

Ecumenical policy

The District's ecumenical officer works within the following framework to support ecumenical working across the District, including in relation to the Anglican-Methodist Covenant.

Current Principles are those that emerged from the 'Not Strangers but Pilgrims' Inter-Church Process of the 1980's, leading to the Swanwick Declaration of 1987, and the setting up of new ecumenical instruments in 1990, including Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (initially the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland).

The Principles declare a move:

- From Co-operation to Commitment
- From Separate Ecumenical Organisations to Being Churches Together
- From Doing Ecumenical Things to Doing Things Ecumenically
- From a Model of Uniformity to one of Legitimate Diversity

With a seeking for

- Resource Sharing
- and Priority Setting.

Three key features of Covenant living

A covenant relationship is about:

1. **A gracious giving and a grateful receiving .**

This relationship flows both ways and goes beyond anything that might be contractual. It is a giving which is liberating, not patronising; it is a receiving which is love-enhancing, not servile.

2. **A purpose which lies beyond the covenant relationship**

God's higher purpose is the unity of all things in Christ - "things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1.10). The unity of Christ's Church by itself is not enough.

3. **A constancy and a mutual cherishing which goes beyond the specifics of what covenant partners actually do together**

This understanding of covenant relationship sets the context for our district policy.

“In partnership with others wherever possible the Methodist Church will concentrate its prayers, resources, imagination and commitments on this priority: To proclaim its conviction of God’s love in Christ, for us and for all the world; and renew confidence in God’s presence and action in the world and in the Church.

In order to facilitate this:

The District will, through its Ecumenical and other officers, support the circuits and local churches in the development of ecumenical working, providing support, advice and encouragement:

- When consultations are taking place about less formal or more innovative ways of working ecumenically, such as Vision Statements and declarations of intent
- When there is need to produce or revise a formal constitution
- Ensuring that review happen in accordance with local constitutions
- Ensuring that all local ecumenical partnerships (LEPs) have a safeguarding policy that adheres to the practice of one of participating partners and has been approved by the District Safeguarding officer.
- Ensuring that there is proper consultation with ecumenical partners when the appointment of a minister is being considered for an LEP
- We will observe normal Methodist practice in the case of joint confirmations within LEPs. The local minister will usually be the confirming minister.
- We commit ourselves to engaging with our ecumenical partners, including our traditional partners and those new Christian Church communities and other organisations that focus on specific Christian ministries which we recognise we need in order to be strengthened as a discipleship movement shaped for mission today.

We commit ourselves, through the District Chair and District officers, to engaging with and participating in the various county and regional Church leaders’ meetings and to building good relationships with other Church leaders..

We will encourage the active participation of local churches in their local Church/Christians Together Groups, where these exist, as well as wider community participation with other voluntary, statutory and civic agencies.

We will encourage non-Methodist congregations to use our premises for worship, either for occasional use a ‘Licence to use’, with the approval of the Superintendent minister and the custodian trustee, by means of schedule 14a, or under sharing agreements, constituted under the 1969 Sharing of Church Buildings Act.

The person leading on this policy is

This policy was approved on ?? and will be reviewed by ??

The person leading on this policy is ?

Draft 2