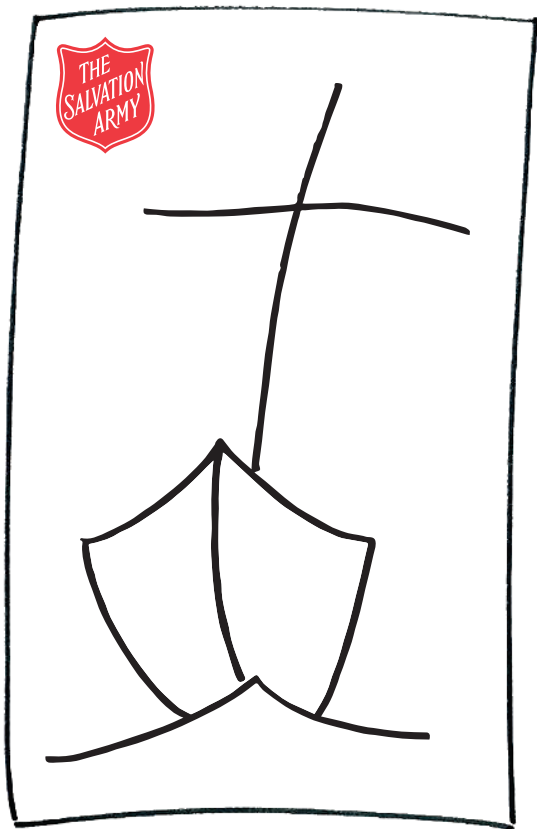


The Salvation Army

United Kingdom and Ireland Territory



A Brief Guide to
**Ecumenical and
Interfaith Matters**
and What You Can Do

**Ecumenical and Interfaith Unit
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INTRODUCTION

The Salvation Army and ecumenism

Ecumenism involves a commitment by churches to deepen their fellowship with each other and work towards greater unity in response to the prayer of Jesus 'that all of them may be one ... so that the world may believe' (John 17:21).

The Salvation Army believes that:

Inter-denominational harmony and co-operation are to be actively pursued, for they are valuable for the enriching of the life and witness of the Body of Christ in the world and therefore of each denomination.¹

Salvationists in the United Kingdom and Ireland Territory are called to value their relationships with Christians in other churches and welcome the opportunity to worship, work and witness together. We do this, understanding that:

- Unity is the gift of God as well as a task to be worked at.
- Unity is not uniformity but can be expressed in diversity.
- Unity and mission belong together as two sides of the same coin.

The Salvation Army and interfaith engagement

In many parts of the UK and Ireland Salvationists live and work alongside people of non-Christian religions. The territory encourages interfaith engagement, which includes:

- Respectful dialogue in which people learn from one another.
- Joint social action in service to the community.
- Sensitive witness by which we share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Unit

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Unit is part of the Communications Service at Territorial Headquarters and is headed by the Territorial Ecumenical Officer (TEO) assisted by the Territorial Ecumenical Support

¹ *The Salvation Army in the Body of Christ: An Ecclesiological Statement* (IHQ 2008), p1

Officer (TESO). They are responsible for supporting ecumenical and interfaith networks and assisting Salvationists to engage with other Christians and people of other faiths.

Territorial Ecumenical Council

The TEO and TESO are supported by the Territorial Ecumenical Council, which exists to encourage, support, resource and review the Army's ecumenical and interfaith engagement in every context within the territory and to update and advise territorial leadership on ecumenical and interfaith issues.

Divisional Ecumenical Officers

Divisional Ecumenical Officers, who are usually corps officers, support corps in the division with their ecumenical engagement. They may also represent the Army in county Churches Together groups.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Strategic Plan

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Unit, the Territorial Ecumenical Council and Divisional Ecumenical Officers work according to the territory's strategic plan for ecumenical and interfaith work. The strategic purpose that guides this plan is:

To support Salvationists at all levels as they build relationships and partnerships with other Christians and people of other faiths.

The strategic plan involves:

1. Encouraging and enabling corps members to engage more fully with other churches.
2. Strengthening intermediate level and divisional ecumenical work.
3. Supporting the development of interfaith relationships and partnerships.
4. Enabling Salvation Army participation in ecumenical and interfaith councils and networks.
5. Researching, developing and providing ecumenical and interfaith resources and guidelines.

What you can do

Perhaps the most useful part of this document is the section 'What you can do' (page 18) - but please dip into the rest as well!

LOCAL ECUMENISM

Local churches together

Local Churches Together groups can play an important role in fostering Christian unity in villages, towns and cities.

The range of their possible activities include:

- Prayer events and initiatives.
- Joint responses to the local media on matters of local importance
- Setting up joint practical projects in response to local needs such as addiction, homelessness and food poverty.
- Inter-church youth activities and joint training of children and young people's workers
- Shared evangelism and outreach.
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which could include a pulpit exchange.
- Ecumenical Lent and Advent Bible studies
- United worship for Advent, Christmas, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost and other occasions.
- Social events.
- Taking action to highlight and campaign on issues such as rural poverty, the environment and racial justice.
- Shared participation in fairtrade schemes and events.
- Developing agreed policies and practices concerning church security and the distribution of practical aid.
- Hosting a hustings event for parliamentary candidates.
- Producing resources such as a local ecumenical events bulletin.



Gather Movement

Many towns and cities have missional unity groups linked to the Gather Movement. Their main focus is on prayer and community transformation. These often run parallel to Churches Together groups but in some places they have integrated with or replaced them.

- gather.global

Local Ecumenical Partnerships

A Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) exists where there is a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, buildings or mission projects of two or more churches. There are six types of LEP:

1. Single Congregation Partnerships

Congregations from two or more denominations worship permanently as one. There is either a single minister from one of the partner churches or an ecumenical ministry team.

2. Congregations in Covenanted Partnerships

Congregations from two or more denominations do not join as one but enter a formal agreement to share in occasional worship, church life, mission and ministry.

3. Shared Building Partnerships

Congregations from two or more denominations enter a formal/legal agreement to share a building permanently, although they usually worship at different times.

4. Chaplaincy Partnerships

Chaplains from different denominations sign an agreement to work together as an ecumenical team within a particular institution or setting, eg an airport, hospital, prison or university.

5. Mission Partnerships

Churches work together to meet needs in their community and some of these projects become LEPs. They have a corporate responsibility and the LEP may become a charitable company.

6. Education Partnerships

These can include lay training, ministerial training and joint or shared schools.

Local unity in mission

LEPs have not always worked well and people are sometimes daunted by the processes and the paperwork! So, Churches Together in England devised *A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission* to make things easier. It recognises that agreements should be light, enabling and flexible.

Churches are encouraged to think about what they are called to do together, how they will relate to one another, what kind of context they are working in and what sort of agreement they need to do this work.

Three types of agreement are possible:

1. A working agreement

A simple set of guidelines to enable churches to do a particular piece of work together such as a local mission initiative. This is especially appropriate when the work is limited in time and scope and when few resources are being shared.

2. A partnership agreement

This covers a more extensive sharing of resources - for example, sharing a church building or enabling the use of resources from a number of congregations to run a night shelter together. The agreement sets out how the churches work together, including decision-making, accountability and resourcing.

3. A constitutional agreement

A more formal or even a legal structure, such as when a body created needs to register with the Charity Commissioners or appoint trustees - for example, existing or new LEPs, a Christian counselling service or a jointly run café, which is also a business, and so on.

- For more information go to cte.org.uk/working-together/local

Ecumenical welcome and commitment

A Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment is intended for communities where there is only one place of worship, but which welcomes members of other churches as regular worshippers. In these situations, Christians will often combine loyalty to their own

denomination with a desire to worship in their local church of another denomination.

The welcome often happens informally, but this declaration is a formal way of helping people feel that they belong. The church formulates a policy aimed at incorporating the insights, strengths and gifts of people of other traditions into the life of the congregation.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is observed locally by Christians of many churches, languages, races and cultures around the world. It provides an opportunity for local prayer gatherings and other ecumenical initiatives. The aim is to pray for the unity of Christians as they work for justice and peace around the world.

The Week of Prayer covers eight days (an octave) and is usually observed from 18 to 25 January, ie between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul.

The resources usually include material for an ecumenical act of worship as well as daily readings and reflections for use at home, in church or in a small group.

- Resources are available from ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

World Day of Prayer

The World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women who encourage people to join in prayer and action for peace and justice. It is held annually on the first Friday in March.

Local committees arrange local events.

- England, Wales and Northern Ireland: wwdp.org.uk
- Scotland: wdpscotland.org.uk

INTERMEDIATE ECUMENISM

Intermediate Churches Together groups, which exist mainly in England, usually correspond to county boundaries, large cities or regions. They support and encourage local unity and arrange wider events.

Intermediate bodies include the ecumenical officers from different denominations, such as the Army's Divisional Ecumenical Officers (DEOs), and some employ a full or part-time County Ecumenical Officer. DEOs are listed at salvationist.org.uk/ecumenical.

Regional church leaders (eg divisional commanders, bishops, Methodist chairs of district and Baptist regional ministers) usually meet regularly. Sometimes they are also part of an intermediate body.

NATIONAL ECUMENISM

Ecumenical engagement at a national level is facilitated by the 'national ecumenical instruments' for Britain and Ireland as a whole and for each of the nations within Britain and Ireland. The Salvation Army is a member of each of these.

National instruments



Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) provides information and guidance to bridge understanding of issues in today's society and develops publications and free resources to offer reflection, prayer and study materials to celebrate key Christian events. CTBI works with the

four national ecumenical instruments listed below to ensure churches work ‘more together, less apart’. The Territorial Ecumenical Officer is a CTBI trustee.

- ctbi.org.uk



Churches Together in England (CTE) vision is for churches to be: ‘One in Christ Jesus, engaged in God’s mission, empowered by the Spirit.’ CTE functions at national, county (or large city) and local levels. Divisional Ecumenical Officers represent the Army on county Churches Together groups and many corps participate in their local Churches Together group. The Salvation Army is one of 52 member churches, and the Territorial Ecumenical Officer is part of its Enabling Group.

- cte.org.uk

The Scottish Christian Forum

The Scottish Christian Forum is taking shape as the ecumenical body to succeed ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland). The Secretary for Scotland attends the Scottish Church Leaders Forum and the Assistant Secretary for Scotland participates in the Ecumenical Officers Forum.



Cytûn (the Welsh word for ‘agreed’) unites in pilgrimage those churches in Wales that seek to deepen their communion with Christ and with one another, and to fulfil their mission to proclaim the gospel by common witness and service in the world. The Divisional Commander for Wales is a Cytûn trustee.

- cytun.org.uk



The Irish Council of Churches (ICC) is the national body through which member churches engage, dialogue and act on a wide variety of issues. The member churches represent a range of Protestant, Orthodox, Reformed and independent traditions. The Divisional Commander for Ireland is a member of the Executive Committee. ICC members relate to the Roman Catholic Church through the Irish Inter Church Meeting.

- irishchurches.org

Other national groups



The Free Churches Group FCG is a network of denominations in the Non-conformist, Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions in England and Wales. It seeks to express unity in Christ by promoting fellowship, shared counsel and joint working to extend Christ's Kingdom in every sphere of society. There is a particular focus on chaplaincy work in prisons, healthcare, education and the armed forces. The Territorial Ecumenical Officer is a trustee.

- freechurches.org.uk



The Evangelical Alliance UK, founded in 1846, is the oldest and largest evangelical unity movement in the UK. It exists to serve and strengthen the work of the Church in communities and throughout society. It resources Christians, enabling them to act on their faith and speak up for the gospel, justice and freedom in their areas of influence.

- eauk.org

INTERNATIONAL ECUMENISM



The **World Council of Churches (WCC)** is a fellowship of 352 churches from more than 120 countries, representing over 580 million Christians worldwide. It enables members churches to reflect, speak, act, worship and work together and challenge and support each other. Although The Salvation Army was a founder member in 1948, we now have adviser status as a ‘world communion’. This means we are invited to participate in Central Committee meetings and General Assemblies but do not have a vote.

- oikoumene.org/en



The **Conference of European Churches (CEC)** is a fellowship of Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic churches from all countries of Europe, plus 40 national councils of churches and organisations in partnership. It seeks to help the European churches renew their spiritual life, strengthen their common witness and service and promote the unity of the Church and peace in the world. CEC works closely with the Roman Catholic Council of European Bishops' Conferences on matters of mutual concern. The United Kingdom and Ireland Territory is a member of CEC and is represented by the Territorial Ecumenical Officer. International Headquarters is also a member on behalf of the rest of the Army in Europe.

- ceceurope.org

INTERFAITH



The Inter Faith Network for the UK works to promote understanding, co-operation and good relations between organisations and persons of different faiths. It does this by providing opportunities for linking and sharing of good practice, providing advice and information to help the development of new interfaith initiatives and the strengthening of existing ones. It organises an annual Inter Faith Week each November. The Salvation Army is a member of the Network and is represented by the Territorial Ecumenical Support Officer.

- interfaith.org.uk



Interfaith Scotland provides a forum for different religions to dialogue with one another on matters of religious, national and civic importance, support a wider interfaith dialogue with other religion and belief groups, support educational activities in connection with interfaith dialogue, encourage civic engagement by religious communities in Scotland and support religious equality. The Salvation Army is a member and is represented by the Assistant Secretary for Scotland.

- interfaithscotland.org



The Council of Christians and Jews works to create constructive dialogue between Jews and Christians on a wide variety of topics. It works to combat antisemitism and intolerance, working with a variety of Christian, Jewish and secular community groups.

- ccj.org.uk



The Christian Muslim Forum is the leading national forum for Christian-Muslim engagement. It tackles the tough issues that divide communities, challenges anti-Muslim and anti-Christian hostility and supports local church-mosque twinning and friendship.

- christianmuslimforum.org

Churches' Forum for Inter-Religious Relations

The Churches' Forum for Inter-Religious Relations is an ecumenical body resourcing the churches' engagement in interfaith relations. It is a group within Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). The Territorial Ecumenical Officer represents the Army in the forum.

KEY EVENTS IN THE YEAR

During the year there are many opportunities for shared witness, worship and action. Some of these are listed below. Resources for key dates are also available at salvationist.org.uk/resources/key-dates.

JANUARY

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer
Holocaust Memorial Day: hmd.org.uk

FEBRUARY

Racial Justice Sunday: ctbi.org.uk
Church Action on Poverty Sunday: church-poverty.org.uk/sunday

MARCH

World Day of Prayer: wwdp.org.uk and wdpscotland.org.uk

MAY

Christian Aid Week: christianaid.org.uk

JUNE

Refugee Week: refugeeweek.org.uk

JULY

Thank You Day: thankyouday.org.uk
Sea Sunday: missiontoseafarers.org

SEPTEMBER

Creation Time: ctbi.org.uk
Education Sunday (England and Wales): cte.org.uk

OCTOBER

Prisons Week (England and Wales): prisonsworld.org
Homelessness Sunday: housingjustice.org.uk

NOVEMBER

Remembrance Sunday: ctbi.org.uk
Interfaith Week: interfaithweek.org
Prisoners Week (Scotland): prisonersweek.org.uk



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Ecumenism should not be ‘an extra, which absorbs energy’, but ‘a dimension of all that we do, which releases energy through the sharing of resources’.² In light of this, consider the three ecumenical Rs:

- **Realise** that each church and every Christian has something to offer and much to learn.
- **Recognise** that God can accomplish more through us when we share tasks, interests and concerns.
- **Reassess** priorities and ways in which churches can be together and do things together.

Ideas for action

- Include ecumenical reflection and action in your corps Missional Journal process.
- Identify your corps’ level of involvement with the churches, organisations and initiatives mentioned in this booklet.
- Consider how your corps could introduce or develop an ecumenical element into its activities.
- Look at the activities listed under ‘Local Churches Together’ (page 7) and highlight areas where your corps could initiate or participate in local expressions of ecumenism.
- Identify a corps ecumenical representative to encourage and develop engagement with other churches and faith groups.
- Place ecumenical and interfaith matters on the agenda of corps council meetings.
- Check the websites included in this booklet for news and information about the wider ecumenical and interfaith scene.

² *The Next Steps for Churches Together in Pilgrimage* (1989), p3

THE SALVATION ARMY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

SUMMARY STATEMENT

From *The Salvation Army in the Body of Christ: An Ecclesiological Statement* (IHQ 2008).

The full statement can be downloaded from the resources section at salvationist.org.uk/ecumenical.

1. The Body of Christ on Earth comprises all believers in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.
2. Believers stand in a spiritual relationship to one another, which is not dependent upon any particular church structure.
3. The Salvation Army, under the one Triune God, belongs to and is an expression of the Body of Christ on Earth, the Church universal, and is a Christian denomination in permanent mission to the unconverted, called into and sustained in being by God.
4. Denominational diversity is not self-evidently contrary to God's will for his people.
5. Inter-denominational harmony and co-operation are to be actively pursued, for they are valuable for the enriching of the life and witness of the Body of Christ in the world and therefore of each denomination.
6. The Salvation Army welcomes involvement with other Christians in the many lands where the Army is privileged to witness and serve.

salvationist.org.uk/ecumenical



Love God
Love Others