

Contents

Accountability of clergy	3
Administrative Complexity.....	4
Adults (definition)	5
Children.....	5
Young People	5
Children admitted to Communion	6
Common Purse.....	8
Communion Presidency	10
Covenant (other forms)	10
Decision making	12
Denominational Parent Bodies	14
Ecumenism.....	15
Organic unity.....	15
Visible unity.....	15
Receptive Ecumenism	15
Emerge, multi-denominational.....	16
Infant Baptism policy	17
Interregnum	19
Lay Leadership	21
Membership.....	23
Multiple membership	23
Mission (of the Partnership)	25
Pastoral Care model.....	27
Pension Implication.....	29
Sharing Agreements for buildings.....	30
Single Congregation LEP.....	31
Sponsoring Body	32
Team Leader	33
Toothill + Westlea LEP.....	34
Westlea adopted by URC	35

These issues have arisen or been brought to light through our recent ISR review and the report. We have had discussions at Partnership Council and in local churches with regard to staffing changes and possible future partnership rearrangements, and we have started thinking through the scenarios presented for our consideration. Here we address misunderstandings, misapprehensions and simple mistakes that are worth correcting. We try to answer questions worth answering where we can.

You may find it useful to refer to when questions of interpretation or understanding arise. If you have further questions on details of the ISR report, our policies and procedures, what the constitution says or what it means, contact Chris Scarisbrick secretary@wswinlyd.org.uk

This document is based on cut-and-paste from existing material, many parts have been compiled by the leadership teams of the churches. Partnership Council has agreed the document, though it may be updated. Check the following location for updates:

<http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/meetings/2013-07-13-ISR-readout/>

The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying the website <http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/meetings/2013-07-13-ISR-readout/>. The page title is "Partnership council meeting".

The page layout includes a logo on the left with a green leaf and a white cross. Below the logo is a "Links" sidebar with the following items: Partnership, All Saints' Lydiard Millicent, Holy Trinity Shaw, St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze, Toothill, Westlea, emerge Youth groups, Partnership Council, Partnership Council, Goals and Reports, Publications, Meetings, meetings..., Our Policies, Our Constitution, and Web site development.

The main content area is titled "Papers" and contains a table with the following data:

Name	Last modified	Size	Description
Parent Directory		-	
Clarifications.pdf	26-Jul-2013 10:52	258K	
ISR-report.pdf	15-Jul-2013 14:16	712K	
Notes-from-ISR-readout-130713.pdf	26-Jul-2013 10:31	93K	

Below the table, there are five circular images representing different churches: All Saints Lydiard Millicent, Holy Trinity Shaw, St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze, Toothill, and Westlea.

The footer contains the following text: "Copyright © 2006-2013 West Swindon and the Lydiards Church Partnership; all rights reserved. Individual names and Trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Registered Charity Number 1141341. Use of this site is subject to our Web site [Privacy Policy](#) particularly those for [visitors](#) or [members](#). If you have any problems or queries relating to your use of this site please [contact us](#)."

Accountability of clergy

(ISR report P 4, Key Theme 5.1)

As far as formal clergy discipline is concerned, and for formal pastoral cover and career supervision etc, clergy are clearly responsible within their respective and various denominational structures. Synod, Circuit and Deanery and Diocese constraints etc. all apply. Clergy are called, appointed and posted via the [relevant denominational procedures](#)¹ (Constitution Schedule “Ministry” para 17 & 18).

For matters affecting partnership internal organisation, leadership and programming, clergy are responsible to the Partnership Council. Evidently this needs to be formally highlighted. For local day to day organisation of local church leadership, this responsibility relationship is delegated to and exercised through the local “appropriate authority”, according to [our constitution](#)² schedule para 5:

The Appropriate Authority for each Participating Church is:

- a) The leadership team of All Saints Lydiard Millicent;
- b) The leadership team of St Mary’s Lydiard Tregoze;
- c) The members’ meeting of Holy Trinity Shaw;
- d) The church committee of Toothill Church; and
- e) The members’ meeting of Westlea Church;

As a further example the members’ meeting at Westlea Church usually delegates its day-to-day operations to the annually-elected leadership team. Pastoral matters, rotas and responsibilities and budgeted expenditure are all delegated. Major decisions and non-budgeted expenditure are decided by a quarterly members’ meeting.

¹ relevant denominational procedures http://wswinyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_s17ministry.html

² our constitution schedule para 5 http://wswinyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_s03participating.html

Administrative Complexity

(of ecumenism, ISR report)

Partnership Council (20 or so people) meets 4 or 5 times in a normal year (!)

Partnership Standing Committee (5 people) currently meets 4 or 5 times a year between PC meetings to progress the PC business, and action anything delegated. It has no decision making power but recommends.

The clergy staff team (3 people) meet [whenever...]

Local church leadership teams (4 – 8 people) meet when they need to – [approx 6 times a year]

There may well be further meetings of particular ministry and other teams at local churches.

Local churches are supposed to hold quarterly congregational meetings [Our constitution](#)³ says (Schedule “Congregational Meetings” para 13 [and commentary](#)⁴). Some interpret this to mean members meetings, some hold open congregational meetings, local traditions vary. Across the Partnership it’s a bit inconsistent, but then we want local traditions to vary.

The clergy may well attend other relevant denominational meetings.

Some Anglican issues with legal force (building faculties, graveyards, foundation governorships etc) require the legal entity of the PCC to discuss, decide and sign stuff. Clearly this causes delay and extra work for local leadership when dealing with Anglican buildings etc.

Denominations frequently contact clergy, recognisable denominational officers and contacts at whatever local churches the denomination recognises. For some issues like child protection, having multiple administration organisations behind us, allows us to be flexible in the methods and processes we use locally to administer paperwork etc. We get 4 times the opportunities to be social and get training, as any single denomination church would.

It can be a lot of mail for some.

³ Constitution Schedule “Congregational Meetings” para 13 - http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_c09congregational_meetings.html

⁴ Commentary on congregational meetings - http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11com_c09congregational_meetings.html

Adults (definition)

(ISR report P15, Action point 9.2)

Adults are those over 16 years old. Yes, we know it's 18 for many civic legal purposes, but for all relevant church purposes a 16 year old should be treated as an adult. Strictly child protection legislation protects people up to the age of 18, and vulnerable adult legislation protects people over the age of 16. There is a fortuitous overlap where both sets of laws and guidelines apply to 16-18 year olds. So we consider you start becoming an adult (and are treated as such) at 16, and you stop being a child (and so stop being treated as such) at 18.

Children

Children are people who have not yet attained the age of 18. In order to be polite, we will prefer to call children over the age of 11, or who would normally attend a secondary school (in year 7 or above) **Young People**. See also **Adult**

Young People

Young People are **Children** over the age of 11, or who would normally attend a secondary school (in year 7 or above). We prefer to use the term Young people (person) if it applies. If a **Young Person** has attained the age of 16 we will consider them to be **Adult** (see our [vulnerable adult policy](#)⁵ for an example explanation)

Age	0-11 (or, up to and including School yr 6)	11-16 (or, up to and including School yr 11)	16-18 (or, up to and including School yr 13)	Over 18
They legally are	Child	Child	Child	Adult
We will call them, and treat them as	Child	Young Person	Adult	Adult

For the purposes of service attendance statistics we will record x/y where x is the number of adults (over 16 years) and y is the total number of children + young people.

⁵ vulnerable adult policy <http://wswinyd.org.uk/council/policy/vulnerableadult.html#Note-section-1>

Children admitted to Communion

(ISR report P15, Action point 9.1)

All Saints' position:

The Bishop of Bristol has given permission under the *Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations* for parishes within Bristol Diocese, to admit Baptised children to Communion before Confirmation subject to his approval through Daniel Jones the Diocesan Children's Adviser.

The clergy, Leadership Team and congregation of All Saints, Lydiard Millicent fully supports the view that baptism is the universal sign of complete initiation into the life of the Church. It is the desire of All Saints Lydiard Millicent to invite eligible children to take Communion.

Any child who is baptized (see exception for children from an evangelical/free church background*) and freely wishes to receive Communion, and has completed in full the preparation course. This would include children's ministry such as J-Club and Ignite The child would not normally be less than 3 years old.

Children under five only have bread. Once 5 they can take Wine.

Some children, for valid doctrinal reasons held by their parents or guardians*, (*mainly those from an evangelical or Free Church background), have not been Baptised as infants. For this church they may be prepared for receiving Communion before Confirmation, on the basis that they have already received a thanksgiving or dedication ,and that as soon as they are old enough and are willing will be Baptised. This exception to the general rule is being made because we are in an Ecumenical Partnership and therefore wish to be sensitive to those who hold varied understandings on the age at which children can be Baptised.

The permission of the parents or legal guardians for the child to receive Communion must be given in writing. A form will be provided.

- Preparation is the responsibility of the clergy, assisted by others, and would follow approved guidelines provided and or approved by The Diocesan Children's adviser and the Bishop, and seen by the Leadership Team
- Any member of the Clergy, or Children's and Youth Leaders, and other approved persons can carry out the preparation.
- Parents or legal guardians of the child are encouraged to participate in the child's preparation, which will take place in a family/all age training session open to the whole church, probably on a Saturday

In accordance with Diocesan guidelines a register of all children admitted to Holy Communion will be maintained.

Any changes to this policy will be agreed by the All Saints Leadership Team and notified to The Bishop of Bristol and the Diocesan Children's Advisor.

Westlea position:

Westlea Church will admit children to communion under the following conditions

- If the president is happy to administer communion to children
 - we will tell them beforehand it is our practise

- we recognise not every visiting president will be happy with this, if not we will allow them not to preside.
- If the parent, guardian or accompanying adult believes the child understands and is aware of the implications of receiving communion and is adequately prepared
 - We recognise that children’s understanding and faith has a tendency to vary from week to week, and we will be sensitive to this, allowing an accompanying adult to indicate at the time if it is appropriate.
 - We will from time to time, if not regularly, have teaching and discussion on communion, at Sunday Club sessions.

We do not find it helpful to define children as baptised or not baptised, we do not find it helpful to define children as pre- or post-confirmation. We do not, at the moment, maintain any list of children who are allowed to take communion.

We DO find it helpful to allow the president and parents to consider the individual child’s faith and understanding.

We will announce at the preparation for communion, Jesus’ “open table”, His invitation to children “who’s normal habit...”, and the option of His blessing.

These agreements have been extensively discussed and graciously agreed. We won’t change easily.

Conclusion

It seems we can agree – children who believe may be accepted in communion. The details of what public declarations and marks of saving faith are necessary, which vary between our traditions, apply primarily to membership and NOT to admission to communion. Our preparation of such children may vary in detail. Some keep a list, some don’t.

We would have to carefully consider in any partnership policy, how we would ensure fairness and pastoral sensitivity if children “who’s normal habit is to take communion...” in one place, were to worship elsewhere.

It seems our practise in communion is the same, with local variation only in who may preside.

Common Purse

This suggestion crops up in the ISR report, in several places, and is implied by several others.

ISR rep P6, Sect 5.4.2 Building Maintenance “It was suggested that the Partnership sell off one or more of its church sites and gather a larger congregation in the remaining site(s).” and

Sect 5.4.3 Hidden costs “There was also concern that the Partnership did not recognise the high financial cost of maintaining the older buildings within the Partnership (particularly All Saints). The question was raised as to whether the calculations for the financial contribution to the Partnership from individual churches recognised the higher costs of maintaining an older building.”

ISR report P7, Sect 5.4.6 Multiple bank accounts “Each church has its own bank account in addition to a Partnership bank account. Could some of the complexity in running the Partnership be reduced if there was just one bank account for all the churches?” and

Sect 5.4.7 Common Purse “Alongside calls for the consolidation of all banks accounts into one there were also concerns expressed about the tensions caused by having a ‘common purse’. It was felt that local church leadership teams do not understand the Partnership’s financial commitments to the four denominations because of their lack of knowledge about the financial details of the common purse.”

P12, Sect 6.2.4 Property concerns “A concern was expressed about the degree to which the Partnership Council fulfilled its role in term of taking responsibility for property issues at the local church level.”

The current situation is that we have a treasurer, a bank account, a budget and a set of books for each church AND another one (of them all) for the Partnership. This exists for a multiplicity of reasons, it is certainly not a default position, or just for historic reasons. Some of the churches have restricted funds where money has been given for a specific purpose (eg buildings) and the money can only be spent on this. We have tried to ensure decisions with a financial impact are made as close to the place where those finances are raised. However there may be good reasons to centralise it.

It is fair to say the best people to know about and deal with the issues of buildings, are the people who meet in it regularly. People also have affection for “their” building – it’s often a part of their decision to join the community that worships in it. That’s why the Partnership Council delegates building issues to the local church congregation. Until we all, the whole partnership, worships regularly in each building (perhaps in turn) it is clearly good for local people to be responsible for the decisions regarding “their” building. Having recognised this, it implies that there will always need to be local budget, a bank account and an account book. Which implies a local treasurer.

The other model of building finances might be to arrange a partnership fabric committee to deal with all the buildings, both the general day to day running costs and the building renovations and enhancements. Clearly this would need people to serve, from each local church community (those

with a building). But it could allow the removal of the treasurer, budget, accounts, and books from each local church and just allocating some of the budget to the building maintenance team among other central teams. It immediately leads on to considering the removal of other leadership responsibilities from local teams, leaving perhaps only the local church community pastoral care. If all the financial decisions are made centrally, most of the decisions (many of which have financial impact) would need to be made by the people immediately responsible for the budget ie the Partnership Council. It is conceivable that if there were no leadership teams at local church level, the Partnership Council could have many more motivated people to populate several partnership sub-committees focussed around functions (buildings, programme, training and lay ministry, admin, finance and budgets, clergy staffing, emerge and youth mission, messy church and family mission and children's work, schools links, other mission activities...) rather than geography (Toothill, HTS...) It might help make us more identifiable as a single congregation. It certainly reduces perceived "duplication" and helps the single congregation aspiration

There are also cons...We might lose some local variety, amongst which is mixed in some denominational tradition. The amount of work that would need to be done by the partnership treasurer dealing with all the churches building payments as well as the other payments that are currently handled by the individual churches eg charitable giving and purchasing consumables for refreshments, Sunday schools etc would be considerably more than the current role. It may then be difficult to find a voluntary person to take on that amount of work, it may well need a small team of treasurers...

Communion Presidency

(ISR report P15, Action point 9.1)

Our constitution http://wswinyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_s14worship.html says

14) The LEP shall respect the faith and practice of each of the Participating Denominations. Worship shall safeguard and present the doctrines, practices, traditions and developing traditions of each of the Participating Denominations and be conducted in accordance with denominational practices and/or using rites adopted by the Sponsoring Body. A balanced and varied pattern of worship shall be aimed for in order to maximise the riches of each tradition and to enable the congregation to explore and express its ecumenical life and aspiration, while at the same time ensuring that worship is accessible and sustaining for all its members. Ordained priests, ministers or other duly authorised persons shall preside at the Eucharist as permitted by the rules of the relevant Participating Denomination.

15) The authorisations of each Participating Denomination apply to that denomination's services.

16) All those recognised as communicants by the Participating Denominations may receive the sacrament. In arranging services encouragement shall be given to the participation of the whole congregation, especially Lay/Local Preachers, Readers, and others authorised as leaders of worship or as preachers.

So at communion services advertised as Anglican, authorised Anglican clergy holding Bishops Permission to Officiate, and by permission of an Anglican member of the staff team (usually the one with pastoral oversight of a local church), may preside.

At communion services advertised as Baptist, any member in good standing with the local church and with the agreement of the Partnership Council (which agreement will usually be delegated to the decision of the local church committee or members' meeting), may preside.

At communion services advertised as Methodist, any Methodist presbyter with permission from the Circuit Superintendant Minister may preside. It is possible special dispensation from the District Chairman may be gained, to enable our Methodist Lay Preachers to preside. We're working on it.

At communion services advertised as URC, any URC minister may preside. It is possible special dispensation from the Synod may be gained, to enable other lay people to preside. We're working on it.

If a communion service is not specifically advertised as denominationally "branded" the president (whoever they may be) will already (by dint of the rota arrangements or otherwise) hold the agreement of the Partnership Council (usually delegated to the local church committee or members' meeting) to preside using whatever form of liturgy is agreed between the president and the Partnership Council (usually delegated locally as before).

[Opinion] It looks complicated when written out, but in practice it isn't; and it's what we already do.

Covenant (other forms)

(Comments at Sat 13 July meeting)

Churches Together in England (CTE) have the following guidance for Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs)

They include the Definition of an LEP⁶ and 6 Categories⁷ of LEP and model constitutions for a

- Single Congregation LEP⁸ and for
- Congregations in Covenanted Partnership⁹. There is information about
- Shared Building Partnerships¹⁰ and the remaining kinds of LEP¹¹ (Chaplaincy, Mission and Education) with examples of
- Education,
- Prison and
- Health Care Chaplaincies.

There is probably more information there, than you'd want.

Though we may not immediately feel like a single congregation, if you attend a Partnership Council meeting, if you go to messy Church, or if you try to work out any denominational backing of emerge, we can act like it.

We however are not currently the shape that would fit a “congregations in covenanted partnership” LEP. That really fits pre-existing single-denomination congregations who wish to work closely in ecumenical harmony, (often to share costs). It doesn't really fit us now, as we have developed multi-denominational/ecumenical congregations who would not all want to go back to single denomination churches.

A “shared building” model of LEP suits those who wish to meet as separate congregations but share the building...Like the congregation that used to meet at Toothill in the afternoon might have become if they had wanted to share the costs of the building as opposed to just renting it. New build churches with LEPS that include Roman Catholic congregations, are often of this type with separate membership lists and worship meetings, because of the difficulties and sensitivities of joint worship.

Anyway, apart from setting aspiration, some details of constitution, fine-tuning of decision making and legal ownership considerations, its mostly just a name label.

⁶ Definition of an LEP - <http://www.churches-together.net/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=265212>

⁷ Categories of LEP - <http://www.churches-together.net/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=312808>

⁸ Single Congregation LEP - <http://www.churches-together.net/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=87297>

⁹ Congregations in Covenanted Partnership - <http://www.churches-together.net/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=313068>

¹⁰ Shared Building Partnerships - <http://www.churches-together.net/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=311411>

¹¹ Chaplaincy, Mission and Education LEPS - <http://www.churches-together.net/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=313062>

Decision making

(ISR scenarios)

A change of the name of the partnership would alter the main body of the constitution; a change of list of participating churches in the LEP would change the schedule to the constitution; a [dissolution of the LEP](#)¹² with no further existence of its legal entity would be complex and we'd call on our denominational **Parent Bodies** and the Charity Commission for legal assistance.

According to our [constitution para 55](#)¹³,

This Constitution (including the Schedule) may be amended at either a General or a Special Congregational Meeting provided that:

- a) No amendment may be made to this clause that would have the effect of making the Charity cease to be a charity at law or altering the purpose of the Charity if the change would not be within the reasonable contemplation of the Members;
- b)
- c) Members are given 21 days' notice and resolve by not less than two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting; and
- d) the resolution receives the approval of the Sponsoring Body and of the appropriate authority of each of the Participating Denominations.

If changes are made to the makeup of the partnership (churches leaving or joining), the decisions should be made by an EGM or Special Congregational Meeting (where Congregation here means that of the whole membership across the partnership/LEP).

Apart from our AGM which is a cross-partnership thing, we tend to hold congregation(partnership) meetings as a set of congregation(local-church) meetings in all local churches, maybe at different times, and "add up" the results at Partnership Council. See the [commentary to the relevant section of our constitution](#)¹⁴. If we kept strict records of attendance this could be achieved, we'd have to try hard to ensure quorum (one quarter of membership) and wide representation. This is probably best done locally rather than one big meeting (it's also easier to arrange a date). Any vote which changes the nature of the entity, or limits its future options, would have to be 2/3.

If Partnership Council were sufficiently informed by local church discussions, they could make a "recommendation and request" – which would not require a big EGM. We'd request, then the Sponsoring Body would arrange denominational bodies to do it to us - they'd need to arrange a "final" EGM.

This is all speculative, so far.

Partnership Council met on Thurs 25 July at All Saints LM, to agree on the process as follows:

Local churches will be asked to carefully and prayerfully consider ALL scenarios presented by ISR. Despite the differing models of church decision making among and between our local churches, Partnership Council requires that these considerations are by, and seen to be by, an overwhelming majority of those in membership and regular attendance.

¹² dissolution of the LEP - http://wswinyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_c57dissolution.html

¹³ constitution para 55 - http://wswinyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_c55amendment.html

¹⁴ Commentary "congregational meetings" -

http://wswinyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11com_c09congregational_meetings.html

The outcome shall be a list of advantages and disadvantages of each scenario primarily to that local church’s mission objectives, and secondarily, to that local church’s pastoral situation. Please also consider to what extent the choice would address our major concerns (clergy stress, finance, duplication of meetings etc)

Local Church:			
	Advantages	Disadvantages	Order of preference (1,2,3,4)
Scenario 1			
Scenario 2			
Scenario 3			
Scenario 4			

Partnership Council will meet on Mon evening 7 Oct at Toothill, to choose one scenario; clearly PC will choose whichever option then seems the least worst. This will form a recommendation to our Sponsoring Body.

We are intending to hold an Extraordinary Members meeting of the Partnership, on Sunday afternoon 24 Nov 2:30pm at Holy Trinity Church Shaw, in conjunction with Swindon Churches Together Sponsoring Body, to implement the final decision.

We suspect and hope the Sponsoring Body will arrange our Denominational parent organisations to administer to us some rearrangement that is similar to our decision; that will however be somewhat out of our hands.

Denominational Parent Bodies

see also **Sponsoring Body**

The term “Parent Bodies”, as we bandy it around, usually refers to “the 4 denominations”; strictly it means the appropriate authority groups or meetings of the denominations. Let our constitution be our guide:

...on [Participating Denominations, para 3](#)¹⁵

The Participating Denominations are:

- a) The Church of England;
- b) The Methodist Church;
- c) The Baptist Union of Great Britain; and
- d) The United Reformed Church.

..and on the [Appropriate regional and bodies of the participating denominations, para 25](#)¹⁶

The LEP shall maintain a proper relationship to the appropriate local and regional bodies of the Participating Denominations, fulfilling necessary constitutional requirements. These bodies are:

- a) in the case of the Church of England, the Swindon Deanery and the Diocese of Bristol;
- b) in the case of the Methodist Church, the Upper Thames Circuit;
- c) in the case of the United Reformed Church, the South Western Synod; and
- d) the West of England Baptist Regional Association and the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

¹⁵ Participating Denominations, para 3 -

http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_s03participating.html

¹⁶ Appropriate bodies, para 25 - http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_s23denominations.html

Ecumenism

[Ecumenism](#)¹⁷ can be summarised as “...initiatives aimed at greater Christian unity or cooperation...”

Organic unity

This probably most closely describes the diplomatic work of uniting church governance, mutual recognition of membership, ministry, sacrament and financial interdependence.

The United Reformed Church and its history is probably the best example of such a quest.

Having held out that laudable goal, “..that they may be one” [[John 17:11](#)], we also recognise that even if there is complete organic unity “...the body is not made up of one part but of many” [[1Cor 12:14](#)], which leads us to:

Visible unity

United in the same basic beliefs, we admit we are all working towards the same goals in the long term, and we celebrate our variety. This view of ecumenism is apparent from the character of first century Christianity, which was marked by diversity as well as unity. The unifying elements were monotheism; the conviction that the historical Jesus was "the exalted one" who was "to bring God and man finally together"; a common faith and promise of forgiveness, salvation, and Spirit; the Jewish scriptures "interpreted in the light of the revelation of the Christ event," and "all Christians practiced baptism in the name of Jesus and joined in the common meals from which emerged the Lord's Supper as such..." [James D.G. Dunn: *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry Into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1977, Chapter XV.]

During the lifetime of the West Swindon and the Lydiards LEP there has been a noticeable shift in the wider ecumenical focus and practice from organic to visible unity. This is a factor that needs to be taken into consideration when reflecting on the future direction of the LEP.

Receptive Ecumenism

(ISR report P1; & P14, sect 7.2, Scenario 2, subpara e;)

In the spirit of “receptive ecumenism” each church of the Partnership should focus on what it can receive from the other churches’ worship styles, theology, practice, governance, rather than what the other churches can receive from them.

A suitable link ([Churches Together in England on Receptive Ecumenism](#)¹⁸) to start your reading, though beware they use the word “Church” to mean those of a single denominational church...not quite our experience.

¹⁷ Wikipedia “Ecumenism” - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenism>

¹⁸ CTE Receptive Ecumenism - <http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/91312/Churches Together in/Local Ecumenism/Resources/Worship and reflection/Receptive ecumenism/Receptive ecumenism.aspx>

Emerge, multi-denominational

(Comments at Sat 13 July meeting)

Some were concerned that Emerge might change character if specifically adopted by an Anglican benefice per ISR Scenario 1 or 4.

It is fair to say that activities at the various emerge groups are not immediately identifiable as denominational. Even those leaders at emerge who have a strong denominational background do not constrain the emerge activities. The group is young-person-centric, aimed at encouraging their personal character, relationship and life choices, and faith. If young people achieve faith and wish to make a public statement then they are encouraged to seek confirmation (if baptised as an infant) or baptism (if not). The discussion about membership of a church is not relevant to this as they clearly consider the emerge community to be their church, certainly for the time being. Discussions about the young person's membership of other churches is likely to focus more on friendship groups and worship styles than on any denominational affiliation.

It is difficult to see how this would need to change if emerge was adopted by a solely Anglican church. The current staff would resist any such change.

If the partnership dissolved or changed significantly in its makeup, it is probable that all the local churches who currently support the work with money, prayer and finances would continue to do so. We might even decide to sign a letter of understanding to make this clear and public. The possibility that we might change doesn't devalue the work itself.

We would have to carefully consider the accountability of the emerge management team.

Infant Baptism policy

(ISR report P15, Action point 9.1)

We have (or at least, had) a leaflet that was available for those who enquired about baptism. The text follows:

Quote...

We want a nice christening

Mum wants me to get the baby “done”

Can I book the Church for a baptism?

Since I discovered Jesus I want to bring up my child as a Christian

...Unquote

This leaflet

Thank you for asking about a Service in Church for your child. This leaflet will tell you about the different sorts of Service that are available, and help you to take the next steps. If you have any questions then please ask your minister or the person who gave you this leaflet, you will find some helpful telephone numbers on the back page.

Service of Thanksgiving

This Service is the usual starting place for families who wouldn't normally come to Church, but still believe in God.

You know that God has created the world around us and you recognise His loving hand at work in bringing your child to birth. So you want to come to Church to say a public thank you for your child.

Also, like some parents in the Bible, you want to ask Jesus for His blessing on your child. In this service the minister will lay their hand upon your child and pray for God's blessing upon them.

For many people the Thanksgiving Service has other advantages too:

- you are not asked to say things you may not be sure you believe;
- there are no promises made, which you may find it difficult to keep;
- you leave open the possibility of a Baptism, if and when either you or the child decides it is right

Can we go further?...

...Yes, if it's the right thing to do

The Service of Infant Baptism

This Service is for the children of practising Christians. They have experienced God's forgiveness of their sins and received His gift of His new life. They will usually be in Church on Sundays, not because they have to be, but because they want to be.

Since such parents are part of the Church, they want their children to grow up as part of it too. The Baptism Service includes very important promises as it marks the public start of life in the Christian Church.

You will be asked to declare the Christian Faith and to promise to pray for your child; to bring up you child within the Christian Church; and to be part of that yourself. The Church congregation will also promise to be there to support and encourage you and your child in your Christian journey.

The Service of Dedication

This Service is similar to the Service of Infant Baptism, the same level of Christian commitment is expected of the parents and similar promises are made. The vital difference is that no water is used and no Baptism takes place. Instead the child is dedicated, as Hannah in the Old Testament dedicated her son to the Lord forever.

This allows the child to decide if they want to be Baptised when they are old enough to make a mature choice. The 2 different approaches reflect the traditions of different Denominations. Because we work together here, you are able to choose according to your conscience in any of the Churches.

What can I do next?

1. Ask your minister for details of preparation/courses that you may be asked to attend. This is likely to be brief for Thanksgiving and longer for a Baptism or Dedication.
2. After doing your preparation, you can agree to a date with your minister for the Service. This will be during one of the main Services on a Sunday, we do not do private Services.
3. Keep on finding out more. There are so many good things about being in God's Church. Some people find that having a Thanksgiving Service is just the start, as they grow into faith one of the other Services becomes appropriate later.

Did you know?

There are facilities for children and babies in all of the Churches, don't feel you have to stay away because of the "little ones"

Does anything more need to be said or done?

Interregnum

(ISR report P4, Sect 5.1 3rd para)

It was also noted that, when a church experiences a gap in ministerial oversight due to delays in making a new appointment, it is often not clear to that church who has a mandate for decision making within the church.

All decision making in the partnership is the responsibility of the Partnership Council, this does NOT mean they decide everything. Day to day decision making in the local church is delegated to varying bodies. According to [our constitution](#)¹⁹ schedule para 5:

The Appropriate Authority for each Participating Church is:

- a) The leadership team of All Saints Lydiard Millicent;
- b) The leadership team of St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze;
- c) The members' meeting of Holy Trinity Shaw;
- d) The church committee of Toothill Church; and
- e) The members' meeting of Westlea Church;

Usually, when a minister leaves, there is some interregnum during the time taken for planning ministry changes and calling another minister. It has been our practice that we nominate a member of the existing clergy to take overall pastoral responsibility for that local church in the interim. Clearly pastoral matters are best dealt with by the local leadership, and this would normally be done in conjunction with the nominated clergy. External communications can be diverted via our partnership office, through which anyone suitable and available may be located. In these times we rely on our wide ranging rotas, and the goodwill of our friends.

Decision making about the shape of ministry across the partnership is done by a body we form to do this job - the legendary, short-lived and exotic beast that is the Staffing Consultative Group.

Let's look at the [Constitution on "Ministry"](#)²⁰, paras 17-19:

17) Authorised ministry within the LEP shall be provided by ministers (whether clergy or lay) duly appointed by the Participating Denominations, after consultation with the Sponsoring Body.

18) The procedures of the relevant Participating Denominations shall be followed in the appointment/call of ministers. Recognising, however, the importance of continuity, the LEP expects that those responsible for the appointment/call of ministers shall select persons who will respect and develop the ecumenical character of the LEP. To that end, when it is expected that a minister or member of the ministry team serving the LEP may leave, or before any major changes in the responsibility of the minister presently in post are considered, or if additions to the ministry team are being contemplated, the agreed procedure of the Sponsoring Body shall be followed.

19) There shall normally be a practice of alternating ministry between the Participating Free Church Denominations. At least one Church of England Minister shall normally be a member of the ministry team.

This section is so important, it has [commentary](#)²¹:

¹⁹our constitution schedule para 5 - http://wswinyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_s03participating.html

²⁰ Constitution on "Ministry", paras 17-19 - http://wswinyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_s17ministry.html

In accordance with CTE Constitution Guidelines a Staffing Consultative 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.

We always try to have at least one representative from the local church or churches affected, as well as those mentioned. We usually limit the Parent Body invitations to those denominations likely to be invited to post a minister to us. We try to have a sympathetic non-partnership chair or convenor.

We almost never simply back-fill a vacancy. Upon any staffing changes we always consider deployment of existing staff across all churches, denomination of any new staff, ministry needs as they are at the time, ministry needs in the foreseeable future, and our partnership (and local church) mission priorities. Then we have to fit into whatever procedure the relevant denomination recognises. That's one of the reasons why it seems to take ages. Another is that getting busy people together for an extra meeting is tricky.

During discussions of the current issues in our partnership, the Partnership Council has consciously and deliberately formed a Staffing Consultative Group from itself entire, and a variable mixture of friends from SCTSB and ISR.

²¹ commentary on the Ministry section -
http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11com_s17ministry.html

Lay Leadership

(ISR Report P15, Action Point 9.6)

As mentioned in the Clarification on decision making in an interregnum:

All decision making in the partnership is the responsibility of the Partnership Council, this does NOT mean they decide everything. Day to day decision making in the local church is delegated to varying bodies. According to [our constitution](#) schedule para 5:

The Appropriate Authority for each Participating Church is:

- a) The leadership team of All Saints Lydiard Millicent;
- b) The leadership team of St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze;
- c) The members' meeting of Holy Trinity Shaw;
- d) The church committee of Toothill Church; and
- e) The members' meeting of Westlea Church;

All Saints Church Lydiard Millicent has a church leadership team comprising lay folk and two clergy, lay chaired, that leads church life. Lay convened ministry teams are delegated to do most things involved in church life. Leading worship and preaching is clergy led, though the primarily lay All Age team lead each 3rd Sunday. Mission to schools is done by a clergy led, though otherwise lay team. Alpha and Christianity Explored courses are lay led. The involvement of lay leadership is limited by time - busy people working find it difficult to sign up to do courses in the evenings run by the Diocese

St Marys Church Lydiard Tregoze has a church leadership team comprising 12 lay folk (one chairing) and one clergyman, that leads church life. Housegroup is led by 2 or 3 lay leaders, the pastoral team is all lay people, the communications team is all lay people, a ChurchWarden coordinates and liaises with clergy. We have 2 lay people confident or trained in leading worship and 1 who preaches. We have lay missionary involvement in industrial chaplaincy and school governorship and youth and childrens work.

Holy Trinity Church Shaw has a church committee comprising 5 lay folk, lay chaired, delegated by the church members meeting (which is the appropriate body) to administer the church life on a day-to-day basis.. Housegroup leadership is led by 2 lay people, the pastoral team is lay convened, though it is early days yet. We have 3 or 4 lay people who are happy to lead worship or preach. In mission we have lay people involved in schools work and supporting emerge and messy church.

Toothill church committee is the decision making "appropriate body", it comprises 5 lay folk and a supernumerary Methodist minister, and is lay chaired. 2 of the 3 subcommittees are lay convened. The housegroup is clergy led. There is a lay-led mother and toddlers group. Ad hoc activities are led by individual or lay teams. Toothill have 4 accredited lay preachers active across the partnership and beyond.

Westlea has a leadership team comprising 6 lay folk and (currently)two clergy, lay chaired, delegated by the church members meeting (which is the appropriate body) to administer the church life on a day-to-day basis. Westlea has one housegroup which is lay led and convened, and a regular prayer meeting also lay led and convened. Westlea has a lay pastoral coordinator as point of contact for church family pastoral concerns and a lay community pastoral contact. About 1 third of the membership has experience of leading worship or preaching, though not all of those would do so regularly. As most of our members are in employment or otherwise busy for the majority of

weekdays, our mission is targeted through friendship evangelism, individual members and adherents being encouraged to engage in outreach by being the Body of Christ with their friends. We have several folk involved with emerge activities.

The existing cross-partnership mission activities, messy church and emerge, are both lay convened, and primarily lay led.

It could be argued that what we need is not so much more lay leadership, but rather more recognition of the existing lay leadership!

Membership

Our constitution says (on [“Membership” at para 5²²](#))

...persons shall be entitled to membership of the Charity if entitled to membership of the LEP in accordance with the provisions of the Schedule.

Our denominations all allow membership to those who are Baptised using the Trinitarian wording.

And the relevant parts of the [schedule \(paras 9, 10, 11 and 13\)](#) ²³ essentially allows the following:

Pre-existing membership of a single denomination that is one of “our 4”, can be directly transferred into us

Pre-existing membership of a church that is not one of “our 4” denominations, but holds a Trinitarian basis of faith and is in “good standing” with one or more of “our 4” to be taken as supporting circumstances for an application for membership here.

Pre-existing membership of multiple denominations (as part of an LEP elsewhere) can be transferred in principle, but only “our 4” can be supported.

We do not allow membership of 2 or 3 of the 4, just one or all.

Those who wish to be a member among us may still hold sole membership of a single denomination we call this single denominational membership.

Multiple membership

We allow those who have been baptised as a believer or confirmed in a multiple denominational service (which is how we do believers’ Baptisms and Confirmations, here) to be allowed to take multiple membership of all 4 denominations if they so wish; this we refer to as multiple membership.

In order not to allow discrimination among us, we encourage people to express the “wish to be known among us as multiple members” of all 4 denominations if they so wish, even if they have not been confirmed here in a multiple denominational service. We think this is strictly outside the rules of 2 or 3 of the 4 denominations, but we don’t tell them.

People who have been baptised as a child and who have then chosen to be baptised as an adult are not allowed to take multiple membership. That’s a Baptist-only thing.

Generally, multiple membership (or the wish to be known among us as a multiple member of all 4) cannot be transferred out elsewhere. People would have to revert to their historic membership if they had one, or simply re-apply where ever they end up.

²² “Membership” at para 5 - http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_c04membership.html

²³ schedule (paras 9, 10, 11 and 13) - http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_s07initiation.html

Membership IS membership of the partnership (single congregation...!), but it is held and expressed locally. Lists are collated and held locally, only statistics are summed when we report.

The Church of England requires a separate list - the Electoral Roll. This fulfils many of the same functions as the civic Electoral Roll. It is updated and maintained separately. Everyone who wishes (and is entitled) to be an Anglican-only member must sign up to the Anglican Electoral Roll. If a member of the partnership “wishes to be known among us as a multiple member of all 4” (and is entitled to) then they must also sign up to the Anglican Electoral Roll. We maintain this list locally, we don't send the names to the Diocese, we just send statistics.

When it comes to statistics, we report to each denomination the number of members solely of that denomination, plus one quarter of the number of those who have multiple membership, plus one quarter of the number that “wish to be known among us as a multiple member of all 4”

The way we administer membership means we almost never have to refer to, or discriminate between, the different types.

Speculating about the future:

If a local church decided it was no longer a part of the partnership and reverted to a single denomination, then matching single denominational membership would be unaffected. Multiple denominational membership of the partnership could be transferred to single denominational membership there. Single denominational membership that didn't match would not be supported and some sort of membership change would have to occur - either a person would change denomination, leave membership, or change church.

If a local church (or a group of them) decided to leave the partnership and became a new ecumenical partnership or ecumenical congregation it is likely that most membership options could continue. If the denominational parent bodies are different in the new arrangement than in the old, then only the varieties of membership allowed under the new arrangement will be supported.

Mission (of the Partnership)

The ISR report echoes our published documents, web site etc:

The overarching vision of the Partnership is “to be the People of God and extend the Kingdom of God throughout West Swindon and the Lydiards”. Within the Partnership literature the image is frequently used of five burning coals (representing the five participating churches) which burn brighter when they are brought together.

The mission of the Partnership is summarised in the constitution with the wording of the “five marks of mission”:

- to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
- to teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- to respond to human need by loving service
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

In that the partnership is in many ways the sum of the 5 local churches, the “mission” of the partnership is also the sum of the local mission objectives of the local churches. These have been recently collected:

[W] Take the Good News about Jesus to every person in Westlea and encourage them to receive Him as their Lord and Saviour. Care for and teach every Christian believer so that they can become mature disciples of Jesus.

[ASLM] We seek to worship the lord our God. We express our worship through all that we do and all that we are; giving of ourselves, our love, our time, our money and our gifts. We seek to encourage one another in developing our faith. A life of prayer which encompasses listening to God, praying faithfully for one another, the local community and for the needs of the world. Every Child, Every Teen, every adult praying. We are a group of Christians who worship in the Church of All Saints Lydiard Millicent welcoming all who believe in or seek to know more about the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe in the authority of the Bible as the word of God. We seek to know, share and apply its message. We seek to share our faith with others. Welcoming all ,we seek to love, serve and care for everyone and to be a community of wholeness. Each member is unique and has different gifts and skills. We seek to support one another to develop these skills. As part of the West Swindon and the Lydiard's Partnership we value a multitude of traditions and styles of worship. We also value our historical roots and what God will do amongst us in the future. All Saints Church aims to make known and share the love of God within our communities.

[SMLT] To know Christ and to make him known. To draw people in.

[T] God Father Son & Holy Spirit is special and important to us. We're in the centre of our community. We invite the presence of God into our community through us. God is important and the people in our community are too. People are important to us, no matter what background. We welcome you. We are inclusive, open flexible and adaptable.

[HTS] As a church ...

- We want to continue learning to follow Jesus.

- We pray that we may grow in the love of Christ both as individuals and as a group of God's people.
- We want to be able to serve Christ in the area of Shaw by our care and support and friendship of those whom we meet.
- The wider world is also very much a part of our Christian life in our work of relief, justice and peace.
- We are a Fairtrade Church this means we use Fairtrade foods when ever we can.

Annually we augment or add detail to our Partnership's mission, by agreeing on areas of particular focus for the year. [This year, 2013, we agreed²⁴](#), among other things to

Reach out to Children and Young people through our local churches and together via Messy Church, Schools work and Emerge

The future

We assume our local churches are the best place to carry out mission in most of our local communities. This leave the partnership to be the best forum to address mission among communities that are not so evidently confined to local geography, or perhaps existing communities where we would need to work collaboratively to resource the work. We might consider addressing

- Encourage a model of friendship evangelism where the Good News of Jesus is shared in word and action
- Developing and using the gifts of those within the partnership with music and creative arts perhaps by forming a children's choir
- Work with the elderly in our local communities, perhaps building on the model of gen2gen
- Widening our schools assemblies work into other schools, lunchtime or after school clubs etc
- Chaplaincy – industrial estates and factories. Maybe in conjunction with ISR
- Debt Counselling – in conjunction with [CAP²⁵](#) or other existing credible organisations
- Parenting classes – in conjunction with primary schools or the local family centres – maybe initially just resourcing the childcare and hospitality, or funding...

The initial need of any of these mission initiatives, would simply be a couple of motivated, capable people. Some need people during the day, some don't.

²⁴ Mission goal for 2013 - <http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/report/#Goals>

²⁵ CAP, Christians Against Poverty - <http://capuk.org/>

Pastoral Care model

(ISR report P16, Action point 9.5)

[SMLT] (from the web site)

One of the greatest ways to witness to the world about our faith is to live the Kingdom of God so that people cannot miss it. The early church was famous in the world around because people saw how the Christians loved one another. The world is yearning for love and community. This is the founding principle of why we offer Pastoral Care.

At St Mary's this care is offered, by the Minister and a group of Pastoral Friends - these individuals approved by the Church are asked to be aware of a number of families and individuals. In some cases they will be the first point of call before a Minister is contacted.

[The principles of pastoral care](#)²⁶

[W]

Westlea have appointed a member of the leadership team as church family pastoral coordinator, who will be the first point of contact for church family pastoral issues. The coordinator will forward pastoral issues to relevant leaders, those in the congregation with pastoral giftings, suitable friends or the clergy if necessary.

[T]

Toothill have a pastoral team, trained in basic pastoral care, this team is "backed up" by Jan Partridge as an experienced retired minister. The team could equally be backed up by other clergy as required.

[HTS]

Holy Trinity have a pastoral team, who are backed up by any available clergy person.

[ASLM]

All Saints have a pastoral team, backed up locally by Tudor and Tricia Roberts. They could equally be backed up by any available clergy person available.

Conclusion

In the times of decreasing clergy availability, and in times of financial constraints where stipendiary ministry is increasingly pressured, it seems clear that body ministry is, in the first instance often best performed by suitably gifted lay workers. These may be formally (denominationally) trained, or not. They may be formally (denominationally) recognised or not. They may be locally recognised with ministry only appropriate to their friends or local church community (house group leaders or

²⁶ The principles of pastoral care - <http://www.stmaryslydiardtregoze.org.uk/page21.html>

similar). They may be released into ministry for significant amounts of time, or purely “spare-time” people.

It seems this model could be formally agreed between us. Perhaps a role description (and the limitations of the role) might be usefully worked on.

People who pastorally minister to their particular friends and neighbours, to their housegroup brethren on an ad-hoc basis, simply need to be willing Christians. It’s not a bad idea for their leadership team to be aware that they have acted this way, not least so that they can be helped if it all gets too much!

People who pastorally minister to people across their local church community on an ad-hoc basis, need to be Christians gifted in suitable areas. Their willingness and gifts should be approved by their local church leadership team. They ought to have had some sort of training course in listening, there are many suitable courses available. As this is ad-hoc not regular, no formal recognition is necessary.

People who regularly pastorally minister to people within their local church community, need to be Christians gifted in suitable areas. Their willingness and gifts should be approved by their local church leadership team. They should have DBS check and be trained in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. They ought to have had some sort of training course in listening, there are many suitable courses available. Their role should be recognised at a suitable service of worship and regularly reviewed by a representative of the local church leadership team and a clergy person annually.

People who pastorally minister across the local churches of the partnership (or a local group of churches such as the Anglican Deanery, the Methodist Circuit etc) should have completed a denominational training course, which should also include some element of recognition, many possibilities exist. They will have a DBS check. Their role should be recognised within the partnership at a joint service of worship, and their ministry should be reviewed annually according to a relevant denominational review process. Once recognised by one denomination, their ministry may be accepted and used across the partnership if they so wish.

Pension Implication

(Comments at Sat 13 July meeting)

When we employed a Baptist Minister (and in the Baptist model it is the Partnership that is the employer) we contributed to the pension scheme. Originally we were just playing the standard employer contribution but they then discovered the scheme was in deficit as is the case with lots of pension schemes because people are living longer and the interest rates are low. As employers we then had to make an additional contribution to contribute to the shortfall, but this is a long term plan.

The government regulations specify that if a member (us) leaves the scheme (if the last employee for whom payments are made changes employer) or if the employer(us) changes or dissolves its legal identity then a "cessation event" is deemed to have occurred and the full catch-up once-off payment is due immediately ("employer debt"). Without costly calculations it is not possible to determine this, but a conservative guess would be £70,000. At the moment they are letting us just pay the deficit contribution as if we had a fulltime member in the scheme as we are in a "period of grace". This gives us time to employ someone new or put someone else in the scheme. The annual amount we are contributing is £3000.

If the Partnership of West Swindon & the Lydiards still remains as one congregation but in 4 locations rather than 5, then its legal status probably hasn't really changed to trigger a cessation event (when the deficit to the Baptist Pension Fund of possibly £70,000 would have to be paid). We would have to draw up an agreement that when that liability was called to be paid, the location that was no longer part of the partnership would still have to pay its part of it. (Hopefully this would be after the next actuarial valuation and would be based more on the time we were part of the scheme and therefore would be at a lower amount). The sensible split would be based on the Budget Partnership Share split used in 2011 & 2012 which was based on the income survey, membership numbers, attendance numbers and income.

Sharing Agreements for buildings

(ISR report P15, Action Point 9.3)

There are sharing agreements for Toothill Church and for Holy Trinity Church Shaw (and for the Toothill manse, though we're mostly considering church buildings here). All Saints Lydiard Millicent and St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze are not shared. Westlea have never asked the council about Westlea School hall, because they don't want anything more than their shed (For which they have a letter of understanding about the ground plan and no security of tenure!).

A sharing agreement (in distilled essence) would lift the denominational restrictions on posting ministers with pastoral responsibility and those allowed to preside at weddings and at communion in the relevant buildings.

Denominational restrictions still apply to services with the denominational label (for an example see **Communion Presidency** above), and to the activities of denominationally posted clergy.

Some knowledgeable people consider it impossible to get approval from the free churches to any sharing agreement for a medieval church. Our partnership secretary has copies of the text of sharing agreements for the Methodist Chapel in Old Shaw Lane (1985), Toothill Church (1988) and the HTS new build (1989), *[Opinion] he considers it possible. And is desperate to try.*

Single Congregation LEP

(ISR report and our Constitution) also see **Covenant (other forms)**

We were originally constituted as a single congregation LEP. When we re-thought our constitution we deliberately continued to assert this as a prophetic and aspirational direction.

The constitution drafters of ancient days (may they be forgiven), when thinking through our visible ecumenical form, came to the conclusion that we are a Partnership of 5 ecumenical churches, each of which is to a greater or lesser extent ecumenical, each honouring and desiring to be a member church of 4 denominations. It's not so much the partnership is ecumenical, as the people and the local churches have become ecumenical. The geographic local (already individually somewhat ecumenical) churches simply choose to be in partnership with each other.

This model is now being re-considered, at least by All Saints LM.

Sponsoring Body

see also **Denominational Parent Bodies**

Our Constitution says our [Sponsoring Body is Swindon Churches Together](#)²⁷

[Swindon Churches Together](#)²⁸ have a sub-committee called the [Swindon Churches Together Sponsoring Body](#)²⁹. Guess what they mostly do?

²⁷ Sponsoring Body - http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/constitution/c11_s06sponsoring.html

²⁸ Swindon Churches Together - <http://www.swindonchurches.org/>

²⁹ Swindon Churches Together Sponsoring Body - <http://www.swindonchurches.org/index.php?module=pagesmith&id=22>

Team Leader

(ISR report P14, Sect 7.2, Scenario 2, subpara f)

In previous understandings there have been three possible functions of the staff team leader:

- A sort of figure-head externally associated with the leadership of the partnership – the publicly identifiable “go-to” spokes-person
- Leader (often best a visionary) for the partnership as a whole,
- Convenor of the staff team and the meetings where pastoral oversight is shared, and where planning is done.

The current members of the clergy staff team feel that neither an externally appointed nor a part-time staff team leader would be appropriate, they would struggle to grasp the partnership’s internal range and variety even more than the existing staff team do.

For the time being the best option would seem to be to merge the clergy staff team meetings with the officers of the Partnership Council to form a cabinet (almost a replacement of the existing Standing Committee, which would no longer be so necessary). This would facilitate the third duty of the team leader, with the lay folk acting as honest brokers and secretariat to the clergy. When Dick retires and in the short term, one of the lay members might take on the “team leader” role.

We will consider the benefits of including our Youth Work Manager into these meetings. We need to carefully consider the other functions of leadership, as clearly the collegial approach does not address the visionary and figure-head aspects of leadership.

Toothill + Westlea LEP

(ISR report Scenario 4)

Some say that Westlea+Toothill would not be financially sustainable. The combined current budget income of the two churches is £22,000. In the absence of a “partnership share” this is adequate to fund a half-time free church minister (or missionary..)

Westlea adopted by URC

(ISR report Scenario 1)

Westlea's history is a "church plant" of Gorse Hill Baptist Church, which joined with a Toothill Church housegroup on the new Westlea estate. The groups were brought together by Rev John Flory the then rector and team leader of the West Swindon and the Lydiards LEP.

Though the single largest denominational-background group is probably Roman Catholic(!) or those of non-Christian background (to whom denominations are an anomaly), the group has several ardent Baptist folk and we suspect if any one single denomination was chosen it would be Baptist.

They don't want one denomination, though.