

# CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND

## The role of an Ecumenical Development Enabler

### Introduction

This document is offered to senior church leaders and/or denominational finance managers, to set out the scope and importance of the role of an Ecumenical Development Enabler.<sup>1</sup> As such, it will need to be adapted to fit the local context and denominational/ecumenical priorities. It will have to be re-framed into a job description, with special reference to the number of hours per week/month for which the Ecumenical Development Enabler is to be employed. And it is still a document in development, about which comments and responses are welcomed.

### Role description

The Ecumenical Development Enabler (EDE):

#### 1. Carries the vision

The EDE carries, nurtures and transmits the vision of Christian unity:

- a. In line with the Biblical call to the unity of the Body of Christ, expressed in such passages as John 17:20-26 and Ephesians 4:1-16;
- b. In keeping with the declared aim of 'Churches Together in England' to be 'one in Christ Jesus, engaged in God's mission, empowered by the Spirit';
- c. In order that the *Missio Dei* might be fully embodied and expressed through the unity of the Body of Christ.

The EDE sincerely believes that, while there are multiple, uniquely-graced Christian congregations within any village, town or city, there is only one Church. The EDE, therefore, thinks, believes, prays and works towards the visible expression of this heavenly reality.

#### 2. Acknowledges the actual

The EDE understands the current breadth and complexity of the Church in their area:

- a. Knowing the senior church leaders and their respective areas of jurisdiction;
- b. Understanding key aspects of the doctrine, culture and emphasis of the various churches;
- c. Keeping abreast of new congregations, local ethnic church plants and 'Fresh Expressions of church';
- d. Relating to 'Churches Together' groups, newer unity-groups, Christian organisations and focus groups.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ecumenical Development Enabler envisaged in this role description is a contemporary equivalent of the person known over the last 30 years as the County Ecumenical Officer. An alternative title for EDE would be 'Ecumenical Development Facilitator'.

The EDE appreciates that, while holding firmly to the vision of Christian unity, the current situation is complex, subtle and ever-changing. The EDE is able to hold the tension between the desired goal of visible Christian unity, the *status quo* and the evident gulf between the two.

### 3. Engages nationally

The EDE is well-informed of the national ecumenical scene as expressed in and through Churches Together in England (CTE). The EDE's tasks include:

- a. Building relationships with CTE staff members and National Ecumenical Officers;
- b. Participating in the triennial Forums, annual meetings of county-level ecumenical officers, CTE enabling group meetings and other CTE gatherings which take place from time to time;
- c. Understanding the direction and detail of [A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission](#), the '[Single Congregational Local Ecumenical Partnership Model Governing Document](#)' and other important guidelines.

The EDE understands that developments taking place at national level will impact at regional and/or local level (and *vice versa*). The EDE is in a privileged position to speak into the national unity movement, as well as to the regional and local.

### 4. Supports senior church Leaders

The EDE supports senior church Leaders in their co-operative relationships and ministry by:

- a. Enabling and supporting meetings of senior church leaders and of the Sponsoring Body (where it exists);
- b. Enabling the different priorities and/or mission strategies of member churches to be addressed collaboratively;
- c. Relating with Denominational Ecumenical Officers privately and in Enabling Group settings;<sup>2</sup>
- d. Keeping in touch with denominational Mission Officers, Communications Officers and other relevant representatives;
- e. Representing the wider Christian Church within the context of single denominational synods, services and meetings.

The EDE supports and enables co-operative understanding and working between churches and senior church leaders. The EDE is able to hold the tension between being influential on the one hand, while having no institutional authority on the other; between belonging to everyone and belonging to no-one. The EDE is a visible symbol of the whole Church.

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<sup>2</sup> Not all Intermediate Bodies work through Enabling Groups. Some function via different arrangements. Others have no formal structure.

## 5. Develops lasting relationships

The EDE is skilled at networking and at building strong, lasting relationships with all:

- a. Acting as a relational ecumenical hub in the area;
- b. Introducing Christian leaders to each other across denominational, ethnic and/or geographic boundaries;
- c. Encouraging and affirming partnerships at every level;
- d. 'Joining the dots' between Christian churches, congregations, organisations and ministries.

The EDE understands that every co-operative partnership and event is built on strong, lasting relationships. Investing in the development of personal relationships at all times is central to the role. Releasing, encouraging and affirming others in their relationship-building is of equal importance.

## 6. Builds bridges

The EDE sees the importance of making connections between different churches, leaders, congregations and organisations:

- a. Crossing denominational boundaries with confidence;
- b. Interpreting one party to another, in order to build awareness and enable acceptance;
- c. Speaking positively and affirmatively of all God's people at all times;
- d. Providing confidence to leaders and people to take a step towards other Christian leaders, people and groups.

The EDE acts as a bridge between leaders and people, enabling them to engage in ecumenical relationships and activities which they may not have done without the presence and involvement of the EDE. The EDE is an agent of reconciliation and friendship, a cheer-leader on behalf of each and every church and Christian group.

## 7. Communicates effectively

The EDE is a skilful and effective communicator within, and beyond, the Christian community:

- a. Telling good-news stories of ecumenical relationships and cooperative working;
- b. Inspiring and encouraging all God's people on the ecumenical journey;
- c. Highlighting good practice for the benefit of the wider Church;
- d. Promoting united mission and/or mercy joint-ventures;
- e. Providing a wider context for local congregations and 'Churches Together' groups.

Being aware of the power of stories, the EDE disseminates a positive ecumenical mission message, using the tools of printing, websites, social media to the best of their ability. The EDE is an ecumenical communication hub.

#### 8. Develops concrete steps

Upon the solid foundation of ecumenical relationships, the EDE develops concrete co-operative steps on the journey to Christian unity and mission:

- a. Incarnating the *Missio Dei* through the people of God;
- b. Encouraging and/or organising united prayer;
- c. Facilitating united mission and/or evangelistic ventures
- d. Promoting joint social action.

The EDE brings the vision 'not to do apart what we can do together' closer to reality, one step at a time. Having disseminated the vision and built strong relationships, the EDE enables the ecumenical partners to move into co-ordinated, mission-shaped ministry.

#### 9. Facilitates ecumenical structures

The EDE facilitates united relationships through appropriate ecumenical structures:

- a. Supporting the function and work of the Intermediate Body through its structures (e.g. Sponsoring Body, Enabling Group and/or Management Team);
- b. Supporting and encouraging Churches Together and/or other local unity groups;
- c. Supporting Denominational Ecumenical Officers to care for and/or review Local Ecumenical Partnerships;
- d. Facilitating flexible mission-focused agreements in line with 'A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission';
- e. Enabling the Intermediate Body to review and update its structures, in order to move its ecumenical mission forward.

The EDE upholds and uses existing ecumenical structures, without becoming mired in bureaucracy and institutionalism. The EDE regularly considers whether and how existing structures need updating, in order to adapt to changing realities and to facilitate the progress of the *Missio Dei*.

#### 10. Embraces Christian ministries

The EDE embraces Christian ministries, organisations and groups working inside, outside, among and beyond churches and congregations:

- a. Linking to CTE's Bodies in Association, while being aware of the increasing number and diversity of similar Christian organisations in the area;
- b. Building relationships with their trustees, leaders and workers where possible;

- c. Joining the dots between focus-groups across denominational boundaries;
- d. Celebrating the strong missionary ethos and clear vision of Christian ministries
- e. Linking the ministries and organisations to churches and congregations in order to build unity and enable co-operative mission endeavours.

The EDE understands that the Body of Christ functions beyond the borders of denominational churches and local congregations. The EDE includes and embraces Christian organisations, seeking to strengthen the links between them, churches and local congregations, in pursuit of the fulfilment of the vision of Christian unity.

Robert Mountford

- Following discussion at the CEO Consultation in May 2019
- With input from Chris Densham, Colin Marsh, Anna Nugent and Jenny Bond

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This draft was circulated to County Ecumenical Officers who approved it wholeheartedly.