



Canon Laws
Of
The Church of
St Mary & St John



Table of Contents

1. *Promulgation.*
2. *The Structure of the Church.*
3. *The Governance of the Church*
4. *The Seven Sacraments.*
5. *The Church Clergy.*
6. *Ordination and Incardination.*
7. *Church Finance.*
8. *Relations with other Churches.*
9. *Clergy Dress and Vestments.*
10. *Liability of The Church*
11. *Seminary.*



1. Promulgation

1.1 These Canons were promulgated by ++Tia L. Douglass, the Presiding Bishop of The Church of St Mary and St John, after consultation and meditation, on the twenty first day of March in the year two thousand and eleven. These canons are subject to revision from time to time by the Synod of Bishops.

(This present version is the seventh version)

1.2 These Canons may be referred to as “The Canons of The Church of St Mary and St John” or “The Canons of The CSsM&J” or simply “The Canons”.

1.3 Where the duties of Clergy and other members of the Church are described below, they shall be understood as if the phrase “provided that such action is compliant with all the relevant secular laws and regulations in the country-state-province where it is to be performed” were post pended in each case. It is recognised that in some cases, particularly in respect of marriages, the law may vary widely from one country-state-province to another, and what is legal in one country-state-province may not be legal in another.

1.4 No part of these Canons shall be understood, interpreted or relied upon as offering guidance or advice on any aspect of ‘Secular Law’ whatsoever. All persons affected by these provisions are recommended to seek independent legal advice before proceeding.



2. The Structure of the Church

2.1 The official and formal 'Name' of the Church shall be "The Church of St Mary and St John" an Independent, Esoteric, Celtic, Gnostic Jurisdiction in Great Britain and Ireland. (Hereafter "The Church of St Mary and St John", "The CSsM&J" or simply "The Church").

2.2 The Church of St Mary and St John, incorporates subsidiary Societies, Orders and Ordinariates as listed under Canon 2.4 below and as may be varied from time to time.

2.3 The character of the Church shall be that of an Independent, Inclusive, Progressive, Liberal, Esoteric, Celtic, Gnostic and Templar styled Church.

2.4 The current Societies and Orders that are under the protection of the Church are as follows:

- Order of St Mary Magdalene
- Order of St John the Baptist
- Order of St Thecla
- Order of St Joseph of Arimathea
- Order of the Holy Grail
- Ordo Infinitus Orbis - Knights Hospitaller Templar
- International Priory of Knights Hospitaller Templar
- Temple of Theola
- Theomerla

2.4a Orders, Societies, Ordinariates, Parishes and Monastic Demesnes of the Church shall be properly constituted within the Church (or as constituted bodies, acting under the guidance and authority of the Church). They shall be at all times Divinely and quietly governed, and exist for the Glory of the Divine. All such bodies within the Church will be as far as possible democratic, liberal and work for the common good of their members and the common people.

2.4b Within their defined constitutions, Church Orders and Societies may exercise freedoms in respect of their specific private belief while outwardly expressing the beliefs of the Church, as long as at all times the Divine is glorified and the liberal ethos of our Trinity and Gnostic Theolalite identity is maintained. The CSsM&J shall always be the 'Parent' body of such groups, to whom they shall defer.

2.4c Orders or Societies of the Church may have members who are not part of the Church within their Orders or Societies membership, and where this happens, those persons are considered as members of the Church by virtue of our understanding that all are in intercommunion whether stated or not and by their expressed continuation in membership of said Order or Society.



Canon Laws of The Church of St Mary and St John

2.5 The Church practices universal membership as an Independent, Esoteric, Celtic, Gnostic and Templar styled Church. It welcomes adherents at its ceremonies without requirement that they hold specific beliefs on condition that they agree through their presence to respect the Liberal Ethos and practices of the Church. In these Canons, the term “Member” is used to mean a person who is an active adherent to the Church.

2.6 All Parishes and Monastic Demesnes are an integral part of our one Church and they shall own any properties in common. The Clergy are to be held in common by all and for the benefit of all. The role of the Church is to serve its Parishes and Monastic Demesnes, and to provide support, education and a governing structure for its Clergy. The role of the Clergy is to serve ministerially to educate and to honour the example of the Divine through their work. Any private property (i.e. vestments etc.) held by individuals or groups but used for Church purposes remains the property of said private owners.

2.7 The Church understands the word “Parish” and “Monastic Demesne” to be geographical, but without preventing those with an established or historical connection from participating from a distance. The Parish or Monastic Demesne embraces all persons who come into contact with a particular Meeting, Society, Order or Clergy person in the context of their Ministry. The Church shall use all technologies available to conduct its business and all who come into contact with a particular Meeting, Society, Order or Clergy person online or otherwise via the internet shall likewise be considered part of that body.

2.8 The Church is a Not-for-Profit, Charitable Organisation, Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England and Wales, Co. Reg. No.: 7828241. This allows us to raise funds for the Church, its Orders, our Charities and Projects, Tax Free. We will seek Full Registration with the Charities Commission when we feel it is appropriate.



3. The Governance of the Church

3.1 Although hierarchical in structure and subject to the Presiding Bishop solely, the day-to-day administration of the Church is largely Ministerial in practice. There are two parallel and related systems of governance. The first system is at Church level and consists of the Synods. The second system is at Ministerial level and consists of a Priest-Priestess together with their Parish or Monastic Demesne if any. These systems are directly connected on all issues involving Church accountability, for example in respect of the discipline of the Clergy.

3.2 The system of governance of the Church as a whole is through the Presiding Bishop, Vicar General and the Synods. There shall be three Synods. The Synod of Bishops, the Synod of Abbots and the Synod of Clergy. All the Synod members have the ability to co-opt specialists and advisers as needed from time to time.

3.2a The Synod of Bishops, Shall consist of the Presiding Bishop, Bishops and Episcopal Vicar General or their elected representatives.

3.2b The Synod of Abbots, shall consist of all the Abbots and Abbesses or their elected representatives.

3.2c The Synod of Clergy, shall consist of all other Clergy and Lay Members, or their elected representatives.

3.3 Although a Bishop, Abbot and Abbess are usually appointed to a Titular See, appointment to the Episcopal Order is conferred *ad personam* (to the person concerned) and does not automatically carry with it the implication of territorial governance or hierarchical responsibility for Clergy and Communities. To a certain extent, Clergy and their Communities function semi-independently and semi-autonomously provided that they remain within the Ethos and requirements of these Canons.

3.4 Appointment of a Bishop or Priest-Priestess to an office which has specific responsibilities for Church governance is recognised through an additional appointment to a position as Administrator of a Province, Ordinariate or Head of a Religious Order, Mission or similar.

3.5 Due to geographical distance, the Synods may meet through electronic communications for the conduct of routine business, although it may also meet in person. The Synod of Bishops along with the Vicar General, will at all times undertake the routine administration and matters affecting the Church as a whole as well as any specific duties and commissions that may arise from time to time.



3.6 All matters being placed before a Synod for their decision, must be resolved wherever possible by means of a unanimous vote. A simple majority will not be accepted, (except in unusual circumstances) as being sufficient means of resolving issues, since the synods are charged with the responsibility to reflect the views and opinions of all aspects and members of the Church and shall seek compromise where possible and act not only on their personal experience and convictions, but also with the overall good of the Church in mind. However, should there be an insurmountable deadlock on a given subject, then the Presiding Bishop shall have a final casting vote, and the matter shall be settled.

3.7 All Aspirants for Ordination or Incardination, shall be assessed by the synod of Bishops and the Vicar General, and must receive their full and unanimous support before being admitted, however the Presiding Bishop shall have the final say.

3.7a The minimum ages of Aspirants for Ordination shall be as follows:

For the Minor Orders - 18. For the Sub-diaconate - 21. For the Diaconate - 22.

For the Priesthood - 23. For an Abbess - 25. And for the Episcopate - 30.

These ages, except for that of the Episcopate, may at the discretion of the Presiding Bishop, or the Presiding Abbot-Abbess be adjusted.

3.7b It is recommended that, wherever possible, a minimum interval of six months should elapse between the conferring of the Minor Orders of Cleric through to Acolyte and that of Sub-deacon and a minimum of twelve months should elapse between the Orders of Sub-deacon, Deacon and Priest-Priestess. These may at the discretion of the Presiding Bishop, or the Presiding Abbot-Abbess be adjusted.

3.8 The Presiding Bishop is the overall Head of the Church and shall have a casting vote where consensus has not been reached. In using a casting vote, the Presiding Bishop shall have regard to the overall good of the Church rather than any individual.

3.9 During sessions of the Synods, silence shall, in normal circumstances, be considered as acceptance and assent of a matter in hand. Members of a Synod who dissent, or require more time to reflect upon or discuss further any issues, must make their feelings known to the other members at their earliest opportunity, and shall bear full responsibility for doing so. For practical reasons and due to the, at times considerable volume of business before a Synod, members are required to respond within twenty-four hours of receipt of any item. Any action by the Synods, shall become effective from the date of notification by circular to all members of the three Synods.

3.10 Except in cases where prior confidentiality has been requested and granted, Clergy, Church Members or other correspondents must assume that their correspondence will be shared with other members of the Synods as well as the Presiding Bishop and the Vicar General. However, all members of the Synods, the Presiding Bishop and the Vicar General undertake that matters of a sensitive or personal nature will not be discussed outside of the Synods without the express permission of the Presiding Bishop, Vicar General and the Synod as a whole, as well as wherever possible the correspondent concerned.



3.11 The Church has several Codes of Conduct (including Codes of Conduct adopted from outside Groups or Societies) covering various activities. Clergy must at all times exercise the highest 'Moral' and 'Professional' integrity. The Codes of Conduct must be complied with at all times. Clergy are encouraged to strive for 'Best Practice' as they see it in their serving. Codes of Conduct are reviewed by the Synods from time to time.

3.12 Members of Clergy may approach the Vicar General or the Synod of Bishops at any time to request a hearing regarding matters of concern, to seek advice or for spiritual guidance. It is considered prudent for the Clergy to seek advice earlier rather than later, especially in matters that may have implications now, or in the future for the Church, its Clergy or other members. Clergy should never feel concerned that they may be wasting the Vicar General's or Synod's time. It is far better for them to do so than let what appears to be a small problem, escalate into a major concern for all, especially if an early intervention may have prevented this.

3.13 Proceedings of the Synod of Bishops regarding the discipline of the Clergy shall normally be private. Any member of Clergy who is the subject of proceedings before the Synod of Bishops shall, have the right to be accompanied by a solicitor or other person trained in Canon Law, or a friend. The Synod of Bishops shall have the right to delegate any part of their representation during the proceedings to a Solicitor Advocate or other person trained in Canon Law. All legal representation shall be at the sole expense of the party who employs it.

3.14 In the event that the behaviour of any member of Clergy gives rise to concern, any person, whether Lay or Ordained, shall have the right to report the matter to the Synod of Bishops using the contact information on the Church website. It shall be the responsibility of the Synod of Bishops to provide pastoral care for those involved, with the intention that the matters that have given rise to concern be investigated and dealt with as is necessary. If, despite this, the behaviour concerned continues, the Synod of Bishops may issue an Official Notice dissociating itself from the behaviour concerned and suspending the faculties of the Clergyperson in question.

3.15 In the event that a member of Clergy is accused of misconduct, the complaint must be made to the Synod of Bishops with full details of the matters complained of, and this must be signed by the person or persons concerned. Anonymous accusations will not be accepted.

3.15a A formal hearing before the Synod of Bishops shall be arranged in person and the Clergyperson concerned shall be requested to attend the hearing together with his or her representatives. A notice period of twenty-eight days will normally be given. Clergy who are unable or unwilling to attend the hearing may submit evidence in writing for the consideration of the Synod.

3.15b The Synod of Bishops will appoint a Prosecutor to represent the complainant(s). The Prosecutor may be a Solicitor or other person trained in advocacy. In order to ensure impartiality and wherever practical he or she would not normally be a member of the Church.



3.15c The Synod of Bishops will consider the evidence and representations made to it and will find the allegation Proven or Not Proven. For an allegation that is Proven, the Synod of Bishops may impose sanctions including the admonishment of the Clergy person concerned, and the suspension or removal of his or her faculties, or in extreme cases expulsion from the Church.

3.16 An appeal against a ruling of the Synod of Bishops may be made to the Presiding Bishop within twenty-eight days of the publication of the ruling, setting out the grounds for appeal including the substantive evidence under which the ruling may be deemed unsafe. The Presiding Bishop shall hear any appeal in person, giving a notice period of twenty-eight days for the hearing, and he or she may choose to be accompanied by any advisor not being a member of the Synod of Bishops. If the Clergy person is unable or unwilling to attend the hearing, he or she may submit evidence in writing for the consideration of the Presiding Bishop. The Presiding Bishop after due meditation and consideration has the right to endorse a decision of the Synod of Bishops, or request it to be reconsidered.

3.17 A member of Clergy of the Church who resigns his or her office shall not normally be eligible for readmission except in special circumstances. A member of Clergy seeking such readmission shall make application to the Synod of Bishops, giving a full account of his or her actions. The Synod of Bishops shall consider the matter and issue a ruling within fourteen days of receiving the application for reinstatement. No member of Clergy of the Church may be readmitted after resigning for a second time.

3.18 All members of Clergy of the Church are bound by these Canons and applicable Codes of Conduct at all times they remain as Clergy of this Church. In accepting the role of Clergy person, they accept both this obedience and the authority of the Synod of Bishops in administering the Canons and with the help of the Divine in meditation, in rendering any form of judgement based upon them.



4. The Seven Sacraments

4.1 We are a Church in valid Apostolic Succession from the Apostles and practice the Seven Sacraments handed down to us through their tradition, that is to say: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, The Eucharist (Mass), Confession, Anointing of the Sick (Unction) and Holy Matrimony. We may vary the way in which these Sacraments are performed, for example through the use of different liturgies, providing always that the Gnosticity of the Sacrament in matter, form and intent is preserved. We understand the Sacraments to be outward signs of an inward Spiritual grace.

4.2 With the exception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, Clergy of the Church may not deny the Sacraments to those who ask for them, provided that the reasonable discretion of the Clergy involved shall apply with regard to the choice of the time and appropriate place for their Ministration.

4.3 The Church recognises that Holy Baptism may in theory be performed by any adult provided the correct form, matter and intent are present. However, it is usually performed by the Clergy. The use of our formula of the Holy Trinity and the use of water and wine are considered obligatory. The usual means of Baptism in the Church is by aspersion or effusion, although where the layperson concerned requests it, Baptism by submersion is also permissible.

4.3a Clergy of the Church may conduct Naming Ceremonies for those who wish them.

4.3b Clergy of the Church may not refuse to conduct Baptism or a Naming Ceremony on the grounds that the parents of the child concerned are not married.

4.4 A Bishop is usually the Minister responsible for Confirmation. However, in cases of necessity, a Bishop may issue Confirmation Faculties to an experienced Priest-Priestess. Priests-Priestesses may in other situations administer Confirmation where a Bishop is not available, specifically in the case of the Baptism of adults, the admission of a Baptised adult to full Communion or the Baptism of a person in danger of death.

4.5 The Mass is celebrated in English, (except where English is not the native language, wherein it can be performed in the native language, subject to the Clergy being fluent in that language).

4.5a Wine (i.e. the fermented juice of the grape) should be used during the Mass; however the use of unfermented grape juice is allowed for those who abstain from alcohol. It is acceptable for Communion to be given either by intinction or into the hand. Sacrament may be 'reserved' for Communion later where appropriate.

4.5b There are no 'Approved' Liturgies in the Church and freedom is permitted for Clergy to offer worship and Sacraments as the Divine Spirit leads them as long as the Liturgy used is dignified and balanced. There are however, recommended Liturgies in the Church.

4.5c All who are present may receive Holy Communion without prior requirement of specific beliefs, although it is encouraged that those who wish to do so should undergo appropriate preparation.



4.5d In the case of a person who is Excommunicated from the Church but who desires still to receive Holy Communion, they shall be admitted to the ceremony only during the administration of Holy Communion and shall be required to withdraw after receiving the consecrated elements.

4.5e The Church is of the opinion that it is not usually accepted to administer the Eucharist to children under the age of ten. In the case of a child who has received suitable instruction and who has an obvious understanding of the nature of the Eucharist, the Priest-Priestess in charge may allow at his or her discretion a younger child to receive it.

4.6 The Church does not require auricular confession of its members, but makes such available, along with pastoral counselling, to its members at their request. We recognise that the seal of the confessional is absolute.

4.7 The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is understood by the Church to be a spiritual ceremony solely. While the registration of civil marriage or civil partnership may be necessary to give legal standing to the union of two people, such a ceremony cannot by its nature constitute marriage as that Sacrament is understood by the Church in spiritual terms. The policy of the Church is that two consenting people may proceed to the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony provided that such a ceremony is permitted by law in the jurisdiction concerned and all legal requirements have been complied with.

4.7a Marriage is not to be undertaken lightly. The Clergy person should in each case satisfy him or herself that the couple are fully aware of the solemn and lifelong nature of the promises which they are to make, and of the duties of family life, particularly with regard to the upbringing of children.

4.7b Clergy must ensure that the parties concerned have registered correctly with the Registrar and that all legal formalities in the country concerned have been followed.

4.8 The Church will bless ceremonies of civil marriage or civil partnership between members of the same or the opposite sex.

4.9 In respect of canons 4.7, 4.7a and 4.8 the Church will admit divorced and remarried people and those whose previous civil partnerships have been dissolved to these ceremonies.

4.10 Clergy at or above the Order of Priest-Priestess may celebrate same-gender marriages and blessings of civil partnership if they wish and if permitted by law in the jurisdiction concerned, but they shall not be compelled to do so. In the event that they do not wish to accept an invitation they shall refer it to the Vicar General for redistribution to another Clergy member if possible.



- 4.11** Sacramental Certificates must be issued for all Baptisms, Confirmations, Blessings and Holy Orders. Clergy must issue their own Sacramental Certificates and maintain a record of these in a register. A copy of each Certificate should also be sent to the Vicar General to be kept in the Church records. Samples of these are available from the Vicar General.
- 4.12** Holy Oils are available from the Vicar General to Clergy of the Church. In the case of the Oil of the Sick, a Priest-Priestess may 'Bless' oil when necessary, but shall do so during the same service in which the oil is to be administered.
- 4.13** Clergy must not attempt to conduct ceremonies of Exorcism on Human or Animal subjects without first having sought and been granted the express permission of the Presiding Bishop in each case. There are serious legal implications that may follow from such ceremonies. Experienced Clergy of the Order of Exorcist or above may apply for a faculty to 'Exorcise' objects or places (only), which is a less problematic area.
- 4.14** Clergy who wish to undertake Healing Ministry that involves physical contact with subjects are strongly recommended to seek accredited training in their chosen method. They are also advised that they may require insurance cover to undertake such Ministry. When practical no Healing Ministry should take place without a second person being present to act as a witness.



5. The Church Clergy

5.1 Clergy members of The Church of St Mary and St John are those Ordained to any of the following Orders: Lay Cleric; Lay Reader; Cleric; Doorkeeper; Reader; Exorcist; Acolyte; Sub-deacon; Deacon; Priest-Priestess; Monsignor-Monsignora, Abbot-Abbess and Bishop, as well as any who shall belong to named Religious Orders designated under the Churches protection. The Presiding Bishop may appoint to offices including those of Vicar-General, Abbot-Abbess, Chancellor, Registrar and Treasurer, the latter three of which may also be held by a layperson, and shall in each case define the responsibilities of the office concerned. The Presiding Bishop may create additional offices within the Church as She or He thinks fit.

5.2 At this moment in time no member of Clergy or person in Minor Orders or person holding a Lay office of The Church of St Mary and St John shall be considered an employee of the Church under any circumstances whatsoever. All who serve the Church are voluntary and non-stipendiary. All appointments within the Church are made conditionally upon this understanding.

5.3 Each Clergyperson, if fit for work and younger than the usual retirement age, is expected to support him or herself through secular work, although it is also recognised that some may be able to support themselves as full-time Funeral Ministers, Ecumenical Youth Workers etc. The Church makes no distinction between those who undertake secular work and those who undertake full-time Ministry. It is the duty of the Clergyperson concerned to check that their work with the Church, although unpaid and voluntary, does not contravene any regulations or rules towards government or social benefits if appropriate.

5.4 Those Ordained to the Minor Orders of Cleric, Doorkeeper, Reader, Exorcist and Acolyte may be men or women and may discharge the responsibilities particular to those offices. It is usually necessary to receive the Minor Orders before Ordination as a Sub-deacon, as it is generally considered beneficial. All persons in Minor Orders are responsible to the Presiding Bishop and Vicar General who may delegate this authority to a Priest-Priestess.

5.5 A suitably qualified layperson may be admitted as Lay Cleric in the Church, with their responsibilities defined specifically in each case. There is also provision for the admission of Lay Readers where deemed necessary. Persons in these offices are responsible to the Presiding Bishop and Vicar General who may delegate this authority to a Priest-Priestess.

5.6 Sub-deacons and Deacons are men or women Ordained to the Diaconate. They may perform Funeral Ceremonies (but not celebrate the Funeral Mass) and Baptisms. At Mass, they may read the Gospel and assist the Priests-Priestesses and Bishops present. They may perform Blessings of civil marriage and partnership. All Sub-deacons and Deacons are responsible to the Presiding Bishop and Vicar General who may delegate this authority to a Priest-Priestess. A Sub-deacon is addressed as 'The Reverend Sub-deacon X' or in speech by 'Sub-deacon [Christian name]', and a Deacon is addressed as 'The Reverend Deacon X', or in speech by 'Deacon [Christian name]'.



5.7 Priests-Priestesses are men or women Ordained to the Priesthood whose ministry involves regular celebration of the Eucharist. They may celebrate Mass, perform Marriages, Blessings of civil marriage and partnership and Baptisms, Anoint the Sick, hear Confessions and perform Funeral Ceremonies including the Funeral Mass. They may administer Confirmation in conformity with canon 4.4. All Priests-Priestesses are responsible to the Presiding Bishop and Vicar General. A Priest-Priestess is addressed as 'The Reverend X', or in speech as 'Reverend [Christian name]'.

5.8 A Priest-Priestess who is also The Vicar-General is addressed as 'The Reverend & Very Reverend X'.

5.9 Monsignor-Monsignora are Priests-Priestesses who have shown great devotion to the Church or have performed a specific task or office. All Monsignors-Mosignoras are responsible to the Presiding Bishop and Vicar General and are addressed as 'The Reverend Monsignor-Monsignora X' or 'Monsignor-Monsignora [Christian name]'.

5.10 Abbots-Abbesses are men and women who have been Ordained to Priest-Priestess and have been gifted an Abbessy or Monastic Demesne in their country-state or province by the Presiding Bishop. They can perform all Ecclesiastical duties and confer Holy Orders up to Priest-Priestess, they may also administer Confirmation. All Abbots-Abbesses are responsible to the Presiding Bishop and Vicar General. They are addressed as 'The Right Reverend Lord-Lady X', or in speech as 'Lord Abbot [Christian name]' and 'Lady Abbess [Christian name]', or as 'Your Grace'.

5.11 Bishops are men or women Consecrated to the Episcopate. They can perform all Ecclesiastical duties and confer all Holy Orders; they may also administer Confirmation. All Bishops are responsible to the Presiding Bishop and Vicar General. A Bishop is addressed as 'The Right Reverend X', 'Tau X', or in speech as 'Bishop' or 'Tau [Christian name]', or as Your Excellency.

5.12 A Bishop who is also The Vicar-General (known as an Episcopal Vicar-General) is addressed as 'The Right Reverend & Very Reverend X', 'Tau X', or in speech as 'Bishop' or 'Tau [Christian name]', or as 'Your Eminence'.

5.13 The Presiding Bishop is a Bishop who is also the Prelate of the Church. The Presiding Bishop is addressed as 'The Most Reverend X', 'Tau X', or in speech as 'Bishop' or 'Tau [Christian name]', or as 'Your Eminence'.

5.14 The Consecration of a Bishop is valid when performed by at least one Bishop and witnessed. A photographic record of the key stages in the ceremony should also be kept. All Bishops must be in valid Apostolic Succession.

5.15 All Clergy below the rank of Bishop shall be assigned to an Ordinary who will be responsible for their pastoral advice and guidance as required.



5.16 It is suggested that all Clergy should apply for membership of the Churches Order, The International Priory of Knights Hospitaller Templar. As the Order is valued by the Church and offers significant opportunities for spiritual progress and instruction.

5.17 It is not permitted for any member of the Church of St Mary and St John's Clergy to partake in voluntary work for other Churches, unless such work is in co-operation with the CSsM&J or is helping promote or further our aims. Nor are they permitted to do voluntary work for other Spiritual Charities, or Charitable Organisations that are not either directly connected to the Church of St Mary and St John or do not follow our Spiritual and Moral beliefs.

5.18 All Clergy shall keep a criminal record background (DBS) check on file with the Church at all times. They are responsible for informing the Presiding Bishop and the Vicar General at the first available opportunity if they have been arrested or convicted of a criminal offence. Failure to inform the Presiding Bishop and the Vicar General of such an event shall be treated as a disciplinary matter.

5.19 The Presiding Bishop and the Vicar General may confer Emeritus or Honorary titles on Clergy who have performed signal service to the Church. There are several Orders within the Church for means of such recognition. Clergy shall be appointed as a 'Companion' in the Order after a time of, or an act of exemplary service to the Church, and further promotion in these Orders shall be available as a means of recognition by the Church of service or particular distinction. These Orders are:

- Order of St Mary Magdalene
- Order of St John the Baptist
- Order of St Thecla
- Order of St Joseph of Arimathea
- Order of the Holy Grail

5.20 Clergy of the Church are advised and encouraged to live according to a pure lifestyle. This should encompass taking regular Exercise, Yoga or Tai Chi and Meditation, as well as consuming organic, natural and whole foods. Also the herbs and resins used in ceremonies should wherever possible and practical, be of organic origin, picked or grown by yourself. Ideally all ceremonial items should be made from natural materials, again preferably by yourself. Clergy are permitted to use the 'Sacred Holy Herb'* of our Ancestors, during their private spiritual ceremonies**.

**(The Sacred Holy Herb is, Cnáibe.)*

*** (Please note that this is NOT a license, nor authority, to commit a crime)*



6. Ordination and Incardination

6.1 All Aspirants for Ordination or Incardination must receive the approval of The Presiding Bishop, The Presiding Abbot-Abbess and the Vicar General.

6.2 An Aspirant for Ordination shall have supplied the prescribed information (usually by completing the application form) and shall have provided evidence of his or her spiritual and secular qualifications along with details of suitability for Ordination and a criminal background (DBS) check. He or she must provide evidence or otherwise affirm that he or she has been Baptised and Confirmed, if not the Aspirant must be Baptised and Confirmed before continuing with Ordination.

6.3 The Church does not usually Ordain people with serious criminal convictions, even in the event that the people concerned can show that he or she has taken sincere steps to reform his or her life in times since. In the case of minor or spent criminal convictions the discretion of the Presiding Bishop will apply as to whether the Aspirant can be approved.

6.4 The Church Ordains both men and women to all Holy Orders and does not discriminate in admission to Holy Orders on the grounds of sexuality or marital status; nor does it discriminate on grounds of race, ethnicity, disability or financial means. Further information on the qualities looked for in this process are available on the Ordination page of the Church website.

6.5 All Aspirants for Holy Orders must complete appropriate educational training. This is defined by the Church as a standard of esoteric theological education that is the Diploma in Esoteric Comparative Theology (DipECTh). This is the training you will receive from our Seminary.

6.5a All Aspirants are encouraged to continue their theological education after receiving Holy Orders, and evidence of such commitment to personal development shall normally be looked for in any Aspirant for the Episcopate. As a guideline, an Aspirant for the Episcopate must demonstrate through proven accomplishment that his or her professional standing in ministry is equivalent to the doctoral level.

6.5b Aspirants for Holy Orders will not be debarred from the completion of educational prerequisites for financial reasons wherever possible.

6.6 Aspirants who wish to Incardinate from other Churches must produce Letters of Excardination from their current and any previous denomination. They will be required to explain fully their reasons for wishing to Incardinate, and may be required to complete additional educational prerequisites. They may be required to be Re-Ordained 'sub-conditionally'. Aspirants will not be Incardinated where it is not possible to offer effective Episcopal oversight in the country concerned.

6.6a Bishops are not usually permitted to Incardinate except under very special circumstances to which particular conditions may be attached.



6.7 Holy Orders are usually bestowed in public ceremonies at which the Mass is celebrated. Candidates wishing to become Aspirants for Holy Orders should be aware that at present, all of the Bishops of the Church are resident in Sweden, and therefore they may be required to travel to Sweden to be Ordained, or cover all the expenses necessary for a Bishops to travel to their country. The Church does not recognise or practice any form of Ordination that is not conducted physically by the laying on of hands. The Church does not recognise postal or web-based Ordinations, or Ordinations which may be 'purchased' no matter how sincere the Aspirant may be. New Clergy are usually granted temporary faculties for the first year, which is probationary, and permanent faculties upon satisfactory completion of that year.

6.8 Once Holy Orders are bestowed, they are permanent and cannot be resigned, removed, returned or abrogated. However, Clergy wishing to return to lay life may execute an 'Instrument of Resignation from Active Ministry' if they wish, which will enable them to remain within The Church of St Mary and St John as retired or inactive Clergy. Such Clergy shall be called 'Supernumerary'.

6.9 Clergy wishing to resign from The Church of St Mary and St John in order to exercise their ministry in another denomination must apply to the Presiding Bishop for an 'Instrument of Excardination'. They are reminded that any form of Re-Ordination to Holy Orders they have previously received that is not specifically conducted 'sub-conditional' is inherently sacrilegious.



7. Church Finance

7.1 At the present time the Church shall have an overall ethos of being a voluntary organisation with specific emphasis on non-stipendiary ministry. The Church shall strive to exist and work without monetary commitment.

7.2 The Vicar General may appoint a member or non-member of the Church to act as Treasurer. The Treasurer shall be responsible to the Vicar General. He or She shall maintain accounts for the Church and shall present these at regular intervals. Such accounts are most likely to be 'nil return' accounts. He or She will not be responsible for the accounts of individual Communities, Parishes or Clergy.

7.3 At this present time no member of the Churches Clergy shall be entitled to receive any form of stipend or emolument whatsoever from The Church of St Mary and St John in recompense for their membership or service within the Church, and nor will the Church be responsible for the expenses of Clergy. All Clergy are to be fully self-supporting and shall offer their service to the Church voluntarily and without expectation of financial reward. They shall be responsible for their own tax affairs and in respect of any activities, such as Community, Parish, Wedding or Funeral Ministry, for which they may receive donations, are considered by the Church to be self-employed.

7.4 Clergy are not obliged to pay dues to The Church of St Mary and St John, nor are they obliged to tithe, however any donations would be gratefully received.

7.5 Clergy may solicit financial contributions from their Community or Parish in order to support their Ministry, and some Communities or Parishes may be in a position to pay their Clergy a stipend. Clergy shall not make their Ministry conditional on receiving financial contributions, providing that they shall not be required to offer Ministry if it is not possible to cover their normal expenses in doing so. Such financial contributions shall be accepted by the relevant authorities of the Parish or Community on behalf of the Clergyperson, Community or Parish concerned and not on behalf of The Church of St Mary and St John.

7.6 It is strongly recommended that all Communities and Parishes that wish to solicit financial contributions should appoint their own Treasurer, and that their Treasurer should be responsible to the organising committee or council of the Community or Parish concerned. All such accounts are wholly independent of The Church of St Mary and St John and are the responsibility of the Community or Parish concerned. Whether or not a Treasurer is appointed, all Clergy must keep proper records of offerings received in the course of Ministry and of the expenditure of those offerings. Such records shall be made available for inspection on request by the Vicar General or their nominated officers.



7.7 Clergy may also solicit a donation for the performance of the following services: Funerals; Blessings; Healing Ministry such as Exorcism (but see canon 4.13); Baptisms; Naming Ceremonies and Weddings etc. They should reduce their suggested donation in the event of proven financial need, though they will not be obliged to perform a service without their expenses such as travel and materials having been covered. For the Funerals of babies and very young children, Clergy should seek to cover expenses only.

7.8 All Fundraising for the CSsM&J or its associated Orders & Charities, must come through Central Funding of the Church to allow for Tax Exemption on these funds, All Clergy must notify the Vicar General of any Fundraising they are planning for full details of the necessary rules etc. needed and details of the central account.

7.9 Where an offering is given to a Clergy person for a specific purpose, it shall be used for that specific purpose, provided said purpose is not contrary to law.

7.10 All Clergy shall exercise integrity in their handling of money and specifically in the handling of donated money in the context of their Ministry.

7.11 Clergy may discuss donations to specific works of The Church of St Mary and St John outside of the immediate concerns of their Community or Parish when potential donors wish to initiate such a discussion. A report of this discussion must be sent to the Clergy person's Ordinary who will determine whether the donation should be accepted and what conditions, if any, should be attached to its acceptance.

7.12 The Vicar General shall have discretion to hear any proceedings relating to finance as those proceedings relate to the conduct of individual members of Clergy or the Church as a whole, but shall not have responsibility for the financial affairs of semi-autonomous Communities or Parishes.



8. Relations with other Churches

8.1 The Church considers itself to be in Full Communion with all Human Beings.

8.1a The Church is willing to enter into intercommunion arrangements with other Churches where such arrangements prove fruitful. However, the Church still regards itself in full communion even where no such arrangements exist.

8.2 The Church recognises non-sacramental Churches and Communities outside the Apostolic Succession as fellow-travellers in the Divine path and way of life. However, in order for the Church to recognise a Sacrament as valid within its own boundaries, that Sacrament must have been celebrated with the proper form and intent by a Sacramental Minister who has been Ordained in the Apostolic Succession.

8.3 Clergy of the Church may wish to accept invitations to participate in ecumenical, interchurch and interfaith projects with other Churches and Communities, as well as with Clergy and Laity of other Faiths.

8.4 Having first obtained the consent of the Presiding Bishop, one or more Bishops of the Church may participate in the Ordination of a Deacon or Priest-Priestess, or the Consecration of a Bishop, in and for another Church.

8.5 In accepting any invitation from another Church or Community, Clergy of the Church shall have regard to the principle of mutual respect in interdenominational relations. This principle requires that there should be a mutual understanding and respect for the theology and polity of each Church or Community involved, such that although significant differences may exist, there is an agreement that such differences should be put aside during the given occasion, in as far as is possible, in the interests of Ecumenical relations and fellowship. However, Clergy should avoid placing themselves in situations where they are deemed to have consented to or to have given implied consent to teachings which are against their conscience or against the fundamental principles of these Canons.

8.6 The Church does not seek to proselytise or convert others to its beliefs in its relations with other Communities and no member of Clergy should seek to use such opportunities for these purposes.



9. Clergy Dress and Vestments.

9.1 Clergy are required to wear correct Clerical Dress-Mass Vestments when administering the Sacraments, and should dress appropriately when taking Funerals, Visiting the Sick and appearing at any other function where they are to offer Ministry. It is the free choice of the Clergyperson concerned as to whether they wish to wear Clerical Dress when not exercising such functions.

9.2 The Clerical Shirt for both men and women shall consist of a shirt of the appropriate corresponding colour to their Orders with a White Collar Insert. The Clerical Shirts for each Order are: Grey for Cleric, Doorkeeper and Reader; Black for Exorcist and Acolyte; Dark-Bottle Green for Sub-deacon; Dark-Royal Blue for Deacon; Violet Purple for Priest-Priestess and Roman Purple-Magenta for Bishops and Presiding Bishop. The style of collar is up to the individual and any of the four main types are acceptable providing the Collar Insert is White. Any member of the Clergy may wear a Pectoral Cross, Tau or Ankh, although for those below the Order of Bishop this should be two inches or smaller, discreet and not overly demonstrative. A Black Clerical Shirt should be worn at Funerals by Exorcist, Acolyte, Sub-deacon and Deacon. Priests-Priestesses & Bishops should wear their appropriate coloured shirt. Devotional medals may be worn if wished.

9.3 Cassocks may be worn as part of the dress of the Clergy. The appropriate colours are as follows: For the Minor Orders of Cleric through to Reader, a Black Cassock with a Grey Sash-Fascia about the waist; for Exorcist & Acolyte, a Black Cassock with a Black Sash-Fascia around the waist.

For the Major Orders of Sub-deacon, a Black Cassock Piped and Buttoned in Dark-Bottle Green with a Dark-Bottle Green Sash-Fascia around the waist, Deacon, a Black Cassock Piped and Buttoned in Dark-Royal Blue with a Dark-Royal Blue Sash-Fascia around the waist, Priest-Priestess, a Black Cassock Piped and Buttoned in Violet Purple with a Violet Purple Sash-Fascia around the waist, For the Vicar-General and Bishops a Black Cassock Piped and Buttoned in Roman Purple-Magenta and a Roman Purple-Magenta Sash-Fascia around the waist.

The Presiding Bishop may wear a Choir Cassock of Rose-Purple Piped and Buttoned in Red with a Red Sash-Fascia around the waist.

Clergy of Major Orders may also wear a Black Cape Piped in their appropriate colour over their Cassock. The Roman style of cassock is acceptable.

9.4 A list of and Instructions for, the use of Vestments at the Celebration of Mass, along with details of Liturgical Colours and other relevant information is available from the Vicar General's office.

9.5 Clergy should wear Vestments appropriate to the ceremony, Season and Situation (i.e. Denominational setting, Mass etc.). Due reverence and respect must be shown by all Clergy to Vestments which are used to convey further depth and meaning when serving The Divine.



10. Liability of The Church

10.1 The Presiding Bishop and The Vicar General shall manage the affairs of The Church. Financial or Legal liability incurred in the rightful exercise of their office shall not, however, be their personal liability, but shall be the liability and responsibility of The Church as a whole.

10.2 All Clergy, Members, Visitors or Other Persons who attend any of The Churches Events, do so at their own risk, and neither The Church nor its Clergy, Officers or Members, can or will accept any liability or responsibility for any Damages, Injuries or Losses incurred or sustained at any of The Churches Properties, or other Venues, while at any of The Churches Events or Activities.



11. Seminary

11.1 The Church of St Mary & St John operates its own Seminary and has developed its own course for the Minor and Major Orders.

For the Minor Orders when completed you will receive a Certificate in Esoteric Comparative Theology (CertECTh.) For the Major Orders the training will culminate in a Diploma in Esoteric Comparative Theology (DipECTh.) These will be taken through our own Seminary.

Aspirants ordinarily study by distance learning. Aspirants in other Countries may choose a local University or Seminary; however, they must first seek approval from the Vicar General as to the suitability of the course offered before enrolling.

The Church retains responsibility and control of curricula and the appointment of mentors or spiritual counsellors. Aspirants are responsible for meeting their own costs in respect of seminary or other study. However, it is the Churches desire to ensure that no suitable Aspirant is prevented from study due to financial matters. Should this apply the Vicar General shall attempt to create a suitable study program with the Aspirant, appropriate to their circumstances.

At the moment we do not run a Degree Course, but to progress further than the level of Priest-Priestess a Degree in Comparative Theology or Esotericism will be required.