

Using the leaflets

These leaflets may be freely photocopied provided the entire leaflet is copied unaltered complete with copyright information. For example a parish considering entering into a congregations in covenant LEP might wish to distribute copies of this introductory leaflet and leaflet 2 to all parishioners.

Downloadable printable versions of these leaflets are available from www.cbcew.org.uk. Packs of all seven leaflets are available in small numbers from The Committee for Christian Unity at a cost of £5.00 including postage

Resources

Unitatis Redintegratio 1964 (UR) (The Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism)

The Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms on Ecumenism

1993 (DAPNE) Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity,

The Search for Christian Unity, Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales 2002 (A popular version of DAPNE, available in Welsh as *Chwilio am Undod Cristnogol*)

Pope John Paul II *Ut Unum Sint* 1995 (UUS) (the Pope's encyclical on ecumenism)

One Bread One Body, Catholic Truth Society 1997 (A teaching document on the Eucharist by the bishops of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, which includes norms on sacramental sharing)

Cecily Boulding *Churches Together*, Catholic Truth Society

William Steele *Ecumenism for Catholics*, Blackfriars 2004

Roger Nunn *This Growing Unity*, Churches Together in England 1998 (a handbook on ecumenical development)

Elizabeth Welch & Flora Winfield *Travelling Together*, Churches Together in England 2004 (a handbook on LEPs)

Jenny Carpenter *Together Locally*, Churches Together in England 2002 (a handbook for local churches working together)

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The Catholic Church and Ecumenism

Since the Second Vatican Council Catholics have been encouraged to take an active role in ecumenical endeavours. Pope John Paul II in his encyclicals and addresses has stated that the Catholic Church has 'committed herself irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture'. The Catholic Church in England and Wales, through the Conference of Bishops, entered into a commitment with twenty-one other churches in 1990, becoming a full member of *Churches Together in England* (CTE). The Roman Catholic Church in Wales is a full member of *CYTUN* (Churches Together in Wales).

'The Holy Spirit is at work today causing people everywhere to pray and work for Christian Unity - that unity so greatly desired by Christ. This Council urges all Catholics to co-operate fully with this grace and to devote themselves actively and intelligently to the work of Ecumenism' (*Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism*)

'At the second Vatican Council the Catholic Church committed herself irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord, who teaches people to interpret carefully "the signs of the times".' (*Pope John Paul II, 'Ut Unum Sint'*)

Catholic parishes may wish to make a firm commitment to the ecumenical journey. One way of doing this is by joining with other Christian churches in the locality in a Local Ecumenical Partnership.

Structures for ecumenical working

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales Department of Mission and Unity comprises a number of committees, of which the Committee for Christian Unity is one. Its members are clergy and laity with ecumenical expertise and experience and includes the National Ecumenical Officer. A Bishop chairs the Committee.

The *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* published by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and approved by the Pope recommends that every Diocese should have a Diocesan Commission and Diocesan Ecumenical Officer, whose task it is to advise the Bishop and offer support and advice to parishes. However, there are variations in the ways Dioceses organise their ecumenical structures.

Catholics are fully involved in *Churches Together in Britain & Ireland* and at national level Catholics play a full part in *Churches Together in England*, *CYTUN* in Wales, and *Action for Churches Together in Scotland* and *Churches Together in Ireland*.

At national level Catholics serve on the Enabling Group of *Churches Together in England*, on the Council of *CYTUN*, and on associated Coordinating Groups and Bodies in Association.

In England each county, metropolitan area and region has an ecumenical body that enables the churches to work together in partnership and act as Sponsoring Body for LEPs. It brings together Church Leaders, Denominational Ecumenical Officers and others assisted by an ecumenically appointed County Ecumenical Officer. In a few places Denominational Ecumenical Officers work as a team to do this work.

At local level in England and Wales many parishes belong to a *Churches Together* group or a similar body encouraging ecumenical cooperation. It is vital that parish representatives should have access to the Parish Pastoral Council and parish bulletin, in order to involve parishioners in ecumenical work, consulting and communicating widely and encouraging support of ecumenical events.

A Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) is defined as existing ‘where there is a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, buildings, and/or mission projects of more than one denomination; and a recognition of that agreement by the Sponsoring Body and the appropriate denominational authorities’.

For Catholics the ‘appropriate denominational authority’ is the Ordinary of the Diocese (the Bishop).

At a Churches Together In England consultation in 1994 the churches agreed the following categories for LEPs:

1. Single Congregational Partnerships

Ministry is shared by an Ecumenical Ministry Team and congregations consist of members of several denominations. The buildings may be in a formal Sharing Agreement. There is a common purse and an Ecumenical Council which manages the life of the LEP.

2. Congregations in Covenanted Partnerships

There is a substantial sharing in worship, church life, mission and ministry between congregations of differing traditions. Many Catholic parishes belong

to this type of LEP, where there is freedom to negotiate the level of involvement. Some denominations within the LEP share ministry and sacraments while others do not.

3. Shared Building Partnerships

The church building is shared by two or more denominations. Formal agreements come under the *Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969*, but there are many instances of informal sharing.

4. Chaplaincy Partnerships

The chaplains working in an institution commit themselves to work together as an ecumenical team e.g. in education (universities, joint schools), in prisons or in hospitals.

5. Mission Partnerships

These include a variety of contexts e.g. industrial mission, social responsibility, broadcasting, overseas twinning and others.

6. Education Partnerships

These include Lay Training, Ministerial Training and joint or shared schools.

Leaflets are available covering each of these LEP categories. They are available on the internet at www.cbcew.org.uk. If you do not have access to the Internet copies of the leaflet can also be obtained from the Bishops Conference Committee for Christian Unity.

Why should a Catholic parish/priest/lay person become a member of a Local Ecumenical Partnership?

The Declaration by the Churches in Swanwick in 1989 states

‘We now declare our readiness to commit ourselves to each other under God... to become, in His own time, the One Church of Christ, united in faith, communion, pastoral care and mission’

Belonging to an LEP enables Catholics, both priests and laity to play a greater part in the ecumenical endeavour in order to make Christ’s words “may they all be one.... that the world may believe” a reality.

‘We enjoy being together as good friends. You have to put a bit of effort into it.’ *Catholic priest, Ashington*