

Minutes

Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Meeting No. 20

Meeting held on 7 February 2007
at St Paul's College

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

Regrets: John Long

1. **Richard Lebrun** welcomed everyone to the Mauro Centre of St. Paul's College.
2. **Sharing ecumenical and personal experiences:**
 - a) **Richard** reported attendance at the Opening of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the Lutheran Church of the Cross, which he found powerful and inspiring.
 - b) **Harold Jantz** reported:
 - i. Attending three of the events of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: The Opening at the Lutheran Church of the Cross, Immanuel Fellowship Church (Missionary/African), Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, and Holy Eucharist Church
 - ii. Participation in Missionfest, at the Grant Memorial Baptist Church. He was particularly moved by one speaker, Steve Saint, the son of one of the five missionaries killed in Ecuador. The tribe that was involved in this killing is now Christian, and this man now works "under" them.
 - iii. Participation in a chaplains' curling league, where he has had some good conversations with a United Church minister on issues concerning homosexuality, and his own work in New Directions.
 - iv. In connection with his work at the House of Hesed, visiting with a man now in St. Boniface Hospital concerning his situation. The man, of Roman Catholic background and estranged from his family, thinks of himself as experiencing divine judgment. They read the Scripture together.
 - c) **Mike** reported that:
 - i. He is sponsoring a person in the RCIA program at St. Ignatius (which means he attends the sessions with this person), and that he is learning a lot from seeing his own faith through the eyes of someone who is "just coming through the door."
 - ii. He discovered in his work as a volunteer at the Immaculate Conception drop-in centre that many of the folks who come there for a meal (often aboriginal people) regard coming there as coming to "church." This despite the fact, that there is

absolutely no “church” pressure put on these people. Attending a seminar with David Northcote from Winnipeg Harvest, he found that David finds the same phenomenon among people using that facility.

- d) **Adolf** reported that the congregation to which he belongs is sponsoring a refugee family – actually an extended family with seven children in school as well as a number of adults. There is a “transport” problem in getting the family members to various events and venues. Recently at one of their church service, the woman in the family offered a “thank you” for the fact that they were able to acquire a van.
- e) **Elaine** reported:
 - i. With respect to the Week for Christian Unity, attending the service in French at Eglise Saint-Eugène in St. Vital.
 - ii. Taking a group of 28 (mostly students) to a Seder service at the Congregation Etz Chayim synagogue. She and the students found the visit a delightful experience; they really appreciated the warm hospitality that they were accorded.
- f) **Lynda** reported
 - i. A visit to Christ the King by an ecumenical group of persons attending the Refreshing Winds conference at CMU, who wanted to see the “worship space” at the parish. She found they were very interested in her own work there as a Pastoral Minister. They wanted to sing, and sang a doxology in four-part harmony.
 - ii. That Christ the King church had hosted worship space and the use of their hall for Catholics from India of the Syro-Malabar Rite. Invited to attend the worship, she found their liturgy quite similar to the Byzantine liturgy of Ukrainian Catholics and the Orthodox. She also enjoyed the ethnic food at the following potluck.
 - iii. Shared the titles of three books by Bruce Feller (a Jewish writer):
Walking the Bible: A Photographic Journey
Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths
Where God was Born: A Journey to the Land of the Roots of Religion.
- g) **Henry** reported:
 - i. An incident when he was teaching in a small town in Newfoundland, where he ended up taking the service in the local Mennonite church for three out of four Sundays, and finding, when he started to lead the singing of the Doxology, that the folks there were accustomed to singing it to a different melody than the one he knew.
 - ii. Going recently to a small town in Saskatchewan, where he lent a helping hand to a family building an extension to a home, and attending the local Mennonite church. He was surprised and impressed to find that the pastor (just retiring) had, over the previous few years, invited some twelve different speakers from various denominations to address his parish from the pulpit – a real example of ecumenism.
 - iii. Trying to connect for a visit with his old friend, Fr. Mike Koryluk at St. Mary’s Cathedral, driving by, finding a parking spot, finding Fr. Mike in, and, in effect, making a “divine connection.”

- h) **Irma** reported
 - i. Her attendance (along with another three or four carloads of Mennonites from Steinbach) at a bar mitzvah ceremony in Minneapolis. The mother of the young man is a person of Mennonite background who converted herself to Conservative Judaism after following a course given by Rabbi Neal Rose at the University of Manitoba. This woman says that she had always had a “hard time with Jesus.” The bar mitzvah ceremony was some three-hours in length, and mostly in Hebrew, but there was a prayer for peace in English, read by the boy’s Mennonite grandmother.
 - ii. Shared an anecdote that had occurred at the Refreshing Winds conference held at CMU, the most ecumenical event the CMU has hosted. She described the closing communion service as bit of a comedy of errors. This service was led by a Lutheran pastor, who organized a procession at the opening. Trying to organize such a service, with many different denominations and traditions involved, proved quite a challenge. When the Lutheran pastor learned that, out of respect for the tradition of the Mennonite Brethren, grape juice would be used, he insisted on bringing wine for the occasion. Then the person offering communion to the Mennonite Brethren in attendance, confused the two cups, and ended up offering them wine instead of grape juice! Irma marveled at what a wonderful experience it was for all, despite the confusion.
 - iii. Upcoming: both she and Christine Butterill will be making presentations at a conference on the theme “Theology in the Church – Who Needs It?” to be held at St. John’s College on March 2–3. The conference is open to anyone who would like to attend. Information about the conference is available on the St. John’s College website.
- i) **Luis** reported:
 - i. Feeling overwhelmed by the publicity and media attention arising from his work in the Week for Prayer for Christian Unity and his recent appointment by the Vatican to the “working group” of the World Council of Churches.
 - ii. Giving the keynote address at the Salvation Army Seminary (recently relocated from Toronto to Winnipeg) where he spoke to some forty students and eight faculty members. He was surprised to find himself engaged in their discussion of an introduction of “sacraments” in what had began as a “movement” and is now beginning to recognize itself as a “church.” **Helmut** remarked that some Mennonites, uncomfortable with the title “church” had called their places of worship “meeting houses,” and that what is now known as Mennonite Church Canada had previously been known as the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.
 - iii. A request to review a new book, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (New City Press) by Cardinal Walter Kasper. Luis finds that the little book has lots of practical advice for those involved in ecumenical activities.
- j) **Helmut** reported:
 - i. Working with his wife on behalf of his wife’s niece, a woman with a rather checkered marital history, who had become something of a black sheep of the family. Now in Surrey, BC, and ostracized by her family, she has recently found a

- “home” in the Salvation Army. The Army has assisted her in her struggle to retain power of attorney for her mother, now in a nursing home in Ontario
- ii. Attendance at the Opening Service of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the Lutheran Church of the Cross and at the service at the Sargent Avenue Mennonite. He thought that the last part of the fourth stanza of the hymn applied particularly to our work in Mennonite-Catholic dialogue: “May we all so love each other/ and our selfish ways deny/ so that each one for the other/ may not hesitate to die / Kindle in us love’s compassion/ so that every one may see/ in our fellowship the promise/ of a new humanity.”
 - iii. That he had contributed an article about the Mennonites and Mennonite-Catholic dialogue, entitled “The Quiet in the Land,” to *Living City* (January 2007 issue), a magazine published by Focalare (a Catholic peace group) magazine. His article was paired with an article entitled “In Step with the Amish Community” about the community in Pennsylvania where a number of children were killed in a schoolhouse.
 - iv. That he will be going soon to Bose Monastery in Italy to a second ecumenical meeting working on a proposed common martyrology. Among the participants will be Helmut Moll, a German scholar who has been preparing a catalogue of twentieth-century martyrs.
 - v. Will be participating in a workshop being organized by the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Saskatoon (May 27–29).
 - vi. Will be participating at an Ecumenical Institute, June 24–25, on the theme, “Peace among Congregations.”
 - vii. Will be responding (along with Fr. Drew Christianson) at an academic conference at Notre Dame University (July 30–31) in the days immediately following the Bridgefolk conference (June 26–29) to held at Elkhart, Indiana. Mennonite and Catholic scholars will take up issues of history, theology and peacemaking as they emerge from Called Together to Be Peacemakers.
3. **Opening prayer.** This was in two parts. **Irma** distributed a poem by Jeff Guny, entitled “The Cookie Poem,” which she read, and **Elaine** provided a “Blessing for a Meeting,” which we prayed together.
4. **Update on new congregational/dialogue groups.**

Richard reported that the Charleswood Mennonite / St. Ignatius group has met four times, and has another meeting scheduled for 10 April (which will take up peacemaking), and that the CMU/St. Paul’s group has also met four times, and has additional meetings scheduled for 12 March and 2 April. **Irma** commented that the latter group, rather than being a rather dry gathering of academics, has been remarkable for the amount of personal sharing that has occurred.

Harold reported that the group organized in Northeast Winnipeg has met four times, and has an additional meeting scheduled for 12 March. **Helmut** and **Luis** have attended different

meetings of this group. They will be discussing *From Anabaptist Seed* at the March meeting. **Helmut** commented that this group has been meeting from 6:30 to 9:30 pm, and that he was impressed with the amount of excitement generated among participants on both sides, and by how seriously participants took their assignments as well what a good job they did “unpacking” the paragraphs they had been assigned to comment upon.

Adolf reported that the group that he and **John Long** are co-chairing (which involves participants from one Mennonite congregation and three Catholic parishes) has met twice, and has additional meeting schedules. Participants have commented about how much they are learning about their own traditions. He reported that one Mennonite participant, in the car on the way home from one meeting, had commented that, of course, those involved were a “hand-picked” group, and wondered what would happen with people “off the street.”

Richard suggested, from his own experience in a new ministry at St. Ignatius, that perhaps we should look at what is going on in these new groups as a kind of “ministry,” remembering that while Christ may call all to follow him, St. Paul himself spoke of being called to different ministries. **Luis** thought that we might think of ourselves as working with people who would take up leadership roles in the future. **Richard** referred to a *Commonweal* article, “Praying to the Buddha; Living amid Religious Pluralism,” in which Peter C. Phan distinguishes four kinds of dialogue: 1) the “dialogue of life” in which people engage others in their community in a neighborly exchange of daily joys, problems, and concerns; 2) the “dialogue of action,” a call for Christians to cooperate with those of other faiths in projects of mutual interest; 3) the “dialogue of religious experience,” in which people share spiritual practices, such as prayer and contemplation, and 4) the “dialogue of theological exchange,” involving specialists who undertake to enrich each other’s conception of their respective religious and spiritual traditions. **Luis** referred to a document put out by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, called “Dialogue and Proclamation, Reflection and Orientations on Inter-religious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus,” (the link may be found on the website of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface), where some of these distinctions and their implications are spelled out, and suggested that we should be thinking about where we will go with all this.

5. Meal break

6. Summary of reflections based on *From Anabaptist Seed* (continued)

a) Anabaptist Ordinances

i) **The Lord’s Supper.** **Mike** began by suggesting that this section of the document might be read at several different levels. On the one hand there is the stark statement that “All Anabaptists rejected the idea that there was a real, bodily presence of Christ in the elements of bread and wine,” and the strong emphasis on the “memorialist” understanding of the Supper, while on the other hand there are citations from Balthasar Hubmaier stressing the Supper as a “sign of the obligation of brotherly love,” and a “public sign ... that just as they break and eat bread with each other ... they wish now to sacrifice and shed their body and blood with one another.” As well, Snyder states that “Since the Lord’s Supper was a celebration of unity in the Body of Christ, each member

was to do a careful self-examination, to ensure that the Supper was being celebrated ‘worthily.’”

In some of this, **Mike** found convergence with Catholic understandings. In Paragraph 1363 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, one reads: “In the sense of Sacred Scripture the *memorial* is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men. In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is celebrated the Exodus events are made present to the memory of the believers so that they may conform their lives to them.” He also cited Fr. Peter Monte, at a recent RCIA session St. Ignatius, who responded to a question about “real presence” with the comment that it is a mystery. We try to describe the indescribable with limited human language.

Richard offered his observation that two of the Mennonite participants in the CMU/St. Paul’s dialogue (well-informed theologians) that they were now convinced that there was not really as much difference between Mennonite and Catholic understandings of these issues as has been thought traditionally. With respect to the document “Called Together to be Peacemakers,” **Irma** contrasted the “flat” language of paragraphs describing Mennonite understandings with the “poetry” of the paragraphs describing Catholic understandings. **Helmut** suggested we should remember that Snyder is writing about sixteenth-century positions, while **Adolf** commented on Snyder’s rather strange source for his citations. Hubmaier, while one of the best-educated Anabaptist leaders of the time, had broken with Luther over the latter’s position on Christ’s presence in the elements, and that he had spent only three years in the Anabaptist movement before his martyrdom. Diverse comments from **Helmut**, based on the Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Church Canada, and **Irma**, based on the Minister’s Manual, suggested some difference of emphasis the use and interpretation of 1 Cor. 11:23–24 as a guideline for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

- ii) **Footwashing.** **Luis** distributed and spoke to a handout that summarized his reflections on Snyder’s description of Footwashing as an Ordinance.

I. STRUCTURE OF AN ORDINANCE: FOOTWASHING

	GENERAL ORDINANCE	FOOTWASHING
<i>INNER</i> (CONFORMITY TO CHRIST)	REGENERATION/TRANSFORMATION/NEW BIRTH BY THE HOLY SPIRIT ONTOLOGICAL-PERSONAL	HUMILITY AND PURIFICATION IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST (JN. 13.15)
<i>OUTWARD</i>	VISIBILITY AS FAITHFULNESS TO THE WORD OF CHRIST	WASHING IN THE WAY OF

(COMMITMENT TO CHRIST)	COMMAND TO PERSONAL COMMITMENT IN COMMUNITY RENEWAL	CHRIST
<i>ETHICAL</i> (WITNESS TO CHRIST) MISSION IN THE NAME OF CHRIST	MARTYRDOM PERSONAL COST OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE WORLD LIVING IN THE BODY THE COMMITMENT “LAYING DOWN YOUR LIFE FOR THE SAINTS” WORLD	SERVICE INVOLVES PERSONAL SUFFERING: HUMILITY, BENDING THE KNEE, LETTING GO OF PRIVILEGE, POWER, STATUS (I TIM. 5:10)

II. THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS AND QUESTIONS:

1. Christological and Pneumatological Dimensions: A Spirituality of Discipleship

- Jesus as suffering “servant”. The need for the disciple to consider how he/she is allowing Jesus to serve him/her personally. Avoiding activism and mission in one’s own name.

2. Streams in Meaning for Discipleship (cf. K. Koop, Anabaptist-Mennonite Confessions of Faith: Development of a Tradition (Waterloo: Pandora, 2003), 126):

- Pilgram Marpeck (d. 1556) of south Germany: footwashing as a church ordinance
- Dirk Philips (1504–1568): footwashing added as an essential ordinance
- Frisian-High Germans: footwashing as an “essential mark of the church” and tied to the service of “alms, visiting and caring for the sick, and offering counsel when needed”
- Jan Cents Confession (1630) of the Frisian and High Germans: footwashing related to “hospitality”
- Dordrecht Confession (1632) of the Dutch Mennonites: footwashing as a rite linked to “congregational worship”
- Sjouke Voolstra: footwashing as “preparation for communion” (especially among Frisian and High Germans, 138 n. 70)

3. Ecclesiological Implications:

- Scriptural foundations of ordinances. How many ordinances are there and what becomes the criterion for determining this?
- Historical appropriation of this ordinance. How is the tension between the visible (emphasized by the Frisian and High German/Flemish) and the invisible (emphasized by the “spiritualizing” Westlanders) being lived out today?
- Frequency and Ritual of Celebration.
- Parallel and Equivalency to Holy Communion. This is ceremony open to all or reserved for the local congregation? Is it appropriate to share this ritual with non-Mennonites (c.f. as is the practice at “Bridgefolk”)?
- Do Mennonites distinguish between “sacraments” and “sacramentals”?
- “All may, none must, some do, and (some should)”?

- Can the diversity of practice (flowing from differing emphasis on the inner versus outward dimensions of footwashing) shed light on *koinonia* (visible unity) between Mennonites and Catholics?

After presenting his handout, Luis wondered if his analysis spoke to the understanding of the Mennonites present. He added that he thought that perhaps the “inner” dimension might be most meaningful to evangelicals, the “outer” dimension might be most meaningful to Catholics, and the “ethical” dimension might be most meaningful to Mennonites. He ended with some questions: How many Ordinances are there? What kind of parallel is there to the Lord’s Supper? Did Mennonites perhaps view Footwashing as a “sacramental”?

Harold reported that the Mennonite Brethren do not regard Footwashing as an ordinance, that is it practiced in only some settings, and with a strong sense that it is a way of honoring each other within the community, and less with a sense that it symbolizes service in the world.

Helmut, in contrast, reported that the Mennonite Church Canada does regard Footwashing as a symbol of service, of readiness to serve those in need, but that it does not claim Footwashing as an Ordinance. He stressed that it was not regarded as obligatory, and even when it is practiced, not all members of congregation participate.

Irma questioned the characterizations that Luis had employed – “inner,” “outward,” and “ethical.” The “ethical” command suggested an “outward” dimension to her. **Luis** said he thought discipleship had to be related to what happens beyond the doors of the church. **Elaine** wondered if “ethical” referred to the quality of the outward service.

Harold reported dealing with the account of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples in John 13 at a recent Sunday school session. He suggested that the description can be seen to work at three levels. At one level, it is a way Jesus indicates who is to betray him. At another level, he is saying that only feet need to be washed, when it is seen as the cleansing for the sin that we commit in our lives daily. And at still another level, he is demonstrating that a leader must be a servant; he has given them an example. **Henry** reported how a friend was moved by the experience of having his feet washed by the pastor, a demonstration of serving each other equally. **Irma** noted that students could be similarly moved by having their feet washed by their professors, or by having students apply ashes to the forehead of professor on Ash Wednesday. She also commented that John Howard Yoder regarded these actions as paradigmatic.

Commenting on the schematic Luis had provided, **Henry** remarked that perhaps the important thing to note was that all the dimensions were in “one box,” while **Adolf** thought that it was somewhat misleading to put the three things, the Lord’s Supper, Church Discipline, and Footwashing, in one box as Ordinances. **Helmut** reminded us that Snyder talked of four Ordinances, Baptism being included. **Luis** observed that Luther began by trying to retain three “dominical” sacraments, baptism, Eucharist, and Confession (Penance), but that the last was then dropped as not dominical.

iii) Consequence of Anabaptist Ordinances

Helmut offered the following comments on this section:

- I find it unusual that Arnold links the ordinances with doctrinal teaching. Are they not primarily a confirmation of the grace of God and the benefits of Christ? Baptism is an affirmation that the believer is in covenant with God and with the Christian community; the Lord's Supper is an affirmation of the salvation we have in Christ and of the covenant of the Christian community with each other under God. The ordinances are functions that build up the community of faith and service.
- That is in fact what the paragraph "A Church of Born Again Believers" says.
- "A Visible Church" links the ordinances with the concern of the Anabaptists/Mennonites to make their holiness visible and to foster an attentive discipline/discipleship "strengthened by the Lord's Supper and Footwashing." This sounds right to me
- In "A Church Relying on the Holy Spirit" Snyder draws attention to the ordinances as a reminder that the church relies on the Holy Spirit, on the inward baptism of the living Spirit of God. The authority for baptism was granted by the scriptural command, but the actual inward baptism was granted by the living Holy Spirit. It was the presence of the Holy Spirit that clinched the effectual-ness of the ordinances.
- Baptism was not distant, not removed from the real life-experience of those receiving it. It was not something that would have meaning and be owned personally some day. Right then and there baptism gave power to become disciples and to persevere on the narrow way – even unto martyrdom. That's why we speak of believers' baptism, of adult baptism.
- And baptism was not for a few; it was not a "council of perfection" that some aspired to. It was equally accessible and equally obligatory for men and women alike. (About one third of all Anabaptist martyrs were women.)

Irma, commenting on the first sentence of this section, felt that it not reflect the profound experience of those who participate in the rituals prescribed by the ordinances, and that it seemed out of line with Snyder's known interest in spirituality. **Harold**, too, thought that this section needed more. **Luis** referring to the necessity of baptism for entrance into church life, suggested it could be viewed as the confirmation of an inner experience, but that it still related to the role of the church in salvation, and in some way was a "human essential." **Irma** observed how baptism becomes a crucial issue with respect to the question of an "open table." Should the table be open to those who have not been baptized? She reported that many of her students wondered why we need baptism. **Luis** observed that this question became an issue historically with the rise of such movements as the Salvation Army. **Henry** was surprised that anyone could think of a church without baptism. **Irma** wondered if there was something in Anabaptist roots that might be working itself out in this matter. **Harold** thought that contemporary culture was more to blame, something that made it difficult to people to make commitments. **Elaine** said she encounters a number of young people who wonder "what is the point?" of church membership and rituals. Perhaps these things are not so important in God's eye, but we need them, we need things to establish our status in the church, etc. **Harold** referred to Robert Putnam's treatment of some of these "membership" issues in his book, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. **Richard** related an anecdote from the last Annual General Meeting at St. Ignatius Parish, where the chair of finance committee, in presenting the annual financial

report, pointed out the amount the parish contributes to the archdiocese, and jokingly referred to it as “our franchise fee.”

Irma reported that students often raise questions about “public confession” of their faith, preferring to think of faith as something “deeply personal.” **Helmut** wondered if we are reaping the harvest of a “hermeneutic of suspicion” with respect to society, with respect to all groups, whether politicians, police forces, corporations, or churches.

Adolf commented that he found it remarkable that in all our dialogue meetings he has never heard the concept or idea of “post-modern” discussed; he thought that a lot of what we have been talking about here is related to post-modernism, and suggested the phenomenon goes back to Descartes and the Enlightenment. We have bought into “bill of rights” language, and this is a mindset that affects many denominations. He also referred to recent research by Reg Bibby that shows that the kind of “brand loyalty” that held people in denominations that had been part of family tradition has largely disappeared in the last twenty years.

Henry observed that parents who do not bring their children to “dedication” ceremonies in his congregation appear to be very self-confident, displaying an attitude of not needing the help of others. **Luis** cited a saying to the effect that religion is always personal, but never private, and commented as well on the tie to the Enlightenment. The birth of modern European society has been synonymous with the development of individualism, and myths about the superman or superwomen who think they do not need community. Churches, of course, serve the human need for community and continuity. He also spoke about the work of Mary Douglas [the British symbolic anthropologist] who has written about how churches can be assimilated into the dominant culture. He reported as well discussions in the Winnipeg Christian-Jewish dialogue group about how it takes about five generations for families to move from being completely orthodox to become completely secular.

Elaine reporting on her experience with couples preparing for the baptism of their children, noted how they could become “re-awakened” to the meaning of their faith, and to realize that there was a “gap” to be filled. **Harold**, reflecting on the notions of “visible” and “invisible” church, suggested that in the first instance, the “visible” church was important in strengthening individual Christians against a dominant culture, but that it was also good to feel part of an “invisible” church, made of great numbers of Christians we do not know, but who we sense to be there and also in the presence of Christ.

b) **Discipleship: living the faith**

i) **Truth Telling.** In **John Long**’s absence, **Adolf** reported John’s reading of this section: “truth telling means telling the truth!” **Helmut** commented that the Anabaptist insistence on truth-telling was in part a reaction against contemporary problems. **Adolf** added that the Anabaptists came to believe that their only allegiance was to Christ; this meant, among other things, that their church had to be a “non-state” church. **Irma** recalled how much difficulty her family’s stand against singing the national anthem had caused her as a schoolgirl. **Luis** wondered about contemporary Mennonite attitudes towards Canada Day Celebrations. **Adolf** suggested that with the gradual transformation

of Remembrance Day celebrations into “peace remembrance” occasions, it’s been easier for Mennonites. **Luis** referred to the distinction between a “peace-making” church and a “peace church.” **Harold** spoke of Ernie Regehr and Project Ploughshares and its efforts to find alternatives to violent conflict; and as well of the work of the MCC representative in Ottawa. Increasingly Mennonites are coming to acknowledge the necessity of sometimes using force to restrain violence, and a movement to activism (vs. an older passivity) in non-resistance.

ii) **Economic sharing.** **Adolf** offered the following commentary on Snyder’s treatment:

Snyder (*From Anabaptist Seed*, 40–41) provides only a very brief statement on this aspect of “Discipleship: Living the Faith.” I will supplement this with a selection of brief 16th-century texts that provide a bit more insight into the thinking and practice in this area. I have added scriptural allusions not in the text itself.

Among the Hutterian Brethren (Hutterites) the institutional form of practicing the economic implications of their faith has been complete sharing of goods within the community for most of the 470 years of their existence. This is not a complete renunciation of private property but an almost complete rejection of *individual* and *nuclear family* ownership.

Among most Mennonite and Amish groups the main institutional form of economic practice is a strong emphasis on *mutual aid*. While organizations designed explicitly as Mutual Aid Societies have decreased over time, the practice and teaching have not died out completely.

Anabaptists, like some other Christian groups in the 16th century, were opposed to the principle of lending money at interest and consistently refused to accept interest themselves. They argued the common sense notion that money should be lent for the benefit of the borrower rather than the lender. Then the charging of interest was a form of exploitation. Few Mennonites today follow this practice. Some note that loans are available far more easily to the rich than to the poor and that today’s economic system needs reforming in a different way than in pre-capitalist 16th-century Europe. However, they have not put forth any consistent new Christian way of participating in the modern capitalist economy.

Balthasar Hubmaier, 1526: *Always and everywhere I have said as follows about the community of goods: that each man should have regard for his neighbor, so that the hungry might be fed, the thirsty refreshed, the naked clothed. For we are not lords of our own property, but stewards and dispensers. Assuredly no one could say that we claim that one should take his own from anybody and make it common property; rather we would say: if anybody should take your cloak, give him your coat also.* [Note the reference to Mt. 5:40]

Hans Hut, 1527: *He persuaded no one to steal his goods. However, he taught that whoever had a surplus should help the needy. True, some who were well-to-do who sold some acres, vineyards and other property and shared it with the brothers who were poor.* [Reference to Acts 4: 34–35]

Ulrich Stadler, ca. 1537: *There is one communion (Gemein) of all the faithful in Christ and one community (Gemeinschaft) of the holy children, called of God. They have one Father in heaven, one Lord Christ. All are baptized and sealed in their hearts with one Spirit.... Thus in this community everything must proceed equally, all things be one and communal, alike in the bodily gifts of their Father in heaven, which he daily gives to be used by his own according to his will. [Reference to Ephesians 4:4–7] ... Such a community of the children of God has ordinances here in their pilgrimage. These should constitute the polity (policeien) for the whole world.*

Georg Schnabel, 1538: *Concerning the community of believers and their material goods we say that everyone willingly helps his poor brother in his need out of his surplus. Paul writes about this in Romans 15 [26–26] that those from Macedonia and Achaia have willingly collected a common contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem.... The Apostle John also says in his first letter chapter 3 [17–18]: But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need and yet closes his heart against him, how does love abide in him.*

Peter Riedemann, 1542: *One sees in all things created, which test to us still today, that God from the beginning ordained nothing private for man, but all things to be common.... Created things which are too high for man to draw within his grasp and collect, such as the sun with the whole course of the heaven, day, air and such like, show that not they alone, but all other created things are likewise common to man... . Because what is temporal does not belong to us, but is foreign to our true nature, the law commands that none covet strange possessions, that is, set his heart upon and cleave to what is temporal and alien. Therefore, whosoever will cleave to Christ and follow him must forsake such taking of created things and properly, as he himself also says: "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple."*

Menno Simons, 1552: *O preachers, dear preachers, where is the power of the gospel you preach? Where is the thing signified in the Supper you administer? Where are the fruits of the Spirit you have received? And where is the righteousness of your faith ... ? Shame on you for the easygoing gospel and barren bread-breaking, you who have in so many years been unable to effect enough with your gospel and sacraments as to remove the needy and distressed members from the streets, even though Scripture plainly teaches and says, "Who so hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion for him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" [1 John 3:17]*

With respect to the Holdeman community (here in Manitoba?), **Henry** pointed out that their members are not to accept positions in which they have supervisory responsibility for more than three people. He sees this as an attempt to impose restraint on participation in capitalist society. **Harold** observed that some of the largest credit unions in Canada began as Mennonite institutions. **Adolf** added that Mennonites were involved as well in the founding of producers' and consumers' coops. **Richard** noted that Catholics have been involved in similar movements and institutions, and referred to the Antigonish movement association with St. Francis Xavier University and to the Caisse Populaire movement in Quebec.

iv) **Pacifism.** **Elaine** offered the following commentary on Snyder's treatment of Mennonite teachings on pacifism.

Dictionary definition of PACIFISM: *1. opposition to war or violence as a means of settling disputes; refusal to bear arms on moral or religious grounds. 2. An attitude or policy on nonresistance.*

Highlighting points from the text:

1. Pacifist roots:
 - disciples of Christ suffer with Christ...do not inflict suffering on others through violence.
2. Apocalyptic Challenge:
 - the way I understand it, because they thought the end of time was very near, the (peaceful) sword for the cause of Jesus was taken up.
3. Painful lesson:
 - only to be regretted later, thus settling the question of violence for the Anabaptists; the example and words of Jesus are from hereon the infallible guideline for discipleship and so the sword was put away indefinitely. This is based on the clear scriptural command of Jesus who forbade violence, hatred, and commanded love. Since 1540 Anabaptists refused to participate in violence. The question remains: how to relate to evil and violence?
3. Nonresistance:
 - Based on Matthew 5:39: do not resist an evil-doer. And so they became “separatists”; governance was seen as being left for non-Christians so Anabaptists could live discipleship more fully and witness to God’s love. As a result a very quiet church tradition developed.

Comments/Reflections:

The taking on of pacifist perspectives is a way of emphasizing a Gospel call in the period of history that was quite violent and unpeaceful: feudal wars, crusades, inquisition, etc. Those who were pacifist prior to this time were mostly those who “escaped” to the desert, to hermitages, to religious communities (convents or monasteries)...

The teachings in this text are so crucial not just to the Church but also to the world. As we have seen in many countries in the world, especially the Middle East, violence begets violence. However I find that in order to not just avoid violence but also resolve it, there must be more effort to find alternative conflict resolutions. I know that colleges, universities, and churches are making more efforts to orient people in this direction, but so far we are barely scratching the surface. Non-violence must however pervade every aspect of our lives.

I believe that in some cases and places the history of violence and war is so deep rooted and removed from the time and source of the original cause, that many are caught in a spiral of violence that is so deeply engrained in its own victims. Violence unfortunately, is the make up of their existence.

A rebirth in the human person is necessary...like the “consistent-ethic-of-life”, non-violence is effective only when it becomes a seamless garment followed consistently in every situation, no matter what the results (A.J. Muste). And because we

are creatures, limited beings, and not God or gods, our limits can rub up against one another and be a potential for violence in some unexpected way. With the emphasis on our individual rights, the chances for violence arising are greater in order to have one's rights carried though. We must be on guard for this...yet non-violent...

The application of non-violence to life is not always evident: non-violence does not guarantee a non-violent response or reaction. Its fruits are not always seen right away. Non-violence is not necessarily a guarantee of peace, and peace involves more than non-violence. This offers a challenge to explore all the areas of what it means to bring both to all peoples and the world.

One influential Catholic, Dorothy Day with her Catholic Worker movement, established in New York around 1932, professed that "it is better to suffer oneself than to inflict suffering on others" and I believe that the Anabaptist tradition from its beginnings has tried to live this maxim.

Elaine concluded by stressing the roots of current anti-war movements in the Anabaptist tradition. But **Harold** pointed out that the real roots lie in the earliest Christian tradition. **Richard** recalled the early prohibition on Christians serving in the Roman army, and **Adolf** pointed to the stand on non-violence taken by some of the religious orders (the Franciscans in particular) and the prohibitions against the shedding of blood by ordained persons. This tradition of a higher ethic was appropriated by the early Anabaptists. He also pointed out that the Münster episode had been an attempt to implement an Old Testament model.

c) **Conclusion**

Helmut noted the ecumenical tone of the chapter, but noted that while Snyder made specific reference to learning from Pentecostals, Protestants, and other Christian traditions, he made no reference to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. He observed that neither Snyder, nor the Anabaptist tradition generally, does that a good job at "defining" ordinances, perhaps because they have usually put more emphasis on living discipleship than theology as such. He suggested that Catholics seem to approach the matter from the opposite direction, putting a lot of emphasis on the theology (with attempts at precise definition) in the expectation that life would follow.

Irma remarked on the "sharpness" of definitions in the "Catholic" paragraphs in "Called Together to be Peacemakers." **Luis** suggested that a distinction had to be made between the language of theology, where precision is to be sought, and the language of liturgy, which speaks to another time and place, and where it was appropriate to have recourse to emotional language.

Harold remarked on the way that Catholics bring history and tradition to the liturgy, which Mennonites tend not to do. **Irma** commented that it appeared that Catholics were much more willing to name tradition (as well as Scripture) as the source and justification for what they do in liturgy, while Mennonites, stressing Scriptural origins, were reluctant to talk about tradition, though in fact what they do is also much influenced by tradition. **Helmut** reminded us that the sixteenth-century reformers generally were taking a radical "restorationist" position, calling for a return to Scripture. **Harold** thought that Mennonites are realizing a growing sense of

accountability to one another between Christians of different church streams and traditions.

Helmut referred to a conference scheduled for June 2008, being organized by CMU's Institute for Theology and Church, with himself and Irma involved in the planning, which will be on the theme "Congregation, Decentralization, and the Body of Christ." It will include a panel of non-Mennonite speakers.

7. **Concluding the local dialogue process**

Luis spoke to earlier plans for some kind of "wrap up" that would involve participants from all the neighbourhood groups. Questions remained about the date and kind of get-together to plan. After considerable discussion, it was agreed to:

- a) Plan an evening event (beginning about 6 pm) on a date in mid-June. **Irma** will try to book the space at CMU for June 19, 20, or 21.
- b) **Irma** will ask Fr. Robert Polz to work with her in planning a closing liturgical event.
- c) **Helmut** and **Luis** will work together on agenda for the meeting part of the event, probably with request to each dialogue group to report on some aspect of what they had learned during the year.
- d) **Henry** and **Mike** will be asked to organize some kind of pot-luck.

8. **Next meeting.** It was agreed that our group should meet again on Wednesday, May 23, at CMU. **Irma** agreed to book the space. **Helmut** and **Luis** agreed to prepare an Agenda, which will include reports from the neighbourhood groups, planning for the June wrap-up event, and the study of a chosen document.

9. **Luis** led us in a closing prayer, which was based on the Liturgy of the Hours, and included an account of the martyrdom of St. Paul Miki and his companions (some 26 in all) who were crucified for their faith in 1597 in Nagasaki, Japan.