

PREM19

103

PRIME MINISTER

(Meeting with British
Council of Churches)

(October 1979)

Confidential Filing

The PM's meeting with representative of the
British Council of Churches.

53
830

PRIME MINISTER

May 1979

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
17.10.79.							

PREM 19/103



Prime Minister

17 October 1979

Many thanks for your kind note, and for the copy of the statement issued to the Press after yesterday's meeting.

With all good wishes.

C. V. PETERSON

The Reverend Dr Kenneth G Greet

1 Central Buildings
Westminster, London SW1H 9NH
01-222 8757

PERSONAL

16th October, 1979.

My dear Prime Minister,

R17/10

I write to thank you most warmly for your kindness in receiving my colleagues and me this morning, when we came to talk with you about some of the concerns of the British Council of Churches. We very greatly appreciated the opportunity of talking with you and the chance to share with you something of the Council's work, and listen to your views and judgements on so many crucial issues.

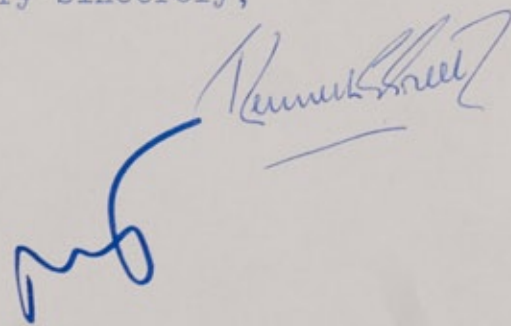
We particularly appreciated your kind offer before we left of a renewed opportunity at some later date to talk with you. We shall not presume upon your kindness but we do greatly value the opportunities of dialogue with the Departments of State and believe that the keeping open of these channels of communication is very important.

I do hope that your cold will soon have gone.

With every good wish in all your work,

Yours very sincerely,

The Rt. Hon.
Mrs. Margaret Thatcher,
M.P.,
The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON, S.W.1.



The Methodist Church

THE REV. DR KENNETH G. GREET
Secretary of the Conference

1 Central Buildings
Westminster, London SW1H 9NH
01-222 8757

16th October, 1979.

My dear Mr. Peterson,

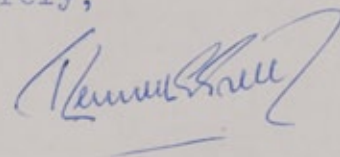
This little note is to thank you again for your kindness in helping to make the arrangements for the conversation we had with the Prime Minister this morning.

I enclose a copy of the statement that has been issued to the press.

With every good wish,

Yours very sincerely,

Mr. Colin Peterson,
Secretary for Appointments,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON, S.W.1.



Enc.

A deputation representing the British Council of Churches was received by the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street. The deputation was led by the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Greet, Chairman of the BCC Executive Committee, who was joined by the following members of that committee: The Rev. Harry O. Morton, Dame Diana Reader Harris, the Rev. William B. Johnston, the Rev. Arthur L. Macarthur, Mr. Derek Pattinson.

Dr. Greet, in outlining the work of the British Council of Churches, said that the Council greatly valued the tradition of dialogue with the departments of State. A wide-ranging discussion followed during which the following particular concerns of the Council were tabled: the needs of the refugees from Indo-China; the Council's report on South Africa; the problem of unemployment; and the future of Scotland. [The Chairman assured Mrs. Thatcher that the Churches see their spiritual responsibilities for the cure of souls and their social witness as one undivided task.



10 DOWNING STREET

MR ALEXANDER

I attach a copy of a record of the Prime Minister's meeting today with the British Council of Churches deputation.

I doubt if any further action is needed. The one exception might be the Prime Minister's comment (page 1) that a permanent selection committee for refugees in Hong Kong "could be looked at". May I leave it to you to pass this on, or not, as you see fit to the Department(s) concerned?

CVP
R. Kilson.
✓ *I have passed it on.*

16 October 1979

Russell
- 16/4

Subject

British Council of Churches

The Prime Minister received today a deputation of the British Council of Churches (BCC). This comprised:-

Dr Kenneth Greet, Chairman of the BCC Executive Committee

The Reverend Harry Morton, General Secretary

The Reverend Arthur McArthur, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church

The Reverend Bill Johnston, Church of Scotland

Dame Diana Reader-Harris, Christian Aid

Mr Derek Pattinson, Secretary, Church of England General Synod

Dr Greet briefly outlined the work of the BCC. He said that some felt that BCC statements showed a political left of centre stance, but the BCC hoped that all their statements would be judged in the light of the Christian Gospel and not by whether or not they supported a view of one or other political party.

Dame Diana Reader-Harris spoke about the work of Christian Aid, with particular reference to refugee work in South East Asia, the raising of finance by appeals and Christian Aid's attempts to educate public opinion about the need of help. She mentioned that the BCC had written to the Prime Minister recently to express concern over the delay in re-settlement of refugees. Was there any possibility of a permanent selection committee in Hong Kong? The Prime Minister said that this was something which could be looked at. She mentioned some of the problems of helping the refugees, and the position of other countries in South East Asia which already had large Chinese minorities. Many people in the area felt that the expulsion of the refugees was a deliberate policy to destabilise neighbouring countries in that part of the world.

Mr Pattinson mentioned Southern Africa as an example of BCC concern, deriving from the missionary activity and long historic and cultural connection of all the Churches with the Republic of South Africa. In the 1960s, the Churches' pressure for "constructive engagement" had produced some softening in the policies of the South African Government. The Prime Minister said that she did not agree that had been cause and effect. On the contrary, the process of change in South Africa had been slowed down by indiscriminate hitting out by outside countries at South African policies. Change was coming anyway - it had to do so. The worst thing which outside countries could do would be to withdraw investment. The Prime Minister commented that there seemed to have been no welcome in this country from the Churches when the South African Government had recently announced that there would be changes in the obnoxious marriage law. If the Churches were to commend to their members "disengagement" from South Africa, they would be bound equally to commend disengagement from all Marxist societies. If outsiders reacted in the wrong way to internal South African affairs they would encourage chaos. Similarly, in Namibia, the Prime Minister commented that the new Parliament was doing many good things but still getting no encouragement from the Churches in this country, only criticism.

Mr McArthur introduced a brief discussion of unemployment, arguing that the present situation - unlike that of the period between the Wars - did not admit of a solution because of the impact of technology on work opportunities. The Prime Minister said that technology had created more jobs than it had destroyed, mentioning industries like washing machines, radio, TV and computers. The problem in this country was that we were not producing goods of the quality to meet the demand that existed. The Government did indeed have a strategy of as full employment as possible,

but this was not helped by the view which the Churches so often seemed to express that the individual could cast all his cares upon the State. Areas like the North East certainly had problems, but she commended to the deputation the recent speech by Lord Seiff of Marks and Spencer, pointing out the high income in that area which had promoted strong sales by that company of more expensive goods.

After a brief discussion of Scotland, the Prime Minister said that the Churches seemed to talk of Christianity only in its social manifestations. There were huge problems in places like Glasgow as in Liverpool and Manchester, partly caused by the pouring in of money to those areas in the wrong way, not based on establishing small communities and the spirit of personal responsibility to work and family. Dr Greet said that the BCC were indeed concerned to change attitudes, and were deeply involved in evangelism.

Dr Greet thanked the Prime Minister for receiving the deputation. The Prime Minister said that she had enjoyed the meeting, and looked forward to another discussion some time.

Later, I agreed with Dr Greet the text of a press release by the BCC which mentioned (without further comment) the main subjects raised. I asked Dr Greet to delete a reference to the Prime Minister's views so that the release solely reflected the BCC.

CVP.

16 October 1979



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 October 1979

Dear Michael,

Clive Whitmore asked Sue Unsworth in Mr Marten's Private Office for a short brief on voluntary agencies' work for refugees overseas for the Prime Minister's meeting on 16 October with a delegation from British Church groups.

/ I enclose a brief from the ODA.

*yours ever
Roderic Lyne*

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON

Brief for Prime Minister's Meeting with Delegation from Church Groups

16 October 1979

VOLUNTARY AGENCIES' WORK FOR REFUGEES OVERSEAS (ODA ASSISTANCE)

This work is a valuable supplement to that of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees which has been the main channel of UK official help to refugees (we are making a contribution of £6 million to his budget for 1979).

In 1979/80 the FCO (ODA) will provide about £151,000 of grants to projects undertaken by voluntary agencies for refugees overseas. The main activities are education, including handicrafts and vocational training, mother and child care and supplementary feeding. Subject to Parliamentary approval, £156,000 will be provided for similar activities in 1980/81.

Small agencies which have benefitted from grants include Project Vietnam Orphans and the Ockenden Venture - both operating in Thailand. Save the Children, operating in Thailand and Honduras, is one of the larger agencies receiving funds.

Christian Aid showed interest when ODA started this programme but, although they said they would discuss the accounting requirements with their oversea collaborators, they have since made no formal request for help.

£ for £ Scheme (ODA Joint Funding Scheme)

The Government fully recognises the role of voluntary agencies in the field of overseas development, and supports selected projects undertaken by them on a £ for £ basis. This year ODA is providing £1,650,000 under this scheme, of which Christian Aid is receiving £200,000 for projects in community health, training, agriculture, water supplies, etc.

UND (B)
9 October 1979



142 OCT 1979

MR WHITMORE

had
5x.

Meeting with British Council of Churches,
16 October

I attach a brief.

I have asked Mr Neil Marten's Private Office to let you have a note on Christian Aid's refugee relief work by close of play on 11 October, Mr Marten himself will be in East Africa on 16 October; I have not asked for any official to attend - perhaps decide when you see the brief?

I have talked to Dr Greet about publicity. The BCC want to tell the press that the meeting had taken place, the names of those attending and the topics discussed - without going into what had been said about these topics. This seems to me harmless enough; Dr Greet will have with him a text of what, if we are content, he would like to say.

CVP

5 October 1979

MR WHITMORE
PRIME MINISTER

John
5x.

British Council of Churches (BCC)

I repeat - this is
not a discussion
meeting. I shall
say - if they really
want to

You are receiving a BCC deputation on Tuesday 16 October at 10 am. The meeting, which was requested after the General Election, was first fixed for 27 July but it was swamped in the pre-Lusaka rush and had to be postponed.

Edw the press.
no.

The deputation will be:-

Dr Kenneth Greet, Chairman of the BCC Executive Committee

The Reverend Harry Morton, General Secretary

The Reverend Arthur McArthur, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church

The Reverend Bill Johnston, Church of Scotland

Dame Diana Reader Harris, Christian Aid

Mr Derek Pattinson, Secretary, Church of England General Synod

Dr Greet, Mr Morton and Mr McArthur have all accepted invitations to your dinner party on 7 November for Dr Coggan.

The BCC was founded in 1942. All the churches, except the Roman Catholics, belong (the RCs often send observers). There are similar Councils in Scotland, Wales and Ireland and the BCC is affiliated to the World Council of Churches. It has four main Divisions - Christian Aid, community affairs (including race relations), international affairs and ecumenical affairs.

The BCC is largely financed by grants from member churches. It is short of money.

The BCC has good contacts with Government Departments, for example on aid matters, but it must be some years since they were received by a Prime Minister.

The subjects they hope to raise are:

1. Christian Aid, and its refugee relief work.
2. Southern Africa. The BCC recently published a paper "Political Change in South Africa: Britain's responsibility", which is due to be debated by the BCC and some at least of the member churches later this year. The thrust of this paper is that shareholder pressure and 'constructive engagement' is not enough, and that the Churches should press public opinion and HMG for "disengagement" by the West from South Africa and a readiness to support, or at least not veto, United Nations proposals for sanctions against South Africa, including an oil embargo. (The Churches, particularly the Church of England, may not necessarily endorse this BCC line.)
3. Energy and unemployment.
4. The future of Scotland in a United Kingdom.

The BCC publishes plenty of literature. Last year they produced a book "Britain Today and Tomorrow", edited by Canon Beeson of Westminster Abbey. Dr Greet may hand you a copy, and a copy of the South Africa paper.

The deputation is expecting a meeting of 45 minutes. They would like, if this is acceptable, to make a Press release to say that the meeting had been held, and that these four topics had been discussed - without enlargement on what had been said. Dr Greet will have a draft with him.

CVP

4 October 1979

PRIME MINISTER

*Mr. Laker
May in pt. here
a unit.
HLL
28/12*

1.

BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

You were to have met a small deputation from the British Council of Churches on 27 July but it was swamped in the pre-Lusaka rush and had to be postponed until Tuesday 16 October.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council wrote to you on 12 July (copy attached) to let you know what subjects the deputation hoped to raise with you. I understand that this is still the ground they would like to cover when they come next month. We need to decide:-

(i) Whether you want any other Ministers or officials with you when you see the deputation. Would you like Mr. Neil Marten to be present since they want to talk about the refugee relief work of Christian Aid? I rather doubt whether you will need anybody to support you on the other subjects they want to bring up - Southern Africa, Energy, Unemployment and the Constitutional Future of Scotland.

(ii) Whether you need any briefing on the subjects mentioned in Dr. Greet's letter. Again, I should not have thought that you would need anything, except possibly a note on the refugee relief work of Christian Aid.

*The meeting is rather
for them to give me their views
than for me to give them mine! They can i. take longer.
Further - I take it the meeting is purely a no
press statements other than the
fact of the deputation if they so wish.
M.T.*

27 September 1979

MR WHITMORE

Prime Minister's Meeting with the British Council
of Churches - Tuesday 16 October at 10 am

Soon after the General Election the Reverend Harry Morton, General Secretary of the British Council of Churches (BCC) wrote to ask if "some leaders of the churches might have an opportunity for conversation with the Prime Minister and some of your colleagues".

The Prime Minister agreed, on advice, to receive a small BCC party and a July date was fixed. This had to be put off, and they are now coming on 16 October.

The attached letter from Dr Greet gives the background, except that I think Mr Morton will replace Mr Wilkie.

I know Mr Pattinson, and have asked him what was the BCC's reason for seeking this meeting. He tells me that it is, so to speak, political; the BCC think that the Conservative Party regard them as always on the Left, and want a chance to explain why they think the way they do, for example on Southern Africa. The idea of asking to see the Prime Minister seems to have come from Mr Michael Latham MP and an unnamed Labour MP, both active in the BCC world.

I am afraid this does not look a very auspicious occasion. Subject to your view, the action now needed would seem to be as follows:-

- (i) Decide what Ministers (if any) or officials the Prime Minister might wish to have with her at this meeting.
- (ii) Arrange briefing. I suspect the Prime Minister will not wish, or need, a full brief. I can look after the introduction; do you think we need to commission briefs on any of the subjects in Dr Greet's letter?

I am very ready for a word about this if you wish.

CVP.

26 September 1979

MEETING WITH THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

I spoke to Mr Pattinson about this.

Harry Morton is likely to come himself; I said that somebody must therefore drop out.

Mr Pattinson told me that the BCC's main purpose in seeing the Prime Minister was defensive; the BCC thought that the Conservative Party regarded them as always on the left, and wanted a chance to explain why they thought the way they did. The idea of asking to see the Prime Minister seems to have come from Mr Michael Latham MP and a Labour MP, both active in the BCC world.

Mr Pattinson said that BCC contacts with Government Departments were good, for example between the International Affairs Section and the FCO.

He thought Kenneth Greet planned to give the Prime Minister two documents, Trevor Beeson's book, "Britain Today and Tomorrow" and the BCC's paper on Political Change in South Africa. (He will send me a copy of the latter).

CVP.

26 September 1979

23 July 1979

Thank you for your letter of 20 July.

I am glad that 10 am on Tuesday, 16 October will be convenient for you and the other members of the British Council of Churches Party who will call on the Prime Minister, and I shall look forward to being in touch with you about the details nearer the time.

G. V. PETERSON

The Reverend Dr Kenneth G Greet

The Methodist Church

THE REV. DR KENNETH G. GREET
Secretary of the Conference

1 Central Buildings
Westminster, London SW1H 9NH
01-222 8757

20th July, 1979.

Dear Mr. Peterson,

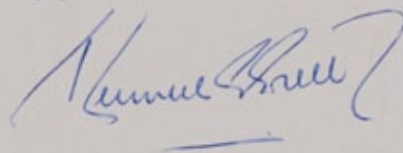
Thank you for your letter of the 19th July.

I fully understand the need for the postponement of the visit of the BCC deputation to the Prime Minister. We very gladly accept the alternative time at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 16th October. It is just possible that we may want slightly to vary the membership of the deputation, but I can be in touch with you again about that nearer the date.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Mr. C. Peterson,
Secretary for
Appointments,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON, S.W.1.



19 July 1979

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your letter of 12 July about the meeting with the British Council of Churches deputation, and for the details of the matters which you wish to raise.

I am very sorry to say that, because of the extended session of Parliament, the Prime Minister's diary next week has to be re-arranged, and I have to ask if the meeting could be deferred. I have spoken to Mr Amey, who kindly agreed to let those concerned know; and I have suggested to him an alternative time for the meeting, 10.00 am on Tuesday 16 October.

I shall look forward to learning if that date and time are convenient; and I would like, once again to express the Prime Minister's regret at not being able to receive you next week.

C. V. PETERSON

The Reverend Dr Kenneth G Greet

MR WHITMORE

Prime Minister's Meeting with the British

Council of Churches

Friday 27 July at 9.30 am

Soon after the General Election the Reverend Harry Morton, General Secretary of the British Council of Churches (BCC) wrote to ask if "some leaders of the Churches" might have an opportunity "for conversation with the Prime Minister and some of your colleagues".

The Prime Minister agreed, on advice, to receive a small BCC party, and a date and time were fixed. One hour is in fact available, but you will see from my letter of 24 May that I mentioned "a meeting of 45 minutes or so".

Dr Greet, who will lead the BCC party on 27 July has now written about the meeting.

My first comment, looking at the names of the party, is that this is a pretty weak follow-up to a meeting suggested for the Prime Minister to meet "leaders of the Churches". This team is pretty small beer, and they are, frankly, lucky to have this meeting. (I take it that it is better to receive them and be done with it, rather than to put them off.) I had in fact, before Dr Greet's letter arrived, telephoned Mr Morton to ask what was happening, and he told me that the BCC had decided to send, so to speak, a party of people who were all very much involved with BCC affairs, rather than to enlist top people like the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is not of course so fully involved with the BCC.

The agenda does not seem very exciting.

Subject to your view, the action now needed would seem to be as follows:-

- (i) Decide what Ministers (if any) the Prime Minister might wish to have with her at this meeting.

- (ii) Arrange briefing. I suspect that the Prime Minister will not wish, or need, a full brief. If it would be helpful, I am sure we could get further information from Mr Pattinson (a former civil servant) about what the BCC party are likely to be saying.
- (iii) A reply to Dr Greet's letter. If you will be in charge of this meeting, you may like to do this? Mr Morton will, I understand, be on holiday; I will be in Sheffield that day.

I am very ready for a word about this if you wish.

CVP.

13 July 1979

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

British Council of Churches

The Reverend Henry Morton told me today that Dr Greet will be leading the BCC party, and is writing about the meeting.

The subjects seem to be:-

The "context of pluralism" (regional issues, other nations and immigrants). This may lead to some discussion of Scotland as the group will include a Scot (Reverend W B Johnston).

Refugee matters, and development aid (Dame Diana Reader Harris).

The BCC document on South Africa and British responsibilities there (Mr Pattinson).

If time permits, energy and industrial renewal (Reverend Arthur McArthur).

The party hope to bring the Reverend James Wilkie to take a note.

CVP.

13 July 1979

The Methodist Church

THE REV. DR KENNETH G. GREET
Secretary of the Conference

1 Central Buildings
Westminster, London SW1H 9NH

01 222 8757. ~~XK-830780E~~

Dear Prime Minister,

12th July, 1979.

I write as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the British Council of Churches to follow up the letter of the 24th May, 1979, in which your secretary for appointments kindly indicated your willingness to receive a small deputation from the British Council of Churches at 9.30 a.m. on Friday, 27th July. I was asked to convey to you the warm appreciation of the Executive Committee for your willingness to receive us.

I enclose on a separate sheet the names of those who will be coming on the 27th July. It may be helpful if I indicate how, subject to your approval, we think the time may be most profitably spent. With your permission I will introduce the members of the deputation, and say a general word about the work of the Council. Then we hope you will allow Dame Diana to say a word about the refugee relief work of Christian Aid; Mr. Derek Pattinson to refer to the Council's concern about Southern Africa; the Rev. Arthur Macarthur to speak about energy and unemployment; and the Rev. Bill Johnston to say something about the future of Scotland in a united kingdom.

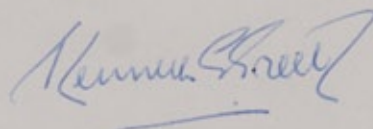
These introductory comments will be very brief and altogether will occupy no more than fifteen minutes, thus leaving thirty minutes during which, we hope, you would question us and share your own thinking with us as seems right to you.

You may be sure that those of us who are coming greatly value this opportunity to meet you during these early days of your administration, and to represent the Churches in whose work, as we know, you have such a lively interest.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

The Rt. Hon.
Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON, S.W.1.



Enc.

The following members of the Executive Committee of the British Council of Churches will attend the meeting with the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street on the 27th July at 9.30 a.m.:-

Rev. Dr. Kenneth Greet (Chairman of the BCC Executive Committee)

Dame Diana Reader-Harris (Chairman of the Board of Christian Aid)

Mr. Derek Pattinson (Secretary-General of the General Synod of the Church of England)

Rev. Arthur Macarthur (General Secretary of the United Reformed Church)

Rev. Bill Johnston (Convener of the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the Church of Scotland)

Rev. James L. Wilkie (Staff member of the BCC)

Unemployment
S.

File please.

MISS STEPHENS

The British Council of Churches have accepted the Prime Minister's offer of a meeting on Friday 27 July at 9.30 am "of 45 minutes or so".

Four, or five at most, will be coming.

I have asked to be told what they want to discuss.

CVP

1 June 1979

✓
COLIN

Mr Amy (British Council of Churches) phoned re. meeting with Mrs Thatcher of Church Leaders on Fri. 27 July. They accept, will be putting this in writing and names will follow later.

RH
31.5.

Thank you.

CVP. 31/5.

Sp Mr.
Mr Amy

4 or 5 only. Good.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

2 EATON GATE LONDON SW1W 9BL Tel 01-730 9611 Cables Koinonia London SW1

President
Honorary President
Vice-Presidents

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
THE REVD DR ERNEST A. PAYNE, CH
THE REVD DR R. D. ERIC GALLAGHER
MRS W. D. HART
THE REVD BERNARD G. THOROGOOD

Chairman, Executive
Committee
General Secretary
Honorary Treasurer

THE REVD DR KENNETH G. GREET
THE REVD HARRY O. MORTON
MR BRIAN L. WORTH, FCA

31st May, 1979.

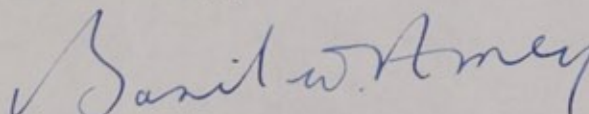
Mr. C. Petersen,
Secretary for Appointments,
10 Downing Street,
London.

Dear Mr. Petersen, ^{CVP. 1/6.}

Thank you for your letter of 24th May. May I now confirm my telephone call of 31st May when I mentioned that the Rev. Harry Morton is very happy to accept the invitation for a meeting on Friday, 27th July at 9.30 a.m.

Mr. Morton has noted the Prime Minister's preference that numbers be kept small and after consultation with his colleagues he will be in touch with you again regarding the names of those whom he hopes will be able to be present at the meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Rev. B.W. Amey
Assistant to the General Secretary

24 May 1979

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you very much for your letter of 9 May, and for your greetings and good wishes on behalf of the British Council of Churches. She much appreciated what you said.

You asked if some of the leaders of the Churches might have an informal meeting with the Prime Minister. Mrs Thatcher would welcome this, and has asked me to discuss the details with you. Her diary for the summer months is very crowded, but may I explore with you the possibility of a meeting of 45 minutes or so at 9.30 am on Friday 27 July? The Prime Minister would prefer numbers to be kept small, and she might wish to have one or two of her colleagues with her, depending on the particular subjects which the Council might wish to raise.

I hope that date and time may be possible and, if so, I shall look forward very much to discussing further with you the arrangements for the meeting.

C. V. PETERSON

The Reverend Harry O Morton

Mr. Peterson

The Archbishop would be free at 9.30 a.m. on 27 July. (Mr. Kinchin Smith telephoned and asked me to pass on this message)

B 24/5



10 DOWNING STREET

MR. PETERSON

I have had a word with the Prime Minister about the British Council of Churches, and she would be happy to see them for 45 minutes to one hour later in the summer. Perhaps we could have a word about a date?

E.J.

23 May 1979

Friday July 27th.

11 May 1979

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to acknowledge and thank you for your letter of 9 May.

A reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

C. V. PETERSON

The Reverend Harry O. Morton



10 DOWNING STREET

Mr Peterson

We spoke. Can you
handle this one?

MA
10/11

THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

2 EATON GATE LONDON SW1W 9BL Tel 01-730 9611 Cables Koinonia London SW1

President
Honorary President
Vice-Presidents

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
THE REVD DR ERNEST A. PAYNE, CH
THE REVD DR R. D. ERIC GALLAGHER
MRS W. D. HART
THE REVD BERNARD G. THOROGOOD

Chairman, Executive
Committee
General Secretary
Honorary Treasurer

THE REVD DR KENNETH G. GREET
THE REVD HARRY O. MORTON
MR BRIAN L. WORTH, FCA

9th May, 1979.

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
10, Downing Street,
London S.W. 1.

Reo

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of this Council, I send you greetings and good wishes, both for yourself and for your government. The member churches of the Council recognize that your administration takes office at a difficult time for the people of these islands. The hard choices which we face often appear as issues which divide us. The new pluralism, which has come about not only as a result of immigration but also because of our new affluence, strains our sympathy for each other, often to breaking point. We need the power of Christ to reconcile us and make us one, without in any way obscuring the necessary changes and the new decisions to be made.

The churches are currently engaged in a Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism, seeking to learn from success and failure so that we may serve all our people by drawing them into God's grace and love. The project Britain Today and Tomorrow has led us to probe very carefully issues connected with work, power and identity. The publication of the book "Britain Today and Tomorrow" by Trevor Beeson marked one stage in this process. Our aim is to assist the people of our country to look at our future in the context of the world at large and of Europe, in particular.

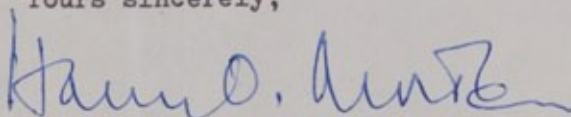
Meanwhile, the churches continue to strive for unity among all Christ's people. We are very hopeful that the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales will come into membership of the Council. We believe that this will greatly strengthen the Council and enable that church to play a wider role amongst the British people.

The churches have a tradition of dialogue with the departments of State. We shall continue to discharge that ministry. We would welcome the possibility of a more informal contact with your government when some leaders of the churches might have an opportunity for conversation with yourself and some of your colleagues. If you think this would be helpful, perhaps one of your staff could be in touch with me to discuss the best way of arranging such an occasion.

In the past, a dinner has been held in the Palace of Westminster when the churches have felicitated the new government. I suspect that this is a little formal and that we might be better served today by a rather different occasion.

I can assure you that you and your colleagues have been prayed for in most congregations on Sunday last. I know that you can count on the prayers of many people throughout your term of office. May God give you his strength and grace.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Harry O. Morton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

The Rev. Harry O. Morton
General Secretary

c.c. The Archbishop of Canterbury
The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Greet





END

Filmed at the National
Archives (TNA) in London

February 2010