

Minutes

Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Meeting Number 7

Held on 24 September 2002
At Canadian Mennonite University

In addition to the twelve on-going members of the dialogue, we welcomed the following guests:

Mr. Jascha Boge, Board, Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches
Rev. Doug Enns, Pastor, McIvor Mennonite Brethren Church
Dr. Harry Huebner, Dean, Canadian Mennonite University
Rev. Dr. Dan Nighswander, General Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada
Dr. Bernie Wiebe, Moderator, Mennonite Church Manitoba
Dr. John Stapleton, Rector, St. Paul's College
Very Rev. James Weisgerber, Archbishop of Winnipeg

Introductory

Co-chairs, **Helmut Harder** and **Luis Melo**, opened the meeting by introducing our guests to the participants and then the participants to our guests.

Luis Melo led the Opening Prayers and had **Elaine Baete** read a Scripture passage.

Overview

Helmut Harder provided the background to the origins of the present dialogue, stemming from his own experience in the international Catholic-Mennonite Dialogue, and his meeting with **Luis Melo**, who had already been involved in ecumenical dialogue with Anglicans and Lutherans in Canada. He noted our Statement of Purpose (as reproduced on the agenda for the meeting), and themes of the six meetings that had been held to date.

Luis Melo explained the “spiritual ecumenism” that has flavoured our meetings, which have been opened and closed by prayers and hymns, and noted the Scriptural basis of our hope (“where two to three are gathered in my name” etc.). He explained how he and **Helmut** in choosing those invited to participate had tried to choose a “representative” group including men, women, clergy, and lay participants. He explained as well how the meetings have been organized, how we have listened to one another, and how the papers presented have tried to take into account both doctrine and practice with respect to the issues under discussion. He noted how the 1982 WCC document on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, a convergence rather than a consensus paper, as well as official church responses to that document, have been used as a basis for some of our discussions. He suggested that we have been moving from “isolation” to “common witness.”

Helmut reported how, at each meeting, participants had shared the ecumenical activities that they had experienced in the periods between our meetings – a time consuming but helpful exercise.

Baptism – Catholic Teachings and Practices – Harold Jantz

The text of Harold’s remarks are appended to these minutes as Attachment 1.

Baptism – Mennonite Teachings and Practices – Michelle Sala Pastora

Michelle distributed notes for her talk, which are also appended to these minutes as Attachment 2. She concluded her remarks with reflections about the age at which children are admitted to Baptism in Mennonite congregations, suggesting that judging from her own daughters, age 13 seemed a bit young for the kind of faith commitment that Mennonite practice asks. In reply, **Harold Jantz** observed that in most Mennonite congregations the end of high school was the more usual age. **Helmut** noted that traditionally, when the celebration of Baptism was limited to Easter, it was the usual practice to link Baptism with first participation in the Lord’s supper, but that more recently the rituals are not always co-related. Guest **Dan Nighswander** reported that some Mennonite congregations now practice a ceremony of “child dedication.”

Eucharist – Catholic Teachings and Practices – Elaine Pinto

Elaine chose to share her understanding of Catholic teachings and practice by taking all of us through her experience of a Mass at St. Boniface General Hospital; she did this by helping us to participate with her and **John Long** (who read the parts assigned to the priest) by following the text that she distributed to us. The complete text, including her reflections, are appended to these minutes as Attachment 3.

Eucharist – Mennonite Teachings and Practices – Richard Lebrun

The text of this presentation is appended to these minutes as Attachment 4.

Questions and reflections on the first four presentations:

Doug Enns wondered if there was not some inconsistency between the Catholic practice of recognizing non-Catholic baptisms (providing certain conditions such as use of water and a Trinitarian formula were met) and Catholic discipline with respect to not inviting baptised non-Catholic Christians to receive the Eucharist.

Luis Melo explained that the Catholic Church viewed Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist as sacraments of initiation. Current Catholic discipline with respect to participation in the Eucharist is set out in a 1992 directive which specifies four conditions: a) that the person be rightly disposed, b) that the person believes what the Church believes of the Eucharist, c) that the person receive of his/her own free will (not invited), and d) grave necessity (with no access to their own minister). He pointed out that the issue touches on discipline within the Church (e.g., those divorced and remarried without an annulment of the first marriage are not regarded as eligible to receive the

Eucharist). In practice, the only persons ever likely to be turned away are so-called “notorious sinners.” An example would be a denial of Eucharist to “rainbow” gays who approach communion wearing a symbol of their denial of Church teaching with respect to homosexual actions. Archbishop Weisgerber observed that many problems are caused by a lack of consistency in the application of these rules; many priests have been doing and saying all sorts of things on this matter, and as a result people are left confused.

Helmut Harder observed that traditionally many Mennonite congregations practiced “closed communion,” which restricted communion to baptized members of the local congregation (but which might include relatives and visitors who were also Mennonites). The criteria had less to do with doctrinal beliefs than ethical relationships.

Harry Huebner pointed out that accountability in this matter was less to the minister than to other members of the congregation, and **Harold Jantz** noted that admission to communion implied both baptism and good fellowship within the particular congregation. **Luis Melo** suggested that while the Catholic discipline sees doctrinal unity as a requirement for shared communion, the Mennonite practice tends to see communion as producing unity of relationships.

Both **Luis** and **Archbishop Weisgerber** reported that in ecumenical worship situations Catholic representatives generally do not participate in communion at non-Catholic services.

In reflecting on the Catholic insistence on the use of a Trinitarian formula in Baptism, **Harry Huebner** suggested that while Mennonites use similar formulae, they perhaps do not think enough about the meaning of these formulae.

Helmut Harder thought that Mennonites’ use of the Trinitarian formula in Baptism derives from their desire always to be Scriptural, and thus use the Baptismal formula reported in Jesus’ “Great Commission.” **Luis Melo** noted that in the 1980s the American bishops had issued a statement insisting on the use of the traditional formula (using the names of the persons of the Trinity) in opposition to a proposals to use more figurative language (such as Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, which amounted to a kind of “modalism.”) In response to **Harry Huebner’s** suggestion, **Helmut Harder** mentioned Mennonite writers who do pay attention to the Trinity, and observed that successive Mennonite confessions affirm Trinitarian formulae, though they do not develop them.

Archbishop Weisgerber observed how preparations for the Jubilee Year had focused on the three persons of the Trinity: Jesus in 1998, the Father in 1999, and the Holy Spirit in 2000. He had found this a sensitizing experience.

Bernie Wiebe indicated his concern with the way Mennonite congregations deal with young people. While child dedication services have been introduced, he remains uneasy about the fact that children are not recorded as members of congregations. He wondered if our dialogue group would be addressing questions concerning the education of children and young people. These comments led to a discussion about diversity between Mennonite churches with respect to a requirement for “rebaptising” adult converts who

had been baptized as infants in another church. **Helmut Harder** observed that Canadian Mennonites tended to be “softer” on this requirement than American Mennonites, who were “harder” on the issue. **Dan Nighswander** noted that this is a sensitive issue since the ancestors of Mennonites had died for “believers baptism.”

Dinner

Ministry – Catholic Teachings and Practices – Henry Loewen

The text of this presentation is appended to these minutes as Attachment 5.

Ministry – Mennonite Teachings and Practices – Michael Radcliffe

The notes for this presentation are appended to these minutes as Attachment 6.

Sin and Salvation – Catholic Perspectives – Adolf Ens

The text of this presentation is appended to these minutes as Attachment 7.

Sin and Salvation – Mennonite Perspectives – John Long

The text of this presentation is appended to these minutes as Attachment 8.

Service and Mission – Catholic Perspectives – Ardith Frey

The text of this presentation is appended to these minutes as Attachment 9.

Service and Mission – Mennonite Perspectives – Elaine Baete

The text of this presentation is appended to these minutes as Attachment 10.

Reflections from Guest Observers and Discussion:

Helmut Harder opened this part of our program by noting that discussion of mission and service had been the most congenial part of our dialogue – that in effect we had engaged in re-affirming each other in these activities.

Archbishop Weisgerber turned to the more difficult topic of ordained ministry. He suggested that while on the surface it appears that Catholics and Mennonites look at this issue very differently, in fact we may be more similar than we think. We share belief in the Church as the fundamental sacrament and in the equality of all the baptized. He suggested that ministry is a topic that our dialogue group needs to probe more deeply.

Harold Jantz in reflecting on our reportedly different kinds of church governance indicated his own belief that the essential feature of church leadership is trust; that there has to be trust of people and trust between leaders and followers, and that questions of the form of governance were less important.

Harry Huebner took up the issue of the role of the Church in understanding sin and

salvation, and in particular the traditional Catholic teaching that there was “no salvation outside the Church.” He noted that Mennonites share that belief, but interpret it somewhat differently than the traditional Catholic interpretation. For Mennonites, the saying points to the importance of life in the church within which the achievement of salvation is rooted. He wondered if our dialogue had discussed this issue.

Adolf Ens noted that the teaching of Vatican II was closer to Mennonite understanding in the way it described the church as a “sign of salvation.”

Helmut Harder spoke of “binding and loosing” as the Church exercising responsibility for the salvation of its members.

Doug Enns reported that he uses the notion of “no salvation outside the Church” as an antidote to individualistic notions of salvation. In the Anabaptist tradition, the church is seen as a consecrated community, so that we can’t understand salvation outside the church.

John Long observed that Vatican II says of those outside the Church that many of good will may also be saved, and **Luis Melo** pointed out that Catholics no longer use the language “no salvation outside the church,” in large part because Fr. Feeney was excommunicated for his too rigid position on this question. The Catholic Church always had other language, such as “Mystical Body,” and there is a tradition of leaving it to God to judge.

Archbishop Weisgerber noted the changes that have been made to the prayers of Good Friday, where Catholic once prayed for the “perfidious Jews.” He also observed that ideas about the role of the church in salvation remain a real challenge in our individualistic culture. **Elaine Pinto** reported that in her chaplaincy work she often people meets who say, “I’m not religious, but I’m spiritual.” She finds many people who say they find God in “the bush” (i.e., in nature).

Helmut Harder suggested that in this matter Catholic and Mennonites shore each other up; in their ecclesiology Mennonite and Catholics are quite similar, despite difference in church structure. He then cited an article by Hans Hillerbrand who argued that the radical Reformation restored something quite Catholic: a holistic understanding of grace and an appreciation of what it means to be community. He also cited an article of the confession of the Mennonite Church of Canada which speaks of a two-fold reconciliation—God as reconciler and the church as the reconciling community of God’s people.

Michael Radcliffe noted how Jews put a great stress on community, and **Archbishop Weisgerber** observed that all the sacraments are celebrations of the community, and that they are parts of the Church’s life, despite the fact that many people still see sacraments such as Baptism as “private” celebrations.

Michelle Sala Pastora recounted her experiences with the Baptisms of her two daughters. In the one case, the Baptism was celebrated as a “family oriented” celebration, in the other case the celebration was part of the Easter Vigil, which stressed the larger community. She found both experiences expressions of the Gospel, but with a great

difference.

Elaine Pinto talked of her experiences at Catholic weddings and funerals, where she was very impressed with how Christ is always present through the Eucharistic liturgy that is a part of these celebrations (which is not the case in Mennonite weddings and funerals).

Harry Huebner suggested that perhaps our dialogue group should do more with the topic of ecclesiology. **Helmut Harder** noted that we had touched on the issue often, but in practical ways as we explored other topics.

Plans for the Future of the Dialogue:

Helmut Harder opened this part of the discussion by suggesting that there were four kinds of issues to explore:

- 1) If the group is to continue, there were questions about form—the possibility of changes in size and/or composition of the group.
- 2) Questions relating to topics and themes to take up next.
- 3) Questions relating to process—the number times of year to meet, and the length of the meetings.
- 4) Questions relating to goals—where are we headed? When do we go out and tell the world what we have been doing? Helmut observed that worldwide there is a vast discrepancy in size between the Catholic community and the Mennonite community, but that in Manitoba the groups were more commensurate in size, with about 300,000 Catholics and about 50,000 Mennonites.

Luis Melo noted that work on a common project can be a way to energize a dialogue, e.g., giving a common witness on a specific issue. This is also a way to involve additional people.

Michael Radcliffe wondered how much our congregations on both sides knew about our dialogue, and our discoveries of convergence. Would there be benefits to sharing our discoveries more broadly? Perhaps public discussions at CMU and St. Paul's College would be a way to do this.

Archbishop Weisgerber reported that dialogues at the Cathedral were one means that had been used to help people get beyond stereotypes.

John Long reported that the LARC group in Winnipeg had jointly celebrated the joint Catholic-Lutheran declaration on justification, a celebration that had included a public disavowal of old anathemas. He wondered about the possibilities for some kind of joint worship. He referred to the terrible persecutions that Mennonite had once endured at the hands of Catholics, talked about the need for a “healing of memories,” and wondered if we might explore liturgical means to help achieve this goal.

Bernie Wiebe thought that many people in most congregations are quite uninformed about the possibilities of dialogue and would not appreciate its significance, and suggested that anything that could be done to change this situation would be worth doing.

Doug Enns reported how on Good Friday this past spring the various churches in his neighbourhood in North Kildonan had organized a lunch and walk together, and how this Good Friday walk turned out to be a wonderful experience.

John Long felt that continuing our dialogue would always be useful and should not be foreclosed.

Archbishop Wiesgerber advised keeping focussed on the Catholic-Mennonite relationship, and spoke of the need to get the activity out into our parishes.

Ardith Frey wondered about the possibilities of building on activities already present in our communities, such as the World Day of Peace and the Days of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Michelle Sala Pastora reported how at ecumenical lunches (first of the clergy in St. Boniface and then of the staffs of the diocesan offices) there was a sharing of news about upcoming events that might of interest to others.

At this point, **John Long** shared news about two upcoming events at St. Paul's College: the inaugural lecture of the Arthur Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice by Prince E1 Hassan of Jordan and the Hanley lectures to be delivered by Sr. Mary Boys on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

Jascha Boge reported his experience of observing theologians of the Mennonite Brethren Churches working on a common confession of faith, and how impressed he was with how they were learning from each other. From this experience he encouraged our group to continue, suggesting that it was always important to strive towards better understanding of each other. However, he also thought that the time had come for us to let others know what we are doing.

Harry Huebner also encouraged us to become more visible, suggesting that this could stimulate others to become involved in similar activities.

Elaine Pinto suggested that the focus remain on the dialogue between Mennonite and Catholics, and cautioned against plugging into existing organizations and activities, and spoke of the blessings of a "new vehicle."

At this point, **Adolf Ens** suggested that **Helmut Harder** and **Luis Melo** recruit two other people (either from our group or from our guests, or elsewhere) to plan what can be organized for our next meeting. There was general agreement on this suggestion and on scheduling the next session for Tuesday, 21 January 2003, at St. Paul's College, 4 to 9 pm as usual.

In closing **Helmut** reported that he will be involved in a number of ecumenical activities over the next couple of months, and requested our prayers in his support. He then led us in a closing prayer and a hymn.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Ens – Baptism / Catholic Teachings and Practices

Attachment 2: Sala Pastora – Mennonite Baptism Teaching and Practices

Attachment 3: Pinto – Mennonite Catholic Dialogue: The Catholic Eucharist

Attachment 4: Lebrun – The Lord’s Supper: Mennonite Teachings and Practices

Attachment 5: Loewen: Ministry – Catholic Teachings and Practices

Attachment 6: Radcliffe – Ministry from the Mennonite Perspective

Attachment 7: Ens – Catholic Perspectives on Sin and Salvation

Attachment 8: Long – Sin and Salvation: The Mennonite View

Attachment 9: Frey – Reflections on Catholic Perspectives on Service and Mission

Attachment 10: Baete – A Summary of Service and Mission: Mennonite Perspectives

Attachments to the minutes of the meeting of 24 September 2002

Attachment 1

Baptism / Catholic Teachings and Practices

By Adolf Ens

I was happy to be asked to make a few comments on this subject because it so happened that this was one that I found especially meaningful. Baptism has been an issue that has in particular set us as Mennonites apart from the Roman Catholic Church. I have felt and continue to feel very attached to an understanding of baptism which sees it as a personal confession & faith in Christ, of new life in Christ through what he has done for us in his death and resurrection, which is made by persons who can do so with understanding on their own behalf. I've understood and continue to understand the church as consisting of those who've consciously confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord and that he is present in their lives in the act of baptism in the presence of others.

So when we came together to discuss this subject, I was very interested to know how we would find ourselves, since the baptism of infants has been such a prominent part of the life of the Roman Catholic Church. It still is, but there have also been significant changes.

What I learned and what was new to me was the fact that throughout the Catholic Church, the baptism of adults has come to play a very important role. A rite of adult baptism was restored to the Roman Catholic Church by the Second Vatican Council, that is in the last century. This is very important.

We were especially helped in our understanding of this question by Richard Lebrun, a retired historian from St. Paul's and one of the Catholic group in our discussions. He reviewed the history of baptism from the early church to the present and showed the changes that have happened from the first church to the present. The New Testament accounts tell a story in which the "the baptism of believing adults" was "the norm." In our day, with the strong emphasis on evangelization within the Catholic Church around the world, many are coming to faith as young people and adults and the baptism of adults is again becoming a regular practice as these express their faith in Jesus through baptism. It happens at Easter time and may involve total immersion or being baptized by pouring water over the catechumenate while standing in a basin.

At the same time children born into Catholic families will still be baptized as infants. So both forms of baptism are practiced.

Richard Lebrun leaned quite heavily on a study by Joseph Martos (*Doors to the Sacred.* A Historical Introduction to the Sacraments of the Catholic Church, first published in 1981). He told us that the shift from the baptism of adults to the baptism of infants within the early church happened over a period of several hundred years. A number of elements contributed to the shift.

First, the practices which became identified as sacraments within the church were practiced as rites for many years before some of the theological explanations were elaborated for them by people within the church.

Second, it is possible to see in retrospect how an understanding might develop which would support the practice of infant baptism, even though the Scriptures nowhere speak about it directly. The connection can be made between the practice of circumcision and infant baptism, for example. The images of the children of Israel finding deliverance through passage through the Red Sea and through the Jordan, the rescue of the family of Noah from the flood through the ark, are a kind of prefiguring in Catholic theology of the salvation that baptism represents. Further, the New Testament makes a strong connection—for example, in the sermon of Peter at Pentecost— between baptism and salvation. “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” So salvation can be understood as dependent on baptism. Children in the Catholic understanding have inherited the sin of Adam and because of the high rates of infant mortality, there were those who believed their children were lost if they hadn’t been baptized. They understandably wanted to make sure their children wouldn’t be lost. The practice was already beginning by the year 200. The practice of baptizing infants began before the theology to support it was clearly articulated. Cyprian and Augustine were most influential in that articulation—which I won’t go into—except to say that Augustine effectively laid the foundation for the baptism of infants by arguing that baptism provided the seal of the image of Christ on the soul of the person baptized and removed the stain of sin. By the fifth century infant baptism was universal in the Latin west. At first the baptisms always took place at Easter, later they happened at other times too, because children could die at any time.

Long before that, the practice had been to have candidates for baptism go through a lengthy process of teaching and preparation for their baptism. They were called catechumens. Persons seeking baptism had to have a sponsor, they needed to prove their conversion to a new life by their willingness to leave disreputable kinds of work and behaviour and their readiness to do good. They had to show over a period of time—sometimes up to 2 or 3 years—that they were ready to be followers of Jesus and reception into the church. The baptism ritual itself became quite elaborate. And at the baptism the questions were asked, “Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth?” Then, “Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his Son, who was brought into the world to suffer for it?” And finally, “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Church, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting?” After each answer, water was poured over the candidate.

When the Christian faith became the religion of the empire, baptism began to change. The preparation for baptism became less intense, baptism became public, restricted occupations fewer, more people delayed baptism so they could be baptized before death and before sinning again.

With the shift to infant baptism, however, the catechumenate—the period of preparation— fell away. It couldn't play a role for infants. Participation in the first communion became the confirmation of the baptism. Adult baptism with extensive preparation became less and less of a memory within the church. When Europe outside the sphere of the church became evangelized—for example the Germanic tribes—they were often baptized en masse using the rituals employed for the baptism of infants. Little education was provided to teach what the earlier catechumens had learned. As Richard Lebrun put it in his paper for us, what once had a spiritual or metaphysical meaning came

increasingly to have a magical meaning.

At the time of the Reformation, the Catholic Church's response did little to address the challenge of the reformers, except to place more emphasis on teaching and training. The understanding of changed hardly at all. Lebrun cited the example of Francis Xavier who baptized 10,000 souls in India in December, 1543.

It has been in recent years, both through its interaction with other church bodies and through its experience of dealing with a world of disestablished religion and unbelief, that the Roman Catholic Church has come to rediscover the history and practices of the early church. That is what led the Second Vatican Council to bring forth a revised Rite of Baptism for Children and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, which, Richard suggests, is both more scriptural and more patristic in origin.

I have leaned very heavily on Richard Lebrun's presentation to us, which I found very stimulating and helpful. I heard it as a description of a movement toward a substantial recovery of the believer's church understanding of baptism.

At the same time, we heard Michele Sala Pastora, describe the meaning that baptism as an infant had meant for her as she thought about her mother's faith and as her own daughter, in turn, was baptized as an infant. It was clear that the experience of bringing her children for baptism had been very meaningful. She described the white dress which she had worn at her baptism and her children had worn after her. It reminded her of the garment of Christ which we put on. "I embraced the values of my mother. Christ's values became my own," she said. She brought symbols—a cross, water, sacred oil—reminders of the crosses we share with Christ, the water representing both the dangers we face and the source of our renewal and spiritual life, and the oil which reminds us of the anointing in Christ, that we are joint heirs with him. She called baptism a sacrament of faith which provides the conditions for growth.

The recently released Catechism of the Catholic Church pays a lot of attention to the restoration of adult baptism and the teaching which accompanies it, and bringing baptism, confirmation and participation in the Eucharist into a single celebration. The rite is a very rich one, both in the symbols that are employed and the proclamation of the Word of God that accompanies it. It is taught as necessary, baptism is not seen as the end or an end, but as an expression of faith that must continue to grow. The role of others—that is, the community of believers—in that growth is emphasized. Baptism represents forgiveness for sins. It represents incorporation into the church, the body of Christ. Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians...they have a right to be called Christians and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church." They are marked with the seal of Christ.

Well, that is something of what I understand the teaching of the Catholic Church to be. As I said earlier, much of it resonates with my own understanding within the Anabaptist understanding. Knowing more of the history of Catholic teaching and practice has given me a better knowledge of my own history, because that history is mine too. I should perhaps add, that the Catholic Church has a kind of informal list of churches outside the Catholic Church whose baptisms it recognizes. That would include a spiritual tradition such as ours in the Mennonite churches. It would not include those, however, who fail to teach a Trinitarian doctrine.

Attachment 2

(Notes, presentation by Michele Sala Pastora)

MENNONITE BAPTISM TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES

1. MEANING...

- When people Receive God's gift of salvation, they are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- For those who understand its meaning, are able to be accountable to Christ and the Church and *voluntarily and publicly* request baptism.
- Baptized *upon own confirmation of faith* (Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior) & *commitment* (testimony) to follow Christ as members of a local church (Covenant with the Church to walk in the way of Christ through the power of the Spirit). Incorporation into Body of Christ (expressed by local Church) & pledge to serve Christ according to gifts received. Awareness & acceptance of the ethical implications of such a commitment. Impact of what happens thereafter.
- Baptism is rooted in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and resurrection
- Sign of new life through Jesus Christ. Having been cleansed from sin and having repented of sins, the candidate dies with Christ and is raised to new life and receives the Holy Spirit (at work before, during and after baptism)
- Emphasis on inward meaning rather than outward form. Symbol less important than that which is symbolized. (Words & water less important than public testimony of spiritual experience/believers *baptism*) Less than sacrament, but more than a sign (act of God): faith decision (repent & trust) & receipt & the Holy Spirit.

2. AGE...

- Used to practice infant baptism until late 1524 (Ulrich Zwingli's reform movement in Zurich, Swiss Brethren)
- Now the norm is senior high years (13–21)
- Variances: In Canada — 16–19 In U.S.A. — 13–17
- Upon request (any age from 13 up)

MODE...

- Can be by pouring (most common) which represents outpouring of the Holy Spirit, OR Sprinkling (3 X) on candidate's head.
- Immersion now being used more frequently (candidate enters water & is covered by water in lake or church tank)

4. PREPARATION...

- Varies from congregation to congregation. From a minimum of 12 weeks to 2 years
- During Sunday school class time (9–12 months)
- Study of Scripture & its application to day-to-day living and the history & purpose of church + Special practice of faith

5. INVITATION / WHEN...

By youth program or youth catechism classes or invitation made by church 2 or 3 times during the year. Upon request.

Done in the context of Sunday service (a.m.) Pentecost Sunday tradition in some churches Festive nature (celebration) / teaching opportunity

6. FORMULA... (Statements of Baptism)

(NAME) Upon your profession of faith, I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism. Amen

(NAME) Upon your profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior from sin, and your vow of consecration to Him and His service, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord baptize you with the Spirit from above.”

7. Liturgy or Service...

- Opening worship (Prayer/song & music)—Scripture appropriate to baptism
- Personal testimony & commitment of candidate (& witnesses if desired) Less grueling than it used to be
- Vows (questions)
- Baptism
- Right hand of fellowship
- Commitment/response of the community or congregation
- Communion and Prayer (music/song)

Attachment 3

Mennonite Catholic Dialogue: The Catholic Eucharist

Presentation by Elaine Pinto

1. The four actions of the Eucharist are: *to take, to bless, to break, and to give.*
2. The Eucharist is considered to be *the preeminent Sacrament* in the Catholic Church. The life of a Catholic Christian flows from, and is oriented toward Eucharist.
3. The *real presence of Christ is experienced* in four ways:
 - in the people who are gathered, in the worshipping assembled, the household of the faith.
 - in the priest, the one who is acting in the person of Christ (in *persona Christi*)
 - in the proclamation of the Word, the sacred Scripture;
 - substantially and permanently in the elements of bread and wine.
4. The Eucharist *celebrates the whole of the paschal mystery*; the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Each time the Eucharist is celebrated, we make present again the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. By the action of the Holy Spirit the gifts of bread and wine **are** transformed into the body and blood of Christ.
5. Eucharist *sends us out to continue the mission* of Christ in the world.

It is the 18th Sunday in ordinary time. Our daughter Karen and sit here in the hospital chapel..., a surprising place to be, with Paul in heart failure just down the hall. How our world has been torn in pieces. Yet sometimes I've sensed a calmness and peace as I've sat before the blessed sacrament to pray these last days.... Father Gerry is celebrating the Eucharist today. He is the one who anointed Paul with the sacrament of the sick the other night.

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
Amen.

“The Lord be with you...”
and also with you.

I hardly know anyone here in this community... not like St. Mark's where we've been for thirty years. There's Eva, the woman I met whose husband is dying, and has no children here. There's a nurse from Paul's ward ... but that's about it.

“My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries, let us call to mind our sins.”

(silence)

Sins... Are our present troubles—Paul’s sickness—because of sin? Sometimes, in this last week, I’ve wondered..., but coming here has been so comforting. Father Gerry encouraged me to find solace in Christ’s suffering and that’s what I’ve hung on to. The assurance and expectation of the Eucharist is like a promise... (God with us in whatever we suffer... God with Karen and me as we wait.

Mother Theresa of Calcutta said she couldn’t live without the mass every day. She’s right. It’s been so good to take communion with Paul on the ward every day when the communion minister comes around.

“You were sent to heal the contrite Lord have mercy.”

Lord have mercy.

“You came to call sinners: Christ have mercy.”

Christ have mercy.

“You plead for us at the right hand of the Father: Lord have mercy.”

Lord have mercy.

“May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.”

Amen.

I am waiting for something in the liturgy of the word, but I don’t know for what. A gospel story of healing in the life of our Lord?

The readings seem to pierce in a new way. Isaiah 55 is especially comforting.

“Rich fare is offered..., wine and milk and bread without cost”

This matches my need. Oh God, I truly have nothing to bring, being exhausted from keeping vigil this week.

“What can separate us from the love of Christ?”

The word comes again to heal. Not even sickness will separate our little family from Christ. The dryness and emptiness I began this hour with, seems to be dissipating.

“A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew”

Glory to you Lord.

Our present troubles stand right alongside this story of the feeding of the five thousand. I feel so hungry, yet so unable to provide for my own need, let alone Paul’s or Karen’s...just like in the gospel reading. I join myself to You, Lord. Now as Father Gerry moves to the altar, and offers the elements, I offer myself to you.

“Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.”

Blessed be God for ever.

“By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

“Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands...”

How can this ordinary bread and wine become something so wonderful.., the real body and blood of Christ that I will carry within me, like Mary carried Jesus within ? God’s holiness is in this still moment.

“...It will become our spiritual drink.”

Blessed be God for ever.

“Pray friends, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.”

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his Church.

“The Lord be with you.”

And also with you.

“Lift up your hearts.”

We lift them up to the Lord.

“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.”

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

The bread.., the cup is raised. I feel like everything in my life, and everything the church does, is centered in this body and blood, ... so everything I need for Paul and Karen and myself is held here too. This is the truest of all realities.

“Father, all powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Out of love for sinners, he humbled himself to be born of the Virgin. By suffering on the cross he freed us from unending death, and by rising from the dead he gave us eternal life.

“And so, with all the choirs of angels in heaven we proclaim your glory and join in their unending hymn of praise.”

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

“Lord, you are holy indeed, the fountain of all holiness. Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” ”Before he was given up to death, a death he freely accepted, he took bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples...

Just like the gospel reading. The loaves and fishes were transformed by Jesus taking them, and thanking.., breaking them, and giving.., and now You are here again, transforming the simple elements into a gift of Yourself.. to me.

“Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body
this is my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting **covenant**.
It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of
me.”

“Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:”

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

“In memory of his death and resurrection, we offer you, Father, this life-giving bread, this
saving cup. We thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve
you. May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity
by the Holy Spirit.

“Lord, remember your Church

“Remember our brothers and sisters who have gone to their rest

“Have mercy on us all

“Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy spirit, all glory and honour is
yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever.”

Amen.

*When the priest prays for others, and for the world, I feel I am being brought into the
circle. It is as if Christ is right here praying, giving thanks. I wonder if that's why they
call the Eucharist the great thanksgiving. The table of the Lord is big enough for all, just
like in the gospel reading.*

“Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Saviour gave us:”

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will
be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread: and forgive us
our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

“Deliver us Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us
free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of
our Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

“The peace of the Lord be with you always.”

And also with you.

“Let us offer each other a sign of peace.”

*Strange... I'm feeling more at home with this temporary parish family. As I look into the
eyes of people here, and give and receive the sign of peace, there's a sense we are
enfolded in something far greater than ourselves.. There even seems to be a small flicker
of hope in Eva's eyes.*

I 'm feeling hopeful too—not that our troubles will magically go away but assurance that there is hope in this world through this sacrifice we partake of Somehow meeting at this altar., in the sacrifice... I anticipate being one with You in a new way. I feel like I am waiting for the taste of the bread on my tongue, the searing wine in my throat, like a need to be fed, to be joined to you, and to become someone new, all in one act.

“Lamb of God...”

...you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: grant us peace.

“...This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper.”

Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.

Why do I always feel a lump in my throat when I ask that of Jesus? Will you say the word today that heals us? I feel like Paul and I are truly entering into the mass... Paul with his struggle to breathe., myself and Karen with this heaviness of heart. Oh Jesus, if there ever was a time that I understood what suffering means, it is now. I remember you, and unite myself with your sacrifice. Say the word and we shall have sustenance enough for our journey.

“Lord, you renew us at your table with the bread of life. May this food strengthen us in love and help us to serve you in each other. We ask this through Christ our Lord.”

Amen.

Serving each other. I wonder if there's any way we could help Eva. No one here to talk to... how difficult that must be! Maybe I could invite her for coffee when the staff are hussy with the patients., at least try to see if there's some way we can be present to her.

“The Lord be with you.”

And also with you

“May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

Amen.

“Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

Thanks be to God.

Attachment 4

The Lord's Supper; Mennonite Teachings and Practices

Presentation by Richard Lebrun

I am particularly pleased to report on what I have learned about Mennonite beliefs and practices with respect to what they call The Lord's Supper. This is because this is probably the aspect of Mennonite teaching and practice where my past assumptions have been most challenged and where I have learned the most.

From my previous study of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation and of Anabaptist origins in particular (and this is a topic which I had taught while I was an active university teacher), I had a number of assumptions about Mennonite teachings and practices about the Lord's Supper—things that I thought I “knew.”

I knew that the early Anabaptist leaders had followed Luther and Calvin in rejecting the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, and that they followed the magisterial reformers in speaking of the Lord's Supper as a “memorial service.” I had assumed that this meant that any sense of the “real” presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper would be absent from Mennonite teaching and experience. I had also assumed that an understanding of the Lord's Supper as a mere “memorial service” meant that it was not “sacramental” in the Catholic sense.

I knew as well that the Lord's Supper was celebrated relatively infrequently in Mennonite congregations (and I was to find out that in most cases it is celebrated only about four times a year, or at most, about once a month). To me this implied a downplaying of the importance of the ritual in the lives of Mennonites and of Mennonite congregations.

From my study of medieval Catholic sacramental teaching and practice, which I knew had become excessively “mechanical” — both in the way the Mass was understood and in the way that the ritual was carried out, I had appreciated that the early Protestant reformers (including the first Anabaptist leaders) were reacting against very real abuses, but without a very deep understanding of the practical implications of that reaction.

As a result of my participation in our Catholic-Mennonite dialogue here in Winnipeg the past two years, and from my experience at another Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, this past July, I have had to revise my understanding of Mennonite teachings and practices with respect to the Lord's Supper.

In particular, I have learned a great deal from Helmut Harder's research on what various Confessions of Faith of Anabaptist-Mennonite churches over the years from the 16th century to present have had to say about the Lord's Supper. In speaking about this “confessional tradition,” Helmut pointed out the way this tradition differs from Catholic understanding of tradition. Unlike the “progressive” nature of successive Catholic doctrinal statements, these Mennonite confessions have the character of “restatements” of understandings of the Scriptures—in other words, in Mennonite self-understanding these confessions follow Scripture rather than Tradition. In almost all cases, judging from the texts that Helmut shared with us, these confessional documents contain a multitude of references to Scripture, but very few, if any, references to earlier church documents.

Within this context, these documents testify that Mennonite churches celebrate the

Lord's Supper because the Lord commanded it, and because the apostles practiced the ritual in the New Testament church. But in the Mennonite tradition where the congregation and families of congregations (various branches of Mennonite churches) retain a certain authority, there is considerable autonomy at the local level, in contrast to regulation through a priestly hierarchy, as occurs in the Catholic tradition.

In the context of this local autonomy, a variety of terms are used in Mennonite Confessions of faith. The term "sacrament" appears only very rarely; in English the preferred terms are "ordinance" or "sign," with "sign" apparently gaining in acceptance more recently. For example, a contemporary Mennonite theologian has suggested that the concept of "trans-signification" might serve as a Mennonite theological alternative to "trans-substantiation." A "sign," in this context, is understood to be both a pointer to an event, and a symbol that embodies the event, and in doing so, raises its level of significance.

When, in the sixteenth century, the early Anabaptists voiced their objections to the seemingly magical transubstantiation of the bread and wine, they were charged by Catholics with de-sacralising what was considered holy in the Catholic tradition. And yet, as Helmut pointed out to us, Mennonites are sacramentalists in the sense that they believe that God actively transmits divine grace to creation and to humans. However they place less emphasis on God's grace channelled through the sacramentality of church ceremonies, and more on God's grace mediated through the sacramentality of the church itself, faithful in discipleship. His survey of confessions shows that throughout the tradition, there are understandings in the ordinances concerning the Lord's Supper that point to the sacramental power of the ceremony. The statements affirm the presence of Christ at the meal. They claim that Christ is present in an embodied form, namely in the body of Christ, the gathered church. They claim that a transformation happens at the meal—the body of Christ, the church is renewed in its faith and its life. While the Anabaptists denied that in the Mass the action of the priest made the Body of Christ physically present, they did not side with the spiritualists who wanted to dispense with all visible and material elements. They continued to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a holy and sanctified moment in the life of the Church.

Helmut pointed out that it can even be argued that the Anabaptists introduced sacramentality at another level by holding that next to Jesus Christ, the church itself, as the body of Christ, is the true sacrament, the mystery in and through which God is present in the world. The church body, in this perspective, is the incarnation of the body of Christ, present to the world as the medium of God's grace. Christ is present in his saints, the baptized members of his church, who are themselves the visible signs of his grace. So that, as Helmut put it, "the bread is broken when members suffer; the blood is poured out when members sacrifice their lives for one another in the name of Christ Purity and holiness were accomplished not through the untainted sacramental host in the ceremony, but by obedience to Christ in the life of discipleship and discipline."

These various Mennonite confessions of faith offer, in fact, a variety of perspectives and ideas about the Lord's Supper. With respect to Why the Lord's Supper is celebrated, the following considerations appear most often: because the Lord commanded it; as an aid in remembering what Christ has done for us, as a confirmation or seal of salvation, as a sign of full membership in the church, as a means of encouragement to the Christian life, as an admonition to love, as an occasion for self-

examination, as an anticipation of the heavenly banquet, and as a way for the Holy Spirit to teach its hidden meaning. As for the Who, the confessions stress that it is for the baptized, who are members of the church, who desire it, and are not under the discipline of the church (under what Mennonite call the “ban” and Catholics would call excommunication), for those who are living in peace and unity. The confessions describe the Lord’s Supper as a memorial, a demonstration, as a re-assurance of faith, as a seal of salvation, as a sign of communion and love for one another, as a meal of thanksgiving, as exhortation, and as a representation of Christ. As for the elements of bread and wine, the term “symbol” appears most often, but others terms like “sign,” “seal,” and “representation” appear as well.

Among the things I learned from the other Mennonite participants in our dialogue is that there are a variety of ways in which the Lord’s Supper is celebrated in various Mennonite churches. There are differences in the way the elements are distributed, the words that are spoken (and who speaks them—in some cases it is not an ordained minister), in the use of wine or grape juice, and in the frequency of celebration.

On the topic of frequency of celebration, I would like to share a couple of reflections with you. When I first thought about the relative infrequency of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in Mennonite churches, I was, of course, comparing their practice with contemporary, Catholic practice in which we Catholics take weekly and even daily participation in the Eucharist for granted. But when I recalled that most ordinary lay Catholics in the sixteenth century, and indeed until the end of the nineteenth century, rarely received the Eucharist more than once a year (in fulfillment of the Easter Duty), it dawned on me that Anabaptist celebration of the Lord’s Supper four times a year was a very real step up from the Catholic practice of the time.

Secondly, when I heard our Mennonite dialogue participants describe the preparations that precede the quarterly celebration of the Lord’s Supper, I realized that they took the ceremony very seriously indeed. As Adolph Ens, our Mennonite historian in our dialogue, pointed out, from the very first Anabaptist confession, the “Schleitheim Confession” of 1527, great emphasis has been put on forgiveness within the community in preparation of its celebration. Another of our group, Ardith Frey, recalled that in her church when she was growing up, communion was observed only about twice a year, but it was always prepared for with a great deal of soul-searching, and with exhortations that it was a time to make things right—with God and with one’s brothers and sisters. In her husband’s more conservative church, the Ministers held an open meeting several Sunday before the quarterly celebration of the Lord’s Supper for corporate confessions of concerns about perceived harmful trends or behaviours with the community/church. Withholding participation in communion was sometimes used as a form of discipline for unrepentant members, so that participating in communion was an important symbol of good standing in the church. In retrospect, Ardith reported that she now-feels that there was perhaps too much emphasis on horizontal relationships and too little on the vertical relationship to God, and that there was too heavy an emphasis on their preparation to approach the Lord’s Supper, and too little on the grace that one accepts there. As a minister herself now, she says that it is the aspect of forgiveness and grace inherent in the observance of communion that has become increasingly important to her. In observing her congregation approach communion, she has rediscovered the vertical relationship as the source of grace and as the source of acceptance of her own imperfection, which in

turn enables her to live out horizontal relationships with grace and acceptance. From the testimony of all the Mennonite participants in our dialogue, it is now clear to me that the Lord's Supper is something very important in their lives, important as an occasion when they experience the real presence of Christ in their communities and in their personal lives.

I would like to conclude by sharing with you some reflections that Henry Loewen presented to our dialogue in response to our reading the World Council of Church's document on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry. In the light of that document's stated goal of visible unity among Christ's followers, Henry, found nothing so potent and challenging as communion with those of other Christian denominations. He suggested that if we experience communion together, it does make us one in the presence of Christ—a critical direction in witnessing to the world. Henry thought that we should ask ourselves “whose meal this is?” and that we should see Christ as the host, and recall how Christ acted as host at the Last Supper and with the disciples at Emmaus. At the Lord's Supper we are Christ's guests. Henry wondered why we, as followers, make so many rules?

I thought of Henry's reflections when I participated in the Mennonite-Catholic dialogue at St. John's Abbey this summer. Before the first mass to which we were all invited, Father Lawrence, one of the Benedictine monks who took part in the dialogue, explained that under current Catholic discipline, he could not invite the non-Catholic participants to take communion. But, he continued, they would never turn anyone away from the Lord's table. I observed that at least half of the Mennonite participants in the dialogue took communion at each of the three masses that were part of our program. For me, Christ was present in our dialogue community is quite a number of ways, for which I was most thankful.

Attachment 5

Ministry—Catholic Teachings and Practices

Presentation by Henry Loewen

Reflections of one who was a lay minister as opposed to an ordained minister of a Mennonite congregation.

I grew up in a Mennonite church which followed traditions that were somewhat but not totally different from other churches in our larger Mennonite family. A bishop presided over a number of congregations each of which had their local ministers and deacons with their respective responsibilities and authority. Persons for these offices were chosen, elected, called by the congregations and ordained for life.

I was a part of the generation which participated in and experienced a change in this aspect of ministry. The role and office of Bishop ended, and authority and responsibility formerly held by this office was dispersed to ministers of the local congregation; including lay ministers. I have always been interested in the lay ministry and therefore was struck by the comments of Martin H. Wock in his introduction to the section on Laity in the Vatican II document. (page 486). Several words-phrases should be noted:

“Indeed the renewal of the church, depends in great part on a laity that fully understands not only these documents but also their own co-responsibility for the mission of Christ in the church and in the world.”

What does fully understand mean and who determines when matters are fully understood? This is a challenge faced by both Catholics and Mennonites as well, I presume, as other faiths.

I see the process required for the teaching and preaching ministry of the Catholic Church described in the following statement of this same article:

“the present Decree came into existence as the official teaching of the church, established by the highest authoritative body within the church, namely, the bishops of the world, gathered in Council, with the Pope and promulgated by him.”

The authoritative steps are clearly identified. This is notably different for a Mennonite where baptism and being accepted into a local congregation signifies entry into the ‘priesthood of all believers.’ The leading of the Holy Spirit, tested in the local congregation is, in a simplified way, the authoritative route.

Never the less, the words of Vatican II express a similar importance of the laity. (page 492)

“The laity derive the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union

with Christ their Head. Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself. They are consecrated into a royal priesthood and a holy people."

I recall how Father Hanley of St. Paul's College, from whom I took a couple of courses and who welcomed me into the Catholic world, shared the struggles of writers and thinkers in his church requiring and obtaining approval to publish. Should they stay in the church and wait, or leave and publish?

In his introduction to the section on Priests (Vatican II document) G. C. Young writes, (page 527)

On the one hand, the Decree teaches unequivocally that the bishop fully possesses (in the sacramental order) the priesthood of Christ, while the priest participates in that priesthood in a derived and a dependent manner. The bishop alone is the direct and immediate sign of Christ to his flock, while the priest is a sign, not directly of Christ the Priest, but of his bishop.

At the same time, I see the many, many different Orders, Nuns, Sisters, Knights of Columbus, hospitals, charities, homes for disabled and troubled i.e. Marymount and St. Amant, and others, as mentioned by Michael John, in which the church, the body of Christ, is built up by lay people.

How does not only your, but also our 'Hierarchy,' if I may call it that, help or hinder the spread of the Gospel?

Again, while we recognize the importance of being called, training and doing things in good order, the Mennonites would probably agree with the participants of our meetings that "the mediation of God's grace in the Christian community is too important to reserve it to an institutionally controlled select set of religious specialists."

In our discussion, Louis Melo noted that Vatican II documents portray ministry as a gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed on the whole community and that since Vatican II care has been taken in the Catholic church to distinguish between the official and the office.

Richard Lebrun referred to a 1981 *Concilium* article by Avery Dulles that offered some important distinctions between three different kinds of ministry of the Word; apostolic ministry, prophetic ministry, and theological ministry.

In closing, I would say that in ministry we as Catholics and Mennonites have in the past too frequently walked in parallel paths rarely reaching out to each other, let alone walking together on the same paths. These meetings have been an encouragement for me to continue doing this—to reach out, support, and encourage each other, do things together, walk the same path.

An example from Father Hanley's class, illustrates one way in how we might develop an attitude/spirit that would enable us to work and witness together.

- Course—opened with the Lord’s Prayer
- Invited students to join in Prayer
- Noted that Protestants and Catholics don’t conclude the Prayer in same way
- Never the less, we can pray together, we will wait while you finish, and then together say Amen.
- We shouldn’t let a 2% difference prevent us from praying 98% of the prayer together.

My hope is that we continue to invite each other to pray together and where we differ, we wait for each other.

WHAT WE HEARD ON THE TOPIC OF MINISTRY FROM THE MENNONITE PERSPECTIVE IN OUR DISCUSSION

Presentation Notes—Michael Radcliffe

Firstly, we reviewed the work, “Faith and Order Paper, 111” from the World Council of Churches Geneva, 1982, referred to as the Lima text of 1982. This work dealt with the issues of baptism, Eucharist, and ministry. I will focus on what was discussed regarding ministry, from what I heard of the Mennonite perspective.

Firstly, the preface to the document speaks of congregations of Christian churches “asking how their understandings and practices of baptism, Eucharist, and ministry, relate to their mission for the renewal of the human community as they seek to promote justice.” The Lima text speaks of God’s call to Israel and Jesus’ life of service, death and resurrection as a foundation of a “new” community, built by the good news of the gospel and gifts of the sacraments.

Christ offers forgiveness, invites to repentance, and delivers from destruction. The Holy Spirit was upon Jesus at his baptism and was given to those who believed in the risen Lord to recreate them as the body of Christ. The spirit brings many gifts to the body of believers. These gifts are:

- communicating the gospel;
- gifts of healing;
- gifts of praying;
- gifts of teaching and learning;
- gifts of serving;
- gifts of guiding and following;
- gifts of inspiration and vision.

The essential question asked is how is the church to be ordered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel and to create a community built up in love?

We hear of the terms charism, ministry, and ordained ministry. Charism is the gift to any member of the body of Christ. Ministry is the service to which the people of God are called and ordained; ministry refers to the people having charism appointed by the church through the laying on of hands and invocation of the Holy Spirit.

This paper describes how Jesus chose the initial twelve to be his leaders and teachers of his word. This then sets the background for the ordained ministry in the church. A

number of issues are reviewed in the Lima text, in the general language of Theologians:

1. ordained ministry and authority;
2. ordained ministry and priesthood;
3. ministry of men and women in the church;
4. forms of ministry.
5. Bishops presbyters and deacons and the their functions.
6. Finally the form and condition for ordination of ministers.

We heard the reaction on the Lima text the function of ministry in the church is to “prefigure” and proclaim the kingdom of God. All members are called to confess their faith and give account of their hope and the Holy Spirit bestows diverse and complimentary gifts.

CONCERNS OR DIVERGENCES

1. When considering ordained ministry the paper denotes the charism of the body of Christ (all its members) in favor of a specialized monopoly. The significant Mennonite point being the mediation of God’s grace in the Christian community is too important to seek to reserve it for an intentionally controlled select set of religious specialists.
2. The ordering of choice of bishops, presbyters and deacons was a historical organization, Lima suggests this needs reform and throws this question out to all churches.
3. The issue of orderly transmission of the faith in Jesus Christ. Lima claims the spirit keeps the church in the apostolic tradition, and questions if this done through institutionally ordained ministers or charisms bestowed by the spirit on all its members?

RESPONSE TO BEM BY THE UNITED GERMAN MENNONITE CONGREGATIONS

1. The highest level of authority all are equal each congregation and members is equal to another;
2. The emphasis on the tradition of the church instead of the weight of gospel and scripture and guide to faith. The tradition should be continually reconsidered.
3. What is the type of unity being pursued, doctrinal, administrative, and it is necessary to reconcile the differences?

So far as ministry is concerned the issues are: approval the preamble of BEM of the call of the whole people of God.

Further agreed there are special callings to service in ministry. The difficulties occur:

1. Ministry is not constitutive for life and witness of church.
2. Commissioning of ministers for life not necessary.
3. The spirit of God hoped to be connected to office but not necessarily.
4. Subordination of the role of laity.
5. Role of women in the people of God needs work.
6. The whole delegation role in congregation is necessary but should not lead to a role of authoritative ministry.
7. Prefer the experience and the continuity of church in gospel scriptures rather than apostolic succession.
8. Again reconsider the essence of unity.

Attachment 7

Catholic Perspectives on Sin and Salvation

Presentation by Adolf Ens

What I found very helpful in our sessions was the clear and uncluttered presentations by Fr. Luis Melo of official position of the Church, frequently with the aid of extracts from the *Catechism*. Equally insightful were Professor Lebrun's succinct surveys of historical developments and analysis of contemporary Catholic thinking on a subject. The two presentations complemented each other very well. In my own academic discipline of historical theology, I have over the years read extensively in Catholic theology, and developed a measure of understanding of it. On balance this background knowledge helped me in understanding the wealth of information presented during our six sessions. However, this prior understanding may also have at times provided me with an unhelpful framework in which to incorporate new learnings. Nevertheless, I hope that the following summary reasonably reflects our discussions on the theme of sin and salvation.

Humans were created by God. This act of grace produced a harmonious situation: an inner harmony of the human person, harmony between man and woman, and harmony between the first couple and the rest of creation. In this state of "original justice" the first humans tended creation in collaboration with creator God.

The sin of our first parents disrupted the entire harmony of original justice. The dictates of reason were subjugated to the pleasure of the senses, covetousness for earthly goods, and self-assertion replaced self-mastery. This legacy of "original sin" is inherited by all of their descendants.

The stories of creation and fall (Genesis 1-3) and the long record of human disobedience and rebellion against God's will in the OT are developed in the NT writings of St. Paul into a more comprehensive theology of sin. Sin is not only a transgression of divine law, but a state of being, an all-embracing reality. We are enslaved to the power of sin. St. Augustine (5th C.) developed these ideas into a classical doctrine of original sin, which was further refined during the subsequent centuries and reaffirmed by the Council of Trent in the 16th century. [Decree on Justification. I. 13 January 1547. Manschreck]

Salvation from this state of being came at God's initiative through his Son Jesus Christ. [Ibid., II] Although Christ died for all, not all receive the benefit of his death, but only those to whom the merit of Christ's passion is communicated. [Ibid. III] For children of parents in the Church this transmission is effected through the sacrament of baptism. [Ibid.. IV] In adults the prevenient grace of God makes it possible for them to convert themselves to their own justification "by freely assenting to and co-operating with" that grace. [Ibid., V] Further sanctification is an on-going process of faith co-operating with good works. [Ibid.,

X]

Early Protestant leaders—Luther (with his justification by faith alone) and Calvin (with his unqualified divine election to salvation)—interpreted Paul and Augustine to teach an understanding of the effects of original sin that led to total depravity, and from that to a “bondage of the will.” Their positions left no place for human co-operation or even an act of the will in finding salvation, since their sinful **condition** renders them incapable of **willing** obedience or disobedience to God. In contrast, the Catholic understanding of sins sees them as acts of the will. In keeping with this, its theology of sin makes careful distinctions among different kinds of sins: according to their object, the virtues they oppose, or the commandments which they violate. It distinguishes between venial and mortal sin. the latter involving “full knowledge and deliberate consent.”

The second Vatican Council in the 1960s opened numerous windows for Catholic theologians to reinterpret, or even re-envision, the Tridentine teaching on sin and salvation. Among these windows are a greater attention to Scripture, the abandonment of legalism and of the “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*” position of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), a shift from classical toward historical consciousness (natural law to historical change), and a shrinking world producing a pervasive awareness of our context of pluralism. As a result, a great diversity of opinion now exists among Catholic moral theologians.

Prominent among these newer views, especially in the third world parts of the Church, is Liberation theology. It finds revelation in the acts of God liberating the poor and oppressed in the here and now. It is less preoccupied with the *eschaton* and places more emphasis on seeking to transform present social, political, and economic structures of oppression than on securing personal spiritual salvation, although saving faith is exercised in the struggle for greater freedom and justice. Critics point to its tendency to reduce the Gospel to ethics and its leaning toward a new semi-Pelagian form of justification by works.

Other perspectives are more relational or personalistic, emphasizing religious experience (overcoming the estrangement between human sinner and God); existentialist (seeing cross and resurrection as symbols, rather than causes of salvation); or subjective, yielding salvation as something that occurs in the process of human beings achieving a maximum degree of self-realisation or self-fulfilment and their full potential of happiness and creativity.

None of the newer models has supplanted the previous “classical” one(s). How much modification the official church teaching will undergo remains to be seen. In keeping with the pronouncements of Vatican II on the salvific potential of non-Christian religions and on inter-religious tolerance, Pope John Paul II travels the world and calls for inter-religious dialogue. At the same time, voices from the Vatican—e.g. *Dominus Jesus*, seem quite condemning of the emerging pluralism in Catholic thought and language on the theology of sin and salvation.

Attachment 8

Sin and Salvation: The Mennonite View (as I understand it).

By John Long

Sin is first the fruit of disobedience since God's command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was not followed by our first parents. This was a deliberate transgression involving pride and a claim to moral autonomy—they, not God, would decide what was good and what was evil. Humankind thereafter inherits sinfulness, a condition which we cannot remove ourselves (essentially, this is an Augustinian interpretation of the Fall). Further, only God, through the atonement of his son, Jesus Christ, can redeem mankind. Sin is also personal; it is an act or state which violates the will of God, that is, it does not honour what God intends asks or requires. It is an ethical category—something contrary to the divinely legislated code of right conduct (as, for example, is set out in Exodus 20: 1–17, Deuteronomy 5: 1–21, Micah 6:8 and in the New Testament, especially at Matthew 22:34–40, Mark 12: 28–34, Luke 10:25–28 and John 15: 7–17).

The Mennonite (like the Catholic) would find it a moral distortion to define sin exclusively or narrowly in terms of the law, even of the divine law (as the New Testament passages cited above underscore). The deeper insight is the recognition that sin is an act of severing or jeopardizing the intimate relationship between creator and creature and that this requires personal accountability. Certainly for the Mennonite, sin is a failure in fulfilling the promises of a “believer's baptism,” a betrayal of the promises made at (youthful or adult) baptism, that is, a personal turning away from the testimonial as a feature of baptism, if not one's entitlement to ask for it.

In the reality of lived experience, that is, growing up Mennonite, there is (or was in a more conventional time) a significant socio-cultural aspect—no smoking, no drinking, no dancing, since to dance is to invite the temptations of the flesh and drinking is to inflame those temptations! About the perils of smoking, I'm not certain (though a contemporary, secular morality would say that it is a very bad thing all around for everybody!). In any case, it seems to me that, by virtue of the idea of discipleship, the Mennonites' discipline of conscience, maturely formed and attested to in baptism, bears some resemblance to Catholic “guilt” in relation to the dictates of the Church and the necessity to acknowledge that one has sinned and requires reconciliation. I suppose that “shunning” is a local form of “excommunication,” and both may be seen as serious failures of fidelity to belief and church discipline.

And Mennonites would further assert that faith is essentially a freely accepted inner experience of Christ maturely proclaimed, and that baptism is primarily meaningful as the mature (or maturing) outward profession of personal faith, that faith being the inspiration of the Holy Spirit given to the individual believer. No external authority can supplant this means of salvation, that is, the unmerited love of God is the mystery of salvation and redemption, as St. Paul says so clearly in Ephesians 2:1–10. (After the Joint Declaration on Justification, recently promulgated by Lutherans and Catholics on October 31, 1999, even Catholics can say this too with enthusiasm and a deeper understanding of God's grace, which saves us all.)

Attachment 9

Reflections on Catholic Perspectives on Service and Mission

Presentation by Ardith Frey

This assignment brings me full circle to the origins of my experience in ecumenical contact and dialogue. Last time, at our January meeting at the Grey Nuns' Provincial House, I made the comment that "I wouldn't be here (in this location or in this dialogue) if it weren't for my service experience with Mennonite Central Committee." Through MCC, I had opportunity to meet Catholics in ecumenical discussions (Council of Churches settings in southern Africa), through program relationships (seconding MCC volunteers to Catholic schools and other programs), and supporting dialogue between Catholic and Protestant church leaders in Lesotho. Through these forums I had opportunity to observe the Catholic Church at work in missions and service at different locations in southern and East Africa.

Through a seminary course last year on "The History of the Church in North America," I was reminded again of how large the contribution of the Catholic Church has been in starting schools, hospitals, social services, and many other forms of Christian service or "works of mercy." This is a point which was so well illustrated as well by St. Elaine Baete's historical sketch at our last meeting of the origins of the Sisters of Charity, or "Grey Nuns" and the story of their foundress, Marguerite d'Youville. These observations were brought to life in a new way this May when I had opportunity to visit old Quebec City and see the Convent of the Ursuline Sisters, the Seminary (the beginnings of Laval University), the Hotel Dieu Hospital, and to attend a Pentecost Mass at Notre Dame Basilica. In these experiences I was reminded that the legacy of Catholic Mission in Canada is much longer and larger than we as Mennonites can connect to. I was able to observe that the legacy of the Catholic Church in Canada is similar to what I had observed in Africa, an amazing network of institutions that sprang up out of witness to the compassionate love of Jesus Christ. So many of these institutions became the foundation for Government services in education, health and social services.

As I reflect back on my own experience, and on the observations shared by Richard Lebrun, Sr. Elaine Baete, and other personal reflections by Catholic participants in our January meeting on "Mennonite and Catholic perspectives on Mission and Service," there are several observations I wish to share.

1. Catholic missions and service sees itself as being part of one continuous history with that of the early church, an unbroken connection to the apostolic commission to "*go into all the world and make disciples.*" Though this history includes different periods or attitudes of openness to "the world," there has always been at least a thread of extending hospitality and compassionate care to the suffering. The Mennonite history and self-identity is different because of the Reformation experience and the concept of separation from the world.
2. Catholic mission and service, by virtue of being carried out largely by religious orders,

has been characterized by an extraordinary depth of Christian motivation to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ. The fact that missions and service is largely carried out by those who have made lifetime vocational vows has made for a high degree of commitment, dedication and continuity.

A similar commitment and motivation is evident in the work of long-term Mennonite missionaries, but the fact that these missionaries by and large balance family commitments and considerations with their missional commitments makes for a different level of practical engagement and focus. This has both advantages and disadvantages for mission and service. The biggest contrast between Catholic and Mennonite approaches to mission and service comes in the tradition of short-term Mennonite service assignments. The negative side of this is lack of continuity and history, and limited understandings of local context. The positive side is that the North American Mennonite church has been profoundly enriched by having a large cadre of lay people who have experienced service and mission assignments in North America and overseas and who have helped to shape the North American Mennonite church in profound ways.

3. Catholic missions and service is remarkably holistic, judging from my observation of it in Africa. The Catholic Church is a place where the Sacraments are enacted, the Word is preached, the body healed, and the mind educated, often in uniquely indigenous ways. While different religious orders specialize in different ministries, there is a remarkable union of “word” and “deed.” In Mennonite experience, these specialties have too often been divided between mission and service agencies, though on the ground there is also considerable blurring of the lines between word and deed.

4. The Catholic Church is rich in institutions and appears to be deeply committed to supporting these in settings where the local church is now in charge of running them. Mennonite missions have tried over the years to divest themselves of institutional dependency and rather tried to support local churches in coming up with more locally-sustainable institutions. This has not been wholly successful and at times has led to tensions over disparity between resource rich northern churches, and resource poor southern churches. I wonder how these *seemingly* different approaches to missions might inform each other.

5. From Richard Lebrun’s paper, it appears that Catholics and Mennonites are asking very similar questions about evangelism in a pluralistic context. Again it appears that there would be benefit from closer dialogue on these issues at the levels of mission and service practitioners in both churches.

In summary, as I listened to Catholic reflections on mission and service, I felt that there are profound areas of commonality, perhaps more so than in any other area we have discussed together over our two-year dialogue. For this commonality I am profoundly grateful and my appreciation for the Catholic Church has been further deepened.

A SUMMARY OF SERVICE AND MISSION: MENNONITE PERSPECTIVES

Presentation by Sr. Elaine Baete

For those who were present at the last meeting in January, the presentation of mission and service was, a dynamic “show-and-tell,” one in which Ardith passed around different brochures that gave some statistical information and described the various mission and service activities. There was no paper from which to extract a summary. I did take the time to surf the MCC internet pages and of course there is a lot of information there. I give however, in a nutshell, a summary of the mission and service activities that are common to the Mennonite community, locally and at large.

We can see from the historical beginnings of the Mennonite community the thrust to service and mission. A review of some of the articles and resources dealt with over the past meetings brought me to see how far back to the beginnings that service and mission is the lifeblood of the Mennonite community. I summarize briefly: (see Cornelius Dyck, *Mennonite History: An Introduction, Anabaptist Origins*, 1993, pp. 33–49) “We turn to Melchior Hoffman.... hence Strasbourg, to look for further origins.... It seems probably that the poverty of the people, brought about by floods, poor harvests, near starvation, wars which interrupted shipping and other factors gave a desperate people hope in Anabaptism as the resolution of problems in the end time (skip a few lines) Hoffman’s message was one of peace, but not tranquillity... No weapons were needed.” (Some of his disciples were eventually led to execution.) This event ended Menno’s struggle of faith (within the Catholic Church) and led him to accept the call to leadership in the Anabaptist movement in 1536 (without being the founder). It was the Countess Anna of East Friesland who allowed peaceful Anabaptists whom she named Menists after Menno to live in her territory. With his supporters, he denounced violence, placed importance on conversion, the congregation, discipleship, and discipline. Thereon, since 1534, some of the Dutch Anabaptists moved on according to the geographical trade routes, becoming widely appreciated for their skills, for example, in draining marshes and river deltas. These were skills that from the Middle Ages on, some of the Benedictine Monasteries had been known for through Europe. Through persons such as Menno and many others not cited here, the Reformation was a movement that permitted a transfer of skills to a new faith perspective with an emphasis on development of land, and the promotion of peace and non-violence. This, I believe was a departure point for what the Mennonite Community can account for today in terms of contemporary mission and service.

I summarize therefore from a MCC Fact Sheet Ardith referred to. I begin with the Mennonite Central Committee, which in its Mission Statement states (MCC) ... “seeks to demonstrate God’s love by working among people suffering from poverty, conflict, oppression and natural disaster. Started in 1920 in response to hunger in the Ukraine, MCC is the cooperative relief, service and development agency of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in North America. MCC serves as a channel of interchange by building relationships that are mutually transformative. MCC strives for peace, justice and dignity of all people by sharing our experiences, resources and faith in Jesus Christ.

It has over 800 workers in 58 countries around the world in a variety of programs. It is a response motivated by the biblical call to care for the hungry, the stranger and the naked, the sick and those in prison (Mt 25: 35–36).

At the heart of MCC' s work are thousands of volunteers in North America offering their time and resources. On average volunteers prepare more than 15,000 school, health, and relief kits each month; as well as comforters, sheets and towels. Additionally, another 15,000 pounds of clothing and soap are prepared and distributed overseas. The MCC portable meat canner had a record year, producing more than 400,000 cans of beef and other meat...totalling over 7.7 million dollars CAD for MCC programs worldwide. Food Assistance from MCC and the Canadian Food Grains Bank benefited people in 26 countries.. E.g. Serbia, Russia, North Korea, Venezuela, Mozambique and India.

The Mennonite Disaster Service is a network through which various churches of this denomination can respond to those affected by disasters. While the main focus is on clean up, repair and rebuilding homes, this activity becomes a means of touching lives and helping regain faith and wholeness. (Web page resource)

Next...

The Voluntary Service Program of MCCC Manitoba is a dynamic program in constant change and growth, shaped by the needs that become evident and call for response in the region, of course also met by the ability to respond to those needs. The understanding with that motivation is that God has given generously through Jesus and has charged us with the ability to give to others. One way this is done is by connecting with local service organizations and providing skilled workers who are willing to commit to a task and do so on a voluntary basis. Service encourages people from a variety of backgrounds to join together in Christian service while at the same time challenging assumptions and calling forth new lifestyles.

In Manitoba the Volunteer Service Program has been extending the help of MCC Manitoba to:

- children and families in inner city, Kenora and Winnipeg * to street involved people in the heart of Winnipeg
- to people in conflict with the law through mediation and literacy programs in Manitoba
- to Christian youth who are interested in learning more about inner-city poverty and racism issues in Kenora and Winnipeg and willingly participate in serving and learning.
- People motivated by their Christian faith is the way that God provides the personnel to reach out in love:
- to people who are hungry and have to rely on food banks to survive
- to those who are cold and rely on Thrift Stores to clothe their families

- to those who are lonely and without hope and reach out to family resource centers and community ministries and
- to the Mennonite community by those who take on administrative roles in various offices

This volunteer service program is among the largest Volunteer Service programs in Canada, but the needs are such that more volunteers are required. Requests for partnerships have come from a residential school in Northern Manitoba, a teen-mother housing unit and northern communities looking for economic development workers. Ongoing needs for people skilled in administration, clerical work, conflict resolution and child care have also been identified.

There is gratitude for the opportunity to reach out as Christians on behalf of the Mennonite churches to the world and play a role in giving to others while also sharing in the confidence of what God has in store for each person.

MCC Programs

Overseas, MCC is involved in development work such as education, health, and agriculture, peace and justice issues, relief work and job creation among other things. also operates Ten Thousand Villages, which purchases crafts from developing work artisans and crafts persons for sale in North America.

In North America MCC is involved in immigration and refugee assistance, job creation, work with Native people, people with disabilities, offenders and victims of crime and more. MCC help is offered to all, regardless of race, religion or political orientation. As a relatively small agency, MCC believes it can best serve by looking for people who have fallen between the cracks of larger programs.

Whenever possible, MCC works with partners overseas. These partners are usually local church groups, including Mennonite, Brethren in Christ and other Churches. There may also be local women's groups, farmer cooperatives and government agencies to unite with.

Financial Support of MCC

Support for the MCC worldwide efforts comes from generous individuals, such as the person who gave a small donation for Rwandan refugees in 1994. Other sources of relief are from relief sales, thrift shops, and donations, e.g. of food grains. Much of these relief fundraising activities are organized by volunteers. Though one sale may not seem like much for financial support, it is with others that there is a significant source of financial support. Canadian farmers can donate grain through a unique program founded by MCC: the Canadian International Development Agency.

Finally, there is the "Peace and Justice Programs" of MCC Canada. Promoting peace is central to the Gospel and central to Mennonite life and service. As Louis Barrett states in his chapter on "The Fragmentation of the Church and its Unity in Peacemaking: A

Mennonite Perspective,” it is a participation in the life and death of Christ, a part of the social ethic of the Church as a holy nation. Peacemaking is made possible by a community that teaches and practices peace, and it is sustainable in a community that places its hope in the present and the future reign of God. These affirmations are a challenge to contemporary Mennonite churches as well as to other Christian communions” (pages 182–183).

To conclude, Mennonite mission and service is based on the values and message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, responding to the call to serve as He did, while respecting the persons and groups, cultures, religions and nations that they find themselves in. Mennonite mission and service seeks to bring every facet of life and activity in line with God’s mission to redeem and restore the people of God’s world, sharing God’s love and redemption across the street and around the world.