

Guidelines for Catholics in Local Ecumenical Partnerships
Leaflet 1: Single Congregation Local Ecumenical
Partnership

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A Single Congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) consists of members of two or more denominations in one worship centre (or occasionally in more than one centre). Ministry is shared by an Ecumenical Team in a large LEP, or in a smaller one by a single minister serving a congregation made up of members of more than one Christian tradition. An Ecumenical Council manages the life of the LEP. There is a common purse.

Single congregation LEPs can be established in new housing developments. In these situations, the denominations have decided that there will be shared ministry, worship and mission from the beginning. Single Congregation LEPs can also be established when two or more congregations decide to join together to become a sign of visible unity, or perhaps because of declining numbers. They usually decide to move into one building.

Single Congregation LEPs share in the preparation and reception of sacraments such as Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Joint Confirmation is celebrated enabling members of the LEP to hold membership in all participating denominations. Ecumenical collaboration in the appointment of ministers is essential for the ongoing life of the LEP.

A Catholic congregation cannot be a **full** partner in a Single Congregation LEP. This is because, in the Catholic view, our ecumenical partners in the West have not preserved the full reality of the Eucharist because of a defect in the sacrament of Orders as the Catholic Church sees it. This means that the Catholic Church cannot recognise the priestly ministry of their clergy as completely equivalent to its own – so if we were to enter such an LEP it would imply a recognition that we cannot in fact give.

For a Catholic congregation to be a **full** member of such an LEP would, in the Catholic understanding of Church, imply that the Catholic Church itself was already in full communion with these denominations. This is not yet the case. We are in partial communion, but not yet fully one.

Nevertheless, as a means to promoting closer unity a Catholic parish may enter into a Covenant relationship with the LEP while preserving its own Catholic identity and sacramental ministry. This Covenant could enable the priest and people to share in many forms of united worship and mission in the locality.

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