



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Council for Christian Unity

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Yes, they may

This mini-guide summarises the legal basis for how members of other churches may participate in the life of Church of England parishes

A Admission to Communion

Canon B15A; Admission to Holy Communion (1972) enables members of other churches (as defined below) to receive communion in the Church of England.

1. There shall be admitted to the Holy Communion...
 - a) baptized persons who are communicant members of other Churches which subscribe to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and who are in good standing in their own Church;
 - b) any other baptized persons authorised to be admitted under regulation of the General Synod; and
 - c) any baptized person in immediate danger of death.
2. If any person by virtue of sub-paragraph (b) above regularly receive the Holy Communion over a long period which appears likely to continue indefinitely, the minister shall set before him the normal requirements of the Church of England for communicant status in that Church.
3. Where any minister is in doubt as to the application of this Canon, he shall refer the matter to the Bishop of the diocese or other Ordinary and follow his guidance thereon.

B Taking part in church government

1. The Church Electoral Roll

Rule 1 (2) (c) of the Church Representation Rules (1995) enables a person to remain a member of another church and also to be on the Church of England's Electoral Roll

- (2) A lay person shall be entitled to have his name entered on the roll of a parish if he is baptised, of sixteen years or upwards, has signed

an application form for enrolment set out in Appendix I of these rules and declares himself... to be a member in good standing of a Church which subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (not being a Church in communion with the Church of England) and also prepared to declare himself to be a member of the Church of England having

habitually attended public worship in the parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment.

'public worship' means public worship according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. Rule 54(1)(c).

2. Election to PCC or Deanery Synod

Members of another church may be elected, since Rule 10 states the qualifications for a person to be elected are

- (a) his name is entered on the roll of the parish;
- (b) he is an actual communicant as defined in rule 54(1) [quoted above]; and
- (c) in the case of election to the parochial church council, he is of sixteen years or upwards, and in the case of his election to the deanery synod, he is of eighteen years or upwards.

3. Deanery Synod members as electors

Rule 31.1 states that

The elections of members of the diocesan synods by the houses of clergy and laity of the deanery synods in the diocese shall take place every three years

Rule 35.1 (a) (3) states that in elections to General Synod

For the purposes of this Part of these rules, the diocesan electors of a diocese other than the diocese in Europe shall be the members of the houses of laity of all the deanery synods in the diocese other than:

- (a) persons co-opted to the deanery synod under rule 24(7).

Rule 54

is the basis for a member of another church being described as an "actual communicant" of the Church of England.

54. (1) In these rules 'actual communicant' means a person who has received Communion according to the use of the Church of England or of a Church in communion with the Church of England at least three times during the twelve months preceding the date of his election or appointment being a person whose name is on the roll of a parish and is either

- (a) confirmed or ready and desirous of being confirmed; or
- (b) receiving the Holy Communion in accordance with the provisions of Canon B 15A paragraph 1(b)

4. Election to Diocesan Synod

Members of another church may be elected, provided all other qualifications are met, since Rule 31.2 includes the qualification

any lay person who is an actual communicant as defined in rule 54(1) of eighteen years or upwards and whose name is entered on the roll of any parish in the deanery

5. Election to General Synod

Members of another church may be elected, provided all other qualifications are met, since Rule 37.1 includes among the qualification that

- (a) he is an actual communicant as defined in rule 54(1);

6. Appointment as Churchwarden

The Churchwardens (Appointment and Resignation) Measure 1964 states the qualifications for being chosen as churchwarden.

1. Number and qualifications of churchwardens

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Measure there shall be two churchwardens of every parish.

(2) The churchwardens of every parish shall be chosen from persons who are resident in the parish or whose names are on the church electoral roll of the parish.

(3) Such persons shall be actual communicant members of the Church of England except where the Bishop shall otherwise permit and of twenty-one years of age and upwards.

(4) No person shall be chosen as a churchwarden unless he has signified his consent to serve.

Members of another church are therefore eligible to be appointed churchwarden, subject to all other qualifications being met, provided they are 'actual communicants' as defined in Rule 54 (1) of the Church Representation Rules.

Note about definitions of 'other churches'

Canon B15a and the Church Representation Rules define 'other churches' in different ways.

Both are general in their definitions and are not restricted to the lists of denominations that apply in the case of Canons B43 and B44 or the Shared Building legislation (see leaflet A-1)

Canon B15a highlights the baptism and communicant status of individual church members.

The Church Representation Rules, while depending on Canon B15a for defining 'actual communicant' status, define 'other churches' on the basis of their commitment to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

In either case this appears to exclude Quakers and members of the Salvation Army – although it seems that there was never a targeted intention to exclude them when the rules were drafted.

Canon B15a clause 3 may suggest that the bishop should be consulted in these cases. The House of Bishops Guidelines re the Salvation Army and Quakers (see leaflet B-4) are also relevant.