

Message from the New Chair of Council

Chris Clarke, Southampton, England

On October 15th the Council of the SMN promoted me from acting Chair (as reported in the last issue of Network) to be its Chair for the coming year. Let me introduce myself to those of you who don't already know me. I am a theoretical physicist by training, and until recently I was Professor of Applied Mathematics at the University of Southampton, where I worked mainly in computational astrophysics, but with excursions into biomagnetism, quantum theory, and the physics of consciousness. I have always had a drive towards integrating my spiritual and my intellectual leanings, which led me to resign my post last year in order to give this integration my full attention. My spiritual background is in the Christian tradition, particularly in its creation-centred aspects. I belong to those who, in the words of our current publicity leaflet, "feel that the world is best comprehended by the view that the visible universe around us is part of a larger reality" and who are thereby led to "an appreciation that the challenges facing us are intellectual, emotional and spiritual as well as material." You can find out more about me at <http://www.scispirit.com>.

I shall not be attempting to emulate the brilliant and inspiring role played by my predecessor Peter Fenwick: rather, I shall be trying to establish the conditions within which all members of Council, and members of the Network as a whole, can make a greater contribution to "our common objective ... to deepen understanding in science, medicine and education, by fostering rational analysis and intuitive insights, ..." to quote our leaflet again. The needs not only personal integration, but an active dialectic between those of us who have deep commitment to different aspects of this common quest. It is thus crucial that we are indeed a network. The more effectively that we can function as a network, the more we can realise the immense potential of our astonishingly varied gifts. Some of us achieve this in local groups, special interest groups, at "Mystics and Scientists" or other major national meetings; but not everyone can attend these and we need to open up other channels of communication. At the Members Forum of this year's AGM, the main concerns that emerged were about communication and co-operation. How can people register their desire to help? How can members start up a new local or special interest group? How can there be more free discussion, and more personal care, at meetings and conferences? How can we use e-mail lists (I am in the process of setting up a range of further ones) and the pages of Network to maximum effect in order to realise our own strengths? I would like to hear from everyone about these and other issues - though I give advanced warning that the disorganised state of my office makes it less than totally certain that your message will be dealt with immediately (e-mail Chris@scispirit.com, address in the Directory Supplement, or for Associates via the Office).

Outreach to and communication with the wider community is the other side of our activity, though this needs to be done with care so as not to compromise the confidentiality of SMN membership and the "safe house" principle of internal meetings. Over the last year we have necessarily been rather inward looking. Following the relocation of our office to Ockley, our finance and record systems have been rebuilt, involving an immense input of work for Graham Gordon our Administration Director. After considerable searching of hearts, heads and souls we have set aside some of the more radical changes in structure that were heralded at the 1999 AGM and reverted to our established pattern of separate Trustees and Council, with clearly defined areas of activity for members of the latter. Once this is all in place early next year I hope we will be able to turn attention more to the outward side of

our wider mission. I will, with David Lorimer's permission, be using Network to keep members informed about any developments on this front over the coming year.