



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Council for Christian Unity

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Canons B43 & B44

Accessing the 1989 Code of Practice – together with its 1997 supplement

The so-called ‘ecumenical canons’ – B43 and B44 – are essentially permissive. They relate to the conduct of worship in Church of England Churches and the participation of Church of England ministers in worship in other churches. They are to be read in conjunction with the rest of the ‘B’ canons 1-42 which regulate the Church of England’s discipline regarding worship. (See *CCU resource paper B-6*) Canon B44 also sets out the required procedures for establishing Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

Canon B43

Applies to all parishes and provides parameters and procedures by which incumbents, PCC and bishops may *supplement* what is required by canon so that

- Non-Anglican ministers from a specified list of denominations (see *CCU resource paper A-1*) can be invited to take part in Church of England worship.
- Church of England ministers can be allowed to take part in non-Anglican worship in churches on the specified list
- Hospitality can be offered so that churches from the specified list can hold their own services in Church of England churches or share in ‘joint services’ with the Church of England.

Notes:

- The reference to ‘joint services’ in the Canon should not be interpreted to include Holy Communion. Both Canon B43 and Canon B44 make explicit provision for the celebration of this sacrament, seeing each celebration as rooted in the life of a particular tradition and not as joint worship.
- This canon does not prevent the Church of England from offering hospitality to a much longer list of churches to hold their own services in the context of a Shared Building Agreement (See *CCU resources paper A-3*)

Canon B44

Provides a framework whereby a bishop may agree with other partner denominations to the formation of a Local Ecumenical Partnership **in the context of which** certain *exemptions* can be made from the Church of England’s normal disciplines for the conduct of worship.

Canon B44 is most obviously applicable in Local Ecumenical Partnerships where single congregations share ministry from more than one denominational source.

The provisions of Canon B44 also readily apply in ecumenical chaplaincies (colleges, prisons, etc). Other categories of LEP have however been identified by Churches Together in England since the Canon was drafted: Local Covenants, Shared Buildings (where there is no structure providing for a single congregation), Mission Partnerships and Education Partnerships. In these LEPs, the precise circumstances requiring the application of the later clauses of Canon B44, (from clause 4 onwards) will need to be defined in each case. The conduct of congregational worship may not be a function of the LEP. Alternatively, the general hospitality offered by Canon B43 may be sufficient.

The 1989 Code of Practice

In 1989, when the ecumenical canons were first promulgated, the House of Bishops agreed a lengthy document setting out a Code of Practice for their application. Although the context has changed after fifteen years, this Code of Practice has never formally been updated. A ‘Supplement’ was added by the Council for Christian Unity in 1997.

The original documents are now out of print – but the Code of Practice (as supplemented) still provides an essential background reference against which the meaning of more recent CCU resources can be checked. A version of the 1989 Code of Practice is therefore now available electronically on the National Administrators Network (NAN) web site, on the Anglican/Methodist Ecumenical Officers’ (AMEOs) intranet, and by email from ccu@c-of-e.org.uk.

This electronic version consists of the full 1989 text into which the 1997 material has been consolidated. References have also been included at various points to current CCU resource papers which are intended to offer more accessible guidance in the application of the canons in today’s context.