



CCU Resources 2007

Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPS) IN CHANGING TIMES PERSPECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

1 Reviewing the LEP scene

Representatives of the churches involved in LEPs have met together at Consultations called by the Churches' Group for Local Unity (GLU) in 1994 and 2002. This paper seeks to provide a summary of current issues in response to criticism of LEPs and to promote the vision of LEPs among the wider Christian community.

2 Definition and Categories

A Local Ecumenical Partnership is defined as existing 'where there is a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, buildings and /or mission projects of more than one denomination: and a recognition of that agreement by the Sponsoring Body, and authorisation by the appropriate denominational authorities'.

Following the 1994 Consultation six categories were agreed:

1. Single Congregation Partnerships
2. Congregations in Covenanted Partnership
3. Shared Building Partnerships
4. Chaplaincy Partnerships
5. Mission Partnerships
6. Education Partnerships

There are now around 850 LEPs

3 Eight Issues for LEPs - for consideration by the Churches

The 2002 Consultation worked at the following issues which have been recognized as of continuing importance:

- 1) Ministry - its deployment and availability.
- 2) LEPs growing out of themselves – matters of identity, expansion, change.
- 3) "Imagine..." what would LEPs look like if unity had arrived?
- 4) Team Work – how widely is this possible?
- 5) Worship and Spirituality in LEPs - valuing each other's traditions; working at the 'edges'.
- 6) "We're all Christians here!" ... matters of oversight and review, and of relating to parent denominations.
- 7) The impact of today's culture on the Churches.
- 8) Ecclesiology – or 'When is a Church a Church?'

4 Making the Record of the 2002 Consultation

1 Summary of the Discussions of the Issue Groups (available from CTE) - this document records the details from each of the eight above Issue Groups with the headings of: A. Key Points, B. Consensus, C. Priorities for Future Work – an important source of information central to the follow-up work done by GLU.

2 LEPs in Changing Times (produced by CTE) - this Report includes the Keynote Address, the Biblical Reflections and the Report of the Issue Groups.

3 Where Unity and Mission Meet (published in Pilgrim Post) - an article by the General Secretary of CTE summarizing the Consultation.

4 A Letter to the Churches (attached as Appendix A) – highlighting key issues of the Consultation

5 The Churches' Responses to the Consultation

There have been two written responses – from the Church of England - which offered comments on the Eight Issues (*available from the Council for Christian Unity*) - and from the Roman Catholic Church which has produced Guidelines for Catholics in LEPs (*available from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales*) - both are useful resources to all Churches in their engagement with LEPs.

6 Themes and Questions identified by the GLU from the Issue Groups - for consideration by the Churches

- 1) To remember the value of prayer and fasting – the sacrificial nature of God's calling.
- 2) To create a statement of values for ecumenical team working.
- 3) To explore issues around a strong or light relationship between the LEP and its denominational sponsors.
- 4) If we take seriously putting God at the centre of our decision-making might we find our way through the issues?
- 5) Does working in an ecumenical team strengthen one's own denominational identity, or create a new identity?
- 6) What lessons can be learnt from the flexible working of chaplaincy/mission/education LEPs?
- 7) Does our valuing of diversity include expressions of being Christian which are not recognisably denominational?



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7 Five Priorities for GLU following its study of the Consultation documents

- 1) Exploring the meaning of Covenant and developing some bench-marks for local partnerships.
- 2) Developing good practice in shared consultation and decision making.
- 3) Simplifying LEP constitutions and LEP documents generally.
- 4) Acknowledging the diversity of spirituality and traditions among the denominational partners in an LEP.
- 5) Promoting a vision for local ecumenical living, and LEPs in particular.

8 Tasks for GLU from the Consultation's Issue Groups

- 1) Articulate afresh the vision of 'pilgrims together' to win the ownership and commitment of a new generation of church leaders.
- 2) Develop light, robust, flexible and purposive structures.
- 3) Resource the ministers who work in 'sole charge LEPs'.
- 4) Develop a clearer profile for intermediate ecumenical bodies.
- 5) Make more use of the Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment especially in rural areas.

9 Towards a Vision of Local Ecumenical Living

(a resource paper circulated with Pilgrim Post and attached as Appendix B).

Three themes are identified:

- the spirituality of sacrifice;
 - a deeper understanding of team-working;
 - a theology of diversity in our unity.
- The paper's purpose is:
- to trigger discussion and prayer
 - to be a resource for reviewing co-operation,
 - to promote a shared framework for the variety of ecumenical work .

INVITATION

The Churches' Group for Local Unity, representing those involved in local ecumenical development, invites member Churches to engage with the issues arising from the 2002 Consultation as set out in this summary.

Responses are welcome and should be sent to: The Secretary, The Group for Local Unity: CTE, 27 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HH.

The Group will continue to serve the Churches by working with this same agenda.

10th November 2005