

A Guide to worship with other denominations

1 Introduction

1.1 The Church of England recognises the importance of worshipping with other denominations, especially with the Methodist Church following the Anglican Methodist Covenant.

Worship with Christians of other traditions is usually a very enriching and uplifting experience and is a powerful witness to our unity in Christ. Worship together enhances our mission which is at the heart of the ecumenical vision.

1.2 The Diocese actively encourages ecumenical mission and worship.

Parishes and clergy sometimes ask what kind of permission is required for acts of worship involving our ecumenical partners.

These guidelines explain what is and is not permissible in this Diocese.

The legal framework is laid out in canons B43 and 44 and amending canon 28.

These canons can be downloaded at

www.cofe.anglican.org/about/churchlaw/legis/canons/complete.pdf

The Council for Christian Unity has excellent booklets on best practice on their website at the following address:

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/england/resources/>

1.3 The Church of England is part of the Anglican Communion which includes the Church of Pakistan. It is in full Communion with a number of churches such as the churches in the Porvoo agreement. Where there is full communion, the same rules regarding permission to conduct worship apply, as for clergy from other overseas Dioceses.

For a list of churches with whom the Church of England is in full communion see

<http://www.anglicansonline.org/communion/index.html>

2 Who?

2.1 Canon B 43: of relations with other churches, applies to every Church of England congregation and place of worship including Cathedrals.

3 Why?

3.1 To allow churches of different Christian traditions to share with one another the particular treasures of their traditions as they worship together.

3.2 To help churches of different Christian traditions to draw closer to one another and to grow in fellowship together.

3.3 To help local churches to work together more effectively in mission and service.

4 What?

4.1 Canon B43 allows churches of the Church of England to invite ministers or lay people of other churches, who are baptised and in good standing with those churches, to participate in the worship of the Church of England through:

- a. saying or singing Morning or Evening Prayer or the Litany;
- b. reading the Holy Scriptures at any service;

- c. preaching at any service;
- d. leading the Intercessions at the Holy Communion and leading prayers at other services;
- e. assisting at Baptism or the Solemnisation of Matrimony or conducting a Funeral Service.
- f. assisting in the distribution of the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people at the Holy Communion; if the minister or lay person is authorised to perform a similar duty in their own church.

4.2 Canon B43 also allows incumbents, with the approval of the PCC and the Bishop, to invite members of the designated churches to use Church of England churches for worship, according to their own forms of service and practice, on particular occasions. If a regular arrangement is envisaged, then it might be appropriate to draw up an agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act. For further information regarding sharing buildings, please contact the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer.

So for example, a church with a small building may wish to use a Church of England church for a large wedding or funeral or special service.

4.3 Canon B43 also allows Church of England clergy, lay workers or readers to accept invitations from partner churches to share in their worship, undertaking the kinds of role which they perform in Church of England churches

5 How?

5.1 In inviting ecumenical partners to participate in Church of England worship or in accepting invitations from other churches, it is important to obtain the necessary permission – these vary, according to the nature of the invitation.

5.2 Inviting ministers from other denominations to take part in or lead worship in Church of England churches.

In all cases, those participating in worship should only be asked to do what they are authorised to do in their own churches; they also need to be baptised (if not, e.g. they are Quakers or Salvation Army, the Bishop needs to give approval through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer), be from a “designated church” (see below) and be invited by the incumbent.

- i) **On an occasional basis** (i.e. no more than three times per year)
 - They can then read scripture or lead intercessions.
 - For preaching or leading morning or evening worship, they additionally require approval from the PCC.
 - For assisting with baptisms or weddings (they can't solemnise weddings for legal reasons) or conducting funerals, they also need a request from the family (but not approval from the PCC)
 - For assisting at Holy Communion, they also need PCC approval AND, through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer, the Diocesan Bishop's approval.
- ii) need PCC approval AND, through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer, the Diocesan Bishop's approval.

iii) Holy Communion and Baptism.

A Church of England Holy Communion or Baptism service is by definition one presided over by an ordained Church of England priest.

However, it is possible, with the Bishop's consent, to invite ministers from designated churches to preside at Holy Communion. It needs to be made clear to the congregation before the service starts that this is not a Church of England Communion even if the rite used is Common Worship. It is acceptable either to use Church of England or their own rites, providing the minister's own denomination allows this.

Either way, they need the agreement of the PCC, AND, through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer, that of the Diocesan Bishop.

These services may be the main service of the day.

Following Amending Canon 28, this may be the **only** service in the Parish on a Sunday provided it is not at Christmas Easter or Pentecost.

A similar principle applies to Baptism services.

For more information see

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/england/resources/courtesies3.doc>

5.3 Church of England priests or Readers participating in leading worship in other denominations' churches

The rule of thumb is that what you can do in a Church of England church you can do elsewhere.

i) Services of the Word, Marriages, funerals and assisting at Holy Communion.

Church of England clergy and others can participate in such services, if invited, provided that the worship complies with Church of England doctrine. They may only perform such duties as they are permitted to perform in the Church of England. So, for example, priests are not permitted to confirm in another denomination's church. At weddings, clergy should not act as Registrars of the marriage.

Before accepting any invitation they will need:

- The approval of the incumbent of the parish where the service is to take place
- The approval of both the Bishop, through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer, and the PCC in that parish if the invitation is to take part in worship on a regular basis (i.e. more than three times a year)

ii) Services of Baptism and Holy Communion

If invited to lead such worship, the priest should consult the Bishop, through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer; the Bishop needs to be satisfied that "special circumstances" warrant it.

In the case of Methodist and Moravians, the Covenant and agreement are taken as fulfilling these special circumstances. The rites of the partner church may be used; the rule is they *"are not contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter"*. (Canon B43.4)

For more information on taking services in other churches see

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/england/resources/courtesies4.doc>

For specific information on worship with Moravians and Methodists see <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/england/resources/courtesies5.doc>

6 With whom?

6.1 The advice above has related to “designated churches”. Who are they? Canon B43 includes relations with those other Christian churches designated under the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure:

- The Baptist Union
- The Methodist Church
- The Moravian Church
- The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales
- The United Reformed Church
- The Congregational Federation
- The International Ministerial Council of Great Britain (formerly the Shiloh United Church of Christ)
- The Lutheran Council of Great Britain
- The Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain
- The Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches
- The Free Church of England
- The Southam Road Evangelical Church, Banbury
- Member Churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany
- Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland
- The New Testament Church of God
- The Russian Patriarchal Church of Great Britain being the Orthodox Diocese of Sourozh operating within the provinces of Canterbury and York
- The Independent Methodist Churches
- The Church of the Augsburg Confession of Alsace and Lorraine
- The Evangelical–Lutheran Church of France
- The Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine
- The Reformed Church of France

6.2 What about other churches?

If the person comes from a church is in full communion with the Church of England e.g. a Porvoo church or from the Church of Pakistan, then it is a courtesy to notify the Diocesan Bishop.

6.3 When inviting a person from a church or being invited to a church which is not designated, the Diocesan Bishop must be consulted through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer. Normally permission is granted to people from churches who are members of CTBI or are churches designated under the Sharing of Buildings Act.

In other cases the Bishop will need to be sure that they are from Trinitarian churches and as well as checking individual credentials, the Bishop might wish to consider when exercising his discretion (but not so as to limit it) whether or not the Church concerned

- is actively associated with the local Churches Together group
- is a member of the Evangelical Alliance
- is a recognised Church based mainly overseas

Advice on other denominations can also be received from the Bishop’s adviser on New Religious movements

Further information on this can be found at

http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/A-1-2_Our_Partners_2007.pdf

7 Hospitality

7.1 Where a Church of England Church wishes to offer hospitality to another church on a regular basis, the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer should be consulted in the first instance. If it is for a limited period (while a partner church has their building repaired, for example) or for a one off occasion, this is allowed under Canon B 43.9. If it is a more permanent arrangement, please refer to the Diocesan guidelines for the sharing of buildings. In cases, where you are unsure of the good standing of the denomination, please consult the Bishop's adviser on New Religious movements. It is in all cases important to be clear about the terms and conditions of any agreement to share the building. Sample booking forms are available from the Archdeacons. Final authorisation must be given by both the PCC and the Diocesan Bishop (through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer) who may indicate special conditions.

For further information see

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/england/resources/courtesies2.doc>

8 Local ecumenical partnerships

8.1 Canon B43 is intended to help congregations to grow in fellowship. If local churches worship together regularly, and develop a common life in witness and service, then it might be appropriate to think about establishing an LEP. In Local Ecumenical Partnerships, the addition of provisions of Canon B44 applies.

8.2 In practice the same principles apply, except that the agreements are formalised and the frequency of mandatory Church of England Holy Communion is much less.

Amending Canon 28 now indicates that, providing a Church of England Holy Communion service is accessible in a nearby parish, it is only mandatory for one to be celebrated on festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun or Pentecost.

More information can be found from

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/england/leps/>

9 Diocesan Policy

9.1 In all cases under Canon B43 where the Bishop's permission may be required, application should be made through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer.

9.2 In the case of **occasional** joint services the Bishop's approval should be taken as read, if the provisos above are fully met.

9.3 In the case of **frequent and regular** joint worship, the Bishop, through the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer must be consulted. Frequent and regular is taken to mean more than three times per year.

10 Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment

10.1 Where the Anglican Church is the only Church in a Village or in a self contained part of an Urban area it is recommended that the church uses the formal Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment to indicate the church's desire to welcome members of all Christian denominations. Details from the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer

For further information see

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu/england/resources/courtesies1.doc>

11 Further information and contacts

Further information can be obtained from the Diocesan Ecumenical officer, the Venerable Mark Ashcroft on 01614481976 or by email at

ArchdeaconManchester@manchester.anglican.org