

**SHARING AGREEMENTS****Background**

Local Ecumenical Partnerships often involve sharing of church buildings, and sometimes manses. One way, but not the only way, of sharing premises is to enter a Sharing Agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969. Wherever the URC enters a Sharing Agreement in the Wessex Synod, it is the URC (Wessex) Trust which is party to the Agreement for the URC. This is regardless of who are the trustees of the property.

Procedure

The initiative for sharing church buildings or a manse might arise in a number of ways. However, it is important that the District Ecumenical Officer and the Executive Officer of the URC Wessex Trust (the “Trust Officer”) are made aware of the possibility of sharing at the earliest stage. This will ensure that all the options are considered and costly alternatives avoided. The following are guidelines, although it is appreciated that there will be variations in procedure dependent upon the situation:

- the local church should seek the guidance of the District Ecumenical Officer as soon as the possibility of sharing arises
- the local church should ask the Trust Officer to visit the LEP to enable the church to explain what they are seeking to achieve and to provide an opportunity for the Trust Officer to set out the alternatives and the most likely way forward
- if a Sharing Agreement is appropriate, the local church should ask the District Council to give permission for its preparation
- once all the ecumenical partners have agreed to proceed with a Sharing Agreement, the trustees in whom the property is vested will prepare the first draft
- the Trust Officer will act for the URC in the drafting of the Sharing Agreement, consulting further with the local church if necessary

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- the Synod Clerk and, if appropriate, the Wessex Trust's legal advisers, must confirm that the Agreement is acceptable to the URC. Any legal costs incurred by the URC (Wessex) Trust will be met by the local church
- the District Council will, following consultation with the local church, seek the consent of the Synod to enter the Sharing Agreement
- the Synod Finance Committee, acting on behalf of the Synod and on the advice of the Synod Clerk and the Trust Officer, will request the URC (Wessex) Trust to enter the Sharing Agreement