

LICHFIELD DIOCESAN REGISTRY
GUIDANCE NOTE
Canon B43 and the Code of Practice on Co-operation by the Church of
England with Other Churches

The previous Canon B43 and B44 have now been amalgamated into one simpler new Canon B43, and a Code of Practice has been approved by Synod which clergy and parishes have to have regard to (meaning that it should be followed unless a substantial reason exists to depart from it). The Registry is publishing the Code here, because anyone contemplating ecumenical links should read it before seeking legal advice. Hopefully legal advice will not be necessary because although the provisions of the legislation are complicated, the Code is helpfully and clearly written, and explain the steps needed in many common situations.

The new Canon, B43, covers a wide variety of circumstances and the Code is readable and largely self explanatory, so that we are not producing a detailed note. However, we have prepared a table which sets out the basic requirements in a more accessible form than the Canon or Code. Obviously anyone working in this area should ensure that they rely on the Canon and Code rather than the table or this note, but we hope that our contribution will be a useful introduction and an aide memoire once the full detail has been assimilated.

The Canon enables ministers from other specified denominations to take a part in Church of England services and vice versa; it allows Church of England Churches to be used for services according to the rites of the specified denominations (other than marriage); (the specified denominations are listed by the national church, but provision is now made for a diocesan bishop to nominate a church locally on a temporary basis); it allows members of other Trinitarian denominations to read scriptures at Church of England services and to lead intercessions and prayers.

It also enables a diocesan bishop to make agreements for local ecumenical co-operative schemes (the new name for LEPs) and to make special provisions for ministry in relation to them.

Provision is also made for Salvation Army members to take a wider part in services than hitherto.

As an example, take a funeral service. A Church of England priest might wish to invite a priest from another denomination to take part in a service in the Church of England church (table 1); or be invited to take part in a service in the other denomination's church (table 2); or to be involved in a joint form of worship in the Church of England church (table 3); or may wish to allow a person of another denomination to hold the service according to their own rites etc. but within the Church of England church building (table 4). All of these approaches are encouraged and facilitated, but different consultations and consents are required. We give this as an example because it is often necessary to make swift arrangements and it would be important for clergy to understand how simple these things are to organise so as to avoid embarrassment or offence.

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