

SOMERSET CHURCHES TOGETHER

CONSTITUTION

1. NAME.

The charity shall be known as Somerset Churches Together (SCT), and it shall cover the geographical area of the Anglican Diocese of Bath and Wells.

2. BASIS.

Somerset Churches Together unites in pilgrimage those Churches in its area 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

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.

3. RELATIONSHIPS.

Somerset Churches Together is an Intermediate Body of Churches Together in England (CTE).

4. OBJECTS.

The objects and aims of Somerset Churches Together shall be the advancement of the Christian religion, the relief of poverty and the advancement of education and any other purposes which are charitable according to the law of England and Wales. Somerset Churches Together shall seek to further these objects by:

- (i) facilitating common witness to the Christian religion by the member churches;
- (ii) providing means of consultation between the member churches;
- (iii) working and praying for Christian unity.

5. AIMS AND POWERS

In particular, Somerset Churches Together shall aim (within its general objects):

(i) to be a visible sign of the Churches' commitment to one another and to assist the churches in the visible expression of Christian unity;

(ii) to affirm, support and service local ecumenism, whether it be formal or informal, structured or unstructured and in particular to encourage the formation and affiliation of local Churches Together groups;

(iii) to act as Sponsoring Body for present and future Local Ecumenical Partnerships, providing oversight, ensuring for them the provision of appropriate ongoing advice and support and proper periodic review;

(iv) to encourage shared worship and prayer, learning, service and evangelism, with each church sharing with others the treasures of its tradition;

(v) to encourage full and early ecumenical consultation so that the churches may use resources (including buildings and the deployment of personnel) with sensitivity and in the interests of good stewardship;

(vi) to provide a meeting point for church leaders and representatives within the ecumenical area

(vii) to keep the churches informed about ecumenical initiatives in its area and beyond, in particular those promoted by Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland;

(viii) to support the churches in their response to the needs and opportunities of society, to assist them in their relations with local government and other statutory, voluntary and private bodies and, when appropriate, to make representations on behalf of the churches, either independently or with others;

(ix) to encourage the fostering of good relations with other faith communities;

(x) to encourage those bodies and individuals in the churches which share a similar remit or concern to work together

and shall have

(xi) power to raise funds and to invite and receive contributions provided that in raising funds SCT shall not undertake any substantial permanent trading activities and shall conform to any relevant requirements of the law;

(xii) power to buy, take on lease or exchange any property necessary for the achievement of the objects and to maintain and equip it for use;

(xiii) power, subject to any consents required by law, to sell, lease or dispose of all or any part of the property of the Charity;

(xiv) power, subject to any consents required by law, to borrow money and to charge all or any part of the property of the Charity with repayment of the money so borrowed;

(xv) power to employ such staff (who shall not be members of the Standing Committee) as are necessary for the proper pursuit of the objects and to make all reasonable and necessary provision for the payment of pensions and superannuation for staff and their dependants;

(xvi) power to co-operate with other charities, voluntary bodies and statutory authorities operating in furtherance of the objects or of similar charitable purposes and to exchange information and advice with them;

(xvii) power to establish or support any charitable trusts, associations or institutions formed for all or any of the objects;

(xviii) power to appoint and constitute such advisory committees as the Standing Committee may think fit;

(xix) power to do all such other lawful things as are necessary for the achievement of the objects.

6. MEMBERSHIP.

(a) The founding members of Somerset Churches Together are those churches or associations of local churches with a significant presence in the ecumenical area whose national bodies are member churches of Churches Together in England.

(b) Other churches or associations of local churches with a significant presence in the ecumenical area who are willing to assent to the Basis of Somerset Churches Together and who satisfy three quarters of the member churches which subscribe to the Basis that they are committed to the aims and objectives of Somerset Churches Together and will work within the spirit of the Basis, may apply for full membership.

(c) Churches or associations of local churches with a significant presence in the ecumenical area which on principle have no credal statements in their tradition and therefore cannot formally subscribe to the statement of faith in the Basis, provided that on their admission they satisfy and that they thereafter continue to satisfy three quarters of the member churches which subscribe to the Basis that they manifest faith in Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures, are committed to the aims and objectives of Somerset Churches Together and will work within the spirit of the Basis may apply for full membership.

(d) Churches or associations of local churches who do not wish to seek full membership or who cannot accept the Basis may apply for Observer Status. Those accepted may be invited to appoint observers to the Forum (see paragraph 7(a) below) at which they may speak but not vote.

(e) Member Churches. The expression 'member churches' used throughout this Constitution shall where the context permits include all churches and associations of churches referred to in paragraphs 6(a) to 6(c) above.

(f) Bodies in Association. Associations, networks and movements which bring together Christians of different denominations for purposes congruent with the Basis and the aims and objectives of Somerset Churches Together may be invited to become Bodies in Association. Such bodies may be represented at the Forum (see paragraph 7(a) below) and on the Standing Committee (see paragraph 7(b) below).

7. ORGANISATION

(a) The Forum. The Forum shall meet at least annually. Its functions shall be:

- (i) to reflect all aspects of the church's mission to the ecumenical area;
- (ii) to provide a place where church, statutory and voluntary bodies may speak to the churches in the ecumenical area;
- (iii) to recommend to the member churches such matters as it believes should be addressed jointly.
- (iv) to engage in worship and discussion;
- (v) to reflect on the activities and future programmes of Churches Together in Somerset;
- (vi) to elect three members of the Standing Committee.
- (viii) to appoint an Honorary Treasurer, who shall during the period of such appointment continue as a member of the Standing Committee.

The Forum shall be an open meeting in which all churches in the ecumenical area are encouraged to share. One of the meetings of the Forum will include the Annual General Meeting of Somerset Churches Together.

The Forum shall be chaired by the chair of the Standing Committee. The Forum at its Annual General Meeting shall elect three members of the Standing Committee and appoint an Honorary Treasurer, who shall during the period of such appointment continue as a member of the Standing Committee.

For voting purposes its membership shall be:

- The Presidents of SCT (being the designated leaders of each of the member churches or their equivalents);
- Two representatives from each of the member churches;
- The Standing Committee (see paragraph 7(b) below);
- One representative of each local Churches Together group affiliated to Somerset Churches Together;
- One representative of each Local Ecumenical Partnership sponsored by Somerset Churches Together;
- One representative of each Body in Association;

Twelve members shall constitute a quorum.

(b) The Standing Committee. The Standing Committee is the management committee of Somerset Churches Together. The members of the Standing Committee are the trustees of the charity, defined in Section 97(1) of the Charities Act 1993 as 'the persons having the general control and management of the administration of a charity.'

The Standing Committee shall meet at least twice a year. The Standing Committee shall facilitate the aims of Somerset Churches Together. Its functions shall be:

- (i) to enable member churches to make decisions together which are proper to them (where necessary referring matters back to the member churches);
- (ii) to respond to initiatives from the member churches and the Forum;
- (iii) to agree a budget and to receive accounts;
- (iv) to appoint and (if considered appropriate) to dismiss members of staff (including the Ecumenical Officer, whose appointment shall be for a period to be determined by the Standing Committee) and to deal with all matters regarding the terms and conditions of their employment;
- (v) to set up Sector Groups and any other permanent committees or temporary task groups which may be needed and to keep them under review;
- (vi) to decide upon applications for and invitations to membership of Somerset Churches Together.
- (vii) to receive regular reports of the work of Local Ecumenical Partnerships and Covenants in Somerset, to ensure that all Partnerships receive appropriate ongoing advice and support, equitable financial assessment and proper periodic review and to authorise the approval or closure of Local Ecumenical Partnerships in the SCT area.
- (viii) to prepare for meetings of the Forum.

The Standing Committee shall be accountable to the Forum.

The membership of the Standing Committee shall be as follows:

- One of the Presidents who shall act as Chair and be appointed for three years by a meeting of the Presidents
- The serving Denominational Ecumenical Officers or their equivalents for the area covered by Somerset Churches Together
- One representative from each of the member churches which does not have a Denominational Ecumenical Officer

One representative of the Social Responsibility Group of the Diocese of Bath & Wells
Three members elected by the Forum
The Honorary Treasurer

The County Ecumenical Officer shall attend and service meetings of the Standing Committee in a non-voting capacity

Other salaried employees of SCT may attend if invited to do so, but are not entitled to vote, nor are they eligible for election to the Standing Committee or appointment to any other Committee.

There shall be a quorum of five members.

In the event of any of the member churches ceasing to be a full member of Somerset Churches Together that body's representative(s) will automatically cease to be in membership of the Standing Committee.

8. FINANCE

(a) The work of Somerset Churches Together shall be maintained by contributions from the member churches as agreed amongst themselves. The Standing Committee shall also have the right to seek donations from *organisations*, trusts and private individuals towards the furtherance of its work.

(b) The Standing Committee shall prepare a budget for each calendar year and shall submit the proposed budget for each year to the appropriate financial authorities of the member churches not later than 30th September in the preceding year.

(c) Accounting records shall be maintained in accordance with the Charities Act 1993 and any subsequent legislation in relation to charities as may be enacted by Parliament.

(d) The accounts shall be presented to the Standing Committee, be made available to the Forum and be communicated to the appropriate financial authorities of the member churches

(e) Somerset Churches Together shall operate a bank account in the name of the Charity into which all monies shall be paid. Cheques drawn on this account shall require the signatures of any two from those signatories appointed by the Standing Committee. Where the County Ecumenical Officer is one of the signatories, cheques drawn shall be subject to a limit agreed by the Standing Committee.

9. HOLDING TRUSTEES

All real and personal property acquired by or on behalf of Somerset Churches Together shall be vested in a trust corporation lawfully entitled to act as a Custodian Trustee or in not less than three nor more than five trustees (not being members of the Standing Committee) who shall enter into a deed of trust setting forth the purposes and conditions under which they hold such property in trust for Somerset Churches Together. These trustees shall be appointed by the Forum.

10. REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

It is intended that Somerset Churches Together should reflect the developing life of the churches as they continue their pilgrimage together. From time to time a Review Group shall be appointed by the member churches to report on progress and make proposals for any desirable changes.

11. RULES

The Standing Committee shall be the only body that may make and amend all Rules necessary for the conduct and operation of Somerset Churches Together. At least three months notice of change should be provided to the representatives of the member churches. Such Rules shall be consistent with the provisions of this Constitution.

12. TRUSTEES

A Trustee shall cease to hold office if he or she:

(1) is disqualified from acting as a member of the Trustees by virtue of section 72 of the Charities Act 1993 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that provision);

(2) becomes incapable by reason of mental disorder, illness or injury of managing and administering his or her own affairs;

(3) is absent without the permission of the Trustees from all their meetings held within a period of twelve months and the Trustees resolve that his or her office be vacated; or

(4) notifies to the Trustees a wish to resign (but only if at least three members of the Trustees will remain in office when the notice of resignation is to take effect).

(5) is no longer supported by his/her appointing body.

Any Trustee for the time being who is a solicitor, accountant or other person engaged in a profession may charge and be paid all the usual professional charges for business done by him or her or his or her firm when instructed by the other members of the Trustees to act in a professional capacity on behalf of the Charity: provided that at no time shall a majority of the members of the Trustees benefit under this provision and that a member of the Trustees shall withdraw from any meeting at which his or her own instruction or remuneration, or that of his or her firm, is under discussion.

No Trustee shall acquire any interest in property belonging to the Charity (otherwise than as a Trustee) or receive remuneration or be interested (otherwise than as a member of the Trustees) in any contract entered into by the Trustees.

13. ANNUAL REPORT

The Trustees shall comply with their obligations under the Charities Act 1993 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that Act) with regard to the preparation of an annual report and its transmission to the Charity Commission.

14. ANNUAL RETURN

The Trustees shall comply with their obligations under the Charities Act 1993 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that Act) with regard to the preparation of an annual return and its transmission to the Charity Commission.

15. SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS

The Trustees may call a special general meeting of the Charity at any time. If at least three member churches request such a meeting in writing stating the business to be considered the County Ecumenical Officer shall call such a meeting. At least 21 days' notice must be given. The notice must state the business to be discussed.

16. ALTERATIONS TO CONSTITUTION

Amendments to this Constitution may be approved at a meeting of the Forum with the consent of not less than three quarters of the member churches provided that six months notice is given to the representatives of the member churches to enable their decision-

making bodies to form a view on the matter. No amendment shall be made to the Constitution which shall cause Somerset Churches Together to cease to be a charity in law.

The Trustees should promptly send to the Charity Commission a copy of any amendment made under this clause.

17. DISSOLUTION

Somerset Churches Together may be dissolved by a resolution passed by not less than three quarters of the member churches by their representatives present and voting at a Special General Meeting of the Forum convened for the purpose of which at least six months notice shall have been given to the representatives of the member churches. Such resolution may give instructions for the disposal of any assets held by or in the name of Somerset Churches Together provided that if any property remains after the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities such property shall not be paid to or distributed among the member churches but shall be given or transferred to such other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to some or all of the objects of Somerset Churches Together as the Standing Committee may determine and if and in so far as effect cannot be given to this provision then to some other charitable purpose.