

the
Society of Catholic Priests

supporting men and women in their priestly service of God within the Anglican Communion



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Our way of life

The Church exists to witness to the universal love of God for all people, revealed in Jesus Christ. Therefore it is called to be united, holy, apostolic and catholic and to express the creative love of the Trinity. This love is made real in the sacraments, which embrace all members of the church regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

As priests, we are called to search out the gifts of all God's people that the whole church may be built up in unity and faith, to witness to God's love and to work for the coming of his kingdom. We are also called to search for God's children in the wilderness of this world's temptations, and with all God's people to tell the story of God's love, baptising new disciples and nurturing them in the faith. We are committed to a ministry of evangelism shaped by the story of Christian faith as expressed within the catholic traditions of the church.

Our society was founded in 1994 to give collegiate expression to our vocation. The twin objects of our Society are to promote

- (i) the formation and support of priestly spirituality
- (ii) catholic evangelism.

Our life is expressed in the charism of our society:

- To centre our lives on the real presence of Christ in his sacraments.
- To follow a corporate rule of life with integrity and humility.
- To give and receive hospitality after the example of Jesus.
- To seek the peace and unity of Christ's church, aspiring to live in full communion with all of the baptized.
- To proclaim by word and example the Gospel of Christ.
- To encourage and equip one another in the ministry of evangelism.

All members of our society commit themselves to a common life. This is expressed in the hospitality of our meetings, the concelebration of the Eucharist, mutual pastoral care for each other, and regular prayer for the priestly work of all the brothers and sisters.

The Society Prayer

Father,
we thank you that you have called us to your service,
to feed your people by word and sacrament.
By the power of your Spirit,
keep us faithful to you and to those in our care.
Keep united in the bonds of peace and love
the members of our Society,
that by sharing in Christ's priesthood here on earth,
we may come to share in the joys of his eternal kingdom,
where he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Constitution

1 TITLE

1.1 The Society shall be called 'The Society of Catholic Priests' (the Society)

2 OBJECTS

2.1 The objects of the Society are:

- .1 the formation and support of priestly spirituality; and
- .2 the promotion of catholic evangelism.

3 MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Membership is open to all bishops and priests who:

- .1 believe that the churches of the Anglican Communion are part of the one holy and catholic and apostolic church;
- .2 are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury;
- .3 believe that as a witness to the universal nature of the priesthood of Christ the church should ordain to serve as deacons, priests and bishops in the church of God all those whom the church discerns as being called by God to such offices regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation;
- .4 believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist;
- .5 use and practise the seven sacraments of the church; and
- .6 keep the rule of life of the Society.

3.2 Continuing deacons may be admitted as 'deacon members' with the same constitutional rights.

3.3 Ordinands may join their own association (the Dearmer Society) which is run under the auspices of the Society.

4 RULE OF LIFE

4.1 Members of the Society will:

- .1 centre their spiritual life on the Eucharist;
- .2 say the daily office;
- .3 consult a spiritual director;
- .4 use the sacrament of reconciliation;
- .5 pray for their sisters and brothers in the Society;
- .6 offer confidential pastoral care to fellow members; and
- .7 attend all meetings of their chapter unless prevented by good reason.

5 ELECTION OF MEMBERS

- 5.1 An aspirant for membership must:
- .1 be sponsored for membership by an existing member of the Society;
 - .2 attend two chapter meetings; and
 - .3 be interviewed by the chapter rector.
- 5.2 The aspirant will be admitted to membership at a meeting of the chapter by the chapter rector, or another chapter officer, using the form provided in appendix C.
- 5.3 Each newly-admitted member shall be given a Society badge, manual and membership card.
- 5.4 After appropriate consultation, chapter rectors may at their discretion exclude from the Society any member who fails to continue to satisfy the conditions of membership. Any dispute shall be referred to the visitor of the chapter.

6 GOVERNANCE

- 6.1 The Society consists of chapters, each covering one or more dioceses, organised in such a way as to enable the Society's common life to flourish.
- 6.2 Chapters are grouped into provinces, and each province shall be governed by a provincial council.
- 6.3 The provincial councils shall agree amongst themselves for one of their number to exercise responsibility for the affairs of the Society as a whole. The officers of this council shall be designated 'officers general'.
- 6.3 Each chapter shall adopt a constitution in accordance with the form provided in appendix A. Provinces shall adopt a constitution based on the model at appendix B. The provincial secretary shall send a copy of this constitution to the secretary general.

7 VISITORS

- 7.1 Each chapter and province shall have a visitor who shall be in episcopal orders, as set out in the constitutions. The rector general shall invite the Archbishop of Canterbury to be visitor general, or to appoint another archbishop or bishop.
- 7.2 It shall be the duty of the visitor to oversee the chapter(s) in their care, to ensure good order and to arbitrate in any dispute relating to the Society.

8 CHAPTER MEETINGS

- 8.1 It is recommended that each chapter meet at least six times a year for the offering of the Eucharist, for fellowship (normally including a meal) and for study/discussion. This pattern may be varied with the agreement of the provincial rector. In planning meetings chapters should have regard to the working patterns and personal circumstances of members.
- 8.2 Each meeting shall be convened by the rector, who will chair the business of the meeting. The focus of chapter meetings should be the promotion of the objects of the Society.
- 8.3 Chapters may at their discretion meet on occasion in smaller groups, providing that there shall be at least one meeting annually (which shall include the annual meeting) at which the whole chapter gathers.
- 8.4 The concelebration (wherever possible) of the Eucharist at chapter meetings is to be commended as a laudable practice witnessing to the corporate nature of the ministerial priesthood embodied in the catholic church and as a sign of collegiality within and between the members of the Society.

9 CONFERENCES

- 9.1 A conference shall be organised each year within each province. Normally this will incorporate the annual general meeting. Members are encouraged to attend their provincial conference at least once every three years.
- 9.2 In provincial general meetings members may vote in the election of officers, on changes to the manual and on the dissolution of a province or of the Society as a whole either in person or by proxy in the manner laid down by the provincial constitution.

10 FORMATION AND DISSOLUTION OF CHAPTERS

- 10.1 A group of priests interested in forming a chapter of the Society (a minimum of five priests, but ideally between eight and twelve priests) should have met in advance of the inaugural meeting and discussed the constitution of the Society. Having agreed to form a chapter, they shall provide the provincial rector with possible dates for the inaugural meeting. Provincial rectors should satisfy themselves of the bona fides of those making the request and should then arrange the inaugural meeting. The provincial rector should normally preside at the inaugural meeting but may delegate this responsibility to another provincial officer.

- 10.2 At the inaugural meeting the provincial officer shall admit the new members to the Society using the usual form; see appendix C.
- 10.3 Before the inaugural meeting, one of the local priests shall write to the diocesan bishop informing him or her of the proposal to open a chapter of the Society and asking him or her to become its visitor. Should the diocesan bishop not wish to perform this ministry, he or she should be asked to nominate another bishop. Where a proposed chapter is to cover more than one diocese, the diocesan bishops in question should be invited to select one of their number to be visitor. If none of them wish to become visitor they should be asked to nominate another bishop.
- 10.4 In the event of a chapter ceasing to exist, its assets and liabilities shall pass to the provincial council. In the event of a province ceasing to exist, its assets and liabilities shall pass to the officers general.
- 10.5 The Society may be dissolved upon a two-thirds majority of members voting at an extraordinary general meeting of the whole Society. Following such a resolution the remaining assets of the Society shall be dispersed in accordance with the aims of the Society by the visitor general in consultation with the officers general.

11 AMENDMENTS

- 11.1 Amendments to any part of this manual and constitution may be proposed by the officers general or by the annual general meeting of any province and submitted to the secretary general, whose responsibility it shall be to circulate the proposal to all provinces. Provinces shall vote on the proposal at their next annual general meeting. Proposals which are supported by a two-thirds majority in all provinces shall be adopted.

12 INTERPRETATION AND DISPUTES

- 12.1 The interpretation of this constitution rests with the officers general in consultation with the visitor general. The decision of the visitor general shall be final.
- 12.2 Any dispute arising within a chapter shall be referred to the diocesan visitor, whose decision shall be final. Disputes between chapters shall be referred to the provincial officers, whose decision in consultation with the provincial visitor shall be final.

Appendix A: Model constitution for a chapter

A1 TITLE

A1.1 The chapter shall be called ...

A2 ANNUAL MEETING

A2.1 There shall be an annual meeting of the chapter, at which (in addition to whatever other business is considered appropriate):

- .1 the rector shall present an annual report;
- .2 the treasurer shall present the annual Accounts;
- .3 the members shall elect a rector, a secretary and a treasurer, together with such other officers and committee members as the membership considers necessary;
- .4 the members shall renew their promise using the form provided in appendix D; and
- .5 the members shall agree the annual subscription.

A3 FINANCE

A3.1 Each chapter shall establish a bank account, to be administered as the chapter shall see fit, for the handling of chapter funds. Financial business on behalf of the chapter shall be transacted through this bank account alone.

A3.2 The financial year of the chapter shall be that of the province.

A4 CHAPTER OFFICERS

A4.1 The duties of chapter officers will include:

A4.1.1 RECTOR

- To be the focus of unity for the chapter.
- To speak for the chapter and to maintain regular communication with the diocesan bishop(s) (and the visitor).
- To meet prospective candidates for membership after nomination and to ensure that the aspirant fulfils the conditions for membership and intends to keep the rule of life.
- To admit new members.
- To facilitate the provision of, and where appropriate, undertake pastoral care for the members.
- To ensure that links are maintained with isolated and housebound members and to appoint one or more members of the chapter to undertake this.
- To plan with the chapter officers the programme of meetings for the year, ensuring that there is pastoral / theological input at the meetings.

- To convene the annual meeting and to preside at the renewal of promises.
- To promote working together in the chapter to further catholic evangelism in the diocese and further afield.
- To maintain regular contact by electronic means or by meetings with the provincial rector and the other chapter rectors in the province.

A4.1.2 SECRETARY

- To keep minutes of the annual meeting.
- To keep records of attendance at all meetings.
- To keep an up-to-date list of members including addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses and promptly convey that list and any changes to it to the provincial secretary.
- To liaise with the rector as necessary over Society business.
- To circulate members annually with dates of meetings and the address list.

A4.1.3 TREASURER

- To collect and keep records of annual subscriptions.
- To produce annual accounts for the annual meeting.
- To be responsible for the ordering and distribution of Society badges, membership cards and manuals.
- To reimburse the rector, officers and speakers for their expenses pertaining to Society business.
- To send to the provincial treasurer the appropriate amount for the membership of the chapter during the course of the Province's financial year.

A5 VISITOR

- A5.1 Each chapter shall have a visitor who may offer guidance to the chapter and be consulted by officers and members. The visitor will oversee the chapter, ensure good order and arbitrate in any dispute.
- A5.2 The chapter shall invite the diocesan bishop to be its visitor. Should the diocesan bishop not wish to perform this ministry, he or she should be asked to nominate another bishop. [OR The bishops of the dioceses covered by the chapters should be invited to select one of their number to be visitor. If none of them wish to become visitor they should be asked to nominate another bishop.]

A6 AMENDMENTS

- A6.1 Amendments to this constitution may only be made with the consent of two-thirds of the members and with the consent of the provincial rector.

Appendix B:

Model constitution for a province

B1 TITLE

B1.1 The province shall be known as the ...¹

B2 CONSTITUENT CHAPTERS

B2.1 The province shall comprise the chapters in the dioceses of ...

B3 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

B3.1 There shall be an annual general meeting of the province, to be held usually during the annual conference, and in any case no later than fifteen months after the previous annual general meeting.

B3.2 A notice of the annual general meeting shall be sent by the provincial secretary to all chapter secretaries no later than six months before the date of the meeting.

B3.3 Motions, including motions for the amendment of this constitution, for consideration at the annual general meeting, may be proposed by the provincial council or by chapters, having been passed by a simple majority of the provincial council or of members voting at a meeting of the chapter.

B3.4 Motions and other items for inclusion on the agenda shall be sent by chapter secretaries to the provincial secretary no later than two months before the annual general meeting.

B3.5 The provincial secretary shall send the agenda for the annual general meeting to chapter secretaries no later than one month before the meeting.

B3.6 The annual general meeting shall be responsible for:

- .1 receiving a report from the provincial rector;
- .2 receiving a report from the provincial treasurer, to include a presentation of the financial accounts for approval;
- .3 such other business as has been requested by chapters (see B3.3 and B3.4);
- .4 electing officers;
- .5 making amendments to the constitution;
- .6 approving the budget and the provincial subscription;
- .7 discussing relations with other organisations; and
- .8 making arrangements for the subsequent annual general meeting.

¹ The members of the Society may decide that their province of the Society shall be known by a title other than 'The Society of Catholic Priests'.

B4 PROVINCIAL OFFICERS

B4.1 The provincial officers must include:

- The rector
- The secretary
- The treasurer

B4.2 Other officers and council members may be elected as the annual general meeting shall decide.

B4.3 All officers and council members shall hold office for three years and may stand for re-election.

B5 THE VISITOR

B5.1 The council shall invite the metropolitan of the province to be visitor. Should the metropolitan not wish to perform this ministry, he or she should be asked to nominate another bishop. [OR The metropolitan bishops of the area covered by the chapters should be invited to select one of their number to be visitor and, should none of them wish to perform this ministry, to nominate another bishop to act as visitor.]

B5.2 The visitor will oversee the province, ensure good order and arbitrate in any dispute.

B6 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

B6.1 The officers shall be elected by the members of the chapters of the Society within the province. It shall be the duty of the provincial secretary to organise the election of officers.

B6.2 When any tenure of office is due to end, the provincial secretary shall inform all chapter secretaries accordingly no later than six months before the date of the annual general meeting. Nominations (duly proposed and seconded) for the election shall be sent to the provincial secretary no less than two months before the annual general meeting. The provincial secretary shall circulate the nominations to all chapter secretaries not later than one month before the annual general meeting.

B6.3 Elections shall be by secret ballot; a simple majority of members voting shall secure election.

B6.4 Members may vote in person or by proxy. Any member who does not attend the annual meeting may nominate the provincial rector or any other member attending the meeting as their proxy by completing the proxy voting form. The form shall be brought to the annual general meeting by the nominee, or, where the provincial rector is nominated, sent to the provincial secretary.

B7 THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

- B7.1 The officers elected in paragraph B4 shall constitute the provincial council.
- B7.2 The council shall be responsible for the day-to-day management of the affairs of the Society and any matters not specifically remitted to the annual general meeting under paragraph B3.6.
- B7.3 The council shall have power to co-opt up to three additional members to undertake specific tasks.
- B7.4 The council shall meet at least four times each year, one of which shall be at the annual conference. At each meeting, the date and venue of the next meeting shall be arranged.
- B7.5 Additional council meetings may be called at the request of the provincial rector or at the request of four members of the council. The date and venue shall be arranged by whoever requests the meetings. At least four weeks' notice shall be given of such meetings.
- B7.6 Travelling expenses of the council will be borne by provincial funds.

B8 PROVINCIAL SUBSCRIPTION

- B8.1 The provincial subscription for each financial year shall be decided by the annual general meeting as in paragraph B3.6.6.
- B8.2 The financial year of the province shall run from ... to ...
- B8.3 The membership of each chapter at any time shall be as held by the provincial secretary from information given by chapter secretaries. Membership lists shall be closed one month before the annual general meeting and before any extraordinary general meeting.

B9 THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

- B9.1 There shall be an annual conference of the province, to be organised by a chapter or by a group of chapters together.
- B9.2 The organising chapter should budget to avoid any financial loss; but in the event of a loss being incurred, the local chapter is expected to bear it. Where necessary the organising chapter may request assistance from provincial funds. In the event of there being a financial surplus, that amount should be given to provincial funds normally to be used for future conferences.

B10 EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

- B10.1 An extraordinary general meeting of the province may be called at any time by the request of a majority of the provincial council or by the request of one third of chapter rectors or by the request of five per cent and not less than twelve members of the Society within the province.
- B10.2 The date and venue of such a meeting shall be arranged by those requesting the meeting.
- B10.3 The business of such a meeting shall be indicated to the provincial secretary who shall give notice of the meeting and its agenda to chapter rectors for immediate distribution to all members. At least six weeks' notice shall be given.
- B10.4 Only previously notified business may be conducted at an extraordinary general meeting.
- B10.5 All members of the Society named on the membership list held at that time by the provincial secretary shall be entitled to attend.
- B10.6 The meeting shall be chaired by the provincial rector or another officer of the Society.
- B10.7 Resolutions may be passed by a simple majority of the members present and voting.
- ## B11 CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES
- B11.1 This constitution shall not be altered or added to except by the consent of two-thirds of the members voting in accordance with paragraph B6.4.

Appendix C: Rite of admission

The rite of admission normally takes place during the Eucharist after the Gospel (or any homily) with the chapter rector officiating. The candidate may be presented by any appropriate chapter member. Local custom may be followed regarding posture, etc.

Reverend father/mother rector, I present to you N, who desires to be admitted to the Society of Catholic Priests.

The rector says to the candidate(s) to be admitted

Members of the Society of Catholic Priests believe that the churches of the Anglican Communion are part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church, ordaining men and women to serve as deacons, priests and bishops in the church of God, believe in the real presence of the risen Lord Jesus in the Eucharist use and practise the seven sacraments of the church; and undertake to keep the rule of life of the Society. Do you accept these precepts?

Candidate(s)

I do.

Rector

Members of our Society seek to centre their lives on the real presence of Christ in his sacraments; to follow a corporate rule of life with integrity and humility; to give and receive hospitality after the example of Jesus; to seek the peace and unity of Christ's church, aspiring to live in full communion with all of the baptized; and to proclaim by word and example the gospel. Our life together is expressed in the hospitality of our meetings, the concelebration of the Eucharist, mutual pastoral care for each other, and regular prayer for the priestly work of all the brothers and sisters. Do you aspire to this way of life?

Candidate(s)

I do.

The rector says to each candidate

N, I admit you into the Society of Catholic Priests in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Receive these tokens of your membership [*a manual, badge and membership card*].

The rector may bless the newly admitted member.

The Nicene Creed or another authorized affirmation of faith may be said.

Rector

Let us pray

All join in the Society Prayer, after which the rector introduces the peace.

Appendix D: Renewal of promise

The rite of renewal of promise should be celebrated annually by Chapters, normally during the Eucharist at the annual meeting.

All stand.

Rector

Sisters and brothers, let us join together in renewing our promise as members of the Society of Catholic Priests.

All

We believe that the churches of the Anglican Communion are part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church, ordaining men and women to serve as deacons, priests and bishops in the church of God.

We believe in the real presence of the risen Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, we use and practise the seven sacraments of the church; and we undertake to keep the rule of life of the Society.

We affirm our intention to centre our lives on the real presence of Christ in his sacraments; to follow a corporate rule of life with integrity and humility; to give and receive hospitality after the example of Jesus; to seek the peace and unity of Christ's church, aspiring to live in full communion with all of the baptized; and to proclaim by word and example the Gospel of Christ.

Rector

Let us pray

All join in the Society Prayer, after which the rector introduces the peace.

