



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND Council for Christian Unity

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Yes, you may!

How any Church of England parish can share worship with Christians of other traditions

A mini-guide to Canon B43: of relations with other churches

Canon B43 was passed in 1989 so that Church of England churches can lawfully share in worship with churches of other traditions.

Canon B43 applies to all Church of England congregations and places of worship.

Canon B43 provides the ground rules for when Church of England churches share in worship in the context of local “Churches Together” or when they have signed a Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment or at any other time.

Canon B43 provides a foundation in worship to enable Church of England congregations to begin to work more closely with other Christians in mission and service.

A: Invitations to other Christians

Church of England incumbents, with the approval of their PCC, may invite ministers and lay people of other churches on an occasional basis to take part in the worship of the Church of England in a number of ways.

Those who are invited must be baptised and in good standing with their own churches. They must also be authorised to do similar duties in their own church.

They may be invited to:

- Say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer or the Litany
- Read Holy Scripture at any service
- Preach at any service
- Lead intercessions at Holy Communion
- Lead prayers at any other service
- Assist at Baptisms and Weddings
- Conduct a Funeral Service
- Assist in distributing the sacrament (bread or wine) at Holy Communion

Where the person invited is not baptised (e.g. a member of the Salvation Army or a Quaker), the bishop must give permission.

The bishop must also give permission for regular invitations, and when someone is invited to preside at Holy Communion or take part in an Ordination. Baptism, weddings and funerals obviously also require the consent of the families.

B: Invitations from other churches

Church of England clergy, lay workers and Readers may accept invitations from other churches to share in their worship, provided that it only involves the kind of duties they perform in a Church of England church.

Before accepting any invitation they will need:

- The approval of the incumbent of the parish where the service is to take place
- The approval of both the bishop and the PCC in that parish if the invitation is to take part in leading worship on a regular basis

The bishop will need to be sure there are special circumstances before allowing a priest to accept an invitation to preside at Holy Communion in another church.

C: Hospitality for other Christians

Incumbents may invite other churches to use Church of England churches for services in their own tradition, either on special occasions or more regularly.

The invitation needs the approval of the PCC and the bishop – and the bishop will indicate any special conditions for the arrangement.

If a regular arrangement seems likely to become permanent, an agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act may be appropriate.

D: First steps on a journey

As local churches of different traditions grow together, developing a common life and witness, it may be appropriate to work towards establishing a Local Ecumenical Partnership. The provisions of Canon B44 will then apply (see leaflet B-2-1).