

**SMEF**

***The Annual Report  
of the  
Society for the Maintenance  
of the Faith***

***Easter 2008***



## OFFICERS 2007 – 2008

President: Dr Brian Hanson CBE

Vice Presidents: Charles Best-Shaw

Dr Ann Chippindale

Dr Paul Kent

Margaret Laird OBE

The Rt Revd Paul Richardson

Trustees:

Christopher Davidge

John Hanks

Dr Brian Hanson CBE

David Marchese

John Underwood

General Secretary: The Revd Paul Conrad

Patronage Chairman: Canon Philip Ursell

Patronage Secretary: The Revd William Davage

Membership Secretary: The Revd Simon Godfrey

Treasurer: The Revd Owen Higgs

## COUNCIL

The Revd Jonathan Baker

Michael Batten

The Revd Nicholas Burton

The Revd Paul Conrad

The Revd William Davage

Christopher Gabriel

The Revd Simon Godfrey

John Hanks

The Revd André Hart

The Revd Owen Higgs

David Morgan

Canon Philip Ursell

Canon Dr Robin Ward

## **Addresses:**

**Correspondence about The Society, suspension of Livings, publicity, regional festivals, publications, other activities should be addressed to the General Secretary: The Revd Paul Conrad, Christ Church Vicarage, 10, Cannon Place, Hampstead, London NW3 1EJ.**

**Correspondence about vacant Livings, patronage enquiries, the Annual Report should be addressed to the Patronage Secretary: The Revd William Davage, Pusey House, Oxford OX1 3LZ**

**E Mail: [william.davage@stx.ox.ac.uk](mailto:william.davage@stx.ox.ac.uk)**

**Correspondence about membership should be addressed to the Membership Secretary: The Revd Simon Godfrey, The Rectory, Albion Place, Northampton NN1 1DU**

**E Mail: [simongodfrey@breathe.net](mailto:simongodfrey@breathe.net) Telephone: 01604 621854 : Mobile: 07973472369**

**Correspondence about all matters financial, grants, and making bequests to The Society should be addressed to the Treasurer: The Revd Owen Higgs, The Vicarage, Willett Way, Orpington BR5 1QE**

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

For a thousand years or more English law has recognised the concept of the corporation sole - a legal entity being a single person as office holder, either priest or bishop. When the corporation sole is the incumbent of a benefice he has duties of office under Canon Law and, for the better performance of those duties, the church, churchyard, parsonage and the right to receive fees are vested in him as the incumbent. When the priest vacates the benefice and the patron makes presentation of a successor to the bishop, on institution and induction, the benefice land and buildings will pass to the new incumbent on the same trusts.

At the sessions of the General Synod this February, there were proposals for parsonage houses to be transferred to a diocesan board “discharged from all previously existing trusts in favour of the benefice or of the incumbent”. The fact that, frequently, land was given by the local squire and the parsonage was erected by local public subscription or by the patron and then vested in the incumbent as corporation sole for him and his successors in office, had been dismissed as of little consequence by the framers of the draft Measure. As members of the Society will be aware, your Council has consistently campaigned for church, churchyard and parsonage to remain in the ownership/trusteeship of the incumbent. The steering committee for the Measure had bowed to public opinion and agreed to the church and churchyard staying with the incumbent but had turned down all amendments which would have enabled the incumbent to retain ownership of the parsonage.

However, after speeches about “centralisation” and “clergy as employees rather than office holders”, all three Houses of the Synod voted against transfer to the diocese. Thus, the proposal has been dropped as has the proposal to transfer to the diocese the incumbent’s right to receive parochial fees.

Members of this Society should take heart that reasoned argument articulated consistently will sometimes be listened to by those who take the

decisions and such argument can win the day. In the months and years ahead there will undoubtedly be other issues where our voice as a Society needs to be heard and, by the grace of God, the decision-makers will be sympathetic to our viewpoint if it is constructive and cogent.

Yours in the Faith

Brian Hanson



## **From the General Secretary**

This has been a very busy year for the Society and its officers. There has been a flurry of appointments made and pending, many meetings to discuss pastoral reorganisation and suspensions, all of which has generated much correspondence. There has also been routine administration and some extra-ordinary work undertaken by the Officers of the Society.

The Society has consistently, and with energy, opposed the Draft Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms Of Service) Measure, believing that the abolition of the freehold will materially alter what patrons were presenting to, and that the proposals for Common Tenure were ill-conceived. We were especially concerned (as the President indicated in his Letter in this Report) about the proposal contained in the Measure to transfer the ownership of parsonage house to the dioceses. We joined with others, notably the Ven. Norman Russell, Archdeacon of Berkshire, and with other Patronage Societies, both Catholic and Evangelical, to oppose this. We were also a signatory to a letter sent by the Dean of Christ Church to the Charity Commissioners raising significant questions about the proposals.

The Measure came before Synod in February. Although it seems clear that Common Tenure will come in some form, the Synod decisively threw out the proposal to transfer the ownership of the parsonages. An amendment to remove these proposals from the Measure was passed by all three

Houses: the Archbishops of Canterbury and York voting for it. It was good to note that nearly all Society members on General Synod voted to support the Society's position although at least one prominent member seemed to find himself in the other lobby. As this was the first occasion on which Synod members voted electronically, their votes can be seen on the website of the Church of England.

This modest victory may yet prove pyrrhic: there are already rumours that a proposal may be put to Synod to remove an incumbent's ultimate veto to the sale of the parsonage house. Should these whispers prove correct, the Society, no doubt with the same allies, will oppose them vigorously as they would represent the same threat to the security of an incumbent as the original proposals. All this continues the tendency of the contemporary church to centralization, for centralized authority rather than local, parish autonomy. In a briefing paper to Synod Bishop Stephen Venner, who chaired the Drafting Committee maintained that the diocese paid for the repair and maintenance of parsonage house and it should also own them. He conveniently failed to mention that the money for repair comes from the parishes through the Quota.

The Council met three times during the year. Eleven new members were welcomed: Bishop Geoffrey Rowell, the Ven Richard Seed, Canon P. Harbord, the Revd James Houghton, Mr Michael Burbeck, Mrs Joanna Monckton, Mr John Pope, Mr Bill Sargison, Mr and Mrs David Tilley, Mr David White. The Revd Roger Jackson was presented to the Living of S. John the Evangelist, Clevedon (Bath and Wells), the Revd Peter Hibbert was made priest in charge of Altarnon with Bolventer, Lanesat and St Clether (Truro), the Revd Brin Singleton was made Rector of Capel St Mary (Chelmsford) have been priest in charge, the Revd Andrew Ling was made Rector of the Flegg Coastal Benefice (Norwich) having been priest in charge. The Revd Graham Oakes retired from Holy Trinity, Bath (Bath and Wells) and moved to Clevedon where he assists in two Society Livings, S. John the Evangelist and at All Saints. The Society learned with much sadness of the sudden deaths of the Revd Ron Cook, All Saints, Kettering (Peterborough), and the Revd David Addley, Aston Cantlow with Wilmcote and Billesley (Coventry). We extend our deepest sympathy and prayers to their families, friend and parishioners: Jesu mercy, Mary pray.

The Society held a Reception and a Buffet Luncheon in the Merchant Adventurers Hall in York for the members of the Catholic Group, and some other members during the July meeting of Synod. As well as supporting the Catholic Group members with our hospitality and prayers, we were able to outline the Society's opposition to the Draft Measure and urge members to support the amendments that would be put.

A Conference for Incumbents, hosted by the Council, was held at Ascot Priory where as well as being well fed and "watered," thanks to the Warden of the Priory (Father Ursell) and his assistants we heard a magisterial survey of the impact of Common Tenure on the lives of the clergy and their ways of working by Father Jonathan Baker and an inspirational address from Father Philip North, the Administrator of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, on the important subject of mission, which led us to consider how our parishes could be better instruments of mission.

Grants have been given in the past year to the Walsingham Appeal, S. Mary, Alderminster, S. John the Evangelist, Digswell, S. Michael and All Angels, Beckenham, S. Margaret, Leytonstone, and for the Evelyn Light Fellow, Father David McConkey who spent his time at Pusey House writing his doctoral thesis on Michael Furse. He defended his thesis this year and has been awarded his doctorate. He wrote very generously about the Society and its support and we congratulate him on his academic success.

In the coming year it has been decided, as an experiment, to separate the Annual General Meeting from the Festival. The Annual General Meeting will be held at Christ the King, Gordon Square in May, and the Festival at S. Augustine, Kilburn in September. Details occur elsewhere in this Report. It is hoped that by separating matters of business from worship and holding the Festival on a Saturday, it will enable more members of the Society, Incumbents of Society Livings and parishioners to join us. Invitations and posters for the Festival will be sent out later in the year. The change is also reflected in this Annual Report which largely confines itself to matters of business.

*Paul Conrad*

# NOTICES

## COUNCIL MEETING

A meeting of the Council of The Society for the Maintenance of the Faith will take place at Christ the King, Gordon Square at 11.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 20 May 2008

### AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Treasurer's Business
  - i. Accounts
  - ii. Grants
  - iii. Honoraria
  - iv. Other
4. General Secretary's Business
5. Election of new members
6. Date of next meeting

*Minutes of the last Council Meeting are enclosed with this mailing for Council Members and Officers*

### 135<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of The Society for the Maintenance of the Faith will be held at Christ the King, Gordon Square on Tuesday, 20 May 2008 at 12.30 p.m. to be followed by a Buffet Luncheon

## AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Presentation of the Accounts
4. Election of Auditor
5. General Secretary's Report
6. Election of Officers

Nominations for the Council should be received by the General Secretary no later than **Tuesday, 13 May 2008**. Only those who have paid their annual subscription are eligible to be nominated for the Council, and to take part in elections. The minimum annual subscription is £10.00 and should be sent to the Treasurer whose address appears elsewhere in this issue.

*Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting are enclosed with this mailing for Members of the Society.*



The Annual FESTIVAL MASS will be held this year on **SATURDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2008 at 12.30pm** in the church of **S. AUGUSTINE, KILBURN** (by kind permission of Father Anthony Yates). The preacher will be **The Revd Prebendary William Scott, *Sub-Dean of the Chapels Royal, Sub-Almoner, Deputy Clerk of the Closet and Domestic Chaplain to H. M. The Queen.***

There will be a Buffet Luncheon after Mass. Invitations and publicity will be sent later in the year but, please, put this date in your diary to join us for this year's Festival.



