



CCJ (UK) Launches Student Presidents Programme

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Durham University hosts historic meeting between the Archbishop of York and the Chief Rabbi.

On 19 February 2014 Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and Archbishop of York John Sentamu met in Durham for the first time at the invitation of Durham University students to discuss interfaith in the 21st century. The CCJ will be facilitating and supporting a network of Student Presidents made up of the leaders of Christian and Jewish Societies at Universities up and down the country.

The Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu opened the discussion by talking about the necessity for interfaith dialogue, particularly within the context of the modern world. He highlighted that we are all more interconnected and reliant on each other than ever before. In his address he spoke of the importance of increasing religious literacy, understanding and most importantly dialogue.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis talked about how much Christians and Jews can learn from each other using the historical bonds between the two faiths. Society as a whole needs to look up to religion and respect faith; it is this which promotes compassion and understanding.

The event marked the launch of a new student-led interfaith community called the CCJ Student Presidents (CCJSPs). Participating students will work with the wider organisation to facilitate regular opportunities for students of different faiths to meet, campaign for religious tolerance and promote religious intelligence within the wider campus community. Students from across the country are invited to join the initiative and implement the programme in their own campus.

Tammy Ostro, President of the Durham Jewish Society and inaugural CCJSP says: "Last night was not only a day of historical importance for Durham, where Jewish-Christian relations has always been significant, but also one that is also deeply personal. My family would not be alive today if it wasn't for the friendship between my grandfather who survived the Holocaust with the help of Christians during the Second World War. I hope that the CCJSP platform helps to bring the significance of this kind of friendship and understanding to the next generation."

The Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu says: "This is an exciting occasion for the Jewish and Christian societies of Durham University. It's exciting because there is a major opportunity to work and witness together in finding solutions to the intractable challenges of difference. If we are not listening and talking to one another, fear and misunderstanding will grow and mutual support will be lost. Our world is increasingly interconnected which gives us wonderful opportunities to develop inter-religious relationships and understanding. I believe the case to learn how to live as near-neighbours is stronger than ever."

The Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis says: "I issue a call to students across the UK to participate in interfaith activity. I am encouraged that so many students are committed to dialogue. It is through such conversations between people of different faiths that we can achieve the kind of social cohesion and mutual respect that we all yearn for. Religion can, at times, be the cause of division and friction. But religion also has the power to heal the world. Every human being is created in the image of God and therefore we must appreciate the Godliness in every individual. Let us promote what brings us together whilst being respectful of our differences."

Source: [CCJ News](#)