

ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK CHRISTIAN UNITY COMMISSION

CONSTITUTION (2013)

Purpose of the Commission

1. There shall continue to be a Christian Unity Commission for the Archdiocese of Southwark. The purpose of the Commission shall be to implement the Archbishop's ecumenical policy and to promote ecumenical activity in the archdiocese, on the lines set out on pp. 20-21 of 'The Search for Christian Unity - A popular version of the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*' (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2002). The relevant extract is at Annex 1.

Membership

2. The president, chair, vice-chair and members of the Commission ('Commissioners') shall be appointed by the Archbishop after consulting such persons or bodies as he considers appropriate. The membership should include clergy and laity and, if possible, religious, and, so far as is practicable, should reflect an appropriate balance between the different geographical areas of the archdiocese; subject to that, the number of Commissioners should be kept to the minimum necessary for the Commission to do its work effectively.

3. The president, chair and vice-chair of the Commission shall hold office for as long as the Archbishop decides. Other Commissioners shall be appointed for a term of three years. At the end of each term, their membership may, at the chair's discretion, be renewed for another three years.

Officers

4. In addition to the president, chair and vice-chair, the Commission may appoint a secretary and such other officers as it thinks fit.

Co-opted members

5. The Commission may invite non-members, including people of other Christian denominations, to attend its meetings and participate in its work, whether on an occasional or a regular basis, but only Commissioners shall have the power to vote on any motion before it.

Parish unity contacts

6. The Commission shall encourage every parish priest in the archdiocese to appoint a parish unity contact (PUC), whose duty it shall be to take the lead in promoting ecumenical activity in their parish and to provide a contact point between their parish and the Commission.*

* The current detailed guidance on the role of the PUC is to be found in the PUC brochure, the text of which is at Annex 2. It will be amended in due course to reflect the new constitutional arrangements for the Commission.

Local groups

7. The Commission may establish local groups, each to cover an episcopal area, a deanery, or a group of deaneries, in order to help further its work at a more local level. In that case, it shall appoint someone, normally a Commissioner, to convene the group and ensure its efficient working. Each local group shall comprise all the Commissioners and PUCs who are based in its area, but it may invite other people to its meetings if it wishes. It should decide its own programme and method of working, but this should be subject to any guidance given by the Commission and have regard to the Commission's action plan and medium and long term objectives (see paragraph 8). Each local group shall submit to the Commission an annual report on its work.

Annual reports etc

8. Each year the Commission shall prepare

- a report on its work over the previous twelve months, incorporating reports on the work of local groups (see paragraph 7)
- a statement of its medium and long term objectives
- an action plan for the forthcoming twelve months.

9. These documents should be submitted to the Archbishop, and the statement of objectives and the action plan modified if necessary in the light of any directions he may give. At an appropriate time, the documents should be publicised, in whatever format the Archbishop thinks fit. The Commission should ensure that such documents are archived appropriately.

Annual general meeting

10. At least once a year, there should be a general meeting of the Commission to which PUCs and others with an interest in the Commission's work should be invited. The documents described in paragraph 8 should be presented and explained to the meeting, which should be invited to make comments on or suggestions about the Commission's work.

Status of this document

11. This document is intended to be interpreted flexibly. The Commission itself can make any minor changes to it which it considers to be desirable in the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of its work; if more substantial changes are thought to be needed, the agreement of the Archbishop should be sought.

Annex 1

Extract from 'The Search for Christian Unity', pp. 20-21.

THE DIOCESAN ECUMENICAL COMMISSION

The bishop should set up a commission or secretariat to implement his ecumenical policy and promote ecumenical activity in the diocese. If necessary, several dioceses may jointly form such a commission

The membership should reflect the Church as a whole and include clergy, male and female religious, and laity with the relevant (especially ecumenical) skills. It would be a good idea to have representation from the diocesan council of priests, the pastoral council and the diocesan or regional seminary. In general, the commission should co-operate with other groups or persons in the diocese that have an ecumenical purpose. It should be in contact with parishes, with religious communities and with lay organisations. It should be a support for the ecumenical officer.

More specifically, the commission's terms of reference should include:

- putting into effect the decisions of the Church authorities on ecumenical matters;
- keeping in touch with the ecumenical commission of the whole Bishops' Conference;
- encouraging spiritual ecumenism;
- taking forward the ecumenical formation of clergy and laity by means of day conferences, seminars and the like;
- taking an interest in the way seminary students are being prepared for the ecumenical dimension of their future ministry;
- promoting good relations between Catholics and other Christians;
- initiating dialogue with other Christians at diocesan level;
- promoting joint witness to the Christian faith and cooperating with other Christians in such matters as education, peace and justice, and culture.

Annex 2

Commission for Christian Unity in the Archdiocese of Southwark

PARISH UNITY CONTACTS

By prayer and action we, the Commission members, respond to Our Lord's prayer that 'all may be one' (Jn 17:11).

To promote this ideal we will try to use every appropriate occasion both to foster friendship amongst Christians and to celebrate and work together.

Our purpose is that

- Everywhere the love of God will be known
- The followers of Jesus will grow more united
- The Good News will bring joy and contentment to all peoples

What is a Parish Unity Contact?

A PUC should be a parishioner, nominated by their parish priest.

By showing an openness and interest in Christian Unity, they will be willing to keep in contact and work with the Unity Commission.

Who can be a Parish Unity Contact?

Any parishioner who is committed to the Catholic Church's search for unity between all Christians.

What is the role of the Parish Unity Contact?

To take a lead in the promotion of and concern for Christian Unity within their parish community, and in supporting positive ecumenical relationships between their parish and the other denominations in their area.

Suggestions for action:

Some of these ideas can be used wherever appropriate or possible in a parish. The first task might be to develop some support within the parish. The formation of a small Unity Committee, particularly if encouraged by the parish priest or parish council, is recommended but not always possible. Just one other person with whom to work and share ideas can be a great help.

- **Support your parish priest:** Assist the clergy by advancing Christian Unity in collaboration. Always keep him informed of progress.
- **Find out what is going on in your area:** Is there a Churches Together body? What are the churches in your area doing together? What are other churches doing separately in which your church might be able to participate?
- **Prayer:** Regular prayer for Christian Unity is the prime task of everyone. Encourage prayer groups to give high priority to Christian Unity in their intentions; ensure that prayers for Christian Unity and prayer for other local churches are a regular part of parish worship (e.g. in Sunday Bidding Prayers)
- **Fostering Ecumenical Openness in the Parish:** to help ecumenical concerns become a key part of parish life e.g. the agendas of the Parish Council and significant parish groups. Ask the question -can we work together with / include the other churches in our parish initiatives, in particular, by involvement of young people?
- **Formation:** to remind groups of the need to study the Catholic Church's teaching about the importance of the search for Christian Unity
- **Communication:** to provide a channel of communication for ecumenical matters: within the parish, to the Deanery Pastoral Council, other area organizations and the Diocesan Unity Commission. To promote the Diocesan Unity Bulletin 'Together in Christ' in the parish and encourage articles for it.
- **Other local churches:** to be a key contact for fostering relationships with other local churches. Importantly, to work with local churches to encourage suitable celebrations of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18-25 January).

Realistically it is not possible to do all of the above. Every parish is different and your time is limited. Aim to do what is right for you and what is possible in your particular parish and local area.

What support and help can a Parish Unity Contacts expect?

- **The Area Commission for Christian Unity.** The Area Commissions meet several times a year, one of these meetings being the Annual General Meeting held with the other two Area Commissions. PUCs are welcome to attend any or all meetings. You will be sent the minutes of all meetings of the Commission.
- **Other Parish Unity Contacts.** Ideally, each parish in your deanery or neighbouring deanery should have a PUC.
- **Deanery** In some Deaneries there is a Unity Co-ordinator able to keep in close contact with the local PUCs and arrange for them to meet each other for encouragement and mutual support, to share experiences and learn from each other.