



## TRUSTEES' REPORT 2024

The Ecclesiastical Law Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (registered charity no 1181002) whose registered office is at 1 The Sanctuary, London SW1P 3JT. The Trustees of the Charity for this reporting period were:

Elizabeth Wilson (Chair) until 27<sup>th</sup> April  
The Rt Rev'd Martin Warner (Vice Chair)  
The Rev'd Paul Benfield (Treasurer)  
The Ven Moira Astin  
Paul Barber  
The Rev'd Stephen Coleman  
Lee Coley – elected Chair 27<sup>th</sup> April  
Edward Dobson until 27<sup>th</sup> April  
Frances Godden  
The Rev'd Sam Maginnis  
Ola Olajide from 27<sup>th</sup> April  
The Rev'd Canon Neil Patterson  
The Rev'd Christopher Smith

The objects of the CIO as stated in our Constitution are:

The objects ("Objects") of the CIO are:

To promote education in ecclesiastical law for the benefit of the public including in particular but not exclusively:

- (a) the clergy and laity of the Church of England;
- (b) those who hold authority or judicial office in, or practise in the ecclesiastical courts of, the Church of England; and
- (c) students and teachers of ecclesiastical law.

The Trustees are pleased to report that during the calendar year 2024 these objects were furthered in all of the activities and meetings of the Society and the Trustees wish to record their thanks to all those, Officers, members and service providers for their work in maintaining the life and witness of the Society.



The AGM was held on 27<sup>th</sup> April at St Peter's Eaton Square, Belgravia, London SW1W 0QH during the course of the Day Conference. We are grateful to the Vicar and Churchwardens of St Peter's for their hospitality. The liturgical theme attracted a large number of participants the gathering exceeded 80 people who were treated to a rich variety of talks. Our Vice-Chair, Bishop Martin Warner, set out the ideals of liturgical law, and Neil Patterson illustrated the messier way in which they have worked out in the modern life of the Church of England. Then Moira Astin and David Willinck drew

out the sometimes unexpected connections between liturgy and the practical decisions required by the faculty jurisdiction. Finally after lunch and the AGM, Bishop Robert Atwell explored the recent production of texts by the Liturgical Commission including the *Prayers of Love & Faith* and Christopher Landau posed the challenge presented by a Church where many congregations sit extremely light to liturgical forms, urging wider use of the framework of A Service of the Word. These all prompted many questions and good discussion, and members went away with enriched understanding of the complex interplay between liturgy and law.

During the annual meeting members expressed their gratitude to Elizabeth Wilson who had indicated that she would not stand for re-election as Chair. The President, The Rt Rev'd Christopher Hill summed up member's thanks when he said that Elizabeth Wilson had been a cheerful, efficient enabler during her term of office. Lizzie was thanked for her open approach which had brought a fresh dynamic to the Trustee body which was now more diverse and collaborative.

The meeting unanimously elected Lee Coley as Chairman.

The Rev'd Samuel Maginnis and The Rev'd Neil Patterson were re-elected as Charity Trustees and Ola Olajide was elected as a Charity Trustee having previously been a co-opted Trustee.

The meeting received the annual accounts of the Charity which had been independently examined and these, with the Treasurer's report, are appended at the end of this report. The Society relies almost entirely on its members for its income. During this reporting period the Charity received some sponsorship from Wrigleys, Stone King and Birketts, to whom the Trustees express their grateful thanks.

After careful consideration the Trustees decided that subscription rates would increase with effect from June 2024. The last increase had been in 2019 and such a change was overdue. The new rates take into account inflation and the increased costs of the journal. Membership renewals this year show a reduction of 30 and result in increased income of £10,000.

The Trustees met on four occasions in 2023/24. A major subject on each agenda has been to monitor the planning of the forthcoming weekend Conference ***Nicaea Received: 1700 years of Canons, Councils and ecumenism*** to be held from 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2025 in Chichester. The Trustees are most grateful to a small group convened by Sam Maginnis who are making the practical arrangements. This group is working closely with the Bishop of Chichester and his staff together with the Dean and Chapter of Chichester Cathedral to deliver a major Conference on the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council. We are delighted to have secured keynote addresses from His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch and Professor Myriam Wijlens.

The Trustees made a strategic decision to review the governance structure and have set up a group, convened by Frances Godden, to undertake this work. A time scale has not been set but the matter will be progressed as quickly as diaries permit. This decision was made in order that our governance procedures continue to ensure compliance with public benefit as published by the Charity Commission and with a view towards ensuring that future Charity Trustees reflect appropriate diversity in both membership and experience

In addition to the Day Conference already referred to, a lecture programme was delivered with both in person and virtual events. The London Lectures were at the Grosvenor Chapel. and delivered by Stuart Jones, Robin Ward and Bishop Martin Seeley. The average attendance 35. Regrettably Flora Winfield's lecture scheduled for November had to be cancelled as the proposed date could not be accommodated in the diary for her new ministry.

Professor Jan Hallebeek addressed the Society at an online lecture on "Introduction to the Canon Law of the Old Catholic Churches (Union of Utrecht)" on 30 April 2024. This can be seen on the Society's Youtube channel and it is hoped that a version will appear in a future journal.



The training committee events have continued to prove popular with members and non-members. They have offered sessions on Patronage in the 21st Century, and Help I have a Churchyard! All training events this year took place on Zoom. Training has also been provided by way of a new initiative, Ecclesiastical Law Bite-Sized. The themes addressed this year have been Why Ecclesiastical Law?; Who's Who in Ecclesiastical Law?; What is a PCC?. Each is half an hour long with a 20 minute presentation followed by questions. The presentation is made available subsequently on our YouTube channel. The Trustees record their thanks to all members of the training committee and to others who have assisted in these tasks.

The Trustees are also grateful to all the volunteers who offer to assist them in the work of the charity. We record our ongoing thanks to the section editors of the Journal and to its Editor, Ben Harrison. This is our flagship publication and we continue to work closely with CUP to guarantee its production and distribution.

The Rev'd Russell Dewhurst and the Rev'd Stephen Coleman delivered teaching in canon law at several Theological Education Institutions of the Church of England, presenting the ELS course 'Canon Law for the Newly-Ordained.' The course is updated each year and is always enthusiastically received by those about to begin their ordained ministry.

The Eric Kemp prize for 2024 was not awarded. The ELS again collaborated with the Inner Temple in an annual Ecclesiastical Moot Competition by providing a generous cash prize to the winner. A similar competition has begun at Nottingham University and the Trustees are delighted to be able to work with a member to support this initiative.

The Society's Newsletter, edited by Frances Godden, has been distributed regularly to members via email. Frances wishes to keep this publication fresh and accessible and, in order to do so, will be grateful to receive contributions and comments.

The Trustees record their gratitude to all those whose time and talent have been employed in furthering the aims of the Society in the past year. We look forward to developing the scope of our work in the coming year.