

ECUMENISM

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Promoting dialogue and unity



***The Week of Prayer
for Christian Unity:
“Has Christ been divided?”***

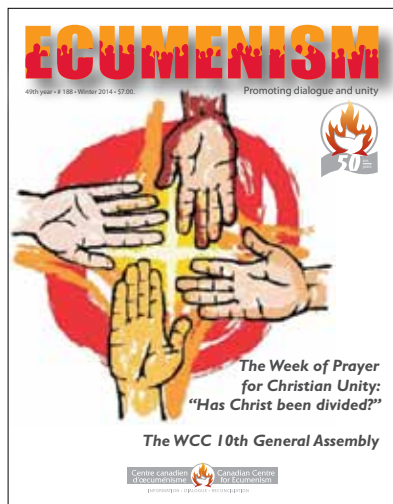
The WCC 10th General Assembly

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Editorial

New Year's Resolutions and Lasting Commitments

David Fines I know that it's just a coincidence. January could be called "the month of ecumenism" because the churches together celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and also because, in this connection, many churches of different denominations organize ecumenical services. The coincidence I'd like to point out is that the month of ecumenism is the same month in which we make our New Year's resolutions.

At the beginning of each New Year, many of us like to make some resolutions: lose weight, get more exercise, eat better, stop smoking (for good), manage our money better, eat out less, support a good cause, go see our parents more often, spend more time at home with the kids, take a real vacation with the family... Each of us could add to this list.

We know that January is the month that the fitness centres, and Weight watchers programs, do their biggest business. But in February, everything returns to normal: the regular clientele, the people who usually work out, will continue to come, but the New Year's athletes, the ones who are fuelled by a momentary enthusiasm, quickly lose heart and stop going.

It's interesting to note the parallel with ecumenical involvement. In January, we make a lot of promises and resolutions: after the intensity and high emotions of the Week of Prayer, we swear by all that is holy that we will see each other again soon, we'll extend mutual invitations, we'll visit each other, we'll get to know each other better, we'll shake off our indifference and this will be the year that we really find out about our neighbours. But when February rolls around, many of these resolutions have been forgotten; we return to everyday life in which ecumenism is less of a priority compared to more urgent and important problems.

I've heard priests and pastors refer to their flock as "Sunday Christians", people who are in regular attendance at church on Sunday morning, but are not involved in the life of the church the rest of the week or give witness to the gospel at other times.

Are we the ecumenical equivalent of "Sunday Christians"? Are our ecumenical intentions like New Year's resolutions? Is it only in January that we think about putting ecumenism into practice, building bridges and joining together in prayer and action? What happens to all our resolutions? Are there occasional athletes as well as genuine ones even in the ecumenical movement?

Being committed to ecumenism is not something that happens only once a year; it can't be done on a part-time basis. It cannot survive if it is rooted in a passing emotion, like our New Year's resolutions. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is naturally a high point of the year, certainly the most exciting and enriching time in our ecumenical commitment. What a happy coincidence that it takes place at the beginning of the year, thereby giving us the impetus to continue on for the other 11 months! However, we must remind ourselves that a commitment to ecumenism is for the long term, constant, solid, a commitment of our entire being, all the time, taking advantage of every opportunity to be enriched by our neighbour's faith and to share our own. To use a modern meaningful expression that is very meaningful: a commitment to ecumenism must be a "long-lasting commitment."

For the welfare of all the churches, for the adornment of the Earth and for the glory of God alone.



News from the Centre

Visit of Father Beaubien

Monday, October 28th Father Irénée Beaubien, S.J. the founder of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, visited the centre. It was a great joy for all the staff to have him with us here. We were honored by his presence.



Father Irénée Beaubien surrounded by Norman Lévesque (responsible for the Green Church program), Adriana Bara (General Director), Bernice Baranowski (librarian), Françoise Martel (archivist) and Paul Paradis (President of the board of Directors).

The Centre was there

Adriana Bara, participated in the meeting of the Commission on Faith and Witness of the The Canadian Council of Churches, held at Villa St. Martin, Pierrefonds, on October 22. She spoke about the Center and our activities and the challenges we face.

The Centre worked with the pastoral team of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, Montréal, Qc, to organize presentations of various religions in French or in Spanish on Tuesday evenings in November and the beginning of December 2013. Adèle Brodeur, former associate director of the Centre spoke on sects and new religious movements. There were also conferences on Judaism, on Protestantism, on Orthodox Christianity, and on Islam.

And in the medias...

On October 21st Adriana Bara and Norman Lévesque met André Raymond from Radio-Canada, director of the program Le Jour du Seigneur, and three directors and producers from France 2 television in order to coordinate the broadcast of the Evening of Christian Union to be held at Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal, on January 19th 2014, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

On October 23rd Véronick Beaulieu, journalist and film maker from the France 2 television network, came to the Centre with her film crew to interview Adriana Bara and Norman Lévesque as part of a documentary on Migration des chrétiens au Québec. The documentary will be broadcast both on Radio-Canada and France 2.

Jean-Philippe Trottier is the enthusiastic host of "En dialogue",



Monday evenings at 7 p.m. on Radio Ville-Marie. This show, in French, covers ecumenical and interfaith topics and presents personal accounts of dialogue and bridge-building between faith communities. It has 506,000 listeners every week, making it one of Radio Ville-Marie's most popular programs. Tune in to Radio Ville-Marie at 91.3 FM in the Montreal area, 100.3 FM in Sherbrooke, 89.9 FM in Trois-Rivières, 89.3 FM in Victoriaville, 104.1 FM in Rimouski and 1350 AM in the Gatineau area.

Read the Good News!

In the editorial of the Spring 2013 edition of Ecumenism magazine, David Fines lists the French Presbyterian magazine, "La Vie chrétienne", as no longer being published. But, after not publishing for a while, "La Vie Chrétienne" is now being published again. We are sorry for the confusion. To subscribe or for more information, please call Richard Bonetto at (514)722-3872 or write to: richardbonetto@videotron.ca

Église verte Green Church

Enviromennonites?

Green Church Committee
Église évangélique de Saint-Eustache

In this article, we intend to answer two main questions. First: Why would we, as an evangelical Christian church, want to join the Green Church Program? And second: What are the theological and pastoral considerations involved? We will then close with a summary of the implications of certification and a review of some of the measures we have already taken.

Why join the Green Church Program?

Our immediate answer is:

- Out of a concern for relevance and social credibility, as people are currently very much aware of environmental concerns (e.g., in keeping up with the schools).
- To reintroduce an element that has been neglected in our confession of faith (not something new theologically) concerning creation: *Article 3: We believe that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and they were very good. All of creation expresses God's sovereign will and design but remains distinct from the Creator. The universe belongs to God, who takes care and delight in sustaining it.*
- To promote overall Christian stewardship that includes God's mandate for creation:
- *Article 15: We believe the universe and everything in it belong to God the Creator. God has entrusted the care of the earth to all people, who are responsible for managing its resources. Good stewardship uses the earth's abundance to meet human need, but resists the unjust exploitation of the earth and its peoples. All God's gifts are to be received with thanksgiving and used responsibly.*

Responsible living

To confess Jesus as Lord transforms values. Jesus warns that we cannot serve both God and wealth. Preoccupation with money and possessions, self-indulgent living, and eagerness to accumulate wealth for personal advantage are not in keeping with the teachings of Scripture.

Generous giving

The Bible teaches cheerful, sacrificial, and proportional giving through the church in grateful response to God's goodness.

Christians do not claim any of their possessions as their own, but manage all their resources, including money, time, abilities, and influence, in generous ways that give glory to God. They do not despise the poor but practice mutual aid within the church and share what they have with others in need. God's people seek to embrace a lifestyle of simplicity and contentment.

- Because Creation declares God's wisdom and power, calling all to worship him.
- Because the Green Church Program is an appropriate vehicle for promoting our values with regard to Creation.
- To stimulate other churches to reflect on this question and encourage their participation in the program (by setting an example).



What are the theological considerations involved? In other words, should the church go green?

Our answer is yes, absolutely. The Green Church Program is a good fit with our mission of proclamation and compassion because it is an approach that focuses on:

- The implications of the Gospel: The Gospel message is not being changed, but one of its implications is being highlighted. Like a beautiful daisy, the heart of the message remains reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, but the petals represent the social, practical and ethical implications of Christian life.
- The Christian difference: We are not saying what people elsewhere are saying – our discourse comes out of a Christian framework.
- Christian stewardship of Creation: Because stewardship does not apply only to our time or our treasure.
- A comprehensive view of discipleship: The impact our faith has on our lives as a couple, a family, our finances, work, sexuality, money, etc.

Furthermore, to move forward with the Green Church Program, we recommend an approach aimed at being:

- Non-extremist: we are aware of the reality and complexity of the issues, but we want to take realistic action.
- Non-interfering: no environmental police or surveillance of private life; instead, we advocate a collective approach.
- Balanced: Christian environmentalism does not monopolize everything the church says and practises, it is only one aspect of the life of the church.

Implication of certification

For us, certification has a symbolic value: it is indicative of a church's theological and practical orientation. It is not so much a destination as a trajectory to follow. It reflects an intention, namely wanting to incorporate an ecological dimension into our faith.

Concrete actions taken

The church is already regularly carrying out concrete actions related to the environment, such as the Sunday of Earth Day, intercessory prayer for the world, sermons related to creation, our summer programs for children that focus on nature (Natur-à-pik, Eau là-là, Tutti frutti), our occasional



Evangelical Church of Saint-Eustache

support for environmental initiatives (petitions), having electric heating regulated with a thermostat, the quality of our exterior maintenance, our purchase of fair trade coffee, paper cups and reusable dishes, our use of recycling bins (inside and outside) and our involvement in setting up a community garden on the church grounds for the past three years (the garden is open to the entire community and is primarily intended for community organizations and underprivileged families. It encourages people to eat fresh, locally-grown food and to adopt good living habits).

In conclusion, becoming a Green Church makes sense!

Green Church Committee

Église évangélique de Saint-Eustache

Theme : *The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 2014: The Making-of

Donald Bolen The author is the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

It was a privilege to play a new role in the preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU), 2014. I had a long acquaintance with the preparation of WPCU texts, having worked at the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity between 2001 and 2008. During that period, I was part of the international team that coordinated the preparation of materials for the WPCU, co-chairing that process from 2004 to 2008. Three years after returning home to Saskatchewan, a phone call from the Pontifical Council where I had worked asked about the possibility of the WPCU being prepared in Canada, and I was delighted.

The WPCU is a venerable tradition, with a variety of historical antecedents in the 19th century, when, in the words of Cardinal Walter Kasper, an ecumenical awareness began to emerge “more or less independently in different circles and church traditions across confessional and national boundaries”, and “cannot be understood in any other way than as an impulse and work of the Holy Spirit” (Kasper 2009, p.29). Its specific origins can be traced back to 1908, when Episcopalians Father Paul Wattson (1863-1940) and Mother Lurana White, co-founders of the Franciscan “Society of the Atonement” in New York state, began an Octave of Christian Unity (Rouse 1953, p.348).

Through its history, the WPCU has evolved in its approach, method, and vision of unity. The most significant transition came in the 1930s, initiated by a Catholic priest from the Archdiocese of Lyons in France, Paul Couturier (1881-1953). Couturier changed the name from “Octave for the Unity of the Church” to “Universal Week of Prayer for the Unity of Christians”, and refocused the WPCU on Christ's prayer for unity, praying to the Lord for “*the unity of Christians, such as Thou wilt and by the means that Thou wilt*” (“*l'unité que Tu veux par les moyens que Tu voudras*”), alternatively expressed as the “unity that Christ wills, as he wills and when he wills”. (Curtis 1964, pp.64-65; Report 1966, p.253; Puglisi 2009, pp.51 and 54).

The Foundations

The foundations of the WPCU lay in St. John's Gospel, where it relates that the night before Jesus died, he prayed to the Father for his present and future disciples, “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they



also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21). Prayer for unity is a joining with Christ's prayer, praying for the unity he wills. The WPCU is celebrated with the conviction that such prayer is foundational to the reconciliation willed by God and at the heart of Christ's mission.

The current methodology for the preparation of WPCU texts evolved soon after the completion of the Second Vatican Council from a 1966 consultation on the future of the WPCU between representatives of the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church. The Report of that consultation called for “a central working group, representing various linguistic and geographical areas on a collegial basis, [to] be formed to draw up the basic material year by year. This group should be sponsored by the World Council of Churches through its Faith and Order Commission and by the Roman Catholic Church through its Secretariat for Christian Unity” (Report 1966, p.260). The Report outlined the components to be included in the WPCU material, and called for the internationally prepared texts to be further adapted ecumenically at the regional level to ensure that they can be meaningfully used in each local context.

In 1975, the F&O Commission and the Vatican's office for Christian unity began the practice – still followed today – whereby in alternate years each invited a local ecumenical “source group” from a particular country or region to prepare a first draft of the WPCU materials. So it was that late in 2011, as the Pontifical Council began planning for the WPCU 2014, the idea emerged of asking that Canada form a source group to prepare materials. Only once previously, in 1989, had Canada been approached to prepare WPCU materials, on that occasion working through the Canadian Council of Churches.

The Request

The Pontifical Council's request was to draw together an ecumenical group of Canadians, making sure that we include French Canadians in the preparation of materials. They quickly accepted the proposal that work on the WPCU texts be coordinated by the two ecumenical centres in Canada, the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism in Montreal and the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism in Saskatoon. The two ecumenical centres readily agreed, and we sought other representatives from different parts of the country and different Christian churches, so that many voices would be at the table.

Directions soon arrived from the Pontifical Council asking the Canadian source group to propose a biblical passage that could serve as the unifying subject for the Week of Prayer, and to select a phrase from the passage that would serve as the principal theme and title. We quickly settled on the theme “Has Christ been divided?”, working with the larger text of I Cor. 1:1-17. We were then asked to draft a series of materials around the chosen theme: a theological-pastoral introduction linking the biblical theme with the subject of Christian unity; an ecumenical worship service (liturgy of the Word) in which traditional liturgical elements from Canada were invited; a development of the theme through the eight days of the WPCU octave by selecting four biblical texts – Old Testament, psalm, epistle, gospel – for each day, accompanied by a brief meditation or reflection points and a prayer. Finally, we were asked to prepare a text on the ecumenical situation in Canada, and to add supplementary prayers and liturgical resources from the different traditions present in our nation.

Other articles in this issue narrate different aspects of our work together. Suffice it to say that it was an enriching experience, which culminated in Sept. 2012 with a 5-day meeting of representatives from our Canadian source committee with the international working group summoned together by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Commission of the World

Council of Churches. The international group's responsibility is to prayerfully and studiously work their way through the texts prepared by the source group, assessing the materials for their liturgical and theological suitability for international usage, and revising the materials as deemed necessary. We were grateful that relatively few changes were requested by the international working group.

A few months later, in early 2013, the WPCU materials for 2014 were sent out to all of the World Council of Churches' member churches and to Catholic episcopal conferences around the world. The texts were subsequently posted on the respective websites of the World Council of Churches and the Vatican. Churches in each country or region were then invited to engage – once again, ecumenically – in an adaptation of the material, making it appropriate to their particular context, needs and liturgical traditions of the locale. In Canada, we got a year off on that task.

From the inception of the Octave for Unity to the present way of celebrating the WPCU, prayer for unity has helped to move churches out of isolation and towards communion, from praying apart to praying together for unity, from polemics and conflict towards a standing together before God as brothers and sisters in Christ. It has been a source of hope, encouragement and learning, which has given common witness to the Gospel, and has shown a world prone to violence a peaceful way of seeking reconciliation and addressing differences.

May this year's gatherings to pray for unity, using Canadian-prepared materials throughout the world, bring forth new steps in the reconciliation Christ desires, drawing us more deeply into relationship with him and with one another.

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Has Christ Been Divided?

Michel Belzile

Rev. Dr. Michel R. Belzile serves as Lead Pastor of Central Baptist Church in Oakville, Ontario, an intentionally intercultural church which ministers in both English and Portuguese. Michel also sits on the board of the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec (CBOQ) as First Vice President. From 2006 to 2012, Michel was the CBOQ Representative on the Canadian Council of Churches' Writing Team for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In 2012, Michel served as the Canadian Council of Churches' Representative on the Canadian writing team for the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

"Has Christ been divided?" (*1 Corinthians 1:13a*) It sounds like a rather odd theme for the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and yet it was the theme that served to unite a richly diverse team of Christians from across Canada for over a year beginning in January 2012.

Canada, having been selected to author the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, brought together various Canadian ecumenical bodies in January 2012 to embark upon a year-long journey giving expression to our shared hope for Christian unity from a distinctively Canadian perspective. This ecumenical writing team consisted of bilingual representatives from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, and the Canadian Council of Churches. It was this eclectic gathering of over a dozen men and women, Roman Catholics and Protestants, academics and clergy from across Canada that crafted and gave voice to our prayers for Christian unity.

My involvement on this team was as the Canadian Council of Churches' (CCC) bilingual representative. From 2006 to 2012 I had served as the Canadian Baptist (CBOQ) representative on the CCC writing team for the annual Week of Prayer. Each year, working alongside creative representatives of other Christian denominations, we were tasked with editing, adapting, translating, publishing and distributing the liturgies and meditations crafted by gifted Christians from other countries. Together we were encouraged to venture beyond our own denominational and cultural expectations for worship and liturgy as we adapted liturgies created by other nations such as South Africa, South Korea, Scotland, Poland, Israel, India and the United States.



A privilege

Then in late 2011, Canada was invited to write the liturgy for the 2014 Week of Prayer and I was asked to represent the CCC on the writing team. What a privilege! After six years of editing the rich liturgies of other countries, I was being given the opportunity to play a role in shaping a fresh liturgy reflecting our Canadian experience and vision for Christian unity. As a team, we were being tasked with offering the world a distinctively Canadian voice in our collective prayers for unity. Furthermore, as the CCC representative, I would get to contribute my distinctively Canadian Baptist pastoral perspective.

And thus our journey began. Over the course of the next twelve months we met together almost weekly by way of bilingual conference calls to give shape to the liturgy, meditations and resources for the 2014 Week of Prayer. Our

task was threefold. First, we needed to agree on a biblical text able to speak to our context and a theme able to guide us. Second, we needed to collaborate together to author the meditations for the Eight Days. Finally, we had to reflect upon and articulate for the global Christian community our distinctively Canadian ecumenical perspective on Christian unity.



The Apostle Paul

Thirteen different biblical texts and themes were proposed during our first conference call, yet by our next meeting, a week later, consensus had emerged around the biblical text, 1 Corinthians 1:1-17, and the theme “Has Christ Been Divided?”. It was a bold theme for a liturgy calling the world

to prayer for Christian unity. There was much discussion as we wrestled to understand what the Apostle Paul was telling the church at Corinth and by extension the Canadian and global Church. And yet we all sensed this was the right text to speak to our Canadian experience of ecumenism and the dangers that come when we seek to proclaim “I belong to Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:12) as a means of setting ourselves apart from other Christians. It was this theme that gave us the courage to acknowledge our failings as well as celebrate our successes as an ecumenical body of Canadian Christians so easily divided by language, culture, geography, theology and denominational allegiances. And yet the Apostle Paul calls us to keep the conversation going: “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” (1 Corinthians 1:10)

A safe place

You see, all too often, when we gather as ecumenical bodies, it is either to assert our denominational differences or else restrict our conversation to issues where we have agreement. As an evangelical Baptist pastor, what I valued most about our ecumenical dialogue was not the quest to find things we could agree on, but rather the safe place that was created for us to voice our differences as we sought to discern the message God was calling us to voice. I valued the diversity of thoughts and theological perspectives that served to enrich us as we explored the unity that is to be found in Christ. What I valued about our ecumenical discussions as a team was the opportunity to hear new biblical perspectives in timely issues offered by people I had come to respect as sisters and brothers in Christ. We were Christians of various stripes and differing theologies grappling together to find God’s voice revealed to us in sacred texts, history and *koinonia*.

In our own way, the Canadian writing team for the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has tried to shape an ecumenical liturgy that will allow followers of Paul and Apollos and Cephas (1 Corinthians 1:12) throughout the world to gather in a shared hope and prayer for Christian unity - an occasion during which we can be enriched by our diversity while remaining united in Christ.

Week of Prayer: Reflections on Preparing the Ecumenical Prayer Service

Sandra Beardsall

Rev. Dr. Sandra Beardsall is Professor of Church History and Ecumenics at St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon, a position she has held since 1997. Originally from Ontario, she has served congregations in Newfoundland, Labrador, and Ontario as an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada. Her particular research interest is the history and theology of ecumenical shared ministry congregations in Canada.

What would be a good liturgical “symbolic gesture” of Christian unity? There is not an easy answer to that question. This was one of the many things I learned as a member of the writing team for the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity materials. Others on our committee will have described the challenge and thrill of working as members of several Christian traditions, across Canada's vast geography, and without meeting one another face-to-face until the end of the process, several months later (and even then, not everyone could attend the Toronto meeting).

I joined the liturgical sub-group, so one of my tasks on the writing team was to help prepare the draft of the ecumenical prayer service, the “main” service of the Week of Prayer. As a United Church minister, I am familiar with shaping liturgies, but this was my first time to do it in two languages *and* at least two Christian traditions, *and* by conference call, with people I had never met! But the gracious spirit I encountered in my sub-group collaborators smoothed the way, and we were able to produce a worship service draft text. It took the face-to-face meeting, however, to pull it all together.

Each year the global organizers of the Week of Prayer send specific guidelines to the national group preparing the resources. Their instructions help to focus the task. For the service of worship, they asked us to create a “service of the word... including traditional liturgical elements.” The members of our small sub-committee were Roman Catholic and United Church of Canada, but thanks to the “liturgical convergence” that flowered after the Second Vatican Council we were able to agree about what “traditional” elements need to be in a worship service without reliving the debates of the sixteenth century! While adhering to the expected liturgical



forms, we wanted to inject as much Canadian “flavour” as possible. We also wanted to reflect our passions for unity, justice and peace. And we needed to attend throughout our work to the theme text we had chosen: “Has Christ Been Divided?”

However, the word “gifts” gave us new inspiration. What if we chose not to guard the gifts of our traditions, but to share them?

Our oneness in Christ

One element that has become somewhat “traditional” in Week of Prayer services is a symbolic action for unity, a gesture that worshipers can perform to indicate their oneness in Christ. Of course, Jesus offered us the perfect gesture – the eucharist – but we cannot yet share that together, so our liturgical actions must reflect the “in-breaking, but not yet here” quality of visible Christian unity. Our theme text, from I Corinthians, pointed us to a visible lack of unity in an early Christian community. The quarrels among the Corinthians seemed to stem from their conflicted loyalties to particular authority figures: Paul, or Apollos. We imagined replacing those names with names of our divided Christian communities: Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics. The challenge, however, is that not all our *differences* are *divisions*. We also celebrate our diversity – and that includes ecclesial gifts that we treasure from our denominational heritage. So back we went to the drawing board.

However, the word “gifts” gave us new inspiration. What if we chose not to guard the gifts of our traditions, but to share them? The notion of sharing gifts ecumenically has gained currency in the past few years, based partly on the work of Dr. Margaret O’Gara, a beloved Canadian ecumenist, who wrote a book called *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*. Perhaps we could symbolically enact a sharing of gifts from various traditions. Those of us from Saskatoon had witnessed a lovely example of such sharing at an ecumenical prayer service on the eve of the ordination of Bishop Don Bolen in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon in March, 2010. Members of many of the Christian denominations present in Saskatoon brought forward items to represent a gift of their faith heritage: the “Luther rose,” a clutch of rainbow balloons to represent diversity in the Spirit – to name just two. A liturgical leader read a short explanation of each gift as the bearer brought it to the chancel steps.

We discussed this possibility a little further. Bearing gifts is indeed a warm gesture, but do we all *want* the gifts the other wishes to offer? Some of the divisions among us stem from an explicit and unresolved *rejection* of theological and ecclesiological gifts. The universal ministry of the Bishop of

Rome and the ordination of women spring immediately to mind! Good ecumenical dialogue actually takes us deeper. It reminds us, or teaches us, about the gifts we *need from* the other. This is also an idea that is current in ecumenical circles, particularly in the work of Dr. Paul Murray, an English ecumenist, who speaks of “receptive ecumenism.”

The “symbolic gesture”

Thus was born the “symbolic gesture” as it appears in the Ecumenical Prayer Service. It requires prior ecumenical discussion. What does our own tradition lack that we see present in the other? What have others shown us in their Christian witness and practice that would enrich our own? Then, having agreed on the “gift,” we need to find a “thing” that might symbolize it.

That is a lot of work to pack into one brief liturgical moment! The writing team came to believe that it would be worth the effort, for those liturgical planners who choose to try it. Our hope is that by working to determine what ecumenical gift we need to receive from the others around us, we will deepen the meaning of “diversity” in ecumenical discussion. Diversity does not simply mean tolerating difference. It means interweaving our lives with the faith lives of others. It requires a moment of humility, and a moment of curiosity: humble willingness to take stock of our own strengths and weaknesses as Christian communities, and the desire to learn, to be surprised by a stone we thought we had rejected. It was an honour and a blessing to work on this Week of Prayer writing team. Now I hope that our humble and joyful offering gives Christians fresh opportunity to pray, study, and work for the unity that Jesus gave us. Has Christ been divided? May that two-thousand year-old question stir us anew!

A short reflexion about my experience

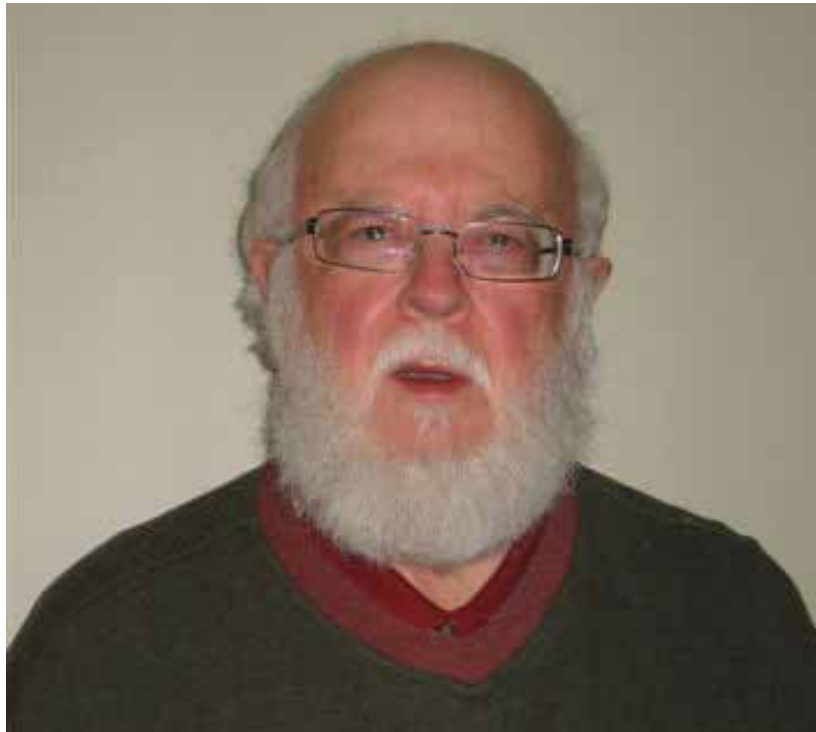
John Wilson Reverend John A.C. Wilson is a retired minister within the United Church of Canada living in Summerside, P.E.I. As part of his retirement activities, he became involved with the Atlantic Ecumenical Council (AEC) through the Summerside and Area Christian Council. The then President of AEC, Morris McIntyre, received a request from the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism for the AEC to participate in the writing team for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2014. Both Rev. Dr. David MacLachlan from the Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, NS and John Wilson agreed to participate at the request of the AEC Executive.

I have always been involved in ecumenical activities through local Christian Councils, ministerials, and inter-church community activities throughout my ministry both as a lay person prior to ordination and as a member of the order of ministry. I am also a graduate of the Atlantic School of Theology that has at its heart a strong belief in ecumenism and ecumenical activity, a belief that has carried me throughout my ministry. So this opportunity to participate in the writing team was one that I embraced with a bit of trepidation but also with excitement and challenge.

David Fines, the editor, in his email to me asked (as I know he asked other members of the team) if I would like “to write a short reflection about your experience, how did you feel, what it is to overcome our division and work together.” The group of us that worked on the writing team, while coming from a variety of church backgrounds was able to share from our varied experiences and to come to common consensus not only on the theme that we chose but also on the content of the background information and the material for the worship service. For that ability to work together so well, I give thanks for I know I gained much from the experience, probably much more than I was able to contribute. And I know all of us were grateful for the opportunity to participate and to work together as a team.

A sense of gratitude

At the heart of the experience for me was the sense of gratitude, as expressed by Paul in the theme scripture passage from I Corinthians 1: 1-17 where Paul says that together we give thanks for God’s grace. As the Day Two meditation notes, “Gratitude, in the ecumenical context, means being able to rejoice in the gifts of God’s grace present in other Christian communities, an attitude that opens the door to ecumenical sharing of gifts and to learning from one another.” I know



we experienced that gift in many ways as we were able to rejoice in the sharing of the various gifts that each of us possess.

That ability to work together to develop this theme came together naturally, almost as if we had known each other for many years. We were all aware of those things that divide us at a denominational level without having to speak them due to our ecumenical experiences at the local level and at the various other levels of Christian life in which we are involved.

There is no question that we as Christians are divided at the very least by our denominational structures and theology, but, on the other hand, there has always been widespread agreement on many aspects of our faith that enable all of us to appreciate the gifts that each church brings to the table any time we come to share around common concerns. While each of our churches/denominations have our way of doing things, what unites us is that each in our own way believe we are following the way of Jesus to the best understanding of our faith and faith practice. And always when we come together to share, as we did the work of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2014 writing team, we always have much to learn from one another. For that experience of God's grace, we are always grateful.

The gifts of God's grace

The commentary for Day Two asks these questions: "What are the gifts of God's grace that we experience from other church traditions in our own communities? What can Christians of different traditions do better together to share the varied gifts that God has given to each tradition?" Or as the question is asked in the commentary: "What do you give thanks for in your church, community and country? How

Has Christ been divided? Of course, in one sense, the answer to that question is yes. And yet at the same time, that division is part of what it means to be human.

have you experienced the spiritual and/ or material gifts of God among other Christians or others in your community?" Those are questions that we do not always ask ourselves, questions that we take for granted. In my own context in the Maritimes, I am thankful for the collegiality that exists among the various clergy, denominations and congregations. I am thankful for the life and work of my own local Christian Council and all other Christian Councils throughout the region which enable each of its members to share the work they are doing. I am thankful for the opportunity to hear about community concerns and how we as churches work together in facing these concerns.

Has Christ been divided? Of course, in one sense, the answer to that question is yes. And yet at the same time, that division is part of what it means to be human. How otherwise could we then come together and share in vibrant debate and discussion the heart of what it means to follow the way of Christ? And in so doing, we deepen our experience of what it means for us to be faithful in our time and place in history.

We always have much to be grateful for in the life and work of the various churches and denominations that comprise the Christian faith. That is why I believe a very important part of a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service is the willingness to share what we see as the various gifts that each church brings to the wider community. We may be in a formal sense divided, but we are all following the way of Christ and as part of following that way, we come together to share the load and to rejoice at the presence of the Spirit of God moving through our church communities into the wider environs of society. Thanks be for the grace of God that we experience from one another!

The Canadian Gift for Ecumenical Relations

Nicholas Jesson

Nicholas Jesson is the Bishop's Assistant for Ecumenical Relations in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

I was recently at an international ecumenical meeting. Looking around the table, we realized that four of the six people present were Canadians. Over a glass of wine that evening, we talked about why so many Canadians have served in international ecumenical posts. My joking answer was that this is because we don't have enough paying jobs at home. However, there is a seriousness to the question. We could make a long list of Canadians who have served in ecumenical roles in their national and international church bodies or in ecumenical agencies. My own experience is primarily with *Faith & Order* ecumenism, but I would guess that there would be as many in other ecumenical areas as well. Whether this is an honour roll or a bragging list depends a lot on how we answer the question: what is it that Canadians bring to ecumenism that is distinctive?

As part of the team that produced the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity resources, I had a long time to reflect on what Canadians offer to the search for Christian unity. I suspect the obvious challenges of geography, language, and culture that Canadians have faced through our history have given us a facility for cooperation with people who are different. We are not a perfect society; we have serious problems of political, social, and racial exclusion that we need to address. Yet Canadians seem to have the basic tools necessary for mediating the major divisions within our country.

From coast to coast

As a team working on the Week of Prayer, we faced some of these issues ourselves. We had participation, literally, from coast to coast. David MacLaughlin in Halifax and John Wilson in Summerside, PEI made up the East coast contingent. Sandra Beardsall was on sabbatical in Vancouver, Anthony Mansour, Norman Lévesque, and Bernice Baranowski were in Montréal, Gilles Routhier was in Québec, Michel Belzile was in Toronto, and Amanda Currie, Bishop Donald Bolen, and I were in Saskatoon. We would have benefited from a true West coast perspective and we did not have any Northern representation. We had Anglophone and Francophone participants and we attempted to work together in both

languages. The draft texts were produced in English because that is the language that the international committee required, however through the good facilities of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism translators we were able to submit the worship service and the "Ecumenical Situation in Canada" texts in Canadian French as well.



Geography was a natural difficulty in this project, as it is with almost every project at a national level. With eleven of us on the team, we could not gather together for regular meetings to discuss the project and review progress. Before the project began, most of us had not even met each other. We tried, unsuccessfully, to have meetings by Skype but quickly reverted to teleconference call. We were only able to meet together once, in June of 2012 after six months of regular teleconferencing. As is frequently the case, Toronto was the chosen venue because of the travel costs to meet anywhere else. We spent a little more than a day together carefully reading, reviewing, and testing the texts. We also had a chance to socialize and get to know each other, in most cases for the first time.

For those of us without strong second language skills, listening to others required patience, particularly on the telephone when it was not possible to see the speaker's face or mannerisms, but this swiftly became an experience in which we received the gifts offered by the other. In our reflections on Christian unity and the divisions of the Christian community, we could not allow language to divide us. In reality, it was a lot harder on the Francophone participants because most of

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continuation from page 15

the discussion was in English. I was truly grateful that the Francophone members insisted on speaking French. Not only did this keep us conscious of their reality, but it also allowed us all to hear particular contributions that could only be expressed in French.

Speaking to the whole world

The text that I was most involved with framing was the “Ecumenical Situation” text. We had some input on this from other ecumenists in Canada including from Karen Hamilton of the Canadian Council of Churches. Knowing that we were speaking to the whole world, we wanted to try to share something of the challenge of forming a national ecumenical experience. The challenges that our own team experienced are part of the reason that Canadian ecumenism is more vibrant in regional and local groups than in national bodies. Even in this one small project, we failed to include a number of significant ecumenical communities in our reflections. In the Ecumenical Situation text, we tried to outline these challenges but also to point towards the ways that Canadian churches try to work around them.

As I try to answer the question about why so many Canadians have served in international ecumenical roles, I come back to the experience of trying to work together to draft the resources for the Week of Prayer. The challenges that we did not face as we worked together were any divisions over the goal of Christian unity, the importance of prayer, or even over the content of our prayer. Instead, we discovered that our cooperation strengthened not only our sense of belonging to the one Body of Christ, but also our sense of being Canadian. Our theme text posed the question: Has Christ Been Divided? Tragically, our churches remain divided, but Christ is not divided. As Canadians, we are separated by distance and language, by culture and race, but in Christ we are one.

Norman Lévesque Norman Lévesque is Associate Director

I guess by now you know that Canada wrote the materials for the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity...

To plan this international event, delegates from the Vatican and from the World Council of Churches met with our Canadian writing team in Montreal in September 2012 to put the finishing touches on our texts. Their participation is essential in authenticating the materials and circulating them worldwide.

We designed the ecumenical service around the theme: “Has Christ Been Divided?”, the same question St. Paul asked the Corinthians (1 Co 1:13). In this passage, Saint Paul wonders why some people say ‘I belong to Paul’, or ‘I belong to Apollos’, or ‘I belong to Cephas’. This is very similar to our present day sense of belonging to a particular Christian denomination. Saint Paul reminds us that we all belong to Christ.



ts of the Ecumenical Service 2014

ctor at the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism and in charge of the Green Church Program.

We see our country reflected in the service, beginning with a *prayer in the four directions* in the tradition of the First Nations. Everyone prays to God while facing East, then turns to the South, the West and the North in prayer. For Canadians, it is strongly suggested to ask a member of the First Nations to lead this prayer.

There will also be an *exchange of spiritual gifts*. Each Church will share a symbol of their Christian identity: a cross, an icon, a musical instrument, a kettle, a book, whatever depicts their particular identity traits as disciples of Jesus. Invite representatives of the different churches in your local area to reflect together on what “gift” all receive from each. The goal is to identify together one gift from each community that the others can agree to “receive.” Either local gifts or gifts from their wider tradition may be selected. Representatives of the different churches bring objects representing the gifts that their tradition brings to the whole Christian community.

Ideally, you will also obtain a symbolic representation of each gift to be brought forward during the “Ecumenical Exchange of Spiritual Gifts.” The gifts are brought forward and then placed on a table.

The *Intercessory Prayers* lift up the Eight Millennium Goals of the United Nations. We encourage you to print these prayers for the worshipping congregation so they can see the specific goals embedded in the prayers. We pray about poverty and hunger, universal education, equal dignity of man and woman, child health, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, stewardship of creation and international solidarity.

At the *exchange of peace*, we honour our country’s French heritage by telling the person next to us, in French, that they are a “Don de Dieu”, which means “Gift of God”. When the French came to Canada in the 16th and 17th centuries, they found a land rich in resources, and were helped by its First Peoples. Their sense of gratitude led to naming the ship that brought Samuel de Champlain, the founder of Québec City, “Don de Dieu”.



In Québec, the expression *Don de Dieu* takes on a fresh vitality in the Christian community and in popular culture. “There is even a beer with that name!”. It recalls a sense of gratitude for the gifts of God that comes from a time when their ancestors were able to share in thanksgiving with the First Nations of Canada. During this service, it is a sign of our peace and as a way to recognize the gifts we receive from one another.

Call your church, diocese or synod, to find out where and when the 2014 ecumenical service will take place. If there is no service, you could organize one locally thanks to the materials on the website.

Visit www.WeekOfPrayer.ca to download the materials.

Singing Together for Unity

Amanda Currie

The Rev. Amanda Currie serves as the minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon. She also represents the Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan on the Board of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism. As a member of an interchurch family (Presbyterian/Roman Catholic) she delights in the opportunity to sing in two church choirs most Sundays.

St. Augustine is credited with saying that "when you sing you pray twice," and that has certainly been my experience during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In Saskatoon, where I live and serve the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism assists the churches in coming together to pray for unity numerous times throughout the week. Some of the highlights of the week usually include joining together in the prayer of different traditions, listening to good preaching, sharing meals, and visiting together across denominational lines. But I always find that one of the best things about the week is the singing.

The first happy discovery is often that we know and love a lot of the same hymns and songs. Many of our favourite hymns are found in all of our denominational hymn books, and so even if the pattern of standing, sitting, and kneeling is different, or the words of the prayers are new to us, we can join whole-heartedly in singing the songs that we all know. As a worship leader and singer, I also enjoy discovering new hymns and songs. When we visit different churches during the WPCU, I take the opportunity to peruse whatever song books I find in the pew. And if the worship includes music that is new to me, I appreciate the chance to expand my repertoire.

But more powerful than the fact of having some of the same songs, or the discovery of new and wonderful songs from each other's church traditions, is the actual experience of joining our voices together in song to our one Lord, Jesus Christ. When we sing in unison, we have an auditory glimpse of the one church together in unity. When we sing in harmony, we experience the richness of our diverse community coming together to make a glorious sound for God.

And when we sing together, we pray twice for the unity that is already ours in Christ, but is not yet fully realised because of the divisions between our churches:

*"We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
and we pray that all unity will one day be restored..."
(We are one in the Spirit, Book of Praise #471)*



Great joys

As part of the Canadian team commissioned to prepare the resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2014, I really enjoyed the process of selecting the Scripture and theme for the week that will be used by churches throughout the world as they come together with their neighbours to pray for unity. It was both a challenging and rewarding experience to work with a diverse committee from different churches, languages, and regions of the country to prepare the resources for eight days of prayer for unity.

While we got to choose the readings and write the prayers, I found myself wishing that we could also suggest appropriate hymns as a way of encouraging the churches of the world to sing their prayer for Christian unity. Unfortunately, the diversity of languages and resources make that an unmanageable task on the international level. Here in Canada, the Canadian Council of Churches helpfully provides a list of hymn suggestions which congregations and parishes might choose for their WPCU worship services: http://councilofchurches.ca/en/Our_Faith/hymns.cfm

This is not, however, an exhaustive list of songs for unity. When you come together with your Christian neighbours to worship and pray for Christian unity in 2014 and beyond, I would encourage you to search the hymn book of the church where you will gather to discover the wealth of hymns and songs that can help you to pray together for the unity that Christ desires for us. Use the indexes of the back of the book: Look under topics like *unity*, *Christian unity*, *communion of saints*, and *church*. Search the scripture index for hymns based on I Corinthians I.

When I did this kind of search using The Presbyterian Church in Canada's "Book of Praise," here are some of the treasures I found:

*"Called forth from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth,
our charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth,
one holy name professing and at one table fed,
to one hope we are pressing, by Christ's own Spirit led."
(The church's one foundation, #479)*

*"We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load."
(Brother, sister, let me serve you, #635)*

*"God bless your church with life! May all our branches thrive,
unblemished, wholesome, bearing fruit, abundantly alive.
From you, only holy vine, in freedom may we grow;
sustain us in our mission, Lord, your love and peace to show."
(God bless your church with strength, #491)*

*"Join hands, companions in the faith, whate'er your race may be!
Who loves and serves the living God is surely kin to me."
(In Christ there is no east or west, #480)*

*"Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above."
(Blest be the tie that binds, #481)*

*"We are the body of which the Lord is head,
called to obey him, now risen from the dead;
he wills us be a family, diverse yet truly one:
oh, let us freely give our gifts,
and so shall God's work on earth be done."
(We are God's people, #472)*

*"Let strife among us be unknown; let all contentions cease;
be God's the glory that we seek; be ours God's holy peace."
(Where charity and love prevail, #692)*

*"When we Christians gather, members of one body,
let there be in us no discord but one spirit.
Banished now be anger, strife and every quarrel.
Christ, our God, be always present here among us."
(God is love, and where true love is, #227)*

*"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one
another as I have loved you...
By this shall all know you are my disciples: if you have love one
for another..."
(A new commandment, #225)*

Go and do the same

You will find similar offerings in other church hymn books, and I hope that you will take the time to search, to choose carefully, and to consider your singing together during this WPCU as an important part of your prayer for Christian unity.

If, like me, you enjoy learning new songs you can also check out some new music for unity that has been written and shared especially for this year's WPCU. Our Canadian writing team invited Canadian church composers to write and share hymns and songs on the theme of Christian unity and specifically I Corinthians I. There was a wonderful response to this call for new music, and we are thankful for all those who took the time to reflect on the theme, to write, and to share their work. You can find some of these beautiful offerings at <http://www.ecumenism.net/music/>

Many of these new hymns and sacred songs include both sheet music and recordings, and you are free to copy and share them for use during the WPCU 2014 or in the future when used with the WPCU 2014 resources for prayer and worship.

Has Christ been divided? Certainly not! May we join our voices together to witness to our growing unity in Christ, and may our prayer for unity be magnified by the songs we sing together.

Five Days of Christian Prayer in Québec City

Paul Mackey Paul MacKey is a Roman Catholic and member of the Conseil interconfessionnel de la région de Québec (the Québec Region Interdenominational Council) who has been involved in the ecumenical movement in Québec city for many years.

Several years ago, at a meeting of the *Réseau œcuménique du Québec* (the Quebec Ecumenical Network), there was a discussion about new ways of presenting the faith – in England, for instance, there was the “Fresh Beginnings” movement, a call for creativity in proclaiming the Gospel. In my parish, the prayer and worship committee had taken a survey in 2009 to find out what initiatives it could pursue. The idea came up of organizing a week focusing on different styles of prayer for a period of 50 minutes (similar to the Canadian Bible Society’s “Proclamation” event!). However, there were other priorities at the time, and it was not until 2013, the Year of Faith, that the project was resumed at a meeting on January 16 and finally brought to completion.

This original activity was intended for the general public as a form of evangelization that would offer people a personal choice, a value that appeals to them. We thought of a slogan along the lines of “Come and discover your style!” As we thought about different styles of prayer, we began by identifying the ones that first came to mind:

- Taizé prayer
- Christian meditation
- Complete silence
- Silence along with classical music
- Chanted prayer
- Charismatic prayer
- Praying the Rosary
- Vespers
- Eucharistic adoration
- Reading from the Bible
- *Lectio divina*
- Continuous reading of a book of the Bible (one of the Gospels, Song of Songs, Psalms)

A second approach was in terms of age groups, or other groups, such as:

- Prayer with children (e.g., *Brebis de Jésus*)
- Prayer with teenagers
- Monastic prayer

Then we thought in terms of other cultures and peoples: Prayer in other languages and other cultures (Spanish, English, German, African, etc.)

We also thought it would be good to invite other Christian denominations to introduce us to their particular style or styles.

The event took place from June 3 to 7, from noon to 9 p.m. at Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens church in Quebec City, chosen for its easy access by public transit, bicycle and wheelchair. The slogan was « *25 façons de s'approcher du Christ* » (25 ways to get closer to Christ). We created posters, a pamphlet and banners, and had an Internet presence.

Eight churches worked together on the event, which featured Orthodox Vespers and Anglican Evening Prayer, praying with the Psalms, Christian mediation and other prayer forms. The reaction from participants was positive. The number of participants varied, but there were always a significant number of them there – from a minimum of eight for silent prayer, to a maximum of 150 for Taizé prayer and sharing the Gospel led by Roman Catholic Archbishop Gérald Lacroix.

Among the positive feedback comments received:

“Congratulations on the Five Days of Christian Prayer ... a great success!”

“Thank you for the opportunity to take part in your wonderful programming this week.”

“Best ecumenical activity in Quebec City in 30 years!”

A similar event was organized in the Thetford Mines area of Quebec by a group from Versant-la-Noël, with priest and liturgical musician Robert Lebel. The organizers found it to be a “magical” activity, and plans are underway for a second edition in May 2014.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Conseil interconfessionnel de la région de Québec

January 18-26th, 2014

“Has the Christ been divided?” (I Cor 1, 13)

Saturday, January 18th, 4:45 p.m.

Vêpres à l'intention de l'unité des chrétiens
La Clarté-Dieu, 220, Grande Allée Est # 140

Sunday, January 19th, 4:40 p.m.

Célébration d'ouverture de la Semaine de prière
La Chapelle des Ursulines,
18, rue Donnacona (Vieux-Québec)

Tuesday, January 21st, 7:30 p.m.

Célébration œcuménique de la Semaine de prière
Église Mission Notre-Dame-de-Lorette,
75, rue Chef-Maurice-Bastien (Wendake)

Wednesday January 22, 2 p.m.

Ecumenical Hymn Sing
at Saint Brigid's Home, 1645, chemin Saint-Louis (Sillery)

Thursday, January 23th, 7 p.m.

Vêpres orthodoxes
Chapelle des Missionnaires du Sacré-Coeur, 71, rue Sainte-Ursule (Vieux-Québec)

Friday, January 24th, 7:30 p.m.

Soirée de prière autour de la Croix, à la manière de Taizé
Montmartre canadien, 1669, chemin Saint-Louis (Sillery)

Sunday, January 26th, 9:30 a.m.

Messe selon le rite byzantin – Divine Liturgie
à l'église Sainte-Geneviève, 3180, rue d'Amours (Sainte-Foy)

Sunday, January 26th, 3 p.m.

Cérémonie de clôture de la Semaine de prière
Closing celebration
Église unie Saint-Pierre, 78, rue Sainte-Ursule (Vieux-Québec)



The 10th WCC Assembly: God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace

Thomas Ryan

Thomas Ryan, CSP, served as associate director (1981-84) and director (1984-95) of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism and prior to Busan, participated in the WCC Assemblies in Vancouver (1983), Canberra, Australia (1991), and Porto Alegre, Brazil (2006). He currently directs the Paulist North American Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations in Washington, D.C.

When people first heard about the World Council of Churches (WCC) holding its 10th Assembly in Busan, South Korea, October 30-Nov 8, many wondered, "Why Korea?" The WCC had never held an Assembly in Northeast Asia. Why now? Historical developments in Korea over the past century provide the answer.



Fence spanning the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea. Ribbons contain names and prayers for separated family members and for peace.

The invasion of Japan in 1910 revoked Koreans' right to sovereignty over their own country. The freedom movement was led by Christians with Korea winning back its independence from Japan in 1945.

The trusteeship of the Western powers divided the peninsula into North and South, and within a short time, the Korean war broke out (1950-1953), causing 18 million Korean casualties, approximately half of the population of North and South Korea at the time, devastating the whole of the Korean peninsula.

The war-torn South raised its arm in diligent efforts for reconstruction, overcoming poverty and exhibiting economic victory. It now seeks to overcome the barrier of the Demilitarized Zone that separates North and South and walk along the path of unity and peace.

However, given that three nuclear weapons states - the U.S., Russia, China - all have military bases in the region, Northeast Asia still contains the world's heaviest concentration of military and security threats. Accordingly, the peace of the world seems directly related to peace on the Korean peninsula.

The churches in Korea, together with the ecumenical movement, have been encouraging reunification efforts for decades. The invitation to meet in South Korea was the joint initiative of many churches in the country, including WCC member churches, as well as evangelical and Pentecostal churches. The WCC leadership felt the time was right to bring Christians together from all over the world to pray with one voice for all the world to hear: "Lord of life, lead us to justice and peace" (the Assembly theme).

Three weeks before the opening of the Assembly, a Peace Train started building momentum for it. 130 church and civil society representatives from around the world departed October 6 on a Peace Train from Berlin, Germany through Russia and China to northeast Asia, arriving in South Korea just as the World Council of Churches 10th assembly was opening there in Busan.

Historically, Koreans lived under the influence of Shamanism, Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism. But in the last 200 years, Christianity has grown rapidly in Korea, where today, according to a 2005 social statistics survey, 53% of Koreans follow a specific religious faith, with Buddhists accounting for 43% of that religious half-population, followed by Protestants at 36% of it and Catholics at 21%. By contrast, Japan has less than 1% Christians, Protestants and Catholics combined. From the outset it was clear that the Asian context would significantly shape the gathering.

In planning the Assembly, the WCC central committee sought to make it more inclusive and welcoming of the wider ecumenical movement, providing space for member churches and ecumenical partners like the Global Christian Forum, the Roman Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) of in an effort to move toward a shared vision of the one ecumenical movement. In so doing, the WCC recognized that it is not alone in serving the visible unity and common witness of the churches.

What is an Assembly?

The Assembly is the highest governing body of the World Council of Churches and is the only moment when the fellowship of 345 member churches comes together as a whole in prayer and celebration. The assembly has the mandate to review WCC work, to determine the overall policies of the Council, to issue public statements and to elect a new central committee. Only the assembly has the authority to change the WCC constitution.

As noted above, it also represents the gathering of a worldwide ecumenical movement of churches and partners. This makes an assembly of the WCC the largest, most diverse gathering of Christians in the world. It is a unique moment in the life of the one ecumenical movement to deepen visible unity and common witness so that the world may believe. Participating were approximately 800 member church delegates, advisors to delegations and outgoing members of the central committee, and about 575 representatives from ecumenical partners and other churches, observers and guests. Add to that another 1000 international assembly participants, including hundreds of young people. There were another 1000 Korean host committee members, staff, volunteers and day participants, and another 300 staff, stewards, and interpreters. All in all, somewhere between 3,500 to 4,000 participants.

What happened at this Assembly?

What's the rhythm of a normal day at an assembly? The general pattern of each day's activities looked like this:

8:30-9:00	Morning Prayer
9:15-10:15	Bible Study
10:45-12:15	Plenary on a Particular Theme
12:15	Committee lunches
2:15-3:45	Business Plenary or Workshops
4:15-5:45	Ecumenical Conversations
6:15-7:45	Regional or Confessional Meetings or Committee Reports
8:00-8:30	Evening Prayer
8:30	Dinner

What was it like in the living of it? A synoptical view of each element:

Morning prayer. I found the morning prayer, which introduced with scripture and song the theme featured in each morning's plenary session, to be very well put together. The prayers were rich and evocative, the hymns sung in three or four languages, the readings well-chosen for the theme, and the intercessory prayers graphically rooted in the realities of our times. Each morning's prayer highlighted a thematic symbol: water; fire and wind; food and soil; wildflowers; washing of the feet. The inspiration given motivated participants to roll out of bed after late nights and make it to their hotel shuttle buses so as to arrive at the Assembly hall on time for morning prayer. The book of Resources for Prayer and Praise will, I'm sure, be used by many in their back home contexts.



Korean dancers greet participants at the WCC Assembly.

Bible Study. Towards the end of the assembly, I heard several people remark in conversations with others that the bible study groups were a highlight of the assembly for them. All participants had a booklet containing exegesis for each day's scriptural passage, chosen with the day's plenary theme in mind. People gathered according to linguistic groups for further reflection and discussion. Generally, two facilitators provided a 15 minutes introduction to the theme, and then invited the participants to break into groups of 6-8 and share their reflections and insights with one another on the passage concerned. The sharing of faith by people from different countries and contexts was generally rich and provided as well for personal connections with other participants, resulting in post-session conversations and exchange of email addresses to stay in touch.

Plenaries. There were two forms of plenaries: Those on particular themes, and business plenaries. The thematic plenaries were large-scale events providing space for celebration and inspiration. They presented crucial issues, highlighting their importance and relevance for the churches and the ecumenical movement today. The opening day's plenary featured an exploration of the overarching theme of the Assembly: "Lord of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace." The following day brought the Asia plenary, which focused on how the churches in Asia understand and respond to the Assembly's overarching theme in their multi-faith context. Subsequent themes were Mission, Unity, Justice, Peace—global challenges the churches must face together, with attention to how ecumenical partners are already working together to address them.



Banner with the theme of the Assembly: "God of Life, Lead us to Justice and Peace"

Each theme was exposed with creativity, sometimes involving music and dance by children or young adults, sometimes story-telling, sometimes conversation around a table, sometimes a talk or personal witness. For those accustomed to the more academic lecture format, the plenary sessions provided refreshing variety and creativity in the development of their theme.

In the business plenaries, during the first half of the Assembly, delegates were presented with proposals for constitutional revision or proposals for assembly committee leadership and membership. During the latter half of the Assembly, committees presented reports and recommendations to all the delegates for consideration and approval.

The Korean hospitality, expressed in so many ways, was extraordinary. Just about every day as participants filed into the assembly hall, one Korean group or another would place a little gift in your hand—a letter opener, a key chain, a sweater, a book.

Workshops. This program component was called *Madang* workshops. *Madang* is a Korean term that denotes a courtyard in a traditional Korean house. The *madang* serves as a space for encounter and sharing, celebration and fellowship. The Korean churches proposed *madang* as a concept to help root the Assembly in the host context and to promote the exchange of gifts and experiences among participants. Toward this end, over 80 workshops covering a broad range of themes were spread out over four days, led by people from the different member or partner churches. They provided space for members of the ecumenical community to discuss issues of common concern, allowing for free and frank discussion in an environment of mutual learning. One of their objectives was to provide inspiration and clarity around future work and initiatives.

Ecumenical Conversations. The afternoon Ecumenical Conversations took the Assembly themes a step further by engaging assembly participants in sustained, in-depth dialogue on critical issues that affect the unity, mission and witness of the church today. Here there were 21 themes-- something for everyone!--with four sessions offered on each theme. They ranged from "Called to be One: New Ecumenical Landscapes" to "Evangelism Today: New Ways for Authentic Discipleship" to "Religions Working Together for Peace and Freedom". Participants were asked to choose one theme and commit to working on it for all four sessions. The aim was to deepen the dialogue between member church delegates on the issue concerned. At the end, each ecumenical conversation was asked to prepare a short narrative report that includes affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC. These reports will be available to participants, churches, and partners, and will be submitted to the WCC central committee at its first full meeting after the assembly in 2014 for consideration and appropriate action.

The Regional or Confessional Meetings. At the beginning and end of the Assembly, the opportunity was provided for participants from the same church family to join in fellowship and prayer. The first meeting was an opportunity to discuss and to affirm the gifts that the different traditions of Christian faith offer the one ecumenical movement. The second gave the participants an appreciated occasion to reflect together on the experience of the week and to share their experiences, questions, and insights with one another.

Evening Prayer. The 8pm closing prayer service was generally offered in the tradition of one of the confessional families. The Orthodox evening was marked by chant and incense; the Protestant by Scripture, music, and message; the Pentecostal—which went twice as long but nobody seemed to mind—by its arm-waving and body-swaying movement to music led by a stage full of young adults with smiling faces.

The Assembly Theme

In his sermon at the opening prayer service, His Holiness Karekin II, Patriarch of all Armenians, said that the Assembly's theme—"God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace"—is more imperative today than ever before: "The unique mission of Christ's Church is to undertake a personal outreach to others, to regard our fellow human beings, without exception, in the full dignity and holiness of their personhood."

He identified four values that constitute a bedrock foundation for those who seek to be led by the God of life and that constitute the fruit of Christianity's 2000 year history.

The first is morality. "It is learned by example, and that example must come from the Church. We must exemplify the moral virtues we wish to see in the world around us," he said.

A second essential value is education, which builds respect towards one's neighbor, a mutual acceptance and cooperation among peoples. "We today must not allow the Church to be driven out of the modern educational establishments," said Karekin. "We must uphold the Church's identity as one of the great educational institutions in the history of mankind." A third value, closely related to morality and education, is family. "Today we are troubled to observe not only a desertion of societal support for the family, but also a distortion of the very idea of what constitutes the family," he said. "As the family declines, so too does the Church. Thus, our role in forming and defending strong, kind, loving families is vital."

The fourth value is that elusive reality in our world called "peace". Especially painful are the violence and active warfare presently being carried out in the Middle East—especially in Syria and Egypt. As churches, said Karekin, "we must speak forcefully for the universal doctrine of human rights, because without a foundation of justice and human rights, the peace we seek will be only temporary and fleeting."

On the assembly's opening day, greetings were brought by various church leaders. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, speaking on behalf of the Anglican Communion, said, "We renew our commitment to the ecumenical journey and the ecumenical task. We need one another.... We are to be one, visibly one, so that the world may believe. We are to be one so that the Gospel we preach is not denied by the way we live in separation. We are to be one because we are more effective together than apart. We are to be one – one people worshipping one God Father, Son and Holy Spirit, eating and drinking around the one table of the Lord, for that is Jesus' prayer for his disciples then and for us now."

Greetings were also brought from Orthodox and Catholic leadership, both of whom underlined "the importance of the assembly theme: "God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace". The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I underlined the theme in a videotaped message: "There is no comfortable way of sitting on the cross," he said. "We cannot remain passive in a world plagued by injustice. Ecumenism is rightly called a movement. It is this notion of pilgrimage that expresses

the Christian way," and the way Christians must be on, he indicated, is the path leading to justice and peace.

His eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch, leading a Vatican delegation of 27, read greetings from Pope Francis, who also picked up on the Assembly theme in saying "I assure you of my close pastoral interest in the deliberations of the Assembly. I trust that it will help all Christ's followers to intensify their efforts for justice and peace. We are called to reach out to those who find themselves on the peripheries of our societies--immigrants and refugees, the elderly and the young. I pray that the Assembly will contribute to new energy and vision for the unity of the Church."

Moderator's Report

In another plenary session devoted to the Moderator's and General Secretary's reports, WCC Moderator Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann provided some important overview perspectives. "What has marked the WCC since the last Assembly?" he asked. "Financial crisis." He noted that it has not only affected profoundly the world economic order, but the financial stability of churches as well as their capacity to support ecumenical organizations around the world.



Assembly stage during the thematic plenary session for peace

"The total amount of membership fees constantly declined during this period," said Altmann. This has resulted in a "reduction in the number of officers and employees, reducing capacity to develop established programs. Thanks to administrative measures taken and to the dedication and understanding of the staff, it was possible to maintain a stable financial situation in the WCC. However, to what extent are the churches willing and able to support and strengthen the WCC as a non-renounceable part of their commitment to the ecumenical cause"? Altmann asked. He noted that one of the ways the WCC is dealing with this challenging financial situation is a review of the use of its properties in Geneva.

He noted that another transition is deeper and wider than the changes already mentioned: a growing religious mobility and fragmentation. In Christianity, there has been a decline of Christians in many Western countries due to secularization, and the Middle East has also seen a significant diminishing of the number of Christians due to tensions in countries there. In Asia and Africa, the numbers have grown, “in some cases explosively”.

“Pentecostalism has grown considerably,” said Altmann, “although as a very fragmented movement...not sufficiently represented in the WCC, as yet. A growing number of these churches are showing interest in WCC membership or at least seeking dialogue with us. Still, it is clear that the WCC is today less representative of Christianity than it was when it was founded.”

Altmann noted that one way it has tried to respond to this challenge is an expanded space for meeting: the Global Christian Forum. “Initiatives such as the Global Christian Forum should not be seen as an alternative to the WCC,” he said. “They play a complementary role to each other.



Participants sharing faith with one another in a Bible study group

The WCC remains a privileged instrument of the wider ecumenical movement.”

Altmann reminded his listeners that the ecumenical movement is a journey. “We no longer need to take the first step. The ecumenical movement has already taken a good number of steps. Mission. Life and Work. Faith and Order. Christian Education. These are all pillars of our present ecumenical endeavor.”

The general secretary of the WCC, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, underlining that the identity of the church is missional, reported on a wide range of projects encompassed by the WCC’s main program areas:

- *Koinonia* – united by one faith and fellowship in Christ
- *Martyria* – the faithful witness of the church in the world
- *Diakonia* – faith in action serving God’s justice and peace
- Ecumenical formation –with a special focus on young adults and leadership development
- Inter-religious cooperation – as a common context faced by all the churches.

Highlight

One of the assembly highlights was the presence and contribution of youth (see other article). Among the 3,000 participants from the 345 member churches were more than 700 young adults who filled various categories of participation. In addition to the youth delegates, there were stewards and volunteers who came from around the world to give their time and energy to assist the assembly in its work but also to share in an experience of ecumenical formation and to strengthen the voice of youth at the sessions.

Another venue at the Assembly augmenting the presence of future church leaders in formation was the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI), the WCC’s key program for quality improvement in theological training and formation for ministry all around the globe.

This year GETI brought together, alongside the WCC Assembly, 180 seminarians and faculty from all regions of the world and all Christian denominational traditions for an intensive 2 week theological program which focused on “*the future of ecumenism and the transformation of World Christianity in the 21st century*” and was geared to the justice and peace theme of the Assembly.

Dr. Diedrich Werner, the Global Program Coordinator for GETI, said “My passion is for training the future leaders in world Christianity, because I believe that younger potential leaders need to have an ecumenical vision of the Church. Those enrolled are not only from WCC member churches. We have also included Roman Catholics both among the students and faculty. It’s a truly ecumenical gathering. People are really enthusiastic about this program. We have invited world renowned scholars to give keynote addresses to the students, so it is an intergenerational dialogue between ecumenical leaders in world Christianity and the young adults.”

Lowlight

In 1982 the WCC's Faith and Order Commission sent to the churches a document entitled *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM). It became an all-time best-seller in its genre, influencing churches across the spectrum to embrace a common understanding and practice of these three sacraments that represent an essential scaffolding for the life of the church. The official responses to BEM identified key areas in ecclesiology for further study. Ecclesiology has long been identified as the most elemental theological objective in the quest for Christian unity. Thus, for the past twenty years, delegated representatives of the Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic churches have sought to uncover a global, multilateral and ecumenical vision of the nature, purpose and mission of the Church.

In 2012, the Faith and Order Commission presented what it is hoped will be another best-seller: *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. This common statement text was received by the central committee and sent to the churches to seek their formal responses to it. *The Church* addresses first the Church's mission, unity, and its being in the Trinitarian life of God. It then addresses our growth in communion – in apostolic faith, sacramental life, and ministry – as churches called to live in and for the world.

As Olav Fykse Tveit, the General Secretary of the WCC says in his preface to the new document: "This study and its response process will have an important role in the coming years for discerning the next steps toward visible unity. Work on ecclesiology relates to everything the Church is and what its mission implies in and for the world... It reflects the constitutional aims and self-identity of the WCC as a fellowship of churches who call each other to the goal of visible unity."

The disappointment was that this significant new document received only a passing reference in two or three of the plenary sessions. If, as Tveit noted, the study of this text and the response to it will have an important role in the coming years, it is surprising that the WCC did not seize upon the opportunity provided by the assembly to draw more attention to the document, thus providing motivation and stimulation for the churches to seriously engage with it in their back home context and respond to it. A major opportunity was missed to boost the important work of Faith and Order and to provide fresh impetus toward convergence on ecclesiology which will play a vital role in the mutual recognition between the churches.

Summary of closing statements

After an intensive process, which involved the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), the WCC officers and the WCC executive and central committees in 2012 and 2013, on its final full day public statements on the following topics were presented to the assembly for adoption: politicization of religion;

rights of religious minorities and stateless people; peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula; and just peace.

Other themes that surfaced in the Assembly minutes were concerns expressed by the delegates on Christian presence and witness in the Middle East, the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

The statement titled *Politicization of Religion and Rights of Religious Minorities* calls on the global ecumenical community to mediate with their respective governments "to develop policies of providing effective protection of persons and communities belonging to minority religions against threats or acts of violence from non-state actors."

The statement also calls for "concerted and coordinated efforts on the part of religious, civil society and state actors in order to address violations of rights of religious minorities and their freedom of religion and belief".

Through the statement on *Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula*, churches "call upon all stakeholders in the region to participate in a creative process for building peace on the Korean peninsula by halting all military exercises on the Korean peninsula, by ceasing foreign intervention, withdrawing foreign troops and reducing military expenditures".

Another statement titled *Human Rights of Stateless People*, calls on the "churches to engage in dialogue with states to adopt policies which confer nationality to stateless people and provide proper documentation". The text also encourages churches, civil society, human rights entities, United Nations agencies and regional organizations to collaborate effectively to reduce and eradicate statelessness.

On the Way of Just Peace was another significant statement, which affirms that "Peace constitutes a pattern of life that reflects human participation in God's love and care for the world and all God's creation". With this affirmation, it recommends concrete actions and invokes commitment to share "God's love for the world by seeking peace and protecting life:"

"Together we commit to protecting human dignity, doing justice in our families and communities, transforming conflicts without violence and banning all weapons of mass destruction," the document says.

All in all, the statements spell out what an answer to the assembly theme-prayer—"God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace"—would look like in concrete terms. Now the work is before us.

Future of the church: Young people active participants at WCC Assembly

By Father Tom Ryan Catholic News Service

Busan, South Korea (CNS) - Often, people look at church congregations and meetings and wonder, "Where are the youth?"



The Justice and Peace Tent was a gathering place for young adults participating in the assembly.

But at the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly in Busan, young people are everywhere.

In addition to the more than 700 youth delegates, young adult volunteers in orange shirts are positioned at entryways and along the corridors, offering program materials, giving directions and answering questions.

"They represent the future, and it's thanks to them that this assembly is functioning so well," said the Rev. Ofelia Ortega Suarez, a Cuban Presbyterian and former WCC officer.

Another 150 young adults in the assembly hall and worship space wear white shirts with "stewards" written across the back in big green letters. They come from around the world to give their time and energy to assist the Assembly in its work, but also to share in an experience of ecumenical formation and to strengthen the voice of youth at the sessions.

Young people go in and out of the Justice and Peace Tent in Madang hall, the Assembly's social gathering area, talking about what they have just heard in a plenary session. Other students are taking part in the Korean Ecumenical Theological Institute. Participation in different assembly events is part of the learning experience for them all.

The WCC's Global Ecumenical Theological Institute brought together 180 seminarians and faculty from all regions of the

world and all Christian denominational traditions for an intensive two-week theological program on "the future of ecumenism and the transformation of World Christianity in the 21st century."

Diedrich Werner, global program coordinator for the Institute, said he believes "younger potential leaders need to have an ecumenical vision of the church. Those enrolled are not only from WCC member churches. We have also included Roman Catholics, both among the students and faculty. It's a truly ecumenical gathering."

He said the program includes internationally known scholars addressing the students, "so it is an intergenerational dialogue between ecumenical leaders in world Christianity and the young adults."

Victor Cancino of Boston is a Jesuit in training.

"Before my experience here," he said, "I was more interested in dialogue with other religions than in the work for Christian unity. However, coming to this Assembly has been life-changing, because it's made me see the diversity of the Christian experience in its broad range of traditions.

"Getting to know and share with people from other traditions of Christian faith also makes our divisions less acceptable," he said. "So now this idea of unity within the church and what that might look like holds new interest and value for me."

Karin Gerstle, a member of the United Protestant Church of France, has a Protestant mother and a Catholic father. She said her experience in Busan "has opened my eyes and heart. I am now thinking of going on for a Ph.D. in ecumenical studies. My own commitment to work for Christian unity is deepening because of what I'm living here."

Sarah Thompson is a Mennonite Anabaptist from Indiana who has worked with Christian Peacemaker Teams in the U.S., Canada, the Holy Land, Iraq and Columbia. She said she has appreciated the opportunity to "reflect and theologize with people from around the world."

"The prayer and discussions taking place here will inform my action," she said.

Sai Hyung Lee, a member of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, shared how he finds his own faith being enriched in the assembly and the theological institute.

"Meeting people from all these diverse contexts is making me broaden my prayers and my thoughts, and to care about all the people in this world, not just those of my own country," he said. "It's also giving me a network of people in diverse churches with whom I hope to join hands in the work for justice and peace as we go forward from here."

Nov-4-2013

Catholic News Service/U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Ecumenical News

INTERNATIONAL

The 22nd meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ILC) took place in Madrid, Spain, from 13-16 October, 2013. Jewish and Christian representatives from five continents attended the gathering which was co-chaired by Betty Ehrenberg of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) and Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. The theme of the meeting was "Challenges for Religion in Contemporary Society". In their joint statement, the participants reaffirmed "the unique relationship between Catholics and Jews based on a common spiritual legacy and our shared responsibility to defend human dignity." They see themselves as "partners in healing our created world so that it may reflect ever more brightly the original biblical vision." The statement called on political and religious leaders to protect the right to change or leave one's religious belief and to manifest one's religious beliefs. Noted among the religious practices under attack today were "the right to religious slaughter, male circumcision, and the use and display of religious symbols in public." The Liaison Committee members agreed to cooperate to improve the lives of those on the margins of society and to protect God's creation from the dangers posed by climate change. This official forum for ongoing dialogue was founded in 1971 after the first international meeting between Catholics and Jews in 1970. *Holy See Press Office and Times of Israel*

The second meeting of the Oriental Orthodox-Anglican bilateral dialogue was held in London, October 3-7, 2013. Archbishop Nareg Alemезian of the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate and Rev. Jeffrey Raul co-chaired the meeting which discussed the doctrine of Pneumatology and the joint statement on Christology of 2002. On October 5, the participants attended a special prayer service dedicated to the Middle East, held in the Coptic Orthodox Church and on the following day they assisted at an Anglican Church Service and were the guests of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, for lunch. The next meeting of the bilateral dialogue will be held October 13-17, 2014 in Cairo. *Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia*

Lutherans and Anglicans have begun a new series of conversations designed to strengthen relations and highlight ways to mark together the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. The first meeting of the Anglican-Lutheran International Coordinating Committee (ALICC), held in Helsinki, Finland, 19-25 September, was co-chaired by Bishop Mauricio Andrade, Primate of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil, and Bishop Michael Pryse of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The Committee hopes to provide study materials based on the theme, "Liberated by

God's Grace". Rev. Anne Burghardt, ALICC Lutheran co-secretary, commented, "The Anglican-Lutheran dialogues and cooperation have been one of the success stories of the ecumenical movement in recent decades. Several regional agreements have been signed between Anglican and Lutheran churches, with some of them, such as the Porvoo Common Statement and the Waterloo Declaration, having declared full communion between the respective churches." Canon Dr Alyson Barnett-Cowan, Anglican co-secretary of the Committee, noted, "As this was the first meeting of this group, what was impressive was how quickly people learned to work with each other and how everyone contributed to the plans for the work." The Committee continues to meet annually until 2017. *LWF Newsletter*

Christian meditation is growing among the homeless in the US. The World Community for Christian Meditation brings together people from various churches who are interested in the meditative dimension of Christian spirituality and in interreligious dialogue. The homeless meditation group founded by Rev. Christina Rathbone in Boston is bearing new fruits. A group from a street church have begun to meditate at All Saints Episcopal Church in Worcester, MA. This is the fourth homeless Christian meditation group in the state now with two in Boston, one in Waltham and now one in Worcester. *Meditatio Newsletter*

Some 500 people participated in a multi-faith program and walk around Public Square in downtown Cleveland, Ohio on September 22 to raise awareness about violence against women in the local community and society at large. A diverse group of women faith leaders called on the dozens of public officials and political candidates in attendance to sign a pledge of accountability to help end violence against women and children. October is national Domestic Violence Awareness month. "Our goal as women of faith is to help raise awareness and call for divine help to empower our community to stand against the scourge of violence," said the Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) for Cleveland, Julia Shearson, who helped co-organize the event along with more than 40 women clergy and lay leaders from diverse faiths in the greater Cleveland area. *CAIR Press Centre*

Some 250 Buddhist delegates from 39 countries gathered together in the Indian capital of New Delhi in September under the aegis of the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC). These representatives of the world's 400 billion Buddhists sought to define common positions and to formulate collective proposals on global issues such as climate change and terrorism. The meeting in India, one of the founding members of the IBC, also welcomed spiritual leaders from other religions. *Radio Ville-Marie*

In Damascus, Syria, fashion designer, Rahmé Briki, teaches women evacuees sewing, embroidery and fashion design to help them find jobs and support their families. In September 2012, she welcomed the enrolment of 45 women belonging to all the different faiths in the country: Sunnites, Shiites, Christians, Alawites and Druze. They had only one thing in common: they were all evacuees and had lost everything. The tensions between them were very strong and they even refused to be in the same room. Rahmé's priority was to treat each one as a person worthy of respect. Little by little, the women started to greet one another, to speak to one another, to have a certain relationship. On the feast of Ramadan, the Christian women prepared a little surprise party for the Muslims. The Muslims did the same at Christmas. At the end of the course in June 2013, the women were asked what had been the most difficult moments they experienced during the past year. One, on behalf of the whole group, answered that today was the most difficult day because it was the last day in the centre. "It's the only place where we are able to 'breathe', and it has helped us to go ahead, bringing peace in our families and our hearts," she said. *Living City*

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, the highest-ranking Muslim in the British government, called on Western governments to do more to protect besieged Christian minorities across the world, particularly in the Holy Land. Warsi, a mother of five and the daughter of Pakistani immigrants, said Christian minorities in war-torn regions of Egypt, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere are threatened by Muslim majorities in the very places that gave rise to Christianity. "What concerns me is that these communities ... are now being seen as outsiders," she said on November 15 in a speech at Georgetown University. She has been critical of both Muslim extremists and those who would deny women the right to wear a headscarf, and said protecting the religious freedom of minorities is a responsibility of all faiths. "It shouldn't just be for Christians to speak for Christians, and Jews to speak for Jews, and Muslims to speak for Muslims," she said. For her, the solution "will not come by Christians in the West and Muslims in the East, but actually by Muslims in the West and Christians in the East, both of whom come from a minority experience perspective." *Huffington Post*

Pakistani Muslims and Christians came together and formed a human chain in front of a local church in Lahore on October 6. By forming the human chain, the people expressed solidarity with the victims of the Peshawar church attack that took the lives of around 100 Christians. Mufti Mohammad Farooq delivered a sermon quoting a few verses of the Holy Quran that preached tolerance and respect for other beliefs. Father Nasir Gulfam stood right next to him after having conducted a two hour long Sunday service inside the church. *The News Tribe*

"Working Together: Christian-Muslim Humanitarian Partnerships", a workshop held in Amman, Jordan, 5-8 October, brought together participants from international Islamic and Christian non-governmental organizations. The workshop was one of the follow-up initiatives of a UN High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection convened in December 2012 which called on faith-based organizations and communities to strengthen efforts to welcome and support displaced and stateless people across the world, and to stand united against xenophobia. In her presentation on the theoretical and theological framework for interfaith partnerships, Rev. Dr Simone Sinn from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) said that such partnerships "help to counter animosity and mistrust between religious communities and create space and visibility for the constructive role of religion in humanitarian work." *LWF Newsletter*

The US Jewish Council for Public Affairs adopted a resolution calling on local and national Jewish groups to build coalitions with Muslim Americans. "Jewish and Muslim Americans ... should work in coalition to advance common commitment to civil liberties, the struggle against all forms of terrorism, racism, anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim prejudice," the resolution declared. The Union for Reform Judaism, America's largest Jewish religious denomination, has been engaged for more than a year in an extensive dialogue with the Islamic Society of North America, the largest Muslim organization in the United States. Jewish activists currently involved in dialogue with Muslim groups agree that talks should focus on issues with potential for common ground -- not on the Israeli-Arab conflict. Among the issues suggested for building coalition were human rights, health care, immigration and poverty. A recent Gallup Poll revealed that both groups have similar voting patterns. The survey also found American Muslim women to be more highly educated than women in every religious group except Jews. The Reform movement's Mark Pelavin, who presented the resolution, stressed that many local Jewish communities across the country are "looking for guidance" on how to go about reaching out to Muslims. *Forward Association*

"Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders", a pledge of support for refugees, displaced and stateless persons, was signed by religious leaders on November 21 at the 9th Assembly of Religions for Peace in Vienna, Austria. Six hundred delegates representing Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim faiths attended the Assembly. The Lutheran World Federation president, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan commented that welcoming "the other" is a core value of faith and accepting the document pledges faith communities to welcome strangers with compassion, mercy, love and hospitality. World Religions for Peace is a multi-religious coalition that advances common action for peace among the world's religious communities. *Lutheran World Information*

The North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, meeting in Mississauga, Ontario, October 24-26, issued an agreed statement titled “The Plight of the Churches in the Middle East”. The North American Consultation explores theological issues that are later considered by the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. At this year’s meeting, hosted by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, a summary of previous papers on the role of the laity in the two traditions was presented. Father John Erickson, former dean of Saint Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, presented his paper on “Conciliarity or Synodality?” There was a presentation of a paper by Msgr. Thomas J. Green on “Lay Ministries in the Church: Comparative Reflections on the Eastern and Latin Codes” as well as a summary of previously published papers on celibacy, marriage and the priesthood by Father Peter Galadza of the Ottawa Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies. A highlight of the meeting was a panel discussion between seminarians from St. Augustine’s (Catholic) Seminary with those from the Greek Orthodox Theological Academy of Toronto. The next meeting of The North American Consultation is scheduled to take place June 2 – 4, 2014. The next document expected from the consultation will tackle questions of celibacy and married priests. *Joint News Release and Catholic Register*

In a joint press release issued November 6, representatives of the three major monotheistic religions in Belgium expressed opposition to extending the 2002 law on legal euthanasia to minors and adults with dementia. The religious leaders were against suffering on the grounds that all suffering was revolting. “But to suggest that minors could decide on euthanasia for themselves distorts their faculty of judgment and consequently their freedom. Suggesting that persons with dementia can be euthanized is to deny their dignity and delivers them to the judgment, possibly arbitrary, of the people making this decision,” says the document. The Chair of the United Protestant Church of Belgium, the Grand Rabbi of Brussels, the Chair of the Central Committee of the Anglican Church in Belgium, the Chair of the Federal Synod of Protestant Evangelical Churches of Belgium, the Metropolitan of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Chair of the Muslim Executive of Belgium and the Chair of the Belgian Conference of Catholic Bishops also criticized the pressure placed on physicians to perform a “so-called medical act.” *La Croix and Oumma.com*

Julien Hammond, associate director of ecumenism for the Edmonton Catholic archdiocese, has been named by the Vatican to be part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)-Roman Catholic International Dialogue. “Christians Formed and Transformed by the Eucharist” is the theme of the next phase of this five-part dialogue. Hammond’s ecumenical involvement over the past eleven years involves activities at local, regional and national levels. Locally, he participates in dialogues with

Anglicans and with Mennonites. Regionally, he works with a network of Catholic ecumenical officers. He served on the national dialogue between the United Church of Canada and the Catholic Church and is now serving on the national Anglican-Catholic dialogue. Hammond finds that through the encounter with one another in dialogue, we are enriched. *Western Catholic Reporter*

NATIONAL

Christians, Jews and Muslims co-hosted a colloquium on “How can one be a person of faith in the 21st century in Canada” at Carleton University in Ottawa on November 10. Mary Jo Leddy, founder of Romero House Community for Refugees; Ingrid Mattson, chair of Islamic Studies at Huron University College; and David Novak, chair of Jewish Studies and professor of religion and philosophy at the University of Toronto were the guest speakers. *Anglican Journal*

Citizens for Public Justice hosted a celebratory dinner at Toronto’s Church of the Holy Trinity on October 3 to honour 50 years of social justice advocacy based on Christian values. Executive director, Joe Gunn said that CPJ was one of the oldest among Christian ecumenical organizations in the country working for social justice. Founded in 1963 by the late Gerald Vandezande, CPJ’s members represent a cross-section of mainstream Christian traditions. Gunn credits CPJ’s engagement with issues of human rights, reduction of poverty and environmental protection by advocating to the federal government for changes that reflect Christian values for the diversity of followers it attracts. While the organization continues to focus on questions of national importance, he sees many current issues such as climate change as having global impacts. “There are no more issues that are just local any more,” said Gunn. For Father Bill Ryan of the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, CPJ members bring their own inspiration on how justice cannot be separated from faith. “What keeps people here is a sense that they’re doing something that is good and right that comes out of their deepest Christian values,” said Gunn. *Prairie Messenger*

Canada’s inaugural Religious Freedom Seminar, held in Ottawa on October 23, included presentations from former British prime minister, Tony Blair; the Pew Research Centre; the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights; and others. The seminar was the first of what Andrew Bennett, Canadian Religious Freedom Ambassador, said would be quarterly seminars to focus on “why religious freedom matters in the current international environment.” He noted that religious freedom is a question of human rights and human dignity. His office works to protect and to advocate on behalf of religious communities under threat. “We are focused on opposing religious hatred, and bringing to account those who foster religious hatred,” he said. Through its Religious Freedom Fund, the office has \$4.25 million “per year to finance projects outside of Canada to assist religious communities facing intolerance or persecution,” he said. *Prairie Messenger*

REGIONAL

West

The Taizé prayer, a non-denominational gathering modelled after the prayer of an ecumenical community founded in 1940 by Bro. Roger Schutz in Taizé, France, was introduced to Edmonton more than four decades ago. For the past two years it has been hosted monthly by the churches located on 95th Avenue, including Strathearn United, St. Luke's Anglican, Holyrood Mennonite and Assumption Catholic parish. There is no presiding pastor or sermon at this service. It begins with a few chants and is followed by a psalm sung by one person and responded to by the congregation. Then there is a Gospel reading followed by five minutes of silent meditation, more music and intercessory prayer. There are a few more chants at the end, after which participants gather for fellowship. "As a result of the Taizé prayer, people in the neighbourhood are less afraid to walk into each other's churches and to worship together," says coordinator Maria Kruszewski. Denise Hugman, a United Church member who has attended Taizé services for about ten years, likes the simplicity which allows people to connect with God within. Hugman says she leaves refreshed and rejuvenated after each service. "I think it's really beautiful that it is people from different Christian denominations because we all have Jesus in common and even if there are differences in the way we believe, we can worship together," Kruszewski added. *Western Catholic Reporter*

Thanks to the support of community and faith groups, Edmonton is now a Fair Trade city. The title was officially granted at the University of Alberta on September 26. This means city council will purchase only Fair Trade coffee, tea and sugar. For farmers in developing countries, this means fair wages, fair labour and environmental sustainability. Having met all the requirements to earn the distinction, Edmonton is the 17th community in Canada to become a Fair Trade town. The city has more than 40 restaurants and cafes, and over 80 stores and grocers that sell two or more Fair Trade products. The push for fair trade began more than 20 years ago when social justice advocates would drink Bridgehead Coffee in their meetings to encourage fair trade. "There was a sense we couldn't do too much to change the patterns of world trade, but there were specific things that we could do," said Bob McKeon, director of the Social Justice Committee of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Edmonton. *Western Catholic Reporter*

Evangelicals and Catholics in Saskatoon have been meeting to talk about their common faith in Jesus Christ, what they share and where they differ for over two years. Mandated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Evangelical Ministers Fellowship, the dialogue group is in the process of writing a joint statement. The

20-member dialogue group includes 10 representatives from each tradition. Rev. Harry Strauss, associate pastor at Forest Grove Community Church describes the joint statement as: "We confess our common faith, we acknowledge our differences and we affirm our common mission." *Prairie Messenger*

A multifaith celebration of Hanukkah, Christmas and Eid Al-Adha was held at Edmonton City Hall on December 15. *Western Catholic Reporter*

Ontario

Representatives from the Presbyterian Church, local aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, and residential school survivors together dedicated a monument at the site of Cecilia Jeffrey residential school near Kenora. A large rock near the centre of the monument bears the inscription: "In honour of all the children." Beneath the stone, a time capsule contains toys the schoolchildren played with, including bottle caps, elastic bands, ribbons and marbles. The memorial was built by the Treaty 3 Tribal Council. "When the children of today ask: 'What do these stones mean?' they can hear from their parents and grandparents about the residential schools," wrote Rev. Peter Bush who represented the church at the dedication ceremony. "As we were leaving, a woman came up and thanked me for my words," Bush said. "She and her husband had received their compensation payments along with a letter from the Presbyterian Church. 'But', she said, 'that seemed unreal; your words today gave the apology a human face. Thank you.' And then she hugged me." The church was in charge of the school from 1902 until the federal government took over in 1969. It ceased operating in 1976. *Presbyterian Record*

Embracing diversity within the church will lead toward a world where the presence of God is felt in greater proportions, said Cardinal Baselios Cleemis of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church on September 5 while in Toronto on the final stop of a pastoral tour of Canada. "Uniformity is no longer accepted as a sign of unity," he said. Referring to the diversity of the eastern and western churches, Cleemis stated, "Our mission, our vocation, is to see that the same faith can be lived in different ways." While parishioners from the West could benefit from a greater sense of reverence in their prayer, people of the eastern churches would be wise to borrow the West's dedication to evangelizing mission work. The multitude of saints from different countries and different cultures is a sign to him that diversity in how we practise and live our faith is yet another gift from God. "Diversity is always a blessing," he said. *Prairie Messenger*

A wide range of religious leaders came to St. Paul's Basilica in Toronto on November 10 to pray for Christians and others persecuted for their faith. Muslims, Zoroastrians, Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, Jews, Hindus, people of divergent faiths, they came together to offer prayers. Rabbi Edward Elkin read from Libi Astair's account of Chanukah in the Nazi death camp of Bergen Belsen and how the prisoners kept faith in God even when they were surrounded by death. Syriac Orthodox pastor, Fr. Estephanos Issa found a passage from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians which speaks of being "struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our bodies," to be most appropriate. For archdiocese of Toronto ecumenical and interfaith director, Fr. Damian MacPherson, the fact that religious leaders from almost every significant faith in the city recognize that religious persecution is a real issue – real enough to demand their time and prayers – is significant. *Catholic Register*

"Meditative Practices in the Jewish Tradition" was the topic of a presentation by Michelle Katz, Jewish Spiritual Director and Educator, at the November monthly educational meeting of the Toronto group of The World Community for Christian Meditation. *WCCM Newsletter*

"Advent: Beginning Again" was the theme of a December retreat organized by the Ottawa Area Christian Meditation Community, and the Saint Paul University Anglican Studies Program. The retreat was led by Rev. Kevin Flynn, director of the Anglican Studies Program and Pastor Martin Malina of Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ottawa. *WCCM Newsletter*

Quebec

The third annual Interfaith Dinner, organized by the Intercultural Dialogue Institute in collaboration with the McGill University Chaplaincy Service, the Anglican Diocese of Montreal and Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom, took place on November 19 at McGill on the theme of "Responsible Citizenship". With Fr. John Walsh as moderator, the evening featured a video presentation on the theme and addresses by Bishop Barry Clarke of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal, Prof. Ira Robinson of the Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies at Concordia University and Dr. Hamid Slimi of the Canadian Council of Imams. At the end of the evening, Dr. Adriana Bara, General Director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, presented certificates of appreciation in recognition of outstanding contributions to building intercultural and interfaith relations. Headquartered in Toronto with offices in nine cities across the country, Intercultural Dialogue Institute (IDI) was founded by Turkish Canadians concerned about how people from different cultural and religious backgrounds could create a harmonious society. Its members

increasingly come from diverse faiths and cultures and share the IDI mission: "We endeavour to bring together people of good will from all cultures and faiths on a common platform to develop an understanding that can inspire peace and harmony in our community." More information is available at: www.montreal.idialogue.ca and: www.interculturaldialog.ca.

"Women in Religion: Listening to her Voice", a November evening course at Montreal Diocesan Theological College, featured six women who gave six perspectives on faith and life. The guest speakers were Professor Christine Jamieson, Sukhy Basra, Shana Stafiej, Shanta Srivastava, Kelsang Drenpa, and Rabbi Lisa Grushcow. *Montreal Anglican*

"Dialogue between the Monotheistic Religions: Advances and Obstructions" was the theme of a panel discussion organized by the Centre of Contemporary Jewish Studies (ALEPH) in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism (CCE) and the Memories and Dialogue Association and held on December 2 at the Segal Arts Centre in Montreal. Professor and Rabbi, Michel Serfaty of l'Amitié judéo musulmane de France; Prof. Jean Duhaime of l'Université de Montréal; and Raffa Touhami-Rachid, jurist and specialist in Islam, examined the current state of Jewish-Christian, Muslim-Christian and Jewish-Muslim dialogues and the impact of the Middle-East conflict on these dialogues. They also looked at how each religion saw the other and explored ways of breaking down prejudices and concentrating more on the spiritual values that bring people together. The brief presentations were followed by comments by the ALEPH director, Dr. Sonia Sarah, and questions from the audience, with closing remarks and observations made by CCE general director, Dr. Adriana Bara. *ALEPH Centre*

"Women in the Church: A Dialogue between an Protestant and a Catholic" was the theme of a conference by Elisabeth Garant, general director of the Justice and Faith Centre, and Rev. Darla Sloan, a United Church of Canada minister. This talk was organized jointly by the Centre culture et foi du Montmartre and Le Parvis de Québec, and held on December 4. The two women spoke of what each one had lived in her church, the difficulties, the hopes, progress made, setbacks encountered and shared ideas about what the two churches could do together on the question of the role of women. *Le Montmartre*

Book Reviews

Wounded Visions: Unity, Justice and Peace in the World Church after 1968, Jonas Jonson, Wm. B.

Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 2013, 202 pages, \$24.00 US.

With forty years of direct involvement in the ecumenical movement, Jonson reviews developments in ecumenism from the 1960's to the present. He discusses the decolonisation of mission, interreligious relations, the preferential option for the poor and unity in diversity. He also maps the global ecumenical landscape and presents the "Fourth Church" – comprised of the charismatic, Pentecostal and evangelical movements of the twentieth century. He explores the impact of the fall of communism, the opening of China and the globalization of financial markets on the ecumenical movement as well as the causes of the retreat of so many big churches from their ecumenical commitments in order to promote and protect their own interests. *Jonas Jonson is bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Strängnäs, Church of Sweden.*

Cross and Kremlin: A Brief History of the Orthodox Church in Russia, Thomas Bremer, Wm. B.

Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids MI, 2013, 190 pages, \$26.00 US.

Written by an author who is admittedly neither Russian nor Orthodox, this work attempts to expose both the singularity of Russian Christianity as well as the intricacies of its affiliation with Europe. It provides an insight into the history and the contemporary situation of the Russian Orthodox Church. After introducing the most significant epochs, developments, and events, the volume presents central themes and problems -- monasticism, theology, church-state relations, dissidence, contact with the West -- with an eye on their historical significance and, where possible, on their situation today. *Thomas Bremer is professor of Eastern Church Studies and Peace Studies at the University of Münster, Germany.*

Joseph Ratzinger in Communio, Volume 2, Anthropology and Culture, Pope Benedict XVI, Edited by David L. Schindler and Nicholas J. Healy, Wm. B.

Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 2013, 207 pages, \$30.00 US.

In this second volume of Joseph Ratzinger in Communio, Pope Benedict XVI speaks to various issues relating to humanity today – conscience technological security, the origin of human life, the meaning of Sunday, Christian hope, and others. Concern about the implications of theology and spirituality for humans and for culture is one of the main distinguishing features of Joseph Ratzinger's theology.

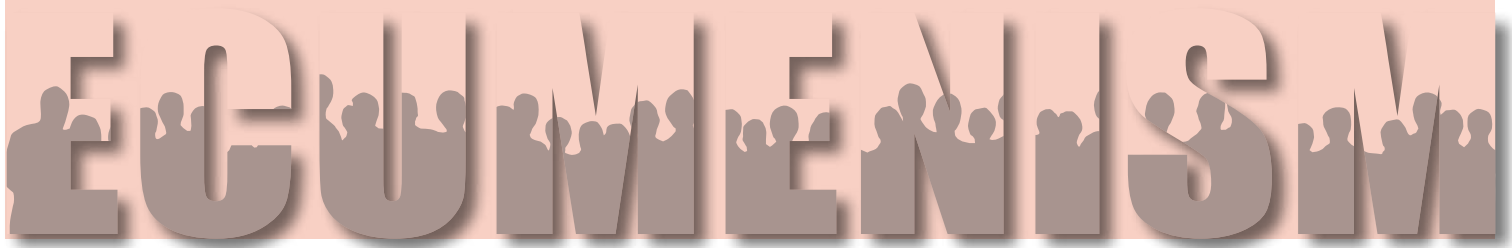
Cushing, Spellman, O'Connor: The Surprising Story of How Three American Cardinals Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations, Rabbi James Rudin, Wm. B.

Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 2012, 157 pages, \$18.00 US.

Recounted in these pages is the story of how and why an unlikely trio of American-born Roman Catholic cardinals used their ecclesiastical positions and their personal charisma during the second half of the twentieth century to set Jewish-Christian relations on a new, more positive and more realistic footing. With a background in interreligious dialogue, Rabbi Rudin demonstrates how Cardinals Richard Cushing and Francis Spellman influenced the Second Vatican Council to adopt the *Nostra Aetate* decree decrying anti-Semitism and affirming God's action in non-Christian religions. A generation later, Cardinal John O'Connor pioneered the practical applications of this revolutionary document. The two introductory chapters tracing the climate of Jewish-Catholic relations from the first century to the twentieth reveal the extraordinary nature of these cardinals' actions. Following chapters provide compelling case studies to enliven discussion among church and synagogue study groups and enrich seminary courses on ecumenism and interfaith dialogue. *A prominent figure in inter-religious dialogue since 1968, James Rudin currently acts as Senior Interreligious Advisor for the American Jewish Committee.*

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