



ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK CHRISTIAN UNITY COMMISSION

CONSTITUTION (2020 REVISION)

Purpose of the Commission

1. There shall continue to be a Christian Unity Commission for the Archdiocese of Southwark. The purpose of the Commission shall be to implement the Archbishop's ecumenical policy and to promote ecumenical activity in the archdiocese, on the lines set out on pp. 20-21 of 'The Search for Christian Unity - A popular version of the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*' (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2002). The relevant extract is at Annex 1.

Membership

2. The president, chair, vice-chair and members of the Commission ('Commissioners') shall be appointed by the Archbishop after consulting such persons or bodies as he considers appropriate. The membership should include clergy and laity and, if possible, religious, and, so far as is practicable, should reflect an appropriate balance between the different geographical areas of the archdiocese; subject to that, the number of Commissioners should be kept to the minimum necessary for the Commission to do its work effectively.

3. The president, chair and vice-chair of the Commission shall hold office for as long as the Archbishop decides. Other Commissioners shall be appointed for a term of three years. At the end of each term, their membership may, at the chair's discretion, be renewed for another three years.

Officers

4. In addition to the president, chair and vice-chair, the Commission may appoint a secretary and such other officers as it thinks fit.

Co-opted members

5. The Commission may invite non-members, including people of other Christian denominations, to attend its meetings and participate in its work, whether on an occasional or a regular basis, but only Commissioners shall have the power to vote on any motion before it.

Local groups

6. The Commission may establish local groups, each to cover an episcopal area, a deanery, or a group of deaneries, in order to help further its work at a more local level. In that case, it shall appoint someone, normally a Commissioner, to convene the group and ensure its efficient working. Each local group shall comprise all the Commissioners, and those who have been appointed as parish unity contacts, who are based within its area, but it may invite other people to its meetings if it wishes. It should decide its own programme and method of working, but this should be subject to any guidance given by the Commission and have regard to the Commission's action plan and medium and long term objectives (see paragraph 7). Each local group shall submit to the Commission an annual report on its work.

Annual reports

7. Each year the Commission shall prepare

- a report on its work over the previous twelve months, incorporating reports on the work of any local groups (see paragraph 6)
- a statement of its medium and long term objectives
- an action plan for the forthcoming twelve months.

8. These documents shall be published in draft on the Commission's website, or in any other format the Commission thinks fit, and those who are known to have an interest in the Commission's work shall be invited to offer any suggestions for changing the text.

9. Having considered any suggestions made under paragraph 8, the Commission shall submit a further version of the documents to the Archbishop, and the statement of objectives and the action plan shall be modified if necessary in the light of any directions he may give. The final version of the documents shall then be publicised, on the Commission's website or in whatever other format the Commission thinks fit.

Status of this document

10. This document is intended to be interpreted flexibly. The Commission itself can make any minor changes to it which it considers to be desirable in the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of its work; if more substantial changes are thought to be needed, the agreement of the Archbishop should be sought.

September 2020

Annex 1

Extract from 'The Search for Christian Unity', pp. 20-21.

THE DIOCESAN ECUMENICAL COMMISSION

The bishop should set up a commission or secretariat to implement his ecumenical policy and promote ecumenical activity in the diocese. If necessary, several dioceses may jointly form such a commission

The membership should reflect the Church as a whole and include clergy, male and female religious, and laity with the relevant (especially ecumenical) skills. It would be a good idea to have representation from the diocesan council of priests, the pastoral council and the diocesan or regional seminary. In general, the commission should co-operate with other groups or persons in the diocese that have an ecumenical purpose. It should be in contact with parishes, with religious communities and with lay organisations. It should be a support for the ecumenical officer.

More specifically, the commission's terms of reference should include:

- putting into effect the decisions of the Church authorities on ecumenical matters;
- keeping in touch with the ecumenical commission of the whole Bishops' Conference;
- encouraging spiritual ecumenism;
- taking forward the ecumenical formation of clergy and laity by means of day conferences, seminars and the like;
- taking an interest in the way seminary students are being prepared for the ecumenical dimension of their future ministry;
- promoting good relations between Catholics and other Christians;
- initiating dialogue with other Christians at diocesan level;
- promoting joint witness to the Christian faith and cooperating with other Christians in such matters as education, peace and justice, and culture.