage, 'dirty hands')
- 'Social Cohesion'
- 'Policing'
- 'Journalism & Media Ethics'

It was pointed out that the SSCE had organised a conference on 'managerialism' as recently as 2007, and that the theme of 'Working Life'; however, that 'Professional Ethics', especially when made to include academic work, was a good option for the 2014 conference (which, in accordance with the aforementioned rhythm, would have a focus on 'method'). There was also discussion as to whether the themes of 'Just War', 'Security & Surveillance' and 'Policing' could be amalgamated; however, the proponent of 'Just War' rejected this suggestion. It was decided to vote on the aforementioned themes as separate themes: 'Security & Surveillance' received most votes, and so it was decided this would be the theme for 2013, with 'Professional Ethics' as an option for 2014 (to be discussed at next year's AGM).

8. *Studies in Christian Ethics*

Due to time constraints, Susan Parsons could only give a very brief report. It had once again been a good year for the journal, with interesting figures on digital use of the journal in different continents. A full report by SAGE (the journal publisher) was made

available to all members for consultation.

9. ‘Sister’ Societies (SCE and Societas Ethica)

Neil Messer gave a brief report on the recent Societas Ethica conference, held in Lugano. He announced that next year’s conference would be held in Romania. He encouraged research students in particular to attend and submit paper proposals, mentioning that the society had launched a prize for the best postgraduate paper.

10. Postgraduate Forum

Robert Heimburger (in the absence of Matthew Arbo) reported on the state of the Postgraduate Forum. While the Edinburgh forum (March 2011) had been successful, the forum scheduled for September (prior to the main SSCE conference) had unfortunately been cancelled, due to low interest. The general feeling is that this is due to a ‘natural’ flux in postgraduate numbers, rather than a lack of interest. The next forum is due to take place in Edinburgh, March 2012.

11. Any Other Business

Robert Song tabled a plan to launch an initiative to improve Wikipedia entries on (Christian) ethics. His idea was to bring together a number of members (e.g. postgraduate students and early-career academics), to examine and/or edit existing entries, and write new ones. His proposal was enthusiastically backed. Brad Littlejohn volunteered to co-ordinate the scheme.

Guido de Graaff
SSCE Secretary
3rd September 2011