

Minutes

Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Meeting No. 28

Meeting held on 16 June 2009
held at the Charleswood Mennonite Church

Present: Adolf Ens, Doug Enns, Dora Dueck, Helmut Harder, Janet Kozak, Joseph Langan, Richard Lebrun, John Long, and Luis Melo.

Regrets: Henry Loewen and Lynda Trenholm

1. **Helmut** reported that he had received regrets from **Lynda Trenholm**, and **Henry Loewen**. He also reported that **Viola Mirochnick** has withdrawn from the dialogue. He then welcomed us to Charleswood Mennonite Church, which he had helped found in 1963 (at which time he lived in Charleswood). The congregation numbers about 280 members today. Helmut had invited Pastor John Brown to participate in our meeting, but he was unable to attend.
2. **Dora** led us in an **opening prayer**.
3. **Sharing of ecumenical experiences:**

Richard reported trips with his wife to Arizona to visit a daughter (and her husband) and one grandson, and a trip to North Vancouver to visit a son, his wife, and grandchildren, as well as another grandson, his wife and six great-grandchildren in Langley. He has been very busy working with the woman who organized the Maistre colloquium in Cambridge last December preparing papers delivered there for three planned volumes. Since about half of the papers were given in French, he's been busy translating as well as editing. As for ecumenical activities, Richard reported that he has been invited to participate in an academic conference in Moscow in mid-October, where he will present two papers, one on Joseph de Maistre's observations on war, and the other on the general topic of secularization. The conference is being held at the new Orthodox University in Moscow, St. Tikhon's Orthodox University, but he will also have the opportunity to meet professors and graduate students in philosophy at the Lomonosov Moscow State University. Also on his agenda, is a "pilgrimage" to St. Petersburg, where Joseph de Maistre served as the Piedmontese ambassador to the court of Tsar Alexander I from 1803 to 1817.

John reported participation in recent "clergy days" in the Archdiocese of St. Boniface on the 10th anniversary of the signing of the joint declaration on justification by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church. [**Luis** explained the background and the importance of this joint declaration, and reported that there were, in fact, two events on 30 May—a day-time event attended by the three Catholic archbishops, the bishop of the Lutheran Synod, and Catholic and Lutheran clergy, with the Anglican Bishop, Don Philips, and Helmut Harder present as guests. John (and a Lutheran partner) gave a presentation about what had occurred

ten years ago, including the recommendations made at that time, and assessed the extent to which those recommendations had been fulfilled. John also participated in a small discussion group with three priests. He was struck by two things: how earnest the priests were about the topic, and their tentativeness about accepting his basic point that there is no necessity to wait for complete theological consensus to act together. The second event was an evening “hymn sing” at a Lutheran Church. **Luis** reported that Margaret O’Gara spoke at both these events.] **John** also reported on-going conversations with one of the librarians at the University of Manitoba who had participated in the Catholics Coming Home sessions offered at St. Ignatius Parish. This person appears frustrated still by some things in the Church, but eager to talk about her experience and her reading.

Luis suggested that John deserved congratulations on his election as president of the local branch of the Conservative Party of Canada.

Adolf reported the ongoing experience of his granddaughter as a student at the Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface. She has now achieved her goal of feeling free in conversing in French. She enjoys the Collège as a “small place” after attending a very large high school. Adolf also reported on a quartet performing a hymn by a Jesuit hymnist at Lindenwood Place/Terrace (a seniors residence).

Janet reported that ecumenical activities have not been forefront in her life recently. She will be going to a summer church camp in Saskatchewan for three weeks, to a chapter meeting of her congregation for ten days, and will be a keynote speaker at Unity gatherings at the University of Saskatchewan (the fourth of its kind). She also reported that she will be superior of the congregation’s local house during the coming year. However, she hopes to continue working in her parish, where she has been involved in marriage preparation for inter-faith couples (couples from the eparchy). She also informed us about the Sheptytsky Institute Study Days to be held in Ottawa from July 2 to July 4.

Dora reported that she has been working full-time as the editor of the Mennonite Herald, and that she will be attending the upcoming Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay. She thinks this will be a very important event, especially for the Mennonites of Paraguay, which group now includes descendants of the Mennonites of European origin who came to the country as well as indigenous people who have become Mennonites. The latter group, especially, will be wondering about the significance of the gathering. Dora will be there as part of a media team, and also visiting family with her husband, who comes from Paraguay. **Helmut** explained that these Mennonite World Conferences are held every seven years, with 5,000 to 10,000 people participating. This meeting is at the same time as a General Council that will make decisions about global programs. A broad range of Anabaptist groups will be involved.

Joseph reported that his wife attended a wedding at a gated resort in Jamaica, a small country that lives on tourism. She participated in a bus tour that stopped at a local church, where she was rather surprised and taken back when the pastor immediately made a pitch for some tourist money. Joseph also reported attending the ordination of Jeff Burwell to priesthood at St. Ignatius Parish, the first time he had ever attended such a ceremony. The

church was packed with people of all ages, most of whom, like him, had never attended such an event before.

Doug reported that his oldest son had been home working as part of cooperative learning experience in accounting at Deloitte & Touche. His son took Doug along with the son's best friend to an Orthodox Ash Wednesday service (in English) at the chapel at St. Andrew's College. At one point the priest came down and joined the small congregation for a ritual of confession and forgiveness, which was exchanged around the circle. A second experience was going with international students from the school where he teaches to a B'nai B'rith retreat. The food was kosher and the councillors all Jewish. He noted that most of the international students appeared quite comfortable talking about religious values.

Doug's big news was that he (and his wife and daughter) have accepted a three-year term with the Mennonite Central Committee in Chad, where his role will be to work with a lawyer/pastor in a peace building movement with Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim participants. He explained that the country is some 53% Muslim (mostly in the north). Doug thought that his experience with our Catholic/Mennonite dialogue may have helped them win the position. They are leaving in August. His wife will be working with people with HIV/AIDS, and their daughter will be attending an international school. They are now brushing up their French and trying to learn some Arabic. He explained that there aren't many Mennonites in the country, though there are some groups that have a Swiss Mennonite background from Quebec and Switzerland. There are evangelicals and Lutherans, and, of course, from the French background, Catholics. The political situation in this former French colony is pretty unstable.

Helmut reported that much of his time since our last meeting had spent working on a chapter for a book in honour of Monsignor John Radano. Helmut was invited to write this piece by Larry Miller. The chapter covers sixty years of Mennonite involvement in ecumenical conversations, beginning with participation in 1910 with a conference involving missionary societies. When the World Council of Churches was formed in 1948, Dutch and North German Mennonites became involved; the WCC was anxious to have Mennonites collaborators. At the moment it has been reported that Fernando Enns is on a short list for the position of Executive Director of WCC. A second chapter on Mennonite involvement in ecumenical dialogue began in the 1970s with conversations with the Baptists, Reformed, and Lutherans, followed by the Catholic-Mennonite Dialogue with which Helmut was involved. In all this, Mennonites had participated without any specific guiding principles (that is, anything analogous to the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism put out in 1993 by the Vatican's Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity). What Helmut has tried to do in his chapter is set some guiding principles for Mennonites participating in ecumenical dialogue, as follows:

1. Interchurch dialogue submits to the authority of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

This means that Jesus is the primary point of reference, rather than the Anabaptist tradition.

2. Interchurch dialogue proceeds in a congregational style of fraternal discernment.

This means a fraternal style of dialogue, with "Christ among us." Without leaving

structures aside, it means women and men, young and old, laity and clergy have an equal voice.

3. Interchurch dialogue accepts the Scriptures as the primary point of reference.

This is as opposed to creeds, the Scriptures are the first resource.

4. Interchurch dialogue posits discipleship as a primary goal of Christian unity.

Here Helmut references the document that came out of international Mennonite/Catholic dialogue: "Called Together to be Peacemakers."

5. Interchurch dialogue seeks unity in the churches' understanding of baptism. Here Helmut spoke of the need for Mennonites to revisit the issue of baptism as part of their confession of faith.

6. Interchurch dialogue pursues reconciliation, peace, and justice. The emphasis here is on historical reconciliation.

7. Interchurch dialogue leads to radical catholicity. Speaking of "catholicity" with a lower-case "c" Helmut suggested we need to agree we need to live and celebrate as a global Christian body. Here Catholics are challenged.

At this point, we took a break and enjoyed the meal prepared by **Irma Harder**.

Luis distributed a list of his recent ecumenical activities, and spoke to selected items on the list:

Item 7: "Grace Works!" – the Lutheran-Catholic Study on the 10th Anniversary of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Luis emphasized the importance of this statement, the only such "church-directing" statement to date arising out of ecumenical dialogue. He reported that planning for this event had begun three years ago when he was asked by the Vatican to begin planning a Tenth Anniversary Event. He had even made a trip to the Lutheran World headquarters in Geneva for this purpose. At one time, it was thought that a pilgrimage would be the appropriate commemoration.

Item 3. Luis reported that he had been re-appointed for another 4-year term as the CCCB representative on the Anglican-Catholic Dialogue in Canada, where he has served since 1997.

Item 4. Luis reported that for reasons of time and expense he has resigned from the Board of Bridgefolk.

Item 6. Visits to Rome and London. In particular he spoke about participation on the Migrant Mass at Westminster Cathedral, which honours "illegals" and their contributions to British society; this included a very "political" march to Trafalgar Square to hear some speeches. All this is very much in the tradition of Cardinal Manning, who did so much for poor Irish immigrants to England in the later nineteenth century.

4. **Discussion of *David Toews Was Here (1870–1947)*, chaired by Luis.**

Helmut: Introductory comments, divided into two sections:

1. **David Toews and the Mennonite Pilgrimage Motif**

For much of their history, Mennonites have envisioned themselves as a pilgrim people, a people on the move, partially on account of persecution; partly as a way of understanding

their faith. At first they were driven from one region to another in Europe. Eventually they took the initiative – in search of land on which to preserve their agrarian way of life and raise their large families; in search of safe havens where they could pursue their ways free from persecution; in search of governmental protection for the privilege of their non-military stance, and even, (as in the case of the Toews family) in search of that place of refuge where they could welcome the return of Jesus (an extreme pilgrimage). In my years of childhood and youth our Mennonite congregations frequently sang pilgrim songs – e.g. “Wir pilgern nach Zion”; “Hier auf Erden bin ich ein Pilger”.

Mennonite history can be viewed as dominated by pilgrimage. Beginning in the late 16th century the Dutch and North German Mennonites moved from their place of origin to what today is Poland. From there many left in the late 18th century for the Russia of Catherine the Great. Meanwhile, Swiss and Amish Mennonites left Europe for America, beginning in the 17th century. Beginning in the 19th century, Mennonites coming to North America from Russia speak of three waves of immigration – the 1870s, 1920s, and the post WW2 group (refugees).

David Toews does not fit into these groups in his own coming to North America. He came as a 14-year old in 1884. As for his service to his people, he fits into the 1920s group, being the key person on the Canadian side to effect that immigration. Indeed, his lifetime spanned the years between the 1st and the 3rd wave.

David Toews had a background in pilgrimage. His parental family moved from the Danzig area (in today’s Poland) to Russia. He was born in their new Russian homeland a year or two after they arrived. But he only lived there for the first decade of his life. Then his family embarked on a 4-year trek from the Am Trakt colony to Turkestan; from Turkestan to Kansas (he was 14); from Kansas to Manitoba; from Manitoba to Saskatchewan. After 25 years of settled life there he gave his life energy to managing a formidable pilgrimage – the movement of 20,000 Mennonites from Russia to Canada, and helped them settle in the new land.

2. David Toews in the Context of Mennonite Church Development

From the beginning of the history of Mennonite presence in Canada, the Mennonite congregations and their conferences have straddled both sides of the border. The so-called Swiss (or Old) Mennonites settled originally in eastern USA, and began coming north at the time of the United Empire Loyalist movement in the early 19th century. Eventually these folks formed the MCOQ, a regional church of what became the “Mennonite Church” of North America. The so-called Russian Mennonites first came to Canada and the USA simultaneously in the 1870s. This set them up for inter-family and inter-church relations. Congregations in Canada eventually formalized their relationships with their US counterparts by joining either the General Conference Mennonite Church or the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. With the second wave of immigration in the 1920s, which brought Mennonites almost exclusively to Canada (rather than to the USA), these ties continued and developed further – in particular through global mission programs, Christian service initiatives, and congregational resources (curriculum, hymnbooks, etc.), theological education, but also by way of

doctrinal directives (e.g. CFMP, MB/CF). For the Mennonite Brethren Churches as well as for the General Conference Church in North America, the US and Canadian sectors have recently become more clearly drawn. In 1995, for example, the “Mennonite Church” and the “GCMC” re-formed their relationship into two primary units: Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.

David Toews was active in the early stages of this North American relationship, in the first half of the 20th century. Note how easily he crossed the border between Canada and the USA. But note as well that he contributed significantly to the formation of the church’s identity within Canada, predominantly in the West, but also among 1920s immigrants settling in Ontario.

Following these comments, **Luis** asked “What is your overall impression of the biography?”

Janet found the volume easy to read; she was very moved and much enthralled by the story of David Toews. **Dora** said she had grown up knowing about Toews. She found it very relevant to a chapter she is preparing (at the request of **Harold Janz**) on another Mennonite leader, B.B. Janz, for a book. **Joseph** also found the biography easy to read; he wondered about what audience Helmut had in mind in writing the book (to which Helmut replied that he had been aiming at an older general audience). Joseph found the book a window on the history of this part of Canada, really a history book as much as a biography. **Doug** found the book very accessible; he was impressed with the organization of the book and the amount of detail provided. Helmut allowed the story to tell itself and allowed the reader to make his/her own judgments about the man and his work. **Luis** said he did not usually read biographies, but had much enjoyed this book, which made the man come alive. He read the book on airplanes on his recent trip to Europe, and felt he had made a pilgrimage with Toews. He came away with an image of Toews as a man for whom people were much more important than such matters as economic solvency. **John** too was impressed with the man that emerges from the biography; long before the last chapter he was saying to himself “What a legacy!” He was ahead of others in seeing what needed to be done—the point of strategic leadership.

Adolf spoke from the perspective of the CMBC publications committee that had commissioned the book. They thought Helmut was the logical person to write this book; they were confident that he would produce a “church document” and not simply a personal and family story. He noted that the family (apart from David’s wife, Margarete) do not figure largely in the book. **Luis** interjected with an inquiry about David’s children. He wondered particularly about the son. He suggested that, given all his work and responsibilities, perhaps David should have been celibate. **Helmut** reported that one daughter, Louise, is still alive in Calgary, and that there are grandchildren around, but there is no great story of descendants. **Luis** wondered about the kind of reception Helmut encountered as he did his research. **Helmut** replied that this was a story that wanted to be told, that people wanted the story told, and that he had encountered no problems. **Richard** said he had taken the first question as referring to the subject of the biography rather than the volume as biography, but that he had found it a very readable book from which he came away feeling that he had really met David Toews and found him a man he

would like to have known. As for the question of the book as a biography, Richard observed that as someone who had also written a biography (of Joseph de Maistre), he was much impressed with the quality of the work. In a round up on the first question, **Janet** wondered if Toews' name is still popular among Mennonites. **John** commented on the book as a history of church development as well as being a biography of a particular individual. **Helmut** acknowledged his dual purpose in writing the book.

Luis then led the discussion to the next questions on the Agenda; participants were invited to share their impressions, insights, and questions about David Toews both as a personality and as a church leader. **Luis** led off by giving his impression that Toews appears to have been greatly affected by the experiences of his early years—the trek to Turkestan and the migration to Kansas, and then his own move to Manitoba. He wondered about easy it appeared to be for these Mennonites to be swayed by millenarianism (and connected this to Toews' role as a “prophetic” man.) He thought Catholics were perhaps less likely to be influenced by the millenarian current of thought. **John** suggested that this was only a hypothesis; he thought that there was no way to tell. He noted that David's father appears to have been reluctantly involved in the millenarian quest that took this group to Turkestan, and pointed out that he rather soon concluded that the venture was not very realistic, and so turned back to Ukraine, and then migration to North America. **Luis** thought that the fact that David remained hopeful in difficult situations still reflected this millenarian streak, and noted that David was often not overly prudent in his ventures. **Dora** saw no evidence of this influence. **Adolf** suggested that the emphasis these Mennonites put on Scripture and the fact that the leadership was not particularly well versed in theology left them susceptible to the kind of millenarian vision touted by people like Jung-Stilling. He thought as well that this experience may have led David to emphasize the importance of education. **Doug** thought that 16th-century Anabaptists had been susceptible to millenarianism. **John** related the issue to their pacifist stance and their need to find a refuge. **Doug** suggested that contradictory forces were at work in all this: a sense of pilgrimage and a looking for a great deliverance. **Richard** thought that millenarian movements tended to surface in times of great social and political turmoil, and made reference to Joachim of Flora, whose millenarian ideas would be picked up by Catholic groups at times of great turmoil. Even a well-educated Catholic like Joseph de Maistre, at the end of life deeply touched by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, picked up on Joachim's ideas about three revelations, that of Moses, that of Jesus, and a coming age of the Holy Spirit.

Coming back to David and his father, **Helmut** observed the trek to Turkestan was in part to avoid the threat of conscription, and that after the father found sanctuary in Kansas, he became a Mennonite pastor there, a post that he then held for most of life. He also noted that it was a whole village that went on the trek to Turkestan. **Adolf** pointed out that moving by horse and wagon was a more conservative move than embarking across the ocean by ship.

Luis, at this point, brought the discussion back to the issue of the style of leadership exercised by Toews. He said he was struck by the way this man of strong feelings and commitments was never “dogmatic,” and wondered what we might make of this. **Richard** began this part of the discussion by observing that there were bishops and there were bishops, some tending to act like feudal lords, and others who were strongly

pastoral. He definitely placed Toews in the second category, a strong leader who operated comfortably within the Mennonite tradition of relatively “democratic” church leadership, involving broad participation and consensus. He pointed out that the only time Toews really got in trouble within the Mennonite community is when he stuck his neck out and signed the deal with the CPR to obtain credit to bring Mennonite refugee families out of Russia. **John** pointed to Toews’ persistent commitment to education and the German language. **Janet** noted that though Toews was strong in his pacifism, in practice he tended to be tolerant, as for example when he welcomed to the Rosthern community Mennonites who had been excommunicated in Manitoba. **Joseph** wondered why Helmut would consider Toews to be a hero. Coming back to issue of signing the deal with the CPR, **Adolf** observed that this was a complicated matter. There was no protocol to follow in the matter. All of the Mennonite groups that Toews counted on to participate in the initiative to bring refugee Mennonites from Russia had relatively slow acting consultative procedures for decision making, and it would have been impossible to get a decision in time to obtain the commitment from the CPR. In this situation, Toews was a pioneer who saw what had to be done, and went ahead and did it. It was a question of yes, we have to do it. **Doug** thought that Toews had become accustomed to dealing with politics and power, and realized that the CPR needed a signature. **Luis** observed that Toews was not afraid to deal with the state, especially for humanitarian purposes; in some ways he was a “good politician” was adept at interacting with businessmen and politicians. **Adolf** noted that when Toews approached the federal government on the issue of alternative service (to military conscription), he took with him Gerhart Ens (a non-Mennonite but two-time MLA with ties to the Prime Minister). **Helmut** observed that Toews knew how to chose good associates, and **Doug** was struck by how Toews had become a friend of the CPR official, Colonel Dennis, and how he tended to be “pastoral” with all with whom he came into contact. He added that he had not known until reading this biography that William Lyon Mackenzie King had been an MP for Waterloo County in Ontario, where he had gotten to know and respect Mennonites. **Luis** observed that Toews could be dogmatic enough when he discouraged Mennonite students from attending the University of Saskatchewan, where military drill was compulsory. **Doug** pointed out that there has been something of a myth about Mennonites not participating in politics, and mentioned a recent book by James Urry, *Mennonites, Politics and Peoplehood*, which studies Mennonite involvement in politics from the 16th century onward. He thought it significant that signing the CPR deal to a certain extent controlled Toews’ life from that point on. He wondered if Toews ever regretted doing it. **Helmut** thought that Toews was surprised that matter had not been cleared up in a few years. Of course, the Great Depression of the 1930s intervened. **Doug** had the impression that it was a matter of honour for Toews, and part of a communitarian ethic of caring, a matter of trust. **Joseph** wondered how this might be tied to a “work ethic” (as it might have been with Dutch Calvinists); he contrasted such an attitude with his own Irish background. **Adolf** suggested that Mennonite thinking in this matter was not in the tradition of Calvinist Reformed theology, in which the individual could never be sure be being saved, and in which hard work and success could be seen as signs of being among the elect. There is nothing of this in Anabaptist theology. **Janet** thought that there could be a kind of work ethic associated with big families and agrarian culture. **Richard** too suspected something cultural. From the polders of Holland through similar situations in North Germany, the

Mennonite were renowned as good farmers, which is one of the reasons they had been welcomed to Russia. **Joseph** agreed that for Toews not paying down the CPR debt was a matter of breaking a promise, that would involve a loss of integrity. **Luis** agreed, seeing it as a matter of corporate identity and image. **Dora** pointed out that there were varying attitudes among different groups of Mennonites; those who had come in the 1870s were less likely to see the debt as their problem; they were not as sympathetic to the newcomers from Russia as Toews was. **Helmut** thought that Toews expected more from the 1870s group than he got. **Adolf** reported that his father was a collector for this debt, and that he did his collecting primarily from the recent immigrants. There was in fact a parallel with respect to debt. The immigrants of the 1870s had paid their own way, but then crop failures put them in a position having to obtain loans from the government (which they repaid). This debt was seen as a collective debt to be repaid. When it was repaid, the fact was reported in Parliament as something exceptional. **John** picked up on the issue of “foot dragging” as described on pp. 155–6 of Helmut’s biography, where Toews made it clear that he regarded repayment of this debt by the immigrants as a matter of trust, and indeed of sin. **Dora** noted that Toews said: “Get behind me Satan” on this occasion. **Helmut** noted how persons who him knew regarded Toews as a very significant human being, and recalled how his aunt remembered how Toews had impressed her by saying the lines that are quoted in both German and English on p. 158 of the biography: “Do your best to be faithful and upright/ Even to your very last breath: / and do not veer from God’s pathway/ Not so much as an inch.”

Luis then turned our attention to last question on the Agenda: our impressions, insights, questions about Mennonite faith and culture during the time of Toews’ life. There were questions about how the title *Ältester*, as to whether it was properly translated as “elder” or “bishop.” It was noted that at the time David Toews was elected to the position, it was the *Ältester* who was responsible for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, baptism, and ordination of a *Prediger* (preacher). Functionally, the position was more like a “bishop” than an “elder” in the Calvinist sense. **Adolf** pointed out that in the 1970s each Mennonite congregation began taking responsibility for its own liturgical functions (baptisms and celebration of the Lord’s Supper). **Doug** explained that this was part of movement towards professionalization of the clergy. **Luis** was struck by the lack of compensation for Toews for his ministerial responsibilities. He also wondered about the general age for baptism in this period, noting that at one point in the book there is mention of someone being reprimanded for baptising someone below the age of eighteen. **Doug** thought that baptism often occurred before marriage or before taking on responsibility for property. **Adolf** reported that a study has shown that over a span of fifty years the average age at baptism has declined from about 22 to about 18. Apparently, in Mennonite Brethren congregations the age tends to be lower. **Dora** said that the feeling was that 13 or 14 was too young, young people of that age lacking the requisite maturity. **Helmut** said that with baptism a person should be ready to take responsibility for decisions along with their elders, to accept the weight of mature responsibility. **Luis** had the impression that for Toews education was very important and that he had been worried about a “credibility gap” when Mennonite people did not give witness to their faith by neglecting regular attendance at church services or by not maintaining conscientious objection to military service. He wondered about the 4,500 Mennonites who reportedly had served in the military during WWII, and how this was seen. **Helmut** pointed out that

the great majority of these men were Mennonite by culture, but not necessarily by “faith” (had not been baptised). **Adolf** noted that this count is problematic. The military documents did not require identification of religious affiliation, and the count was apparently made by simply counting “Mennonite names.” However, **Helmut** recalled identifying himself as Mennonite at age 12, long before he was baptised. Some who joined the military were excommunicated, and on their return tended to join the United Church. On the other hand, a mother’s heart would not reject her son. **Dora** reported an uncle who had gone to the camps, been disappointed with the kind of people who were there, and then subsequently accepted military service as a non-combatant. Apparently Toews was flexible on the issue of alternative service. **Luis** raised the issue of refusal to take an oath. **Adolf** replied that this was not longer a problem in Canada, where an affirmation is accepted in place of an oath, and that by the 1920s alternative service in a non-combatant role was accepted by most Mennonites. **Dora** noted that B.B. Janz, accustomed to this from his Russian experience, pushed alternative service.

Luis turned the discussion to Mennonite practices of faith, of discipleship in the Mennonite tradition. **Doug** said that he was struck by the criticism that Toews had to undergo from people in the Mennonite community, for example the charge that he and other were making money on the Russian immigration program, and the whole Friesen-Braun affair. He cited Toews’ testimony on pp. 174–5, where he says “Admittedly it may have been good for me that in recent years I often served as the object of assaults and slanders.” **Doug** thought that Mennonites were notoriously bad at being critical of each other among themselves, displaying a kind of “passive aggressiveness.” Perhaps the idea is that you have to keep people humble. He amazed at the kind of stuff Toews had to take. **Helmut** at this point referred us to the long quotation on p. 143 by Jacob H. Janzen who was present at a meeting with Col. Dennis of the CPR; in it Janzen describes Toews as a humble man of great integrity, and closes with the remark that he had “always admired the confidence and the faith in God shown by our Brother Toews.” He added that he had his wife Irma read and comment on each chapter of his book, and that at times he found himself in tears for David Toews, as in the death of one of the Toews girls in a house fire. **Janet** noted that her understanding of vocation included a spirit of sacrifice, that sanctity grew out of suffering, and said she thought that humiliation had strengthened David Toews in his faith. **Joseph** wondered if he was humble. **Janet** noted how he had sought reconciliation with those with whom he had had disagreements. **Helmut** observed that when Toews believed he was in the right, he did not back down. He was strong, but he did not tell people off. **John** observed that he was forthright in disagreements. **Joseph** asked, should he be canonized? He observed two different kinds of saints: those like St. Francis, and those like St. Paul, who stood up to Peter when he thought the latter was wrong. Jesus seems to have portrayed both ways. “Doers” are not always “saintly,” and in the end Toews left quite a legacy. **Dora** wondered if he had had a good marriage. **Helmut** said he found no evidence of friction between David and Margarete. **Doug** thought it evident that it was Margarete who administered the family and paid the bills. **Adolf** reflected on Toews’s sense of calling and how it might relate to humbleness. He wondered if Toews was the only one who could do all these things, and recalled the long list of role and responsibilities that he took on—was this recognition of his talents? **John** thought the reality is that people who do this work like it, and are willing to think that they are called to it. **Helmut** thought Toews listened to the voices who said we need you,

and **Doug** observed that in the end he only bowed out because of deafness. He recalled that his friend Thiessen advised him to choose his successor, and Doug wondered if he could not have taken two or three people, trained them, and gotten them involved. **Helmut** pointed out that in the last ten years of Toews' life, others had taken over many of his old responsibilities. **Dora** wondered if he had an Achilles heel. **Doug** thought it was that he couldn't say NO. He wondered why Toews had not paid the debt to Friesen, and **Helmut** replied that he didn't have the money. With respect to money, Toews had made some wrong moves, for example getting involved in land speculation that didn't work out. With respect to the debt to Friesen, some friends offered to pay it off for him, but Friesen was stubborn and wouldn't accept the money from them. **Helmut** went on to say that he was not afraid of canonization and spoke of his work with the Bose group, which now includes a reading about Menno Simons in the their lectionary for 23 January. **Luis** commented that the first criteria for canonization was: did the person lead a virtuous life, especially in their last years; did their life demonstrate faith, hope, and charity? **John** commented on evidence of his great generosity. **Janet** thought there was lots of evidence of "miracles" in his life, for example, getting relief supplies to Russia in very difficult circumstances.

Luis then asked for any concluding remarks. For himself, he thinks of Toews as a pioneer in the faith. **Helmut** said he was gratified with our response to his book, and appreciated the challenging questions that were raised. **Janet** said she was amazed that the man was able to do so much. She also found parallels to the Ukrainian story. **Luis** wondered when the film would be made. **Joseph** thought the book should be required reading for students. **Helmut** reported that a student at Westgate Collegiate had won an essay contest writing about Toews.

5. Next meeting: **Luis** introduced a discussion of the topic for our next meeting, suggesting three books as possibilities for discussion:

1. Catherine de Hueck Doherty, *Fragments of my Life*.
2. Deborah Cowley and George Cowley, *One Woman Journey: A Portrait of Paul Vanier*.
3. Jim Lotz, *The Humble Giant; Moses Coady, Canada's Rural Revolutionary*.

After consideration, it was agreed that we should discuss the book about Pauline Vanier, which is available from Amazon.

Joseph agreed to explore the possibility of hosting the meeting at St. John Brebeuf parish.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 28 October.

6. Finding replacements for participation in our dialogue. **Helmut** observed that we need replacements for Viola and Doug. He will consult Harold Jantz about finding someone from the Mennonite Brethren community.

7. Closing prayer. **Helmut** led us in saying the Our Father together.