



# ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

5 October 2015

**Statement by the Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby  
Archbishop of Canterbury**

**FAITH, PLACE AND PLANNING – FAITH GROUPS AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM:  
POLICY BRIEFING  
Faith and Place Network**

I welcome this briefing from the Faith and Place Network, which highlights the challenges faced by a diverse and growing number of faith communities seeking places for worship. These challenges are particularly acute for migrant faith communities, for whom worshipping in their own tradition both supports community life and affirms identity. We must heed the strong biblical imperative for us to welcome the stranger and to treat them and love them like ourselves. I am pleased that the Faith and Place Network is advocating better understanding across those groups for whom this is a key issue: on the part of local authorities of the practices and needs of faith communities; within faith communities about the planning system; and, crucially, between faith communities. Understanding one another is essential in building the trust and confidence in which these challenges can be addressed.

Extending welcome and hospitality to the stranger is a strong tradition in this country. It is something that we have found enriches communities and benefits our common life. Hospitality is a value embedded in the Christian faith, found in the example of the life of Jesus Christ, and many of our places of worship already extend hospitality to communities from other traditions. This is true of many Church of England parishes and of other faith communities blessed with buildings of their own. Hospitality can lead to the building of friendship and partnership across different contexts and cultures, and this should be our aim – not for our faith communities to remain strangers to each other but to become good neighbours and partners in serving the common good.

I commend the work of the Faith and Place Network to our faith communities and to local planning authorities and encourage them to engage seriously with the Network's recommendations.