



Ecclesiastical  
Law  
Society

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**NEWSLETTER**  
**of**  
**THE ECCLESIASTICAL LAW SOCIETY**

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Editor:  
Benjamin Harrison  
[assistant.editor@ecclj.org](mailto:assistant.editor@ecclj.org)

Executive Secretary:  
The Rt. Rev'd John Ford  
[execsec@ecclawsoc.org.uk](mailto:execsec@ecclawsoc.org.uk)

**ELS CONFERENCE 2021**

The Society's planned Residential Conference for 2021 had to take place online because of COVID restrictions, but a happy consequence of this was that over 200 people registered to attend. The topic of the day was 'The Solemnization of Matrimony: past, present and future' and three excellent papers were given:

- *Getting married: the origins of the current law and problems*—Professor Rebecca Probert, University of Exeter
- *The Law Commission's project on weddings law reform*—Professor Nicholas Hopkins, Law Commission
- *Three Problems with Marriage Law*—Professor Russell Sandberg, Cardiff University

The PowerPoint slides from these presentations can be downloaded [here](#). Video recordings will be published on the [ELS YouTube channel](#) in the coming days—so do look out for that. The conference ended with a panel discussion bringing together themes of the day. The Society is grateful to the three speakers for their very interesting and topical contributions.

## **DATES FOR THE DIARY 2021**

*New events since the last edition of this Newsletter, and changes to the original programme, are in boxes.*

### **Wednesday 21 April 2021**

The Worshipful John Bullimore, Chancellor of the Dioceses of Blackburn and Derby  
*Best practice in the consistory court and other bits, some guidance from a retiring Chancellor.* [Book here.](#)

### **Wednesday 12 May 2021**

The Rev'd Dr. Helen Hall, Associate Professor, Nottingham Trent University  
*Exorcism and the Law.* [Book here.](#)

### **Wednesday 16 June 2021**

The Rt. Rev'd Christine Hardman, Bishop of Newcastle  
*The importance of ecclesiastical law in facilitating the mission of the Church.*  
[Book here.](#)

### **Thursday 8 July 2021**

The Society is hosting a Zoom webinar on the subject of *Religion and Marriage Law: The Need for Reform*, when an expert panel will mark the launch of Professor Russell Sandberg's new [book](#). The session will be moderated by Professor Mark Hill QC (Former Chair, Ecclesiastical Law Society). [Book here.](#) Panel members will include:

- Professor Gillian Douglas (formerly Dean of the Dickson Poon School of Law, King's College, London),
- Lady Hale of Richmond, DBE (formerly President of the United Kingdom Supreme Court),
- Professor Jane Mair (Professor of Private Law, University of Glasgow).

### **Wednesday 15 September 2021**

The Rt. Worshipful Morag Ellis QC, Dean of the Arches and Auditor  
*Clean and green—law and the carbon neutral Church.* [Book here.](#)

### **Wednesday 20 October 2021**

A joint lecture by the Rev'd Stephen Coleman (Assistant Director of the Cardiff Centre for Law and Religion) and the Rev'd Russell Dewhurst (Chair of the ELS Communications Committee). *The Canons of the Church of England—reflections on some fundamentals of ecclesiastical law.* [Book here.](#)

### **Wednesday 17 November 2021**

The Rt. Worshipful Peter Collier QC, Vicar General of the Province of York  
*50 years of Safeguarding—950 years of Clergy discipline: Where do we go from here?*  
[Book here.](#)

## THANKS TO OUR OUTGOING CHAIR

*The following speech was delivered by Bishop Christopher Hill during our recent AGM, as part of a vote of thanks for the Society's outgoing Chair, Mark Hill QC.*



I want to express all due thanks to the trustees and officers for all their sterling work over the past year, not least the way in which they have ensured not only that the work of the Society *continued* in Covid time, but actually *increased*. I would like also to speak of Mark's achievements for the Society as its outgoing Chair. Mark has in effect been at the tiller for around seven years. A good biblical number, but *not* indicative of famine following!

Membership of the Society is at its highest ever at over 700. Under Mark's rule—usually benign if occasionally robust—the diversity of the trustees and officers has properly increased and the prospect of serving as a trustee has become *desirable*—witness the recent contested trustee election. Educational activities in ecclesiastical law have flourished with reading groups in Canon Law and groups such as the CDM working party. Mark has supported and encouraged (occasionally, I am told, cajoled!) trustees and members in all this. The London Lectures have flourished and the Northern Province Lectures initiated. The new CIO constitution has been implemented (including necessary Covid amendments last November). New Constitutions take great bites out of time and are also demanding in terms of detailed attention. Professional support for officers and trustees, through Stephen Hogg and Bishop John, and previously Andrew Male, have increased. I well recall dire times in the distant past when administrative problems not only shackled the then Executive Committee but also caused more than unnecessary personal stress on individual members, Mark included.

Above all we are grateful for Mark's *passion* for the ELS, even if occasionally he has just shown a little exasperation when others have not entirely matched his own enthusiasm and efficiency! And this passion has, at times, been at a personal cost. It is therefore right that we should express our deep gratitude to him now, and to show both our appreciation and affection for him. Mark, we are indebted to you. Please don't go away!

+Christopher

*The Rt. Rev'd Christopher Hill, President of the Ecclesiastical Law Society*

## **A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW CHAIR OF THE ELS**

Dear Fellow Members of the ELS,

May I take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Society. I was elected by the members at the AGM on 20 March 2021, having served as a trustee of the Society since 2016.

I have been a practising solicitor since 2001 and have been a partner at Wrigleys Solicitors LLP in Yorkshire since 2009 specialising in ecclesiastical and charity law with a particular interest in meeting the needs of Churches, Religious Orders and other ecclesial communities and organisations.

If I have felt able to accept the role of Chair it is only because of the tremendous legacy left by Professor Mark Hill QC. Mark has worked tirelessly for the Society, setting it on the firmest of foundations.

Those of us who have had the privilege of being alongside Mark on the board of trustees have had the opportunity to see a superb lawyer and charismatic orator at work, with a sure eye for detail and an exceptional work ethic. We all owe him a very great deal. He will be greatly missed from the board of trustees.

May I also take this opportunity to echo Mark's words of thanks to the outgoing trustees: Bishop Christine Hardman, Simon Baker, Frank Cranmer and Russell Dewhurst for all their hard work and dedication over the last few years, particularly during this time of transition to a CIO.

We are delighted to welcome the following new and re-elected trustees: Paul Benfield, Lee Coley, Edward Dobson, Sam Maginnis and Neil Patterson. May I also thank those who were prepared to put themselves forward for election as trustees. It was heartening to see how many people were willing to volunteer. The whole Society is grateful to them for their demonstration of confidence in the Society and commitment to its future.

I look forward to continuing to foster a Society providing not only a forum for the promotion of ecclesiastical law and for the exchange of ideas and points of view but also a place for mutual support and encouragement.

May we together take the Society forward whilst remaining steadfastly true to its essence and underlying, founding principles.

As the trustee board prepares for its first meeting during this Easter season may I ask for your prayers for us as we begin a new chapter in the life of the Society.

With very best wishes,



*Elizabeth Wilson*

*Chair of the Ecclesiastical Law Society*

## NEWS

### **Covid-19 and church committees**

The latest video posted to the ELS YouTube channel is a discussion of ‘COVID and Church Committees.’ Louise Connacher (Provincial Registrar of York), the Rev’d Dr. Andrea Russell, and the Ven. Simon Baker discuss the practical effects of COVID restrictions on PCC meetings and APCMs. The video can be viewed [here](#).

### **Final Report published by ELS Working Party Reviewing the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003**

On 24 February 2021, the ELS announced the Final Report of its Working Party on the Clergy Discipline Measure. Members will recall the circulation of its interim report last September, and many will have responded to the Working Party’s two consultations. The final report can be viewed [here](#).

### **Updated online—Legal Opinions Concerning the Church of England**

An updated version of the *Legal Opinions Concerning the Church of England* is now available on the Church of England website via [this link](#). Although the text of all the opinions was on the website before, the advantage of the recent consolidation is that it is fully searchable for key words. Whereas it is the 2020 edition, it was prepared some time ago, and so six opinions from January 2019 onwards are still in PDF-only form, and they are still separately listed on the site.

### **Landmark events in ecclesiastical law during four decades**



The latest London Lecture, delivered by Paul Morris Esq., can be viewed [here](#).