

# SMTF The Society for the Maintenance of the Faith

**Presidential Address**  
*by Dr Colin Podmore MBE*  
**14 June 2025**

It's very good to be back at St Magnus the Martyr, London Bridge, after last year's diversion to St Andrew by the Wardrobe. Many thanks to Fr Philip Warner and his team for the mass, to Fr Philip Barnes (Master of the Guardians of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham) for preaching for us, to Deacon William Allen for deaconing the mass and to Ben Almond, an ordinand at St Stephen's House and member of our Society, for coming to serve. God willing, William and Ben are to be ordained soon to the priesthood and the diaconate respectively. To see young men accepting this vocation is a huge encouragement to all of us. Thank you to Ed Walters and the choir of St Magnus. Last year, in exile, they gave us a Stanford communion service in the centenary year of Stanford's death. This year we have had a Palestrina mass, as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of Palestrina's birth. Thanks also to the St Magnus *chef de cuisine* Professor Frank Keating, and his helpers, for the lunch that we are about to enjoy: previous experience tells us it will be excellent.

At this, my fifth AGM as President of our Society, my first term as President concludes. It has actually lasted only 4½ years because COVID delayed the AGM at which I was elected. This prompts me to look back briefly on what we have achieved in that time.

- We have reformed and updated the **Constitution**.
- We have adopted and revised **Policies** covering the main aspects of our work: policies on things like Conflicts of Interest and Financial Controls – the sort of policies that should be in place in every anglo-catholic charity but apparently are not in some.
- There is now a limit of three terms for continuous service on the **Council**. In consequence the Council's membership is largely new. I am grateful to Fr Owen Higgs for coming back last year, after a year lying fallow, as it were, to give us some much-needed corporate memory. Four of the eight lay Council members are now women, and they have made particularly strong contributions to our work.
- We have radically simplified the **Accounts**. We no longer hold funds for the benefit of parishes, so we just have a general fund. The bulk of that fund is now (or in the case of a small sliver, soon will be) invested with CCLA. We now also have just one bank account, with the very user-friendly CAF Bank. I'm very grateful to Michael Cooper, who was elected as Treasurer last year, for completing all this work, which his predecessor Andrew Carter had set in train.
- We have had our **Archives** at Pusey House professionally thinned, sorted, boxed and catalogued.
- And we created a new and informative **Website**.

We reminded ourselves that the **Object** of our Charity is “to promote and maintain catholic teaching and practice within the Church of England” – and that we are under an obligation to concentrate our expenditure and efforts on work that fulfils that Object.

With this in mind, we have arranged our patronage into three groups:

- The first group consists of 28 benefices that include resolution parishes: we are sole patron of 20 of these.
- The second group consists of 26 benefices where we are the sole patron and/or there is an element of continuing catholic tradition despite the lack of a resolution.
- The third group consists of 45 benefices where we are joint patrons and the parishes are not 'catholic' by anyone's definition of that term.

We must concentrate our energy and resources on the first two groups, while of course not neglecting our legal responsibilities in relation to the third.

We are attempting to increase the number of resolution parishes and reduce the non-catholic benefices. This is not easy: we must mostly proceed by way of exchange with diocesan bishops, and that requires a willingness on their part to help us in this way and to invest time and energy in doing so. In 2023 we received two benefices by exchange: All Saints Torre & Torquay St John, and Edlington & Hexthorpe. This year, we received the newly separate benefice of St George's Preston as a gift from the Bishop of Blackburn: we welcome them to our SMF family. There are exchanges agreed but not yet implemented in the Dioceses of Portsmouth and Southwell & Nottingham, which would bring us two more resolution benefices. And there are other conversations underway both about exchanges and about transfers to us.

Your Council works very well as a team. Initially, I chaired appointment panels for our sole patronage benefices myself, but now I mostly delegate that to other Council members. I think nine of our fourteen Council members have now served on one of our panels or represented us on a diocesan panel.

We try to keep in touch. I write to the parish priests of our Group A benefices at Christmas, sending a card and our Cycle of Prayer. And all members receive an invitation to this Festival, and papers for the AGM, by email. If you would like to join us in prayer for our parishes, copies of the Cycle of Prayer are available.

Since our last AGM we have received news of the deaths of Fr Michael Brotherton, Fr Nicholas Burton (a former member of the Council), Fr Andrew Wagstaff, Mr David White and Mr David James Kidd (some of whom died in previous years). We have added 12 new members. In total we now have 121 members (79 ordained and 42 lay).

In concluding this brief address, may I thank all the members of the Council for their support and their important contributions to discussions at our meetings and between meetings?

As I have said in previous years, Fr Philip Corbett does a huge amount of work for us as General Secretary. Without him, the administration of our patronage of 97 benefices simply wouldn't happen. He brings to that work a great amount of pastoral wisdom and diplomatic skill (coupled, of course, with appropriate firmness where necessary). I am tremendously grateful to him, as we should all be.

And finally, thanks to all of you for supporting us with your prayers and with your presence at our worship and our meeting today. Please continue your prayers!