



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN SUFFOLK

CONSTITUTION



For more information visit our Website at
www.CTSuffolk.org.uk
or ring the County Ecumenical Officer, Margaret Condick,
on 01394 448576

Adopted by the Council on 9 June 2004

1 NAME

The organisation shall be known as Churches Together in Suffolk, and it shall cover the geographical area of the County of Suffolk excluding the Waveney and Lowestoft area which is cared for by Norfolk and Waveney Churches Together.

2 BASIS

Churches Together in Suffolk unites in pilgrimage those Churches in Suffolk 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:

- a) to seek a deepening of their communion with Christ and with one another in the Church, which is his body; and
- b) to fulfil their mission to proclaim the Gospel by common witness and service in the world;
- c) to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3 RELATIONSHIPS

Churches Together in Suffolk:

- a) participates in the life and work of Churches Together in England as an Intermediate Body;
- b) sponsors Local Ecumenical Partnerships;
- c) accepts the affiliation of local Churches Together groups.

4 OBJECTS AND AIMS

The objects and aims of Churches Together in Suffolk 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. Churches Together in Suffolk shall seek to further these objects by:

- a) facilitating common witness to the Christian religion by the member Churches;
- b) providing means of consultation between the member Churches;
- c) working and praying for Christian unity;
and in particular shall seek (within its general objects):
- d) to be a visible sign of the Churches' commitment to one another and to assist the churches in the visible expression of Christian unity;
- e) 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;
- f) to act as sponsoring body for present and future Local Ecumenical Partnerships, ensuring for them the provision of appropriate ongoing advice and support, equitable financial assessment and proper periodic review;
- g) to encourage shared worship and prayer, learning, service and evangelism, with each church

9 RULES

The Council may make and amend all Rules necessary for the conduct and operation of Churches Together in Suffolk. At least three months notice of change should be provided to the voting members of the Council. Such Rules shall be consistent with the provisions of this Constitution.

10 ALTERATIONS TO CONSTITUTION

Amendments to this Constitution may be approved at a meeting of the Council 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. For this purpose each member church shall have a single vote to be exercised by its representatives on the Council.

11 DISSOLUTION

Churches Together in Suffolk 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 Council 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 Churches Together in Suffolk 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 institution or institutions having objects similar to some or all of the objects of Churches Together in Suffolk as the Council may determine and if and in so far as effect cannot be given to this provision then to some other charitable purpose.

END

- c) to carry out any tasks delegated to it by the Council;
- d) to prepare a recommended annual budget for presentation to Council;
- e) to prepare the Annual Report and Accounts for presentation to Council;
- f) to appoint to paid posts approved by Council and (if considered appropriate) to dismiss members of staff (including the County Ecumenical Officer) and to deal with all matters regarding the terms and conditions of their employment;

6.3.2 The membership of the Ecumenical Officers Group shall be:

- a) The Ecumenical Officer for Suffolk of each member church
- b) The County Ecumenical Officer, who shall act as secretary to the group
- c) The Moderator, Deputy Moderator, and Honorary Treasurer

6.3.3 The Group shall appoint its own Convener and shall have power to co-opt up to four members. Five members shall constitute a quorum.

6.3.4 All acts and proceedings of the Group shall be fully and promptly reported to the Council.

6.4 Permanent committees and temporary task groups.

The Council may set up permanent committees and temporary task groups to deal with such matters as it sees fit, and shall determine their membership and terms of reference. Such committees and task groups shall be answerable in the first instance to the Ecumenical Officers Group, which shall be answerable to the Council.

7 FINANCE

7.1 The work of Churches Together in Suffolk shall be maintained by contributions from the member churches as agreed among themselves, and from local Churches Together groups as determined by the Council. The Council shall also have the right to seek donations from trusts and private individuals towards the furtherance of its work.

7.2 The Council shall agree 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 31 March in the preceding year.

7.3 Accounting records shall be maintained as if the organisation were a registered charity. The financial year shall be the calendar year.

7.4 The annual accounts shall be presented to the Council for approval and be communicated to the appropriate financial authorities of the member churches

7.5 Churches Together in Suffolk shall operate a bank account in its name into which all monies shall be paid. Cheques drawn on this account shall require the signatures of any two from among those appointed by Council.

8 REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

It is intended that Churches Together in Suffolk 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.

sharing with others the treasures of its tradition;

- h) 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;
- i) to provide a meeting point for church leaders and representatives within Suffolk;
- j) to keep the churches informed about ecumenical initiatives within Suffolk and beyond, in particular those promoted by Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland;
- k) to enable the churches to respond 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;
- l) to encourage the fostering of good relations with other faith communities;
- m) to encourage those bodies and individuals in the churches which share a similar remit or concern to work together.

And shall have

- n) power to raise funds and to invite and receive contributions provided that in raising funds the Council shall not undertake any substantial permanent trading activities and shall conform to any relevant requirements of the law;
- o) power to employ such staff (who shall not be members of the Council) as are necessary for the proper pursuit of the objects, including a County Ecumenical Officer, and to make all reasonable and necessary provision for the payment of pensions and superannuation for staff and their dependants;
- p) power to co-operate with 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;
- q) power to appoint and constitute such advisory committees as the Council may think fit;
- r) power to do all such other lawful things as are necessary for the achievement of the objects.

5 MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Member Churches

Full membership of Churches Together in Suffolk is open to

- a) all churches or associations of local churches with a significant presence in Suffolk whose national bodies are member churches of Churches Together in England;
- b) other churches or associations of local churches with a significant presence in Suffolk who are willing to assent to the Basis of Churches Together in Suffolk and who satisfy three quarters of the member churches which subscribe to the Basis that they are committed to the aims and objectives of Churches Together in Suffolk and will work within the spirit of the Basis;

- c) churches or associations of local churches with a significant presence in Suffolk 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 in the Scriptures, are committed to the aims and objectives of Churches Together in Suffolk and will work within the spirit of the Basis.

The expression 'member churches' used throughout this Constitution shall where the context permits include all churches and associations of churches referred to in paragraph 5.1.

5.2 Affiliated Groups

Local Churches Together groups, provided they subscribe to the Basis of Churches Together in Suffolk, may become Affiliated Group by decision of the Council by a simple majority. Such groups may appoint two representatives to the Council as voting members.

5.3 Bodies in Association

Associations, networks and movements which either (i) bring together Christians of different denominations for purposes congruent with the Basis and the aims and objectives of Churches Together in Suffolk, or (ii) have objects to encourage inter-faith dialogue, may be invited to become Bodies in Association. Such bodies may appoint two representatives to the Council as voting members.

5.4 Associate Membership

Churches or associations of churches with a significant presence in the Suffolk area which do not wish to become full members or for whom full membership would be inappropriate may be invited into Associate Membership provided that three quarters of the member churches which subscribe to the Basis agree and remain in agreement. Associate members may be represented at the Council, at which they may speak but not vote.

5.5 Observers

Other churches or associations of churches which either do not wish to become full or associate members or for whom full membership or associate membership is deemed inappropriate may be invited into observer status by resolution of the Council. They may appoint observers to the Council, at which they may speak but not vote.

ORGANISATION

6.1 The Council

6.1.1 The Council shall meet at least once annually in September or October. Its functions shall be:

- a) to engage in worship and discussion;
- b) to reflect on the activities and future programmes of Churches Together in Suffolk;
- c) to recommend to the member churches such matters as it believes should be addressed jointly;
- d) to appoint, for such a period as the Council shall decide, a Moderator and Deputy Moderator of the Council from among its members;

- e) to appoint, for such a period as the Council shall decide, an Honorary Treasurer, who shall during the period of such appointment be a full member of the Council;
- f) to receive reports, proposals and advice from the Church Leaders Group;
- g) to oversee the work of the Ecumenical Officers Group;
- h) to decide upon applications for and invitations to membership of Churches Together in Suffolk;
- i) to agree an annual budget;
- j) to receive and approve the Report and Accounts for the preceding calendar year.

6.1.2 The Council shall be an open meeting. Its membership for voting purposes shall be:

- a) The recognised leader of each member church (the "Church Leaders Group"). In the case of the Church of England this shall include the Suffragan Bishop.
- b) The Ecumenical Officer for Suffolk of each member church (the "Ecumenical Officers Group")
- c) Two additional representatives (normally lay) from each member church
- d) Two representatives of each local Churches Together group affiliated to Churches Together in Suffolk
- e) Two representatives of each Body in Association with Churches Together in Suffolk
- f) The Honorary Treasurer

or as determined from time to time by the Council.

6.1.3 Twelve members shall constitute a quorum.

6.1.4 The County Ecumenical Officer, if one be appointed, shall attend meetings of the Council in a non-voting capacity. Other salaried employees may attend only if invited to do so, but are not entitled to vote, nor are they eligible for election or appointment to any committee.

6.2 Church Leaders Group

6.2.1 The Church Leaders Group are invited to commit themselves to meet together at least twice each year for prayer, reflection and consultation about matters of common concern. They shall bring such matters as they deem appropriate to the attention of the Council.

6.2.2 By agreement of the Group, alternates may be sent, and other attendees may be invited.

6.3 Ecumenical Officers Group

6.3.1 The Ecumenical Officers Group shall function between meetings of the Council to exercise general oversight of the work of Churches Together in Suffolk, and in particular:

- a) to prepare for meetings of the Council;
- b) to prepare for other events and activities as directed by the Council;