



The Archbishop of Canterbury today welcomed His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and his delegation, to Lambeth Palace for a private visit. Archbishop Justin was accompanied by a delegation that included the Bishop of London.

Patriarch Kirill arrived in the United Kingdom on Saturday at the invitation of the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Sourozh in Great Britain, which is celebrating 300 years of the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in this country.

Before arriving at Lambeth Palace today, Patriarch Kirill had an audience with Her Majesty The Queen at Buckingham Palace, at which the Archbishop and the Bishop of London were present.

The visit represents the first time that Archbishop Justin and Patriarch Kirill have met, but it is the second time a Patriarch of Moscow and an Archbishop of Canterbury have met at Lambeth Palace in recent times. The first meeting was that of Archbishop Michael Ramsey with His Holiness Alexey I in 1964.



The relationship between the two churches has endured for more than three centuries, through some very difficult times as well periods when the two countries have stood side by side. This relationship has been cemented through many personal contacts and through the spiritual and cultural interchange which has enriched both churches.

After welcoming Patriarch Kirill and his delegation to Lambeth Palace, Archbishop Justin had a personal conversation with Patriarch Kirill. Uppermost in the conversation was their shared compassion for Christian, and other, minorities in many parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, where they have been systematically targeted and persecuted and their communities decimated.

Conversation also touched upon the concerns and challenges that their two churches face in the present time in their different contexts; including the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in a secular culture; the witness of the Church in serving the poor and marginalised in our societies and addressing the needs of migrants and refugees.

They also spoke of the importance of the Church as the keeper of tradition – that is, the wisdom of the past, living in the present.



It was acknowledged that tensions currently exist between the Governments of their two countries. Archbishop Justin and Patriarch Kirill agreed that the first loyalty of the Christian Church is to the Lord Jesus Christ, and they affirmed that reconciliation was the key ministry of the Church in situations of conflict.

In faith, hope and love, founded on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Churches have been a bridge of friendship between the two countries for more than three centuries. The meeting today, and indeed the whole visit of Patriarch Kirill, is a historic event in the development of that relationship, which they pray will be nurtured and sustained through continued spiritual, cultural and personal interchange between their churches.



The two delegations met together over lunch for informal conversation. The Patriarch presented to the Archbishop an icon of the protective veil of the Blessed Mother of God. Patriarch Kirill was presented with a specially bound album of the Treasures of Lambeth Palace Library.

The visit to Lambeth Palace was the final engagement of Patriarch Kirill's visit to the UK.

On Sunday 16th October, Patriarch Kirill reconsecrated the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Dormition in Ennismore Gardens, which was attended by Archbishop Justin and the Bishop of London.

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