

Minutes

Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Meeting No. 16

Meeting held on 12 October 2005
at the Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship Church

Present: Elaine Baete, Adolf Ens, Irma Fast Dueck, Harold Jantz, Helmut Harder, Richard Lebrun, Henry Loewen, Luis Melo, Elaine Pinto, Michael Radcliffe, and Lynda Trenholm.

Regrets: John Long

1. **Helmut Harder** began the meeting by welcoming everyone to Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship Church, where two of our group, **Henry Loewen** and **Adolf Ens**, worship. He noted as well that this will be the last meeting for **Elaine Pinto** who is ending her participation in our dialogue group.
2. **Luis Melo** led the opening prayer, based on the prayer led by Pope John Paul II in Rome on the First Sunday of Lent, 12 March 2000.
3. **Sharing recent ecumenical experiences.**
 - a) **Lynda Trenholm** reported that she had recently joined the South Winnipeg Interchurch Luncheon group, a gathering of pastors mostly, who meet to look at the readings for the next Sunday. Someone shares reflection on the readings, and then the group has lunch together. **Luis Melo** noted that this group is one of the initiatives of his office at the Archdiocese of St. Boniface.
 - b) **Richard Lebrun** reported interesting ecumenical conversations with his son's friends in Saskatchewan, a man who is pastor of the United Church in Carlyle, and a woman who is pastor of the United Church in Wawota.
 - c) **Elaine Baete** reported participating in gatherings at St. Paul's College sponsored by the chaplains at the University of Manitoba, and reported the warm relationship that has developed among the chaplains at the university – she feels they have become a kind of “family.” She also noted that many students at the college are looking forward to participating in a Shabbat dinner.
 - d) **Irma Fast Dueck** reported
 - i) that her doctoral dissertation on the theology of Mennonite liturgy is now being circulated among United Church ministers.
 - ii) that she will be involved in hosting the visiting head of a Catholic college from India.

- iii) that four Catholics (out of a class of eighteen) are enrolled in her theology course at CMU, and that this makes for interesting discussions of such themes as what it means to be church, the sacraments, etc.
- e) **Henry Loewen** reported:
- i) on officiating at a wedding of a Mennonite and a Catholic (who actually make their “home” at an Anglican Church). He found preparing the couple for their marriage to be very rewarding. Among those attending the wedding was Charles Adler. The theme of Henry’s homily was “speaking the truth in love.”
 - ii) stopping by to visit Fr. Michael Koryluk (with whom he had taught at one time) at St. Mary’s Cathedral, and ending up spending some time in reflection in the chapel. He wondered what had happened in his life to make this experience possible, and being thankful for allowing this to happen.
- f) **Elaine Pinto** reported attendance at a ten-day silent “retreat” at a conference in Denver with a group called Renovaré, headed up by a Quaker, Richard Foster. There were some 1,600 people in attendance, including some Catholics, great speakers, and an emphasis on a new Study Bible and the discipline involved in study groups using this new publication.
- g) **Mike Radcliffe** reported that he is still involved with the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises program at St. Ignatius, and that this year he is serving as the spiritual director of a Pentecostal pastor who is following the exercises. Partly as a consequence of providing legal advice to the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Winnipeg, he attended a Byzantine Rite service at Holy Family Church – and finding the liturgy (with all the incense) a bit exotic for a Roman Catholic.
- h) **Adolf Ens** reported attending a funeral service at St. Ignatius, following the sudden death of a neighbour, and being surprised at the large number of people in attendance at the weekday service.
- i) **Harold Jantz** reported his continuing involvement in New Directions for Life ministry and the House of Hesed, which now has ten guests in residence, and where three residents died in the early summer. He noted that a number of churches are involved in this project. The House sponsors a program called Living Waters, with some twenty people involved in worship, teaching, and counseling.
- j) **Luis Melo** reported:
- i. Spending some ten days in Ukraine (July 7–17), where he gave a workshop overview of Western Dialogues to the Ukrainian Catholic Bishops, observed efforts being made towards reconciliation between Polish Roman Catholics and Ukrainian Catholics (particularly at the pilgrimage site of Zarvnezi), learned about the “proselytism” (so-called by Ukrainian Orthodox) of Ukrainian Catholics involved in practices with respect to stole-fees, pews, youth groups, and service to the Orange Revolution, and observed the new national president’s call for church unity.

- ii. going to Rome to visit the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, and where he reported and explored various possibilities.
 - iii. attending a meeting of the North American Academy of Ecumenists (September 23–25).
 - iv. preparing for a meeting of the WDECE in St. Boniface (Nov. 11–13). He repeated his invitation for members our Catholic-Mennonite Dialogue to attend an associated event, a report on and discussion of the Seattle Statement, “Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ” to be held at Villa Maria Retreat House, Saturday, Nov. 12, from 9 to 11:15 am.
 - v. becoming involved in a newly-organized Jewish-Catholic Dialogue in Winnipeg.
 - vi. teaching a course in Catholic Ecclesiology at the University of Winnipeg
 - vii. being consulted by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops on a new United Church “statement of faith.”
- k) **Helmut Harder** reported attending the meeting of the North American Academy of Ecumenists in New York City with **Luis**, this being the first time he took part in this group. He was attracted by the talk by John Roth of Goshen College on “healing of memories,” as well as other speakers. He noted that Jeremy Bergen a graduate student at the Toronto School of Theology (St. Michael’s College) and an essay-contest winner, spoke on the theme of his essay.

Helmut also reported completion of his translation of Fernando Enns’s book, *A Peace Church in Ecumenical Context*, which will be published in the coming year. It was noted as well that the Introduction of a new study edition of “Called Together to be Peacemakers” is also his work.

4. **Discussion of assigned paragraphs of “Called to be Peacemakers.”** Participants were all asked to read paragraphs 190–215 of the document, and to take the following directions into account: “Highlight significant points in your assigned paragraphs. Offer your reflections on the points. What is significant for *your* tradition? What should have been said, but wasn’t? Any new learnings? What questions remain for you?”

A) Paragraphs 190–191. **Adolf Ens** offered the following Comments:

The long separation between Christians of the Catholic and Reformation traditions since the divisions of the 16th century persists on two levels.

For somewhat historically conscious persons the separation is grounded on, and sometimes justified by, negative perceptions or images of the other. Members of each group tended to read history through its own historical writings. Anglicans read church history, written by and for Anglicans. Lutherans did the same, as did Catholics and Mennonites. [Well, in the absence of general church history texts by Mennonite writers, we read Protestant accounts.] Thus we all knew that the other side had been wrong and had done wicked things. Negative views of the other translated into caution, antipathy or even hostility.

Secondly, large numbers of adherents of any of the various Christian traditions have little if any historical consciousness. Nevertheless, the images unconsciously

absorbed in one's own communion have fostered negative images of the other. These are less likely to be strongly held feelings or convictions and result more in avoidance than in hostility.

The first call, then, to begin to move out of that isolation or hostility is a purification of memories.

For me such a process of re-imaging began when I had a Catholic roommate in the course of my graduate studies in chemistry. During the first year we lived together he was national chair of the Ukrainian Catholic Student organization. Whatever hazy images I had had of Catholic Christians changed into something quite positive during those years – and this was pre-Vatican II!

In my years of teaching of history, of Christianity I made it a point of reading at least one new general text each year: Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic. Soon I saw that even among Catholic historians there were significant differences in tone, perspective, and focus. Philip Hughes, Daniel-Rops, John P. Dolan. Especially significant for me was the German, Joseph Lortz, with his Catholic perspective on how the Reformation came. My “penitential spirit” began with the realization that the back side of “reform” was a further division of the Church

The 2 years + that we have been together have added dimensions to my purification of memories. We have not only considered history together, but also theology, practice, and experience. If I were to suggest agenda for further dialogue among us, I would like it to include re-reading together the so-called Constantinian era/phenomenon, the formation of the creeds, the significance of religious orders, As you can tell, even in retirement I continue to like historical themes. I still need to reshape my thinking.

B) Paragraphs 192–193. **Lynda Trenholm** offered the following comments:

- She said she found herself in agreement with what was said in these two paragraphs. She liked the word “purification,” which can have various meanings: removal of pollutants, being freed from sin and guilt, being called to be made holy, etc. With respect to Para. 193, she agreed with Adolf’s point that in both traditions we have tended to focus on the historical developments in our own traditions that we cherish, and to avoid or forget those things that are more embarrassing.
- Commenting on the word “purification,” **Helmut** recounted how the International Dialogue group had moved from the phrase “healing of memories,” to the phrase “purification of memories.” It was not a development he entirely welcomed.
- **Harold** reported that he was also struggling with the word “purification,” which to him suggested an “erasing” or “purging” – which might not be appropriate.
- **Helmut** recalled John Roth’s phrase “right remembering,” as perhaps better, since “purification” suggests that we can get it exactly “right.”
- **Elaine Pinto** wondered if there can be “wrong remembering”?
- **Mike** thought that what was really wanted was “balanced” remembering, common understanding. That we should forgive, but not forget.
- **Lynda** thought that perhaps the process might be similar to what is involved with dealing with memories of abuse.
- **Elaine Baete** suggested “sifting of memories” as an appropriate phrase.

– **Helmut** concluded that there is no one term that will cover the concerns involved in this matter.

C) Paragraphs 194–195. **Richard Lebrun** offered the following comments:

These two paragraphs reinforce what we have learned about the importance of doing history together, both to free each side of our dialogue from stereotypes about the other and to learn from the riches of the other. With particular reference to paragraph 194, it is very important to appreciate that Catholicism in the late middle ages, despite the problems at the top (the abuses of the Avignon Papacy, the Great Schism, and dead-locks that were produced by the Conciliar Movement) had never abandoned the idea that the Church was always in need of reform, and that it continued to experience reform movements from below. Similarly, as stressed in paragraph 195, there was within Catholicism, “an uninterrupted tradition of ecclesiastical peace movements,” a tradition from which both Catholics and Mennonites today can find resources to aid us in shaping a Christian witness to peace.

In preparing for today’s session, I consulted the reference to the work by Christopher M. Bellitto’s book, *Renewing Christianity: A History of Church Reform from Day One to Vatican II*, an excellent study that I recommend highly. Bellitto’s third chapter, entitled “From Avignon to Trent: The Era of Multiple Reforms,” contains an excellent summary description of both the “reform failures” at the level of the hierarchy and of the remarkably vital “reform progress” embodied in “popular developments,” both within religious orders and at the level of the laity.

I was particularly taken by Bellitto’s description of the reform movement generally known as the *devotio moderna* (the modern devotion). It seems to me that this movement should be of particular interest to post-Vatican II Catholics, and, perhaps, to Mennonites. So I would like to share with you a bit of what I learned from Bellitto about the *devotio moderna*.

The *devotio moderna* began with the Dutch religious leader Gerard Grote (1344–84). After studying the liberal arts, law, medicine, and theology at the University of Paris, he experienced a religious conversion and spent four years in a Carthusian monastery. There he became familiar with that order’s radical return to Benedictine monasticism’s roots: silence, manual labor, and prayer, all ordered to the monk’s personal reform. (Note – Bellitto, in his book, traces two currents of reform in the history of Christianity – that of personal reform of the individual Christian, and that of institutional reform. Grote and the *devotio moderna* put emphasis on personal reform.) Grote did not have a monastic vocation, but he still learned a lot from his experience with the monks.

Back in Utrecht, Grote preached a reform program that denounced immorality and simony among parish priests. He soon gathered around him like-minded men and women who met informally in his home on a regular basis to pray, to read, to discuss the Bible, and to support one another’s efforts. Soon some of the men and women were living in separate homes where they led a common life, but not a formal monastic one of vows and a habit. They shared property, a dormitory, meals, chores, and brought in money through their trades.

Their *devotio moderna* piety was marked by strong attention to personal reform. The aim was to be present with God in daily life through spiritual exercise. They thought an internal disposition to good must accompany actions. There was frequent exhortation to conform one's will to God's so all actions would be for God. This spirituality was less a doctrinal program than an attempt to live a devout life in a materialistic culture – this in the Low Countries where the textile industry was exploding into an early capitalist culture. *Devotio moderna* followers focused on the historical, human, suffering Jesus, trying to identify with Him through their own trials – such as confession, asking others to point out their faults, fasting, and abstinence. The famous *Imitation of Christ* (attributed to Thomas à Kempis) may have been from a *devotio moderna* author. Manuals of this sort encouraged readers to identify and imitate Christ's actions, most notably his humility, service, and obedience, and in this way to reform themselves to their original image and likeness of God.

Followers of his way of spirituality attracted some criticism because they rejected many externals of religion. As reformers, they opposed overuse of statues, vigils, pilgrimages, relics, rote prayers, and devotions. In this way, they seem to have been forerunners of many of the Protestant reformers of the 16th century.

Their reform goals were personal progress in virtues and an affective, emotional relationship with God. They read scripture, parts of the mass, homilies, and saints' lives. They kept prayer journals and notebooks of gospel passages and their thoughts on them.

I've not said anything about the heritage within Catholicism of a tradition of ecclesiastical peace movements. Unfortunately our document's main reference on his topic, Ronald G. Musto's *The Catholic Peace Tradition*, was not available to me. However, paragraph 64 of our document does refer to various movements, some led by monks and ascetics, others by popes and bishops, to restrict the use of violence in medieval society, and to protect the innocent, the weak, and the defenseless. Here indeed are resources that could be explored together.

In conclusion, from the perspective of my Catholic tradition, it seems to me important to cherish and endeavor to implement this tradition of personal reform – as opposed to waiting for the hierarchy to legislate and impose institutional reforms (which are also needed in varying degrees at various times in the life of the Church). These paragraphs in our document are perhaps too short, but early parts of the document had already explored their main themes, and we are given good references for further study and reflection. I can't identify any specific questions that remain for me at this time.

– **Commenting** on these remarks, **Irma** mentioned that there appears to be good evidence that the early Anabaptists were much influenced by the *devotio moderna*, and mentioned C. Arnold Snyder's study *Following in the Footsteps of Christ: The Anabaptist Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004) that treats this topic. According to him, this spirituality was not continued by later Anabaptists.

– **Elaine Pinto** related *devotio moderna* spirituality to “conversion of life,” and comments by Thomas Merton in last talk before his accidental death in which he contrasted Marx's way with the monk's way. She also mentioned the work of Thomas Keating and Lawrence Freeman in promoting contemplation, and suggested that if we all followed these practices our “personal reform” could have a tremendous impact.

– **Luis** observed that in choosing “Benedict” as his papal name, our new pope was consciously indicating a “return to the sources,” and the idea of the church as the place where “inner work” should happen.

D) Paragraphs 196–197. **Irma Fast Dueck** offered the following commentary:

196. Briefly, we believe not only that reconciliation and purification of historical memories must continue in our communities, but also that this process may lead Catholics and Mennonites to new cooperation in witnessing to the Gospel of peace.

Presumed in this paragraph is the possibility that the “reconciliation and purification of historical memories” need not lead to new and increased “cooperation.” Those who work in the field of conflict resolution/transformation know that reconciliation of broken relationships does not necessarily assume that parties *can* or have the *will* to be able to work together in the future. Yet this paragraph points to the hope of a “new cooperation in witnessing to the Gospel of peace.” It brings me to the questions of “Why should we cooperate together in witnessing to the “Gospel of peace.” Numerous reasons come to mind for why we should cooperate:

1. *We share things in common.* Clearly what our conversations together have shown us is that we share things in common. Again and again we have discovered that we have more in common than we think; we are not as different as we imagined we were. Given our commonalities and common commitments it makes sense that we should cooperate together. However ultimately what unites us together is not that we share things in common, either theologically or experientially but what unites us is Christ’s work on the cross of breaking down barriers and creating a new humanity (I’ll pick this up again in the third point).
2. *We need each other.* Our shared struggles of what it means to be Christian and be the church in a secular age reminds us of our need for each other. Churches are foolish to think that they can “go it alone” – that they don’t need other churches or denominations, or that denominations/traditions don’t need each other. Clearly we need each other. More than that, it should be said that our witness is more effective when we are able to work and speak together than when we speak individually and apart from each other. One might say simply, we can do more together than we can apart. However this, too, as practical and reasonable as it may be, is not really sufficient reasoning as to why we should cooperate together “in witnessing to the Gospel of peace.”
3. *We are the body of Christ.* For me, the most compelling reason why we should cooperate in our witness is because this is simply what it means to be the body of Christ in the world. Simply put, this is who we are. We are living out of our own identity, as the body of Christ in the world. Or as the first hymn in our Mennonite hymnal says, *we are a living sign...of God’s justice and God’s peace.* Christ becomes known to the world through the activities of his body, the church in the world. Through our cooperation, through our unity, we become more fully who we already are in Christ Jesus. In bearing witness to Christ and the gospel of peace is many ways to reclaim the church as sacrament; that is, Christ is present and becomes known in the Body of Christ, the church.

197. On the Catholic side, statements of the Second Vatican Council reflect a purification of memory. Unlike in the past when others were blamed for ruptures that took place, the Council acknowledged the culpability of Catholics too. The Council made the admission with reference to past ruptures that “at times, men of both sides were to blame” [*Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.] for what happened. Furthermore, in an open spirit inviting dialogue, the Council further acknowledged — and this reflects a Catholic attitude toward Mennonites today — that “one cannot impute the sin of separation to those who at present are born into these communities and are instilled therein with Christ’s faith. The Catholic Church accepts them respect and affection as brothers” [*Ibid.*] In a similar open spirit supporting dialogue, a recent statement of the Executive Committee of Mennonite World Conference has said: “We see Christian unity not as an option we might choose or as an outcome we could create, but as an urgent imperative to be obeyed”. [“God Calls Us to Christian Unity”, a statement adopted by the executive of Mennonite World Conference, Goshen, Indiana, July, 1998.]

I am somewhat surprised that the “f-word” is not used in this section – that is, *forgiveness* (though perhaps it belongs more appropriately to the next section, but I will raise it here nonetheless). The statements reflected around the “purification of memory” are really about what it means to forgive past wrongdoings. Both Mennonites and Catholics need to admit culpability (though I find it interesting that at least according to this paragraph, Mennonites have not admitted to as much wrongdoing as the Catholic statements reflect) and need to acknowledge that we are a new community born out of the past but cannot be held hostage to it. Hannah Arendt, a Jewish philosopher/thinker, argues for the practice of forgiveness (and she draws primarily on Christian insights around forgiveness) in order that our past does not predict or control our future. We see this in the practices of the church and even in the practices of nations such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where sins were publicly confessed and so was forgiveness. We are not our past. We are not our ancestors and fore-parents and yet our past resides within our tradition and so also within us. We need to express our forgiveness to one another so that our past, the wrongdoing, hurts, etc. do not predict how we will be together in the future.

– **Elaine Pinto’s** comment was to cite the old saying: “To error is human, to forgive is divine.”

E) Paragraphs 188–200. **Luis Melo** offered the following commentary:

Paragraph #198

The goal of the “healing of memories” is situated within a context of mission—proclamation—unity, then, is for the sake of credibility of the gospel.

Forgiveness is explored from a theocentric perspective and is a call for all Christians to forgive which is action-oriented. In fact, forgiveness is an act of faith in/witness to the God who forgives. This is at the heart of discipleship.

Asking of forgiveness has two dimensions: forgiveness of God (for the sins of one's tradition) and forgiveness of others (Christians).

Forgiveness shared is an example of "faith in action" and the "penitential spirit" that is the gift of God to His people.

Paragraph #199

The Year of Pardon

This section entitled "Catholic Delegation Statement" develops the meaning and provides a concrete example of "forgiveness in action." Direct reference is made to the declaration of the AD 2000 as a "Jubilee Year" of Pardon. On March 12 (the First Sunday in Lent) Pope John Paul II led the Catholic Church in a universal prayer including a confession of sins committed by members of the Church during the past millennium, and a plea to God for forgiveness.

This act of forgiveness was only possible after a spiritual itinerary of preparation for three years, whereby the Church placed itself in the presence of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each year was dedicated to a person of the Trinity, as prescribed in the document *Tertio millennio adveniente*. This process models and gives witness to the fact that asking for forgiveness is rooted in a experience of God who is mercy and compassion. If one wants to give pardon, one has to receive pardon; a "grace" and participation in the very life of God.

The Ecclesial Nature of Pardon

Pardon is essentially a "received" reality and is lived out ecclesially, that is, in the Church—both in worship and mission/action. The primacy of divine sovereignty is affirmed in this vision. The human response to the initiative of God is in captured in two movements: asking for forgiveness (of God) and giving forgiveness (of God to others). One can only ask for forgiveness because one has an experience of God (as forgiving) as well as what one is called to be.

Forgiveness is first of all *confessio laudis* (praise and thanksgiving for who God is and what God does—forgive) and secondly *confessio peccatis* (ecclesial confession of sin). This naturally leads to *confessio vitae* (sharing in life what one has experienced). All of this may be seen as *confessio fidei* (confession or statement of faith) in both word and action (proclamation in worship as well as enacted proclamation in acts of reparation). This reality is lived out corporately that is, in the Church as an act of worship and sharing in the mission of God (imitation).

1. *Sin in the Church [of Christians] vs. Sin of the Church*

A distinction is made between the members of the Church and the Church in the asking of God for forgiveness. This subtle nuance is captured in the quote:

‘the Church is holy because Christ is her head and her spouse [and] the Spirit is her life-giving soul...,[nonetheless] the children of the Church know the experience of sin...For this reason the Church does not cease to implore God’s forgiveness for the sins of her members.’

Although not developed in the text, the source of this teaching is anthropological and Christological in foundation and is affirmed in the Second Vatican Council Constitution on the Church:

The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men. But the society structures with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ, the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality which comes together from a human a divine element. For this reason the Church is compared, not without significance, to the mystery of the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body (c.f. Eph. 4:15). [*Lumen gentium* #8]

Two categories (out of seven) are identified in this paragraph as applying to the Mennonite-Catholic conversation related to the healing of memories: “sins” which have harmed the unity of the Church, and “sins committed in the service of truth.”

No specific examples are given in this paragraph of each of these categories.

Paragraph #200

This paragraph gives the biblical foundation of the category of “sins against unity”: the priestly prayer of Jesus before his crucifixion.

At this point, somewhat out of order, **Elaine Baete** offered her comments on paragraphs 207–208 (see below), and excused herself because of a prior commitment. We then took a **meal break**.

F) Paragraphs 200–202. **Henry Loewen** offered the following commentary:

The phrases “sins committed in the service of truth” and “confession of sins committed in the service of truth,” which occur in paragraphs 199 and 200 respectively, point to one of the main causes of disunity in the church, namely our response to the truth.

The recognition of this fact therefore, as Article III proposes, is key to a healing of the memories. Two phrases in paragraph 201 could point to some of the misunderstanding which contributed to the disunity.

1. “That even men of the Church.” Is the term men generic or is it exclusive? Could this have been written to be inclusive?
2. “In the solemn duty of defending the faith.” The term defend is a military term. To what lengths does one defend? To death? The history of the church certainly contains many examples where this was the case. Is this word helpful in describing the duties and responsibility of the church? If the truth is to set us free (John 8:32) then why do we need to defend it. The phrase in the following sentence i.e. “to seek and promote truth” seems so much more reflective of attitudes and actions that lead to unity.

The following phrases from paragraphs 201 and 202 illustrate the importance or centrality of “truth,” in our understanding of the responsibilities of the Church:

- in the service of truth
- defending the truth
- seek and promote the truth
- without compromising truth

What is our respective understanding of truth?

Our document in Article II C contains “A Catholic Perspective on Peace and A Mennonite Perspective on Peace.” Could or should there also have been a similar article on truth?

Both Catholics and Mennonites, as well as other faiths, value what we call religious freedom. Vatican II states that, “This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom” are the opening words of Chapter I entitled, “General Principle of Religious Freedom.” The second paragraph closes with the phrase “Thus it is to become a civil right.” It seems somewhat ironic that if we value religious freedom within the state so highly that we as the church have found it so difficult to deal with religious freedom within the church. Martyrdom, Shunning, Excommunication, defending the faith and church splits are a part of our story.

Thus the concluding quotation of paragraph 202 is most encouraging. Recognizing that “each saw the other as deviating from the truth” and “Let us forgive and ask forgiveness” opens the door to a healing of the memories. How do we do this? Perhaps personal stories would be an effective way to do this.

- To **Richard’s** comment that “stories” would seem to be very effective to help healing, **Henry** observed the role of “testimonies” in Mennonite practice.
- **Irma** observed that people who feel “persecuted” are unlikely to admit they are wrong, they are too easily trapped in “victimhood.”
- **Luis** observed that in the “asking for pardon” portion of the 12 March 2000 Vatican service, observed that pardon was asked, not for defending the truth, but for “methods not

in keeping with the Gospel.” We must always respect for the person’s experience of truth.

- **Helmut** recounted that in the International dialogue groups, Mennonite participants seem to have begun with a very strong expectation of hearing an apology from the Catholic participants for 16th-century injustices. The Catholics appeared to be divided among themselves on the issue of the need for an apology. The central statement in paragraph 202 (“Without compromising truth, Catholics in this dialogue can apply this spirit of repentance to the conflicts between Catholics and Mennonites in the sixteenth century” etc.) was as far as the Catholics got by way of apology. There was also a lot of debate about “truth.” **Helmut** also pointed out how the statement in question was “framed” by references to March 12th “Day of Pardon” and a quote from Cardinal Casper’s address to Mennonite World Conference representatives in November 2001.
- **Henry** wondered how ordinary folks in the pews will come to know of this apology.
- **Mike** wondered if this was known among people in Mennonite churches, or only among scholars.
- **Helmut** observed that the story has appeared in Mennonite papers worldwide.
- **Adolf** thought that general perceptions about Catholics among Mennonites nowadays were being shaped by stories about people like Mother Teresa and Oscar Romero. Catholics are known for their work on social justice issues.

- G) Paragraphs 203–204. In the absence of **John Long**, **Helmut** called attention to the themes of these paragraphs: 203 cites a statement by the Executive Committee of the Mennonite World Conference confessing that Mennonites “have not done all we could to follow God’s call to relate in love and mutual counsel to other brothers and sisters who confess the name of Jesus as Lord and to follow Him.” 204 confesses to thoughtlessly perpetuating hostile images and false stereotypes of Catholics and the Catholic Church.
- **Richard** said he was particularly impressed by the statement’s recognition that it would have been easy in the 16th-century to confuse the Anabaptists of Munster with other pacifist Anabaptists.

- H) Paragraphs 205–206. **Harold Jantz** offered the following comments:

Some Observations on the “Common Statement”

1. What did the two groups say? Expressed regret that Catholics and Anabaptists couldn’t “resolve the problems” of the church and prevent the fracture that happened in the 16th century. Acknowledged and regretted “the indifference, tension and hostility between Catholics and Mennonites” that exists in some places today and rejected “the use of any physical coercion or verbal abuse in situations of disagreement and [called] on all Christians to do likewise.” Committed themselves to “self-examination, dialogue and interaction that manifest Jesus Christ’s reconciling love.”
2. Some responses.

- 2.1. One has to agree with the anything that contributes to greater respect for one another, and interaction that manifests Christ’s reconciling love and results in more meaningful fellowship and a sense of unity.
- 2.2. What is missing is a statement that would speak of the good that came through the division. There is too weak an emphasis on the need for renewal and reformation at all times and the contribution that the Reformation made to renewal within the Roman Catholic Church and to the spread of the gospel throughout the world. Likewise, the churches of the Reformation needed Pietism to bring renewal to them and Mennonites have amply shown how they too needed renewal from time to time.
- 2.3. It would be hard to demonstrate that divisions in the church—despite the sins often committed in such divisions—have led inevitably to reproach upon Christian witness and to decline. Many times it has brought growth and great increase of new believers. (One might think of the divisions in China today as an example.)
- 2.4. The “Common Statement” reflects a view of the church which for evangelical Mennonites is too closely linked to an institutional expression. We would confess “one church” with very little sense of urgency about giving it a particular institutional expression, even though we know the church needs to have a visible expression. We would be able to say that the one body of Christ in the world encompasses all who confess Jesus Christ as their redeemer and Lord. In that church we are one, whatever the visible institution that we relate to.
- 2.5. Two quotes:
 “For Catholics, the visible, properly constituted, and hierarchically governed church is the principal God-ordained agent for the work of apostolic ministry. For evangelicals, the church is the body of Christ made up of all those who have responded to the apostolic proclamation of the God-given offer of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.” Mark Noll/Carolyn Nystrom in *Is the Reformation Over?*
 “One thing does hold evangelicalism together other than common traditions: a commitment to the authority of Scripture that motivates a reformist agenda whenever biblical truth is believed to be compromised or endangered. From the Protestant Reformation to the rise of postwar neo-evangelicalism, each movement we have identified as ‘evangelical’ shares this biblical reformist instinct. Thus we believe it is best to understand evangelicalism as a renewal movement within Christianity that continually calls the churches back to deeply committed biblical faith and practice.” The writers then ask, is there an “evangelical approach to doing ethics”? Their answer is “no.” “There are varieties of orthodox and committed Christian ethics located in various historic Christian communions. These find their commonality in their submission to the authority of Scripture, their deep personal commitment to Jesus Christ, and, to varying degrees, in their respect for and attention to the historic orthodox Christian tradition.” From a chapter entitled “Toward an Evangelical Ethical Methodology” by David Gushec and Dennis Hollinger in *Toward an Evangelical Public Policy*, edited by Ronald Sider and Dianne Knippers.
- 2.6. A story. Editor of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* is a former Catholic. Shared her story with me. She “became a Christian in the Roman Catholic Church.” That became a reality for her at her confirmation in grade seven. She critiques the church, but she also expresses appreciation for what the church gave her. All of her family, with the exception of a sister,

are still very involved there. Her journey into a Mennonite church came through a Bible study group. It led her to close fellowship within the church and a decision to be rebaptized, the pivotal choice for her. She says she brings her Catholic history with her and especially the sense of the worship of a transcendent God. At the same time, she values the fellowship and the emphasis on discipleship that she has received through the Mennonite church.

- **Richard** thought that perhaps the Noll statement overemphasized the “monolithic” character of Catholicism, and observed that many reform movements that stayed within the Church began by “dividing” from existing religious congregations or ways of doing things.
- **Mike** commented on the dangers of an attitude of “exclusivity.”

I) Paragraphs 207–208. **Elaine Baete** (given before our meal – see above) commented as follows:

1. Significant points:

- Dialogue can contribute to a healing of memories
- Never forget that we share common beliefs in the Christian faith and heritage
- First responsibility of both groups is praise and worship of God

2. Reflections on these points: The words that come to mind are “Love one another as I have loved you” from our Gospels.

Dialogue can be therapeutic – maturely talking out the issues of concern, issues of agreement and disagreement brings to the surface the reality to be “worked through” together makes more conscious the building and healing process and points that call for attention so that history is not repeated negatively.

3. What is significant for my tradition?

Encouraging dialogue: it seems that in my tradition silence or silencing has often been the mode and norm for dealing with controversial issues; bringing our issues out of the closet is a step towards embracing the reality and dealing more appropriately with the issues.

4. What should have been said, but wasn't?

Something about the apostolic dimension of this healing, reconciling process; action such as MCC and Development and Peace... is part of the concrete reaching out apostolic dimension; many of our divisions are rooted in the rather “avant garde” vision of our forebears who were just too far ahead of the structures of the Church at the time that they were seen as heretics and unacceptable, but in a sense were genuinely prophetic.

5. What questions remain for me:

Other areas remain to be explored and discussed: e.g. Mariology, further on the sacraments, define more clearly what we mean by confession, healing and reconciliation...

J) Paragraphs 209–210. **Michael Radcliffe** offered comments as follows:

Given the emphasis on shared faith (in Jesus Christ, a Trinitarian perspective, significant agreements concerning baptism and the Lord’s Supper) in 209, and with reference to the article “Are Mennonites sacramental,” Mike wondered why we still do not have intercommunion. He wondered if we really need absolute agreement on all the details. He also noted the recognition that both groups face similar challenges in relating to the state in an increasingly secular world.

With respect to paragraph 10, the summary paragraph of this section of the document, although he appreciated its attempts to give directions for the future, he wondered who was speaking to whom?

– **Irma** pointed out that differences in our style of worship (the outward manifestations) is really the area of the biggest difference between Mennonite and Catholics. With respect to theology and spirituality, there are many more commonalities.

– **Helmut** read a statement from Mark Noll’s new book to the effect that Catholics cannot welcome to reception of communion those who do not accept the necessity of papal authority and all that that implies.

– **Mike, Richard, and Luis** all observed that the practical reality is really quite different and more nuanced than Noll’s technically correct statement would suggest, and that intercommunion is allowed in certain circumstances.

K) Paragraphs 211–212. **Elaine Pinto** offered the following reflections on these paragraphs:

In reflecting on the phrase, “...foster new relationships,” I wonder if the laity has not often been the key to this movement; either halting the process, by remaining entrenched in old wrongdoings, or freeing it, by offering a hand toward new beginnings. While it is true that the laity can too easily accept “top-down” mindsets and perpetuate old grievances; when fresh winds blow they often more readily accept a new starting place. Maybe this is because they don’t have places of power to protect.

It seems to me, the laity has often been more ready to address reconciliation than the respective authorities (although significant examples of reconciliation were modeled by Pope John Paul II). Reconciliation began, in a big way, of course, with the welcome invitation from Vatican II but was it not the Charismatic movement of the late 50’s through the 70’s that put feet to the mandate? The Charismatic movement was generally, an evangelistic movement, breaking down the walls of separation. As Mennonite and Catholic neighbours, we simply began having Bible studies together.

It is the small conversations that cross over our borders. On a personal note, as a lay person, working in a Catholic Hospital, interchange was by no means one sided. I did not “buckle under” and pretend there was no difference ... indeed, I think the Catholic staff there expected me to critique them, and welcomed it in a way because they knew I loved the Catholic expression of Christianity. They knew I might roll my eyes and tease, if they

lacked in pertinent scriptural knowledge. Then too, there was the Grey Nun I worked with that told me quite seriously, sometime in her life, she would like to take a year's assignment with MCC, because she thought the Grey Nuns had many common values with MCC and it would not be a huge leap for her.

Of course, the critiquing worked both ways. It was from a priest in my CPE training that I gained an invaluable insight into why one should pray to saints:

"If you were very sick ... wouldn't you call upon your prayer group, or a prayer line to pray?" he said to me.

... "But, Father Gilbert, that's different, I can see my prayer group here. The saints are dead!"

"Oh, is that what your church teaches you about the afterlife?" he replied (and here I was caught) ... "No. the saints are very much alive ... you can ask them to pray for you the way you would ask a friend."

Of course, this doesn't mean I have been banging down the doors in prayer to saints, but it does help me to understand my Catholic friends, and since then, I must confess, I have prayed to saints on occasion.

The Catholics always have esteemed Scripture, and more so, since Vatican II. But I felt smitten in heart by another critique from my friends, around the subject of how freely, and sometimes incorrectly, we Protestants can use our knowledge of the Bible. I always had trouble visiting with fundamentalist Christian patients in the hospital, and wondered aloud with my Catholic friends about this dislike. Somehow, in the discussions to follow, I gained insight into the error of "using" the Bible for one's own gain, to "spear" someone with the right answer, and saw, for all my knowledge of Scripture, how I had often misused it.

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The above examples are meant to illustrate that simple conversations of common folk of both denominations are what ultimately bridge gaps, and connect kinfolk. How can both clergy and laity fan this fire?

If I could borrow Martin Luther King's phrase, "I have a dream" for Catholic-Mennonite relationships (indeed for all Christians of varying theology). We are living in such a time of violence, misery, and injustice in this world, with so many visible world forces (terrorism for one) that deny Christ, I cannot see how we can afford to keep our own little paths to God tidy and neat, and separate from each other. It weakens our witness, separates our forces, and leaves us with a feeble voice in the world. I long for those who do not know the name of Christ, to see within a united Christian church of all members, a gentleness, a respect, and a kindness that we could show one another. "Let your gentleness be known to everyone," says Paul. The New Jerusalem Bible in the Sermon on the Mount says, "The gentle shall inherit the earth," and perhaps we would, with this kind of love.

I also long for a common worship. I do not mean common worship styles, but common liturgy. Here, I think the Mennonites (especially the MBs) could stretch themselves to speak the common ancient liturgy and creeds, and read the common lectionary scriptures every Sunday. Would this really be such a sacrifice? If one would

extend this across all denominations, what authority would come forth from a church world wide hearing and speaking the same word of God around the world every Sunday!

Finally, (and since this is my last dialogue session, I'll dream high), would it not be an immeasurable witness, if we could all sit at the family table together? I refer again to **Henry Loewen's** statement: "Whose table is it anyway?" We all come, vulnerable, believing, and like Thomas, sometimes ... not believing, poor, and in need of the life of the Saviour. We all come as sinners, we know by our own lack of wellness that we need each other, and we need God. Let us then, feed each other kindly, that bread taken, blessed, broken, and given, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and be one.

– To which **Mike** responded "Amen," which was echoed by many others around the table.

- L) Paragraphs 213–215. **Helmut** summarized the thrust of these closing paragraphs. He told us that final paragraph was added a bit later, at the suggestion of and drafted by Joan Patricia Back, one of the Catholic participants in the International dialogue.

In conclusion, he reflected on an interchange that occurred at the New York NAAE meeting, when in the discussion following John Roth's presentation, someone asked how and why there should be a problem in dealing with events that happened some 475 years ago. In response, someone said that Mennonites would be justified in going in the direction of Jewish figures who have pursued those responsible for the holocaust. To this **Helmut** had replied Mennonites would NOT go that way. He then cited for our group a statement by Mark Noll to the effect that we must leave such things to God, and that what each side must demonstrate is the willingness to take the first step, recalling the Biblical injunction to give to the one who demands your cloak, your coat as well.

Helmut (after some comments from **Henry**) concluded that one this issue that the goal should be to find a useable past with integrity.

Helmut, on reading (rereading?) Jaroslav Pelikan's *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism*, a pre-Vatican II publication, reported being struck by his discussion of what happens when you enter into a process of reform or renewal, that if "reform" and "counter-reform" are against something, you can all too easily become narrow and restrictive.

5. Reflections on the above process and planning for future sessions:

Luis opened a discussion of an agenda for our next meeting, suggesting that these two topics be taken up on that occasion. He wondered if it would be useful to attempt a summary of our experience over our last two years, and/or to review our response to the report of the International dialogue.

– **Irma** thought it might be useful for each participant to reflect and report on their whole experience in the dialogue, thinking about such questions as what this has meant to me personally, what am I left with, what remains to be done.

– **Richard** wondered if it might be possible to structure this review, with each participant being asked to undertake part of the review, or to reflect on certain aspects of our experience and learning.

The discussion ended with agreement that Helmut and Luis should draft an Agenda for the next meeting with these suggestions and concerns in mind.

4. After some discussion, the **next meeting** was tentatively scheduled for Thursday, 23 February 2006, with Wednesday, 8 February as an alternate date.
5. **The closing prayer** was led by **Irma Fast Dueck**.