

## **Sharing Buildings on an Informal Basis      A Practical Checklist**

When a worshipping congregation does not own a building or because their building is no longer viable, they may need to share a building with another existing congregation. Denominations covered by the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 should always be encouraged to enter into a formal agreement. However there may be instances where a congregation may wish to share another's building without entering into such an agreement, either on a temporary basis during repair or renovation, or because they are not eligible under the Act. This paper is intended to give some guidance to enable the sharing to be an effective and transforming tool for both host and guest congregations.

Some denominations have specific arrangements for an informal sharing e.g **Methodist Model Trust 14(2A)**. Both host and guest congregations should consult parent denominations to ensure that these arrangements are followed.

**Permissions for such sharing should be obtained through the appropriate structure of the 'host' denominations – but it should be made clear that the agreement is an informal one.**

In any sharing the relationship between host and guest is a delicate one and should be approached with care and consideration. It is essential that the 'host' church members make the 'guest' congregation feel not only welcome but honoured as fellow worshippers. This relationship is much more than a landlord/tenant relationship. Sharing a church building offers an opportunity for congregations to grow in fellowship, worship and unity. The congregations can learn to respect and honour each other's traditions while taking care that the sensitivities of each are understood.

### **Good Practice**

**It is important to have a clear written agreement as to how the practicalities are dealt with.**

Examples of these practicalities include:

#### **Purpose of Sharing**

Does the 'guest' congregation wish to use the building for worship/social/other?

#### **Time and use of building**

There should be a clear understanding of the time and use that each congregation may use the building. Any change in timings or use should be negotiated well in advance.

#### **Services/Organisation/Arrangements**

- Days and times of services, preparation, clearing away and refreshments
- Access to buildings and closing arrangements
- Use of 'host' church property e.g. Chalices, vestments etc.
- Keys and security
- Storage of 'guest' church property

### **Finance**

- Insurance – make sure that the property of both ‘host’ and ‘guest’ are covered
- Maintenance, including cost of heating, lighting, repairs etc.
- Being clear whether the guest congregation will be asked to help with the cost of major repair/improvements
- Clarity as to whether a donation, over and above running costs is expected.

### **Child Protection**

- **An agreed policy for Child Protection should be strictly adhered to.**

### **Consulting and making decisions together**

- Regular meetings of clergy and senior lay officers
- Invitations to each others church meetings

### **Joint Communication**

- Shared Notice Boards (inside and outside)
- Shared Newsletter/Parish Magazine

### **Terminating the agreement**

- All members of the congregations fully consulted
- Parent denominations in agreement
- Length of notice period on either side.

### **Congregations can get to know each other by**

1. Sharing coffee between services
2. Sharing house keeping tasks
3. Sharing fund raising
4. Sharing social events
5. Sharing musical talents and resources
6. Laity taking responsibility for hospitality
7. Sharing prayer and study groups
8. Celebrating non Eucharistic united services
9. Learning about one another's tradition and patterns of worship.
10. Undertaking joint projects in mission and social action
11. Clergy sharing staff meetings and prayer times

As the congregations get to know each other joint rotas for reading, welcome, flower arranging and coffee making could become the norm.

### **Resources**

*Under One Roof*

*Sharers Guests or Tenants*

*Sharing Agreement Act 1969*

*Praying Together in a Common life*

All available from CTE, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH

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Approved by the Churches Group for Local Unity, June 15 2005