

The Reverend Raymond Hemingray – the Canterbury Cross for Services to the Church of England

For outstanding services to ecclesiastical law and the Church of England Raymond Hemingray has devoted much of his professional life and retirement to the service of the Church, both as a lawyer and as a self-supporting priest. His particular gift and distinctive contribution have been the complete modernisation of the reporting of ecclesiastical judgments. In the words of Professor Norman Doe, “He has, quite simply, revolutionised the practice and study of ecclesiastical law”.

Having recognised the potential for using IT in his everyday work as a diocesan registrar for 40 years until his retirement in 2014, Ray combined self-taught skills with his professional expertise in ecclesiastical law. Initially, in 1989, he designed and produced database software for diocesan registrars. He also created a web site for the Ecclesiastical Law Association. He then progressed to collate, summarise and digitise a massive (and continuing) library of ecclesiastical case law.

Beginning in 2006, he has so far assembled on the Ecclesiastical Law Association web site a digital on-line library of over 1200 judgements of ecclesiastical courts. This on-line library quickly established itself as an invaluable ‘go-to’ resource for the Church’s lawyers at every level: judges, registrars, archdeacons and DAC members, as well as those engaged in academic research. Importantly, this on-line library is available, free of charge, to the public. In addition, for Diocesan Registrars, Ray has compiled a collection of ecclesiastical forms and precedents, which members of the Ecclesiastical Law Association can access from the Association’s web site.

Ray has continued this work during his retirement and issues case summaries of contemporary judgements several times each month. Ray’s software and on-line library have contributed significantly to the accessibility of Church law and the efficiency of legal processes, through his outstanding, single-handed work to transfer ecclesiastical case law from paper to electronic records.