



## **DECR vice-chairman meets with a representative of the Church of England**

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Hegumen Philip Riabykh, vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, met with Bishop John Ronald Angus Stroyan of Warwick, a member of the Orthodox-Anglican Commission for Theological Dialogue and one of the patrons of the St. Andrew Foundation, which helps Orthodox Churches and some other confessions in Eastern Europe to send students to British universities and to train young people for social work.

Bishop Stroyan spoke about the diocese of Coventry, which cherishes the memory of those who were killed in the bombings during World War II, and the fraternal relations between Coventry and Dresden, which also suffered from hostilities.

The DECR vice-chairman, in his turn, expressed regret at the absence of regular contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Church of England, caused by the liberalization of Anglican theology and the church practice maintained by some churches in the Anglican Community. In his response, Bishop Stroyan stressed that Archbishop Rowan William of Canterbury made serious efforts to restrain the process of liberalization in the Anglican churches. Among his recent initiatives is a proposal to exclude representatives of liberal churches, who violate the moratorium adopted in the Anglican Community on the ordination of gays and lesbians, from the theological dialogue with other confessions since they cannot express the opinion of all the Anglican churches.

Taking into account Bishop Stroyan's involvement in the work of the St. Andrew Foundation, Hegumen Philip suggested that the idea of common social programs be considered since the Russian Church had already accumulated a rich experience in the medical area, in aid to people with AIDS, work with convicts and hospice patients and in giving spiritual support to the military.

They also discussed the development of Orthodox monasticism in the Russian Church and in England, using as an example the Orthodox monastery of St. John the Baptist in Essex, where Fr. Sofrony (Sakharov), a disciple of the Athonite Starets Siluan, used to stay. Bishop Stroyan pointed to the importance of Orthodox witness in the West, which attracts Christians of various confessions and non-believers by its rich spiritual experience in ascetic literature, by the sublime beauty of its liturgy, deep insight into the spiritual life imbued with the awareness of God's magnificence and mercy. He said it was necessary to intensify the propagation of knowledge about Orthodoxy through theological dialogues, meetings, books, and personal initiative. For instance, Metropolitan Kallistos of Diocleia, through his

ministry in England, has helped to introduce many people to the spiritual values of Orthodoxy. Hegumen Philip stressed that interest in Orthodoxy in Great Britain pointed to the need to develop closer relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Church of England.

Present at the meeting were Canon Simon Stephens, rector of the Anglican Parish of St. Andrew in Moscow, and Ms. Yelena Speranskaya of the DECR secretariat for inter-Christian relations.

*DECR Communication Service*

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Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/57106/>