

Ecumenical Partnerships, Sharing Agreements, and Ecumenical Areas

MC/22/64

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| Date of meeting | 2-4 April 2022 |
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr R F Leao Neto, Assistant Ecumenical Officer leao@methodistchurch.org.uk |

Ecumenical relationships are going through a period of change brought by the Churches Together in England's document 'A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission' and its accompanying Toolkit: [A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission – Churches Together in England \(cte.org.uk\)](#). These two documents help local churches to collaborate with one another with more flexibility, without necessarily establishing an LEP or putting in place a Sharing Agreement. As a consequence there has been a positive diversification of formats in which ecumenical relationships are created. This is dependent on the level of complexity the ecumenical projects require. Collaborations that require a less formal arrangement are managed locally. This is gaining pace.

More complex schemes might lead to a Constitutional Agreement, or even a Sharing Agreement based on the Sharing of Church Building Act 1969. When this is the case, Standing Order 334(5) requires all new schemes approved by the Synods under SO 412(2) and all Sharing Agreements authorised by the Ecumenical Officer, or by the Assistant Ecumenical Officer (AEO), to be reported to the Methodist Council. This Report contains the list of ecumenical schemes reported or the ones where there was direct involvement of the AEO.

Methodism – in collaboration with other denominations – has been encouraging a more flexible approach to ecumenical relationships and is directly involved in the writing of the Flexible Framework and its Toolkit. We are seeing the early fruits of this new approach, but the full consequences of it are still to be understood. The hope is that more flexibility will help people and churches to achieve what they would like to achieve without the bureaucracy that sometimes accompanies new ecumenical set ups. There is already a realisation that a balance needs to be struck between flexibility that makes ecumenical relations more agile and formality that makes them more prepared to face future storms.

A: SCHEMES APPROVED BY THE DISTRICT SYNODS UNDER SO 412(2)

1 Ecumenical Partnerships in Extended Areas

The Assistant Ecumenical Officer has not received any reports of Synods establishing ecumenical partnerships in extended areas in the last year.

2 Local Ecumenical Partnerships

The following list records those schemes approved by the Synods and reported to the Assistant Ecumenical Officer in March 2021 up to March 2022. It indicates other Churches involved and the nature of the Partnership. It also records those Partnerships in which a new constitution has been adopted and current information as to whether the Synod has issued or revoked a direction under SO 611.

2.1 Creation of Local Ecumenical Partnerships

| Circuit No | Trustee Body | Other Churches | Type of Partnership | New Partnership, New Constitution | Direction - SO 611 |
|------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 34/4 | Joint Council | Baptist | Single Congregation LEP – Olive Tree Church | Constitution adopted on the 21 st March 2021 | |
| 6/1 | Joint Council | URC | Single Congregation LEP – Cornerstone Church, | Constitution Approved by both congregations. Partnership to be | Direction Issued |

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| | | | Westhoughton, Bolton | inaugurated at Pentecost Sunday 2022. A Sharing Agreement is required. | |
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*****RESOLUTION**

64/1. The Council receives the report.

B: SHARING AGREEMENTS

The consent of the Ecumenical Officer or the Assistant Ecumenical Officer is required for the making or amendment of any Sharing Agreement (SA) under the Sharing of Church Buildings Acts 1969 and to its termination (SO 334(3)).

The following list reports those Sharing Agreements entered into or terminated in the period March 2021 to March 2022, or the notice of terminate has been given or received.

1. Creation or alteration of a Sharing Agreement

| Circuit No | Trustee Body | Other Churches | Type of Partnership | Sharing Agreement Or Alteration | Date | Registration Number |
|------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 36/13 | Joint Council | URC | Single Congregation LEP – Cross Way Church in Seaford – BN25 1HT | Amendment of Sharing Agreement – providing for a Legal Charge on Methodist Share | | |
| 36/13 | Joint Council Constitution dating Sept 2016 | URC | Sharing Agreement on URC building for Cornerstone Church, Uckfield, TN22 5AE | Sharing Agreement | 25 August 2021 | 39/319 |

2. Termination of and Retirement from Sharing Agreements

| Circuit No | Local or Circuit Trustee Body | Building shared and other details | Other Church party to the SA | Date of Notice | Date of SA | Registered No | Date of termination |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 29/33 | Trinity Methodist Church Council | Trinity Methodist Church, York | The Ark Church - Trustees | 18 January 2021 | 13 Dec 2016 | 39/292 | Effective in six month time from the date of notice |
| 36/1 | Surrey Border Circuit | Manse at: 45 Scarletts Road, Aldershot, | C of E Diocese of Guildford | 16 March 2021 | | | 23 March 2021 |
| 18/13 | Sankey Valley Methodist Church as successor of Warrington | The Worship Centre, known as St Philip Westbrook | C of E Diocese of Liverpool | 30 May 2021 | 26 January 1989 | 38/742 | November 2021 |

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|-------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| | Methodist Church | | | | | | |
| 24/3 | Local Church and later Circuit trusteeship | Lakeway United Church, North Tawton, Devon, URC Building. | URC | 20 April 2021 | 22 October 1997 | | July 2021 |
| 36/16 | Joint Council | St Martins Dorking - Methodist building | C of E | March 2021 | 30 November 2003 | 39/149 | 31 August 2021 |
| 24/1 | Joint Council | Christ Church Estover, Plymouth, - shared land and building | C of E Roman Catholic and Baptist | | 26 Nov 1979 | Signed copy not found | 31 March 2021 |
| 19/1 | Joint Managing Trustees | Church of Epiphany Droysden, Manchester – under negotiation | URC and C of E | 24 August 2021 | 28 Sept 2011 | | |
| 34/4 | Joint Council | Anglican and Methodist Congregations in Dagnall; a shared building now to revert to its previous status as a Licensed place of worship at the Parish of Eaton Bray, Edlesborough | C of E Parish Church of Eaton Bray | 24 June 2021 | January 1982 | | 13 January 2022 |
| 14/25 | Joint Council | Parish of St Peter and St Paul – Church Way Alconbury in Cams | C of E Diocese of Ely | 9 Feb 2022 | 22 February 2011 | 39/252 | Effective in six months time from the date of notice |

*****RESOLUTION**

64/2. The Council receives the report.