



REVISED CONSTITUTION FOR CTIS **(Changed wording for length of service of officers, paragraph 4)**

Accepted by the AGM on 10 May 2016

1. BASIS

Churches Together in Stevenage unites in pilgrimage those churches in Stevenage and its environs 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 by common witness and service in the world to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2. AIMS

The aims of Churches Together in Stevenage shall be –

- (a) to enable the churches, as pilgrims together, to explore the Christian faith, to develop mutual relationships, to seek the mind of Christ and to make decisions, including taking further steps towards fuller unity of purpose.
- (b) to encourage churches to worship, pray and reflect together on the nature and purpose of the Church in the light of God's mission - each church sharing with others the treasures of its tradition.
- (c) to encourage the churches to respond to the needs of local communities, in the light of the Gospel.

3. MEMBERSHIP

A. Membership of Churches Together in Stevenage shall be open to -

- (a) any local church in the area which is affiliated to a church or association of churches which is a full member of Churches Together in England
- (b) any other local church in the area which affirms the Basis, is within the guidelines for Membership (see *appendix A*) and commits itself to promote the aims of Churches Together in Stevenage

B. Associate Membership shall be open to any local Christian organisation, which is formally constituted, subscribes to the Basis and is within the guidelines for Associate Membership.

C. Observer Status

Churches or Associations of local churches who do not wish to seek full membership may apply for Observer Status. Those accepted may be invited to appoint observers. They may speak at meetings but not vote or be appointed as officers.

Membership of CTIS is to be ratified by a General Meeting.

4. OFFICERS

The officers of Churches Together in Stevenage shall be a Chairperson, a Treasurer and a Secretary. The Chairperson is to be a member of, and elected by, the Steering Group, ratified by both the Reps' Network and Leaders' Meeting. The Treasurer and Secretary, together forming the core of the Admin Team, are to be elected at the Annual General

Meeting by Leaders and lay Representatives. Officers shall usually serve for an initial period of 3 years and may be re-elected for one further period usually not exceeding 3 years.

The Secretary will recruit volunteers as required to undertake specific tasks, consulting with their church leader as necessary. Those people taking on significant, ongoing roles in CTIS will only be appointed after consultation with the potential volunteer's leader, efforts to discern their calling, and with the approval of the Leaders' Meeting.

The Admin Team is to undertake the work agreed by the Steering Group, and shall meet at least quarterly to review progress of the day-to-day work of CTIS.

5. STEERING GROUP

(a)The Steering Group will comprise two Church Leaders, two lay Representatives, and the Secretary, with at least three different churches represented on the Group. Nominations for the Leaders' and Reps' representatives will be made by Leaders and Representatives for their own respective group, by post, in advance of the AGM. At the AGM, Leaders will elect two Steering Group Members from the nominated Leaders; Representatives will elect two Steering Group members from the nominated Representatives.

(b)A Leader or Lay Representative will be chosen as Chairperson by the Steering Group. If the Chair is a Leader, a Lay Representative will be chosen as Vice Chair, and vice versa.

(c)The Steering Group serves, and reports to, the Leaders' Meeting and the Reps' Network, guiding the day-to-day work of the Admin Team.

(d)The Steering Group is accountable to the AGM.

6. LEADERS' MEETINGS

Leaders of member churches and associate organisations are encouraged to actively promote the aims of CTIS within their own church / organisation, and shall meet together not less than three times annually to discern strategy, policies and initiatives.

In addition, one representative of each Associate organisation may attend Leaders' Meetings in a non-voting capacity.

The meeting will be chaired by the church leader who is currently Chair or Vice Chair of CTIS.

7. REPRESENTATIVES' NETWORK

Every member church and associate member is invited to appoint one or two lay Representatives to work with their church leader, and to actively promote the aims of CTIS within their church / organisation. The Reps' Network shall meet to make arrangements for forthcoming events, to pray together, to share information and issues, and propose ideas, which can be fed back to the Leaders' Meeting, and to share fellowship, no less than three times annually.

The Network meeting will be chaired by the Representative who is currently Chair or Vice Chair of CTIS.

8. GENERAL MEETINGS

Two General Meetings shall be held during the year to receive reports, consider policies and make decisions.

An Annual General Meeting shall be held early in the calendar year after the completion of the accounts for the previous year. At the Annual General Meeting the final accounts shall be presented, officers and Steering Group members shall be elected, annual reports submitted, and policies, events and initiatives considered. At least four weeks' notice in writing of the Meeting shall be given to Member Churches and Associate Member Organisations.

A General Meeting shall be held towards the end of the calendar year to agree the budget, and any policies, events or initiatives, for the forthcoming year. An independent examiner for the annual accounts shall be appointed. At least four weeks' notice in writing of the Meeting shall be given to Member Churches and Associate Member Organisations.

9. FINANCE

Each Member Church shall be invited to pay such annual sum to Churches Together in Stevenage as shall be agreed at the General Meeting. Associate Members shall be invited to pay half that sum. The financial year shall be from January to December. There shall be four signatories – Treasurer, Chair, Secretary and another Steering Group member. Cheques shall require the signature of any two of the signatories, of which the Treasurer shall normally be one. Annual accounts will be examined by an independent examiner.

10. CONSTITUTION

The constitution, and any subsequent amendment to it, requires the approval of 75% of the Member Churches, acting through their normal decision-making bodies. (See Note A)

11. REVIEW

It is intended that Churches Together reflect the developing life of the Christian Churches as they continue their pilgrimage together. From time to time, the Steering Group shall initiate a Review. A Review Group shall be appointed by the Leaders' Meeting to report on the progress of the pilgrimage and to make proposals for desirable changes.

Notes

A. *It cannot be over-emphasised that a major principle of the ecumenical process is that it is the churches' own decision-making bodies, rather than simply a representative council, acting on behalf of the Churches, which need to make major ecumenical decisions about policy and priorities.*

Appendix A

Guidelines for churches applying for membership of CTIS

1. Any church applying for membership of CTIS must fulfil at least the **doctrinal requirements** for membership of our parent body, Churches Together in England. This essentially Trinitarian belief in One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, (God in Three persons, united and indivisible, but also distinct in personhood.) To this we add adherence to the historic and ecumenical creeds of the Church (i.e. Apostles and Nicene Creeds)

A church, which on principle has no credal 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 those member 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 the new ecumenical body, and that it will work in the spirit of the Basis.

2. There is a requirement for the church to have some **external accountability and oversight** (episcopate) either through membership of a traditional denomination, such as the Anglican Church or Baptist Union or affiliation in some way to a newer network. We understand that the power of external authority differs from ecclesiology to ecclesiology, with the exact relationship being looser for those with some episcopal or presbyterian government. However, we believe that some external accountability is both possible and necessary for every church.

3. CTIS encourages **transparency** in matters of finance, conduct of church business and the conduct of professional ministry or lay leadership. We wish to encourage the highest standards in the conduct of church life so that the reputation of the whole church in Stevenage might be of the highest order and free from dishonour.

4. Where a church has **'split'** from another in membership of CTIS, an option here would be to place a considerable 'cooling-off' period between a church 'split' and the admission of the dissenting group to full membership of CTIS. We would suggest three years, to allow for sufficient time for the authenticity of the new group to be established. At the discretion of the Steering Group, and with the sensibilities of the 'parent' church particularly in mind, an Affiliate status could be offered. The 'cooling-off' period could be waived if the church from which the group split decided to recommend a waiver, if the 'split' was borderline (ie, almost a planned, or acceptable, fracture,) and if the CTIS

Steering Group believed that it was in the best interests of the churches involved, and especially their reconciliation, if this was allowed. However, it should not normally be the case, and this will avoid the 'mother' church feeling morally blackmailed to commend immediate admission into CTIS.

This will involve a very clear definition of 'split'. We commend the definition 'any division of a church which is not part of the whole corporate vision of the church in its planning and strategy'. This would mean a planned 'church plant' could be admitted immediately, whereas a group who leave a church, even with some kind of 'blessing' as an attempt by the church to limit the damage of the 'split', could not be.

5. The scenario where a couple leave and **start their own fellowship** concerns us. Do a married couple, or family, constitute a 'church'? How big or varied in membership does a group have to be if we are to avoid endorsing of a family as a 'church'. Again, this would be an issue for the discretion of the Steering Group.