

1. Name | 1.1 The **Local Ecumenical Partnership** shall be known as West Swindon and the Lydiards Church Partnership, with additional subtext 'Covenanted together for mission.' It shall be constituted as a **Single Congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership** within the guidelines of **Churches Together in England**.

The Local Churches are listed in the Declaration of Intent above (D1 The Covenant).

1.2 As Churches within the Local Ecumenical Partnership, the **Denominations** and **Parent Bodies** recognise each of the Local Churches as

- a United Reformed Church
- a Methodist Church
- a Baptist Church
- an Anglican Church

1.3 Each of the Local Churches in the Partnership functions as an Ecumenical Church, supporting worship practices of the four **Denominations**. Each of the Churches operates with its own local governance and subsidiary financial roles, although **Parent Body** costs are met centrally.

For staff appointments and other matters of liaison with **Parent Bodies**, the Partnership acts as a single entity.

2. Area

2.1 The **Church Partnership** shall encompass the North Wiltshire District Council parishes of Lydiard Millicent and Lydiard Tregoze, and three Swindon Borough Council wards of Freshbrook and Grange Park; Shaw and Nine Elms; and Toothill and Westlea.

3.
Sponsorship

3.1 The **Parent Bodies** of the **Church Partnership** shall be:

- ◆ The Baptist Union of Great Britain, represented by The West of England Baptist Association
- ◆ The Church of England represented by the Diocese of Bristol
- ◆ The Methodist Church represented by the Upper Thames Circuit of the Bristol District
- ◆ The United Reformed Church represented by the [text deleted] South Western Synod

4.1 The **Church Partnership** shall look to the **Swindon Churches Together Sponsoring Body** for guidance, support and oversight.

5.1 **Baptism** in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shall be administered according to the rites and practice of any of the **Denominations**, or according to a rite authorised by the **Sponsoring Body**. In normal circumstances Baptism shall be set within an act of congregational worship.

5.2 Since **Baptism** is an important step, any persons involved (candidates or parents of infants) should proceed with the full knowledge of the options which are available to them. 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.

5.3 For those who have already received baptism in terms that the non-Baptist churches recognise, and who wish to receive Believer's Baptism, the procedure shall be as follows:

- The candidate shall be offered the opportunity to **renew his/her baptismal faith**.
- If the candidate maintains a conviction about being **baptised** as a believer, this shall be offered after a full pastoral consultation between the candidate, the minister, and the appropriate denominational minister(s) from the partner denominations.
- Upon this **baptism** such a person shall be eligible to be placed on the **Register of Members** as a Baptist only.

Where a person requesting Believer's Baptism has previously made a personal or public profession of faith in Confirmation, the request shall not be granted.

5.4 The legal requirement to keep a **Register of Baptisms** in each of the **Local Churches** shall be met, and this shall be regarded as a joint register. A **Register** of Infant **Dedications** and **Thanksgivings** shall similarly be kept, also as a joint register.

5.5 A joint service of **Confirmation** and/or **Believers' Baptism** shall be the accepted rites of adult public profession of faith, according to rites authorised by the **Sponsoring Body**. Representatives of all four **Parent Bodies** shall take part in the **Confirmation**.

During the joint preparation of candidates for **Confirmation** or **Baptism**, attention shall be given to teaching about the shared and distinctive beliefs of the **Denominations**.

Those received into **membership** in either of these ways shall normally become members of all the four **Denominations** and **multiple members** of the **Partnership**.

5.6 **Membership** of the **Partnership** shall be open to all those over the age of 16 years

- who have been baptised; and
- who worship regularly with one of the **local churches**; and
- who love and seek to follow Christ; and who are prepared to confess this publicly.

Membership is exercised primarily in one of the **local churches**.

5.7 Arrangements for transfer of membership into the Partnership shall reflect the member's previous church affiliation as follows :

- Where a member wishes to transfer from any one of the four **denominations** which comprise the Partnership, they may choose to continue in that membership, or request **extended membership** of all four denominations. Requests for **extended membership** shall be considered
 - for Methodist members - by the Local Church Council
 - for Baptist and United Reformed Church members – by the Members Meeting
 - for Anglican members – by the Partnership Council
- Where a member wishes to transfer from another denomination holding a Trinitarian basis of faith (but not being one of the Partnership's four denominations) they may request either membership of one of the four denominations or **extended membership**, using one of the routes listed above.
- Where a member wishes to transfer from another Local Ecumenical Partnership their membership options shall also be as above.

We encourage all transferring **members** to worship with one of the **Local Churches**; to love and seek to follow Christ; and to confess this publicly. Each transfer shall be recognized in a public act of worship.

5.8 There shall be a common **Register of Members**, including those on **Denomination** rolls, multiple **members** by virtue of joint **confirmation**, and those members of the Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, or United Reformed Churches who have sought **Extended Membership**. A separate list of **members** shall also be kept for each **Denomination**, **multiple members** and **extended members** being indicated on each list.

5.9 There shall be a separate **Electoral Roll** for the purpose of Church of England pastoral provision, for example where needed as qualification for Marriage in one of the churches of the Partnership. Any lay person shall be entitled to have his/her name entered on the **Electoral Roll** of the Partnership if he or she:

- is baptised;
- is age 16 years or upwards; and
- is a member of the Church of England (or of a Church in communion with the Church of England); resident in the parish, or if not resident has habitually attended public worship in the parish during the 6 months prior to enrolment; or
- is a member in good standing of a Church (not in communion with the Church of England) which subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and also declares him/herself to be a member of the Church of England and has habitually attended public worship in the parish during the 6 months prior to enrolment; and
- has signed the official form of application for enrolment.

5.10 Membership Discipline shall be a matter for each denomination following its own procedures. In any particular case, multiple members shall be subject to any denomination's discipline as agreed by the **Sponsoring Body** and the appropriate authorities in each **Denomination**, on the proposal of the Partnership Council. The standing of any **multiple member** with each **Denomination** shall be reviewed in the light of the outcome of any disciplinary process initiated under this provision.

6. Worship
and
Communion

6.1 Worship and **Communion** shall be celebrated in forms that reflect the rites, practices, traditions and developing traditions of the participating **Denominations**, or those approved by the Sponsoring Body.

6.2 All those who are baptised and recognised as communicants by their **Denomination** may receive the sacrament of Holy Communion at any such service, as their conscience allows.

6.3 Ordained ministers or other duly authorised persons shall preside at **Communion**, as permitted by **Denominational** legislation.

7.1 **The Staff Team** shall consist of the Ordained Clergy, Lay Ministers, Local Preachers and any others whom the **Partnership Council** may wish to appoint to the team, following reference to the **Sponsoring Body**. Current members of the **Staff Team** are listed in the Appendices to this **Constitution**.

7.2 Denominational procedures will be followed in the appointment of members of the **Staff Team**. The 'Guidelines for the Appointment of Clergy to **Local Ecumenical Partnerships**' agreed by the **Sponsoring Body** should also be followed.

7.3 Pastoral care of church members, regular church attendees and the wider community shall be the concern of the **Staff Team** and the **Local Churches**. They shall share this responsibility collaboratively, through locally appointed pastoral care teams.

7.4 **Local Church** members may be appointed to share with the **Staff Team** in leadership, either within **Local Churches** or within the **Partnership**. They shall be commissioned for their leadership role through prayer and laying of hands in the context of public worship.

7.5 Each **Local Church** shall have a named **Minister**, being a member of the **Staff Team** and designated by the **Partnership Council**.

7.6 **Staffing Consultative Group**. In accordance with CTE Constitution Guidelines the Group shall be consulted on the appointment of Ordained Clergy to the **Staff Team**. It shall also be consulted on other strategic staffing issues for the **Partnership**. The Group shall comprise :

- ◆ representatives of the **Church Partnership**; and
- ◆ representatives of the **Parent Bodies**; and
- ◆ representatives of the **Sponsoring Body**

Further details of representation and functions of this group are contained in the Standing Orders.

7.7 Ordained members of the **Staff Team** shall normally be appointed for an initial period of up to 7 years, depending on normal **Parent Body** practice. In the case of a Methodist Minister the initial period of appointment shall be 5 years.

Where a staff member has asked for a renewal and extension, there shall be a review process led by the relevant **Parent Body**, commencing 18 months before the scheduled end of the appointment.

7.8 Ordained members of the **Staff Team** shall be subject to the normal discipline of their ordaining **Denomination**. Non ordained members shall be referred to an appropriate discipline process through the **Sponsoring Body** (Sect 5.10 above).

7.9 All Staff shall be authorised for ministry by all four **Parent Bodies** of the **Partnership**, according to their normal procedures. In that context :

- The Methodist Circuit and District shall welcome a non-Methodist Minister, and shall seek Authorised Status from the Methodist Conference ;
- The United Reformed Church shall welcome a non-URC Minister in the Partnership as a member of the URC South Western Synod;
- The West of England Baptist Association shall recognise any Minister appointed or called to the Partnership as a Minister in the Partnership ;
- The Church of England Diocese of Bristol shall allow other Ministers to perform ministry in the Partnership according to the provisions of the **Canons of the Church of England** Section B43 'Of relations with other Churches' and B44 'Of Local Ecumenical Projects'.

7.10 Newly appointed members of the **Staff Team** shall be inducted and welcomed at a Service at which they, with other members of the **Staff Team**, members of the local churches and representatives of the **Sponsoring Body**, shall affirm / reaffirm the **Declaration of Intent** of the **Partnership**.

8. Joint
Decision
Making

8.1 Decision making for the **Partnership** shall be organised through the **Local Churches** within their normal practice, as defined by their **Standing Orders**. The principal **Partnership** body for joint decision-making shall be the **Partnership Council** (also known as the **Council**). The **Council** shall meet at least four times per year and shall be open for all members to attend.

For the purposes of the **United Reformed Church**, lay members of the **Partnership Council** shall be considered as the equivalent of **Elders**.

For the purposes of the **Methodist Church**, the **Partnership Council** shall be considered as the equivalent of the Church Council.

The **Council** shall comprise the **Staff Team** and appointed/elected lay people from each **Local Church** in the **Partnership**. Further details are in Appendix 3 Standing Orders. Those appointed or elected shall normally be or become members of the decision-making body of their **Local Churches**. In addition to other members the Methodist Circuit shall appoint a Circuit Steward to be a member of the Council, in accordance with Methodist Standing Order 611.

8.2 The **Council** shall appoint a Secretary and an honorary Treasurer at the **Partnership Annual General Meeting**. Where those appointed are **members** of the **Partnership**, they shall retain full voting rights at meetings of the **Council**.

8.3 The **Council** shall elect from its number a Chairperson and Vice Chair.

8.4 The **Council** may set up such committees and working groups as it may from time to time consider necessary. The current structure is shown in the Appendices to this **Constitution**, but does not form part of it.

8.5 In addition to ordinary **Council** meetings there shall be a **Partnership Annual General Meeting**, at which a report shall be given by the Chairperson or Secretary of the **Partnership Council**, and **Partnership** accounts be presented.

8.6 Other **Special General Meetings** may be held as required, according to the **Standing Orders**.

A **Special General Meeting** may be called at any time to discuss any substantial and significant issue, at the request of any one of the following :

- **The Partnership Council**
- A **Local Church** within the **Partnership**
- The **Sponsoring Body**
- A **Parent Body**

All members of the **Church Partnership** shall be eligible to attend and vote on any motions put to the meeting.

Non-members may also attend meetings and may speak by invitation of the Chair, but may not vote.

9. Premises

9.1 The **Partnership** shall oversee the buildings of the **Partnership** through the **Local Churches**. The buildings comprise :

All Saints Lydiard Millicent (Church of England)
St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze (Church of England)
St Mary's Stable Room (Church of England)
Holy Trinity Shaw (**Shared building**)
Toothill Church (**Shared building**)

9.2 Where a building is shared, arrangements for maintenance are governed by the relevant **Sharing Agreement**. In this context the Joint Council, as defined in the Sharing Agreement, may delegate its day to day management functions to the Partnership Council. In each case this shall be by formal decision, not by default. The Joint Council shall meet when new capital money is to be raised, or proposals to buy or sell land or property are considered.

Primary responsibility for care and maintenance of all church buildings shall lie with the **Local Church**. Regular inspection of shared and non shared buildings shall be governed by the procedures of the owning **Parent Body**.

Where there is any perceived conflict between the terms of this Constitution and a Sharing Agreement, the Sharing Agreement shall take precedence.

9.3 The Toothill Manse is a **shared building** owned by the United Reformed Church, and covered by a legal **Sharing Agreement**. Maintenance and upkeep is the responsibility of the **Joint Council**, which may delegate this function to the **Partnership Council** (9.2 above).

9.4 The **Local Church** at Westlea has no premises and normally meets in Westlea School. It has an external storage facility located at Westlea School. Care and maintenance is the responsibility of Westlea Church.

9.5 Any structural changes to any church building, or related capital expenditure, shall be subject to prior approval of the owning **Parent Body**, as required by the **Sharing Agreement**.

10. Finance	<p>10.1 Each of the Local Churches of the Partnership shall operate separate financial accounts managed under the authority of the Local Church Committee. They shall support the Partnership to meet its obligations to Parent Bodies and common expenses.</p> <p>10.2 Other organisations within the Partnership may also operate separate accounts, approved by Local Church Committees or by the Partnership Council.</p> <p>10.3 The Partnership shall operate a central financial account managed by the Treasurer under the authority of the Council. This shall be used to meet common expenses, ministry costs, and denominational fees and costs.</p> <p>10.4 The Council and Local Church Committees shall ensure that all accounts are managed according to the provisions of current charities legislation.</p> <p>10.5 In consultation with local church Treasurers, the Partnership Treasurer shall determine the share of common costs to be met by each Local Church, which is then approved by the Partnership Council. In the case of any disagreement or dispute between the Partnership Council and any Parent Body concerning the amounts due to central funds, either party may seek guidance from the Sponsoring Body.</p> <p>10.6 Both the Partnership accounts and consolidated Local Church accounts shall be presented to the Partnership Annual General Meeting for approval, following independent examination or audit as appropriate.</p>
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11.1 The **Local Churches** shall elect and nominate to the **Partnership Council**, members to serve on the representative bodies of the **Parent Bodies**. The **Partnership Council** (or **Parochial Church Council** in the case of the Anglican membership) shall hold ultimate authority for endorsing the nominations.

11.2 **Partnership Council** meetings shall be open to all members and held at least 4 times a year (as in 8.1 above).

11.3 The **Council** shall receive reports on the transactions of the **Parent Bodies**, and shall discuss and approve any resolutions that **Council** members wish to be presented to the **Parent Bodies**.

11.4 As required by Church of England Canon Law, the **Parochial Church Council (PCC)** shall comprise the Anglican members of the Partnership Council. In addition, membership of the PCC shall include other members of the Staff Team licensed by the Diocese of Bristol, and any Church Wardens, Deanery or Diocesan Synod representatives who are not otherwise members of the **Partnership Council**. Its special duties are outlined in 'The Synodical Government Measure 1969'.

11.5 The **Parochial Church Council** shall delegate all of its responsibilities to the **Partnership Council**, except those precluded under the Canons of the Church of England. These responsibilities in particular relate to:

- ◆ The application to the Chancellor of the Diocese of Bristol for Faculties for any alteration to any buildings owned by the Church of England in the Partnership.
- ◆ Until such time as a Sharing Agreement has been entered into on any church buildings owned by the Church of England in the Partnership, the responsibilities for Weddings in those churches shall rest with the PCC, according to Canon Laws B30-36.
- ◆ The responsibilities in law of the Parochial Church Council, with regard to the appointment of clergy, shall be exercised by the Partnership Council.

11.6 Each **Local Church** shall hold an open church meeting (members' meeting) at least four times in each year.

11.7 The **Council** shall elect one representative to serve on the **Swindon Churches Together Ecumenical Council**.

11.8 Other churches within the area may be invited at any time to apply for admission to membership of the **Church Partnership**. Applications shall be scrutinised and shall require approval by both the **Partnership Council** and the **Sponsoring Body**.

12. Review | 12.1 The **Sponsoring Body** shall ensure that the **Partnership** be evaluated with reference to its objectives set out in the **Declaration of Intent** and the **Constitution**. The interval between these Reviews shall not normally exceed 7 years.

13.
Continuity

13.1 The **Partnership** may be terminated only with the approval of the appropriate **Parent Bodies** in consultation with the **Partnership Council**, the **Local Churches** and the **Sponsoring Body**.

In the case of the Methodist Church the body consulted shall be the Committee for Local Ecumenical Development.

14. Amend-
ments

14.1 The **Constitution** of the West Swindon and The Lydiards **Church Partnership** may be amended by agreement of the **Partnership Council**, and of either the **Partnership Annual General Meeting**, or a Special General Meeting (of those qualified to vote at AGMs) called for that purpose. Such proposed amendments shall also require the approval of the appropriate **Parent Body committees** and the **Sponsoring Body**.

14.2 The Appendices to the **Constitution** may be amended by agreement of the **Partnership Annual General Meeting**, or a **Special General Meeting** (of those qualified to vote at AGMs) called for the purpose. These amendments shall not require the approval of the **Parent Bodies** or the **Sponsoring Body**.