

Minutes

Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Meeting No. 25

Meeting held on 5 June 2008
at St. Bernadette Parish

Present: Adolf Ens, Dora Dueck, Helmut Harder, Janet Kozak, Joseph Langan, Richard Lebrun, Luis Melo, and Lynda Trenholm

Regrets: Henry Loewen, John Long, Viola Mirochnick, and Doug Enns

1. Sharing of ecumenical activities:

Lynda reported than in addition to dealing with “mixed” couples in marriage preparation activities, she and her husband will be attending the wedding of a godson who is marrying a Baptist.

Janet spoke of attending the funeral of Helmut’s daughter, and of her upcoming trip to Australia to attend World Youth Days.

Dora reported accompanying a group of junior high age Mennonite students to a mass at St. Mary’s Cathedral.

Luis distributed a long listing of ongoing ecumenical activities, and spoke to some of them.

1. Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue:

(a) Planning (still in progress) for the 10th Anniversary of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 2009:

Three Tracks:

- Clergy Study Day (three Catholic archdioceses and ELCIC rostered ministers): resource person, testimonials, prayer and fellowship
- Laity and City-Wide Evening Event: Theology Through Hymnody
- Joint Worship Service (a Sunday close to Reformation Day on October 31)

(b) Presence at the Ordination of a Lutheran woman to “Word and Sacrament” – followed by song and dance!

2. Spiritual Ecumenism: Supporting Taizé (and Iona) services at Windsor Park United Church: monthly

3. Presence at Interfaith Round Table: monthly

4. Jewish-Catholic Dialogue of Rabbis and Priests: monthly
5. Hosting Director of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism
6. Accompanying ZUF (Zone Urbain Francais) Clergy: monthly

ECUMENICAL EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

1. “Believer’s Church” International Conference: (June 11–14, 2008), Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg. Luis distributed copies of the conference program, and invited us to attend.
2. Europe:
 - Rome: June 13–22 (Pontifical Council for Christian Unity)
 - London: June 22–July 5 (Retreat at Orthodox Monastery in Essex, Holiday)
3. Bridgefolk Conference (July 24–27, 2008) Collegetown, MN, Luis distributed the program, and reported that he and Fr. Robert Polz planned to attend.
4. North American Academy of Ecumenists (September 26–28, 2008) St. Louis, Mo. (Program distributed.)
5. Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of CCCB (October 23–25) Toronto
6. Second Meeting of the Joint Working Group of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity (Vatican) and World Council of Churches (November 13–23) Geneva

Helmut reported that his activities have been somewhat curtailed since the funeral of his daughter on 16 April, but noted with gratitude the support he and his wife have been receiving from the Christian community, including the Catholic members of this dialogue group.

He then spoke about the 16th Believers Church Conference to be held at CMU on June 11–14. About 100 people are expected to attend this meeting, which Helmut helped to plan; the program includes some distinguished speakers. He noted in particular the two talks by Fernando Enns, whose recent book Helmut translated. He explained that the “Believers Church Conference” included the Church of the Brethren, an Anabaptist-related group with a 300-year history, and some 2,000 congregations in the U.S.

Helmut also reported that relating to upcoming Eucharistic Congress to be held in Quebec, a Canadian ecumenical journal is publishing a special issue on Eucharist, to which he has contributed an article on Mennonite understanding of the Lord’s Supper. The article starts with a description of his own “first communion” at age 21, following his baptism at the same age.

Helmut had his own story about an upcoming “ecumenical” marriage – that of his 42-year old son Randy to Livid Zyla, a woman who was brought up a Ukrainian Catholic. Helmut will preside at a ceremony at the Forks. The bride’s mother will present the couple with an icon and the groom’s mother will do a Scripture reading.

Helmut and Irma are planning to attend a symposium on martyrdom at Bose monastery in Italy in October, following which they may stay over for a retreat at the monastery.

Richard reported involvement in two “ecumenical” events.

In early April he attended the rather unusual wedding of his niece in Los Angeles. His niece was raised Catholic, from grade school through her undergraduate studies at the College of St. Benedict in Minnesota. The father of the groom is Jewish and his mother was raised Roman Catholic; when they married both families raised such a fuss that both stopped practicing either religion. The April wedding service, written by the bride and groom, and held in a park-like setting in northeast L.A., was presided over by the sister of the mother of the bride (a Catholic nun) and a Protestant minister (a dear friend of the groom’s family). Richard was asked to say the blessing over the meal that followed.

Richard had just returned from Vancouver, where he had attended the annual conference of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association. One of the sessions, a joint session with a number of other groups, was the book launch for the new University of Toronto Press volume *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada* (edited by Paul Bramadat and David Seljak, ISBN 978-0-8020-9598-8). Many of the contributors to the volume spoke and participated in some lively discussions. Richard noted particularly the contribution of Royden Loewen, “The Politics of Peoplehood: Ethnicity and Religion among Canada’s Mennonites,” and Mark McGowan’s “Roman Catholics (Anglophone and Allophone).” He recommended the whole volume, which also contains chapters on the Francophone Roman Catholic Church, Canadian Anglicanism and Ethnicity, Presbyterian and Reformed Christians and Ethnicity, the United Church of Canada, Lutherans in Canada, Canada’s Eastern Christians, and Evangelical Protestants in Canada, as well as opening and concluding chapters by the editors.

2. **Opening prayer.** **Luis** noted that it was the Feast of St. Boniface (673–754), bishop and martyr. He told us something of Boniface’s career, read from one of Boniface’s letters, and concluded with a prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours.
3. **Discussion of *What we Believe Together*.**

Helmut began by identifying some of the people in the photographs on cover and then explained the background of the book, the drafting and approval of a Statement of “Shared Convictions” by the Mennonite World Conference in Pasadena, CA in March 2006, and the Conference’s commission to Alfred Neufeld to produce a small book that would develop and explain the meaning of the seven “shared convictions.”

Good News. **Helmut** went on to note the highlights of the unnumbered introductory chapter

on the “Good News.” He observed how, in the section on being enabled by grace, Neufeld cites as examples, Mary, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Martin Luther, Menno Simons, and Arnold Snyder. Grace is a kind of “double work” that regenerates by forgiveness, and recreates by works. He also noted how Anabaptists have differed from Lutherans with respect to grace and works, acknowledging that perhaps the traditional Anabaptist characterization of the Lutheran position has been somewhat simplistic. He pointed particularly to the last paragraph in this section, which portrays grace as leading to both discipleship and works.

With respect to Neufeld’s section on the church as “part of the one body of Christ,” Helmut noted how the early Anabaptists had had to work out their understanding of church as an antidote to both the old established Catholic Church and the Reformed Church of Zwingli in Zurich. What was worked out was an understanding that was neither “Catholic” nor “Protestant.” He observed how in recent decades understandings were being modified by dialogue (including the present Mennonite-Catholic dialogue).

Helmut echoed Neufeld’s assertions about how Mennonites, despite differences, share central convictions of belief and practice.

Janet wondered about the meaning of the designation “GC” – which Helmut explained means “general conference,” which was the old designation for what is now Mennonite Church Canada. He suggested that “general” was a translation of the German “allgemein.” He also explained that the origins of the Mennonite Brethren go back to a split in Russia, which had been a revival movement that, perhaps influenced by Baptists, insisted on baptism by immersion. With respect to Neufeld’s background in Paraguay, Helmut noted that the split between Mennonite Brethren and other Mennonites went to that country with the earliest Mennonite settlers, but that in the relatively hostile environments in Paraguay (and in Mexico), these disparate groups have tended to work together.

Luis inquired about the membership of the Mennonite World Conference, noting the information at the head of Neufeld’s book that describes its membership as including “97 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ national churches from 53 countries” and wondered just who had “signed on” to the statement of convictions. Helmut explained that some churches that belong to the conference do not use the term “Mennonite” in their title. **Adolf** explained that the process by which the statement was worked out might be described as an “inductive” one by which members and member churches were asked to find commonalities (a kind of “polling,”) rather than a “formal” confession, and noted that this statement was “not to be enshrined.” **Helmut** described the statement as a “magnet” as opposed to a “corral.” He went on to observe that none of the new Churches of the sixteenth century (neither the magisterial Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican churches nor the more radical Anabaptists – who were simply trying to survive – devoted much time or thought to missionary activity. It was only in the 19th century that “Protestant” missionary activity began to become important. Today though, some 60% of all Christians (including all denominations) live in the “southern” hemisphere (South America, Africa, and south Asia), and are not centered on the culture of Europe. This situation helps account for the format of Neufeld’s commissioned book as a kind of “teaching document.”

Luis noted how Neufeld used “living examples” in every chapter, and noted how, on p. 15, the second criteria for church membership refers only to those “determined to follow him [Christ] in life.” Luis thought his sounded like a World Council of Churches sort of statement. Helmut suggested that this statement has to be extended, that it implies baptism, and celebration of the Lord’s Supper, as well as following Christ in practice. In fact, depending on the country, the boundaries may be (and may have to be) rather fluid. In Indonesia, for example, a largely Muslim country where Christians may not be allowed to proselytize openly, when the government demanded that all citizens identify themselves as belonging to particular religious groups, many people showed up at Mennonite missions and demanded to be recognized as “Christian.” In Ethiopia, Christians have had to resort to gathering in “house churches.”

Chapter One: We Give Glory to the Father. Joseph said that he had begun reading the chapter looking for what he might identify as “not Catholic.” He noted with approval the early reference to St. Augustine, but also noted the absence of any statement about “One God in three persons,” and, jokingly, the absence of St. Patrick’s analogy to the shamrock. He thought that the concept of the Holy Spirit is something that is difficult for Catholics – who believe readily enough that the church is guided by the Holy Spirit, etc. (even though it has been wrong often enough).

The reference to the role of the Holy Spirit as creator and restorer put Joseph in mind of Teilhard de Chardin, the great Jesuit archeologist and thinker, who accepted the Darwinian concept of evolution, who saw humankind as the apex of evolution, and who wrote about the “noosphere” in describing the spiritual and cognitive evolution of humankind as coming to circle the globe (something, of course, that has become a reality with the World Wide Web).

Joseph observed that the text (on page 23) stated that “we simply do not know the origin of evil.” He also noted, and wondered about, the statement on p. 25 about Jesus teaching his disciples “that neither tradition nor religiosity itself please God.” and thought that Catholics would phrase these points differently.

In the paragraph before the new section on p. 25, which concludes by saying that “Teaching, preparation, and theological work contribute to being faithful to Jesus in different cultures and circumstances,” Joseph thought that Catholics would also speak of sacraments and grace.

With respect to the repeated use of the term “fellowship” Joseph that Catholics would more likely speak of “communion,” – fellowship in Catholic circles being understood as something that happens at coffee after mass. Joseph also wondered about the phrase “fruitless, traditional religiosity” on p. 28.

With respect to the material on “faithfulness in witness” (pp. 30–31), the comment that “The church witnesses through prophetic announcement and denouncement,” wondered about the Mennonite record in actually denouncing violence and justice. He contrasted a vision of “saints” or “saints in the making” with a vision of “pilgrims on a journey,” and wondered

about just what the role of the church might be in bringing about the “kingdom of God.”

Overall, Joseph found the chapter a bit confusing in that the title speaks about “giving glory to the Father,” while most of the emphasis seemed to be on the church, but he was generally impressed by the views expressed in it.

Discussion. **Dora** noted the comment at the bottom of p. 30, that entire faith communities “should migrate to areas where there is not a Christian witness to become a means of hope and evangelism.” She thought that most migrations took place for other reasons. **Helmut** reported that in the 1940s and 1950s, Swiss Mennonites had moved to northern Ontario with the express purpose of giving “church witness.” **Lynda** commented that her ancestors had come from Poland to “preserve” their religious heritage. **Adolf** reported that there was in fact a body of literature that addressed the issue of “migrational evangelism.” **Richard** reflected on changing ideas about missionary work within Catholicism, with a transition from an older notion of missionaries going out to preach the word, to missionaries going to live among various peoples and giving witness by their lives. He noted that the document cited the words of St. Francis of Assisi who said “Witness always, and when, necessary, use your mouth.” **Luis** indicated that he was not surprised that there was a bias against “tradition” in the churches coming out of the Reformation. He noted that in this document there appeared to be an effort to explain faith without using theological language. Using the words “renew,” “restore,” “redemption” does not deny “salvation,” which in its Latin roots emphasizes “healing.” Luis also noted the emphasis on the prophetic role of the church, rather than any governance role. The text is Christ-centered, without much emphasis on the Father. **Helmut** noted that with respect to the Lord’s Supper, the German term “Gemeinschaft” also means “communion.”

Chapter 2: We Give Glory to the Son. **Lynda** offered the following prepared remarks on her reading of this chapter:

Let me begin by offering some general thoughts about the book. I found it an easy read, concise, and understandable, not overly theological, and scripturally based. The author offered good examples from history and current church life around the world to give weight to the seven shared convictions.

It seems to me that the “Hope of the Mennonite World conference that What We Believe Together will aid local churches, national churches, and individual members, to live more faithfully and to find deeper spiritual companionship as together we build up the global family of faith” is on the road to being realized with our Mennonite-Catholic dialogue having to chosen to study it.

Certainly, I thought the study questions were thought provoking and that they would stimulate conversation and discussion.

As a Roman Catholic reading these seven shared convictions, I could not help but think that other Christian faiths also share these same convictions for the most part.

The first three convictions “We Give Glory to the Father; We Give Glory to the Son, We Give Glory to the Spirit” echo the prayer common to Roman Catholics “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end,” as well as the Gloria which we sing on most Sundays throughout the Liturgical year. The prayer and the Gloria kept coming to mind as I read and reflected upon these chapters.

Now some thoughts on the second conviction. I thought I would approach this by looking at what each section in this chapter professes and then compare it to what Berard Marthaler has to say about our Catholic belief on the same subject matter in his book *The Creed* and also what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says as well.

Chapter 2 – We Give Glory to the Son. “Jesus shows us who God is” – I found it interesting that in the first paragraph that Mary is not mentioned by name as the “Mother” of Jesus. Certainly, for Roman Catholics, Mary holds a privileged role in salvation history. In the Apostle’s Creed we profess: “I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary... “Mary sings out in the “Magnificat”, “All ages shall call me blessed” (Lk 1:48) The New Testament witnesses that she enjoyed a pre-eminent place from the beginning and the popular development of Marian devotions in the East and the West make her words prophetic. Historically, the cult of Mary includes three elements: 1) veneration, that is, Mary receives special honour in recognition of her unique role as Mother of God; 2) imitation, because as virgin and as disciple par excellence she is the model of holiness(by her fiat, her “yes” to God’s plan) ;and 3) invocation, which acknowledges Mary’s power of intercession.”

The Messiah, the name “Jesus” which means “God helps” (Berard Marthaler in the Creed says it means “God saves. In the *Catechism*: “The name Jesus means “God saves” The title “Christ” means “Anointed One”(Messiah) The title “Son of God” signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father.” The title “Lord” indicates divine sovereignty.

The second article of the Creed in both of its common forms, the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed introduces the name of Jesus joined to a series of titles that further define his mission and ministry WE BELIEVE IN ONE LORD, JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD.

“The Son of Man” – Jesus seems to prefer this title. Marthaler suggests that it competes with the title of Messiah in the New Testament – both indicate the eschatological mission of Jesus. Jesus, “the Anointed One,” is baptized by John at the beginning of his public ministry which evokes the Old Testament image of king, priest and prophet, all three of whom were traditionally anointed as they were commissioned. In baptism. Roman Catholics are baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. In addition, they are anointed with the Oil of Sacred Chrism, which signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized who has become A Christian, that is One anointed by the Holy Spirit incorporated

into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet and king.

“The life of Jesus is our model.” Alfred Neufeld uses example of Albert Schweitzer to illustrate how he followed in the footsteps of Jesus.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is the healer. Jesus is the teacher. Jesus is the good shepherd. Jesus is our friend. And so much more: Jesus the is the light of the world. Jesus is the vine. Jesus is the bread of life.

The teaching of Jesus gives us orientation. The death of Jesus makes us free. The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope. The faithfulness of Jesus enables us to be faithful. The way of Jesus redeems the world. Whoever is united to Jesus has eternal life.

The teaching of Jesus gives us orientation

Jesus reverses values. Jesus came to fulfill the law. He taught with authority. Jesus is the beatitude of God. And when someone teaches in such a way, the hearer remembers what he/she said and more often than not is able to relate it to someone else. The examples of Mother Teresa, Bishop Oscar Romero, and Pope John XXIII come to my mind.

Jesus brings a new liturgy. I agree that among the most radical teachings of Jesus were his instructions concerning prayer and worship. Neufeld mentions his instructions to his disciples to avoid long prayers or calling attention to oneself through public worship or good deeds. As a Roman Catholic, I would agree with these statements. However, I would also add how he taught the disciples to remember him in the breaking of the bread. This breaking of the bread symbolized his death Jesus gave new meaning to the Passover ritual. In his hands it becomes the basis for a new covenant.

“Then, taking bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying; ‘This is my body to be given for you, Do this in remembrance of me.’ He did the same with the cup after eating, saying as he did so: ‘This is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.’”

Jesus proclaims the ethic of love. Certainly, I would agree with Neufeld’s explanation here. I believe that it could be expanded. To love as Jesus wants us to love is to give our life to those we love Jesus know what it is to love: he has given his life for us. “This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you.”

Jesus teaches us to prepare ourselves for the future. Additional scripture reference, (John 14:1–6): “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” Through baptism we called to continue the mission of Christ – to build the kingdom of God on earth as we journey toward heaven to live the eternal kingdom of God.

The death of Jesus makes us free

I agree with the statements in this section. Berard Marthaler in *The Creed* says “the theology of the cross pervades the New Testament but it was above all the apostle Paul who exalted the cross as the means of salvation so that it became a center of Christian devotion down through the ages.” “The cross challenges human values. It questions the world’s criteria for success. Even as one recoils at the violence and extends sympathy for the victim, deep down one none can ever be sure where he or she would have stood on that fateful Good Friday. The cross exposes the cracks in one’s self-confidence, even while holding out hope.” As I listen to the Passion of Christ on Palm and Passion Sunday and Good Friday, I find myself asking this very question. “Where would I have been standing that day?”

The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope

I thought this section is well written. Neufeld’s modern age examples of the Jewish journalist and the street boy, Victorino, exemplifies the power and timelessness of the resurrection. Yes, “new creation is possible, thanks to the resurrection.” Berard Marthaler says “the resurrection means that Jesus rose to “glory”; that is, he entered into a higher mode of life and is at the same time the source of new life for the world.”

The faithfulness of Jesus enables us to be faithful

While I agree with all that is said here about faithfulness, I feel there is more to be said about faith itself, personal and corporate faith. Berard Marthaler says this:

The Christian act of faith, moreover, is not an aria sung solo. It is made in communion with the confession of faith sung by the whole church. The “I believe” of baptism becomes the “we believe” of the Eucharistic community. The church keeps alive the memory of Christ and hands on from generation to generation the confession of faith that comes to us from the apostles. The Christian community is the “we” of faith. In proclaiming the Gospel the church invites men and women to share in faith in Christ. “first through her, then in her, and with her.

In reciting the Creed, Christians declare, individually and corporately, their faith before both God and the world.

The way of Jesus redeems the world

This section gives a good description of how Jesus redeems the world. He is the ultimate king, priest and prophet who makes us participants in these same titles.

Whoever is united to Jesus has eternal life

This section would be attested to by Roman Catholics.

Discussion. Joseph led off the discussion by recounting a homily in which the priest spoke of an interpretation of the gospel reading about Jesus multiplying the loaves and the fishes

that would have everyone sharing what little they had as the real “miracle” as mistaken. The real miracle, this priest insisted, was a “real” multiplication of few loaves and fishes to feed thousands and then have baskets of food left over. Joseph that thought these two interpretation reflected two different concepts of God. **Helmut** commented that he finds himself less and less preoccupied with “mystification” and more and more concerned with symbolic meaning. **Dora** agreed that the gospel story could teach lessons about sharing, but that she had grown up in a community where the miracle of multiplication was accepted. **Janet** suggested that in the Eastern tradition the emphasis was “conversion of the heart,” and that suggested the gospel story was a beautiful image of hearts turning to serve one another. **Luis** picked up on Lynda’s question of translating the name Jesus as “God helps,” pointing out that the Hebrew word meant “save” and that the Latin term “salus” means “to heal.” He then suggested again that this text avoids theological language to go to what the Savior does. He was fascinated by the statement (p. 42) that “The Cross of Christ functions like a *hospital*.”

Adolf observed that there is no doctrine of “atonement” spelled out in the document; in no way is salvation made something objective. Rather the emphasis is on restoration and reconciliation. **Luis** noted that there is little or no reference to the sacraments as a means of salvation. For example, on p. 45, in speaking of spiritual life, there is no reference to sacraments as a means of holiness. **Richard** observed that among Catholic theologians there is a tendency to move away from the notion of “atonement” (especially as the notion was formulated by Anselm) as in some contradiction to the concept of a God of love. One recent book [Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul’s Cultic Atonement Metaphors*, 2004] suggests that while St. Paul had used various metaphors to speak about the way Christ won our salvation, later authors tended to interpret his metaphors ontologically. **Dora** reported that she grew up with the substitutionary model in which Jesus was understood to have taken the place of sinner to appease God’s wrath, a view which can be useful. **Luis** remarked that there are certainly many different models, and **Adolf** added that the evangelists speak of Christ being “victorious” over sin and death – and suggested that each of these images reveals something about Christ.

Luis recalled in the Eastern tradition there was great stress on the notion that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and that while sin may mar his likeness in us, we remain in his image, and that Christ restores the likeness. Moving away from God makes us less free. **Janet** posed the question about why the crucifixion was necessary. **Luis** reflected on the notion of the creation being the beginning of our salvation, and **Dora** recalled the notion of Christ being the first-born of all creation. **Helmut** said he was struck by the richness of the images of Jesus compiled in our text in so short a space.

Joseph wondered if Mennonites have a more personal relationship with Jesus than many Catholic appear to have. **Helmut** noted that Mennonites put great stress on the notion of discipleship, “following after Christ.” This is a dominant notion in the Mennonite tradition. **Joseph** that for many Catholic Jesus may seem remote, which may be why they put such stress on devotion to Mary, who appears much more approachable. **Janet** pointed out that when we speak of Christ we speak more of a concept, but that when we speak of Jesus, we

are speaking of a person. **Helmut** added that from the gospels we know much more about Jesus than we do about Mary. **Luis** observed that for Catholics Jesus is “mediated” by the Church through the sacrament, but of course faith in Jesus has to come first. He suggested that we have had a culture that has allowed this to happen. **Lynda** suggested that in the past private devotions had functioned as an alternative to the Latin liturgy.

Chapter 3: We Give Glory to the Holy Spirit. **Dora** offered the following reflections on this chapter.

First, some general comments about the book. As someone else mentioned, it seemed kind of simple to me at first, and like Joseph, perhaps I missed some of the “familiar” theological words too but then I began to appreciate and was blessed by the fresh way Alfred Neufeld explained things.

As Helmut said in his introduction, Alfred was expanding on the statement of convictions. The title of my chapter is “We Give Glory to the Holy Spirit,” yet that core conviction is really about the church. He kind of turned the statements to make it fit the Spirit, but it was about the church. Of the three members of the Trinity, Jesus is the person Mennonites emphasize most. It is Jesus we follow, Jesus through whom we view the revelation of God in the Word. My impression is that Jesus is also the central focus for Catholics, but that’s an impression.

I think that the Godhead is probably not displeased with this emphasis on Jesus, for God came as Jesus to show us himself, and having fulfilled perfectly the righteousness of God and our atonement, was exalted as Lord. It is Jesus who the Spirit also makes clear and accessible, it is the Spirit who is also, in a sense, now incarnated as Jesus (though not as flesh).

Even though the chapter seemed to be as much about the church as the Spirit, it makes good sense to link the two. It is good to emphasize the Spirit’s role in the founding of the church. I felt Alfred might have placed even more emphasis on the “transfer” (and thus the importance of the Ascension) of the Spirit now poured out by Jesus. I read Acts 2:38, “God has raised this Jesus to life...Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear... God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

The statements on p. 6 are worth comment. The Holy Spirit is the dynamic presence of God (the Spirit of life) and the critical presence of God (the Spirit of truth). I found those statements helpful and powerful. If we remove the modifiers for a moment, the key word is “presence.” That’s significant. That’s what the Spirit is. The presence. The being, also the activity of God. As far as the practical implication of “critical presence of God,” I find that the Examen, a practice that I’ve learned through Catholic sources, is a good tool or habit in which we attend to this judging/loving presence of God. At its simplest: Lord, where did I please you today? Lord, where did I disappoint you today?

Janet then offered her own comments on the same chapter.

This is delightful book – easy to read, well written. I like the layout and discussion questions.

I like the way the Chapter title, *We give Glory to the Holy Spirit*, is developed in the subtitles in the chapter:

- *When the Holy Spirit came, the church was born as a community of believers*
- *Wherever the Holy Spirit works, people turn away from sin*
- *Wherever the Holy Spirit convinces, people acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord*
- *Wherever the Holy Spirit takes hold of human life, people confess their faith*
- *Whoever belongs to the church of the Holy Spirit wants to follow Christ in life*

Reading this book is giving me insight into what these churches believe, but I can't help but read it through my faith experience, my perspective as an Eastern Catholic.

I couldn't help myself from thinking while reading, that these beliefs are also true for my Church. There were a couple of places that made me think – they are talking about us Catholics. I felt there were more similarities than contradictions. For example, on p. 55, in the first paragraph. "Many churches seem to go on, thanks to their traditions, schedules, rites, calendars..." Any time I hear those trigger words, my ears perk up. I certainly agree that the church without the "Holy Spirit is nothing." Another example, on p. 57 – "we believe that the church is not basically made up of sacraments and rituals, traditions, structures or bylaws, but is living beings." I say, we believe in all that, too. I find that it is not – either or, but both and.

This Chapter highlights Holy Spirit, who He is and what we are with or with him. The Holy Spirit is the dynamic presence of God: permanent and active role in our lives, as promised by Jesus, yet the Trinity is a Mystery. The Holy Spirit is the critical presence of God: where truth and justice are, injustices are revealed.

The chapter highlights what the church is – made up of believers – those who have placed their faith unconditionally in Jesus Christ – those who have experienced the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. This involves four things: turning away from sin, submitting to the Lordship of Christ, communicating the confession of faith through Baptism, deciding to follow Christ in life. (p.57)

This chapter talks about Sin, personal renewal, putting on a new self, looking to Jesus – a new passion must fill our souls – we must confront sin with determination (p.58–59). It goes on to say...Jesus is Lord of the Kingdom of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit we become part of the church and the kingdom. On p. 61 there is a comment on the secular vs the sacred in the world – for God there is no separation – everything belongs to the lordship of Christ. The text then goes on to talk about the Kingdom of God.

Neufeld put a great emphasis on adult baptism, which is characterized in a number of ways:

- illustrates the baptism of the Holy Spirit "we do not believe that the rite of baptism in itself has saving strength." Contradicts our belief in baptism as infants vs. adults. Yours goes beyond the rite and asks for personal commitment and action.

- illustrates death and resurrection with Christ: we sing this “All who have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ.”
- illustrates the washing of all sins: “The people of Israel received special instructions about purity and cleansings so that they could stand in God’s presence.”
- illustrates being incorporated into the community of Christ’s body – having membership in the church.
- illustrates a public covenant – it is a personal and public way to demonstrate a covenant and commitment to God – to follow Christ.

A few additional point I liked. On p. 65, the Grace of God, given to us through the Holy Spirit, not only forgives our failures, but also strengthens us and makes us able to follow Christ and, without discrimination, sends us forth to be missionaries to and for each other.

On p. 65: “Living with Christ is valid not only in life but also in death. Or maybe it is more true to say that if in life we walked with Jesus, in the hour of our death He walks with us.” Our Goal as Christians is be with the Lord forever.

In the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (dating from 352 & 381), it states “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified...” For those of the Eastern Christian Churches, we do not add “...who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*,” while the Western or Roman Catholic Church includes the “Filioque.” Theological expressions of East and West differ, but the faith is the same.

Lastly as I finished ready this chapter, thinking about our similarities, I couldn’t help but think of the prayer that we begin our services with – the prayer to the Holy Spirit, which we sing:

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth
 Everywhere present and fill all things
 Treasury of blessings, Bestower of Life
 Come and dwell within us
 Cleanse us from all that defiles us
 And save our souls O Gracious Lord.

Discussion of Chapter Three: **Helmut** expressed surprise that Neufeld (pp. 62–64) missed the opportunity to link the Holy Spirit and adult baptism to the baptism of Jesus in the Jordon. He also said that he has found that more and more attention is being given to the Holy Spirit in Mennonite thinking and preaching, and said that he had recently preached on the Genesis text that He had breathed upon them. **Joseph** admitted that the question occurs to him: “Who or what is the Holy Spirit?” **Lynda** observed that we can conjure up image of the Father and the Son, but that this is difficult to do with respect to the Holy Spirit, and this is difficult for Catholics, who tend to be very “physical” in their faith. **Janet** felt that this is a “grace thing” – a mystery, something hard to articulate. Still, we believe strongly in the “gifts of the Holy Spirit.” After all, we believe in one God, the three are one.

Helmut was critical of Neufeld's use of the "illustrates" in his characterizations of adult water baptism, suggesting that the term seems "anti-sacramental," and that it does not work very well. **Dora** agreed, suggesting that a word like "symbolizes" would be better. **Luis** observed that in Catholic theology the water used in baptism **does** something. **Adolf** thought that "expresses" would be better.

Joseph wondered about the statement on p. 59, where the text speaks of the church speaking out with "prophetic denouncement" with respect to the world outside the church. He wondered if Mennonites had a tradition of speaking out against injustice. **Helmut** replied that since the 1950s there has been a greater sensitivity to issues of social justice. Anabaptists had been martyrs in the 16th century, and were more or less forced to withdraw from the world and to focus on mere survival. In North America, it was only in the 1940s that Mennonites began to organize to lobby to influence legislation. He pointed to the current Mennonite role in offering mediation services.

4. **Next meeting.** It was agreed to schedule the next meeting for Thursday, 2 October, at a Mennonite venue, to be determined.
5. **Closing prayer.** **Luis** led us in a closing provided by John Long - adapted from the Four-Week Psalter of the Liturgy of the Hours.