

BISHOPS BEHAVING ECUMENICALLY

COURTESIES AND PRACTICALITIES

**GATEWAY NOTES FOR BISHOPS
AND THOSE WORKING ALONGSIDE US**

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Vocation

Bishops have a unique vocation for promoting unity, and exercising leadership. All who come to be ordained deacon, priest, bishop reply: 'By the help of God I will – in answer to the question: 'Will you work with your fellow-servants in the Gospel for the sake of the Kingdom of God?'

This general call to collaborative ministry includes the specific call to ecumenical relating. At his consecration the Bishop makes a distinctive promise to 'strive for the visible unity of Christ's Church', and is told that through episcopal ministry 'the Church in each place and time is united with the Church in every place and time'.

Bishops are able to be great encouragers of ecumenical partnership – from Churches Together groups to Regional Training Partnerships, from jointly sponsored sector ministry to the shaping of diocesan strategies, not least for the deployment of ministry. And the tone you set will be noticed and passed on by those working alongside you.

One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

These notes relate primarily to your ministry in the diocese. At Ordinations, Institutions and Licensings, you will declare that 'The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church'. The work for unity is all of a piece – local, county, regional, national, international. As we partner God in weaving the robe of his Church's visible unity, we shall seek to be consistent and coherent in what we say and support; we shall also treasure the thread of courtesy within the Body of Christ.

Attitude

Other Church leaders generally value the collegiality of bishops. There is no need to be defensive - but there is every need to be courteous and collaborative. You certainly want to avoid fuelling what some describe as our Anglican sense of 'effortless superiority'!

Attitude is a key ingredient in all our relationships – and attitude is nourished by spirituality. But however positive your attitude and however rich your spirituality, ecumenical working does not come easily.

You may be tempted to draw a line between Unity and Mission, but the two belong together. Separating them as rivals for your attention diminishes both.

These notes - arranged so that individual sheets can be copied to colleagues – have a modest purpose: to provide you with some basic tools and to serve as a gateway to good practice.

When more detail is required, you will need to go to the links indicated. Above all, be ready to seek out advice. There are people around with the knowledge you need and the willingness to help.

The practicalities of ecumenical relating may seem a long way from the great theme of unity. As in so many other areas, God encourages us along the way. At times slow and frustrating, at other times enriching and fun – that's the mix to expect.

Fears and prejudices lurk within all of us and can inhibit working together. A Church Leader represents that Church to colleagues. Over the centuries, we have damaged each other and sometimes that comes to the surface again – or it remains unacknowledged causing even more trouble.

Sometimes personal relationships between Church Leaders can warm denominational coolness – and even change a detail or two. Sometimes personal relationships will have to weather denominational tensions.

What we seek is a maturity of relationship with ecumenical colleagues, so that communication is open and real not tentative and partial. Trust needs time to grow and a key step is to take the learning process seriously.

We expect to learn the tools of our trade in a whole host of areas. We therefore properly give time to learning the language and procedures of ecumenical working. It is difficult enough learning how our own Church operates, so work which zig-zags across a number of Churches, requiring joint attention and decision-making, is bound to be complex, and at times tedious.

Working along lines found useful by others should be helpful. It requires patience. Establishing a pattern of joint- working between people who do not normally work jointly takes time and effort.

The learning required of us is twofold:

- About ecumenical structures and procedures – territory which may seem foreign to all of us
- About how Partner Churches work – you will probably need to build on the knowledge you already have. You will discover that Churches' procedures change - and that sometimes people do not know all the details of how their own Church operates.

The basics about ecumenical structures and procedures relate to:

- Patterns established in 1990, as the result of a wide ranging consultation called 'Not Strangers but Pilgrims' bringing in new partners, especially the Roman Catholic Church, and the Black Majority Churches: with the creation of new bodies such as Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; County Sponsoring Bodies; Local Churches Together groupings.
- Local Ecumenical Partnerships – predating the 1990 re-ordering - with various categories: some for local churches, others for sectors or institutions.

Learning how Partner Churches work requires:

- Discovering the current terminology for other Church Leaders and representatives, and for the structures within which they work.
- Knowing what each colleague can actually deliver in the process of joint decision-making.
- Establishing effective routes for consultation between the different Churches, often designed to work quite differently from our own.

Taking time to discover and absorb the details is a key to a good relationships and proper outcomes. To behave as if there are no technicalities to master is to devalue the work of predecessors and colleagues.

And when you have mastered all this, you will discover that the scene is changing all the time, so be ready to seek advice more than once.

As set out at the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi, 1961:

**We believe that the unity
which is God's will and his gift to his Church
is being made visible
as all in each place, who are baptised into Jesus Christ
and confess him as Lord and Saviour,
are brought by the Holy Spirit
into one fully committed fellowship,
holding the one apostolic faith,
preaching the one Gospel,
breaking the one bread,
joining in common prayer,
and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and
service to all
and which at the same time unites them with the whole
Christian fellowship
in all places and all ages
in such wise that ministries and members are
acknowledged by all
and that all can act and speak together as occasion
requires
for the tasks to which God calls the Church.**

Subsequent Assemblies of the World Council of Churches have developed this statement in a variety of directions. It is important to recognise that the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the World Council, but does belong to its Faith and Order Commission.

Acting Together

The 'Lund Principle' of 1952 continues to be at the heart of ecumenical relating – **that Churches should ask themselves 'whether they should not act together in all matters, except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately.'**

With its challenge to our ways of working, this Principle is posed afresh in the various Covenant relationships, now part of the ecumenical scene.

Responding to the Prayer of Jesus

'.....that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me, and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me'. (John 17 v20-21)

Unity

The following terms appear frequently:

- **Full Visible Unity** – all Churches united in a visible way.
- **Visible Unity** – some Churches united in a visible way.
- **Steps on the Way to Unity** – a gradual process, with each agreed step being distinct, yet related and consistent e.g.

and

Covenant :

Church Leaders/Representatives;

Churches of the County or equivalent;
Local Covenants – non-formal and also
LEPs, Congregations in
Partnership);

as
Covenanted

Anglican-Methodist Covenant

Reconciled Diversity:

With Churches distinct, yet related,

Ministry

The Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry Report of the World Council of Churches (see A Dozen Key Books – Note 9) has encouraged Churches to see ordained ministry as having three complementary expressions:

- As personal – focussing ministry on an individual
- As collegial – clergy as a group, with a corporate life
- As communal – clergy within the whole body of the Church.

This terminology appears in a number of other ecumenical reports and agreements. However, the interaction between the three expressions varies between Churches – a reminder that Churches behave and respond differently. Some are primarily communal; others emphasise the personal; and most would aim to be collegial in their expression of ministry.

These differences explain why Church Leaders vary in their ability to deliver decisions. Recognising the reasons for this can ease frustration, and eventually create secure decision making.

There is often annoyance and bemusement about ecumenical structures - and in no sense should they be exempt from critique.

We need to recognise that our own denominational processes are complex too. We should expect to behave professionally in understanding the ecumenical equivalents.

Ecumenical structures are in place to help us relate across the denominational ones:

- They are part of the cost we all bear for experiencing and securing unity between separated Churches.
- They are channels for communication, consultation and joint decision-making. If they do not deliver this, they need to be improved.
- They express mutual accountability - and we do not always react well to that!
- They are vessels for holding joint projects and visions, which would otherwise fragment as we return to our separate denominational paths.
- They are vulnerable to changes of policy, procedure and personnel among the Churches represented. So participants need to make allowances for this – and promote good communication.
- They are only effective if everybody is willing to collaborate, and if they are properly resourced for the work to be done. Poorly attended groups which are poorly resourced are unlikely to deliver.

Sometimes the emphasis will be on the achieving of tasks; sometimes on the building of relationships. And some tasks can only be addressed when the relationships are secure!

Ecumenical structures deserve the same respect as denominational ones and arguably more patience.

• **By having conversations locally in your early months with :**

- i) Bishop's Staff colleagues, carrying ecumenical responsibilities – What is their brief? - To whom do they relate?
- ii) Denominational Ecumenical Officers (DEOs).
- iii) Any jointly sponsored County Ecumenical Officer (CEO)
- iv) Your opposite numbers in partner Churches – an up-to-date database may be available through your office: maybe through the invitation list assembled for your inaugural service; or through one of the above officers.

Visiting these colleagues at their office or home is a courtesy likely to bring long-term gains – as would an invitation to your own home. Some of you will be relating to more than one area and its meetings – getting that acknowledged helps!

• **By seeking an initial briefing from national officers at:**

- i) The Council for Christian Unity – Archbishops' Council – Church House Westminster, tel 020 7898 1470:
The General Secretary;
The National Adviser (Unity in Mission).

Ask for the most up-to-date set of CCU Resources – here you will find detailed information concisely presented.

- ii) Churches Together in England – 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH, tel 020 7529 8141:
The General Secretary;
The Field Officers: one for the South;
and one for the North and the Midlands

Ensure that one of your colleagues has a copy of its 'Ecumenical Notes' a resource for all partner Churches.

- iii) Churches Together in Britain and Ireland – Bastille Court, 2 Paris Gardens, London SE1 8ND tel 020 7654 7254:
The General Secretary

Is there a Church Leaders' Representatives' Meeting

- Am I required to relate to more than one of these?
- How often are the meetings?
- What dates need to be in the diary?

Who are the Diocesan Ecumenical Officers?

- To whom do they relate in the Bishop's Staff?
- Do they have a job description? And if yes, please provide a copy.

Who is the County Ecumenical Officer – or the equivalent officer funded and jointly supported by the Churches?

- Where will I encounter this officer?

What is the name of the County Sponsoring Body/ Ecumenical Council?

- Am I required to relate to more than one of these?
- How often are the meetings?
- Who are the diocesan representatives/secretary/chair?
- Is there a Constitution? – if yes please provide a copy.
- Who knows about the funding arrangements for ecumenical personnel and structures?

Do the Cathedral Statutes make provision for Ecumenical Canons?

- If yes, who are they and where might I encounter them?

Where will I get an up-to-date list of Local Ecumenical Partnerships, for which the Diocesan Bishop is Church of England sponsor?

- How is this list updated?
- Is there a mechanism for handling appointments and financial arrangements in LEPs?
- Who knows about the financial arrangements for LEPs?
- What arrangements are there for supporting Church of England clergy working in LEPs?

Is there a Church Leaders' / Representatives' Covenant?

- If yes, please provide a copy.
- What is the procedure for signing it?

Is there a Covenant for the Churches of the County or equivalent area?

- If yes, please provide a copy.
- What group is responsible for diocesan engagement with it?
- Is there an arrangement for ecumenical representation at one another's synods or equivalent meetings?

Does the Diocesan Prayer Cycle include ecumenical partners?

- Who handles the detail?

The Anglican-Methodist Covenant 2003: Is there a copy of the National Covenant?**Please provide - (see CCU resources)**

- Is there a related document setting out aspirations / commitments for the county or equivalent area? – If so, please provide.
- Is there an Implementation Group or equivalent? – if so, please provide details of membership etc.

The Anglican-Moravian Fetter Lane Agreement 1995- Is there a copy of the Declaration? Please provide – (see CCU Resources)

- Is there a Moravian presence in the Diocese?
- Is there any pattern of relating?

Are there ecumenical links with Churches world –wide?

- If yes are these with United Churches?
- With the Porvoo Churches of North Europe?
- With the Old Catholics in Europe?
- With the German or French Churches as part of the Meissen or Reuilly Agreements?
- How are ecumenical partners in the Diocese brought into these links?

Who will ask these questions for me? My Secretary/ PA/Chaplain/The Archdeacon(s)/ Ecumenical Officer(s)?

Via Church House Bookshop tel 020 7898 1300, or the Council for Christian Unity (CCU) - tel 020 7898 1470 or Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Publications tel 020 7654 7254

It is better to know your way round a few resource books than to be overwhelmed by many. The following are reliable guides:

Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement – World Council of Churches – 2nd ed. – 2002
(available from WCC website (see below) ISBN 2 – 8254 -1354-2)

- giving access to major ecumenical personalities, documents, and gatherings

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry – World Council of Churches 1982 - Faith and Order Paper No.111

- a widely used reference point for ecumenical understanding

Called to be One – Churches Together in England 1996- reissued 2002

- how Churches in England understand the words ‘visible’ ‘Church’ ‘unity’ - points of convergence and divergence

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Quotes, Words and Dates - Churches Together in England 2005

- a summary guide to the ecumenical story in England and a glossary of words, which can mean different things in different churches.

Ecumenical Relations: Code of Practice – 1989, with 1997 supplement- available from CCU

- the authoritative commentary on the ‘Ecumenical Canons, B43 and B44’

Travelling Together - Churches Together in England 1995, revised 2004

- a handbook on Local Ecumenical Partnerships - Elizabeth Welch and Flora Winfield

CCU Resources - concise notes on ecumenical legislation, good practice and the overall ecumenical scene(from CCU)

Working with Partner Churches in the Diocese – Flora Winfield – 2002

- a comprehensive briefing for Bishops – available from CCU

Growing Together - Working for National Unity Locally– Flora Winfield – SPCK 2002

- including brief portraits of Partner Churches in England – an invaluable guide , updating an earlier book ‘Reflections - how 26 Churches see their life and mission’ – published 1986 as part of the ‘Not Strangers but Pilgrims’ Process.

Ecumenical Notes

- complementary to CCU Resources, and produced by Churches Together in England – includes material for all Partner Churches for the ordering of ecumenical work

A Harmony of Church Finance - 2nd ed. - Roger Mead - Churches Together in England

- A guide to the financial procedures of Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and United Reformed Churches and their interaction in LEPs - with much else on ministry and church life

Church of England Year Book - contains much detail in its ecumenical section

Further books are mentioned in ‘Ways into Partner Churches’ (note 13)

Websites

Council for Christian Unity	:	www.c-of-e.anglican.org/ccu
Churches Together in England	:	www.churches-together.org.uk
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland	:	www.ctbi.org.uk
Anglican Communion	:	www.wcc-coe.org
World Council of Churches	:	www.coc-kek.org

Alongside its relations with a wide range of Churches designated under the Ecumenical Relations Measure, and thereby coming within the scope of our Canons for local co-operation in England (details in CCU Resources), the Church of England is a partner in the following specific ecumenical arrangements:

Fetter Lane Britain	-	with the Moravian Church in Great and Ireland
Anglican-Methodist Covenant	-	with the Methodist Church in England
Meissen Germany	-	with the Evangelical Churches in
Reuilly	-	with French Lutheran and Reformed Churches
Bonn	-	in communion with the Old Catholics in Europe
Porvoo	-	in communion with Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches

The documents containing all these arrangements should be on your bookshelf – they are available from Church House Bookshop, London tel 020 7898 1300.

In relating to Partner Churches via ecumenical structures, the Church of England operates through:

Churches Together in England	(CTE)
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland	(CTBI)
The Conference of European Churches	(CEC)
The World Council of Churches	(WCC)

Any of these relationships may come to your attention either on a day to day basis or from time to time, especially in relation to twinning arrangements and ministerial appointments. Important detail is available in CCU Resources and from the Council for Christian Unity.

In relating to your 'opposite numbers' in Partner Churches, there is nothing more infuriating than misunderstanding the terminology describing their Church eg:

For Methodists, a Circuit is not the same as a District;

The regional expression of the United Reformed Church is a Synod not a Province; nor is it the United Reform Church!

Your Baptist colleague in the Church Leaders / Representatives' Meeting is likely to be known as the Regional Minister.

Establishing a database that gets right the titles of your fellow Church Leaders / Representatives will reduce annoyance and gain friends.

Titles include:

The Bishop of the (named) Roman Catholic Diocese

The Chair of the (named) Methodist District

The Moderator of the (Regional) Synod of the United Reformed Church

The Regional Minister of the (Regional) Baptist Association

The Divisional Commander of the (Regional) Division of the Salvation Army - the Officer's rank may vary

Be vigilant about how partner Churches are described in Orders of Service – 'ecumenical partners' is preferable to 'non-Anglicans';

'Representatives of Partner Churches' is better than 'Representatives of Other Churches';

'Nonconformists' is a term best not imposed on others.

The printing of detailed titles and roles needs to be accurate and checked carefully.

(This note could usefully be copied to your office colleagues and to the Cathedral).

Bishops are likely to be involved in a range of ecumenical meetings - with 'opposite numbers' at county and regional level; at county ecumenical councils; and at more specific meetings e.g. in relation to the Anglican-Methodist Covenant in your area.

Particular care needs to be taken over arrangements. Mistakes can undermine working relationships, so here are some ways of avoiding them.

- Do not let a Secretary/ PA/ Chaplain imply to ecumenical colleagues that you alone have a full diary or a heavy work-load.
- Do help a Secretary/PA/Chaplain understand the ecumenical structures and representatives with whom he/she is dealing.
- Encourage a Secretary/PA/Chaplain to get to know those working in the offices of Partner Church Leaders – much negotiating of dates can be done this way.
- Encourage a Secretary/PA/Chaplain to build up a working relationship with the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer(s) and with the County (or equivalent) Ecumenical Officer, as a resource for technicalities or uncertainties.
- Ensure that there is a regularly up-dated list of Church Leaders/ Representatives for your area, with correct titles for their role.
- Set up an email database for Church Leaders/Representatives for easy, speedy communication – especially for media enquiries.
- At least in the early stages of your appointment, try to have 'equals' handling the detail ie. Church Leader to Church Leader; Secretary to Secretary. It is not good to get this consistently out of balance.
- Make the same distinction between using the Office and Home phone numbers of other Church Leaders as you would wish for yourself – and learn a spouse's Christian name!
- As a general rule, be sure to take your diary to an ecumenical meeting.
- Arrangements for Church Leaders/ Representatives Meetings are often made at the meeting. Only agree a date if you are sure you can manage it. This is a particular discipline for those who normally agree meeting dates through their Office.
- It is better to fix dates for the meeting beyond the next one – otherwise you can find yourself caught in a recurring pattern of absences.
- If you fix a date whilst at a meeting, be sure to tell your Office, so that it goes firmly in the diary.
- Dates for ecumenical meetings should be regarded as having the same priority as other meetings – they should not be treated as dispensable.
- These practical disciplines are central to ecumenical courtesy – mistakes can usually be forgiven; being muddled or casual affects working relationships as well as personal ones.

(This note could usefully be copied to your office colleagues)

Whether you are using a filing cabinet or working electronically, developing a system for ecumenical work requires clear thinking at the outset. The days when there could be one 'catch all' folder marked 'ecumenism' have long since gone!

Ecumenical files are not just required for ecumenical occasions. Particular items and details will need to be accessible for other meetings. Why? – Because ecumenical working involves interaction on a number of fronts; it cannot be kept in one single compartment. Sometimes you can put a file away until the next meeting of that group. Sometimes you will need it a short notice as you discuss an ecumenical situation or strategy in a denominational meeting eg. an appointment to an LEP; ecumenical discussion on a social issue.

Whatever the details of your system, ecumenical files therefore need to be readily available to travel. It is better to have a large number of files with detailed titles, than just a few, through which you search impatiently, or soon ignore completely.

Titles for ecumenical working are best gathered in one distinct section, so that they can be quickly identified and extracted.

From experience, useful titles are likely to include the following:

- Anglican-Methodist Covenant
- Churches Together in England (CTE)
- Church Leaders/Representatives Meetings
- Church Leaders/Representatives Database
- Council for Christian Unity (CCU)
- County Ecumenical Council/Sponsoring body
- County Ecumenical Officer – or equivalent
- Denominational Files eg United Reformed Church, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Salvation Army, Black Majority Churches, New Churches, Quakers
- Diocesan Ecumenical Officers
- Europe
- Group for Local Unity (GLU)
- Local Churches Together Groups
- Local Ecumenical Partnerships – listed alphabetically
- Local Ecumenical Partnerships – Policies and Procedures
- Local Sharing Agreements
- Non-formal Local Covenants
- Projects/ Programmes
- Resource Booklets – particular ecumenical ventures or projects
- World Council of Churches (WCC)

It would be wise to have these files in place from the outset, see them fill up gradually, and amend or expand in the light of experience.

When you collect a file because there is a particular difficulty or an important decision to make, it is a good idea to contact your Diocesan Ecumenical Officer for background or updating.

(This note could usefully be discussed with your office colleagues and therefore copied to them).

The best route is through the Church Leaders /Representatives, your geographical partners.

- Take time to learn about their Christian traditions, as well as sharing yours.
- Seek opportunities to worship within their traditions, as well as sharing in worship on ecumenical occasions.
- Arrange to receive their directories and in return circulate your Diocesan Directory -updating these regularly.
- Read their Reports on matters of common interest Sometimes one Church will produce a report on a particular social issue – this may well be of use to all of us.
- Be alert to what is happening in the councils of Partner Churches, nationally and beyond.
- All of these possibilities can be handled through the Church Leaders' Meeting, so need not be a major burden. It is a case of seizing opportunities.
- Send a brief note to an ecumenical colleague when something significant is happening within that Church – it will be appreciated out of all proportion to the time it takes.

Listed below are some books which will deepen your understanding of Partner Churches.

Methodist

An Anglican–Methodist Covenant – Methodist Publishing House/Church House Publishing 2001.

In the Spirit of the Covenant – Interim Report on the Ang/Meth Covenant - Methodist Publishing House 2005

Baptist

Pushing at the Boundaries of Unity – Anglicans and Baptists in Conversation - Church House Publishing 2005.

United Reformed

Conversations on the Way to Unity – Church of England, Methodist and United Reformed Church – Published by the United Reformed Church 2001

God's Reign and Our Unity – Anglican –Reformed International Commission – SPCK , and the Saint Andrew Press

Roman Catholic

Reports of ARCIC 1 and ARCIC11 (Anglican Roman –Catholic International Commission)

Guidelines for Catholics in LEPS – available from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

New Churches and Black Majority Churches are increasingly significant players – the best access is via local networks

Over-view

See chapter 2 of Flora Winfield's book' Growing Together' - (SPCK2002) – these pen-portraits of Partner Churches are an invaluable guide.

In charting relationships both actual and aspirational, the Churches have drawn on this scale, each point beginning with the letter 'C':

From Conflict

to Competition

to Co-existence

to Co-operation

to Commitment

to Communion

Experience indicates that the movement is backwards as well as forwards.

The 1987 Swanwick Declaration draws on this model with its call for the Churches to move 'from co-operation to commitment'.

You may find this scale useful for evaluating relationships and projects.

Current Principles are those that emerged from the 'Not Strangers but Pilgrims' Inter-Church Process of the 1980's, leading to the Swanwick Declaration of 1987, and the setting up of new ecumenical instruments in 1990, including Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (initially the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland).

The Principles declare a move:

- From Co-operation to Commitment
- From Separate Ecumenical Organisations to Being Churches Together
- From Doing Ecumenical Things to Doing Things Ecumenically
- From a model of Uniformity to one of Legitimate Diversity

With a seeking for

- Resource sharing
- and Priority Setting.

Whilst the Churches have not always lived up to these principles, they continue as a contemporary reference point, part of the Church's common currency.

They are tools by which to evaluate current work and to shape new work.

In the years since the 1987 Swanwick Declaration there has been an increasing commitment to mission. Many hold this alongside the equally strong conviction that unity is essential for both Christian integrity and effective mission.

The Five Marks of Mission, endorsed by the Lambeth Conference 1988 and the Forum of Churches Together in England 1997, provide another resource in the Churches common currency.

- ◆ To proclaim the good news of the kingdom TELL

- ◆ To teach, baptise and nurture new believers TEACH

- ◆ To respond to human need by loving service TEND

- ◆ To seek to transform unjust structures of society TRANSFORM

- ◆ To safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth TREASURE

These 'Five Marks' can be used as a tool for discovering the mission work being done by local churches , affirming what is in place , spotting the gaps, deciding the best ways of moving forward.

In this way 'The Five Marks' can promote a sense of Churches Together engaging in Mission Together.

Ecumenical Meetings operate in a variety of ways:

- For companionship and mutual support;
- For the sharing of information;
- For the developing of shared strategy – on a particular issue or area of work

The movement between these different modes can be sudden and uncertain, so it is just a case of keeping alert.

A Variety of Meanings

- It is important to be clear what ‘working ecumenically’ actually means whenever the phrase is used. There are a number of different models:
 - One church acts as the ‘lead church’ with the agreement of ecumenical partners. The decision to act as a ‘lead church’ is not one made unilaterally!
 - Particular churches act together – with others supportive or distanced in a clearly understood way.
 - Churches arrange for their representatives to work jointly in a particular area or project.
 - Churches appoint representatives to a group led by one church.

In all cases:

- the pattern needs to be agreed,
- the arrangement for appointing representatives clear,
- and the procedure for reporting back secure.

A Variety of Meetings

You will be engaging with a variety of ecumenical meetings - Church Leaders/Representatives, County bodies or the equivalent, LEPs, Regional Development, Regional Training Partnerships, social issues, in a variety of ways:

Do you attend personally? Does a senior colleague represent you, or does somebody else? When you are not directly involved, you will need to put in place some arrangement for reporting back. It may be better to have a reliable representative than to take on too much yourself.

Media Contacts

Sometimes external factors determine how we work together e.g. engaging ecumenically with the media.

This issue is worth discussing at the Church Leaders/Representatives meeting. Having some protocols in place will help, because reporters are likely to go first to bishops for comments – that can be frustrating for your colleagues.

Ready access to one another through an email system, set up for this particular purpose is one possibility. Maybe a joint statement is possible if there is time. Maybe you will have to make a personal statement – but one in which you can mention your colleagues.

When it comes to public occasions and media pictures you may need to be the one to take the initiative in including ecumenical representatives. It is worth paying attention to this – good relationships between Church Leaders send good messages to local churches and to the wider community.

- You will need to be clear about your own role in meetings and in any follow up work
- Sometimes you will be representing the Church of England and the Diocese, working with your own Ecumenical Officers and other appropriate denominational colleagues – making the Church of England’s contribution to the particular joint task.
- On other occasions you will be the ecumenical representative, carrying the joint agenda worked out by the Church Leaders/Representatives or the particular group you are working with. Here you will be the bearer of a joint task and in that capacity you may well be in contact with Ecumenical Officers and representatives of Partner Churches.
- This is best summed up with an image that may make you smile - remember which hat you are wearing – the denominational or the ecumenical.
- It is also worth keeping an eye on where people expressing views are coming from ecumenically:
Is the person speaking as a Church Leader/ Representative?
As an Officer of a particular Church with a particular brief?
As a local Minister?
As a member of a particular congregation or committee?

All of these may properly be described as ecumenical, but their place in the life of the Partner Church will affect their perspective on the matter in hand.

Because:

- They are a tried and tested way of organising practical, long-term partnership.
- Churches have established detailed procedures and permissions for working together in an LEP setting.
- They open up possibilities not otherwise available. For the Church of England, these are offered through Canon B44, with particular provision for the sharing of eucharistic ministry and for Joint Confirmation - both capable of being powerful signs of unity.
- They can be a means of sharing resources – possibly saving money!
- They challenge us to persevere with difficult matters of Faith and Order
- And they are a significant visible expression of the Churches' commitment to unity.

Local Ecumenical Partnerships have their critics. In response, the Churches held a National Consultation in 2002, and subsequently produced a brief follow-up document: *Local Ecumenical Partnerships in Changing Times – Perspectives and Priorities*. This is to be found in 'CCU Resources', and it would be wise to have a copy handy for reference. Among the priorities and tasks to be addressed as priorities are:

- Developing good practice in shared consultation and decision-making.
- Simplifying LEP constitutions and LEP documents generally.
- Developing light, robust, flexible and purposive structures.

In response to those requesting a Vision for Local Ecumenical Living, three themes have been identified:

- The spirituality of sacrifice
- A deeper understanding of team-working
- A theology of diversity in our unity

These themes have emerged as a common thread and are intended to guide our relating and planning – this double-sided sheet is also to be found in 'CCU Resources', and would also be useful to have.

LEPS as expressions of unity need care from the Churches sponsoring them. Sometimes you will be right to be frustrated. However, our real frustration should be about the disunity of God's Church.

LEP procedures exist for a purpose and arise out of experience. They won't be perfect for every situation. Evaluating and modifying these procedures in collaboration with ecumenical colleagues is certainly appropriate. Unilateral, pre-emptive action is not.

There is a new challenge to the LEP model. Instead of encouraging one local church to link with another, the task is increasingly one of getting groups of churches to relate across a wider area. LEP procedures may need to adapt to this new pattern.

Designation as a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) is one well-established way of ordering and overseeing a particular venture. For LEPs, Churches have put in place formal procedures, as a way of delivering stability and consultation. For that reason, the procedures need to be both known and followed.

LEPs have their origin in 'Areas of Ecumenical Experiment', following the Nottingham Faith and Order Conference in 1964. In 1975, the House of Bishops resolved to engage with LEPs within guidelines jointly agreed between the Churches. These guidelines are shaped and revised through the Churches Group for Local Unity (Churches Together in England). The Church of England should not therefore expect to make unilateral decisions about LEPs.

Definition and Category

The Churches have defined an LEP as existing 'where there is a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, and /or mission projects of more than one denomination, and a recognition of that agreement by the Sponsoring Body and the appropriate denominational authorities'. (Group for Local Unity).

In 1994, the number of Categories of LEP was extended from 4 to 6:

- 1 Single Congregation Partnerships
 - 2 Congregations in Covenanted Partnerships
 - 3 Shared Building Partnerships
 - 4 Chaplaincy Partnerships e.g. university, school, prison, hospital
 - 5 Mission Partnerships e.g. industrial mission, overseas twinning.
 - 6 Education Partnerships e.g. ministerial training, joint schools
- (It is no longer appropriate to use the older term 'Local Ecumenical Project')

Terminology

Some LEP terminology varies from one part of the country to another, so you need to be alert and ask questions. But the generally agreed ecumenical language for ordering these partnerships is:

- 1 **Declaration of Intent or Covenant** – a brief statement setting out the broad principles of the partnership
- 2 **Constitution** – a more detailed document, setting out the ground rules for the LEP .It is shaped by national understandings established between the Churches through the Group for Local Unity . The Constitution is therefore a significant document for handling specifics and you should expect it be a secure reference point.
- 3 **Sharing Agreement** - where the direct sharing of property is involved – especially in Category 1 and 3 LEPS. This requires the Registrar's attention, in relation to the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969
- 4 **Sponsoring Body** – a county wide or equivalent body recognized by the Churches as representing them jointly.
- 5 **Review** – a joint visitation of the LEP, handled by the Sponsoring Body, set in place after an agreed number of years. The sharp question for the sponsoring Churches after the Review is whether the LEP should continue and on what basis.
- 6 **(Local) Staffing Consultative Group** - for ecumenical consultation over a ministerial appointment.
Discussions about LEP staffing levels overall are better held prior to a particular vacancy and can be arranged through the Church Leaders/ Representatives' Meeting.

This language is not familiar Anglican language, but because it is ecumenically agreed it serves as a vehicle for clear communication. It is the language of shared oversight. Further detail is available in 'Ecumenical Notes' from Churches Together in England.

LOCAL ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIPS – CHURCH OF ENGLAND PROCEDURE

- You may not hear about the emergence of an LEP until quite a late stage. This risk can be reduced by establishing a pattern of updating through Ecumenical Officers, Archdeacons and the Diocesan Pastoral Committee.

- Your authoritative guideline is the Ecumenical Relations Code of Practice 1989, with its 1997 Supplement, expanded by the Papers in CCU Resources.

- There are secure pathways denominationally and ecumenically - it just takes time to find your way and to feel secure in the territory.

- Conversation with the other Church Leaders/ Representatives usually helps.

- The relevant Canon for Church of England involvement in LEPs is Canon B44 – this sets out:
 - the procedures for establishing an LEP
 - the permissions which the Bishop can give.

- Amidst much detail, there are two particular permissions to consider:
 - a reciprocal arrangement for eucharistic presidency as offered by the participating Churches
 - Joint Confirmation.

- These permissions may be given through an Instrument or you may decide to write a 'Letter of Authorisation' to the LEP clergy and Church(es) with copies to Ecumenical Officers.

- The provisions of Canon B43 apply equally to LEPs, but Canon B44 is the route by which the Church of England processes its participation in an LEP, and provides extra permissions.

The Ecumenical Canons are a response both to the failure of the 1982 Covenant Proposals (involving the Church of England, the Methodist, the United Reformed and Moravian Churches), and also to the creativity of the 1987 Swanwick Declaration with its assertion that Churches in their relating together must move 'from co-operation to commitment'. They are a key tool in taking forward the Church of England's commitment to visible unity.

Much local co-operation goes on without any need for canonical ordering. Canons B43 and B44 deal particularly with the sharing of ministry and worship, including the sacraments. Both Canons authorize developments which are wanted locally; so they are enabling.

It is important to read these two Canons and to be both professional and consistent in applying them. Frequently, the Bishop acts as the authority for Church of England participation.

- Canon B 43 relates to all parishes and cathedrals. Its general approach is: if you are permitted to exercise a role within your own Church, you may carry out that function in the Partner Church. A particular local relationship may be expressed informally with no specific document in place, or it may be expressed as a non-formal local covenant. Such arrangements, often creative and significant, are not LEPs. In both cases, Canon B43 is the guide for the Church of England.
- Canon B44 applies to the participation of the Church of England in LEPs through its parishes and cathedrals and through its involvement in institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons and universities, and in particular ventures such as industrial mission and ministerial training. It makes provision for greater sharing of sacramental ministry, with ministers of partner Churches in the LEP being authorized to celebrate Holy Communion in Church of England churches, and bishops being able to share in Joint Confirmations.

Grappling with the complexity of reconciling the ordained ministries of divided Churches, the Church of England's position is:

- i) Services of Holy Communion led by the minister of the LEP Partner Church, even using a Church of England rite, are not 'services according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England'.
- ii) The permissions given under Canon B44 are for 'shared ministry' not 'interchangeability of ministry'.

For the Church of England, issues of Eucharist and Ministry cannot be separated out – hence the careful language above.

The task of the Bishop is to decide what permissions to give the local Church of England Partner under Canon B44; and whether to give those permissions en bloc at the outset, or offer them step by step when requested.

It would be wise to consult Church of England colleagues, especially within the Diocese, and Partner Church Leaders / Representatives – sometimes in relation to particular situations, and sometimes without the pressure of the immediate.

The CCU Resources are a significant resource.

Joint Confirmations involving the Church of England can only happen:

- i) where the Church of England is participating in an LEP and
- ii) in an LEP where the Bishop has authorized Church of England participation in Joint Confirmations.

The House of Bishops first agreed Church of England participation in Joint Confirmations in 1975 and provision is made for them in Canon B44.

What Happens

In these services representative ministers confirm candidates within the life of the Churches involved in the LEP and through the actions of their confirming ministers. For the Church of England, this will be the Bishop; for other partners in the LEP, it may well be the local minister, or possibly another representative minister.

Because the Bishop is working as one of a team of confirming ministers, it is important not to proceed as if the normal arrangements for a Confirmation are to be put in place. Anybody acting for you needs to be aware of the distinctive procedures.

At the very outset, there needs to be consultation about the date, ensuring the availability of the various confirming ministers. The usual diocesan system for fixing dates needs to recognize this. The host Church should be asked to put you in contact with one another at an early stage.

Arranging the Service

The Order of Service is one approved by the County Sponsoring Body or its equivalent. This may be a Church of England rite, or that of another Church participating in the LEP, or a specially devised rite. The Joint Liturgical Group has produced a resource booklet – 'Confirmation and a Re-affirmation of Baptismal Faith' - 1992.

It should not be assumed that the Bishop preaches or presides at the Eucharist. All these matters are for decision jointly by the confirming ministers.

A Service Arrangement Form is included in 'CCU Resources'.

In these services there is a tension between articulating a sense of belonging to the Church of God and being a member of the local congregation. After the laying on of hands there is a welcome within the life of the member Churches of the LEP (Church of England, Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed etc) followed by a welcome within the life of the particular LEP.

Help with detail and principle is available from 'CCU Resources', from the Ecumenical Relations Code of Practice, from neighbouring bishops and especially through your Church Leaders/ Representatives Meeting.

Preparing yourself

Careful preparation is essential. The way you share ministry with the other confirming ministers will speak volumes for the Church of England's participation in the LEP

Most of the questions you have are ones that will have been asked before. Bishops who have taken extra care with preparation are rarely caught off-guard, and testify to the power of these occasions in witnessing to the One Church of God.

We know from our own experience within the Church of England that patterns for appointing clergy vary from diocese to diocese. Our own appointments process is complicated enough.

Where there needs to be ecumenical consultation it is best to be on the front foot rather than trying to recover lost ground. Be ready for extra factors such as different terminology and timetables, in addition to the more familiar complexities of a candidate's suitability and availability.

Generally

The formal procedures for appointing clergy to Church of England benefices, including meetings and the preparation of a benefice profile, provide an opportunity for consulting ecumenically over all appointments. You can encourage people to do this.

The Anglican/Methodist Covenant adds a further need for such consultation. In addition to local input, you can set up procedures for consultation with the appropriate Chairs of Methodist Districts eg, copying Staff Meeting Papers on Appointments to them.

LEP Appointments

The appointment of clergy to LEP situations requires an extra element of consultation, often through the specially set up local Staffing Consultative Committee, but sometimes through a different channel. The Ecumenical Officer can point the way on this.

Once the appointment has been made its LEP nature should be made clear in the Diocesan Announcement, with copies going to extra people such as Ecumenical Officers, Partner Church Leaders/ Representatives (with the request that they circulate it through their own channels), and the Secretary of the County Sponsoring Body. The LEP might also be encouraged to announce the appointment to all in its ecumenical network. A useful catch-all phrase in the copy for the various ecumenical partners is 'for copying on as appropriate'. That gets you and your office off the hook!

The Service

In LEP situations especially Single Congregation LEPs, but also Category 2 where there is a covenanted partnership between local churches, the Institution or Licensing Service needs special attention. It is important to stop the usual administrative process proceeding as if there was no LEP dimension.

The Order of Service can properly include material from the worship provision of participating Churches, and participation by their representatives.

Where the LEP involves only part of a parish, or one parish in a united benefice or equivalent, the service should give some expression to the LEP commitment.

This delicate work may need your personal attention or that of a sensitive colleague.

Advice is available from the Group for Local Unity Churches Together in England. (tel 020 7529 8141).

- **Canon B15 A (1972)**

Provision for Intercommunion

- **Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment**

Whereby a denominational church locally acknowledges the presence and contribution of members of other Churches within its life. This is a particular resource for rural churches.

- **Church Representation Rules (Rule 54)
Churchwardens Measure**

Whereby a member in good standing of a Partner Church may take part in Church Government and, particularly through being on the Church Electoral Roll, may stand for office.

Details are set out clearly in 'CCU Resources'.

Here are steps on the way to unity. This seeking for visible unity is particularly true of the intercommunion made possible by Canon 15A, the Church of England's response to the failure of the Anglican Methodist Conversations in 1969 and 1972.

A copy of the Declaration and details of the relationship between the two Churches are to be found in CCU Resources.

Arrangements for the sharing of worship are regulated by Canon B43 and there is encouragement to bring Anglican and Moravian Churches into an LEP relationship drawing on the provisions of Canon B44.

Much depends on whether there is a Moravian presence in the Diocese.

The Covenant with its Affirmations and Commitments is reproduced in 'CCU Resources'. Behind it lies a Common Statement - for access to this see the Methodist section of 'Ways into Partner Churches' (Note 13).

Provisions relating to the sharing of worship, including presidency at the Eucharist, are set out in 'Applying Canon B43 in the context of the Anglican/Methodist Covenant' – reproduced in 'CCU Resources'. Permission can be given for a Church of England priest to preside at Holy Communion in a Methodist Church, and for a service of Holy Communion to be presided over by a Methodist Minister in a Church of England church.

Anglican and Methodist churches can enter into an LEP and thereby in addition draw on the provisions of Canon B44 with a more explicit sharing of Eucharistic presidency, baptism and confirmation.

The Covenant currently makes provision for 'shared ministry', not 'interchangeability'.

Difficulties remain over the requirement for episcopal Confirmation, especially for those entering Reader or Ordained Ministry.

There is a website giving information about practical developments: www.anglican-methodist.org.uk.

Some Dioceses and Districts have drawn up documents setting out in more detail how the covenant is to be lived out in their area.

Various joint meetings have been set up – involving District and Diocesan Synods; Staff members; Bishop's Council and District Policy Committee; Circuit Superintendents and Area/ Rural Deans - maybe for the whole Diocese/District/County or in smaller groupings. Sometimes these meetings have been one-offs or repeated.

Getting expectations clear in advance is important especially if the meeting is to be repeated. Is the intention to 'develop relationships' or 'address tasks'? Answering that question will help shape the agenda and style of the occasion

The Anglican/Methodist Covenant takes its place amongst our other ecumenical relationships, especially with the United Reformed Church. Organizationally and spiritually, we can work with a variety of partners at the same time without diminishing any. This requires great sensitivity.

In the gradual shaping of the notes, I have valuable conversations with episcopal and ecumenical friends. Such relationships from across the years and across the country are very precious to me.

There will inevitably be ups and downs as you relate ecumenically. There will always be the temptation to go it alone – and you may be on the receiving end of somebody's decision to do just that!

Mature relationships ensure that disappointments do not become resentments. Good humour soothes. And the kind of efficiency which is both humane and consistent benefits everybody. Ecumenical working is a sure test of our ability to work collaboratively.

Learning the language – honouring the processes - mastering the practicalities – all this benefits the work. Yet at its heart there must be a Christian spirituality which sees Church Leader colleagues and Partner Churches not as extra items on a crowded agenda, but as companions in God's mission to the world, strangers no longer, but pilgrims together.

Spirituality shapes attitude, and attitude is all important.

Lord God we thank you
For calling us into the company
Of those who trust in Christ
And seek to obey his will.
May your Spirit guide and strengthen us
In mission and service to your world;
For we are strangers no longer
But pilgrims together on the way to your Kingdom.

Amen

(The widely used 'Pilgrim Prayer' originating from the 'Not Strangers but Pilgrims' Inter-Church Process in the 1980's)

