

Ecumenical breakthrough as Catholics move into Lambeth Palace



Members of a Roman Catholic order are to take up residence in Lambeth Palace in a move not seen since the Reformation, the Church of England has announced.

The four members of Chemin Neuf, an order founded in France, a married Anglican couple, a Lutheran training for the ministry and a Roman Catholic sister – will live at Lambeth Palace (above), the London home of the Archbishop of Canterbury, from January.

The group will work on ecumenical and international affairs and will share in the ‘daily round’ of prayer at Lambeth Palace, it was announced.

The Archbishop Of Canterbury, Justin Welby told the Church of England national assembly, the General Synod, that the move was ‘very important’ and ‘symbolically significant’.

He said three different Anglican orders have had sisters at Lambeth for the past 24 years, but this was no longer possible.

“I am deeply moved that in God’s grace Chemin Neuf have agreed to this radical and exciting new step of coming to live as a community of prayer, hospitality and learning at Lambeth Palace,” he said. “We pray that this step of obedience will bear fruit among us, and for the church.”

The Chemin Neuf was set up in France in 1973 with the aim of bringing together Christians from different denominations around the world. It has around 2,000 members.

The move is seen as a sign of increasingly strong ties between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church and comes after the Archbishop Welby met Pope Francis earlier this year.

The Archbishop of Westminster, the Most Rev Vincent Nichols and leader of Catholics in England and Wales welcomed the announcement.

“I salute this initiative which brings the riches of a number of Christian traditions of prayer to the life of the Palace,” he said. “This is a clear and bold sign of the importance of prayer in the search for visible Christian unity. Such unity is a gift we are most likely to receive on our knees in prayer.”

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