

WHEN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IS THE ONLY CHURCH IN A VILLAGE

Suggestions and Guidelines

1. In many villages there is only one church building and worshipping community, most often Church of England. Within the village there may be Christians of different traditions, some of whom try to combine loyalty to a particular denomination with their desire to worship and witness in their local community. Sometimes a church of another denomination has been closed, sometimes people from another denomination have moved into the village, sometimes those who previously commuted to a church outside the village are prevented from doing so through infirmity or poor public transport.
2. The aim of Parochial Church Councils and Incumbents will be to make members of other denominations feel at home in their local Anglican church, and to feel that they belong to the Christian community in that place. The sense of belonging and being valued may not for everyone be the same as "being a member". This is because not all those of other denominations are able, because of their denomination's rules, to declare themselves also to be members of the Church of England (as the Church Representation Rules permit).
3. The church making this declaration, whilst remaining subject to the jurisdiction of the Church of England and guardian of its tradition, formulates a policy towards those of other denominations which enables their insights, strengths, gifts and graces to be incorporated into the whole life of the congregation. That life will include worship, mission and service, as well as the administrative and decision-making process.
4. There may be occasions when those of another denomination worshipping in the parish church wish to express their membership and belonging in a particular way. For example, when the tradition with which they have been familiar has a membership structure more closely defined than that of the Church of England. This could be expressed through a short welcome, prayer, and the right hand of fellowship which could take place at the Peace.
5. The congregation of the parish church will want to be especially aware of its responsibility to be broad, flexible and open, and to affirm a diversity of religious experience and expression. (This applies to the variety of emphases within a denomination, as well as between the various denominational traditions.) Breadth and openness could be affirmed through:
 - Choice of hymns, tunes, and hymn books
 - Prayers for other churches and their leaders
 - Invitations to ministers of other traditions to participate in leading worship or preaching (as allowed by Canon B43)
 - Occasional use of other denomination's liturgies (as allowed by Canon B43)
 - Occasional use of other practices of administering Holy Communion
 - Careful use of language which includes and is not specific to one denomination
 - Offering occasional (or regular) use of church buildings to other Christian traditions
 - Use of non-eucharistic services to bridge divide of eucharistic hospitality between Roman Catholics and other churches
 - Consultation between those with pastoral oversight in the area about the responsibility of care, initiation, nurture etc.
6. Before a single church agrees a Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment it should seek advice from the 'Intermediate Body' or its Ecumenical Officer as to which other denominations should be consulted, and at what level. The Group for Local Unity of Churches Together in England suggests that -for the Methodist Church this should be the Circuit Superintendent and Stewards, and for the United Reformed Church, the Church Secretary and the President of the District Council. Care needs to be taken over the real or imagined effect on the congregational strength of these churches, so that this is not seen as "poaching". Sensitivity is needed, to the existence of small groups of Christians, who may be meeting for worship in local houses in some situations, so that this initiative is not perceived as Anglican imperialism. A copy of the Declaration should be displayed in the church.

A DECLARATION OF ECUMENICAL WELCOME AND COMMITMENT
By a Church of England Parish

1. We, the *Vicar* and people of *St CCCSs*, are aware that *St CCCs* is the only church in *Aford*, and therefore we invite all Christians in *Aford* to be as fully a part of our life and fellowship as they are able.

2. We invite those of Christian traditions other than our own
 - to share in the ministry and mission of the Church in this community
 - to worship and, if baptised and communicant members of other Churches, to receive Holy Communion at *St CCCs*¹,
 - to be part of the decision-making of the church² and to contribute to a common fund for the mission and ministry of the wider church, in so far as their continued giving to another church will allow.

3. We undertake
 - to give pastoral care to all those who desire it
 - to invite ministers of other churches to take part in leading worship³
 - to incorporate the riches of worship of other traditions as appropriate⁴
 - to consult with neighbouring churches concerning the mission of the church in *Aford*
 - to include this ecumenical declaration as an integral part of the parish profile

4. Following the decision made by Churches Together in Ashire (our 'Intermediate Body') on..... 199X that such declarations may be made in the area which they serve, we have sought and followed their advice as to which churches should first be consulted, and those mentioned below have given us their blessing and encouragement.

For St CCC's Aford Vicar _____
Church Wardens : _____

for other churches: signature:
on behalf of

¹Canon B15A (1972) enables the admission to Holy Communion of "baptised 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..."
If anyone by virtue of this provision "regularly receives 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 of that Church."

²The Church Representation Rules 1995 enable a person to be enrolled if she/he is baptised, sixteen years or upwards and declares themselves - "to be a member in good standing of a Church which subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity ... 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. Making this declaration also confers eligibility to stand for election to the decision making bodies of the Church of England.

³Canon B43 (1989) says
A minister or lay person who is a member in good standing of a Church to which this Canon applies and is a baptised person may, subject to the provisions of this Canon, be invited to perform all or any of the following duties -

- a) to say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer
- b) to read the Holy Scripture at any service
- c) to preach at any service
- d) to lead the Intercessions at the Holy Communion and to lead prayers at other services
- e) to assist at Baptism or the Solemnisation of Matrimony or conduct a Funeral Service

f) to assist 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 his or her own Church."

⁴"Canon B43 (1989) says

"9. The incumbent of a parish may (with specified approval) invite members of another Church ... to take part in joint worship with the Church of England or to use a church in the parish for worship in accordance with the forms of service and practice of that other Church on such occasions as may be specified in the approval given by the bishop."