

## Minutes

### **Winnipeg Regional Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Meeting No. 40**

Held on Monday, 21 October 2013  
at Canadian Mennonite University

**Present:** Tom Bailey-Robertson, Paul Doerksen, Michelle Gallant, Helmut Harder, Richard Lebrun, John Long, Ron Penner, Donna Peters-Small, and Nancy Wood.

**Regrets:** Victor Kliewer, Lynda Trenholm.

1. **Welcome by Helmut.**
2. **Opening prayers – Marco Funk on *Themes of Pentecostalism and being “beloved of God.”***
3. **Sharing ecumenical and personal experiences**
  - a) **Nancy** reported she had gone to Rio for the Catholic World Youth Day, with thirty young people from Winnipeg. Her community, Chemin Neuf, has a community in Brazil. She found every color of skin, every language, in attendance, and was very impressed by the enthusiasm of the young people. Pope Francis was treated like a pop star. She thought what he said he was great (though she had to listen through radio broadcast translation). She printed up his talks on her return to Winnipeg. At Chemin Neuf here in Winnipeg they are trying to develop a residence program for young people. At the moment they have one young Mennonite living with them. She said they were looking for more young people, and asked us refer possible candidates to her..
  - b) **Ron** reported a fairly full agenda of ecumenical experiences since our last meeting. The Mennonite congregation that he has been pastoring had been sharing a facility with Trinity Lutheran Church. Under an agreement reached in late August, the facility has been gifted to this Mennonite congregation. They will share the facility with four other groups. **Ron** also reported that he and his wife had participated in a Tour to Russia, Ukraine, and Kenya. In Russia, they visited many Orthodox churches with a Canadian tour guide who knew these churches. Contrary to his expectation, it appeared to him that there is a lot of Christian faith in Russia. In Ukraine, they visited places where people on the tour had close relatives who had left in 1930s and 1940s. There is a Mennonite group there that gives micro loans. From Ukraine, they went on to Nairobi, Kenya, where their son-in-law works at an academy. They were in Nairobi when the attack on the Westgate Mall occurred. Ron reported how impressed they were in observing how this trauma was handled on the campus of this academy. The school

community on campus prayed for all those involved, including those who instigated the tragedy.

- c) **Donna** said that in her travels she often attends church of various denominations with friends, and occasionally attends masses at St. Ignatius. She also reported that she has become a lay minister in her congregation, which functions without a paid minister. Since she has retired from her teaching position, she is now free to devote time to this lay ministry; she can visit people in homes and hospitals, etc. She is also on the board of Mennonite Church Manitoba board, where business includes looking at the activities of the conference in Manitoba and Canada. They deal with such questions as: Who are we? What we doing internationally?
- d) **John** had reported at our last meeting about his lobbying the Manitoba Legislature with respect to the proposed Bill 18 (dealing with bullying). He had to report that bill had passed without change. John also informed us about the fall lecture series at St. Margaret's Anglican Church (160 Ethelbert), which will start off on October 24 with a lecture by Ephraim Radner on "Catechesis in Anglicanism: Learning for a Common Christian life." He also mentioned an earlier lecture at St. Margaret's by David Widdicombe, "Utility or Glory? Charles Darwin and the Apostle's Creed." [This lecture is available on St. Margaret's website.] John also told us that his parish has new priest, who seems to have good resonance with young people. John has taken on the role of formation director for the Franciscan fraternity in which he participates.
- e) **Helmut** said he had nothing dramatic to report. The weekend he had spent at St. John's, Collegetown, was his last significant ecumenical activity. He then referred to an article in the September issue of the *Canadian Mennonite* (a biweekly journal) by Will Brown, a staff writer who also writes occasionally for the *Winnipeg Free Press*. In this article he writes about God at work in the church and holy contradictions, in a way that Helmut thought was unfair in what was said about the Roman Catholic Church. He is thinking of responding. He also commented that perhaps Mennonite-Catholic dialogue has affected him more than he had thought. The lesson is that we must be very careful when we speak of each other. **Donna** said that she was worried that Catholic friends might see this article. **Nancy** sees this author as exaggerating a bit, for a reason. **Helmut** also referred to published reports about symposia based on *Called Together to be Peacemakers*. A recent volume from one at Notre Dame University is called *Sharing Peace: Mennonites and Catholics and in Conversation* (edited by John Radano, Gerald Schlabach, and Margaret R. Pfeil). Fernando Enns continues to write, with a recent book in German about healing of memories, *Mennonites in Dialogue*, which goes beyond discussing dialogue with Catholics to dialogues with other Christian churches. John Radano has edited another volume entitled *Lutheran & Catholic Reconciliation on Justification*, which is

sub-titled *A Chronology of the Holy See's Contributions, 1961-1999, to a New Relationship between Lutherans and Catholics and to Steps Leading to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. **John**, whose first experience in ecumenical dialogue was with Lutherans, commented that he had read Kung's Ph.D. thesis at the time, and concluded that most of this agreement on justification had been worked out four decades earlier.

- f) **Tom** told us that he had been invited to participate in a youth conference at the Trappist monastery, but he had to stay away because his daughter was born that day. Reflecting on the story of Trinity Lutheran Church, he asked us to keep St. Chad's Anglican congregation in our prayers. St. Chad's had shared joint ownership of the Assiniboia Christian Centre with the Catholic parish of Blessed John XXIII. Details to sell this facility to John XXIII have now been finalized. St. Chad's will be sharing a facility with Kirchfield Park, a United Church.
- g) **Richard** had no ecumenical activities to report, but said that his brother had passed away a week ago, and that attending prayer services, the funeral mass, and associated gatherings in their home town in North Dakota (Langdon) had made him appreciate how much the mutual support of family members (his siblings, his brother's widow (and her children by a previous marriage after the death of her first husband), his brother's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and numerous cousins and other relatives, helps the bereavement process.
- h) **Michelle** said she had no specifically ecumenical activities, but had had the opportunity to have dinner with a humanist scholar and was very much impressed with his rich take on human rights, which suggested to her how we can learn from anyone.
- i) **Marko** reported activities on two committees and an Evangelical-Anabaptist fellowship group involving five different flavours of Mennonites. This group draws on peace witnesses from other churches as well. Marco is the radio voice of a program the group sponsors, where he reads stories about peace and reconciliation. The Rhineland ministerial group in which he is involved is made up of cooperating pastors encouraging the church to serve the community. To express their care and love for teachers in the community, they are planning a lunch for them. Issues relating to sexuality. He is facilitating a community youth group, and has started a bible study on gospel of Matthew.
- j) **Paul** reported participation in a conference on the Edict of Milan in Belgrade, Serbia, where he gave a paper on human rights. The idea was critiqued from various denominational points of view, with a variety of participants – Serbian Orthodox, Belgian Catholics, etc. The theme of Church-State-authority led to ecumenical discussions. He also interacted with a local academic who has a deep interest in iconography.

#### 4. Dinner

#### 5. Continuing Discussion of the book by John L. Allen, *The Future Church: How Ten Trends are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church*

##### a) Trend Six: The Biotech Revolution

**Michelle** found Allen's analysis of biotech to be on the light side. But there were two things she wanted to pull out. Allen writes about a possible world industry in these products. She observed that a lot more is coming out in the media on these issues, informed by an understanding of the science as well as the theological implications. If bio-tech needs a group with greater respect for life (in the context of issues like assisted suicide), Catholic hospices are places with a higher respect for life. Allen also points to the connection with Catholicism and globalization, and the North-South division on these matters. But he doesn't comment on how bio-tech may benefit the rich more than the poor. Nor does he deal with divisions among Catholics on many of these topics.

**Paul** picked up on Allen's observation (p. 220) about Catholics "being comfortable with the basic contours of those debates." On such issues, he envies Catholicism, because such there is no similar agreement among Mennonites. He referenced a recent Mennonite conference on human sexuality, and wondered where Mennonites could turn for guidance on such bio-tech issues – the Spirit or the Word? For example, with respect to GMOs, within the Mennonite community, there are some who are fanatically against GMOs, but there are other Mennonites involved in big business agriculture who are enthusiastic about the possibilities of GMOs, with both parties in the same congregations. On end of life issues, Mennonites have done some good work with respect to housing for the aged, nursing homes, palliative care, spiritual guidance and help in end of life issues. There are the beginning of a theology dealing with such issues. With respect to Allen's prediction that within Catholicism there will be a revival of natural theology, this will not happen among Anabaptists, who have no tradition of natural law. The Anabaptist approach is: God says, not natural law says. Paul said he was fascinated by Allen's short treatment of the theology of suffering. Mennonites have always had a theology of suffering, but perhaps it needs to be reconsidered. This has been done by Mennonite novelists, but not yet by theologians. Paul picked up on Allen's suggestion of a role for the Church as mediator with respect to biotech issues, for two reasons: it is broad enough with people from many constituencies; and it can be seen as striving for a middle ground. It is a place to work out ethical guides in these areas. Here Paul mentioned the upcoming J.J. Thiessen lectures (Oct. 22-23) by P. Travis Kroeker from McMaster University—on "Mennonites and Mammon: Economics of Desire in a Post-Christian World." Kroeker will look at economies of desire and how they shape us, and how a messianic consciousness can be a source for an appropriate response.

**Discussion: John** wondered if Allen is correct in saying that Catholics are comfortable with the basic contours of the debate on biotech issues. He thought

this might be true with respect to abortion, but not with respect to homosexuality. **Paul** suggested that the Catholic way of pursuing the issue has been consistent, whether or not people agree on conclusions. **John** responded that many Catholics, find Aquinas bizarre on the issue of homosexuality. **Michelle** didn't think most Catholics know much about theological issues, that you rarely hear well-informed debates on such issues. **Paul** suggested that Catholics pick up some of this by a kind of osmosis. **John** observed that abortion was talked about, but not that this was not the case with homosexuality. **Marco** observed that the **Catholic Catechism** contains some pretty clear statements on homosexuality, while Mennonites lack such statements. **Helmut** disagreed on this point, and said he knew of some five or six volumes by Mennonites on homosexuality.

## **b) Trend Seven: Globalization**

**Tom** – suggested that “globalization” is the mother of all mega-trends. It's tough to drink from a fire-house. He didn't think Allen went to its roots in colonialism and neglected the role of the church in its development. Catholicism is the oldest global institution, and its role in colonialism must be acknowledged. In many cases, Allen tries to be too neutral, too balanced. The two sides don't always balance out. He lists the principles of Catholic social thought, etc., but the living out of these principles in practice is quite another story. Competing principles are juxtaposed—local vs universal, despite subsidiarity. Some Catholics are in the anti-globalization camp, protesting the merciless capitalism involved in globalization. They are opposed by free-market Catholics who think these protesters are short-sighted. **Tom** found himself a little disappointed with Allen's treatment of the issue. He wondered, for example, if Michael Novak is representative of a large number of Catholics? Beyond the talk about near-certain consequences, he sees an emerging sense of horizontal Catholicism, which is something at the grass-roots level as opposed to the rigid structure of the hierarchy. He sees people taking ownership of their faith as opposed to leaving it to the clergy.

**Discussion:** **Ron** said his impression of Allen's chapter was more positive than Tom's. He admires Allen for all the issues that he raises. He suggested that Mennonites lack the tools for assessing something like globalization. He thought that Allen's listing of the six fronts in globalization (p. 269ff) quite useful, though he didn't see how the Internet was included.

## **c) Trend Eight: Ecology**

**Nancy** found this an interesting topic. She hadn't known that the Catholic Church had so much to say about the issue of the environment. She noted John Paul II's call to ecological conversion and Benedict's remark about listening to the earth. It appears that Francis is continuing the same call; in Brazil he spoke about the Amazon. Thus encouraged, bishops in US and Canada have issued major documents on church teaching on the environment. The teaching is based

on the dignity of the human person, on our connection with creation, and the idea of the common good. It's a question of stewardship vs. domination. The world is entrusted to us. Calls for setting policies and international cooperation area all there in official teaching, which needs to be disseminated to people, who need to be challenged. However, she discovered nothing on our archdiocesan website about this issue. **Richard** reported on the activity of the environment committee at St. Ignatius Parish. **John** spoke of ecological concerns attached to spirituality and manifestos about the environment, about treading lightly, etc. He sees these concerns in Franciscan publications. **Michelle** observed that she doesn't see a lot of Catholics willing to confront the economic system. She finds it intriguing that we talk about stewardship, but we don't hear real discussions about confronting economic issues. There doesn't appear to be much willingness in Catholic communities to talk about the effects of economic systems or the condition of labour. However, she is impressed with Pope Francis getting rid of pageantry, living a more simple life in the Vatican. **Donna** saw a challenge in all of this: one can have strong opinions, but if we talk about how we live, or how we deal with money, it is much more difficult. We can bracket issues.

#### **d) Trend Nine: Multipolarism**

**Richard** began by remarking how the new situation of multipolarism can affect us personally. Since visiting Shanghai as a visiting prof a few years ago he has been urging his grandchildren and great-grandchildren to study Mandarin. The election of an Argentinian, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, to the papacy has led him to spend a lot of time on the Internet seeking understanding of what a "third-world" pope might mean for Catholicism. Richard now tries harder to keep up with "world news" by watching BBC World News at breakfast.

As an historian, he appreciated Allen's point about the significance of "multipolarism." Unlike the classical European "balance of power" in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, current multipolarism is truly a global phenomenon, and something distinct from globalization. Allen's chapter does a respectable job relating the basic interests and tensions of the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) to the future of the Catholic Church.

He thought Allen's description of China nicely summarizes what most of us already know about what is happening there as well as the traditionalist and cautious stance of the Chinese Catholic community. However, he pointed out that Allen neglects to mention the growing neo-Confucianism movement in the country that argues that this ancient Chinese philosophy is more appropriate than Christianity (seen as a Western import) as a replacement for failed Marxist morality.

With respect to India, Richard noted that India, with thirteen Jesuit "provinces" (vs. two in Canada), now has more Jesuits than the U.S. At St. Ignatius Parish and St. Paul's College we are quite aware of Catholicism in India because a Jesuit priest originally from St. Ignatius spent most of his career as a missionary there, and because we often have Jesuits from India as guests at the

parish and at the college. He also noted that our author, John Allen, has just published a new book, *The Global War on Christians: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution*. From a sample chapter posted to the *National Catholic Reporter*, it's clear that he regards aggressive Hindu nationalist persecution of Catholics in northwest India as a prime example of such persecution.

In his chapter on Brazil, in discussing challenges facing Catholicism in the country with the largest Catholic population of any country in the world, Allen neglects to mention the continuing presence of various African-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé. From his own experience at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, Richard found educated Brazilian Catholics pretty "casual" about their faith, for example, with respect to Sunday mass.

With respect to the Church in Asia generally, Richard thought it strange that Allen did not give a high recommendation to the book by his *National Catholic Reporter* colleague, Tom C. Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church* (2004), which offers a detailed and very sympathetic treatment of Asian Catholicism.

**Donna** said she found Allen's chapter on multipolarism fascinating. He demonstrates clearly that the whole western way of viewing the world is becoming less important. She noted Allen's prediction of two certain consequences: interreligious dialogue – with Muslims, Hindus, and others, and the continuing importance of ecumenism. She noted Allen's point that we are seen as Christians period, without distinctions between Catholics and other Christians. The key question is how do we live together for everyone's good? We have to distinguish what is non-negotiable and yet be courageous in dialogue. With reference to ecumenism, she found the discussion of the Orthodox fascinating. She recalled an incident in Jerusalem when an Orthodox priest was speaking to a group of Mennonites. He seemed clear he regarded Mennonites as two times removed from the "true church."

#### **e) Trend Ten: Pentecostalism**

Before **Marco** began his remarks, **Donna** wondered about Allen's use of the term "Pentecostal." **Marco** said he enjoyed this material, pointing out that Mennonites have experienced interactions with both Pentecostals and evangelicals. They have faced these issues in different missionary situations. He suggested global Mennonites have more connections with Pentecostals than Mennonites in North America. The major distinction between evangelicals and Pentecostals is that the latter stress the ongoing revelation of God in our lives. North American Mennonites put more emphasis on the role of the community as opposed to the individual. Sanctification, saving faith, must be manifested in daily living, rather than in things like speaking in tongues or emotional religious services. He cited Arnold Snyder on the role of the spirit in Mennonite tradition, which can be contrasted to the "just Jesus" approach that is more characteristic of evangelicals. He also noted the Pentecostal tendency to preach a prosperity

gospel. Mennonites would not reject explicit prosperity theology but may tend to practice an implicit prosperity theology. The Mennonites have been good at creating wealth; they have been the capitalists of the Anabaptist tradition. As well, North American Mennonites are less interested in the miraculous. Anabaptists are ready to use modern medicine vs. casting out the demons. Marco also noted a kind of ecstasy deficit among Mennonites. Laughter and joy at Pentecostal services are different than the Mennonite experience. However, he suggested that Mennonites share some aspects of Pentecostals with respect to a congregational ecclesiology. There is a lot of this in Winnipeg, with a considerable amount of “church hopping.” We go where we like it best. On the other hand, there is a sense of community and hierarchy; Mennonites spend time creating creeds.

**Discussion.** **John** returned to Donna’s question—what are the fundamental differences between Pentecostals and evangelicals? Pentecostals are all evangelical. **Ron** observed that many evangelicals disprove of charismatics. What about Catholic Pentecostals? **Marco** noted that there are Catholic charismatics. **John** observed that these are in some ways Pentecostal, with such things as speaking in tongues. Pentecostalism is the denomination; being charismatic is an impulse in various churches—with such phenomena as healing, speaking in tongues, and miracles. **Nancy** pointed out that her community is charismatic, especially in its origins. She noted a recent conference on baptism by the spirit, which listened to a tape by a Pentecostal leader, a person who is pushing Pentecostal-Catholic dialogue. He speaks about a coming unification of the Christian Church because of the Holy Spirit. **Helmut** reported the presence of a Pentecostal from Poland at a Bose Monastery conference on the Holy Spirit. This person approached the issue from a theological rather than an experiential perspective.

#### **f) Trends that Aren’t**

**Helmut** found this chapter something like a list of apples and oranges. He spoke particularly to the issue of women in the Church, and Allen’s flat statement that there is no serious reason to believe that in the period of time considered in his book that the Church will ordain women. **Helmut** observed that for Mennonites, the ordination was a sea change that just happened quite quickly. In the church in which he grew up it was unthinkable. But now there are lots of Mennonite congregations that have women pastors. Old pastors would be turning in their graves. He cited one bachelor farmer who refuses to attend services in his old congregation because it now has a woman pastor. On the other hand, despite people who complain about the Catholic Church being against women, **Helmut** said he keeps meeting Catholic women who are in leadership roles, despite not being members of the clergy. Allen might be right in his prediction. Ordination would require a significant move by the hierarchy. **Tom** observed that Pope Francis may possibly have locked the door. (But doors can be unlocked.) The Vatican won’t discuss the issue, despite a lack of a good theological basis for its position.



## **g) Catholicism in the Twenty-First Century**

**John** found this a packed chapter. He said he was still thinking about a lot of things discussed therein. Allen says Catholicism in this century will be global, evangelical, Pentecostal, activist, and biblical. Then he says it will be dominated by the global south, which seems like a strange kind of globalism. He also wondered about Allen's suggestion that it will be morally conservative, and concerned with pluralism not secularism. In effect, **John** was sceptical about some of Allen's predictions. He didn't think Pope Francis echoes some of these predictions. Perhaps he wants to turn some of this around. He found some of the new pope's remarks about homosexuals astounding; this doesn't sound like doctrinal retrenchment. **Nancy** referred to her community, which teaches its members to love the Church. She thought Allen's postscript encouraged people to love the church and to accept people who don't always agree. She said she was inspired by this. **Ron** told us he enjoyed the discussion of Allen's book.

**Helmut** remarked that Catholicism has a great instrument in the pope; Mennonites don't have anything like that. The new pope gives fresh courage.

**Helmut** concluded with the judgment that Allen's book had stimulated a good round of discussion.

**6. What do we do next?** Ron wondered if there was anything similar to Allen's book on the Mennonite side? **Marco** mentioned *The Naked Anabaptist* by Stuart Murray, but **Helmut** observed that the group had already discussed Murray's book. **Nancy** said she would like a more general topic, with more time for discussion. **John** said that our experience was that it was most productive to have something to discuss, with prepared contributions by participants. **Marco** wondered about tasking one of us to do the research and to suggest reading. **John** thought this sounded like a seminar strategy with only one person presenting. **Helmut** said we've shied away from that approach. He recalled that in our early years, some of our better sessions were on topics like communion; with participants sharing from their tradition and experience. This approach engaged everyone. Maybe it's time to revisit some of these issues. **John** thought that communion might be an interesting choice. In the end, it was left to **Helmut** and **John** to pick a topic and devise an agenda.

**7. Next meeting?** After some discussion it was agreed that late January seems best, and Monday, 20 January, was chosen. **Tom** thought that the dialogue could be hosted at St. John Brebeuf, but he will check on availability of space.

**8. Hand-outs:** **John** indicated that he had copies of today's *Globe and Mail* editorial as well as a commentary by Arthur Schaefer on the Supreme Court of Canada decision on the Rasouli decision (which said that physicians did not have unilateral decision-making power in withdrawing life support). He also made available a Great Courses Library list of courses on the Bible and church history.

**9. Concluding scripture passage.** By way of conclusion, **Helmut** read to us Ephesians 3:1-12, suggesting that this passage seemed particularly appropriate for us after our discussions this evening.