

GENERAL SYNOD**COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY****Simplification of Ecumenical Regulations**

1. The Council for Christian Unity (the Council), with the support of the Simplification Task Group, is bringing forward the proposed changes to the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure (1988) (the Measure) and Canons B 43 and B 44 (the Ecumenical Canons), by way of the draft Church Representation, Ecumenical Relations and Ministers Measure (GS 2046) and draft Amending Canon No. 38 (GS 2047). The overall intention of these proposed changes is to make the Church of England more effective and confident in co-operating with an increasingly wide range of churches in a wide variety of contexts. The changes
 - a. take account of the changing external context for ecumenical activity, especially the increasing diversity of churches with which the Church of England co-operates at local level;
 - b. simplify and clarify the provisions made by Canon under the Ecumenical Relations Measure, by:
 - i. amalgamating the current Canon B43 (Of relations with other churches) and Canon B 44 (Of local ecumenical projects) into one shorter new Canon;
 - ii. setting out the provisions of the new Canon in a more ordered way than the current Canons, which have been added to and amended in a piecemeal manner over the years;
 - iii. transferring as much material concerning approval, consultation and procedure as possible to a Code of Practice;
 - iv. reducing the level of approval and consultation required for applying provisions where prudent; and
 - v. simplifying and streamlining procedures where possible
2. An amendment to the Measure refers to a Code of Practice, issued by the House of Bishops and approved by the General Synod, which is also referred to in the new Canon, to which bishops, clergy and licensed lay person shall have due regard. The detailed content of the Code of Practice is dependent on the final form of the amendments brought forward. This paper gives an overview of what the Code may include.

Amendments to the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure 1988

3. The Ecumenical Relations Measure is intended to balance Church of England convictions about Church order with the theological and missional imperative for working with other churches as partners in the Gospel. The Measure provides a legal framework for extending ecumenical hospitality; for making invitations for ministers of other churches to take part in Church of England worship and to accept similar invitations from other churches; and to co-operate with other churches in witness, service and mission, while continuing to uphold the Church of England's legal obligations and theological convictions concerning ministry and the sacraments. There are however a small number of amendments required to update the Measure for the changing ecumenical context. The Council is confident that the proposed amendments to the Measure continue to hold this balance.

Churches to which the Measure applies

4. The definition in the Measure of churches to which the Measure and Ecumenical Canons apply excludes churches for which designation is impractical or a barrier, especially local independent churches, including a large number of new and black and minority-ethnic majority churches. Co-operation in evangelism, witness and service between the Church of England and these local independent churches is growing in significance, and is likely to continue to increase. It is vital that steps are taken if partnerships with them are to become properly integrated into the life of the Church of England. The intention of amending the Measure is to enable the application of the provisions of the Measure and Ecumenical Canons to such churches.
5. The Council proposes that section 5 of the Measure be amended by adding a provision for the bishop (or an area or suffragan bishop to whom that power has been devolved) to agree that a church which has not been designated by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York may be one to which the Measure and Ecumenical Canons apply, within his or her diocese. Before exercising his or her powers, the amendment requires the bishop to be satisfied that the church meets the conditions included in the amendment. The amendment also limits the period for which this provision may be applied to a church to a maximum of seven years, after which it may be renewed. The bishop may also revoke the agreement at any time.
6. The Council proposes that the Code of Practice will give guidance for bishops to follow in particular cases, for example
 - a. who may request the bishop to consider the local designation of a church;
 - b. who else needs to be consulted;
 - c. discerning whether the conditions set out in the amended Measure are being met by the church;
 - d. the circumstances in which it may be appropriate to explore the possibility of designation by the Archbishops;
 - e. drafting of the bishop's instrument implementing the provision, and
 - f. renewing or revoking the agreement.

Other amendments to up-date the Measure

7. The Council proposes that the terminology of the Measure should also be amended to take account of changes that are under discussion ecumenically. The proposal is to replace the term 'local ecumenical project' currently used in the Measure, with a descriptive term (local ecumenical co-operative scheme) which refers to the definition in section 6 (1) of the draft Measure, which will also be reflected in the new Canon. This amendment will enable the Church of England to use whatever terms are currently agreed ecumenically without the need for updating the terminology of the Measure.
8. Under a scheme, as defined by the amendment, churches of different denominations agree to co-operate in practical actions. The definition does not define the nature of that agreement. The Code of Practice may give ecumenically agreed guidance about the types of agreement that are appropriate in different contexts, ranging from simple statements of intent in relation to small-scale, local initiatives, to constitutional agreements.
9. The Council proposes other amendments to the text of the Measure, including:

- a. to add a provision which will enable invitations to be given to any member of any church which subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to read a lesson or to lead prayers, or to lead intercessions at Holy Communion, to take account of the far greater mobility of worshippers between denominations;
- b. to add a provision which will enable invitations to be given to members of the Salvation Army to preach at any service, to take account of the fact that the Salvation Army is excluded from being designated by virtue of the requirement that a church celebrates the dominical sacraments; and
- c. to extend the provision in relation to the United Churches, so as to include the churches of the Porvoo Agreement, the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht, the Philippine Independent Church and the Mar Thoma Church, all of which are in full communion with the Church of England.

The Amending Canon and the Code of Practice

10. The new Canon avoids being over-prescriptive regarding the level of approval and the extent of consultation required in the application of its provisions. The approvals that are appropriate in one context or situation will be inappropriate in others. The variety of contexts and situations is far too great to be reflected in the Canon, whereas the Code of Practice has more scope for expressing the diversity and flexibility required in a mixed economy church. The Council proposes that the Code of Practice should specify
 - a. the persons or bodies which need to give approval before the provisions of the new Canon may be applied;
 - b. the persons or bodies which need to be consulted;
 - c. any other conditions that need to be met; and
 - d. procedures that need to be followed.
11. The Council proposes that the Code of Practice will build on the following general principles.
 - a. Concerning invitations for members of other churches to perform relevant duties in services of the Church of England, the level of approval specified in the Code of Practice will be as local as is consistent with good order. The Code will set out the conditions in which the approval of the bishop will be required before an invitation is made. It will specify when the approval of the Parochial Church Council will be required, and also the circumstances in which the PCC should be consulted, before an incumbent may make an invitation.
 - b. The new Canon requires the office holder giving the invitation to make enquiries to ensure that the minister or lay person of the other church is of good standing in his or her church. The Code will need to set out conditions concerning this requirement especially in connection with issues of safeguarding.
 - c. With respect of invitations to members of other churches to take part in joint worship with the Church of England, or to use a place of worship of the Church of England, the Council proposes that the Code should make a distinction between invitations for regular joint worship or use of a place of worship on one hand and occasional joint worship or use on the other. If the invitation is for regular joint worship or use of a place of worship, the Council proposes that the approval of the bishop will be required, and in the case of a parish, the approval of the PCC; but that if the invitation is on an occasional basis, the approval of the bishop may be dispensed with.

- d. The new Canon requires the approval of the bishop before a priest may accept an invitation to preside at the Eucharist or any relevant officer (priests, deacons and licensed lay persons) to take part in a service of confirmation or ordination in another church.
 - e. The Council proposes that, within the Code, a relevant office holder (priests, deacons and licensed lay persons) may accept an occasional invitation to take part in a service of another church (other than preside at Holy Communion, or take part in a service of ordination or confirmation) without needing to seek the approval of the bishop. The Code will specify when the bishop's approval is required if the invitation is for regular participation.
 - f. For invitations to a priest, deacon or licensed lay person to take part in any service in another church, the approval of the incumbent of the parish in which the church is situated is required. The new Canon makes provision for appeal to the bishop when approval is withheld, and the Code will need to set out procedures for making an appeal.
 - g. For an invitation to a bishop to take part in any service in another church situated in another diocese, the approval of the bishop of that diocese (in consultation with incumbent of the parish in which the church is situated if appropriate) is required.
 - h. In connection with establishing local ecumenical co-operative schemes with respect to parishes or cathedral churches, the Council proposes that the rights of the parishes or cathedral churches concerned will be protected within the Code. Under the Code the bishop will not be able to establish or extend or amend a scheme in the area of a parish or a number of parishes unless the incumbent and the PCC of each parish have given approval. In some circumstances a resolution will also need to be passed at a Parochial Church Meeting. Likewise, the bishop will not be able to establish, extend or amend a scheme in the area of a cathedral church unless the cathedral Chapter gives approval.
 - i. The new Canon allows the bishop to give approvals for an indefinite period, for such period as the approval may specify or for specified periods only. The Code will need to set out conditions about the period appropriate in different circumstances.
 - j. The Code will also need to indicate in which contexts and with whom consultation is expected, for example with ecumenical partners participating in a scheme before the bishop establishes, extends, amends or dissolves a scheme; with the PCC before making provision for ministry and worship in connection with a scheme in the area of a parish; and when the bishop may wish to consult with the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee.
12. The Code of Practice may also provide pro-forma notices of approval and instruments in order to assist with streamlining procedures.
13. If the General Synod gives its approval to taking forward the proposed amendments to the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure 1988 and the Amending Canon, a draft Code of Practice will be made available before the Revision Stage.

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