



the
Society of Catholic Priests

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

THE SOCIETY MANUAL

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.

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 on the basis of their baptism.

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, baptizing 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 England 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, and
- (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, which may include the concelebration of the Eucharist, pastoral care for each other, and regular prayer for the priestly work of all the brothers and sisters.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIETY

I. TITLE

1. The Society shall be called The Society of Catholic Priests (the Society).

II. OBJECTIVES

1. The objectives of the Society are:
 - a) the formation and support of priestly spirituality; and
 - b) the promotion of catholic evangelism.

III. MEMBERSHIP

1. Full membership of the Society is open to all bishops, and priests who:
 - a) believe that the churches of the Anglican Communion are part of the one holy and catholic and apostolic church;
 - b) are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury;
 - c) 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 race, gender, disability or sexual orientation;
 - d) believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist;
 - e) embrace the sacramental life of the Church as means of God's grace;
 - f) and keep the rule of life of the Society.
2. Membership in the Society of permanent deacons and professed lay members of monastic communities, as well as the role of candidates for Holy Orders, shall be left to the discretion of each province of the Society, except that the definition of full member must remain unchanged.

IV. RULE OF LIFE

1. Members of the Society will commit themselves to:
 - a) centre their spiritual life on the Eucharist;
 - b) say the daily office;
 - c) consult regularly a spiritual director;
 - d) use the sacrament of reconciliation;
 - e) pray for their sisters and brothers in the Society;
 - f) offer confidential pastoral care to fellow members of the Society; and
 - g) attend all meetings of their local chapter unless prevented by good reason.

V. ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

1. The method of admitting/electing members to the Society shall be left to the discretion of each province of the Society.
2. Provinces are encouraged to ensure that aspirants to membership have attended chapter meetings and that chapters are given sufficient time for mutual discernment.
3. Upon admission as members, the giving of signs and tokens of membership is appropriate.
4. After appropriate consultation with the officers of the local chapter and, if appropriate, with the provincial rector, chapter rectors may at their discretion exclude from the Society any member who fails to continue to satisfy the conditions of membership.
5. Disputes in the matter of membership of the Society shall be handled according to the constitution and customs of each province of the Society. In any event the decision of the provincial authorities shall be final.

VI. GOVERNANCE

1. The Society consists of chapters, each covering one or more dioceses, organized in such a way as to enable the Society's common life to flourish.
2. Chapters are grouped into provinces, and each province shall be governed by a provincial council.
3. The provincial rectors shall agree amongst themselves for one of their number to exercise responsibility for the affairs of the Society as a whole as rector general. The secretary and treasurer of the rector general's province shall be designated secretary and treasurer general respectively. If circumstances require the officers general may co-opt one or more full members of the Society to assist them
4. Each chapter shall adopt a constitution in accordance with the form provided by the province of which they are part and the chapter secretary shall send a copy of this constitution to the provincial secretary. Provinces shall adopt a constitution based on the model at appendix A. Provinces may add additional provisions to their constitution so long as these are compatible with "Our Way of Life" and "Rule of Life" as set out above. The provincial secretary shall send a copy of this constitution to the secretary general.
5. It is the policy of the Society that the financial affairs of each chapter and province shall be handled in a way that keeps them apart from the financial affairs of any individual member.

VII. EPISCOPAL VISITORS

1. Each chapter and province shall have a visitor who shall be in episcopal orders, as set out in the constitutions of the chapter or province. The rector general

- shall invite the Archbishop of Canterbury to be the visitor general of the society or to appoint another archbishop in his/her place.
2. It shall be the duty of the visitor to oversee the chapter or province in his/her care, to ensure good order and to arbitrate in any dispute relating to the Society
 3. Additional duties for visitors in the giving of advice to chapter officers and supporting members of the Society shall be determined by the constitution of each province of the Society.

VIII. CHAPTER MEETINGS

1. It is recommended that each chapter meet at least quarterly for the offering of the Eucharist, for fellowship (normally including a meal) and for study and 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.
2. Each chapter meeting shall be convened by the chapter rector, who will chair the business of the meeting. The focus of chapter meetings should be the promotion of the objects of the Society.
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.
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.

IX. CONFERENCES

1. A conference shall be organized each year within each province. Normally this will incorporate the annual general meeting, but this may take place at a separate gathering if the provincial council so decides. Members are encouraged to attend their provincial conference at least once every three years.
2. So that the election of officers and decisions on changes to the manual and on the dissolution of a province or of the Society are taken on as democratic a basis as possible provinces are advised to make provision for members to vote not only in person but also by proxy or by some other means as laid down in the provincial constitution

X. FORMATION OF NEW PROVINCES

1. A group of priests interested in forming a chapter of the Society in an Anglican province which is not part of an existing province of the Society should notify the officers general who should decide whether the Anglican province in question should be incorporated into an existing province of the Society. If the officers general decide that a new province of the Society

should be inaugurated, they should invite the priests concerned to carry out the actions prior to the formation of a new chapter as in Section XI below. If chapters are to be formed initially in more than one diocese one of the priests concerned should write to the archbishop or metropolitan as in XI.3 below. The priests concerned should be asked to arrange for the drafting of a provincial constitution based on Appendix A below. A copy of the draft should be sent to the officers general for approval. Priests concerned should also decide who of their number might act as provincial officers.

2. Once these preliminaries have been completed the rector general should arrange for the inaugural meeting of the province. The inaugural meeting should be preceded by an inaugural Mass at which the first candidates for membership should be admitted by one of the officers general (the rector general if at all possible); it may be necessary to modify the procedure for admission if there are a very large number of candidates; for example, only a representative group be admitted to membership at this stage with the remaining candidates being admitted at the inaugural chapter meetings.
3. After the Mass the inaugural meeting should be held; at this the following business should be conducted:
 - a. adoption of the Manual
 - b. adoption of a provincial constitution
 - c. election of provincial officers
 - d. financial arrangements
 - e. date and place of the first annual general meeting

The members of the provincial council should agree dates for their meetings and the membership might divide into diocesan groups to initiate work on the formation of chapters.

XI. FORMATION AND DISSOLUTION OF CHAPTERS

1. A group of priests interested in forming a chapter of the Society (a minimum of five priests, but ideally between eight and twelve) should have met in advance of the inaugural chapter meeting and discussed the constitution of the Society and that of their province. Having agreed to form a chapter, they shall provide the provincial rector with possible dates for the inaugural meeting. The provincial rector should satisfy himself/herself 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.
2. At the inaugural meeting the provincial officer shall admit the new members to the Society using the provincial form.
3. Before the inaugural meeting, one of the local priests shall write to the diocesan bishop informing him or her of the proposal to form 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 its visitor. If none of them wishes to become the visitor they should be asked to nominate another bishop.

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.
5. The Society may be dissolved upon a two-thirds majority of full members voting at an extraordinary or annual general meeting in each province of the Society. Following such a resolution any remaining assets shall be dispersed in accordance with the aims of the Society by the visitor general in consultation with the officers general.

XII. AMENDMENTS

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.

XIII. INTERPRETATION AND DISPUTES

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.
2. Disputes within or between provinces of the Society shall be referred to the visitor general in consultation with the visitor(s) of the province(s). The decision of the visitor general shall be final.
3. Disputes within or between chapters shall be referred to the Provincial Council whose decision in the matter shall be final.

APPENDIX A : MODEL PROVINCIAL CONSTITUTION

A:I TITLE

1. This Province of the Society shall be known as the Society of Catholic Priests in _____, commonly called the _____ province.

Note: 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’.

A:II CONSTITUENT CHAPTERS & MEMBERSHIP

1. The province shall comprise the chapters constituted within the dioceses of the province(s) of _____.
2. In this province of the Society, (*insert any Provincial practices with regard to the membership of permanent deacons, professed lay members of monastic communities, and candidates for Holy Orders*).

A:III PROVINCIAL OFFICERS

1. The provincial officers shall include a rector, secretary and treasurer, who may be titled as the annual general meeting shall decide. Other officers and council members may be elected as the annual general meeting shall decide. The duties of all officers and council members shall be decided by the annual general meeting and outlined in the provincial constitution. They shall hold office for a term to be laid down in the provincial constitution and may stand for re-election.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. After receipt of the names submitted, all nominations shall then be approved by the council, which shall ensure that the nominated persons are members in good-standing within the Society and willing and able to serve. To that end, the provincial rector, or another member of the council appointed by the provincial rector, may confer with the nominated individual to review the duties of the particular office and to ensure that the candidate is prepared to perform the duties of the same.

A:IV ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. There shall be an annual general meeting of the province, normally incorporated in the province's conference organized by the council each year. In any case, there shall be always be an annual general meeting no later than fifteen months after the previous general meeting.
2. A notice of the general meeting shall be sent by the provincial secretary to all chapter rectors no later than six months before the date of the meeting.
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.
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
5. The provincial secretary shall send the agenda for the annual general meeting to chapter rectors no later than one month before the meeting.
6. The annual general meeting shall be responsible for:
 - a) receiving a report from the provincial rector;
 - b) receiving a report from the provincial treasurer, to include a presentation of the financial accounts for approval;
 - c) such other business as has been requested by chapters; (*see 3 & 4 above*)
 - d) electing officers;
 - e) making amendments to the constitution;
 - f) approving the budget and determining provincial subscriptions for the year;
 - g) discussing relations with other organizations;
 - h) making arrangements for the subsequent annual general meeting;
7. Voting shall be by such methods as shall be determined by each province

A:V EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETINGS

1. Extraordinary general meetings of the province may be called at the request of a majority of the provincial council, or when requested by the majority of chapter rectors, or by request of five per cent (and not less than twelve) members of the Society within the province.
2. The date and venue of such a meeting shall be arranged by those requesting it.
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.
4. Only previously notified business may be conducted at such a meeting.
5. All members of the Society named on the membership list held by the secretary at the time of the notice shall be entitled to attend.

6. The meeting shall be chaired by the provincial rector or another officer of the council.
7. Resolutions may be passed by a simple majority of the members present and voting.

A:VI PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

1. The corporate body of the provincial officers shall constitute the council, whose members shall communicate frequently and meet regularly, as possible, to 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 section A:IV.4 of the provincial constitution.
 - a) Meetings of the council shall be called and chaired by the provincial rector.
 - b) The council shall meet at least four times a year, one of which shall be at the annual conference. These meetings may be physical gatherings or held through electronic media, at the discretion of the provincial rector.
 - c) Additional meetings may be convened by the provincial rector or at the request of four members of the council.
 - d) At each meeting, the date, location, and medium of the next council meeting shall be arranged.
 - e) At least four weeks' notice shall be given for all council meetings.
2. In addition to its constitutional membership, the council may co-opt other members at its discretion to hold office until the next annual general meeting.

A:VII EPISCOPAL VISITOR

1. 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.
2. The duties of the visitor shall be as laid down in the Society's constitution but each province may, by this constitution, provide for additional duties in oversight and governance.

A:VIII OTHER PROVISIONS

1. Chapters may group themselves into regions, and regional matters and events may be coordinated by a regional council, whose membership consists of the chapter rectors of the constituent chapters.
2. Persons from other religious groups and churches who although not eligible for membership in the Society are nonetheless sympathetic to its cause, may be invited, at the members' discretion, to participate in discussions, chapter or provincial meetings, communal worship, and other events in the life of the Society.