

The Church on Fairford Leys Constitution

A Local Ecumenical Partnership supported by:

The Church of England The Methodist Church
The Roman Catholic Church The United Reformed Church

1. NAME

- 1.1 The Local Ecumenical Partnership shall be known as Fairford Leys (Aylesbury).
- 1.2 The Partnership is an Anglican Church within the Church of England Parish of Aylesbury with Bierton and Hulcott within the Deanery of Aylesbury and the Diocese of Oxford, a Methodist Church within the Aylesbury Circuit and the London North West District, a United Reformed Church within the Chiltern District of the Thames North Synod and a Roman Catholic Church within the Deanery of St John Fisher Aylesbury in the Diocese of Northampton.

2. AREA

- 2.1 The LEP primarily serves the area of Fairford Leys in Aylesbury and those who associate with it and benefit from its ministry.

3. SPONSORING BODY

- 3.1 The LEP looks for support and oversight to Churches Together in Buckinghamshire as its Sponsoring Body and will be accountable to the partner Churches through the Sponsoring Body.
- 3.2 The Sponsoring Body shall appoint a Local Support Group through which regular two way contact shall be maintained. Oversight will therefore be experienced as both communal and personal.
- 3.3 The LEP shall make a written Annual Report to the Sponsoring Body.

4. BAPTISM AND MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 Baptism shall be celebrated according to the rite and/or practice of any of the constituent denominations, according to a rite approved by the participating denominations through the Sponsoring Body, and shall be set, in normal circumstances, within an act of congregational worship.
- 4.2 The legal requirement to keep a register of Baptisms shall be met. Since Baptism is such an important step, any persons involved, (candidates or parents of infants) should proceed with the full knowledge of the options open to them.
- 4.3 Infant Dedication and Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child shall be among such options, as shall be a service for the Re-Affirmation of Baptismal Faith.

- 4.4 Preparation for believer's baptism and for confirmation or admission to the full responsibilities and privileges of membership shall be undertaken jointly and shall include specific denominational teaching and instruction.
- 4.5 Membership implies certain responsibilities and duties: regular attendance at worship including eucharistic worship, active sharing in the life of the church, including attendance at meetings of the Church and the congregation, regular sacrificial giving and witness to God's love in the world by word and deed.
- 4.6 A Service of Confirmation and Reception into Church Membership shall normally be celebrated at a joint act of worship according to a rite authorised by the Sponsoring Body.
- 4.7 Those received into membership through such an Act of Confirmation at a joint service are thereby members of all the participating denominations as well as multiple members of the LEP.
- 4.8 There shall be a Common Roll, including those on the Denominational Rolls and multiple members by virtue of joint confirmation, and a separate list of members shall also be kept for each Denomination, multiple members being included on each list.
- 4.9 For the purpose of financial denominational assessment the membership may be divided into its constituent denominational parts, or in some formally agreed proportion. In the case of those with multiple membership a formula should be agreed by the different denominations concerned through the Sponsoring Body. In the absence of such a formula, multiple members shall be apportioned equally for purposes of financial assessment.
- 4.10 Membership discipline shall continue to be a matter for each church/denomination following its own procedures.

5. WORSHIP AND THE EUCHARIST

- 5.1 The Partnership shall respect the faith and practice of its member denominations. Worship shall safeguard and present the doctrines, practices and traditions and developing traditions of each participating denomination and be conducted in accordance with denominational practices and/or using rites agreed by the Sponsoring Body.
- 5.2 A balanced and varied pattern of worship shall be aimed for in order to maximise the riches of each tradition and enable the congregation to explore and express its ecumenical life and aspiration, while at the same time ensuring that worship is accessible and sustaining for all its members.
- 5.3 Ordained priests, ministers and other duly authorised persons shall preside at the

Eucharist as permitted by denominational legislation or by dispensation therefrom. The authorisations of each denomination apply to that denomination's services: good and sensitive practice will be to advertise services particularly eucharistic services as "according to ...X tradition."

- 5.4 All those recognised as communicants by the participating Churches/denominations may receive the sacrament in accordance with denominational practice.
- 5.5 In arranging services encouragement shall be given to the participation of Lay/Local Preachers, Readers and others authorised as leaders of worship or as preachers.

6. MINISTRY

- 6.1 Denominational procedures shall be followed in the appointment/call of Ministers. Recognising however the importance of continuity, the Partnership expects that those responsible for the appointment/call of Ministers shall select persons who will develop the Partnership ecumenically. To this end the Ecumenical Church Council shall appoint four members to a Staffing Consultative Group which shall follow the procedures for these groups as laid down by the Sponsoring Body in each and every case.
- 6.2 When it is anticipated that a minister serving in the Partnership may leave or before any major changes in the responsibility of the minister presently in post are considered, there shall be a meeting of the Staffing Consultative Group appointed by the Sponsoring Body.
- 6.3 The Staffing Consultative Group shall comprise the four representatives of the Partnership, representatives of the parent bodies and two representatives of the Sponsoring Body, one of whom shall chair the Group.
- 6.4 The Staffing Consultative Group shall be responsible for amending an existing job description or drawing up a new one and submitting it to the appointing authority. The procedure to be followed in the appointing or re-appointing of a minister shall be agreed and shall conform to the requirements of the participating denominations.
- 6.5 The Staffing Consultative Group shall advise as to the appropriate level of ministry and the denomination of the new minister to be sought.
- 6.6 The minister shall be subject to the normal discipline of the Church/denomination in which he/she belongs.
- 6.7 Non - Methodist ministers serving the Partnership shall be encouraged to seek Recognised and Regarded or authorised status from the Methodist Conference.
- 6.8 Non United Reformed Church ministers appointed or called by the Partnership

are, by virtue of that appointment or call, members of the Chiltern District Council and the Thames North Synod.

- 6.9 Newly appointed ministers shall be inducted/welcome, according to the requirements of the appointing authority at a service at which they, other members of the Ecumenical Team, and the local congregation shall affirm or reaffirm the Declaration of Intent.

7. JOINT DECISION MAKING

- 7.1 Joint decision making for the Partnership shall be by means of a Congregational Meeting and an Elders' Meeting/Ecumenical Church Council.
- 7.2 The Partnership shall assemble in Congregational Meeting (at least once a quarter) with the minister (s) presiding, and all members on its rolls shall be able to attend, speak and vote; others may be invited to attend, may speak, but shall not vote.
- 7.3 In Congregational Meeting all those on the Common Roll have opportunity through discussion, responsible decision making and care for one another, to strengthen each other's faith and to foster the life and work and mission of the Church.
- 7.4 There shall be an Annual General Meeting, normally in March or April, at which independently examined/audited accounts for the previous financial year shall be presented for adoption, an independent examiner/auditor appointed for the current year.
- 7.5 The Elder's Meeting/Ecumenical Church Council shall meet at least once a quarter with the Minister(s) presiding. Its members shall combine the functions of URC Elders, Methodist Stewards and Anglican District Church Councils.
- 7.5 Its membership shall include a Methodist Circuit Steward (under Standing Order 611).
- 7.7 The Elders Meeting/Ecumenical Church Council shall share with the Minister(s) in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the Partnership.
- 7.8 The members shall be elected by the Congregational Meeting and set apart by prayer in the context of public worship such setting apart shall be understood by the United Reformed Church as Ordination. They shall be inducted to serve for such limited period as the Congregational Meeting shall decide (normally three years) and be regarded for the United Reformed Church purposes as Elders.
- 7.9 Denominational Church Councils or other Committees shall be constituted annually and meet as frequently as required for purposes determined by the respective denominations/church.

- 7.10 Financial and management arrangements shall be set out in the Sharing Agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969.
- 7.11 The Joint Council (where required under the provisions of the Sharing Agreement) must meet when new capital money is to be raised or proposals to buy or sell land or property are being taken.
- 7.12 The Joint Council will probably delegate its day to day management functions to the Elders Meeting/Ecumenical Church Council, but this shall be a formal decision and not by default.
- 7.13 There shall be at least one member of the Elders Meeting/Ecumenical Church Council on any committee set up by the Congregational Meeting for the care of property, finance, worship and the sacraments, and such other matters as from time to time are deemed necessary.
- 7.14 The Partnership shall maintain a proper relationship to the appropriate local and regional denominational bodies, fulfilling necessary constitutional requirements. The bodies are The Parochial Church Council of Aylesbury with Bierton and Hulcott, The Chiltern District Council and The Thames North Synod of the United Reformed Church, The Aylesbury Circuit of the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton.

8. PREMISES

- 8.1 The Church site shall be on a 999 year lease from the Ernest Cook Trust.
- 8.2 The site will remain vested in the URC Thames North Trust body, but it shall enter into a Declaration of Trust to hold the property on trust for the purposes of a Sharing Agreement with the other Churches in the Partnership.
- 8.3 There will be a Sharing Agreement (under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969) with the other members of the Partnership.
- 8.4 The premises shall be subject to inspection in accordance with the current regulations of the United Reformed Church.
- 8.5 The Terms of the Sharing Agreement shall take precedence if any conflict is perceived with this Constitution.

9. FINANCE

- 9.1 There shall be a common purse. The Hon Treasurer shall receive and account for all moneys donated to the Partnership through collection, gifts etc to the Ecumenical Church Council and the Annual General Meeting. Copies of the independently examined/audited accounts as adopted shall be sent to the Parochial Church Council, The Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance and to the

Methodist Circuit Treasurer, the URC Chiltern District and the Roman Catholic Diocese.

- 9.2 Out of the common income there shall be discharged:-
- 9.3 The expenses of ministry and of the administrative costs of the Partnership as agreed with the Sponsoring Body and with the appropriate bodies of the participating Churches/denominations.
- 9.4 Financial obligations to the central and other funds of the participating Churches/denominations as agreed with the Sponsoring Body and with the respective Churches/denominational authorities.
- 9.5 Gifts to other societies and charities as determined by the Ecumenical Church Council.

10. WIDER PARTICIPATION

- 10.1 Other Churches in or near the neighbourhood of the Partnership may negotiate for participation in the Partnership at any time subject to the agreement of the appropriate denominational authorities and the Sponsoring Body.

11. REVIEW

- 11.1 The Sponsoring Body shall ensure that every seven years (or sooner) the Partnership shall be evaluated with reference to its objectives set out in the Declaration of Intent and this Constitution.

12. CONTINUITY

- 12.1 The Partnership shall only be terminated with approval of the appropriate denominational authorities and the Sponsoring Body.

13. AMENDMENTS

- 13.1 Any amendments to this Constitution shall be made by the Ecumenical Church Council and by a Special General Meeting called for that purpose. Amendments shall be made only with the approval of the appropriate denominational authorities and of the Sponsoring Body.

January 2000