

Together in Ministry

Welcome to your new ministry in a Local Ecumenical Partnership, one of 860 places in England where Christians of different traditions are committed to living and working together instead of separately. You have been chosen to continue to pursue the vision of the unity of the Church, which is Christ's will and gift.

Help is available!

You are not alone. There is normally a County Ecumenical Officer (sometimes known by a different name) as well as Denominational Ecumenical Officers for each of the churches in your partnership. They are in turn supported by the National Ecumenical Officers of each denomination and the Field Officers of Churches Together in England. See below for contact details.

Definition

The churches have agreed that a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) exists where: **there is a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, buildings and/or mission projects of more than one denomination: and a recognition of that agreement by the Sponsoring Body¹, and authorisation by the appropriate denominational authorities.**

¹ Usually a County-wide meeting of Church leaders and representatives responsible for enabling the establishment, support and review of LEPs.

This definition distinguishes LEPs from less formal co-operation between churches, and the welcome which many churches give to those members of other denominations.

There are 6 kinds of LEP:

1. Single Congregation Partnerships (usually either the merger of two or more different congregations or a new one planted or established by two or more denominations)
2. Congregations in Covenanted Partnerships (usually continuing to worship in their own buildings but with a strong commitment to united witness and ministry)
3. Shared Building Partnerships (having a Sharing Agreement under the 1969 Act to permit the property of one church to be also used and supported by others)
4. Chaplaincy Partnerships, (e.g. Higher & Further Education Chaplaincy, Prisons, Health Care)
5. Mission Partnerships (Industry, Commerce, Broadcasting, Social Responsibility)
6. Education Partnerships (Lay Training, Ministerial Training, Joint Schools)

Most LEPs are of the first three kinds.

If you haven't yet seen it, ask for a copy of the **Declaration of Intent or Covenant**, the brief statement which was signed by the Church leaders when the LEP was formed. The Partnership may now be different in practice, but this is what it is committed to.

What to do now

- Arrange to meet your Ecumenical Officers, if you haven't already done so. You can obtain contact details from Churches Together in England.
- Find out when the next Training Course for Ministry in LEPs is to be held and book a place before your diary fills! Churches Together in England arranges these courses regularly.
- Read *TRAVELLING TOGETHER: A handbook on Local Ecumenical Partnerships* by Elizabeth Welch and Flora Winfield (CTE) and see what documents on LEPs are published by your own denomination.
- Your County Ecumenical Officer also has a copy of *Ecumenical Notes*, a useful resource for many different situations.

And finally ...

Remember that you are part of the ecumenical **movement**. This means that your Partnership hopes to move on to a growing unity. You can be an agent of that growth.

Churches Together in England

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For those considering or starting ministry
in Local Ecumenical Partnerships