

CONSTITUTION OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN SEVENOAKS AND DISTRICT

1. BASIS

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN SEVENOAKS AND DISTRICT unites in pilgrimage those Churches in the area defined by the Anglican Deaneries of Sevenoaks and Shoreham which, acknowledging God's revelation in Christ, confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and, in obedience to God's will and in the power of the Holy Spirit commit themselves

- to seek a deepening of their communion with Christ and with one another in the Church, which is His body; and
- to fulfil their mission to proclaim the Gospel by common witness and service in the world

to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2. AIMS

The aims of Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District shall be -

- to enable the churches, as pilgrims together, to explore the Christian faith together, to develop mutual relationships, to seek a common mind, and to make decisions together;
- to encourage churches to worship, pray and reflect together on the nature and purpose of the church in the light of its mission - each church sharing with others the treasures of its tradition and, where possible its resources, both human and material;
- to enable the churches to live and share the Gospel, to evangelise together and to take further steps towards fuller unity;
- to enable the churches to respond to the needs of society and to witness to the Gospel together

and especially to meet such aims within the defined area.

3. RELATIONSHIPS

Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District is in association with Churches Together in Kent (itself an Intermediate Body of Churches Together in England).

4. MEMBERSHIP

Membership of Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District shall be open to

- any local church in the area which is affiliated to a church or association of churches which is a full member of Churches Together in England (*see Note 1*), and
- any other local church in the area which affirms the Basis and commits itself to promote the aims of Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District, and
- any local church which on principle has no credal statements in its tradition and therefore cannot formally subscribe to the statement of faith in the Basis, provided that it satisfies 75% in number of those full member churches which subscribe to the Basis, that it manifests faith in Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures and it is committed to the aims and purposes of Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District and that it will work in the spirit of the Basis. (*See Note 2.*)

Current member churches are listed in Appendix 1.

5. FORUM

- The Forum of Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District shall consist of:
 - one clergy/minister/lay leader exercising pastoral responsibility and up to 2 others appointed from each participating church, and
 - one representative of each of the Bodies in Association (*see Appendix 2*).
- The Forum may co-opt others; such co-options not exceeding 25% of the total number of representatives appointed by the participating churches.
- The Forum shall meet not less than once annually. All meetings of the Forum shall be open to the public, but only those described in 5(a) may vote.
- At the Annual Meeting (which shall be held between October and December) the audited accounts shall be presented, officers elected, if desired chairmen appointed to the Specific Activity Groups, the treasurer of Sevenoaks and District Christian Aid Committee appointed, the independent examiner appointed, annual reports submitted (from at least the Executive (*see Section 6*) and the Specific Activity Groups (*see Section 8*), and policy and initiatives for the year decided.

Other meetings of the Forum shall be held as deemed desirable by the officers or at the written request of any six of the participating churches. At least two weeks notice in writing of any meeting of the Forum shall be given. (*See Note 3*) The attendance by at least one representative of at least a third of the Member Churches shall constitute a quorum.

6. OFFICERS

The officers of Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District shall be a Chairman, a Treasurer and a Secretary, to be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Forum. Officers shall serve for an initial period of 3 years and may be re-elected if willing to serve for further periods of 3 years. (It would, however, not be normal for such a continuous term to exceed 6 years.)

7. EXECUTIVE

- (a) The function of the Executive shall be to enable the member churches to make decisions in common and to serve as a standing committee/reference point for the Forum. This function includes:
 - ◆ A central contact point for the media and the wider Churches Together movement
 - ◆ Information exchange (e.g. common diary of events; a Newsletter)
 - ◆ Overseeing funding (subscriptions and events)
 - ◆ A central reference point for the Bodies in Association
 - ◆ Provision of future vision and ideas for churches in Sevenoaks and District
- (b) The Executive shall comprise the officers of the Forum, and one representative from each of the Specific Activity Groups (*see Appendix 2*) and of the Bodies in Association (*See Appendix 2*).
- (c) The group defined in 7(b) may co-opt up to three further members drawn from the member churches with regard to an appropriate representation of the various Christian traditions and denominations in membership, and of both town and village.
- (d) Attendance by at least half of those so eligible to be present shall constitute a quorum.
- (e) The Executive shall meet as necessary, with a minimum of two meetings per year. Action/Decision Minutes will be taken, and will be available for inspection at the Annual Meeting of the Forum.

8. SPECIFIC ACTIVITY GROUPS

- (a) These exist as needed to fulfil a special 'doing' role within the work of the Sevenoaks Churches. Current groups are listed in Appendix 2.
- (b) The Forum has the right (*see Section 5*) to appoint the chairman of such a Group.
- (c) Each Group is represented on the Executive (*see Section 7*).

9. FINANCE

Each participating church/member body shall pay within two months of the Annual Meeting such annual sum to Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District as shall be agreed at the Annual Meeting of the Forum. The financial year shall be from October to September. Cheques shall require the signature of any two of the officers.

Payments by Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District shall be within the scope of its aims (*see Section 2*), or to cover its own administrative costs.

10. CONSTITUTION

The constitution and any subsequent amendment to it requires the approval of two-thirds majority of those member churches, acting through their normal decision-making bodies, present and voting at the Annual Meeting. Notice of the *general nature* of a sought amendment shall be given at least three months prior to the Annual Meeting to all member churches and all Bodies in Association, with details of the exact wording of the amendment provided to member churches and Bodies in Association at least twenty one days before the Annual Meeting. (*See Notes 3 and 4.*)

11. REVIEW

It is intended that Churches Together reflect the developing life of the Christian Churches as they continue their pilgrimage together. From time to time (every 7 years) a Review Group shall be appointed by the member churches in consultation with the County Ecumenical Officer for Kent to report on the progress of the pilgrimage and to make proposals for desirable changes.

NOTES

1. As at September 2001 the full members of Churches Together in England were -

| | |
|---|--|
| Baptist Union of Great Britain | Cherubim and Seraphim Council of Churches |
| Church of England | Church of Scotland |
| Congregational Federation | Council of African & Afro-Caribbean Churches |
| Council of Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches | The Free Churches' Council |
| Greek Orthodox Church | Ichthus Fellowship |
| Independent Methodist Churches | International Ministerial Council of Great Britain |
| Joint Council for Anglo-Caribbean Churches | Lutheran Council of Great Britain |
| Methodist Church | Moravian Church |
| New Testament Assembly | Religious Society of Friends |
| Roman Catholic Church | Russian Orthodox Church |
| Salvation Army | United Reformed Church |
| Wesleyan Holiness Church | |

2 Upon its inauguration Churches Together in England welcomed the Religious Society of Friends under the equivalent of clause 4(c) above.

3. It may prove helpful once or twice a year for each of the decision-making bodies of the member churches (e.g. the Deacons Meeting, the Parochial Church Council, the United Reformed Church Meeting) to meet immediately prior to or immediately following the Forum, and to include as an Agenda item the Forum's business. This would enable particular business of the Forum to be more closely related to the decisions of the member churches.

4. It cannot be over-emphasised that a major principle of the new ecumenical process is that it is the churches' own decision-making bodies, rather than simply a representative council acting on behalf of the churches, which need to make major ecumenical decisions about policy and priorities.

This Constitution is based in large part on that adopted by the Churches Co-ordinating Group for Local Unity of Churches Together in England in February 1996

Appendix 1

Member Churches of the former Sevenoaks and District Council of Churches (as at 30 September 2001)

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Borough Green | Church of the Good Shepherd (Anglican); St Joseph ¹ (RC) |
| Brasted | St Martin (Anglican) |
| Chevening | St Botolph (Anglican) |
| Dunton Green | Free Church |
| Eynsford | United Benefice of Eynsford, Farningham & Lullingstone (Anglican) |
| Halstead | St Margaret (Anglican) |
| Ightham | St Peter (Anglican) |
| Kemsing with Woodlands | St Mary (Anglican); St Mary (Anglican) |
| Knockholt | St Katharine (Anglican) |
| Otford | St Bartholomew (Anglican); Otford Methodist Church, Holy Trinity ¹ (RC) |
| Riverhead | St Mary ² (Anglican) |
| Seal | St Lawrence (Anglican); St Peter & St Paul (Anglican) |
| Sevenoaks | Bessels Green Baptist Church; Christ Church URC; St John's (Anglican); St John's Hill URC; St Luke (Anglican); St Mary, Kippington (Anglican); St Nicholas (Anglican); St Thomas of Canterbury (RC); The Drive Methodist Church; The Religious Society of Friends West Kent Meeting; The Vine Baptist Church; The Vine Evangelical Church; The Vineyard Church |
| Shipbourne with Plaxtol | St Giles, and Plaxtol Parish Church (Anglican) |
| Shoreham | St Peter and St Paul (Anglican) |
| St Mary Platt | St Mary (Anglican) |
| Sundridge & Ide Hill | St Mary (Anglican) & St Mary (Anglican) |
| Underriver | St Margaret (Anglican) |
| Weald | St George (Anglican); Weald Methodist Church; St Edward the Confessor ¹ (RC) |
| Westerham | St Mary the Virgin (Anglican) |
| West Kingsdown | St Bernadette ¹ (RC); St Edmund King and Martyr (Anglican); Baptist Church |
| Wrotham | St George (Anglican) |

1 Member as part of the one Catholic Parish of Sevenoaks

2 United parish with St John the Divine (Dunton Green)

Appendix 2:

Specific Activity Groups

There are currently (30th September 2001) two of these:

- ◆ Sevenoaks Churches' Events and Publicity Group
- ◆ Sevenoaks Churches' Literature Project

Bodies in Association

There are currently (30th September 2001) five of these:

- ◆ North West Fellowship of Churches
- ◆ Sevenoaks & District Christian Aid Committee
- ◆ Sevenoaks Christian Counselling Service
- ◆ Sevenoaks Churches' Group for Social Concern
- ◆ Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust

Churches Together in Sevenoaks & District

A DECLARATION

*(First made on 20th January 2002 at the United Service during
the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity)*

We give thanks to God for the growing friendship and trust between our churches in recent years, and which has led us to affirm our common commitment to worship and work together to God's glory and to the furthering of his kingdom.

We now publicly commit ourselves before God and each other

- ❖ To confess our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures;
- ❖ To seek a deepening of our communion with Christ and with one another in the Church, which is his Body; and
- ❖ To fulfil our mission to proclaim the Gospel by common witness and service

Specifically, we believe that we have been led by the Holy Spirit to help enable the churches

- ❖ As pilgrims together to explore the Christian faith together, to develop mutual relationships, to seek a common mind, and to make decisions together;
- ❖ To worship, pray and reflect together on the nature and purpose of the church in the light of its mission - each church sharing with others the treasures of its tradition;
- ❖ To live and share the Gospel, to evangelise together and to take steps towards fuller unity; and
- ❖ To respond to the needs of society and to witness to the Gospel together.

We will do this through active encouragement within our own church structures, by regularly praying for each other in private and in public worship, through publicity that our church issues, and through the Executive and Council of the newly formed Churches Together in Sevenoaks and District.

We acknowledge that we can only do any of this by dependence on God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Signed:

(Other signatures follow on accompanying sheets)