

New Anglican Inter Faith Commission begins work with meeting in Cairo

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Members of the Anglican Communion's new Inter Faith Commission will gather for their first meeting next week, in Cairo, Egypt. The AIFC was requested by the Anglican Consultative Council when they met in Lusaka in 2016, and launched at the Primates' Meeting in Canterbury last October. Its purpose is to "bring mutual understanding and build trust where there is ignorance, fear and hostility" between different faith groups.

Bishop Mouneer Anis, of the Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa, will chair the new Commission, which includes Dr Josiah Idowu-Fearon, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, an expert on Christian-Muslim relations; Dr Michael Ipgrave, the Bishop of Lichfield in the Church of England, an expert on Christian-Jewish relations; the Revd Canon Tricia Hillas, of St Paul's Cathedral in London, an expert in conflict resolution and mediation; Bishop Humphrey Peters, Moderator of the united Church of Pakistan, who has worked extensively on Christian-Muslim relations; and the Revd Dr Ruwan Palapathwa, who has been a participant at a number of international forums on interfaith concerns.

Other participants include Bishop Danald Jute of Kuching, in the Province of South East Asia; Canon John Kafwanka, the Anglican Communion's Director for Mission; Ms Louisa Mojela, from the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, a member of the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council; Bishop Paul Sarker, Moderator of the united Church of Bangladesh; the Revd Canon Francis Omondi, from All Saints' Cathedral in Nairobi, Kenya; and Mr Nabil Bulus.

Welcoming the start of the Commission's work, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, described their role as being "essential to our future."

In a video message to the Commission's members, he said: "The world is looking for the capacity of religious leaders to differ without hating. And the world's capacity to differ without hating appears to be reducing by the day.

"You will set a pattern, an example, that speaks of the love of Jesus Christ extended on the cross, and in the resurrection, and in His sovereignty seen in the ascension and the gift of His Spirit."

The work of the Commission is to “inspire the provinces of the Anglican Communion to enable Christian witness in a multi-religious world.” It has been welcomed by other Christian leaders, including Pope Tawadros II of the Coptic Orthodox Church, who will meet members of the Commission during their gathering in Cairo next week. The commission members will also meet the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, one of the world’s most prominent Sunni Muslim leaders.

“Engagement with followers of other faiths is now a necessity,” Bishop Mouneer said. “Working together for the common good alleviates many misconceptions about each other, and helps us to see each other as fellow human beings created in the image of God, and loved by Him.”