



ECCLESIOLOGICAL SOCIETY

SUCCESSOR OF THE CAMBRIDGE CAMDEN SOCIETY OF 1839

PRESIDENT: THE RT REVD DR DAVID STANCLIFFE, MA, DD, FRSCM

www.ecclsoc.org

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24 February 2022

Dear Fellow Member,

CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP FEES AND PAYMENTS

I am writing to you to set out changes which the Society's Council is proposing to how you pay your membership subscription, and also an increase in the level of the membership fee. The increase in membership fee needs to be accepted by a vote of members, and this has been included in the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting on Thursday 21 April, which is also enclosed with this letter.

Currently, the overwhelming majority of the Society's members pay their membership fees by standing order, with a small number paying by cheque. The administrative difficulty of changing standing orders (both for the Membership Secretary and for members) means that increases in membership fees have only been made infrequently. We last increased the membership fee nine years ago in 2013. This creates a situation where the Council has, in the past, proposed fee levels intended to last for a cycle lasting several years. This means that, at the start of that cycle, the rate might seem high, but is then low at the end, due to the effect of inflation. At the start of each cycle, the Society tends to make a profit for the year, knowing that it will make a loss at the end of the cycle. For this reason, the Society made a loss in 2020 and 2021, and we expect to do so again in 2022.

The average income for the Society across the cycle is, like Goldilock's porridge, "just right", and the losses at the end balance out the profits at the beginning. However, it is not an optimal way to manage the Society's finances, especially towards the end of the cycle. As you will probably have seen elsewhere, voluntary organisations like ours have generally been migrating from collecting their membership fees by standing order to doing so by direct debit. A key consideration is that this enables us to keep membership fees more closely aligned with the actual annual operating costs of the Society. It is important to emphasise that this proposed change does not mean that members will be paying more over the longer term.

As the Society is now at the end of the old standing order cycle, your Council thinks that it is now prudent to move the collection of membership fees from the old system based on standing orders to one based on direct debits.

As a small voluntary organisation, we do not have the capacity to operate a direct debit scheme ourselves, and, like other similar organisations, we will use the services of an external organisation – in our case GoCardless – to operate it on our behalf. This does not change your relationship with the Society, and the Direct Debit Guarantee will apply to the arrangement (this, of course, is a benefit which you do *not* enjoy if

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you pay by standing order). The only point to note for now is that the debit on your bank statement will appear as “GoCardless” rather than “The Ecclesiological Society.”

Later this year, we will send you the necessary paperwork for you to complete and return to us so that we can set up your direct debit. If we already have your email address, we will also send you a link for you to do this online.

For members who pay in January (the vast majority), any new subscription will take effect for the payment made in early January 2023. We will contact you in good time about this change, if it is accepted by the AGM.

The second change we propose is to the membership fee itself. Under the Laws of the Society, this change requires a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at a members’ meeting. The Annual General Meeting will be held on 21 April 2022, and the agenda enclosed with this letter includes two resolutions relating to membership fees. The AGM will be held in hybrid form and we will count the votes both of those present in person and those attending online. You will also find enclosed a note which explains the changes to membership fees, and which includes the wording of the resolution to be voted on at the AGM.

Finally, if we send you the Direct Debit forms by post and not by email, that means we do not have your email address. We will, however, set out for you how to complete the process online, and we would particularly appreciate you letting us know what your email address is.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on chair@ecclsoc.org, or Anthony Gilmour on treasurer@ecclsoc.org if you have any queries or concerns about these proposed changes.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Kirby". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal blue line that serves as a separator.

Dr Mark Kirby
Chairman of Council



ECCLESIOLOGICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FEE CHANGES

This note forms part of the papers for the Annual General Meeting of the Ecclesiological Society, to be held on 21 April 2022 at the Art Workers' Guild, 6 Queen Square, London, WC1N 3AT, and simultaneously online.

Background

The subscription rates of the Society have been held since the start of 2013. The Society is financially sound, but your Council believes an increase in rates is required now to meet rising costs, along with some measures to control costs.

There are three main reasons for needing to increase rates: (a) the general rise in prices since 2013, (b) the improvements made to the Society's publications, and (c) developments arising from or prompted by the pandemic.

- (a) As the table set out below shows, some increase in rates will be needed anyway. Indeed, some of the Society's costs have risen more than the general price indices would suggest. (The cost of postage – a significant item for us – has grown about 4% yearly.)
- (b) Longstanding members will have noticed that our publications – *Ecclesiology Today* and *Church Crawler* – have improved in quality in the last ten years: they are both now in colour and generally longer (*Ecclesiology Today* is ordinarily well over 100 pages), and the content has improved. *Ecclesiology Today* now normally alternates with our new series of conference proceedings, produced to the same standard and longer (the normal length is likely to be about 160 pages). Feedback suggests that members value these improvements, and your Council remains committed to maintaining them.
- (c) One of the consequences of Covid and lockdown has been that it is now routinely expected that voluntary organisations like ours should hold events like lectures and conferences in hybrid form – i.e. both in person and simultaneously online. This greatly increases the opportunity for the Society to reach its members, and is something which your Council welcomes, but it also involves additional cost, which needs to be covered.

Making reasonable assumptions about future cost rises, we would not expect another subscription rate rise to be needed in the near future. In any case, changes to membership fees require the approval of members.

From now onwards, **new** members of the Society will pay their subscriptions by direct debit, and we will offer no other payment mechanism. For the administrative reasons set out above, your Council believes that it would help greatly in the smooth running of the Society if **current** members also paid their subscriptions by

direct debit. We therefore propose that the new standard rate of £25 for UK members should apply to those paying by direct debit; and that those choosing to continue to pay by other means (normally standing order) should pay a little more – £27. That fairly reflects the extra administrative burden of dealing with payments by standing order or cheque, and we hope will encourage members to switch to direct debit.

Other changes

Rather than increase the Life Membership subscription, we are proposing (like many other membership organisations) to stop offering new life memberships altogether. As things now stand, and particularly with the current uncertain economic outlook, the growing problems and risks in trying to set a fair rate for new life memberships outweigh the benefits of doing so. If approved at the AGM, the change will come into effect straightaway. The change will not affect present life members, of course.

We have a small number of overseas members, and are pleased that our work has a wider circulation. However, like many other small publishers, we have started to run into problems with import charges (including import VAT) when sending publications to some other countries. When setting overseas rates we have not factored in such extra costs, and cannot easily do so as they vary. Nor can a small voluntary organisation such as ours sensibly carry the administrative burdens of paying such charges out of the subscription income. Therefore, we propose to make it clear that an overseas subscription does not include such charges, and overseas members might have to pay such costs at their end.

Partly for that reason, we are proposing a relatively modest increase in the Overseas Membership Rate. But we propose that Council should be authorised to raise that rate by up to a further £10 if it sees fit; and to cut costs by sending overseas members *Church Crawler* in electronic form (as a *pdf*).

The proposals discussed above, and the specific membership rates listed in the Appendix are set out in **Membership Motion 1** below, to be put to the AGM.

Currently, the society offers a concessionary rate to those under the age of 25 or who are retired (which we read as meaning over ordinary retirement age). All or almost all on that rate are retired. Your Council does not propose to remove the concessionary rate from any of the retired members already enjoying it. However, for others we have decided to maintain the spirit of the concessionary rate but to operate it in a different way. We propose that a concessionary rate should be offered on an exceptional basis to any member or prospective member experiencing economic hardship irrespective of age or employment status. This proposal is separate from the wider changes discussed above, and is set out in **Membership Motion 2** below, to be put to the AGM.

Your Council greatly values the support for the Society shown by members, and hopes you will continue to give it their backing in all its attempts to achieve.

The Council of the Ecclesiological Society
February 2022

APPENDIX:

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE OF SUBSCRIPTION RATES ETC

The table below shows the current subscription rates and the proposed rates. The fifth column shows the percentage increase. The final column shows the general increase in prices which has occurred since the rates were last set as from the start of 2013.

Proposed subscription rates from 1 January 2023

Type	Current	Proposed from 1 Jan 2023 (direct debit payers)	Proposed from 1 Jan 2023 (members <u>not</u> paying by direct debit)	Proposed % increase since 1 Jan 2013 (direct debit payers)	For comparison: Retail Price Index inflation from end 2012 – end 2022
	£	£	£	%	RPI %
Normal	17.50	25	27	43%	36%
Concession	14.00	20	22	43%	36%
Extra household member	3.50	5.00	5.50	43%	36%
Life member UK	300.00	–	–	–	–
Overseas	30.00	35.00		17%	–

RPI = Retail Price Index. From Dec 2012 to Dec 2021 the total RPI increase was 29%. The table above assumes that during 2022 RPI will be 6% per annum.

As set out in the main body of this paper, it is proposed to cease offering new life memberships; and to make the changes set out there as to overseas memberships.

Motions to be put to the Ecclesiological Society's 2022 AGM:

Membership Motion 1:

To approve the changes to subscription rates and membership (including Life Membership and Overseas Membership) set out in **Appendix: Proposals for subscription rates etc.**, and explained in the paper **Ecclesiological Society Membership Fee Changes** presented to the Society's 2021 AGM, held on 21 April 2022.

Membership Motion 2:

To approve the proposal for a concessionary rate as set out in **Appendix: Proposals for subscription rates etc.**, and explained near the end of the paper **Ecclesiological Society Membership Fee Changes** presented to the Society's 2021 AGM, held on 21 April 2022.