



The Archbishop of Canterbury welcomed His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Lambeth Palace this morning as the Patriarch began his two-day visit.

It is the second meeting between the two leaders, who first met in Istanbul last year, and in June this year made a joint call for action on climate change.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is based in Istanbul, Turkey, is Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome, and occupies the First Throne of the Orthodox Christian Church worldwide.

During the visit the two leaders will discuss issues facing the Anglican and Orthodox Churches and the wider world, and attend services in Anglican and Orthodox cathedrals.

The Patriarch's visit began today with a lunchtime reception hosted by Archbishop Justin at Lambeth Palace. The event was attended by the Patriarch's delegation, which includes His Eminence, Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and His Excellency Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia. Also present were the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Vincent Nicholls; Ecumenical Bishops; senior lay people in the Church of England; and representatives of church-based organisations that connect to the Patriarchate.

In his formal greeting to His All-Holiness, the Archbishop said: "With great expectations of a further deepening of the ties that bind us together, I look forward very much to the time Your All Holiness has kindly committed to spend with us. We will be building on our Common Statement, which sets out areas in which we work together more closely, growing Christian confidence in our troubled world."

Speaking about the refugee crisis and how Christians can respond, the Archbishop said: "First and foremost we are confronted, and you especially are confronted, with the plight of a huge number of refugees fleeing regions of the most cruel and savage conflict, repression and dire economic privation. We who live in a relatively secure and comfortable context here in Western Europe need to recover our generous culture of welcome and solidarity, which is at the heart of Christian witness."

He added: "These issues will no doubt occupy some of the interchange we will be having with Your All Holiness and your delegation. As Christian leaders we are required to seek together the wisdom and mind of Christ as we guide God's people in the midst of these challenges."

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### **Archbishop Justin's greeting to Patriarch Bartholomew**



Welcome His All Holiness, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch to this lunch. It's a particularly important day, which marks the 24th anniversary of the enthronement of His All Holiness. So he begins his Silver Jubilee year as we are gathered here together. We are very honoured that he should be with us on this anniversary and particularly appreciate that. Your All Holiness, we are delighted that you are here at Lambeth Palace.

Today is a great occasion on which I am privileged warmly to welcome Your All Holiness, our dear brother in Christ. This welcome extends to you all, venerable delegation, consisting of Their Eminences, Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira, His Excellency Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia, Deacon Theodore Meimaris, the Revd Archdeacon Dr John Chryssavgis, and Mr Petros Bazgarlo.

You've graciously accepted my invitation to reciprocate my visit in the early days of my ministry as Archbishop of Canterbury to your All Holiness in January 2014 at the Phanar in Constantinople. The presence of esteemed Christian brothers and sisters with me today underlines the significance of your visit to these islands.

At that first meeting Your All Holiness and I were able to reflect together and discuss ways of strengthening the well-attested bonds of mutual love which have grown between our two churches over a very long period. That period goes back to the 17th century. This resulted in the Common Statement that has supported and enabled our continuing engagement on a number of critical issues.

Your All Holiness, we are living in times of the greatest challenge since 1945.

Our world is experiencing many situations of severe crisis affecting millions of people's lives. Many such crises impinge on our own lives here and also on the wider European context. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported recently that around the world there are now 59 and a half million refugees, many of whom of course are in Europe, in the Levant, and the Middle East generally.

First and foremost we are confronted, and you especially are confronted, with the plight of a huge number of refugees fleeing regions of the most cruel and savage conflict, repression and dire economic privation. We who live in a relatively secure and comfortable context here in Western Europe need to recover our generous culture of welcome and solidarity, which is at the heart of Christian witness.

In the European Union we experience tensions over how the economic crisis in Greece should be resolved in ways that do not further impoverish the people.

These issues will no doubt occupy some of the interchange we will be having with Your All Holiness and your delegation. As Christian leaders we are required to seek together the wisdom and mind of Christ as we guide God's people in the midst of these challenges.

With great expectations of a further deepening of the ties that bind us together, I look forward very much to the time Your All Holiness has kindly committed to spend with us. We will be building on our Common Statement, which sets out areas in which we work together more closely, growing Christian confidence in our troubled world.

In September 2015, under the co-chairmanship of Archbishop Roger Perth and Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia, the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue completed its first agreed statement, "In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology". The first of two parts. We celebrate this accomplishment today. And there will be a symbolic moment during the Westminster Abbey service tomorrow for us to receive a copy of the agreed statement from the co-chairmen.

We are grateful to the International Commission for their commitment and perseverance and commitment to the task during six years of study put into this agreed statement. It is furthermore good to note that the present text will form the theological foundation for upcoming work on moral discernment from 2016, initially around issues of the beginning and end of life.

I should add that having read the statement this morning I am personally convinced that it is a document of the utmost importance that sets out a strong framework for Christian witness in Europe.

We are truly in the debt of those who have worked on the Commission, so thank you to those who are here and who have completed that work.

As our dialogue reflects on our shared faith in Christ, the theological convergence gained and future steps, our Common Statement enables us to keep our focus on our united witness to the Gospel in a deeply troubled and darkened world.

This common witness is already bearing fruit in a number of ways. We have identified the need to persevere on the path of reconciliation between our Eastern and Western traditions. We are committed to overcoming modern slavery.

Furthermore we released a joint statement on the landmark report published by the Lancet medical journal in June this year, which highlights the undeniable link between climate change and human health.

The prayer vigil tomorrow at Westminster Abbey will enable us to uphold in our prayers those fleeing conflict and oppression. Those suffering through dire and almost unimaginable poverty. Those who are threatened by climate change, and all who are seeking to bring the light of the Gospel of Jesus in these dreadful crises.

Thank you.

6 min read

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