

## Minutes

### Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Number 8

Held on 21 January 2003

at St. Paul's College

#### Introductory / Ecumenical activities

**Helmut Harder** opened the meeting by inviting participants to share their ecumenical activities since our last meeting in September.

**Richard Lebrun** reported on arranging for an article about our dialogue to be published in the November 27th issue of the *Prairie Messenger*, and distributed copies of the article to everyone, as well as flyers announcing an up-coming talk by Fr. Drew Christianson, SJ, and the Common Ground Film Festival to be held at St. Paul's College, January 22–26, events that he thought should be of interest to dialogue participants.

**Adolf Ens** reported on his work on preparing a history of the Canadian Mennonite Conference.

**Henry Loewen**, in the context of the theme of the day's session, recalled three events that evoked for him the mysterious presence of the Holy Spirit: 1) the installation of George Neufeld as head of the chaplains' service of Manitoba at a ceremony organized by Mennonites where thirteen representatives of various faiths (both Christian and non-Christian) laid hands on him and prayed a blessing on him and his work: 2) singing with a Mennonite choir at an Anglican church service in Brandon where an infant was baptized: and 3) singing with a Mennonite choir in a Catholic church in Saskatoon.

**Ardith Frey** reported taking a course on Mennonite Confessions of Faith as part of her studies for a Master of Divinity degree, which has helped her understand the context in which these confessions were drafted. She also recounted that her son and daughter-in-law (who was raised Catholic) had recently attended the infant baptism of a nephew, and the family discussion that this event generated.

**Michelle Sala Pastora** reported that she continues to treasure her monthly luncheons with an ecumenical group of pastoral care workers in St. Boniface, where news of events and adult education experiences are shared. Recently they were involved in a prayer celebration relating to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at a local Anglican church. She also recounted her involvement in organizing highly successful sessions in both English and French on centering prayer. She reported as well on week-long activities that featured Ft. Bernard de Margerie, a priest from Saskatoon long involved in ecumenical work

**Harold Jantz** reported curling with an ecumenical chaplains' league, and a trip with his wife to Italy, Greece, and Turkey. One highlight was a service at St. Peter's in Rome, where the pope presided. While writing a series of articles on their travels he was very

conscious of St. Paul's boast in his letter to the Romans that the good news had been preached to the whole world, which in his time meant that it had been reached important places, especially Rome.

**Elaine Baete** reported recent talks with an interfaith dimension (Christian-Jewish) at St. Paul's College by Fr. David Burrell and Sr. Mary Boys. She will be accompanying a group of students to a Shabbat dinner at a local synagogue.

**John Long** reported his continuing involvement in the local Anglican-Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, and noted that this group will be studying the World Council of Churches B.E.M document in the near future. He observed that Cardinal Walter Kasper will be a speaker at a meeting of Lutheran World Federation here in Winnipeg this summer. John said he was disappointed by the lack of interest in his parish in events marking the Week for Christian Unity.

**Elaine Pinto** continues to offer her twice-a-year "centering prayer" sessions at St. Benedict's Monastery. She will be offering a similar session at her Mennonite parish, and will preach on the contemplative life at another Mennonite church.

**Michael Radcliffe** reports that he still serves Hutterite colonies in the province, and is also working as a mentor in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises program at St. Ignatius parish. He noted that persons who have completed the exercises can become involved in Christian Life Communities that meet weekly for prayer and discussion, and that there will be conferences of people involved in such C. L.C. communities this year in Saskatoon and Africa.

**Helmut Harder** reported that locally he had been invited to speak about our dialogue at the Elmwood Mennonite Brethren Sunday school, and that he would be speaking to similar groups in Kitchener, Ontario, and other centres. He reported receiving a request for information about our dialogues from someone in Virginia who was compiling information about such activities.

With respect to activities farther afield, **Helmut** spoke very briefly about his experience at the conference on "The Holy Spirit and Ecumenism" at the Ecumenical Monastery of Bose in October (see the article distributed by email prior to our meeting).

He then reported on the Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue V, which met in Akron, PA. This meeting spent one day dealing with the Vatican document. "Memory and Reconciliation" for the purpose of developing an outline for a section of the Final Report on "Toward a Healing of Memories." Participants found the Vatican document rich in content and perspective. They continued discussion on the group's five-year report. Helmut will be meeting with Drew Christianson concerning the Final Report, to refine paragraphs on convergences and divergences re. Theology of Peace. In two weeks he will meet with James Puglisi in Toronto to do the same with sections on The Nature of the Church and on Sacraments and Ordinances. Then at the beginning of March a sub-group of Dialogue members meets in Strasbourg to see if a report can be finalized for submission to the PCPCU and the General Council of MWC, which meets in Zimbabwe in August.

**Helmut** also attended (with **Luis Melo**) the Toronto Forum on the process of ecumenical discussion in Canada, sponsored by the Commission on Faith and Witness of the Canadian Council of Churches. He reported there on our Winnipeg Mennonite Catholic Dialogue, and felt there was support and appreciation for what we are doing, although there was no formal discussion to that effect.

Reflecting on what he learned. Helmut touched on the following matters: 1) that tensions between Orthodox and Catholics have mounted somewhat in Eastern Europe where the Catholics are perceived as proselytizing in Orthodox territory. (Reported by Peter Galadza, Greek Catholic). What is needed? Patience, in-depth study of history-sociological understanding 2) that there is some enthusiasm over the Waterloo Declaration which brings Lutherans and Anglicans together: that the rub occurs more over order (i.e. episcopacy) than theology: that local initiatives sometimes run ahead of the larger denomination, i.e. "the top." 3) That there is a movement (*group de dom*) in France with a history of 65 years of pursuing ecumenical dialogue; that they emphasize not conversion to Catholicism but conversion to Christ: the emphasis that dialogue ecumenical conversion needs to be in evidence most importantly in the concrete life of the church. The goal of the *group de dom* is the ecumenical conversion of the churches. The articulation of theological consensus is only a first stage. Also the emphasis on prayer, i.e. Christ is our partner in dialogue, through prayer. The aim is to expect the formation of a new collective conscience of the apostolic faith as dialogue and conversion go hand in hand. 4) That a dialogue between Anglicans and Orthodox began as early as 1930. Two problems at the time were addressed: *filioque* and women in ministry. Anglicans dropped the *filioque* clause, but the dialogue broke down over question of women in ministry. Dialogue resumed in the 1980s, but the ordination of women is still to be discussed. 5) In the Catholic-Disciples of Christ dialogue, the question of canon/authority of Scripture was attacked head-on. The groups came to agreement that the early creeds are not a substitute for Scripture, but an affirmation of Scripture. There was growth in understanding that when it comes to perceived differences of doctrine, it is usually the case that each church gives a different emphasis than that they are opposed. 6) George Vandervelde, in speaking for evangelicals, made the point that in some ways evangelicals feel closer to Catholics than to Protestant churches, because RCs have retained and maintained the central core of orthodoxy: also there is agreement on some social and ethical issues. He wondered whether evangelicals have an underdeveloped ecclesiology, or whether Catholics have an overdeveloped ecclesiology.

**Helmut** observed that the Canadian *Mennonite*, the church paper of Mennonite Church Canada, is now carrying articles that feature relations with other churches. (This is where Helmut's report on the Bose meeting appeared). The journal also has a website that invites dialogue. Two topics are Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue and The Future of our Ecumenical Discussion. Check out the Mennonite Church Canada website.

(After supper) **Luis Melo** reported on his many activities during his sabbatical year. With respect to ecumenical activities, in addition to the Toronto forum that Helmut attended, he attended the national bishops' conference dialogue between Anglicans and Catholics in Montreal, and he has been working with Msgr. Goulet, Archbishop of Saint Boniface,

to lay the groundwork for a regional office for ecumenism in Winnipeg. He has been involved in several meetings of the Saint Boniface Ecumenical Commission and met with deacons for a session on ecumenism.

He is currently preparing a paper for Societas Liturgica, to be given in Holland this summer.

**Worship in the small chapel on the theme of the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit was led by Elaine Pinto and Elaine Baete.**

### **Supper**

### **The Holy Spirit and Ecumenism: Promptings from an Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspective**

**Helmut Harder** presented a brief summary of the paper he had given at a conference on “The Holy Spirit and Ecumenism” at the Ecumenical Monastery of Bose in northern Italy in October 2002 (and which had been distributed to participants in advance). He reviewed the principal points covered in the various sections of his paper.

Discussion of Helmut’s paper was chaired by **Luis Melo**. **Richard Lebrun** led off the discussion by observing that in contrast to the Catholic-Mennonite dialogue at St. John’s University that he attended last July, our group, having done our “homework” by in-depth discussions of our traditions on such fundamental matters as baptism, Eucharist, and ministry, was ready to take up such matters as the challenge of confessional violence and the notion that every church should be a peace church.

**John Long** was struck by the stress in Helmut’s paper and his presentation on the Trinitarian orthodoxy of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition: he felt he was reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church. At John’s request, **Luis Melo** explained the historical background of the *Filioque* controversy, noting that it involved both a doctrinal aspect (with both linguistic and cultural dimensions affecting the way the procession of the Holy Spirit has been conceptualized) and a procedural aspect (a change to the wording of the Nicene Creed without the agreement of a Church council). It is a complicated issue that requires reconciliation and healing. He observed that when the pope prays with Eastern-rite Catholics he omits the *Filioque*, on the grounds that it is not part of the Eastern tradition.

**Michael Radcliffe** wondered about the exact meaning of the term “nonresistance,” to which Harold Jantz explained how the term “pacifism” had taken on a certain controversial connotation in the U.S. in the context of WWII, and that Mennonites now tended to prefer the terms “nonresistance” or “nonviolent resistance” as more biblically grounded. He felt that this terminology was more consistent with the notion of “every church a peace church.”

**Henry Loewen** observed that the importance of names with respect to this issue may be revealed in the way that some Mennonite congregations have felt the need to change the

names by which their churches are known.

**Harold Jantz** stressed the need to place reconciliation at the centre of concern with respect to peace making; we must be reconciled to God, and reconciled within ourselves, to find a path to reconciliation with others. **Harold** made particular reference to 2 Corinthians 5:17 and following: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Etc.” He also cited Ephesians 2:13-18, a similar passage.

**Luis Melo** wondered about an approach that Helmut did not include in this paper, and which has relevance for inter-religious dialogue. He pointed out that the documents of Vatican II speak of three ages of the Holy Spirit: 1) the era before Christ, when the Holy Spirit was at work preparing the world for Him; 2) Christ’s lifetime, when the Holy Spirit was working through Him; and 3) the time after Christ, when the Holy Spirit works through the church. From this perspective, we can think of the Holy Spirit working in preparative ways among non-Christian people and in non-Christian religions.

Someone suggested that this seems to be what Henry Loewen had felt to be present in the laying on of hands ceremony for George Neufeld that he had observed.

**Adolf Ens** remarked that the documents of Vatican II appeared to be ahead of Mennonite thinking in this respect. He went on to report that he had been invited to speak about how Christians/Mennonites have a charism to stand between Jews and Muslims.

**Harold Jantz** reported that he had agreed to be involved in organizing a conference on Faith on the Media with people of diverse backgrounds on the grounds that these people were all “believers” who were agreed in believing belief and faith to be important. He observed that both Islam and Christianity are evangelizing faiths.

**Michael Radcliffe** wondered about the approach put forward in the 1983 Vatican document on Dialogue and Proclamation which developed the theme of four kinds (or rules) of dialogue, which seems to be the official Roman position today: 1. We have no right to force our religious beliefs on anyone, but 2) we have the right to be who we are: 3) we have the right to invite people to become Catholics/Christians, but that 4) we have to obey local laws where there are restrictions on missionary activities.

**Harold Jantz** spoke of a recent statement of the Mennonite Brethren Church on this issue, tracing the background to influence of the Moravian Brethren on Mennonites in Germany (in a Lutheran context) who went to Russia in 1834. In the context of this broader background, the statement speaks of a unity of all true believers.

**Luis Melo** noted that the local LARC dialogue group is looking at ‘the gift of authority’ and observed that Catholics tend to identify the Holy Spirit with the Church.

**Helmut Harder** commented that Mennonites tend to see the church as such a community of the Holy Spirit, the place through which the Holy Spirit acts—in effect, a more congregational approach.

**Ardith Frey** observed that Mennonite tradition tied the Holy Spirit very closely to Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that conforms us to Christ. The emphasis was here, rather than on the role of the Holy Spirit in creation. The church is important in supporting the Christian, helping the Christian follow Christ, and admonishing when necessary.

**Adolf Ens** thought that Mennonite theology focused on the process of discipleship, with issues of interpretation referred to the gathered congregation.

**Elaine Pinto** wondered about the significance of the charismatic movement, and the different ways in which the Catholic Church and Mennonite churches received, welcomed and utilized the movement. She noted that at first some churches regarded the movement with fear and suspicion. In her own reaction, she tried to ask “what would Jesus do?” Is this true to the words of Jesus and of Scripture?

**Harold Jantz** noted that much of what was involved in the charismatic movement has been brought back into the mainstream. He also pointed to the ongoing missionary successes of evangelical Pentecostal movements in Latin America and Africa

**Adolf Ens** observed that the “basic Christian communities” often proceeded without much clerical involvement, and how these communities have been seen as a movement of the Holy Spirit. It seemed to him that the Catholic Church have absorbed much from these movements.

**Luis Melo** observed how charismatic prayer groups have often been ecumenical in their membership. He wondered if this isn’t what John Howard Yoder is getting at when he writes about “radical catholicity” from the bottom up. But Luis also wonders what would happen when this approach comes against hard issues.

In response to a question about Menno Simons’ view of the incarnation, **Luis** remarked that it seemed to him that Simon’s view sounded close to a form of doceticism [Editor’s comment: doceticism was a Christological doctrine appearing in early Christianity to the effect that the suffering and death of Jesus was only an appearance.] Someone suggested that related to this Christology was a tendency to expect perfection, a tendency that could lead to legalism and a propensity to excommunicate those who were less than perfect. What we should be aiming at is a vision of unity, even if unity is not yet a reality. Perhaps the true touchstone should be fidelity or loyalty to Christ. We seek criteria for the movement of the Holy Spirit: traditionally, there was an understanding of the “fruits of the Holy Spirit.”

**Helmut** remarked that it appears that for the Catholic Church, the emphasis has been on external marks and doctrinal truth as a criteria of unity, while the Mennonite tradition has tended to put more emphasis on moral and ethical truth.

**Elaine Baete** pointed out that in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, great attention is given to discerning the Spirit, not an easy endeavor.

**Planning for Future Catholic-Mennonite Dialogue in Manitoba**

Helmut reminded us that at our September meeting, our guests, Archbishop Weisgerber and the officials from the Mennonite groups, had encouraged us to carry on and to broaden our efforts by finding ways to educate and encourage ordinary parishioners in ecumenical understanding. **Helmut** thought that we did want to lose our momentum, but admitted that we have no assurance of success in reaching particular goals. With respect to the question of where do we go from here, we can ask ourselves if we want to continue in our present mode, or if we should become involved in new initiatives. He wondered how we might go about involving more people.

**Luis** indicated that the new regional office for ecumenism that he is involved with might provide a mechanism for involving more people in a structured way.

**Ardith Frey** indicated that she will be leaving the group in the spring because she will be moving to Ontario for further studies. She stressed how much she appreciated the gift of having been a part of the group.

**John Long** indicated his wish for the group to continue, suggesting that while we have laid a good foundations, there remains much more to explore.

**Elaine Pinto** wondered if there was a way that our group could provide service by offering some kind of public forum, perhaps by changing the format of our meetings on occasion by inviting more people to observe and/or participate.

**Henry Loewen** was open to promoting Catholic-Mennonite dialogue on occasions when we find opportunities to do so, but was hesitant about large ecumenical services, which from his past experience have fallen flat. There has to be a basis for celebration.

**Elaine Baete** thought that bringing a lot of new people into our group would be a concern, but wondered if our meetings might on occasion be hosted in a parish, with others invited to observe and then participate. At least some ways need to be found to ensure an information flow to our respective communities.

**Michele Sala Pastora** said that she does this in the St. Boniface community. The question is, how do we share our gifts? Personal witnessing, interviews, newspaper stories, were all possible ways. Mention was made of Mary Lou Driedger, who writes for *The Winnipeg Free Press*, and who might be enlisted for a story.

Discussion then turned to possible topics for a spring meeting of our group. **Richard Lebrun** suggested that perhaps we should do more with the issue of peace, and what is involved in being a peace church. It was agreed that Helmut and Luis would work together to develop a program for the spring meeting, which after some consultation was set for 4 pm, Wednesday, 14 May, at Canadian Mennonite University.

**Helmut** closed the meeting with a reading from 2 Corinthians 5:11 and following.