

NEWSLETTER
of
THE ECCLESIASTICAL LAW SOCIETY

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*The Marc Chagall window at Chichester Cathedral, celebrating psalm 150:
“Let everything that has breath Praise the Lord”*

NEWS & NOTICES

WHAT A WEEKEND!

NICAEA RECEIVED: 1700 YEARS OF CANONS, COUNCILS AND ECUMENISM



The Rev'd Sam Maginnis, trustee and chair of the Nicaea Received Planning Group, writes:

We stand now on the other side of Nicaea Received, which took place at Chichester Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace over the weekend of 20-22 June. Despite the scorching temperatures, around 130 people came for at least part of the weekend to reflect on and discuss the legacy and ongoing influence of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea for the faith and good order of the Christian Church.



The speaker programme covered a broad range of topics including the relevance of the Canons of Nicaea to contemporary systems of clergy discipline; the role of conciliarity and subsidiarity in church governance from Nicaea to today; the ecclesiology of the Anglican Communion as a global “branch” of Nicene Christianity; and the enduring importance of the Nicene Creed as the starting-point for ecumenical dialogue and collaboration.

These seminars and panel discussions laid the ground for the three keynote addresses held on Friday and Saturday in the Cathedral Nave: Prof Myriam Wijlens on the place of synodality, consensus and lay participation in contemporary Church governance; the Rt Rev'd Christopher Cocksworth on the particular witness and responsibilities of the Church of England as a national and established church; and His All-Holiness the



Ecumenical Patriarch on the Canons of Nicaea as part of the living tradition of the Orthodox Church.

The impact of the conference was not limited to the quality of the seminars and addresses, however. Each day of the conference was punctuated with worship in the Cathedral, which was itself a marvel of ecumenical concord: heralded by a lengthy procession of clergy and dignitaries from the Anglican, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Coptic, Lutheran and Methodist spheres.

We were further honoured by a sermon from the Ecumenical Patriarch on the common faith of all Nicene Christians at Choral Evensong following his keynote address on Saturday, alongside sermons from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham and the Archbishop of York at the other major choral services over the weekend.

Then, there were the lively conversations and connections made between conference delegates throughout the weekend, whether over meals and drinks in the Bishop's Palace Garden or in other amenable spots around the Cathedral grounds or in the city itself. The atmosphere was one of real community; of people coming together to learn not just about Nicaea but about what Nicaea does and could mean for each of us, whatever our church tradition and personal or professional background.



It was also an atmosphere of real excitement: that Nicaea does hold ongoing influence and importance for the Universal Church, and that Nicaea Received marks a significant contribution to understanding what that looks like in practice.

Feedback from those attending Nicaea Received was generally very favourable. As one delegate said:

"Given the quality of the speakers and the expense of bringing such a wide range of top level contributors from across the globe, it was very good value and I have no complaints."

Another delegate commented on their evolving attitude towards the subject-matter of the conference, where they said they were initially dubious about the relevance of the programme for practising ecclesiastical lawyers but left feeling that "the balance was achieved well." Another said, "Ecumenism and ecumenical aspirations only fall under the heading of law when one considers how they are put into practice, or what their limitations are."



Overall, the conference was said to be “Excellent in every respect”, “probably one of the best ever” and “a real credit to the ELS, one to go down in the history books for the ELS and the world church!” So, certainly plenty for the Society to reflect on – both with regards to future conferences and to how Nicaea Received can have an enduring impact in the world of ecclesiastical law and through the ecumenical connections that were forged over the weekend of the conference.

On a personal note, I am grateful to the Nicaea Received planning group for all their efforts and commitment in helping to shape the conference and bringing it to delivery; to the trustees for their support and input during the planning stages, and to our team of volunteer stewards who supported the work of the operations team during the conference, and made such a key contribution to the experience of those attending. You can all be proud of what we have achieved from this.



With grateful thanks to Andrew Mardell for the photographs.

NEW FELLOWSHIPS INTRODUCED: HIS ALL HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW AND PROFESSOR NORMAN DOE MADE FELLOWS OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL LAW SOCIETY



At the conclusion of his final keynote address at our 2025 Conference ‘Nicaea Received’, His All-Holiness Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch and Archbishop of Constantinople – New Rome was awarded a Fellowship of the Ecclesiastical Law Society by our President, the Rt Revd Christopher Hill, in Chichester Cathedral.

Picture credit: Andrew Mardell

This is the first Fellowship in the Society’s history, and is an award reserved for those who have made “a contribution of great and lasting significance to the study and of ecclesiastical and canon law”.

Our President noted that His All-Holiness “has addressed the principles of Christian Law; issues to do with Europe (and the EU) and religion; Human Rights and Orthodoxy; and Religious Freedom. He has written on the changeability of Canons. In addition to this he has consistently encouraged the ecumenical study of canon law and the Ecumenical Christian Law Panel.” It is a very great honour to the Society to count His All-Holiness as our first fellow.



Our second Fellowship was awarded to Professor Norman Doe, Professor of Law at Cardiff University, a Master of the Bench at the Inner Temple, London, and Chancellor of the Diocese of Bangor. This was given to Norman following his 9 July lecture to the Society entitled “Move Over Lyndwood: The York Provinciale” by the Dean of the Arches, the Rt Worshipful Morag Ellis.

Right to left: The Revd Stephen Coleman, Professor Norman Doe, Rt Worshipful Morag Ellis

Norman's lecture took place at the Grosvenor Chapel, London, and was introduced by the Revd Stephen Coleman, Priest-in-Charge of the Chapel, and co-ordinator of the Society's London lectures. Professor Doe's lecture examined the little known York Provinciale, and its relative neglect among scholars and practitioners in comparison to William Lyndwood's Provinciale for the province of Canterbury. The lecture broke fascinating new ground and opened up many new possibilities for further research.

A fellowship of the Ecclesiastical Law Society is an award reserved for those who have made "a contribution of great and lasting significance to the study and of ecclesiastical and canon law". The Dean of the Arches spoke about Professor Doe's unparalleled contribution to the study of Anglican canon law over many decades.

ELS WELCOMES SIGNIFICANT SPIRITUAL APPOINTMENTS

Since our last issue there have been two hugely significant new appointments for Christians across the globe. Firstly, the election of Pope Leo XIV in May was an historic moment for all. Our chair, Lee Coley, on behalf of the society, sent greetings and assurances of our prayers to the new Pontiff. As a noted canon lawyer and missionary, Pope Leo exemplifies the importance of ecclesiastical law as a servant of the mission of the Church.

Upon the appointment of the new leader of the Anglican Church, Lee Coley further stated: "The Ecclesiastical Law Society warmly congratulates the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE on her appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury. Bishop Sarah's leadership as Bishop of London, combined with her distinguished background in healthcare and public service, brings a unique depth to this historic role.

Her appointment is a landmark moment for the Church of England and the Anglican Communion. As the first woman to hold this office, she embodies a ministry of compassion, wisdom, and bridge-building—qualities much needed in today's Church.

We offer our prayers for Bishop Sarah as she prepares to take up this calling. May she be guided by grace, strengthened by faith, and supported by the prayers of all who seek the flourishing of the Church and the proclamation of the Gospel.

The Society looks forward to supporting her leadership and continuing to serve the Church through our shared commitment to sound ecclesiastical law and governance."

CONGRATULATIONS TO ELS TREASURER AND OFFICER



Members will be pleased to hear that ELS treasurer Moira Astin was consecrated as Bishop of Crediton in July. ELS Chair Lee Coley said: *Members will be delighted to hear this news and to offer their congratulations. As Moira is treasurer of the ELS and a trustee of the charity, we know of the very many gifts she has to offer and are delighted that she has been called to serve the Church as Bishop of Crediton.*

We were also thrilled to hear that our erstwhile Communications Officer, Russell Dewhurst, is to take up the role of Archdeacon of Hastings in November. Russell combines pastoral ministry with expertise in ecclesiastical and canon law and has served the Society for very many years.

We wish both Moira and Russell our heartfelt congratulations.

LYNDWOOD LECTURE 2025

Elizabeth Wilson, our former chair, has produced the following report from this year's Lyndwood lecture, with our grateful thanks.

On 8th October 2025, some 29 years since the first ever Lyndwood lecture the Ecclesiastical Law Society and the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland gathered for the biennial Lyndwood Lecture. His Excellency Archbishop Edgar Pena Parra, Sostituto at the Vatican Secretariat of State, spoke on the topic "Synodality and the principle of subsidiarity" setting out the challenges and opportunities of seeking to strike the right balance between the universal and local structures of the Catholic Church so as to bear an evermore effective witness to the presence of Christ in the world. The lecture took place in the striking surroundings of St Aloysius Church NW1 and was introduced by the Rev George Tartaglia, President of CLSGBI, and Elizabeth Wilson, former Chair of the ELS, gave the vote of thanks.

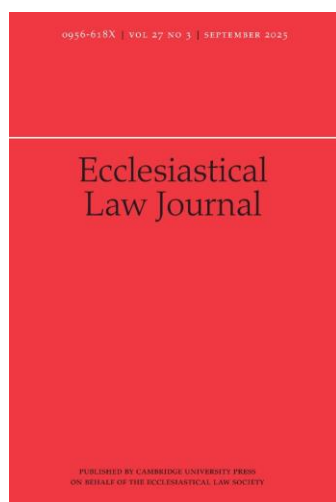


Left to right: Bishop John Ford, Executive Secretary of the Ecclesiastical Law Society; His Excellency Archbishop Edgar Pena Parra, Sostituto at the Vatican Secretariat of State; His Excellency Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain; Fr Luke Beckett OSB, General Secretary of the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland; Elizabeth Wilson, Former Chair of the Ecclesiastical Law Society

The event was very well attended by members of the CLSGBI together with His Excellency Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain and his private secretary Father Andrew Coy. It was a great joy for the ELS members to share the occasion with the CLSGBI. Drinks and refreshments were provided by CLSGBI, and the following fellowship and conversations will be treasured by all members of ELS who took part.

The Lyndwood Lecture continues to be an enduring witness to the fellowship that brings together Roman Catholic and Anglican canon lawyers.

LATEST ELJ PUBLISHED: A ROUND-UP



The most recent edition of the Ecclesiastical Law Journal has recently been hitting our doormats, just in time for the long winter nights ahead. It includes stimulating articles on the religious rights and the freedom of speech by Baroness Hale; the Chancery Court of York by our new Fellow Norman Doe; Richard Hedlund considers the “vexed case of Boris Johnson” in appointing Church of England bishops in the context of Anti-Catholic/ Jewish discrimination; Christopher Jessel elaborates on advowsons in Wills; and Peter Collier KC examines safeguarding and the law.

Regular pieces 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.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 14 May 2025

This year’s AGM was held virtually on 14 May 2025 at 5pm. The Chair of the Ecclesiastical Law Society, Lee Coley, welcomed everyone and commented on the unusual arrangements for the annual meeting; the virtual gathering was necessary due to the fact that the programme for the weekend conference, Nicaea Received, did not provide a suitable opportunity for the annual meeting.

In a period of silence members were asked to remember Geoffrey Tattershall KC and others who had died in the past year particularly Bishop Alan Wilson and Clive Billenness.

Lee said that it had been a very good year especially with the conference planning which was acknowledged to be an excellent gathering with first rate speakers. He thanked the training group for their contributions and the organisers of the London and Northern Lectures. He expressed the Society’s thanks to all sponsors, in particular Birketts and Wrigleys for their sponsorship of the respective lecture series.

In conclusion he thanked the Trustees and executive team for their commitment to the Society and expressed sincere thanks to The Rev’d Stephen Coleman and The Rev’d Canon Neil Patterson who were standing down as Charity Trustees and to The Rev’d Paul Benfield who was retiring as Treasurer and also as a Charity Trustee; posts he had held for many years. The Rt Revd Moira Aston was elected as his successor. Paul Barber and Frances Godden were re-elected as trustees; the trustees collectively would consider co-options at their next meeting when considering the size and constitution of the board.

The Trustees’ annual report was duly received. The Treasurer presented the Statement of Accounts and Report with thanks given to Stephen Hogg for his hard work as Finance Officer.

With thanks to our Executive Secretary, the Rt Revd John Ford, for providing this précis.

LEGISLATION UPDATE

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

Abortion law in England & Wales

MPs have voted to decriminalise abortion in England and Wales. On a free vote, they decided by 379 to 137 to approve NC1 to the Crime and Policing Bill, moved by Labour MP Tonia Antoniazzi, as follows:

‘Removal of women from the criminal law related to abortion

For the purposes of the law related to abortion, including sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, no offence is committed by a woman acting in relation to her own pregnancy.’

It appears as [Clause 191 of the Bill as brought from the Commons and first printed in the Lords.](#)

Chancel repair liability – Law Commission consultation

In July, the Law Commission published a consultation on [Chancel repair liability and registration](#). The Commission says that its project aims to close a historic loophole and save homeowners millions in insurance costs. The consultation paper includes a detailed discussion of the history of chancel repair liability and its legal nature, an examination of whether the Land Registration Act 2002 applies as expected to chancel repair liability and provisional proposals for reform, including draft legislation. The consultation is to close on 15 November.

Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

The [Data \(Use and Access\) Act 2025](#) has received Royal Assent. It updates key aspects of data protection law, making it easier for UK businesses to protect people’s personal information while growing and innovating their products and services. Changes to the law include: clarifying how personal information can be used for research; lifting restrictions on some automated decision-making; setting out how to use some cookies without consent; *allowing charities to send people electronic mail marketing without consent in certain circumstances*; requiring organisations to have a data protection complaints procedure; and introducing a new lawful basis of recognised legitimate interests.

The Act provides the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) with new powers, including the ability to compel witnesses to attend interviews, request technical reports, and issue fines. The ICO has [published](#) information to support organisations and the public as these changes are introduced.

Gift Aid

Gift Aid is incredibly important to church congregations, and there has been much disquiet about its current status in relation to membership subscriptions to charities. In July, the Government [confirmed](#) that it intends to amend the rules on Gift Aid to protect the current position. In answer to a written question from Stuart Andrew (Daventry, Con), the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, James Murray, said this:

‘The Government will legislate to amend the rules concerning Gift Aid due to implications of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act (DMCCA) 2024. This Act introduces new protections for consumers who take out subscription contracts. The Government will amend existing Gift Aid legislation before the DMCCA comes into force so that charities can continue to claim Gift Aid while complying with new consumer protections.’

DCMS subsequently published a [Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme funding tracker](#) showing the amount already allocated and the funds remaining until 31 March 2026. The Government continues to resist calls to make an announcement on the future of the Scheme beyond that date.

Non-stun slaughter of animals

In a debate in Westminster Hall on 9 June, on an e-petition about the slaughter of animals without pre-stunning, the (then) Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs, Daniel Zeichner, confirmed that, though the Government's preference is that all animals should be stunned before slaughter,

'the Government respect the right of Jews and Muslims to eat meat prepared in accordance with their beliefs. We therefore intend to continue to allow the religious slaughter of animals for consumption by Muslims and Jews. We believe that is an important religious freedom...'

Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill

The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill completed its stages in the Commons on 30 June. It was read a second time in the Lords on 12 September and committed to a select committee to hear evidence from 'professional bodies, those with professional experience of coronial services, and Ministers' and 'notwithstanding the usual practice of the House' to report on the evidence received without making recommendations. Under the committal order, the Committee is to report by 12 December; the reason for the Committee not making a report is that, were it to do so, there would have to be a debate on the report.

Weddings law reform

In October, the Ministry of Justice announced that it proposes to amend the law on weddings in England and Wales to allow couples to be married at a wider range of venues than at present. In a press statement, it said that 'The reforms will give couples more choice in how they get married, making the process simpler, fairer and less costly, while ensuring the dignity and integrity of marriage is protected. Under the reforms, couples will be able to marry in a wider range of locations provided venues meet strict standards of being appropriate and dignified.'

A letter to the Law Commission was subsequently released which, said the MoJ, constituted its response to the Commission's report. Under the MoJ's proposals, the present system of licensing *buildings* will be replaced by a regime of licensing *officiants* – something very similar to the current law in Scotland.

And finally...

In a serious candidate for the daftest questions asked in the Commons in the current session – though the competition for that title is very stiff – Andrew Rosindell (Romford, Con) asked the **Minister for the Cabinet Office**, 'if he will reintroduce Lords Spiritual from the Church of Ireland to the House of Lords'. In a response on 8 July, the Paymaster General, Nick Thomas-Symonds, replied:

'Bishops of the Church of Ireland previously sat in the House of Lords as Lords Spiritual, from the coming into force of the Union with Ireland Act 1800 until the disestablishment of the Church in 1871. Given the Church of Ireland is no longer part of the established church, there are no plans to reintroduce Church of Ireland bishops to the House of Lords as Lords Spiritual'.

His even sillier follow-up was 'if his Department will take steps to re-establish the Church of Ireland as the established church of Northern Ireland'. To which Thomas-Symonds replied with a very firm "No".

DATES FOR THE DIARY 2025 - 26

Details and dates of events and lectures (online and in person) will be published on our website as soon as details become available!

These seminars form part of our regular series of introductory 'bitesize' discussions of ecclesiastical law, focussed on the Church of England. They are intended to be accessible to everyone with an interest in the subject.

The introductory discussions are be recorded and posted to our Youtube channel. In the second half, the discussion is opened up to all attending the seminar, and this part is not recorded.

The seminars last 30 minutes in total. They are open to members and non-members and are free of charge.

Bitesize Ecclesiastical Law #14

"What is the law of ordination?"

18 November 2025, 5.30 – 6pm

Book [here](#).

The Rt Revd Moira Astin discusses the law relating to ordination in the Church of England with the Revd Raymond Baudon, Deputy Director of Vocations and Assistant Diocesan Director of Ordinands for the Diocese of Southwark.

Online Training Event

Net Zero and Faculties

1 December 2025, 5 – 6.30pm

Book [here](#).

Back in 2022 the ELS Training Committee ran an education event introducing the 'net-zero' faculty rules under the Faculty Jurisdiction (Amendment) Rules 2022. Three years on this new event, to be held on Zoom, is a chance to reflect on the subsequent implementation of those rules and consider key cases.

Our three speakers will be: The Right Reverend Moira Astin (Bishop of Crediton), Jacqueline Humphreys, (Chancellor of the Dioceses of Norwich and Worcester) & Louise Connacher (Registrar of the Province of York). Each speaker will speak for 20 minutes and then there will be an opportunity for questions for 20-30 minutes.

LONDON LECTURES

These are held at The Grosvenor Chapel, South Audley Street, Mayfair, London W1K 2PA.
We are grateful to Birketts LLP for their generous sponsorship of these lectures.

The Ven Luke Miller on "Speaking First: the Prolocutors of the Convocations, past present and future"

25 November 2025, 6 – 7.30pm

Book [here](#).



The Ven Luke Miller is Archdeacon of London, Prolocutor of the Convocation of Canterbury and co-Chair of the House of Clergy of the General Synod.

Patti Russell on "Justified or condemned by their words?" – a look at the law on free speech, discrimination and expression of religious belief

14 January 2026, 6 – 7.30pm

Book [here](#).



Patti Russell is a partner at Winckworth Sherwood and Diocesan Registrar of the Diocese of Canterbury and the Diocese of Rochester.

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:

#10 “What is a Diocesan Registrar?”

- We talk with Jon Baldwin, Registrar of Southwark, about the office of Registrar in the Church of England.

#11 “What is a Diocesan Chancellor?”

- We talk with Worshipful Ruth Arlow, Chancellor of Salisbury and Deputy Chancellor for the Diocese of London, about the office of Chancellor in the Church of England.

#12 “What is a Diocesan Bishop?”

- We talk with the Rt Revd Christopher Hill, President of the Ecclesiastical Law Society, about the office of Diocesan Bishop in the Church of England.

#13 “What is the law of baptism?”

- The Rt Revd Moira Astin asks the Revd Russell Dewhurst, "What is the law of baptism?" in the Church of England.

ELS WEBSITE

A reminder to readers that the ELS website, www.ecclawsoc.org.uk has a wealth of resources dedicated to advancing our charitable objects, which are to promote education in ecclesiastical law. In particular do have a look at our [Education](#) page, and be sure to check back regularly for upcoming talks and [Events](#)!

