

The Archbishop of Canterbury and the President of the Methodist Conference hosted an ecumenical day of reflection on mining.

The event at Lambeth Palace today was attended by representatives of leading mining companies, along with others from non-governmental and other faith-based organisations.

Work towards this day began late last year, when senior representatives of a group of mining companies contacted first the Methodist Church and then the Church of England to ask for Christian ethical input to their conversations about the future of their industry. For mining companies, this is an on-going process, starting from the recognition that there needs to be a change in the way mining companies see themselves and how they operate, and that such a transformation can only happen with communities taking an active role in the process.

Those involved in this Day of Reflection hold diverse views regarding the contribution of mining to society. The day provided an opportunity to explore those different perspectives, find common ground and build a shared understanding of what mining's role could and should be.

In September 2013, the Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace hosted a Day of Reflection at the Vatican, attended by senior mining company executives, led by the CEO of Anglo American, along with church and religious civil society representatives. The 2014 Day of Reflection on Mining will build a further strand in that conversation and seeks in particular to consider how mining can contribute to the Common Good in the years to come. In preparation for this day, theologians and representatives of the Methodist Church, the Church of England, and their investing bodies have made visits to mines in Australia, Brazil, Chile, Ghana and South Africa.

The Reverend Kenneth Howcroft, President of the Methodist Conference of Great Britain, challenged participants, saying: "We are looking for new insights, and a new vision, and something that we can take into the future."

The Most Reverend Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, raised the difficulties of understanding why "the natural resources curse undermines even responsible companies' best efforts, even in highly developed countries," and why the "large majority of resource-rich regions have not benefited from those resources in the long term."

Mark Cutifani, CEO of Anglo American, said: "The mining industry is about people and relationships. This Second Day of Reflection in mining has been a time for introspection and sharing ideas in which we deliberated what we as an industry contribute, and what we could contribute if create real partnerships were created. If we do not reach out and collaborate our industry is not sustainable."

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