

Society for the Study of Theology

Promoting excellence in the study of Christian Theology by facilitating and shaping theological thought, conversation and community.

www.theologysociety.org.uk

Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 30 June 2025

Annual Report

1. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Summary of Objectives

‘The Society is established for the advancement of education, specifically to promote excellence in the study of Christian theology, in the UK and internationally. The Society aims to support all those engaged in theology, across the full range of approaches and church traditions; to facilitate and shape theological thought, conversation and community; to identify and discuss important themes, questions and dialogues which call for theological engagement; to explore the nature of, and to foster, theological integrity, responsibility and vocation; and to promote understanding of, and engagement with, theological work across a wide range of contexts including the academy and the churches.’

www.theologysociety.org.uk/about-us/constitution/

Summary of Public Benefit

The Executive Committee keeps the Society’s activities under review to ensure that they continue to reflect its aims. In carrying out this review, it makes reference to the Charity Commission’s general guidance on public benefit and in particular to its supplementary public guidance on the advancement of education for the public benefit. The Society ensures it meets the requirements of the Charity Commission through its Constitution.

Additional Activities

Committee/Administrative Updates

During this reporting year, there were a number of changes to the Committee membership, including one Committee Member and the Treasurer stepping down; the latter resulting in the appointment of an Interim Treasurer in August 2024. Internally, the Committee focused on revising technological systems, including updates to the website with the Society's IT partners, and moving its email and file storage systems to Google Workspace (free access provided for registered charities).

The Society supported the work of the Independent Scholars Network, including allocating funds for a networking event at the 2025 conference and making updates to the website to boost the Network's presence. Discussions to increase resource provision for the Society's independent scholars also took place during the reporting year.

Annual Conference Updates

The annual conference in April 2025 featured new workshops that addressed different aspects of embodied theology in accordance with the conference's theme on 'Flesh and Blood Theologies', including singing, dance, and a documentary screening. Short papers, for the first time, were also encouraged to be delivered in alternative formats, diversifying the range of practices and reflections that the Society and its annual conference facilitates. Christian Aid also attended the conference as part of a new partnership developed with the Society; they delivered a workshop conveying their work with global communities, and agreed financial support and bursaries to support the Society's work.

Gaza Responses - Updates

Following an open letter that was signed by members and non-members of the Society, and that prompted a set of agreed actions at the AGM in April 2024, work was focused on delivering the following: (1) the Society would establish a hardship fund for academics affected or displaced by the crisis in Gaza; and (2) the Society would conduct a review of the ethics and policies of its banking partners. (1) was achieved through an additional bursary fund ahead of the 2025 conference; (2) was conducted and no further changes were deemed necessary as a result.

Related questions were also raised by some of the Society's membership about the suitability of Warwick as a conference venue, which prompted an audit and review of possible venues by the Executive Committee in late 2024/early 2025 in consultation with SST members. The result of this exercise was a proposed venue change to The Hayes Conference Centre for SST's 2026 conference; this was presented at the AGM in April 2025.

In addition to the above activities responding to the crisis in Gaza, the Society organised an online event in September 2024 to reflect on the role and complicity of theology in the war in Gaza and Israel. The event featured discussions chaired by the Society's President and facilitated by a panel comprised of Omar Haramy, Davidi Borabeck, Marah Sarji, Munyurangabo Benda, and Maayan Raveh.

A further open letter was shared among members and non-members of the Society, calling for a boycott of the Society's activities and a cessation of membership unless and until the demands included in the letter were met. In response to this, in March 2025, the Committee published a statement on the website: <https://www.theologysociety.org.uk/about-us/initiatives/statement-on-sst-and-gaza/>

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Members and Subscriptions

The total membership of the Society increased from 419 to 439. Student memberships make up 206 of those memberships. The student rate is the same as the old Ordinary membership rate (£10) thus it is supposed that some of that student membership is likely ordinary members who have still not changed their standing order. The drop in membership numbers last year was considered largely attributable to the increase in membership fees coupled with the many members whose automatic contribution was not updated to reflect the new fees and who opted not to respond to numerous notices to update their fees or discontinue active membership in the society. However, it appears that this was a short-lived drop and membership is increasing again. Legacy contributions from those whose fees no longer cover active membership have been added to the bursary fund.

To extend the financial support that the Society is able to make available to students and other conference participants on lower incomes, all members continue to be warmly encouraged to raise their subscription payment to £10 per £10,000 of income.

Postgraduate Conference

There was no Postgraduate conference this year. The £1000 set aside to support this was ringfenced in the budget for a future year.

Gunton/Webster Prize (sponsored jointly by *The International Journal of Systematic Theology* and *The Society for the Study of Theology*)

The 2025 Prize was on the theme of 'Sacraments', and the winning essay was written by Noah Karger of the University of Notre Dame, with the title: 'Dionysian *Synaxis* as the Link to Love Beyond'. This essay will feature in a forthcoming issue of *IJST*. The Society's contribution to the Prize is the award of a sponsored place at its Annual Conference, which in 2026 is to be held at The Hayes Conference Centre.

The 2026 Prize will be awarded to an essay on the theme of 'Jesus Christ'.

3. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Society for the Study of Theology is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). It is constituted by the Constitution adopted by the Annual General Meeting of the Society on the 9th April 2019. The Constitution can be found on the SST website.

As a CIO, the Society for the Study of Theology is eligible for VAT exemption on some goods and services it provides (e.g. conferences and advertising). Accounts are prepared in accordance with English and Welsh charity law.

Executive Committee members, who act as the Society's trustees, are elected by the AGM in accordance with section 7.6 of the Society's Constitution, available at <https://www.theologysociety.org.uk/about-us/constitution/>

The Committee meets at least twice annually, immediately before and immediately after the annual conference. In recent years, a third meeting in the summer has been added to the meeting schedule for the Committee. By tradition, the AGM is consulted on the conference theme two years in advance.

4. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Correspondence

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 Secretary, Society for the Study of Theology
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 Oxford Road,
 Manchester,
 M13 9PL
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2024-25 Executive Committee and Trustees

Prof Robert Beckford	President	2024 - 2026
Vacant	Vice-President	
Dr Scott Midson	Secretary	2023 - 2025
Sarah Molyneux-Hetherington	Treasurer	2024 - 2025
Mr Alexander Douglas	Assistant Secretary	2023 - 2025
Dr Shavaun Shodeinde	GMH Representative	2023 - 2025
Dr CL Nash	GMH Representative	2023 - 2026
Dr Selina Stone	Elected Member	2023 - 2026
Catherine Nancekievill	Elected Member	2024 - 2027
Rev'd Rachel Noel	Elected Member	2023 - 2024
Ms Florence O'Taylor	Elected Member	2022 - 2025
Dr Karen O'Donnell	Elected Member	2024 - 2027
Catherine Nancekievill	Elected Member	2024 - 2027

5. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Bursary Fund

£2000 was allocated from Society funds for GMH bursaries and £4000 for the wider bursary fund. This was supplemented by £210 in donations from members.

Awards were offered initially to 27 eligible bursary applicants, waiving or reducing their conference costs by £50, £100 or £200. However, a number of those

applicants chose not to take up the offer, so an additional 14 applicants were offered a bursary.

The total amount of bursaries claimed was £5190. There was an underspend of £430 in the GMH bursaries and £580 in the general bursaries in addition to £210 donation which can be added to next year's allocation. This underspend is a result of bursaries being offered but not claimed.

In addition to the main bursary, the Society worked with the Queens Foundation to establish a Queens Bursary fund which funded 16 students to attend the conference.

6. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

A. RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

	30-Jun-24		30-Jun-25	
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
<i>Membership receipts</i>				
Subscriptions and Donations	£10 578.00		£11 062.00	
		£10 578.00		£11 062.00
<i>Mail out receipts</i>				
Use of e-mail lists	£150.00		£750.00	
		£150.00		£750
<i>Conference receipts</i>				
Conference Tickets	£72 981.00		£76 922.00	
Bursary Donations			£210.00	
Adverts in programme			£250.00	
Publisher stands	£0.00		£1 325.00	

Reception sponsorship	£0.00	£1 084.05	
		£72 981.00	£79 791.05
2024 income (drinks reception)		£800	
Bank interest	£91.88	£161.45	
		£91.88	£961.45
Total Receipts		£83 800.88	£92 564.50

Payments

Administrative payments

Website, Billing and IT Support	£4 515.95	£6 140.19	
Committee expenses	£326.66	£765.54	
Honorariums & Clerical	£4 622.20	£4 660.00	
TRS Membership	£250.00	£250.00	
		£9714.81	£11 815.73

Misc payments

Gaza Event		£100.00	
Independent Scholar Summer Day		£486.00	
Bursary Direct Payment		£500.00	
2024 Conference		£932.52	
2026 Conference Deposit		£8 098.00	
Postgraduate Conference	£687.93		
		£687.93	£10 116.52

Conference payments

Conference centre	£59 000.65	£55 826.48	
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Event insurance	£81.00	£159.00
Plenary speaker travel	£988.00	£6 346.64
Conference refunds	£2 444.54	-
	£62514.19	£62 332.12
Total Payments	£72 916.93	£84 264.37
Excess of Receipts over Payments	£10 883.95	£8300.13

The following items have money assigned to them from the general fund.

The table below is illustrative of the relative receipts and payments against these funds, but does not constitute separate accounts.

	year to 30-Jun-24	year to 30-Jun-25
<u>Bursary Fund</u>		
<i>Receipts</i>		
Donations	£2 203.00	£120.00
Contribution from SST Account	£6 197.00	£6 000.00
	£8400.00	£6 120.00
<i>Payments</i>		
Direct Payments		£500.00
Vouchers to be used against ticket sales	£8 400.00	£5 190.00
	£8400.00	£5 690.00
Excess of Payments over Receipts	£0.00	£430.00

Postgraduate Conference

Receipts

Contribution from SST Account	£687.93	£1 000.00	
	£687.93		£1 000.00
Payments			
Postgraduate Conference	£687.93		-
Excess of Payments over Receipts	£0.00		£1 000.00

Independent Scholars

Receipts

Contribution from SST Account		£1 000.00	
			£1 000.00

Payments

Conference Reception		£ 292.96	
Summer Conference		£486.00	
			£778.96
Excess of Payments over Receipts			£221.04

B. STATEMENT OF ASSETS AT THE END OF THE PERIOD

In this year a transfer of £10 000 was made from the general fund to the reserves account

	year to 30-Jun-24	year to 30-Jun-25
General Account End	£36 322.60	£34 491.44
Reserve Account End	£10 310.86	£20 472.31

Total

£46 633.46 £54 963.75

DECLARATION

The Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 under the Charities Act 2011. It was approved by the Executive Committee by e-mail consultation and was signed on its behalf by the President and the Treasurer.

Prof Robert Beckford
President

Dr Declan Kelly
Interim Treasurer

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS

This report is on the financial statements of the Society for the period ended 30th June 2025, which are set out on pages 6 to 9.

The trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this period under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility: to examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act; to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act); and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the trustees have not met the requirements to ensure that: proper accounting records are kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and accounts are prepared which agree with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act; or to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Mr Giles Dobson, MRICS

9th May 2024

Almancil House, Church Road, Carlton, Newmarket, CB8 9JZ