

Where the neighbouring churches are not within the boundaries of the Church of England parish, consent will also be needed from the incumbent of the relevant neighbouring parish.

In these special circumstances, where active local relationships are developing between the Church of England parish church and its neighbouring Methodist or Moravian church(es), the Council for Christian Unity encourages bishops to allow clergy from the parish (on request) to lead worship including services of Holy Communion. The only condition would be that *“the rite and elements used should not be contrary to, nor indicative of any departure, from the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter”*. (Canon B43.4)

Parishes are strongly encouraged to make the most of the potential of these arrangements and build the closest possible working relationships with their Methodist and Moravian neighbours.

At the same time, nothing must be done which would diminish Church of England participation in wider inter-Church activity, e.g. through local ‘Churches Together’.

For further advice, contact your Diocesan Ecumenical Officer



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Council for Christian Unity

2006

Courtesies!

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

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 - two special relationships**

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.”

5. Methodists and Moravians - two special relationships

‘Special Circumstances’

The Church of England maintains special relationships with the Methodist Church of Great Britain through the Anglican-Methodist Covenant (2003) and with the British and Irish Province of the Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum) through the Fetter Lane Agreement (1995)

In this context ‘a climate of presumption’ is created. It is hoped that relationships between local churches will develop and that shared ministry, regular exchanges and a common mission agenda will become increasingly the norm.

As these relationships grow, there is no automatic expectation either that the two (or more) congregations will merge or that they will constitute themselves as a formal ‘Local Ecumenical Partnership’. These options are available but the local churches will be the ones to judge whether they are relevant.

Maintaining the courtesies - invitations

It will be appropriate for the normal inter-church courtesies to be followed in relation to Methodists and Moravians as with all other designated Churches. (See *Courtesies No. 3 ‘Inviting Ministers’*) Invitations should come from the incumbent, and the PCC should give its prior consent as necessary.

The Council for Christian Unity has, however, recently encouraged bishops to consider offering a more general consent to parishes who wish to invite neighbouring (and named) ministers from these two Churches to become involved in their life and worship *on a routine basis*.

Many diocesan bishops have now issued ‘Ad Clerum’ letters along these lines, usually with the request that they should be kept informed about how the arrangement is working. Often the bishop will give his consent for a set period of years or while the present named minister is in post.

Maintaining the courtesies - involvement in the other church’s life

In a similar way, bishops have been encouraged to support the involvement of Church of England clergy and ministers in the life of their neighbouring Methodist and/or Moravian churches as part of these special relationships.

Again the normal inter-church courtesies should be followed as with all designated Churches. (See *Courtesies No 4 ‘Responding to Invitations’*) Church of England clergy and ministers should only agree to perform in the other church those functions which they are authorised to perform in the parish church.