



Ecclesiastical
Law
Society

NEWSLETTER
of
THE ECCLESIASTICAL LAW SOCIETY

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**The Ecclesiastical Law Society wishes all its
members, friends and readers a happy and peaceful
Advent, Christmastide and Epiphany**



Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist, Saint Peter and Two angels, Tuscan c.1290

NEWS & NOTICES

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to the final Newsletter of the ELS of the year. It has been an eventful year for the Society, as we bid a fond and thankful farewell to our former chair, Elizabeth Wilson, and welcomed Lee Coley who succeeds her.

We have much to eagerly anticipate in the year ahead and we hope to see many of our members and supporters throughout our

2025 programme.

This seasonal edition of the Newsletter contains exiting news of upcoming events, some updates regarding the work, activities and members of the ELS, opportunities further afield for scholars and practitioners of ecclesiastical law, as well as the usual round-up of the latest Journal articles, legislative updates and, of course, our Christmas Puzzle!

However you intend to spend the festive season, I wish you health and happiness for the year ahead, and look forward to our further work and engagement throughout 2025.

Frances Godden, Editor

A LANDMARK CONFERENCE FOR 2025 - “NICAEA RECEIVED: 1700 YEARS OF CANONS, COUNCILS AND ECUMENISM”

The annual conference of the Ecclesiastical Law Society for 2025 will take place between 20th - 22nd June 2025 at Chichester Cathedral and the Bishop’s Palace.

2025 marks the 1700th anniversary of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea, an event of the highest significance in world history.



It is not only the Nicene creed which Christians today still receive from the Council of 325. For the field of ecclesiastical law, Nicaea left its mark indelibly on the centuries that followed, not least in canons – a species of legislation pioneered at Nicaea – in the involvement of the Emperor and the secular powers, and in conciliarity itself.

The Conference will explore the effects of Nicaea on ecclesiastical and canon law over the past 1700 years and up to the present day. There will be a particular focus on how reception of the first Ecumenical Council can shape the ecumenical endeavour today, and on the emerging field of juridical ecumenism. The Society is honoured to welcome speakers who contribute on the world stage, and the conference promises to be a landmark event for ecclesiastical lawyers, church historians, and ecumenists.



Please note that this is ***not*** a residential conference. Attendees will arrange their own accommodation and breakfast.

The conference fee will cover keynote addresses, choice of workshops and seminars, meals (including the Conference Dinner) and coffee and tea. There will be a cash bar at the Conference venue.

Speakers will include

- His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople
- Professor Myriam Wijlens, Professor of Canon Law at the University of Erfurt
- The Rt Revd Dr Christopher Cocksworth, Dean of Windsor

- The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker, Bishop of Fulham and Chair of the Council for Christian Unity
- Professor Norman Doe KC, Professor of Law, Cardiff University
- Professor Mark Edwards, Professor of Early Christian Studies, University of Oxford
- The Rt Worshipful Morag Ellis, Dean of the Arches and Auditor
- The Rt Revd Christopher Hill, President of the Ecclesiastical Law Society
- The Revd Gerry Lynch, doctoral student, University of Oxford
- The Revd Professor Alison Millbank, Professor of Theology, Nottingham University

Delegates are encouraged to book early since numbers at the Conference are strictly limited and accommodation in the area is likely to be in high demand. There are many hotels, guesthouses, and Airbnb venues in the City and nearby.

Provisional ticket prices (subject to change) are £395 for members, £475 for non-members. Clergy are encouraged to access CMD and other grants to facilitate attendance.

ELS members will be notified when bookings open. Bookings will open to members first, and later to non-members.

If you would like to be kept informed of news about this conference (including confirmed speakers, when registration opens, etc.), please sign up via our website [here](#).

ANGLICAN CHURCH LAW AND GOVERNANCE ACADEMIC UNIT IN AUSTRALIA



We have been asked to share news that an academic unit on Anglican church law and governance has been offered since 2021 by the Trinity College Theological School in Melbourne, Australia. The Trinity College Theological School is a school within The University of Divinity, a university embracing colleges from all the major denominations in Australia. This academic unit is the only one offered by any theological college in Australia. The unit is an elective which can be taken for credit towards a degree offered by the University, and can also be ‘audited’ as a single subject by those with an interest in the church or ecclesiastical law.

The topics dealt with in the unit include theological understandings of the Church and of law in the New Testament and early Church, canon law of the Church of England and of the Anglican Church of Australia, the status, role, responsibilities and discipline of the clergy, professional standards, the governance of parishes and the ecclesiastical law in regard to public worship and the pastoral offices.

COLLOQUIUM OF ANGLICAN AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CANON LAWYERS MEETS IN ROME



Between 24 – 27 September 2024, the Colloquium of Anglican and Roman Catholic Canon Lawyers met in Rome, celebrating its silver jubilee, for comparative study of the subject of synodality in the two systems of canon law.

The Colloquium was hosted at the Angelicum (Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas) in Rome thanks to the offices of Fr Hyacinthe Destivelle OP, Director of the Institute for Ecumenical Studies, and Fr Loïc-Marie Le Bot OP, Dean of the Faculty of Canon Law.

The Colloquium opened with His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, launching the book [Listening to the West: Synodality in Western Ecclesial Traditions](#) (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2023).



Following this, Professor Norman Doe of Cardiff University delivered a lecture ‘Canon Law, Ecumenism, and Synodality’.

Sister Nathalie Becquart, Under-Secretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, responded.

All three presentations can be seen [online](#).

During the subsequent days of the Colloquium papers were presented and discussed. In addition, as part of the silver jubilee celebrations, Norman Doe’s play, Thrice to Rome, was performed at the Palazzo della Cancelleria and a jubilee dinner was hosted by the British Ambassador to the Holy See, Christopher Trott.



To conclude, an agreed statement of joint principles was agreed.

It is hoped that a full report of proceedings will be included in a future edition of the Ecclesiastical Law Journal, and the papers presented may also be published.

“REBUILDING TRUST” – RT REVD MARTIN SEELEY

On Tuesday 15 October, the Rt Revd Martin Seeley, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, delivered a lecture to the Society at the Grosvenor Chapel, London.

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Martin Seeley, spoke about rebuilding trust in the Church of England *writes the Revd Dan Grayson, ELS member.*

Reflecting on his work as part of the Transforming Effectiveness group, which explored questions of trust and leadership in the Church of England, Bishop Martin discussed the need for trustworthy leaders, trustworthy systems, and the need for the Church of England to be trusted in wider society.



Bishop Martin took questions about building young people’s trust in the church, the expectations of parishes and diocese of their clergy, and spoke in defence of clergy autonomy. Other questions explored how the Church of England can be a trusted contributor to public policy, especially on questions of ethics and morals, and Bishop Martin encouraged clergy to become involved in and educated on particular areas of interest.

The ELS is most grateful to our lecturer, and to the Grosvenor Chapel for hosting the event. We are also indebted to Birketts LLP for their sponsorship of the 2024 London lectures.

LATEST ELJ PUBLISHED: A ROUND-UP



The most recent edition of the Ecclesiastical Law Journal was published in September. It includes stimulating articles on Free election in the age of Erastianism by Jason Loch (an examination of the case of *R v The President and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral*), Power and its exercise in the Vatican City State by Konrad Dyda, and John Witte, Jr considers Faith in school: balancing no establishment and free exercise of religion guarantees in American education.

Further comment comes from Mike Highton’s ‘revisiting’ of the *Rustat* case, Frank Cranmer who examines an exceptional burial in a closed churchyard in Kent, and Pt Babie provides reflections on a theory of law in the addresses of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I. Regular content in terms of parliamentary and conference reports supplement the above, along with this season’s book reviews and case notes.

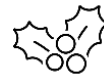
The latest edition has been published and sent to members of the Society who receive it without additional charge. Members have access to the entire run of Journal back issues online.

To use this facility, go to www.ecclawsoc.org.uk and click Login. If you aren’t sure of your password, click “Forgot Password” enter your email address. When you have logged in, click on the “Members” menu title, then “Journal Archive” and follow the link.

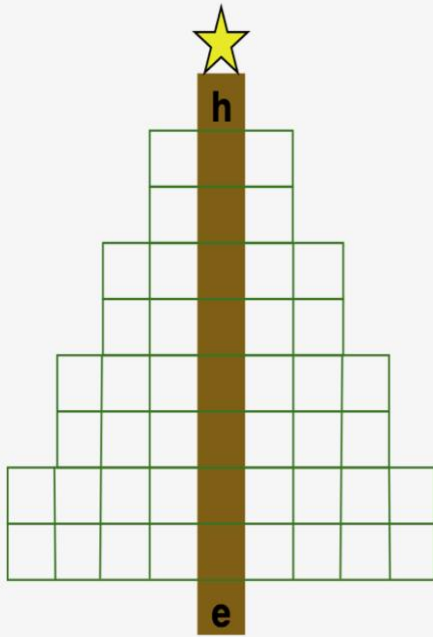




CHRISTMAS PUZZLE



It's that time of year again, and our Communications Officer, Russell Dewhurst, has conceived a fantastically topical quiz for members – good luck, and the answers will be in the first edition of the Newsletter in 2025. Download PDF version [here](#).



ELS Christmas Puzzle 2024

ELS's passion– in full awe and wonder.

Exercise vision where the cathedral is found.

Twisting Latin way with Roman Catholic parish priest.

Cathedral clergy like the sound of a gun.

A group of professors allows you to dispose of the pews.

Sculpture consuming tea is enacted by Parliament.

Chicago-Lambeth polity is endlessly episcopalian.

1700 years of canons, councils, and this!

Solve the clues, and then unscramble the anagram hidden in the trunk of the Christmas tree.



DATES FOR THE DIARY 2025

Our full programme for 2025 will include lectures, conferences, and training events both in person and online.

Details and dates will be published on our website as soon as details become available. Events open for booking so far include our hit ELS Bitesize series!

ELS Bitesize is a new series of introductory sessions to ecclesiastical law in an accessible and digestible format.

These consist of monthly 30-minute discussions between The Revd Russell Dewhurst and the Ven Moira Astin about the basics of ecclesiastical law, in a monthly series of accessible 'bitesize' discussions.

The introductory discussion between the hosts will be recorded and posted to our Youtube channel. In the second half, the discussion will be opened up to all attending the seminar, and this part will not be recorded. The Zoom discussions are open to members and non-members and is free of charge.

Future sessions include:

Bitesize Ecclesiastical Law #7

21 January 2025 5.30 – 6pm

Book [here](#).

“What is an incumbent?”

We talk with the Revd Christopher Smith, Vicar of St Alban's Holborn in the Diocese of London about incumbents in the Church of England, that is to say, Vicars and Rectors.

Bitesize Ecclesiastical Law #8

11 February 2025 5.30 – 6pm

Book [here](#).

“What is an Archdeacon?”

The Revd Russell Dewhurst and the Ven Moira Astin talk discuss archdeacons in the law of the Church of England.

Bitesize Ecclesiastical Law #9

18 March 2025 5.30 – 6pm

Book [here](#).

“What is an Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)?”

We talk with Frances Godden, solicitor and ELS trustee, about Annual Parochial Church Meetings– the yearly church meeting that takes place in every parish in the Church of England.

We would welcome comments and suggestions for future discussions!

ELS Lectures are free of charge and are open to members and non-members save where otherwise stated. Where held in person, spaces are limited and prior booking (through the website) is essential. Booking closes 48 hours before the event (or when the event is full), but please contact the Executive Secretary execsec@ecclawsoc.org.uk for late availability requests. If you find you can no longer attend, please cancel your booking to make the space available for someone else.

And, in case you missed it...

The *Ecclesiastical Law Society* has its own dedicated YouTube channel – you can sign up to subscribe and view past recordings of lectures and interviews [here](#).

Recent additions include:

Bitesize Ecclesiastical Law:

#1 What is Ecclesiastical Law?

- We talk about what subjects ecclesiastical law covers and what its status is, focussing especially on the Church of England.

#2 Why Ecclesiastical Law?

- We talk about why the church has law and what it is for.

#3 Who's Who in Ecclesiastical Law?

- We talk about the roles of chancellors, registrars, archdeacons, and others in the Church of England.

#4 What is a PCC?

- We explain the make-up and function of Parochial Church Councils in the Church of England.

#5 What is a Churchwarden?

- We discuss the qualifications, election, and duties of churchwardens in the Church of England.

#6 "What is an electoral roll?"

- We discuss electoral rolls– perhaps the nearest thing the Church of England has to a membership list. This is particularly topical as parishes will be renewing their electoral rolls in 2025.

LEGISLATION UPDATE

Thanks as ever go to Frank Cranmer for these useful contributions.

The Government and “faith”

In August, the new Government announced that Lord Khan of Burnley, who was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 9 July 2024, would be Minister for Faith. His other duties include resettlement and communities and community relations. He is also the Ministry's spokesperson in the Lords.

In October, Marsha de Cordova, Labour MP for Battersea, was appointed Second Church Estates Commissioner.

In December, it announced that David Smith MP [Lab, North Northumberland] would be the UK's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief and would take up the appointment in the New Year.

Law Commission consultation on burial and cremation law

In October, the Law Commission published a [consultation paper](#) on its provisional proposals for reforming burial and cremation law in England and Wales. Possibly its most important proposal is on the reuse of graves. Its proposals would enable any burial ground to reuse graves, but only after public consultation and with Government approval. There would also be safeguards for each individual grave. The major themes of the consultation are:

- the regulation of burial grounds;
- grave reuse and reclamation;
- closed and disused burial grounds and exhumation;
- the rights granted to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; and
- cremation law.

The consultation closes on **9 January 2025**.

Higgs v Farmor's School

In early October, the Court of Appeal heard the appeal in *Higgs v Farmor's School*. The EHRC intervened: its statement is [here](#). Watch this space...

Humanist weddings

Also in October, there was a [short debate](#) in the House of Lords on humanist weddings. Baroness Thornton asked the Government whether they planned to give legal recognition to humanist weddings (ie in England & Wales), to which Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice, replied:

“The Government understand humanists’ strength of feeling about legally recognising humanist weddings. I know that this strength of feeling extends to many within this House. As a new Government, we must look closely at the details of any proposed changes before setting out our position, which we will do in due course”.

Assisted dying

In October, the Isle of Man’s Legislative Council voted by seven to one to pass the [Assisted Dying Bill](#) through the Principles stage – the initial debate in the upper chamber of Tynwald, where they can discuss the wider aspects of the Bill. It will now move into the Clauses stage, where it will be considered in greater detail, with votes on any amendments. (*A summary of the Parliamentary procedure in the Isle of Man is [here](#).*)

In Wales, Senedd members refused to back calls for the law on assisted dying in England and Wales to be changed. However, at Westminster in December, the Commons voted by 330 to 275 to give the [Terminally Ill Adults \(End of Life\) Bill](#) a second reading. Unusually for a private Member’s bill, it was committed to a Public Bill Committee with “the power to send for persons, papers and records” – i.e. to call witnesses and take evidence.

Churchyard Memorial Regulations

The Ecclesiastical Judges Association published the Report of its Working Party into Churchyard Memorial Regulations. The report, its annexes, and the two documents that make up the draft template for an Additional Matters Order are as follows:

- [Churchyard Memorials Report v4](#)
- [Churchyard Memorials Report – Appendix A – Comparative Table of Diocesan Regulations](#)
- [Churchyard Memorials Report – Appendices B-F](#)
- [Recommended Template – Additional Matters Order](#)
- [Recommended Template – Schedule 1](#)

“Protecting Built Heritage”

In December, the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee announced an inquiry into “Protecting Built Heritage” – which has obvious implications for faith-groups, not least in relation to the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. It invites responses to the following questions:

1. What are the most significant challenges facing owners and operators of built heritage assets, and how are they affecting what those sites can offer? What interventions are needed to prevent the managed decline of heritage assets on publicly-owned land? What can the Government do to make it easier for communities or local businesses to take ownership of historic buildings?
2. How effective are the current funding and finance models for built heritage? What should long-term public funding for the sector look like?
3. What role does built heritage play in the regeneration of local areas and in contributing to economic growth and community identity? How can heritage buildings be supported to increase energy efficiency and contribute to the Government’s net zero targets?
4. What are the financial, regulatory and practical barriers to preserving built heritage? What policy changes are needed to make restoring historic buildings easier and less expensive?
5. What policies would ensure that the UK workforce has the right skills to maintain our heritage assets?

The call for evidence closes on **3 February 2025**: further details [here](#).

Finding relevant ECtHR cases

The Human Rights Centre at Ghent University regularly scans all recently communicated ECtHR cases for its research. Members may wish to know that, in a helpful development, it has decided to make its overviews of communicated cases (in English) available on its website, [here](#).
