



Two years ago, a game of cricket brought together two branches of the Christian faith, Anglicans and Roman Catholics. This September, the two teams are to be joined by a third, this time made up of Muslim players.

In September 2014, a visiting side from the Vatican, the St Peter's XI, played the Archbishop of Canterbury's XI at Kent County Cricket Club's home ground in Canterbury. The game ended with a narrow victory for the Anglicans. The two teams met again in Rome last year, when the Vatican team ran out winners.

On Tuesday 13 September, the teams meet for the third time, again at the Canterbury ground.

What is new is that, after the match, they will travel to Birmingham for a triangular T20 tournament on Thursday 15 September with Mount Cricket Club, a team of Muslim players from Batley, West Yorkshire, to be played at Edgbaston, the international ground and home of Warwickshire CCC.

The following day, the Vatican side will visit Yorkshire, finishing its tour with a match against Mount at the Yorkshire CC ground at Headingley on Monday 19 September, before returning to Rome the following day.

The teams have arranged these matches for the following reasons:

1. To participate joyfully in a celebration of faith and belief.
2. To illustrate that we can be true to our own faith and at the same time cherish diversity.
3. To prove that a love of cricket can unite and empower people regardless of nationality or faith.
4. To show that we can be in competing teams yet still love and respect each other.
5. To be ambassadors for our respective religions and correct misunderstandings.
6. To remember that faith is not exercised just in our minds, or at set times and places: we worship God with our whole bodies and at all times.
7. To continue to build on the fellowship and the generosity of spirit that we have experienced on and off the field, and extend this to the wider community.

The touring Vatican side is made up of an international team of Catholic priests and seminarians who are studying and working in Rome. They belong to St Peter's Cricket Club, established in 2013, an initiative of the former Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, John McCarthy.

As before, the Anglican team is being recruited via the *Church Times*, one of the sponsors of the matches. Trials are to take place at the end of this month. The *Church Times* has organised clergy cricket in the

UK since 1951. The Archbishop of Canterbury is patron of the team.

Mount Cricket Club was founded in 1976. Since 2013, it has embarked on an ambitious plan to widen cricket participation, especially among young people, and involve itself with community activities. Last autumn, it sent a team to Rome to play the Vatican side, losing narrowly in the last

over.

None of these games would be possible without the huge generosity of the three first-class counties Kent, Warwickshire, and Yorkshire, and the full support of the England & Wales Cricket Board.

The tournament in Edgbaston will be played during the day on 15 September. Entry to the matches will be free. More details nearer the time. On Wednesday, the three teams will take part in community activities at Saltley Academy in Birmingham.

The Revd Steve Gray, Captain of the Archbishop of Canterbury's XI in 2014-15, said: "The Anglican players share with their patron, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a belief that faith in God unites people rather than divides them. This is why it is such a privilege to host teams from the Vatican and Mount Cricket Club at Edgbaston. We're thrilled that they have accepted the invitation – and the challenge."

Abdul A. Ravat, of Mount Cricket Club, said: "We are delighted to be part of this journey following our match in Rome with St Peter's XI last year, which shone a light of how cricket can help break down religious and cultural boundaries and unite people of faith."

The Revd Mike Vockins, former Secretary of Worcestershire CCC, said: "There's a long and great tradition of cricketing clergy in this country, which has helped to hold the Church of England together over decades and also enabled it to reach out to the wider world in many ways. It's a paradox that competitive sport brings people together so effectively, and increases understanding and respect. This year's tournament will extend these values to people of another denomination and another faith – which is good news!"

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Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/articles/archbishops-xi-play-roman-catholic-and-muslim-teams>