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Anglican, Catholic theologians host informal dialogue in England

Joshua J. McElwee | Apr. 7, 2014 NCR Today

A group of 16 prominent Anglican and Catholic theologians met for five days last week in Canterbury, England, to continue a set of informal dialogues between the two churches.

Although not officially sanctioned by either denomination, the gathering, known as the "Malines Conversations Group," has support from both the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and Anglican officials in London.

At one point last week, the 16 were received together at the Anglican church's London headquarters at Lambeth Palace where they met with both Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury and head of the Anglican Communion, and Vincent Nichols, the cardinal archbishop of the Catholic archdiocese of Westminster.

Nichols and Welby told the group, which had been meeting on the theme "Memory, Identity, and Difference,? they are serving as a "laboratory" for efforts of dialogue between the two churches, according to a release from the group about the meeting.

Welby, the group said in the release, focused his remarks on "the importance of pilgrimage in our ecumenical relations."

Among other topics addressed at the dialogues, according to the release: "liturgy as dangerous memory; the ethics of liturgy; the spiritual renewal of our Churches; [and] the changing face of Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism."

Also presenting during the meetings were retired Mechelen-Brussels Cardinal Godfried Danneels and retired Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.

Last week's meeting was the second for the group, which previously met last year in Belgium. They are planning another meeting for March 2015.

The group takes its name from the French name for the Belgian city of Mechelen, where the late Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier held a series of similar dialogues in the 1920s. Official dialogues between Anglicans and Roman Catholics take place within the Anglican and Roman Catholic International Commission and the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission.

Among others taking part in last week's dialogues:

- Anglican priest Jennifer Cooper, a professor at the College of the Resurrection in Mirfield, West Yorkshire, UK;

- Anglican Fr. Jeremy Morris, the dean of King's College, Cambridge;
- Anglican Archbishop David Moxon, the Archbishop of Canterbury?s Representative to the Holy See;
- Saskatoon, Canada, Catholic Bishop Donald Bolen, a co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission;
- Fr. Anthony Currer, an English Catholic diocesan priest who serves at the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Christian Unity;
- Paul Murray, president of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain and a professor at the UK's Durham University.

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