

The Catholic bishops of England and Wales and Church of England bishops met in Leicester from January 16th to 17th for their biennial conference.

Together 27 Anglican and 27 Catholic bishops explored a diverse range of subjects including opportunities for closer collaboration at a regional and national level. Cardinal Vincent Nichols and Archbishops Justin Welby and John Sentamu were present throughout. Cardinal Nichols and Archbishop Welby addressed the gathering.

Dr Paula Gooder and Professor Paul Murray, members of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, led the bishops in reflection on its latest document *Walking Together On The Way*. Drawing on their rich experience of walking together as fellow pilgrims, the bishops and differences between the structures of their churches.



The bishops also discussed how they might work together to address issues of national importance, including the UK's relationship with the EU, recognising the unique role the Church plays as an instrument of reconciliation and peace in society.

The spirit of the meeting was expressed by Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Ripon, who said: "All good conversations start round the table over a meal.

"This 24 hour period has been a highly stimulating and honest time of sharing: prayer, fellowship, laughter and mutual support. I would like to think that the body of Christ has been enriched by this time and look forward to other opportunities to engage together."

The Archbishop of Birmingham, the Most Reverend Bernard Longley commented: "This meeting has highlighted how very far we have come in our fraternal discussions in the past 50 years. We have a strong bond, we are dealing with the same problems which we must continue to tackle in our different ways and support each other in our love for Christ and His flock.

"This meeting has been frank and realistic. I am both encouraged and strengthened by this sincere dialogue and our friendship as brothers and sisters in Christ. We journey onwards in hope - we have so much in common - in this drama of Redemption."

The bishops gathered together for Evensong at Leicester Cathedral and for Mass and Morning Prayer at Holy Cross Dominican Priory.

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