

The Canon specifically permits incumbents to invite other churches (from the list of those ‘designated’ by the Archbishops)\* to use Church of England churches for services in their own tradition, either on special occasions or more regularly.

The invitation needs the approval of the PCC and the bishop - and the bishop will indicate any special conditions for the arrangement. It would be rare for a bishop to refuse to approve such an invitation.

If a regular arrangement seems likely to become permanent, a Sharing Agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act may be appropriate.

Typically this clause in the Canon - B43.9 - covers situations where a neighbouring congregation from another tradition ‘borrows’ the parish church for their own services during a time when their own building is under repair - but it can include arrangements such as when the parish church is made available as a Roman Catholic mass centre.

The same clause in the Canon also covers the holding of *joint* services with partner churches in the parish church.

Normally it is better for services of Holy Communion to be of one denomination rather than ‘joint’ - as defined by the denomination of the person presiding. This rules out any form of ‘concelebration’ where the identity of a ‘lead’ celebrant is not clear.

\* For the list of designated Churches, visit the CCU section of the Church of England web site (see address below)

## THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Council for Christian Unity

2006

# *Courtesies!*

## Guidelines for clergy and parish congregations when relating to Christians of other traditions

1. Welcoming individual Christians
2. **Hospitality to other congregations**
3. Inviting ministers to share in worship
4. Responding to invitations from elsewhere
5. Methodists and Moravians - special friends

From the Preface to the Declaration of Assent made by every priest - Canon C15:

*“The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church ...”*

From Canon A8 Of Schisms:

*“... it is the duty of clergy and people to do their utmost not only to avoid occasions of strife but also to seek in penitence and brotherly charity to heal such divisions.”*

## 2. Hospitality to other congregations

### *Guest congregations*

Across many of our towns and cities, guest congregations are welcomed to hold their own acts of worship in parish churches Sunday by Sunday.

These congregations are often from far-flung parts of the world and their worship often expresses a culture far removed from our own.

Little standardised guidance is available to regulate this level of hospitality beyond the fact that it can only happen at the discretion first of the incumbent and PCC and ultimately of the bishop.

To avoid embarrassment, it is strongly recommended that some kind of letter of understanding is exchanged between the parish church and the guest congregation to cover such mundane matters as times of access, clearing and tidying, secure storage of property - and such things as noise levels!

In some cases a tenancy agreement is appropriate.

### *Sharing Agreements*

The most formal arrangement by which two congregations from different traditions can share the same building is a Sharing Agreement set up under the terms of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969.

A Sharing Agreement provides a legal contract between two or more partner denominations to enable them to have joint use of the building and to apportion that usage and the various costs of maintenance etc. It assumes for the purposes of the Agreement that the partner denominations will be worshipping separately at different times.

The Sharing Agreement also sets up a Joint Church Council with representatives from the authorities of the partner denominations and from the congregation(s) using the building.

A Sharing Agreement on the building almost always provides the necessary legal foundation when the constitutional arrangements are put in place for a single-congregation multi-denominational 'Local Ecumenical Partnership'.

### *Hospitality and joint services*

One of the two 'Ecumenical Canons' - B43 - which was approved at the time of the Ecumenical Relations Measure in 1989, sets out another level of hospitality, including scope for joint services, in any parish without creating a formal 'Local Ecumenical Partnership'.