

Greenwich Ecumenical Borough Deans

Introducing the Borough Deans

Updated April 2022

Ecumenical Borough Deans (EBDs) are all about civic engagement. There have been Borough Deans in London since the mid-seventies, appointed to represent their Christian denomination or community to the civic authorities. They are appointed in each of the 32 London Boroughs to witness that the churches are united in a concern for the common good of the borough and are supportive of the efforts being made by elected members to serve the local community. In Greenwich there are currently 8 EBDs (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, United Reformed, Black Majority Churches, Redeemed Christian Church of God, and Independent Evangelical).

One important role of the EBDs is to make sure that the Christian community is strongly represented in a culture which increasingly categorizes 'faith' in one of three equally misleading ways. The first is a tendency to lump all faiths into a 'multi-faith' category which fails to see the distinctive nature and claims of Christianity as relevant to the whole community. The second is to regard 'faith' as a leisure (i.e. 'spare time') activity, and include it in a broad 'voluntary sector' group. The third is to take the secular humanistic line that all faith (and Christianity in particular) is irrelevant and should be suppressed. We estimate that around 10% of the Greenwich population attend a church of one sort or another. This makes a significant group whose concerns need to be taken seriously by the Local Authority and who can also make a significant contribution to the local community.

In Greenwich the EBDs have developed a good relationship with the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council and until covid met regularly with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Mayor as well as the Borough Police Commander and are involved in numerous borough-wide networks. EBDs are now routinely included in all public consultations put out by the Local Authority (e.g. Licensing) and individual Borough Deans participate in various civic events and services.

Greenwich EBDs partner with Emergency Planning Officers in maintaining a cascade call out system for a faith response to Major Incidents, which is part of a London-wide plan and have been involved in running several seminars for clergy and other faith leaders. I sit on the Borough Resilience Forum.

Borough Deans in Greenwich work together - hunt as a pack - and have been responsible for initiating several projects where churches co-operate together:

- Greenwich Street Pastors project in 2009
- Greenwich Foodbank in 2012
- Greenwich Winter Night Shelter in 2015
- Greenwich Sanctuary in 2018
- Greenwich CAP Debt Counselling Centre 2022

They also try and keep in touch with chaplaincies operating in the Borough, such as Hospital, Prison, School & Universities, Army, and also para-church organisations, for example Greenwich Youth for Christ and Safe Families.

Borough Deans initialised a Forum of Church Leaders to work together and promote various initiatives related to the 2012 Olympic Games. This was so successful that it was decided to continue meeting together and the Greenwich Church Leaders Forum now meets five times a year to provide opportunities for Church Leaders to receive information from the local authority, to exchange information from each

other and to network across the wide diversity of church traditions in Greenwich. There is a website to facilitate the work of EBDs in Greenwich -

<http://www.churchgreenwich.org.uk>

In Greenwich the EBDs work well together as a group which spans the whole range of Theological positions, but unites in the belief that Christians should play a full part in serving and promoting local community. In April 2012 Rev Fr Michael Scanlon, the then Roman Catholic Borough Dean, was honoured by being made one of the first freemen of the newly created Royal Borough of Greenwich to recognise his long and distinguished service in the Borough.

EBDs in Greenwich relate to their colleagues in other London Boroughs and also the London Church Leaders Group. Consultations are currently taking place to consolidate London-wide relationships

Further information about the Ecumenical Borough Deans in the Royal Borough of Greenwich is available from the convener, Rev Mike Leader (info@churchgreenwich.org.uk)

Currently the Ecumenical Borough Deans in Greenwich are: Pastor Segun Adenuga (Redeemed Christian Church of God); Minister David Chick (Black Majority Churches); Rev Patrick Eggleston (Church of England); Rev Richard Grocott (Methodist Church); Rev Mike Leader (Independent Evangelical Churches); Rev Duncan Aitkins (Roman Catholic Church); Mr John Twidale (United Reformed Church); Rev Andrew White (Baptist Church)

Rev Mike Leader
Convener April 2022