

## What next?

Copies of draft Declarations and denominational guidelines can be obtained as follows:

### **The Church of England**

Contact your Diocesan Ecumenical Officer or the Council for Christian Unity, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ. A useful leaflet is available summarising how Christians from other traditions can be involved in Anglican worship and in the running of a local parish church. It is entitled *Yes, you may!*

### **The Methodist Church**

Contact your District Ecumenical Officer or Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR

### **The Roman Catholic Church**

A useful guide for Roman Catholic involvement in all kinds of ecumenical activity has recently been published. *The Search for Christian Unity* is available from Publications, Catholic Communication Service, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BZ (£4.00).

### **The United Reformed Church**

Contact the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.

### **The Baptist Union of Great Britain**

Contact the Ecumenical Administrator, Baptist House, 129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon OX11 8RT.

## Who?

These Declarations are not only about individual congregations exercising Christian hospitality. They can also form part of a wider plan for all the Churches in an area, as a way of ensuring that there is adequate and acknowledged pastoral care in every locality for anyone who needs it, whatever their denominational background.

So a Declaration is important not just to the local area but also to the wider Church. For that reason, representatives of the wider Church – Superintendents, Bishops, Moderators, Regional Ministers – working through the County/Intermediate Body, should always be invited to endorse and encourage what the local church is doing.

For further information about making a **Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment**, and to confirm that the Churches working together on your Intermediate Body have authorised its use, contact your County Ecumenical Officer.

Contact details and copies of the documents can be obtained from **Churches Together in England**, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH ☎ 020 7529 8141 or e-mail [glu@cte.org.uk](mailto:glu@cte.org.uk)



**You're All  
Welcome!**

**But how can you feel really welcome in a community where the only church is of a different denomination from the one you belong to or still consider yours?**

## Where?

In many villages, and in some inner city areas, there is only one church building and worshipping community. In these places Christians of different traditions will often combine loyalty to their particular denomination with a desire to worship and witness locally.

- Sometimes their own church has closed.
- Sometimes they have moved into the locality.
- Sometimes those who previously commuted to a church elsewhere can no longer do so through infirmity or poor public transport.

Few congregations in these places are made up of a single denomination. Informal ecumenism of this sort occurs widely and happens 'by default'.

The Councils and Ministers of such churches will aim to make members of other denominations feel at home, and to feel that they belong to the Christian community in that place. But the informal relationship may not always be enough.

## What?

Five denominations have therefore now made provision for affirming this informal ecumenism. The Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church have each produced a **Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment** which can be signed by a church of their

denomination – subject to the agreement and support of the other denominations in the local area. At the same time they have produced **guidelines** for their own members explaining how they can be loyal to their denominational discipline in places where the Declaration has been signed.

The Declaration is intended for places, often villages, where there is *only one place of worship*. The church making the Declaration formulates a policy towards those of other traditions who are within their family. This policy is aimed at incorporating their insights, strengths, gifts and graces into the whole life of the congregation – including worship, mission and service, as well as the administrative and decision-making process.

## Why?

It is important that people from other traditions can feel valued and can feel they 'belong' even when they may not be able to become full members of their host church – perhaps because their own denomination's rules do not allow it.

Christians in some traditions set great store by 'membership'. Some people who regularly worship in a denomination other than their own may wish to express their membership and belonging in a particular way. The policy could provide for them to do this through a short welcome, prayer, and offering 'the right hand of fellowship.'

## How?

When there is only one church in a community, the congregation and those who lead worship will be especially aware of their responsibility to be broad, flexible and open, and to affirm a diversity of religious experience and expression.

### **Breadth and openness can be affirmed through:**

- Care in the choice of hymns, tunes, and hymn books
- Prayers for other churches and their leaders
- Careful use of language which is inclusive and not specific to one denomination
- Use of Services of the Word where eucharistic sharing is not yet possible
- Consultation between those with pastoral oversight in the area about responsibility for care, initiation, nurture etc

### **The following are also possible subject to denominational disciplines:**

- Invitations to ministers of other traditions to participate in leading worship or preaching
- Occasional use of other denominations' liturgies
- Occasional use of other practices of administering Holy Communion
- Offering occasional (or regular) use of church buildings to other Christian traditions