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Director

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Dear Members

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Chairman’s Report to the Members**

November 2019

I will concentrate on the more important aspects of the Society’s work and bring you up to date with developments since the year end.

**Director**

It has now been two years since Father Paul Martin was appointed Director of the Society, so we cannot call him ‘new’ anymore. Father Paul has been instrumental in modernising the way the Society operates and has facilitated a great deal of change in the time he has been Director, of which I will say more later. We are extremely grateful to Father Paul for all the hard work he has put in.

**Objects of the Society**

As ever, it is useful to remind ourselves of the stated objects of the society, which are: ‘in co-operation with the Catholic bishops, to provide support and assistance to those former clergy and religious of other denominations and their dependants who have come into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church, until such time as they have been integrated into the Catholic community and have re-established themselves’.

**Introduction**

As you know, the St Barnabas Society provides both financial and pastoral support to its beneficiaries until they have re-established themselves. It, and its predecessor, the Converts’ Aid Society, have been quietly doing this excellent work on behalf of the Catholic Church throughout the United Kingdom since 1896, fulfilling the tasks given to it originally by Cardinal Vaughan at the behest of Pope Leo XIII.

We do well to bear in mind the difficulties that non-Catholic clergy and religious can suffer before and after being received into the Church. In any situation, it takes great courage and faith to resign willingly from a secure and loving community and to lose both your home and your income. Especially so if you have a wife and children, potentially risking their wellbeing also. In this strongly secular society and age, those Clergy who take this step must be particularly courageous, and it is our hope that the Society’s help might ease this step, even if only a little.

**Staffing**

We are very grateful for the continued efforts of Chris Reynolds, the Society’s Accounts Manager, for the efficient way in which she administers the Society’s finances. We are also very pleased with the impact that our Operations Officer, Chris McGowan, continues to have, especially in the areas of GDPR, his IT and personnel expertise, and generally modernising the way in which the Society operates. As a consequence of the new academic project – of which I will say more later – the Society is proposing to employ another administrative member of staff with specific responsibility to liaise with Professor Stephen Bullivant.

**The Society’s operations**

The Society continues to look actively for people who are eligible for its help and are in need. The Director is in touch with bishops and parish priests as well as convert clergy who often know of others in need.

During the year on which we are reporting, the Society gave financial help to 38 beneficiaries, a decrease from 51 last year. Although there has been a decrease in the grants to the beneficiaries, the Society is not complacent about future calls on its resources.

The Society continues to receive enquiries about the help it might give, but more importantly it is also consulted sometimes by people who wish to be received into the Church, but are not sure how to set about it. While the Director is very ready to talk to these people, naturally the Society cannot promise help until the person concerned has been received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

The Society's trustees continue to work hard to make its fundraising more cost effective, to reach more parishes, to raise its profile within the Church and to attract a greater level of donations and legacies in future.

**Grants**

The Society has decreased the total grants to beneficiaries during the year to £384K (from £442k in 2018) and decreased the actual number of grants made to 436 (545 in 2018). 2018 was a particularly busy year and the Society is now back to a more ‘normal’ level of grant-making.

**Promotion**

The society is promoted by regular parish appeals, carried out by the Director, by Facebook posts and the biannual newsletter. The Director also seeks opportunities to publish articles in Catholic publications and on-line.

The annual St Barnabas day Mass and reception at Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory at Warwick Street, celebrated by Abbot Dom Cuthbert Brogan, was a great success with over 50 people attending to support the work of the Society. Next year, it is planned that His Eminence Cardinal Anders Arborelius from Sweden will be the principal celebrant.

**Research Project**

The Society has engaged Professor Stephen Bullivant, of St Mary’s University, Twickenham, to carry out a research project to record important conversion stories and acknowledge the invaluable contribution that converts have made to the Church in recent times. A significant number have gone on to be ordained as Catholic priests. No research about converts would be complete without including the story of what was formerly the Converts Aid Society and is now the St Barnabas Society. The plan is for Professor Bullivant’s research to be turned into a book to mark the 125th anniversary of the foundation of the Converts Aid Society in 2021.

**Savile Club Dinner**

Following the Canonisation of St John Henry Newman, the Society organised a celebratory dinner at the Savile Club in Mayfair on Tuesday 21 October 2019. The guest of honour was Mgr Keith Newton, Ordinary of the Ordinariate, the speaker was Father Richard Duffield Cong Orat from York Oratory, who spoke educationally and entertainingly about Newman. The dinner was attended by fifty supporters of the Society and much enjoyed by all. It is hoped, perhaps, to repeat this occasion in future years.

**Office**

The Society is now settled in Littlemore, a place which will always be associated with Saint John Henry Newman. The Chapel was blessed by Bishop Kenny on 23 November 2018 and the altar has been designed by a well-known artist, Marcelo Lavallen. A new Cross and Icon were blessed by Archbishop Bernard Longley on Saturday 27 July 2019. I warmly invite you to visit, if you can, to see the office.

**The Board**

During the year, the Board met six times; five times in London and once at the Society’s headquarters in Oxford. Board members are in touch with the Director as necessary between meetings.

I should like to put on record my gratitude to my fellow Board members for their kind help and support, their professionalism, the experience they bring and their patience with me. They all make a vital contribution to the Society’s mission.

Anne Nash and Paul Lock retired from the Board during the year and I thank them both for their dedicated service over the years. Paul had been a trustee for some eleven years and we are most grateful for his enormous contribution over that time; Anne had been a trustee for only a year but had contributed a lot in that short period.

**Finance**

I draw your attention to the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 May 2019. Page 3 itemises headline results for the year.

The Board consider that the performance of Cazenove Capital Management Ltd, who manage the Society’s investments on a discretionary basis, has met the criteria laid down by the Board.

**Property**

The Society now owns seven properties having sold two properties, at Wolvercote and Worcester, after the year end. The rents charged are below market rates and represent a subsidy to individuals or families. Routine maintenance is carried out as needed. These properties represent considerable assets on the Society’s books but most of them have been held for many years and are needed to house beneficiaries.

**Changes to the Articles**

The Charity’s solicitors have suggested amending the Memorandum & Articles to introduce flexibility in relation to membership and trustee proceedings and bring them up to date with current legislation and best practice. The Memorandum & Articles, which were originally produced in 12 September 1991 and amended in 1992 and 2016, will be replaced in their entirety with the new Articles. Under the Companies Act 2006, all the operative provisions of a company's constitution are deemed to form part of the Articles, so there is no longer any need to differentiate between a Memorandum and Articles, which is why a single set of Articles, without a Memorandum, has been drawn up for the Charity.

The Articles form an agreement between the company members (broadly equivalent to the shareholders in a trading company) and govern the mechanics by which the Charity will operate. They also describe the purposes for which the Charity is created, and the powers that it has to achieve these purposes.

In general terms, the trustees of the Charity will be responsible for the general control and management of the company's administration. The members of the Charity form the ultimate decision-making body of the Charity and have certain rights under statute which cannot be limited or removed by the Charity's constitution.

It is proposed that the Members should be limited to the Trustees. Therefore, all Trustees automatically become Members of the Charity upon being appointed as Trustee and cease to be Members on their retirement. As such, the Trustees and Members of the Charity will be the same persons at any given time, which makes it easier for the Charity to make decisions quickly and effectively.

**Acknowledgements**

I should like to thank the Hierarchies of the United Kingdom for the support and prayers that they continue to offer to the Society, especially Cardinal Vincent Nichols, our President.

**Roland Hayes**

Chair and President’s representative