

CAVENDISH COMMUNITY CHURCH

in the
Orwell Team Ministry

DECLARATION OF ECUMENICAL WELCOME AND COMMITMENT

INTRODUCTION

As persons, our roots and our history are important to us. The knowledge of where we have come from and the context that formed us, helps us to have a better understanding of ourselves and can be a determining factor in how we decide to shape our future.

And so it is with communities of people. The following is an attempt to chart how Cavendish Community Church (CCC) came into being so that we have an understanding and appreciation of our roots, give due honour to those who have gone before, and having done this, determine to move on to where we believe God is leading today's community at CCC.

The context for the preparation of this paper is fourfold.

1. The belief that now is the right time for CCC to begin the process of becoming a Parish Church in its own right, with full pastoral responsibility for the local community. With the active encouragement of the Rector in the Team and the Rural Dean, it will in some ways be a formalising of that which has already been happening for a number of years. But nevertheless it will be an endorsement that CCC has 'come of age'.

2. CCC has the Bishop's blessing to work ecumenically. In April 2000, CCC became part of the Orwell Team Ministry (St Mary's Walton, Trimley and CCC). In the legal documentation surrounding this, the ability of CCC to work ecumenically has been included, although the term 'work ecumenically' has not been defined and is left open to interpretation by practice and the Bishop's blessing.

It is therefore important to attempt some definition and formalising of what it means to work ecumenically, particularly as we move towards becoming a Parish Church.

3. It is important that as members of an Anglican church we fully recognise and respect the Church of England, its practices, customs and claims upon us, priest and people alike. In order to extend a welcome to others, we first need to be clear about what we have become and comfortable with what that means.

4. CCC is the only church building and worshipping community on Cavendish & Orwell Park estates and is attended by people of many church backgrounds.

POTTED HISTORY OF CCC

It was the decision of Bishop John Dennis to appoint a resident Minister in Charge of Cavendish Park and Orwell Green Estates that provided the spark to make the hopes and dreams of Christians on the estates to become a reality.

Around 1977 a small group of Christians from various denominations came together to pray for the work on the estates. For over a decade, attempts had been made to set up a small congregation, and there was an ecumenical Support Group that initiated some outreach projects. The main participants in these activities were the Baptists from Maidstone Road and the Anglicans from Walton Parish Church, though people from other denominations were involved.

When the landowner of the new estates (Trinity College, Cambridge), approached the church leaders to see who would be interested in registering an interest in forming a church on the planned estate, they met with a rather negative response. This is understandable as the Methodist Circuit already had four churches and the Roman Catholics two; the Salvation Army was preoccupied with trying to leave unsuitable premises in Walton for the town centre; the Congregationalists and Presbyterians were in the throes of combining and there were already eleven Anglican Churches on the peninsula.

However the Vicar of St Mary's, Walton, indicated that he would be interested, and Maidstone Road Baptist Church said that they would not say that they were uninterested at that stage.

Thus despite there being ample opportunity for a multi-denominational Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP), at that time there was not really the ecumenical drive, nor the ministerial energy, to implement such a scheme.

Little happened between then and 1989, except that the estate was built, and the target location of the proposed church changed at least four times.

In 1989, out of the blue, after informal verbal consultation with the Baptist Superintendent, the Diocesan Bishop, John Dennis, licensed a Priest, Graham Archer, to plant a church on the estates. This was a great surprise to the Christians who had been praying, and to the congregation of the Parish Church (St Mary's) who were then undergoing an interregnum. This act of vision by the Bishop led eventually to CCC coming into existence.

When Bishop John originally appointed Graham to found a church there was not really any mandate to form an LEP, just to plant a church and to work in an ecumenical way. When being interviewed by the local press at the beginning of his ministry Graham said: 'The hope is that the church built here will be the kind of church which is open to people who are not just Church of England.'

Although the concept of an LEP had not been developed, Graham still thought that an LEP might be one way forward and it was pursued for a number of years.

Over the next five years the congregation took shape. Initially it was peripatetic in nature, moving from Graham's house to the local Old People's Home at Reynolds Court, then to the local school, and then finally to the redundant church at St Philip's. During this time the congregation grew from 22 to over 100 adults, plus forty or so children, with about 80% of this growth being new Christians (i.e. having no former church affiliation or connection).

In 1994 CCC finally moved into its own purpose built church, and perhaps for the first time the Church of England backing became really apparent, as did the support of the other churches of the town.

The building cost £330,000 of which the Diocese paid £130,000, Trinity College, Cambridge donated £100,000 (they originally owned the land the estates were on, and it was they who had insisted that there would always be a plot for a church) and the congregation paid the rest. A donation from the local Baptist Church at Maidstone Road provided for the baptistery. The URC church provided a new gold chalice and paten, and the Roman Catholics provided a second matching chalice. The Methodists provided a donation towards the seating, and – finally – the local pub provided the font!

Furthermore the Church of England churches in the local area (deanery) covered the full cost of the quota, until 1995. From that time on the deanery has subsidised the quota in proportionally reducing amounts and we are on target to pay our quota in full in 2004.

From 1994 onwards the congregation ceased to have the same level of explosive growth; it continued to grow, but in different ways. Primarily by attracting young families from the estates, and also by attracting an eclectic membership from the surrounding area, who came for the style of worship practised at Cavendish.

For a number of years, there have been attempts at producing a formal affiliation document between the Church of England and the Baptist Union.

During the early years there were some preliminary talks with the Baptist Union, but they insisted that the local Baptist congregation be involved, and for those years the local congregation were either without a Pastor, or had internal problems to solve.

Subsequently, meetings were held between Graham Archer, the Baptist Area Superintendent for Suffolk, and a Baptist Ecumenical expert from London. Eventually the Baptists insisted that to be an LEP there needed to be a building sharing agreement (1), but that there was no point in having a building sharing agreement as we were one congregation - and this could be divisive. The Baptist's view was that to become an LEP we must appoint Deacons in the Baptist tradition, and have a congregational style of management.

The Diocesan view was that a building sharing agreement was not possible without a fair proportion of the building costs being contributed by the Baptists.

This was not to be and the congregation therefore had to recognize that CCC was essentially Anglican and Graham did his best to ensure that the CCC membership understood this. CCC has the Bishop's blessing to work ecumenically and this was reflected in the appointment of Gordon Whittle, a retired Baptist Pastor, as Associate Minister, who had the Bishop's permission to officiate.

In April 2000, CCC became part of the Orwell Team Ministry (St Mary's Walton, Trimley and CCC). In the legal documentation surrounding this, the ability of CCC to work ecumenically has been included, although as stated in the introduction, the term 'work ecumenically' has not been defined and is left open to interpretation by practice and the Bishop's blessing.

Note

(1) A building sharing agreement is where two or more denominational groups share the use of one building for their separate acts of worship and activities, whilst sharing the cost of the maintenance. Each group has its own pastor or minister.

COMMENTS

The aim of this declaration is to make members of other denominations feel at home in their local Anglican church, and to feel that they belong to the Christian community at CCC.

CCC whilst making this declaration, remains subject to the jurisdiction of the Church of England. However, the declaration expresses an embracing of those of other denominations which enables their insights, strengths and gifts to be incorporated into the whole life of the church. That will include worship, mission and service, as well as the administrative and decision-making process.

Members of CCC will want to be especially aware of their responsibility to be broad, flexible and open, and to affirm a diversity of Christian experience and expression.

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THE CANONS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND (6th edition 2000)
esp. B43 Of relations with other churches

WHO'D PLANT A CHURCH? – Diana Archer

CAVENDISH COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Orwell Team Ministry

DECLARATION OF ECUMENICAL WELCOME AND COMMITMENT

1. We the Vicar and people of Cavendish Community Church (CCC), recognizing that CCC is the only church building and worshipping community on Cavendish & Orwell Park estates, welcome all Christians who choose to worship with us to be as fully a part of our life and fellowship as they are able.

We respect and value the rites of initiation of different Christian traditions and will seek to help and maintain these where possible.

2. We invite those of Christian traditions other than our own
 - to share in the ministry and mission of the Church in our commitment to this community
 - to worship and, if normally receiving communion in their own church, to receive Holy Communion at CCC
 - to be part of the decision-making process of the church and to contribute to a common fund for the mission and ministry of the wider church
3. We undertake
 - to give pastoral care to all those who desire it
 - to share in the ministry and mission of the Church in our community
 - to continue to draw upon and make use of, the richness and variety of Christian liturgy, other than our own
 - to invite those who have recognized ministries in other churches to assist in leading worship and preaching
 - to be open to the appointment to CCC of Associate Ministers from other denominations, providing they receive the Bishop's permission to officiate
 - to work collaboratively with neighbouring churches concerning the mission of the church in Felixstowe
 - to include this Ecumenical Declaration as an integral part of the Parish Profile
 - to review this Declaration within 5 years
4. Following the decisions made by Churches Together in Suffolk on 9 June 2004 and Churches Together in Felixstowe on 27 April 2004 that such declarations may be made in their area which they serve, we have sought and followed their advice as to which churches should be consulted, and those mentioned below have given us their blessing and encouragement.

For Churches Together in Suffolk

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Regional Minister of the Eastern Area of the Baptist Union

Chair of the East Anglia District of the Methodist Church

Divisional Commander of the Eastern Area of the Salvation Army

Moderator of the Eastern Synod of the United Reformed Church

The Roman Catholic Bishop of East Anglia

Moderator of Churches Together in Suffolk

For Churches Together in Felixstowe

Moderator of Churches Together in Felixstowe

Signed 19 October 2004

For the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

The Bishop of Dunwich

Rural Dean

For the Parish Church of St Mary's, Walton

Rector

Churchwardens

For Cavendish Community Church

Vicar

Churchwardens

Signed 24 October 2004