

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

CONSTITUTION

Approved at AGM 22nd November 1994

Preamble

The **Swanwick Declaration** (1987), in which representatives of the Churches nationally committed themselves to each other, included the following:

“We now declare together our readiness to commit ourselves to each other under God. Our earnest desire is to become fully in His own time, the one Church of Christ, united in faith communion, pastoral care and mission. Such unity is the gift of God... We affirm our openness to this growing unity in obedience to the word of God, so that we may fully share, hold in common and offer to the world those gifts which we have received and still hold in separation. In the unity we seek we recognise that there will not be uniformity but legitimate diversity.

It is our conviction that, as a matter of policy at all levels and in all places, our churches must now move from co-operation to clear commitment to each other, in search of the unity for which Christ prayed and in common evangelism and a service to the world.”

In the light of this declaration we, as churches in Hemel Hempstead, resolve to form **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead”** as our local response to that declaration, and adopt the following as our revised constitution:

1) NAME

The grouping shall be known as **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead.”**

2) RELATIONSHIPS

“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead” shall be in association with Churches Together in Hertfordshire and Churches Together in England.

3) THE BASIS OF MEMBERSHIP AND COMMITMENT

This shall be that of Churches Together in England, save for adaptations to suit the local situation:

“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead” unites in pilgrimage those churches in Hemel Hempstead 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, and

To fulfil their mission to proclaim the Gospel to the world by common witness and service to the world,

To the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

4) MEMBERSHIP

Membership of **Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead** shall be open to all churches accepting the basis of membership and commitment (paragraph 3) who agree to the adoption of this constitution at the AGM at which it is approved.

Thereafter applications for membership shall be received by the **ENABLING GROUP** and brought to the **FORUM** for decision. Acceptance will require the support of at least 75% of the member churches represented at the meeting.

A church which, on principle has no creedal statements in its tradition, and therefore cannot formally subscribe to the statement of faith in the Basis, may nevertheless apply for and be elected to full membership, provided that it satisfies 75% of the churches which subscribe to the Basis that it manifests faith in Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures and is committed to the aims and purposes of "**Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead**" and that it will work in the spirit of the Basis.

5) OBJECTIVES

These are adapted from the "Aims and Functions of Churches Together in England", selecting those appropriate to the local scene and including additional aspects suited for a local Churches Together:

"To be a visible sign of the churches' commitment to one another, in obedience to our Lord's prayer "that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You; may they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me". (John 17.21 NIV)

To encourage shared worship and prayer, learning and dialogue, service and evangelism, with each church sharing with others the treasures of its tradition,

To enable the churches to develop growing and changing relationships, as pilgrims together in the living and sharing of the gospel, and to facilitate further steps towards fuller unity in Hemel Hempstead, including providing a focus for the expression of our common faith, the sharing of resources and a united witness to the people of the town,

To provide a channel for the exchange of information and ideas between member churches,

To enable the churches as they grow together in unity, to seek a common mind and to share decision making in common

To enable the churches to respond to the needs of society at all levels, to explore church and society issues and, when appropriate, to make approaches to secular authorities independently or with others."

6) ORGANISATION

THE FORUM

- (i) The representative body of **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead”** shall be called the FORUM.
- (ii) It shall consist of two representatives from each member church or congregation, one ordained and one lay, wherever possible, who shall serve for a period of three years. (Churches having no ordained minister may be represented by two lay members.) Any person appointed to fill a vacancy shall serve for the remainder of the term of office.
- (iii) Churches may appoint one named Deputy for each of their representatives. In all cases the representatives and deputies should be members of their churches own decision-making body.
- (iv) Clergy or ministers who are licensed or authorised by their denomination to serve within the town of Hemel Hempstead, but who are not attached to any one particular church shall be ex-officio voting members of the FORUM.
- (v) The FORUM shall meet at least twice yearly, and one of these shall be the Annual General Meeting. Meetings of the FORUM will be open to all, but only official representatives will be entitled to vote.
- (vi) The FORUM shall exist to encourage the churches to grow together and to attain the objectives set out in the constitution. In furtherance of these objectives the FORUM may request the ENABLING GROUPS or individual LEGs to organise town wide activities.
- (vii) At the Annual General Meeting, (which shall be held in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity), the FORUM shall:
 - a) Elect a Chairperson, a Deputy Chairperson, a Secretary, a Treasurer and an Information Officer (The Officers). These Officers shall be the Officers of the FORUM and the ENABLING GROUP for all purposes. (It is hereby declared that the Chairperson shall be eligible to hold office for a period of up to three years.)
 - b) Elect a further five persons to form the ENABLING GROUP of the FORUM, due consideration being given to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of denominational, ministerial and lay representation.
 - c) Set the annual subscription payable by member churches for the year.
 - d) Receive and discuss reports from the Chairperson, Treasurer and Information Officer, the Chair-persons of the LEGs and working groups established by the ENABLING GROUP and other groups to whom the forum appoints representatives.
 - e) Approve the admission to membership of churches proposed by the ENABLING GROUP.
 - f) Ratify any changes to the constitution such amendments having been previously circulated to the member churches.

THE ENABLING GROUP

The ENABLING GROUP shall be responsible for:

- (i) Promoting the aims and objectives of the constitution,
- (ii) Encouraging the life and witness of the LOCAL ECUMENICAL GROUPS,
- (iii) Requesting that LOCAL ECUMENICAL GROUPS undertake specific tasks which the enabling group is empowered to perform,
- (iv) Appointing the leaders of Working Groups for the furtherance of the aims and objectives of **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead.”** Such leaders shall have power to request representation from all interested churches, bringing together people with shared interests and aims to work and to pray together and to arrange meetings as required. The Leaders of such groups shall report back to the ENABLING GROUP,
- (v) Representing **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead,”**
- (vi) Implementing decisions of the FORUM, including making arrangements for joint services and other town wide activities as necessary,
- (vii) Making arrangements and to prepare the agenda for meetings of the FORUM,
- (viii) Receiving and bringing to the FORUM applications for the membership of **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead”** from new churches or fellowship groups.
- (ix) The ENABLING GROUP shall have power to co-opt up to 3 additional persons for the purposes of specific or general interests of the ENABLING GROUP.

LOCAL ECUMENICAL GROUPS

All member churches will be members of the appropriate LOCAL ECUMENICAL GROUPS (LEG) established for the purpose of promoting the aims of **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead”** at a local community level.

Those elected by their churches to be FORUM representatives shall be “ex-officio” members of the appropriate LEG meeting.

The churches forming individual LEGs may appoint additional members at the LEG meeting.

The LEGs shall determine their own patterns of work. Each LEG shall have power to make such financial arrangements, including the levying of a subscription on member churches of the LEG, except that no LEG shall enter into any indebtedness with any person or organisation.

Each LEG meeting shall elect a person, lay or ordained, as a correspondent who shall also be responsible for ensuring that information concerning the activities of the LEG is communicated to the Secretary of the ENABLING GROUP.

Each LEG shall make an annual report to the Annual General Meeting of the FORUM.

7) FINANCE

Each member church shall pay an annual subscription to **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead.”** Such subscription shall be set by the Annual General Meeting of the FORUM.

The Treasurer shall produce accounts each year to the Annual General Meeting; such accounts shall be audited annually by a suitably qualified person.

The ENABLING GROUP shall have power, with the consent of the Treasurer, to set up such bank or building society accounts as are necessary for the purposes of achieving the aims and objectives of **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead.”**

Every cheque drawn or instruction to the organisations bankers to pay away any sum of money shall require the signature of two members of the Executive Committee. No arrangements for bank loans, overdrafts or other indebtedness shall be entered into except with approval of the FORUM.

8) AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Any amendments to this constitution shall require the approval of at least 75% of the member churches or congregations of **“Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead”** and shall take effect from the Annual General Meeting next following that at which they are ratified.

These resolutions herein adopted

22nd November 1994

To the glory of God.