

ECUMENISM

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Promoting dialogue and unity



Chaplaincy in Prison

Centre canadien
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Canadian Centre
for Ecumenism

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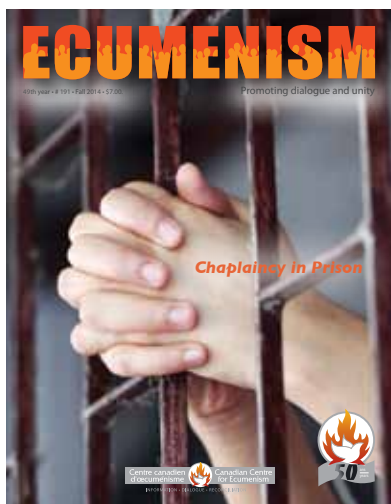


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Centre canadien d'œcuménisme **Canadian Centre for Ecumenism**

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ECUMENISM

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Editorial

A different way of speaking (to each other)

David Fines As a prison chaplain, most of the inmates I meet every day come to the chapel because they want to talk, confide in someone, pray, or even confess. At other times, I am the one who sends them an invitation to come and see me, which they are free to accept or refuse.

One day several months ago, I was with an inmate I had invited to see me, and who otherwise would never have come to the chapel. He certainly looked the part: big, burly and muscular, with heavily tattooed arms and a shaved head. I began, as I usually do, by introducing myself, telling him that I was there for all of them, that I didn't have a magic wand, but if I could do something for them, I would try to ask the administration the appropriate questions. Suddenly, he cut me off and asked me abruptly: "Are you really a chaplain?"

A little taken aback, I answered: "Yes, why?"

"Because you don't talk like a chaplain!"

I couldn't help but laugh. Anyway, the ice was definitely broken between us. God was present.

When I think back on that comment, I realize that it was one of the nicest compliments I have ever received. Telling me that I didn't talk "like a chaplain" no doubt meant that I spoke simply, authentically, spontaneously; that I didn't use any inflated, pretentious or official-sounding language.

I think of Jesus of Nazareth, about whom people often said, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" (Jn 7:46) His listeners, "astounded," could not cease exclaiming that he did not speak or teach like the scribes (Mk 1:22; Mk 6:2; Mt 7:29; Lk 4:32). The scribes were the official interpreters of the Law, the specialists in the sacred books, who hid behind the authority of the texts and tradition. Jesus, however, was different. People were struck by his teaching. What was new about his teaching? What did he say that was astonishing? He said in his own words what the prophets had proclaimed before him. "He was not speaking as a teacher, but as the Lord."¹ When Jesus spoke, people understood him; he spoke so that simple people could understand, in everyday language, and that was why they came from far and wide to hear him.

And especially because what he said, his teaching, brought healing: "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." (Mk 1:27)

I reflected that, in ecumenical dialogue, we ought to think about the way we speak: when I talk, do I talk like a Protestant? Like a Catholic? Like an Orthodox? Is my discourse totally Anglican? Do people know I'm a Pentecostal or an Evangelical the minute I open my mouth?

Wouldn't it be a wonderful compliment if people told us: "You don't sound like the Protestants we're used to hearing! You don't talk like a Catholic! You don't speak like a Lutheran! You say things in a different way! You don't just interpret the sacred texts and you don't just hide behind your tradition! You speak and I understand!"

Do we speak (to each other) like people who are ready to listen, ready to share, ready to support and be supported, ready to walk together?

Do we speak to each other to make ourselves understood, using simple words, words that are true, words of integrity, words of healing? And are our listeners "astounded"?

In moments of grace such as these, God is present.

David Fines

¹ Saint Jerome, *Homily on Mark 1:13-31*



News from the Center

Center's new address

Canadian Centre for Ecumenism
2715, Chemin de la Côte-Ste-Catherine
Suite D 137
Montréal, QC, H3T 1B6

We have moved!

You are welcome to stop in and have a look at our new surroundings located in the Dominican fathers' building!



65 years since the ordination of our founder Father Irénée Beaubien, s.j.

On August 15th, Fr. Irénée Beaubien, s.j., founder of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, celebrated the 65th anniversary of his priestly ordination. He has known a career rich in accomplishments, especially in the service of the ecumenical movement in Montreal, in Canada, and beyond. At 98 years of age, Fr. Beaubien is in residence at the Jesuit infirmary in Richelieu, Quebec. He continues to serve the Church and society through an apostolate of prayer.

Volunteers Needed

Receptionist

We are seeking an individual with strong interpersonal skills, an openness to world religions and the ability to communicate in English and French. The working schedule is flexible depending on your availability.

Computer Technician

We need someone with the skills needed to maintain our small computer network, perform updates, backup copies, etc.

If you have these or other talents to share, come join our team! Contact us.

A Young Canadian at the Ecumenical Summer Course in Rome

Norman Lévesque

The author is the Associate Director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. He attended the summer course in ecumenism at the Centro Pro Unione in Rome from June 23 to July 11, 2014

Rome was very hot, and it was at least 30°C in our non-air-conditioned classroom. But human warmth was also present, in the form of 22 students, mainly from the U.S., as well as an Irishwoman, a Maltese and a Canadian (me!).

The *Centro Pro Unione* is located in a building on the Piazza Navona, a large square with beautiful fountains. Not only is it beautiful inside and out, but the classroom itself has a great deal of historic significance. Vivaldi played his *Four Seasons* there for the first time in Rome. During Vatican II, it was the

site of discussions with the observers from the Orthodox and Protestant churches. As one of the instructors said, "If only the walls could talk..."

I was very well received when I introduced myself as the Associate Director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. In the past year, other countries have taken note of the vitality of ecumenism in Canada, thanks to the 2014 ecumenical worship service designed by a pan-Canadian committee and distributed by the World Council of Churches. What is more,



Father Tim MacDonald told me he liked our new *Ecumenism* magazine, which makes the subject more interesting for all Christians, not just for academics. Some of the students had even heard about our *Green Church* program, and mentioned that they found it a motivating and innovative avenue for ecumenical collaboration. It made me realize that I work for a centre that has an international reputation!

A well-thought-out program

The *Centro Pro Unione's* summer course is given in English. The three-hour classes every morning were on interesting topics, and then in the afternoon we visited a number of places of worship. The themes of the courses were varied, and included:

- Biblical foundations of dialogue
- History of divisions in the Church
- General structure of the dialogues
- Vatican II and Catholic principles of dialogue
- The Reformation (Protestant and Catholic)
- The World Council of Churches (history and statements)
- Official dialogues with the Orthodox, Lutherans, Anglicans,

Methodists, Evangelicals and others

The classes were content-rich, and I was glad of it. I had to find a place where I could quietly re-read my notes and the documents. But what a gold mine of information! I learned, among other things, that the observers from the other Churches at Vatican Council II were officially known as “fraternal delegates”; that the opening address of the Council, given by Saint John XXIII, had strong ecumenical overtones, and asked us to throw open the windows of the Church and let the fresh air of the Spirit blow through.

We re-read the Vatican II documents. The encyclical *Lumen gentium* emphasized the pilgrim aspect of the Church (not static, but on the move), and noted that the word Catholic (universal) was not first and foremost an identifying label, but a principle of openness and dialogue. In the encyclical *Unitatis redintegratio*, there is a call to give ecumenism a central role in the life of the Church. *Nostra aetate* was prophetic with regard to dialogue with members of other faiths.

In the 1982 document of the World Council of Churches, entitled “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry”, which emerged from a consensus of all the member churches of the WCC (plus the Roman Catholic Church), there are some impressive discoveries to be made. If we look only at baptism in the various churches, there are obvious differences (children vs. adults, among other things). But there are also many points on which they agree: baptism is a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, a process of purification, a gift of the Holy Spirit, incorporation into the Body of Christ

(the Church), an entering into the Kingdom of God. All the member churches of the WCC agreed with that. Where dialogue could be fruitful is in considering baptism as a process of initiation. For instance, the Baptists baptize adults, with the sequence of catechesis-confession-baptism, while Catholics baptize babies through a sequence of confession-baptism-catechesis. For many Protestants, a person must confess a personal faith to be baptized. For Catholics and Orthodox, the baptism of a baby is a confession of faith of the community in which the child will grow up.

Tours

During a visit to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, we were greeted by the Council’s Secretary, Bishop Brian Farrell. I was able to view the large icon of Saints Peter and Andrew which the Patriarch Athenagoras gave to Paul VI. The Catholic-Lutheran joint declaration of 1999 concerning justification by faith, with the original signatures, was on display in the hall. Asked about the challenges of dialogue, Bishop Farrell answered that Catholics share the same theology as the Orthodox, but are divided by culture; the same culture as the Protestants, but are divided by theology.

At the end of the summer course, I spent the weekend at Bari in southern Italy, an important pilgrimage site featuring the relics of Saint Nicholas. The Catholic basilica is also frequently visited by the Orthodox, leading to the development of an important ecumenical institute run by the Dominicans.



On my arrival, I was greeted by Father Giovanni, who gave me a guided tour of the basilica. There were Russian Orthodox praying in the crypt, near the tomb of the saint. I stayed near Saint Nicholas, surrounded by a buzzing horde of tourists. I was impressed by the mingling of Catholic and Orthodox. The Orthodox women wore light veils on their heads, and so were easy to recognize. I remember how demonstrative the Orthodox were. They would stop, make the sign of the cross three times, prostrate themselves, and reach through the grill to try to touch the base of the tomb. I remained seated in the first pew in front of the tomb and felt a sense of well-being, a moment of grace during my morning pilgrimage. Father Giovanni spoke to Father Andrei to see if I could attend a prayer service in the Russian church. He agreed. Vespers began at 5 p.m. The service was very beautiful (sung in Russian), with flickering votive candles supporting our prayer.

At three separate times, the priest passed each person with the censer. There was also a lovely moment when we lined up to receive a blessing with a brush soaked in rose oil. My forehead smelled good for hours. I had the impression that I had been part of a sanctification of the people of God.

Back in Rome again, I went to Radio Vaticana for an interview. I felt more confident about being able to carry on with the ecumenical initiative begun by Father Irénée Beaubien, founder of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. I join my flame of hope to yours that we may achieve a visible unity of the Churches, when we can all unite around the same table. And in Italy, matters of the table are taken very seriously indeed!



Theme: Chaplaincy in Prison

Lord, when did we see you in Prison?

Rev. Tim Smart

Chaplain at Cowansville Institution Pastor at Grace Anglican Church, Sutton Director of Lay Education
– Anglican Diocese of Montreal

Last year, we were asked to remove all the religious symbols from the Chapel in Cowansville Penitentiary (Quebec), a men's federal prison with close to 700 inmates.

A chapel that was previously decorated with Christian symbols now became a neutral space within the barbed wire fences. The theory being, that a publicly funded chapel should be accessible to all, not visually offending or putting off anyone from a tradition other than the Christian one.

So we did our house-cleaning and removed the crosses, the icons, the devotional posters and stuck them in the old confessional booths which now serve as storage. The altar and large cross (painted by an inmate) remain on the stage, but can be closed off by drawing large curtains across so that no one's sensibilities are offended.

And we also re-baptized the space (although that is probably the wrong term considering the current changes) calling it the Centre Multiconfessionnel, or Multi-Faith Centre.

This is how it should be in our multi-faith world in a publicly funded institution. All faiths should be welcomed and respected.

Nevertheless, it has taken the three regular Chaplains, myself included, some time to adjust our mental and emotional maps. To go from a place where we assumed that everyone was more or less Roman Catholic and spoke French, to a Multi-Faith Centre where all are welcome takes some time for adjustment.

Chaplaincy in togetherness

Though two chaplains are Roman Catholic and I am an Anglican, we are available to all inmates for counsel and conversation regardless of their religious background. We also have now a more expanded team of visiting faith chaplains who come in to minister to the needs of men from various traditions.

Once a week, an approved Imam comes in to visit with the Muslim men. The Buddhist monk comes by once a month and a Rabbi visits on occasion. And the Jehovah Witnesses now have a regular Monday morning meeting after complaints launched by an inmate forced Corrections Canada to allow them access to the worship space.

Despite our multi-faith stance, we know however, that most of the men in the prison are nominally Roman Catholic, around 73%. The other 27% are a mix of Protestants, Muslims, Natives and others.

Native Spirituality and programs for Native peoples are run from a different building with a different compliment of staff and funding. This separation is not surprising considering the troubled and conflicted past that Native people have had with traders, missionaries, and residential schools personnel. Nevertheless, some Native people do participate in various religious or educational opportunities at the Centre.

It probably does not surprise you to know that most inmates were not regular practitioners of religion prior to their incarceration. Like many people in our society today, they are woefully ignorant of any religious tradition. What prison provides for some inmates, is an opportunity to reconnect with the faith of their birth, and also to explore other faith traditions.

And so for some guys, this is the first time that they have regularly gone to Mass. Or it is the first time that they have participated in bible study with prayer and singing. Or it is the first time that they have prayed with fellow Muslims or attempted to keep the fast of Ramadan.

And because prison is a pretty boring place to be, we have some men who sample a bit of everything. There are some guys who see the Buddhist monk, participate in the Jehovah Witness meetings, and go to Bible Study on Monday nights all in the same week.

It is fascinating to see people exploring religion for the first time in conditions where faith and hope and love are in short supply; not to mention forgiveness.

As an institutional chaplain working in a multi-faith setting, it is not my job to try and recruit people for the Anglican Church or the Christian religion. My job is to listen to people and journey with them in the exploration of faith and help to connect them to their faith tradition.

Religion, inside and outside of prison, can be either a help or a hindrance to our rehabilitation or liberation. Chaplains are often wary of those whose religious expression may be

covering up some other deep-seated anxieties and needs. Or those who use religion to get a better diet from the cafeteria or time off from work. Our motives for being religious are often mixed and sometimes purely selfish. While I am not there to judge people's motivations, I think that Chaplains want to encourage people to seek faith in ways that are genuine and express an honest desire to deepen their spirituality and practice.

Tough on Crime

Before I was a prison Chaplain, like many people, I read about the crimes and the sentencing of people who had done some pretty horrible acts. I was glad that they were in jail and didn't think much about them. Maybe I even said, 'lock them up and throw away the key.'

When you enter a prison as a regular volunteer and then later as a chaplain, you begin to see the face and the person behind the newspaper headlines and it becomes much harder to condemn them forever. You begin to hear the story of their lives and the things that led up to their crime and you begin to understand. You begin to understand that people can become really mixed up inside and become corrupted by forces on the outside as well.

Historically, chaplains have been a part of the penitentiary system for a long time. Chaplains and those running the prisons believed that isolation and time for reflection and Christian teaching were more likely to bring about reform than beatings, whippings or execution. It was hoped that during their time of isolation from society, inmates would become penitent – sorry for their sins – hence the term "penitentiary".

In Canada, in the modern era, Corrections Canada still hopes that incarcerated men will be sorry for what they did and take the designated programs and courses necessary for their rehabilitation. However, the religious aspect is now purely optional. Chaplains and chapel activities are for the minority of inmates, an interesting extra. While the Canadian Charter or Rights and Freedoms grants incarcerated men the right to practice their faith, like society at large, it is a small group of people that chooses to do so.

We are living in an era in which the present government wishes to be "Tough on Crime" and tells us that "Safe Streets" are what Canadians want. However, most chaplains think this rhetoric is just an election ploy, fishing for votes on what seems like an easy issue to agree on.

Sure, we all want safe streets and think that crime should be punished. But are the current policies and methods actually accomplishing this?

Long before the Conservative government decided to become tough on crime, rates of crime had been dropping for years. And yet when they took the reins of government, they passed laws and instituted policies that would mean people would receive longer sentences and also find it harder to go to a minimum prison and harder to get parole. And, at the same time, many of the little privileges that helped to make prison life bearable were being cut – like access to books, school, psychologists, community events and volunteer activities.

The goal of all these government laws and cutbacks is to be tough on incarnated people and show the public that prisoners are not being coddled. Prison Chaplains find themselves baffled as to why the Government would cut back on programs and opportunities that would help inmates in their rehabilitation and reintegration process. It is almost as if the system wants the men to fail by giving them as little training, as little hope as possible, and increasing their level of frustration and despair.

As ecumenical Chaplains representing all faiths inside the razor wire of prisons across Canada, many of us find ourselves out of step with a government that seems more intent on punishment than renewal of life.

How shall Chaplains offer hope to men living in increasingly crowded prisons, with fewer resources being offered, in a system which seems to randomly decide their fate day in a day out?

Daily we enter Canada's prisons as people of faith, with no real power to change the system. We welcome men to talk in confidence in our offices, we visit them in the "hole" (Detention), we visit them in their blocks, and we organize religious gatherings for them with our volunteers who come in from the outside. By our presence, we hope to show them that they still matter and that they have not been written off by us and their communities.

Although we cannot easily change the system, we hope to bear witness that they are all children of God whose liberation can begin even while they live out their years behind bars.

Hope in Prison

Reflections on a career in Prison Ministry

Rev. Ed MacKinley

The Reverend Ed MacKinley is a retired Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and a former Roman Catholic Priest. He is a retired prison Chaplain, 68 years of age, married, the father of three children, and lives in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

My career as a Prison Chaplain began shortly after moving to Victoria, BC in 1994. I was asked to provide relief for the chaplain employed at the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC), a maximum security provincial prison which accommodates approximately 350 male inmates. This man had been ordered off work by his doctor due to symptoms of extreme stress. This, in a nutshell and for the moment, is one insight that I have carried away from my experience serving as a chaplain in the prison system.

The mandate of a chaplain serving in a Provincial correctional facility in British Columbia is to provide support for the religious and spiritual needs of inmates, staff, and their families, regardless of their religious background.

The inmate population included a large proportion of First Nations people, perhaps 40-50 percent. Many of these had a foot in two worlds, possibly raised by a grandmother who was a devout Christian, and now being strongly encouraged to abandon the Christian tradition, and embrace First Nations Spirituality. There was a mixture of other races too: Caucasian, Asian, Arabic, and African-Canadians. I estimate that at the time I worked there perhaps 90-95 percent of inmates were dealing with substance abuse issues. Participation in Substance Abuse programs was usually mandatory.

Variety of religious affiliations

When questioned, most inmates acknowledged no religious affiliation. Of the ones who did, about half said they were "Christian" but could not specify which particular denomination within Christianity. Very small numbers identified themselves as Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, or Pentecostal. There were also some Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims, Wiccans, and Jews. It is not possible for a single Christian minister to serve the needs of all these religious groups adequately.

A series of Native Elders came in to help those First Nations inmates who were interested in learning about their culture and First Nations spirituality. These elders led Talking Circles, smudging ceremonies, Native Brotherhood gatherings, and various healing rituals, including, for a very short time, Sweat Lodge ceremonies.

A Buddhist Lama came in regularly for years and taught and led Buddhist Meditation. I arranged for Islamic Scholars and an Imam to come in and teach Muslim inmates about the Koran and Muslim prayer practices. They provided copies of the Koran and prayer schedules for me to give to Muslim inmates.

For the Christians, I and other chaplains who worked with me from time to time provided regular Worship Services, Bible Study, Meditation, Counselling, and Memorial Services. Roman Catholic Priests were always available to provide the Sacraments. Seventh Day Adventist pastors visited inmates of their denomination, Christian Science, Jehovah Witness, and Mormon elders and teachers were also available, and came in whenever I called upon them. Understandably, it was occasionally difficult to track down someone in the community willing and able to come into the prison.

Overall, I found inmates respectful, but most had very little understanding of their own faith traditions. This lack of basic instruction in their own faith was very evident. Few Christian inmates, for example, could even recite the Lord's Prayer from memory. I found myself handing out printouts of this prayer, the 23rd Psalm, and other scripture passages, along with Bibles, small wooden crucifixes on strings, spiritually uplifting literature, and small booklets containing short daily devotions. These were frequently requested by inmates regardless of their faith traditions and regardless of whether they participated in any chaplaincy sponsored events.

If I ever believed that the lives of inmates would be changed by coming to faith or renewing the faith of their early years, I did not hold onto that belief for long. The high rate of recidivism certainly testifies to the fact that old habits and thought patterns are difficult to change. Ways of thinking and patterns of interaction acquired in order to survive in prison do not serve well in society outside the prison walls, and it is very difficult to adapt after even a short period, let alone several years inside. For that reason, I believe that serving time in prison is a very disabling experience for most people. I believe that everyone released from prison needs an extensive period of therapy to recover from it. It is a very different world inside a prison with very different rules for survival.

The issue of Hope

Working in the prison environment for an extended period of time teaches a person many things. If I could name one element of this experience that stands out for me more than any other after 16 years, this would be the element of hope. I saw it so consistently over the years that it could not fail to have a profound impact on me. A very large proportion of the inmates I met had lost hope somewhere along the line. It may have been the result of abuse from early childhood, from undiagnosed learning or intellectual handicaps, lack of education and job training, lack of family support, lack of love, the inability to hold onto a job, or any number of other reasons. Lack of hope leads to substance abuse and violent or self-destructive behaviour. Ultimately, lack of hope may lead to prison or suicide.

It takes a tremendous incentive to inspire a person to rise up out of the ashes of their shattered lives and try again, and it only happens for those for whom hope has not died out completely. A person without hope, who has sunk into despair can be very dangerous to themselves and others.

As a society, we need to address this issue of hope. Each and every individual can make a valuable contribution to our society. We each have talents and gifts, and we are collectively enriched by encouraging every individual to contribute what they can.

There is scarcely any aspect of North American life which has not been turned into some sort of competition. From the time a child enters kindergarten he or she is required to participate in competitive activities which place him or her in opposition to other children. This process escalates as the child progresses. Philosophically, our society believes strongly in this process, that it makes everyone stronger and that our

children learn from it to strive for excellence. Perhaps this is true to some extent, what is not recognized however, is the other side of the coin. The idea that is reinforced in the minds of those who fail to win in the competitive environment is that they are “losers” that they are “inadequate”, that they are “defective”. Insidiously, the competitive process erodes their sense of hope. For every winner, there is a loser, and very often many losers. Those who lose in a competition are expected to walk away graciously, and accept their defeat as a challenge to try harder the next time. This may happen in most cases, but not everyone has this kind of resilience. The number of people who lose hope is very high indeed, and many of these find their way into the prison system.

Witness the number of athletes who are tempted to cheat somehow in order to be victorious in their competitive endeavours. The rewards of winning and the humiliations of losing are often too much for even the strongest, the fastest, and the most highly skilled. The resentment experienced by some of the “losers” results in anger, violence, and great cost to our society. One of these costs is the extensive prison system we are forced to support in our country.

As a society, we need to address this issue of hope. Each and every individual can make a valuable contribution to our society.

Competition, in my view, is a mixed blessing at best. We love to see competitions taking place. We are excited when a winner emerges from the struggle. What we fail to notice are the dreams that are crushed in the process, and what is happening to those who fail to win when they must go away to experience the full impact of their inadequacy and feel their hopes and belief in themselves gradually fading away.

There is a place in our society for everyone to make a valuable contribution. Very few will win the gold. But no one should be left feeling hopeless.

Coming Together in Our Mutual Need: A Reflection on Ecumenical and Interfaith Cooperation in Prison

Paul Vanderham After obtaining his doctorate in English Literature from the University of Virginia, Paul Vanderham taught in the English Department at The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta. After leaving the academic world in 1998, he embarked on a journey that would lead to experiential work in Dartmouth, NS, Edmonton, Alberta, and Halifax, NS. He currently has Advanced Standing in Spiritual Care with the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC). His theological degree, a Master's in Theological Studies from the Atlantic School of Theology, is currently at the ABT (all-but-thesis) stage. He is employed by the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton and commissioned to serve as a chaplain at Edmonton Institution, where he has been working for the past three-and-a-half years.

One of the distinctive aspects of spiritual/religious gatherings at Edmonton Institution, the federal maximum security prison for men where I serve as chaplain, is that the men who attend the gatherings come from a variety of denominational and faith traditions and none. As a Roman Catholic layman commissioned by my bishop to serve on behalf of the Church, I'm grateful for the diversity of these gatherings. I'm grateful also for the diversity of the caregivers who cooperate with me in providing support for the men in the custody and care of the institution. I'm thinking here not only of the chaplains who work in the institution (an Anglican and a Muslim) but also of the various clergy/pastoral visitors (evangelical Christians, Mormons, Jews, Muslims, Wiccans, and others) who enter the institution periodically to support prisoners of their particular spiritual/religious tradition.

It could be argued that there is no great virtue in the sort of ecumenical and interfaith cooperation I'm describing here. After all, the prisoners who attend religious/spiritual gatherings here are not exactly free to choose with whom they will gather. Likewise, we caregivers who support them on their way are also not exactly free to choose the persons with whom we work on their behalf. It could be that all of us, prisoners and caregivers alike, engage in ecumenical and interfaith cooperation only because our need to work together outweighs our reservations about doing so.

Although there may be some superficial truth to such arguments, the deeper truth is that the ecumenical and interfaith cooperation we enjoy at Edmonton Institution is deeply beneficial and even, I will argue, redemptive. After telling a few stories designed to provide a better sense of the sort of ecumenical/interfaith cooperation that occurs at Edmonton Institution, I'll have a few more words to say

about the ways in which such cooperation, precisely insofar as it involves our coming together in our mutual need, is indeed beneficial, redemptive, and in keeping with the desire of the God of compassionate love who has chosen to dwell in Jesus Christ and, in and through him, in the least of the prisoners in the custody and care of Edmonton Institution.

How to pray

My first story is about my involvement with the Muslim chaplain employed at Edmonton Institution. Some weeks ago, he and I needed to respond to a relatively minor but potentially serious conflict that occurred between two men at Friday Muslim prayer, apparently over a bad debt. Prior to meeting with the prayer participants, we discussed the standards we wanted to maintain during the prayers and reviewed our criteria for adding names to our list of participants. Although we were under some pressure to restrict participation to Muslims, he argued, and I agreed, that the Muslim prayers, like all other religious/spiritual gatherings at Edmonton Institution, should be left open to all persons of good will. In addition to discussing issues related to Friday prayers, we explored the relative importance of the *shahada* (the Muslim declaration of faith) and the rite of Christian baptism in the faith life of Muslims and Christians respectively. Since having the conversation I'm recounting here, my Muslim brother in chaplaincy and I have continued to work closely together. Last week, when I told him that my wife and I would soon be attending a ceremony in Assisi commemorating the death of St. Francis, he said, "Pray for us," which we will surely do.

My second story relates to my collaboration with the pastor of an evangelical Christian congregation in northern Alberta who will soon be entering the institution to baptize one of

the men in our care who had previously attended his church. I'll call the young man Daniel (not his real name). When I first contacted the pastor regarding Daniel's desire for baptism, he asked me if I would be willing to meet with Daniel in order to assess his readiness and sincerity. He recommended a meeting designed to ensure that Daniel understood the meaning of a key passage in Paul's Letter to the Romans. After the meeting, I phoned the pastor to say that, in light of the standards he had communicated to me, Daniel was sincerely ready to be baptized. The ceremony is scheduled for next week. When I told the pastor I would be away from the institution and on vacation at the time, he expressed his regret, adding that he had been looking forward to meeting in me in person. I too regret that I won't be present. I would have enjoyed meeting him, celebrating Daniel's baptism, and celebrating also the good work the pastor and I have done together.

An inclusive circle

My third and final story is one of many I could tell about my cooperation with the Aboriginal elders who work at Edmonton Institution. We work together in many ways, especially when the Aboriginal men in our custody and care report a death or terminal illness in the family. My role as chaplain in such situations generally includes meeting with the men to support them in their grief through attentive listening, while the role of the elders is typically to support them through smudge and sweat lodge ceremonies. Together, we support on compassionate grounds the men's applications for escorted temporary absences that would allow them to attend a funeral service or make a deathbed visit. We also meet from time to time for lunch. During the meal, we discuss matters of common concern, including, for example, Canada's residential schools and the challenge of healing the intergenerational trauma that they and other instruments of colonialism have produced. The other day, one of the elders told me that he had recently visited one of the province's medium security prisons, where many of the men from Edmonton Institution were making good progress on their healing path. Their success, he said, points to the good work we do here. Then, making an inclusive circle with his arm generous enough to include the chaplains, he added, "All of us."

Ecumenical work

The elder's words, I believe, are a fitting tribute to the ecumenical and interfaith cooperation we enjoy here at Edmonton Institution. Such cooperation, I believe, is beneficial, redemptive, and in keeping with the desire of the

God of compassionate love who has chosen to dwell in Jesus Christ and, in and through him, in the least of the prisoners in our care.

Let it be granted that we come together in our need, sometimes perhaps even reluctantly. Far from being denied or minimized, this is a truth that should be celebrated. The prisoners come to religious/spiritual gatherings in their need for life-giving relationship with God and/or with the other persons gathered. And we caregivers, we who are privileged to be able to support them in their journey, we cooperate with each other in our own need: our need to live the spiritualities/faiths we profess by caring respectfully for others in need, to be sure, but also our need to learn to cooperate with each other, to appreciate the gifts that each of us will bring to the banquet table when the great festival of God's love is established, and to grow in freedom to be ourselves in loving relationship with God and with one another.

In pondering the fact that the ecumenical and interfaith cooperation we enjoy at Edmonton Institution originates with the prisoner in need, I can't help but call to mind the Son of Man's saying, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; . . . for I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt. 25.34,36). It's easy enough to interpret these words by emphasizing what we need to do for the Lord living and active in the prisoner in need, but it may be more helpful to emphasize what the Lord, living and active in the prisoner in need, does for us. Our response, of course, remains critical. And from this point of view, the ecumenical and interfaith cooperation we enjoy at Edmonton Institution is especially instructive, for it teaches us that we as caregivers can show love for the prisoner in need only by respecting him as a Muslim if he is a Muslim, as an evangelical Christian if he is an evangelical Christian, as a follower of traditional Aboriginal spirituality if he is a follower of traditional spirituality. The same is true of our cooperation as caregivers in support of the prisoner in need, for we can show love to each other only if we respect and honour each other's spiritual and religious traditions. If we take to heart this teaching, we have good reason to believe that it may well be in precisely this way that the reign of God will one day be established in our midst.

The Principles of Restorative Justice

Lucie Painchaud

Lucie Painchaud has a background in philosophy and has worked in education. After that, she worked in corrections, where she mainly identified and took charge of suicidal prison inmates, and happened to attend a convention of Correctional Service Canada chaplains in 2001 on the theme of restorative justice. Since that time, she has turned a dream into reality by helping to found the Centre for Services in Restorative Justice for the Quebec City region in 2013. She is the Centre's director and coordinator.

Just as we find healing rest from the hardships of urban life by taking a trip to the country, we may be called to enter a process of restorative justice in order to find healing and inner peace. This involves taking a new look at justice, or an innovative way of “doing” justice, through a model that offers the potential of an ultimate encounter between the offended party and the offender.

Restorative approaches can be used in many sectors of society, such as schools, the workplace, neighbourhoods, and also in prison settings and community corrections. This approach is based on a specific philosophy that blends values and methods, some of which have been borrowed from traditional indigenous culture. These values are essentially open-mindedness, inclusivity, responsibility, sharing one's truth, recognition, empathy and even forgiveness.

In this article, we will show some of the basic principles of restorative justice by applying them in the pragmatic context of encounters between crime victims and detainees or ex-offenders. Since the main focus of this article will be the considerable strength of a type of justice that restores basic human dignity, we will examine the place of forgiveness and its role in the journey toward healing and reconciliation.

Restorative justice

The theoreticians do not agree on a single definition of restorative justice. The semantic diversity of *restore* is consistent with the complexity of its intention: from the Latin *restaurare*, “renew” or “rebuild”, it has acquired the English meanings of “give back”, “return”, “bring (something) back into existence”, “return (something) to an earlier or original condition by repairing it, cleaning it”, “bring (someone) back to an earlier and better condition”, “put (someone) back in a position”.

There is no doubt that restorative justice is based on humanist and spiritual principles. In this regard, it is our opinion that the very concept of restorative justice is on the same level as spirituality, including the participant's secular and religious beliefs, which gives it an ecumenical and pluralistic, and thus universal, character. It is spiritual in the sense that we are getting people to work with their inner strengths, their self-respect and respect for others and for life. The empowerment and internalization involved in the process call on spiritual growth to help participants emerge from isolation and break free from victimization or delinquent behaviour.

Victim-offender encounters

In the experience of Sister Thérèse DeVillette, the challenges to be met and the expectations of both victims and detainees are much the same: increase their understanding of the violations they have experienced, free themselves from the burden of destructive emotions (insecurity, fear, anger, desire for revenge) and move into a sacred space in which telling the story of their experience, or bearing witness to it, can bring about reconciliation and healing in the presence of facilitators and community representatives.

In fact, Robert Cario says that victim assistance is inconceivable today without an encounter between the offender and the victim, an apparent paradox. Also, detainees themselves sometimes admit that they are afraid of the idea of meeting victims. That is a challenge in itself for them, especially since, when firing a shot into the air, for example, they may not be aware of committing a crime that affects people.

In other words, restorative justice seeks to consider the viewpoint of the offender at the same time as the viewpoint of the victim who has been wronged or has suffered a loss. This is of prime importance based on the principle of fairness, the spirit of justice that wants to respond to the urgent need

to recognize crime victims and their right to be heard, as well as to increase the chances of rehabilitating the offender. Seen from this perspective, restorative justice offers a different look at criminality and criminals, or, as they are now called, detainees.

To better grasp the scope of these encounters, it must be pointed out that the victim's suffering does not simply go away as a result of rational understanding, but rather because of the relationship with the offender, which makes truth possible. In reality, the heart speaks and becomes the driving force for mutual understanding: helping the other realize what one is experiencing, understanding oneself and understanding each other. This is how understanding leads to taking the step over the threshold of forgiveness.

The place of forgiveness

It goes without saying that the question of forgiveness is never put forward during the preparatory meetings. However, when a criminal admits his guilt and says openly that he is responsible for what he did – in addition to making honourable amends – it is because he is developing a feeling of empathy: his mask is starting to crumble and he is becoming someone worthy of forgiveness. Being forgiven restores his humanity and attests to the humanity of the victim or community offended. Once this stage has been reached, the labels of “victim” and “detainee, offender, murderer, criminal or monster” are dropped, and the boundaries between participants are blurred to the point where these labels no longer have a purpose.

When it happens, forgiveness places the victim in a position of strength because he or she is the only one who can give it. According to certain victims, the soul can heal only after accepting and forgiving. Forgiveness is a gift and not something that can be earned. Nor does forgiving mean forgetting. First and foremost, it means freeing oneself. Of course, without forgiveness, the heart is trapped in a cycle of resentment, hard feelings and violent thoughts. Forgiveness means taking back power over one's life instead of leaving it in the hands of the person who hurt us.

Moreover, some participants consider the process highly therapeutic. A catharsis, a freeing release of emotions, is felt by a person when sharing from the heart, leading to reconciliation with self, with the other or with others present in the circle. W.R. Miller and J. C'de Baca describe this phenomenon as a “quantum change” in which bitterness

disappears, rage is transmuted and burdens are removed. In other words, an epiphany is experienced that leads to the revelation of a new meaning in life, when the person is reborn to what he or she is in soul and conscience.

Conclusion

In closing, the evolving and transformative process brought about by restorative justice is aimed at restoring fullness of life to a wounded humanity. It is an ideal way, for anyone wishing to take it, to give meaning to the suffering caused by transgression and rebuild one's basic identity. As Achiel Peelman has pointed out, healing is not just a physical process, but also a psychological and spiritual one. Fundamentally, it comes from the spirit, it is a spiritual process—a matter of peace and harmony. Through this holistic approach, forgiveness heals the memory and brings grieving to an end.

In reality, the heart speaks and becomes the driving force for mutual understanding: helping the other realize what one is experiencing, understanding oneself and understanding each other.

All in all, may we be able to see the victim-detainee encounter as the full and deep meaning of justice. In addition, as restorative justice offers a counter-discourse to remedy a context of repression and disinformation, it calls for a change of mentality and deserves to be better known by the general public. Among other things, it is currently very meaningful in terms of the advancement of social and criminal justice. On one hand, it would be desirable to see it offered in centres for victims, who need to feel free to choose this approach. On the other hand, it should be a possible choice in cases of serious crime with detainees or repeat offenders, often considered a lost cause, but who are nonetheless capable of encountering victims who are similar to the ones they have harmed.

Christians working for Jesus' justice in the midst of the excluded

Nancy Labonté

Nancy Labonté has been president of the Conseil des Églises pour la justice et la criminologie, section Québec (the Quebec section of the Church Council on Justice and Corrections) since 2013 and has been a project manager there since 2010. She teaches at the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the Université de Montréal while completing her doctorate on social cohesion.

Each year since 1996, the national Restorative Justice Week has been an opportunity for the *Conseil des Églises pour la justice et la criminologie, section Québec (CEJCQ)* to coordinate a community forum in the Montreal area and strengthen ties of cooperation between the members of the restorative justice network. Last year's theme was "Who will dare to humanize punitive justice?" The organizing committee for Restorative Justice Week activities was made up of the CEJCQ team working together with the *Aumônerie communautaire de Montréal (ACMTL)* (Community Chaplaincy of Montreal), the Centre for Services in Restorative Justice (CSJR) and Montreal Southwest Community Ministries (MSCM). A number of activities were held, including a talk by Brian McDonough on the impact of the *Safe Streets and Communities Act* passed by the federal government two years ago (Bill C-10) and a participatory workshop on humanizing punitive justice, featuring the participation of Danielle Trotter, writer of the television drama *Unité 9* about women in prison. During a discussion of how living conditions in a correctional setting are portrayed on television, the comments were touching. Speaking together in a circle made up of anonymous persons who could have been inmates, workers, citizens or even a television screenwriter meant that different points of view were shared. This holistic approach is consistent with one of the principles of restorative justice, which is that all the parties affected by the crime receive a fair hearing. The CEJCQ encourages and supports all citizens in taking charge of problems related to restorative and preventive justice.

The aim of restorative justice is to restore the balance that has been upset between the parties: society, the offender and the victim.

Restoring balance

The aim of restorative justice is to restore the balance that has been upset between the parties: society, the offender and the victim. The central focus of restorative justice is to emphasize reparation for the harm done to people and relationships. It is an alternative approach to justice introduced by community groups attached to Christian churches, including the Mennonite churches. In its secular form, its principles were institutionalized by Correctional Service Canada in the 1990s. It is now promoted in Canada by prison and community chaplains and by a network of community organizations. Restorative justice covers a variety of practices: the classic ones include dialogue programs between detainees and victims, and circles of support and accountability for sexual offenders. However, a large number of initiatives are also practices based on restorative justice principles. Restorative justice covers initiatives that enable incarcerated persons – and those who are reintegrating into society – to take responsibility for the harm caused by the offence. Broadly speaking, the aim of restorative justice practices is to reduce conflict, whether in international politics, criminal justice, interfaith dialogue, or in schools and organizations. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the harm caused to First Nations people through the residential schools is a national example. In most cases, the breakdown is temporary, partial and can be restored. Restoration is possible. Plus it is done gradually, in contrast to forgiveness or pardon, which is a complete reversal in an instant, to an absence of feeling. In fact, it is not essential for everything to be repaired for relationships to go back to being healthy. The techniques of restorative justice involve telling stories and recounting the experience. Talking things through leads to mutual understanding and frees the person from what has been kept secret. It sheds light on the event and helps make sense of situations that make no sense at all.

On the Canadian scene, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC) was formed in 1974, and its headquarters are still in Ottawa. Since it was founded, the CCJC has sought to get the Churches involved in alternative justice. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Council of Churches support this bilingual and ecumenical organization, which has representatives from the following religious groups: the Salvation Army, the Mennonite Central Committee Canada, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Disciples of Christ in Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Presbyterian Church of Canada, the United Church of Canada, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The Quebec branch has been operating since 1981, and counts the Evangelical Pentecostal Church and the Haitian Baptist Church as members as well.

A shared commitment

The mission of the CEJCQ is to promote preventive and restorative justice based on Christian values by interacting with law-makers, offenders, victims, the community and society through research activities and support to groups and individuals engaged in growth processes. Aware that the justice system cannot be improved without the involvement of a better-informed public and the commitment of Christians, the CEJCQ wants to be an instrument to raise awareness in the Christian community, and to offer information and training through its activities and the engagement of the members of the collective. Crime, in all its forms, defines a type of conflictual relationship between citizens, where the actions of some infringe on the rights of others. It is the natural by-product of the interaction between a person's anti-social tendencies, on one hand, and indifference, lack of support or supervision and rejection of the individual, on the other.

The CEJCQ is noted for its involvement in organizing activities during the annual Restorative Justice Week, the different resources it offers crime victims, the alternatives to incarceration it promotes and its ongoing training of volunteers, partners and committed individuals. During a reflection on its mission in 2003, presided by one of its founding members, Bertrand Gendron, nine guiding principles were identified for the services the CEJCQ could potentially offer:

1. The CEJCQ is made up of Christ's witnesses in preventive and restorative justice, among other things. As witnesses, we adopt his example of love, mercy and forgiveness.
2. As representatives of faith communities, we believe that we can, and must, be a voice for preventive and restorative justice.
3. Each and every human being is unique, even in what he or she experiences. What he or she experiences when in a situation of need, whether as offender or victim, has personal consequences. Meeting his or her needs must therefore be tailored to each individual out of respect for his or her rights and values.
4. We believe that human beings can improve and live in a positive way. In a difficult situation, they can go beyond themselves with the support of a community that makes a point of listening to them and supporting them in their efforts to make progress.
5. All human beings need to be made aware of and held accountable for their duties. This is true of communities and societies.
6. All human beings, even me, need to be heard as they express their life experiences, expectations and needs. They also expect to be considered active participants in the process of planning and obtaining the services they require.
7. Delinquency, while attributable to an individual's anti-social motivations, develops in a social context characterized by negative influences, rejection and lack of appropriate support from the surrounding environment.
8. Victims often suffer harm that cannot be quantified and consequently require an environment that will favour the healing process and reintegration into society.
9. We believe in non-violent conflict resolution that is centered on the person in his or her dignity and worth.

We believe that human beings can improve.

A unique approach

The CEJCQ's approach seeks to be humanistic, holistic and community-based. The individual must be seen as an active participant in his or her journey toward the realization that the event is symptomatic of unfinished business, also taking into consideration that respecting the person's development profile is fundamental in becoming aware of the uniqueness of the whole person. In the past 25 years, the CEJCQ has seen a multitude of coordinators and volunteers come and go, and each one has influenced its mission. We think of Mary Beemans and Cyndi Ayala in terms of its glory years, but we must not forget that Laurent Champagne, a prison chaplain, also coordinated the organization and served as its president both in Quebec and at the national level. However, 20 years after the organization was formed, one of its biggest donors withdrew, forcing it to use up its last resources and rely solely on the contribution of volunteers. Circumstances led the CEJCQ to cut back to the bare minimum, which is coordinating and leading activities during the national Restorative Justice Week held every November. Little by little, the education aspect has developed, aimed at training reflection and action groups in Christian milieus. The CEJCQ is thinking of new ways to capitalize on communities and their strengths to prevent crime and provide reparation for offences. However, the organization does not seem to have exhausted its resources just yet. A trainee during the fall 2013 quarter reflected on the theology of restorative justice.

It is possible to proudly accept its Christian roots and explore with believers what Christian justice is and how Jesus tried to place himself in the midst of the excluded.

The organization would like to reach out to Christian faith communities. Giving a workshop at a church is a way to offer education and evangelization that has not been fully exploited. As part of a round table reflection on one of the principles of restorative justice, the group is led to recognize the Gospel stories that promote restorative justice. It is possible to proudly accept its Christian roots and explore with believers what Christian justice is and how Jesus tried to place himself

in the midst of the excluded. How can the Christian Church be organized to welcome the marginalized? We hope to create a basic evangelization movement patterned on Jesus' justice. A workshop on Jesus in the midst of the excluded will be presented starting in September to interested groups. You may contact the CEJCQ about presenting a workshop to your group to reflect on the restorative justice of Jesus.

This brief presentation of the *Conseil des Églises pour la justice et la criminologie, section Québec* would not be complete without a prayer that summarizes the collective's intentions:

Prayer for the challenges of restorative justice

*We walk with you Jesus, as you did,
Taking care to include the most vulnerable in our mission,
As well as the powerful, and ordinary people,
By inspiring families to love
And rebuild and repair broken lives,
By becoming aware of our responsibility for criminal
behaviour,
By proclaiming your name to whoever will receive it,
By reaching out to communities that can bring wisdom to
the world,
By making your message and your inspiration available
to all,
To deal with people in all their complexity, beauty and
mistakes,
To understand that a person is more than a prison
sentence,
To celebrate your teachings in our hopes for a just world.
Give us the strength to accept difficulties and use them to
renew ourselves.
Because new wine does not belong in old wineskins.*

Reference:

Conseil des églises pour la justice et la criminologie, section Québec. 2003. La Mission du CEJCQ : Ma part dans la balance. Internal document.

The Centre for Services in Restorative Justice

Estelle Drouvin

Estelle Drouvin, a legal professional, is the coordinator of the Centre for Services in Restorative Justice and a spiritual director at the Centre Le Pèlerin in Montreal.

The *Centre de services de justice réparatrice* (Centre for Services in Restorative Justice) was officially founded on September 11, 2001, as a result of an encounter between a French-Canadian Catholic Sister (Thérèse de Villette) and an English-Canadian Mennonite pastor (David Shantz). The very origins of this community organization are a strong symbol of peace.

An ecumenical encounter that resulted in a visionary work

At the time, David Shantz was a prison chaplain at a medium- and maximum-security federal penitentiary (for sentences of two years and over). He realized that he was missing “the other half of the story” in his work with prison inmates. This other half of the story was on the other side of the wall, where the victims were.

He had heard about the first experiment in restorative justice in Canada, which took place in 1974 in Kitchener, Ontario, as an initiative of local Mennonites. It was based, among other things, on First Nations talking circles. Excited about the very promising results from young offenders encountering their victims, he wanted to offer this kind of opportunity in Quebec. However, since he was working with detainees who had received long sentences, that was a big challenge. He then decided to create a space where detainees and persons who had been the victims of similar crimes could talk in the presence of members of the community. The director of the penitentiary also shared his vision, and the first encounters were held during the 1990s. All the participants spontaneously spoke of a sense of inner freedom as well as a transformation in their social relationships. Unfortunately, these encounters were isolated events, and only people who knew David Shantz knew about their existence. David Shantz did not have the time to develop them.

That was when Sister Thérèse de Villette crossed his path. She had arrived from Chad, where she had been a missionary. Although she truly loved the country, she had to leave it in a hurry after the murder of one of her consœurs. During her exile, she learned that the person who had committed the crime was an ex-detainee whom Thérèse had wanted to help with his social reintegration. Shattered, she looked for answers to her questions and sought a pathway to liberation that was in keeping with her convictions. It was only after much searching that she heard about the encounters being organized by David Shantz. She decided to take part. It was

a turning point in her life, and prompted her to go back to studying criminology on the subject, as she explains in her book *Faire justice autrement*, published by Mediaspaul.

Founded in 2011

She encouraged David Shantz to set up the Centre for Services in Restorative Justice, along with other early players, including Raoul Lincourt, its current president. The organization, which is a registered charity, received its letters patent on September 11, 2001, a truly significant date for it to come into existence.

Since its beginnings, more than 600 people have participated in detainee-victim encounters, either in a group or face-to-face. For several consecutive weeks, each participant found him- or herself on an equal footing in a safe environment, thanks to the caring and attentive presence of a male facilitator and a female professional volunteer facilitator. The encounter is on a voluntary basis and is confidential. It is not a program that can be added to a detainee’s file.

The feedback received is eloquent:

- “The weight I’ve been carrying is gone.”
- “I feel freer.”
- “I left the guilt and shame inside those walls when a detainee asked me to give them to him.”
- “I felt accepted even after I told them what I had done.”
- “I feel like being part of society.”
- “I’m affirming myself more. I’m taking my place.”
- “My relationships have changed; they’ve become more constructive.”

Fourteen years of experience show that restorative justice is a “win-win” proposition that is deeply human.

The Centre does not categorize itself as Christian. It is for anyone who has been affected by a crime (attackers, victims, third parties, citizens) whatever their beliefs. But for those who approach it from a Christian perspective, there are numerous connections with how Jesus acted for justice.

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them”

The people who take part in these encounters are often amazed that the circle is more than the sum of its parts. It

has a life of its own. Something (or “Someone”, Christians would say) bigger is there. This is perceived in different ways. It can be incredible coincidences (people who look strangely like the actual victim or someone from his or her family or friends, for instance), masks that are taken off (hidden truths that are revealed), healing words that come out of inner silence, sometimes a sincere asking for forgiveness that spreads balm on a wound...

Restorative justice is a prophetic pathway. It carries within itself the seed of a society that is turning into a community. It is up to each one of us to give it eyes, ears, arms, legs and a heart.

It is your family, and you are welcome to join it!

Website: www.csjr.org



The 50th Anniversary of the Decree on Ecumenism

Gregory Baum

Gregory Baum, is a emeritus professor at the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University, a Catholic theologian, a peritus (expert) with the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity at Vatican II, and an author of numerous volumes with among the more recent : Truth and Relevance : Catholic Theology in French Quebec Since the Quiet Revolution (McGill Queen’s University Press) and A theologian to discover : Fernand Dumont : Fernand Dumont, sociologist, philosopher and theologian (Novalis).

On November, 21 1964 the Second Vatican Council promulgated the Decree on Ecumenism that has radically changed the relation of the Catholic Church to the other Christian Churches. I remember well how happy we were on that day in Rome. I worked as an appointed theologian (peritus) at the Secretariat for Christian Unity, the conciliar commission responsible for drafting the Decree.

The Catholic Church’s conversion to ecumenism

When we met the first time at the Secretariat in 1960, the Catholic Church’s official attitude towards the Churches of the Reformation was still totally negative. They were looked upon as heretical communities, deprived of divine grace. Their members did not have saving faith. In the encyclical *Mortalium animos* of 1928 Pius XI had condemned the ecumenical movement started by Protestant churchmen early in the 20th century. If these men truly desire Christian unity, Pius XI wrote, they should return to the Catholic Church and start obeying me. As late as 1943, Pius XII’s encyclical *Mystici corporis* still insisted that the Holy Spirit refuses to dwell in the hearts of Christians and their communities, unwilling to submit to the government of the Catholic Church.

Despite the ecclesiastical No, Catholic theologians had been in dialogue with the ecumenical movement and, since 1948, with the newly founded World Council of Churches. Basing itself on their work, the Secretariat had composed a draft for the Decree on ecumenism. After an extensive debate at the Council, the Decree was approved and promulgated in 1964. It announced the new Catholic teaching: i) dissident Christians are truly Christians, grafted upon Christ’s body by faith and baptism, ii) the dissident Churches are used by the Holy Spirit to mediate salvation to their members: they are thus part of the ecclesial mystery, and iii) the Catholic Church regards the ecumenical movement as the work of the Holy Spirit and intends to join it.

The Decree on Ecumenism agreed with the World Council of Churches that ecumenism was a renewal movement. It was not a search for the lowest common denominator, nor for a set of acceptable compromises. Instead ecumenism involved the effort of the Churches to become more faithful to the Gospel and to the best of their own tradition. As participants of the ecumenical movement, the Churches were even willing to look at the dark side of their own history, acknowledge their infidelities, and commit themselves to renewal and reform. The conciliar Decree accepts this task for the Catholic Church in this paragraph:

Christ summons the Church to continual reformation as she sojourns here on earth. The Church is always in need of this, in so far as she is an institution of human beings here on earth. Thus if, in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or even in the way that church teaching has been formulated - to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself - these can and should be set right at the opportune moment. (no. 6)

That the Catholic Church is *semper reformanda* had not been acknowledged for centuries.

The Churches' growing indifference to ecumenism

After the Council the Catholic Church initiated dialogue committees with representatives of the Orthodox Churches and the various Anglican and Protestant Churches. The achievement of these committees was, with a few exceptions, largely theoretical, devoid of practical consequences. In the 1970s, the Canadian Catholic Church cooperated with the other Canadian Churches to formulate a common Christian social ethics, including joint statements on social and economic justice addressed to the Canadian government. Yet this ecumenical cooperation did not last for long; it was interrupted by the emerging disagreement between the Catholic Church on one side and the Anglican and United Churches on the other over pastoral issues regarding women and human sexuality.

The increasing secularisation of the industrial societies of the West preoccupied all the Churches, leading them to a growing indifference to the ecumenical movement. Since the Churches were losing large numbers of their members, they experienced financial difficulties and were forced to abandon many important pastoral projects. What they now fostered was a strong sense of their own confessional identity, rather than ecumenical cooperation worldwide. The World Council of Churches survived, but unfortunately lost the great influence it had enjoyed. Worried about their future in the secular culture, the Churches now promoted among their members a healthy pride in their confessional tradition, allowing ecumenism to become a minor concern.

Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Decree on Ecumenism, I do not wish to write a negative article, complaining about the inaction of the Churches. I prefer to describe the positive effect of the Decree on several cultural trends in our societies and the world at large.

I only mention in passing that the Decree very quickly changed the relations between Catholics and Protestants

in North America. In the field of ministry, ecumenical cooperation is taking place in hospitals, prisons and other public institutions; in the field of theology, an ecumenical desire for mutual understanding has become the rule; and in the field of personal relations, a radical change has occurred, overcoming the prejudices of the past and producing ecumenical sympathy for Churches other than one's own. This sympathy is not equally extended to conservative Christian communities that reject ecumenism on principle. Yet what I wish to stress in this short article is the wider cultural impact of the innovative experience of ecumenical dialogue.

Dialogue across boundaries: an invention of the 20th century

A radical new invention was the dialogue practised by the ecumenical movement of Anglican-Protestant origin, a movement Catholics joined after the Second Vatican Council. Dialogue was a new kind of conversation. It did not aim to convert the partner to one's own understanding of truth; it demanded instead a careful listening to the partner, sympathy for his or her serious concerns, and an effort to look upon their proposals not from one's own, but from their perspective. Dialogue was not a reasoned attempt to win an argument and prove that the partner was wrong. It aimed rather at greater mutual understanding. To grasp what the other was saying one had to be willing to put oneself in his or her shoes. Dialogue was a trusting conversation in which you presented the truth professed by your Church, while freely admitting the one-sided emphasis and the prejudices that had become associated with this confession.

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This was radically new. Even the traditional conversations of philosophers were concerned with who was right and who was wrong. They tried to understand 'the other' from their own perspective, not from his or her perspective. The idea of putting themselves into the shoes of 'the other' did not occur to them. Of great importance was the philosophical anthropology of 20th century thinkers, such as Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel, which provided an understanding of what the respectful encounter with 'the other' meant in one's own coming to be as a person. These philosophers laid the theoretical foundation for dialogue across boundaries.

This new self-understanding of the person, one must add, was emerging at this time in the culture of the West. .

The Christian thinkers and pastors who invented ecumenical dialogue did not base themselves on philosophical reflections. They responded creatively to the troubling religious insight that Christians are presently deeply divided and, at the same time, share a common faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour, who wants to rescue them from their disunity. Working for Christian unity based on this troubling insight could not involve arguments over who is right and who is wrong, since it had to respect the existing unity in Christ Christians already shared.

I wish to argue that the invention of dialogue, promoted by the ecumenical movement in the widest circles, far beyond the limited network of philosophers, had an extraordinary cultural influence. In the decades after the Holocaust, the Churches sought dialogical relations with representatives of the Jewish community, including Orthodox and Reformed as well as believers and non-believers. Because the Churches had taken for granted that their mission was to convert Jews to the Christian faith, they now had to rethink this inheritance and develop theological arguments to justify their turn to dialogue. This conversion to dialogue took place at the Second Vatican Council and the World Council of Churches.

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The deep divisions in the human family, giving rise to wars and violent struggles, are often legitimated by arguments drawn from religious traditions. Hans Küng was one of the first theologians who said that there can be no peace among the nations, unless there is peace among the world religions. Does the Gospel summon Christians to convert believers in pagan religions or does it call for dialogue with them in search of reconciliation? In 2000, Cardinal Ratzinger in the instruction *Dominus Jesus* still argued that interreligious dialogue undermined the Church's mission and that Catholics involved in this dialogue may not forget that their participation aims at the conversion of their partners to the Catholic truth. He changed his mind, a few years after he became Benedict XVI, now praising interreligious dialogue

as an exercise of the Church in the service of peace. A similar wrestling over interreligious dialogue has been taking place in the other Christian Churches.

This conversion to dialogue took place at the Second Vatican Council and the World Council of Churches.

Of even wider significance is the practice of dialogue between different cultures. Invented by the early ecumenists, dialogue came to guide the Church's relation to the Jewish tradition and the world religions, and was eventually practiced to foster the peaceful and enriching exchange between cultures. The passage from ecumenism to interreligious dialogue has affected the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, which now fosters respect for all religions, and the passage from interreligious to intercultural dialogue persuaded the interreligious Centre Monchanin of Montreal to become, in 1990, the Intercultural Institute of Montreal.

A great task of intercultural dialogue, an effort of world historical importance, is the elaboration of universally acceptable ethical norms, a common world ethos, through an extended dialogue involving all cultural traditions. Catholics used to think that their formulation of the natural law had universal validity, but they now recognize that civilisations and the cultures associated with them have different sets of values. They all love the true and the good, but what they mean in concrete terms differs from culture to culture. In his public conversation with the Jürgen Habermas in 2004, Cardinal Ratzinger agreed with the German philosopher that what is needed a dialogue involving all cultures, European and non-European, to work out ethical principles and values that can be affirmed universally.¹

In the 1990s Macedonia was the only republic produced by the dismantlement of Yugoslavia that had avoided violent struggles, despite the high tension between the Orthodox Christians, the majority, the Albanese Muslims, a substantial minority, and small communities of Catholics, Methodists and Jews. These groupings were divided by religion and culture. The religious leaders recognized that if each group promoted its own truth, there would be violent outbursts. They said to one another, "our choice is between dialogue or death." Macedonia may well be the world.

Beyond Unitatis Redintegratio – Hope renewed

Father John Walsh

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Unitatis Redintegratio (Decree on Ecumenism) many commentaries will analyze the document, speak to its strengths and weaknesses, and, hopefully, renew a universal desire for ecumenism. The document inspired me to work ecumenically in a developing inter-faith world

The fiftieth Anniversary of Unitatis Redintegratio

Fifty years ago the buzz word was ecumenism. Christians were coming together to find ways to fulfill the will of Jesus spoken in his farewell address (John 17): *That they may be one*. Hope erupted. Centuries of division were transformed into the hope for Christian unity. The differences of Catholic and Protestant traditions were confronted in dialogue. Similitudes were discovered and they were soon recognized as outweighing the differences. International, national, and local dialogues were established. There could be no turning back. However, Christian faith differed among Christians through different ways of interpreting who Jesus was, what he stood for, and how he was to be followed. Pluralism was evident in these varied interpretations of how Christians were to develop a relationship with Jesus. Since the Protestant Reformation many Christians had not spoken to each other and had privately and publicly denounced each other's interpretations. Protestants held that only the Scriptures, "sola scriptura," offered a way to Jesus and the Word was accepted literally and interpreted personally. The Bible was inerrant as received. The primacy of the Pope was considered non-biblical by Protestants. Anglicans maintained a sacramental system but Catholics did not consider the sacraments true sacraments because the ordination of Bishops and priests were invalid since there was no physical succession of Bishops from the Apostles. The Roman Catholic Church opted for a Church in which grace came to the believers through the seven sacraments. In the history of the Roman Church the Bible was eventually placed on the *Index of Forbidden Books* prohibiting Catholics from reading the sacred scriptures. The very possibility of entering into ecumenical and an inter-faith dialogues raised the spirits of believers from all faith traditions.

Biblical renewal

All renewal in the Roman Catholic Church began with biblical renewal and the acceptance of the historical-critical method to interpret the Sacred Scriptures. The method was given official approval by the Church in *Divino Aflante Spiritu*, in 1943. The history of the bible in the Christian community is a story of a community, at first transmitted orally and then in written form, that recalls the relationship of humanity with

the God of history revealing truth at the intersection of the human and the divine. In the Roman Catholic tradition it was once held that the "deposit of faith," thus the end of revelation, occurred with the death of the last apostle and the New Testament was the "corpus" of apostolic teaching. The exegesis of the Christian writings concluded that parts of the New Testament were written after the death of the last apostle. The "canon" of scriptures, Hebrew writings and Christian writings, Old and New Testaments, is not the same canon as that accepted in Protestantism and Judaism. The solo authorship of many of the texts has not survived a close scrutiny of the dating of the texts. Catholics used the scriptures as "proof texts" to substantiate theological reflection; however, the application of the historical-critical method to the "proof texts" altered their understanding and questioned the teachings contained in the Tradition of the Church. Eventually the Roman Church placed the Bible on the Index of Forbidden Books disallowing Catholics to read the Bible because it would lead to a relativism from which confusion about faith would result.

The historical-critical method implies a philological and morphological study of the text, a critique through the lens of literary criticism, form criticism, the folk-setting (*Sitz im leben*) and a study of the text beyond a literal interpretation.

In Exodus 3:14 the question is asked *Who is God?* The answer is, *I am who I am* or *I will be who I will be*, since the verb is a future tense, but the theological extension of its meaning is that God is an active God in the midst of the people. Throughout the Hebrew Covenant God is an historical God discovered as present in the history of the Israelites. In the Christian Covenant God is present in Jesus, in history, and his mysterious presence is discovered through the work of the Spirit to determine the signs of the times, where God is active in the world, in history. The Bible was written in a community effort and although a "canon" of scriptures was established, it is the community, in each specific historical period, that interprets and reinterprets the scriptures to see the ongoing revelation of the mysterious presence of God in history. The very affirmation that God is an historical God, active in the midst of the people, and, therefore in the world, offers a perspective of faith that is grounded in dialogue. In the ongoing conversation of humanity the events of history

are the bases upon which the scriptures are to reflect the God/humankind relationship and each successive generation is charged to interpret the scriptures to appreciate the ongoing revelation of God.

Biblical renewal in the Roman Church led Pope John XXIII to call the Second Vatican Council. A re-reading of the Pope's opening address to the 2500 Bishops gathered in the Sistine Chapel in 1962 offers an extremely pastoral approach to bridge the divide between the Church teachings and the practice of the faithful. The most common reference point for ecumenical dialogue is *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Time does not permit a thorough analysis but the decree can be fully understood only in the context of the sixteen documents of the Conciliar Fathers and everything that has occurred since the council in the development of the Church's teaching and

“The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council,”

what has happened in ecumenical praxis.

Ecumenism begins where everything genuinely human is the concern of the Christian who wants to welcome the news of salvation meant for all people who are truly linked with humankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.

Two tables

John Paul II in *Dominicae Cheneae* writes: it has long been possible to apply to the Mass the comparison, made by the Fathers, with the two tables, at which the Church prepares for her children the word of God and the Eucharist, that is, the bread of the Lord. In *Dei Verbum* it reads: “The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord” (21), that “access to sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful,” (22) and “ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” (25)

The divine presence in Word and Eucharist is a real sacramental presence at both tables. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was turned toward God (pro ton theon). *And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.* (Prologue of John's Gospel)

Ecumenism may find in this brief phrase *pros ton Theon* ...

turned towards God ... a theological basis to recognize how God's immanence is the way to encounter God. Christian praxis finds expression through what we say and do and points to the God in whom we believe.

Unitatis redintegratio is to be re-read through the lens of *Nostra Aetate* – the Church's relationship with other religious traditions. There is a great deal to be learned about Christian identity in a multi-faith world.

Brian D. McLaren In *Why did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed cross the Road?* (Hodder & Stoughton Ltd. New York. 2012) writes: Becoming like little children is not such a bad thing. If we are humbled to the point of beginning anew and seeing afresh, maybe, just maybe, our identities will be transformed by grace so that we will reflect more fully the One in whose image we are created, Perhaps, this encounter with the other is the crossroads to which God has been leading us all along, Perhaps this choice, now – to move forward or to hold back, to open arms or to clench fists, to identify ourselves by opposition and hostility or to identify ourselves by hospitality and solidarity –perhaps this is our defining moment.

Christian identity in a multi-faith world

In *Unitatis redintegratio* the first sentence is: “the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council,” and it concludes: “This sacred Council firmly hopes that the initiatives of the daughters and sons of the Catholic Church, joined with those of the separated brethren, will go forward, without obstructing the ways of divine Providence, and without prejudging the future inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Further, this Council declares that it realizes that this holy objective – the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ – transcends human powers and gifts. It therefore places its hope entirely in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. ‘And hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’” (Rom 5:5)

Despite the setback of CDF's *Dominus Jesus* and the reference to the defects of the churches, it is important to understand the complete *Decree on Ecumenism*, which presents three chapters entitled, the Catholic principles on ecumenism, the practice of ecumenism and the churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Roman apostolic see.

A turning point in Catholic history – Modernism

History need not be a static record of people, places and events; history can be a dynamic reflection on the events that have created the ideas and thoughts that have changed the course of history. I first became aware of Maurice Blondel in Gregory Baum's *Man Becoming –God in Secular Experience* (Seabury Press, 1975). Blondel was a modernist. Modernism is a movement toward modifying traditional beliefs in accordance with modern ideas, especially in the Roman Catholic Church in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Blondel insisted, against the official apologetics of the Church, that God is not a divine being facing man from beyond history and that divine revelation is not the communication of heavenly truths to people caught in their own limited earthly knowledge. He considers this an "extrinsicist" approach. He proposed that the only message modern man can accept is a truth that has an "intrinsic" relationship to life, a truth that answers men's questions or corresponds in some way to their experience of reality. Baum shows how the "extrinsicist" approach leads to an outsider God and the "intrinsic" relationship to life to an insider God. In the late 1960s when I was in the Seminary, in theological studies, soon to be ordained a priest, I had to take two anti-modernist oaths.

Immanentism or the method of immanence

Blondel calls "immanentism" or the method of immanence the way truth is accessible to man. The faculty of the real is man's involvement in the whole of life. Action is the organ of truth and is man's willing, choosing and doing, understood as the profound and many-levelled self-affirmation by which he becomes himself and determines his own history. Man is summoned to action. Truth is in man's action and if we reflect on man's action we find implicit in it his values, his vision of life, his view of reality. Action incarnates man's grasp of reality and offers him the possibility of knowing it conceptually. The theology of Blondel transforms the entire mood of the Church's self-understanding. He sets forth the imperative of faith as the "apologetics of the threshold." Man is challenged to believe, to be open to the infinite and this to enter true life, or to refuse faith, to lock himself into a finite frame, and thus to go counter to his destiny. This option is offered to men everywhere, it is only in the Christian message that its reality is fully and concretely spelled out, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There, in Christ, we are brought face to face with the option that

determines our personal history. As we open ourselves to this message in faith, we enter into new life, life caught up in God's grace, which is the only way for man to become truly himself. This is the imperative of the Gospel. The Blondelian shift, Baum's terminology, rejects "extrinsicism" and adopts man's "intrinsic" relationship to life by acknowledging God's

The Good News is that God has redemptively involved himself in human history.

redemptive presence in human history.

Christian faith

Baum clarifies that Christian faith is not new knowledge; it is the new consciousness created by the Christian message. There is a need to refocus on the Gospel in ordinary life. The Good News is that God has redemptively involved himself in human history. God is present to history in the growth and reconciliation of man. God is involved in the humanization of man. God's presence to man, as Word and Spirit, makes humanity possible, not in a closed and finite humanism but in an open-ended humanism. The rejection of newness in human life is, in practical and concrete terms, the denial of God. Man may grow in his humanity even if he is exposed to a dehumanizing community and the breakdown of his cultural environment. Vast numbers of Christians, despite the scriptural witness that God is operative from within human history, think of God as being elevated above men, a supreme person facing them, and hence a special object of human knowledge. However, this God does not exist. God is present in human life through his self-communications and every declaration about God is a declaration about human life. The knowledge of God differs from faith, and goes beyond it intellectually; it clarifies the new consciousness created by faith and reflects on its implications for man's understanding of the whole of reality. The acknowledgement of divine transcendence is a salvational process by which a man is ready again and again to detect the absolutizing trend in himself and in his culture and is willing, by a painful step, to abandon his idolatry. Divine transcendence cannot be accepted by a man once and for all; it is not an idea he acquires and then carries around with him. Divine transcendence must be acknowledged again and again, for every new insight becomes the occasion of a new temptation. It is only because God is Word, offering himself to us as critique, that we have the hope of not losing ourselves in the cultural and religious idolatry that pervades our lives. To that extent we are idolators, we do not know transcendence.

The influence of the modernist Blondel, in his own redemption, can be seen in the theological writings of those theologians who were the most influential in determining the direction of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Time does not permit an in-depth study of Yves Congar or Henri de Lubac but it may be sufficient to say that the best kept secret of the Second Vatican council is that God is redemptively active in the world.

The theological shift was from centering Catholic theology on a study of the Church, Ecclesiology, to a study of Jesus, Christology, and the integration of Christology as the foundation of Ecclesiology into a theology of the Kingdom. Elisabeth Johnson in *Quest For The Living God— Mapping Frontiers In The Theology of God* (Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2007) writes: Reclaiming radical transcendence and radical immanence in equal measure rather than opposing them in a zero-sum game, contemporary theologies view the unknowable God as the very Ground not only of the world's existence but of its fragmentary flourishing and hope against brokenness, they shift attention to the liminal places, the margins of dominating power where God appears in the gestalt of compassion and liberating love, closer to the history and mess of the world. They greatly expand divine graciousness beyond the boundaries of Christianity to include all people, and beyond the human race to include the whole natural world. If it were possible to sum up their rediscoveries in one metaphor, it would be the classic belief that "God is Love" (1 John 4:16). In the Epilogue she pointedly concludes, "that different theologies have been glimpsing God again, not in the sense of deducing all there is to know or uncovering the divine in all clarity --- the Holy is not available in this way --- but in the sense of illuminating or unlocking the unsuspected presence of the gracious divine mystery amid the ambiguity, suffering, justice-making, and vast discoveries of our times ... (it is) the end of the Constantinian era and the dawning of a truly global Christianity."

The end of a dogmatic Theism and the engaging of faith in the process of immanence offers Christians, including Christian-Catholics, new possibilities for theological reflection for individuals, communities and institutions.

Catholics in a pluralist Quebec

The Bishops of Quebec in *Catholics in a Pluralist Québec* are forthright: "it is essential to the mission of the Church to be ecumenical and inter-faith." They state that "clearly the situation has changed dramatically" and that "the new pluralism is not there primarily because of immigration

but because of other factors." There has been a deconfessionalization in the areas of education, health care and social services but a more important factor is that of a transformation of mentalities. Changes are effecting a further secularization of Quebec. The Bishops write: "The process of secularization can lead to a culture and lifestyle that makes no reference to God, to the sacred, or to a religious perspective." They go on to say that "the distinct tone of Quebec's new pluralism is that many Catholics have opted for more discreet expressions of presence and witness." They add that the outcome of the digital revolution for most of society has been the appearance and enrichment of a new and pioneering pluralism, one with borders. They offer the causes of a militant anti-religious position that strongly opposes religion and its place in the public square: a) Religion is a purely private matter; b) Religion is a backward and outmoded phenomenon; c) Religion is a tool to create, impose, maintain and justify patriarchal and discriminatory power structures; d) Religions are by definition sources of division and hatred. The Church is not a showy and secret cult and new gestures, symbols, and practices unfamiliar to Quebec society are present."

The Bishops of Quebec see that the challenge is to create an open and hospitable public sphere where the values and beliefs of everyone can be expressed in mutual respect.

A Church in dialogue – Catholic ecumenical commitment

The Bishops of Canada on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of *Unitatis Redintegratis* produced a document entitled, *A Church In Dialogue- Catholic Ecumenical Commitment*. The Bishops in the opening paragraph set the tone:

Canadian society is characterized today by a rich variety of people of differing ethnic, cultural and religious traditions. This diversity includes the presence of Christians belonging to different Christian communities. Such diversity enriches the "catholicity" of Christ's Church, which is by its very nature a communion of persons from all walks of life, from every nation and culture. The Catholic Church itself is a communion of diverse churches, comprising the Latin Church centered in Rome together with twenty-two Eastern Catholic Churches rooted in the Byzantine, Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian and Chaldean traditions, -- each having developed its own liturgical, spiritual, theological and canonical traditions.

The Bishops desire to see how we as Christians might

deepen our commitment to journey together today on the path to full ecclesial unity. And begin by extending the hand of friendship and cooperate whenever possible. They quote UR. As long as we resign ourselves to the continued division among Christians we “prevent the Church from attaining the fullness of catholicity” (UR 4)

They quote Pope Francis: It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us.”

They continue: In some cases we have discovered that due to misunderstandings and polemics in the past we have misjudged one another. We have uncovered surprising levels of common understanding and convergence in faith. We have also clarified the sources of persistent disagreement. Prayer for Christian unity, the Christian Week of Prayer for Christian unity – belong to spiritual ecumenism ... the soul of the ecumenical movement (UR 8). The Bishops conclude with a final quote from Pope Francis: to journey together is already to be making unity -- the miracle of unity has begun. Christians will continue to deepen their theological foundation of faith as they recognize their relationships with those of other religious traditions

Pope Francis

Last year in an interview with the *Vatican Insider* and *La Stampa* newspaper Pope Francis expressed his thoughts on ecumenism.

He said that for him ecumenism is a priority. He went on to say there is an ecumenism of blood. “In some countries they kill Christians for wearing a cross or having a Bible and before they kill them they do not ask them whether they are Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic or Orthodox. Their blood is mixed. To those who kill we are Christians. We are united in blood, even though we have not yet managed to take necessary steps towards unity between us and perhaps the time has not yet come. Unity is a gift that we need to ask for.”

He went on to give an example: I knew a parish priest in Hamburg who was dealing with the beatification cause of a Catholic priest guillotined by the Nazis for teaching children the catechism. After him, in the list of condemned individuals, was a Lutheran pastor who was killed for the same reason. Their blood was mixed. The parish priest told me he had gone to the bishop and said to him: “I will continue to deal with the cause, but both of their causes, not just the Catholic priest’s.” This is what ecumenism of blood is. It still exists today; you just need to read the newspapers. Those who

kill Christians don’t ask for your identity card to see which Church you were baptized in. We need to take these facts into consideration

We must also remember that the blood of every human being is identical. It is what allows humanity to be identified as one family irrespective of color, race or creed. As Christians our bloodline is our faith and our unity is in that bloodline, the bloodline of all of humanity.

The task ahead will be continuingly to assess and evaluate progress and to rekindle the fire that was lit in the 70’s and 80’s.

My personal journey

In my teens, we knew who was a Catholic and who wasn’t because the schools were denominational. It made no difference when it came to hanging out together. The thought that some of my friends would be going to hell didn’t make sense. We never gave it a thought. Then at about eighteen I visited a Protestant church for the first time and I was somewhat disappointed that a bolt of lightning never came through the roof to strike me down. During university days no one ever questioned one’s religious belonging. I decided to enter the Seminary as the Second Vatican Council began. Ecumenism was in the air and contact was made with the Anglican and Presbyterian Theologates. We met for prayer and a social evening. I remember being invited to the room of one of the Anglican candidates. He closed the door and on the back of the door was a picture of Pope John XXIII. I didn’t know what to say when he broke the ice: I guess I am a spiked Anglican. I made friends with Jim Hunt, an Anglican priest. He was appointed to the same city I was. We worked hard trying to open a Coffee Shop in the abandoned caverns of a former brewery. It was a dream come true until we were told we would have to rewire the building. Our friendship continued until I participated in his funeral liturgy a few years ago.

I was transferred to a neighboring city and was chaplain of the High School. A Korean friend introduced me to the principal of a school for hearing-impaired and mentally challenged children in Korea. He was visiting Montreal. A few months later we arranged a student exchange with students in Korea. Thirty-seven students from Montreal departed for 31 days to work with eighty-five Korean students to prepare the ground for the bulldozers to continue building an addition to the Han-Kook Lip-Reading School in the Mapo area of Seoul.

On a “day-off” I was invited to spend a day in dialogue with a

Monk in a Buddhist Monestary. My translator was a Korean poetess who had converted to Christianity from Buddhism. I was billeted in her home and that night with her and her husband we continued to speak of the day's experience. I soon was lost when she began explaining Christianity through Buddhist symbols. I began to wonder if my Christian faith was only a cultural faith tied into a Catholic culture and limited by it. My quest to understand faith and culture is ongoing to this day.

Upon my return I was invited to take a service in a United Church on Sunday. Sunday was impossible but it was possible mid-week on a Wednesday. I appreciated the experience; to lead a Christian community other than a Catholic community in prayer.

I became a member of Kiwanis International and saw how men (today women and men) worked for the good of the community and how their religious affiliation (which they openly shared) was not an obstacle to their good work. I later became the first Roman Catholic President of Kiwanis in the world. The Protestant Chaplains were always ecumenically-minded.

The meetings during the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* were innovative and exciting. I was invited twice to participate in the Diocesan Anglican Synod, a learning experience to prepare me for the shift in the Catholic tradition towards a more synodal Church. One night at my University class two students were late. At the break I asked them where they had been. At the Anglican Synod, they told me. Their first outburst: we elected a new Bishop after eleven ballots. He is Catholic. I presume the other candidates were more charismatic.

One night I invited a number of friends to join me for supper at home. The Anglican Bishop and his wife, a priest who had married and his wife, a priest who had left ministry, a Native Permanent Deacon and his wife, and myself. We had a most exciting and charged discussion about human rights and social justice. It was heated at one point. Wine and good food are great stimulants to serious discussion. There was an excitement found in the Gospel and how all people of faith and goodwill were called to defend human rights and to further social justice when injustice is confronted. A few months later the Bishop was interviewed by the City's newspaper. He was quoted as saying: "the whole evening was the Eucharist of the future."

I was asked to preach at the ordination retreat of the

candidates of the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches. At that time I was reading a lot about Wisdom Literature and decided to use the Apocrypha as the basis for our reflection on ministry. At the end of the week we held an Agapé Meal because of our divergent theological interpretations of the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. We worked out a celebration acceptable to everyone ... not quite. One comment: I didn't realize what I was missing in Wisdom literature. A second comment: Good celebration but we were unfaithful to the words of institution. Lesson learned. I was also involved in two ecumenical weekends of Cursillo. A United Church Minister, Anglican priest and I were to work out a liturgy to end the weekend. We spoke with those attending the weekend. There was almost immediate agreement that, since all three communities shared the same biblical texts or Sunday readings, we would have the Liturgy of the Word in community. Then there was the question of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Suggestion: there are three different places to go for Lord's Supper or Liturgy of the Eucharist; then we will return to the main chapel for thanksgiving and final commendation. First attempt. What was common to all of us was that we felt strange to be so divided for the Liturgy of the Eucharist when it is to be the greatest sign of Christian unity. Second weekend. Liturgy of the Word in community: no problem. For the Liturgy of the Eucharist we would remain in the main chapel. The three celebrants would preside from behind the same table (large altar) and each would have the species of bread and wine in front of him. I was in the center and we used a common Eucharistic prayer. Each denomination would receive from her or his minister. It was time to receive communion. Three traditions, three stations to receive communion. The surprise came when those going to communion did not necessarily go to the minister of their congregation; they decided where to go and that's where they received. Lesson learned: Theological differences do not hold people back from doing what they think is the right thing to do.

In preparing couples for Christian marriages where one partner was Catholic and the other of another Christian denomination, the challenge was to support both faith communities and draw upon their similarities without allowing the couple to water down faith to a common denominator where nothing of Christian faith remains. There were several couples who alternated on Sundays between their two churches. Their presence in the Catholic community was as if the whole of the other community had joined us in liturgy. In preparing couples for inter-religious marriages the challenges were greater because the individuals were not really aware of the other's religious tradition and

had difficulty explaining faith in both traditions. A process was offered them to deepen their appreciation not only of the external symbols or cultural trappings but of the faith and prayer expressed in Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism or Sikh traditions. It was the dropped chins of the members of the faith community that were not Catholic when they learned about their own tradition. The Catholics were also stunned when they were given a proper understanding of their faith. One Jewish-Catholic marriage took place under the *huppah* (the Jewish ceremonial canopy) which was in the Church all weekend. It stimulated a great deal of discussion. Everyone benefitted, I hope.

My inter-faith commitment has led me to many encounters at formal meetings, prayers in synagogues, mosques and temples, and incredible friendships have evolved. I celebrate first and second Seder at two different homes every year, one with a childhood friend who married a wonderful Jewish woman, their two children and now their families; the other is at the home of a Cantor, a dear friend along with his wife and two sons, and his and her families. I also look forward every year to attend Qol Nidre and hear his great voice lead the congregation in prayer. I am a Board member of the Jewish Public Library and Honorary National Director of the Megan David Adom. I have spoken at many synagogues, often sharing evenings on panels with Rabbi friends, and on occasion with a Rabbi and an Imam. I can't count the number of appearances with a Rabbi and an Imam on radio and television. I have exchanged pulpits with the Pastor of the Black Community Church, the Amani Family Church. I have attended an Iftar supper at the end of Ramadan and have spoken at a number of Muslim Galas and evenings as well as having been M.C. at a couple. My friendship with Gregory Baum has offered me countless insights into the spirit of Vatican II.

As a radio talk-show host for fifteen years at Montreal's number one English-speaking public broadcasting station, C.J.A.D., I always told people that the *raison d'être* of the program was to humanize the world. I have had strong support from the hierarchy and the general population, of all faiths and non-believers alike. It has been a most enjoyable learning experience, one that has allowed me to understand my Christian identity in contemporary terms and has deepened my prayer life. In many radio conversations there was food mentioned and great meals. Meals are so central to the human experience and all religions have ritual meals. The celebration of the Eucharist as a meal, when all of God's children gather around the family table, enabled me to better understand how the Catholic Eucharist is a meal rather

than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For many years I have included in the Eucharistic prayer, "May we as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists, people of faith and people of good will work and pray for the coming of God's Reign." A Rabbi friend includes the same prayer in his Friday evening service at synagogue. I cannot help but say that my ecumenical and inter-faith experiences have provided me with the assurance that all religious traditions have compassion as the fundamental reason for their existence. The future is more than hopeful and after each of these encounters my hope is renewed and invigorated. Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz, Imam Dr. Zijad Delic and I have a blog together: www.faithblender.com.

Final words of hope

Hans Küng in *Christianity: Essence. History, Future*, writes: *No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundation of the religions.*

I leave the final word to Father Jacques Dupuis, s.j., taken from a series of his talks entitled, *Christianity and Other Religions: From Confrontation to Encounter: A "qualitative leap" is required in the Christian and Catholic theology of religions if we wish to develop a deeper theological appreciation of the religious traditions and entertain more open and fruitful relations with their followers. We must shun ways of "defending the faith" which turn out to have the opposite effect, because they make it appear restrictive and narrow. A broader outlook and a more positive attitude, provided they be theologically well founded, will help Christians themselves to discover in their own surprise in the Christian message a new breadth and a new depth.*

In ecumenism and inter-faith dialogues we must never give up hope. Our challenge is to focus on the sacred texts and re-interpret them to express God's transcendence and immanence so that we can catch the Spirit as we work with God in responding to the signs of our times.

Ecumenical News

International

“Peace is the Future: Religions and Cultures in Dialogue 100 years after World War I” was the theme of the 28th international “People and Religions” meeting, hosted by the Community of Sant’Egidio in Antwerp, Belgium, September 7-9. Participants reflected on the futility of war and dedicated themselves to finding lasting peace. In a panel discussion on “Unity of the Church and Peace”, Rev. Martin Junge, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, questioned whether churches have become too used to their fragmentation. The quest for unity among churches is part of their call by God to a wider mission of “compassion, reconciliation, justice and peace for the whole world”, he said. The conference was attended by cultural leaders and religious authorities from all over the world including the President of the European Council, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II, the Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael I Sako, and the Grand Mufti of Egypt Shawki Ibrahim Abdel-Karim Allam. It concluded with faith groups holding separate prayer sessions then joining in an inter-religious procession and making a common proclamation for peace. *Lutheran World Federation*

The publication of an open letter by a group of 126 Muslim scholars to the leader of the self-proclaimed “Islamic State” (IS) was welcomed by World Council of Churches general secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. The letter, issued on 24 September, condemns actions of the IS from an Islamic religious perspective. “The meticulous, detailed and scholarly rebuttal of the claims of the IS to represent authentic Islam offered by this letter will be an important resource for Muslim leaders who seek to enable people of all religions to live together with dignity, respecting our common humanity,” Tveit said. *World Council of Churches*

A report on meetings between the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonite World Conference will be presented to the LWF Council in 2015 and will be linked to the 500th Reformation anniversary in 2017 in reference to the principle of ecumenical accountability and being part of a broader “healing of memories” process with other Christian world communions. The LWF Assembly in 2010 apologized for Lutheran persecution of Anabaptists in the 16th century and for inappropriate and hurtful portraits of Anabaptists by Lutheran authors. At its July meeting in Utrecht, the LWF Task Force on Mennonite Action emphasized that reconciliation with Mennonites continues and it will look for ways to encourage this in LWF pastoral training and in fostering grassroots expressions of reconciliation, particularly during the 2017 Reformation anniversary. *Lutheran World Federation*

In a July visit to the Evangelical Church of Reconciliation in southern Italy, the Pope was welcomed by over 200 Evangelicals who had travelled to Caserta from Italy, the U.S. and South America. Pardon and reconciliation were at the heart of the Pope’s words as he asked forgiveness for the words and actions of Catholics who have persecuted Pentecostals in the past. Calling him, my beloved brother Rev. Giovanni Traettino said that many Evangelicals pray daily for the Pope and see his election as the work of the Holy Spirit. Following the encounter, Pope Francis had lunch with members of the Pentecostal community in Caserta. *Vatican Radio*

Some 15 delegates from Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican and Baptist churches were invited to participate in small group discussions as part of the extraordinary synod on the family, called by Pope Francis and held in Rome, October 5-19. Almost 200 bishops and religious order superiors representing nearly every country in the world, along with a further 38 experts, were among the total 253 people who made up the synod assembly. This two-part synod, with the extraordinary synod this year and a larger ordinary synod next year on the same topic, represents the most extensive scale of consultation to occur since the close of the Second Vatican Council in December 1965. Instead of bishops standing up and making individual five-minute speeches in random order, this synod tackles topics in a structured, ordered way, setting up substantial group discussions. Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops president, Archbishop Paul-André Durocher, was the sole representative of the Canadian Church at the synod. He believes that the dialogue between Church and culture needs to be broadened. “How to do that remains a huge challenge,” he said. *Catholic Register*

A rabbi, an imam and a priest are working together to build a common house of worship – the House of One – in the centre of Berlin that will include a church, a mosque and a synagogue, as well as a joint meeting hall. “We want to make a point and show that religions can be a cause of peace,” said Pastor Gregor Hohberg who came up with the idea and teamed up with Berlin Rabbi Tovia Ben Chorin and Imam Kadir Sanci. The trio hope Christians, Jews and Muslims will soon study and pray together. “I believe in the power of dialogue,” said Rabbi Ben Chorin. “Peace is a process and in order to achieve it, you have to talk to each other.” Construction costs for the building are estimated at 43.5 million euros (\$58.3 million U.S.) and funding is entirely through donations. In an online funding campaign, the three clerics are asking people to contribute by buying bricks for the building for 10 euros (\$13.40) each. *The Associated Press*

The heads of the Anglican and Lutheran churches

in Canada and in the U.S. met for their fifth session of informal talks, July 2-3, in Toronto. Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said these meetings show that “we believe deeply in shared mission, and are finding creative ways to expand and deepen our capacity as partners.” While conflicts around same-sex marriages remain, “it’s not all-consuming,” said Archbishop Fred Hiltz, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. As they shared developments in their respective churches, all felt a sense of “renewed energy”. The meeting included discussions on indigenous issues, the Middle East, refugees, full-communion partnerships and plans for the 500th anniversary commemoration of the Protestant Reformation to take place in 2017. There were serious conversations about how the full-communion relationships between Anglicans and Lutherans in Canada can also be “lived out” in the U.S. and vice versa.” The leaders also agreed to consider a joint response to “The Church: Towards a Common Vision,” an ecumenical text prepared by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches that has been commended to member churches for review and study. *Anglican Journal*

The ecumenical community of Taizé and its young volunteers have been invited to be part of the Lutheran World Federation’s Young Reformers Conference from 22 August to 4 September 2015 in Wittenberg, Germany. “The brothers and volunteers of Taizé can bring an ecumenical and spiritual perspective to the conference” said LWF Youth Secretary, Caroline Richter. “2017 (500th anniversary of the Reformation) should not be about finding our confessional identity against one another, but with each other”, said Brother Alois Löser, prior of the community. “The many gifts of our churches only come alive in ecumenical ways. You, the young people, can show that”. The theme of the 2015 Young Reformers Conference, “Freed by God’s Love”, was very well received when it was presented to the young people visiting Taizé this summer. The ecumenical community of brothers in Taizé, France has been conducting youth meetings since the 1970’s, each week inviting thousands of young Christians from all over the world. In 2015, Taizé will celebrate its 75th anniversary. *Lutheran World Information*

Lutherans and Roman Catholics continued their dialogue on what kind of unity might arise out of their shared understanding of Baptism in meetings held 20-28 July at the Monastery of Bose in Italy. Begun in 2009, “Baptism and Growing Communion” is the fifth study in which the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity has been engaged. The meeting was based on brief thematic papers prepared by members. Holding the most recent meetings of the Commission at the Monastery of Bose which has a long history of involvement in the ecumenical movement and the quest for Christian unity, gave participants an opportunity to participate in the prayer life of the community and gain support for their work. *Lutheran World Information*

The World Day of Prayer 2015 will be celebrated on March 6 with a prayer service written by women in the Bahamas on the theme of Jesus’ words after washing the feet of his disciples: “Do You Know What I Have Done To You?” (John 13: 1-17). *JMP Switzerland*

Over 5,000 people from 12 countries attended the ninth “Days of Encounter for Christians from Central and Eastern Europe”, 4-6 June in Wroclaw, Poland. The theme, “Free in Christ (Gal. 5: 1)”, was developed against the background of changes in the region since the fall of communism. Featuring discussion, singing and prayer, encounters took place in numerous workshops, interactive programs and youth concerts. There was a spirit of mutual understanding that crossed language barriers. Former Polish Prime Minister and former President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, stated that during the political transformation of Eastern Europe, the churches played an important role in providing a moral compass, and they still do. “Freedom without moral rules can be harmful,” Buzek declared and pointed to situations in which the prosperity of a few has excluded others from general well-being in society. Churches from the region have been holding these Days of Encounter biannually and the number of countries and visitors has significantly increased. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary has issued an invitation to the tenth Days of Encounter in Budapest in 2016. *Lutheran World Information*

The protection of creation was the subject of a summer course attended by 19 Christian, Jewish and Muslim students from 12 different countries. For them, safeguarding creation is a concern shared by all religious traditions. Since 2007, holding an interfaith summer course has been an initiative undertaken by the World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical Institute located in Bossey, Switzerland. *Auvidec*

The International Day of Prayer for Peace was celebrated on September 21, the same date as the UN International Day of Peace. The 2014 theme was: “Visions and Dreams for Building Peace”. Christian communities were invited to pray and to act together for a just peace at home and in other countries around the world. The first day of prayer for peace was held in 2004 within the “Ecumenical Decade for Overcoming Violence (2001-2010). *Auvidec*

National

The Canadian Council of Churches is celebrating its 70th anniversary by holding a national assembly November 17-21. As part of the assembly, the CCC Governing Board will hold its regular meeting on November 19-21 in Mississauga, Ontario. A public event will be held in Toronto on November 19 with prominent Canadian writer, theologian and social activist, Mary Jo Leddy, as guest speaker. The assembly hopes to be a time of discovering the work of one another and increasing collaboration with each other. *Canadian Council of Churches*

The founder of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, Fr. Irénée Beaubien, s.j., celebrated the 65th anniversary of his priestly ordination on August 15th. He has enjoyed a career rich in accomplishments, especially in the service of the ecumenical movement in Montreal, in Canada, and beyond. At 98 years of age, Fr. Beaubien is in residence at the Jesuit infirmary in Richelieu, Quebec. He continues to serve the Church and society through an apostolate of prayer. *Jesuit Information*

A well-respected ecumenist in Canada and abroad, the Roman Catholic bishop of Saskatoon, Donald Bolen, was awarded an honorary fellowship on behalf of Saskatoon's Anglican-run University College of Emmanuel & St. Chad by Anglican diocese of Saskatoon Bishop David Irving, the university's chancellor. Bishop Bolen received the honour in recognition of his work in building Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. He is currently co-chair of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission, co-chair of the International Methodist-Catholic Dialogue, a member of the International Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue and of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. In Canada, he co-chairs the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue with his Anglican counterpart, Bishop Linda Nicholls. *Anglican Journal*

“Living Faithfully into a New Climate” is a package of materials assembled by Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), an affiliate member of the Canadian Council of Churches, to assist Canadian faith communities to increase their engagement in creation care as the December 2015 COP21 meeting in Paris draws nearer. The package contains sermon notes, hymns and prayers for creation, activities for youth and young adults, a Bible study on creation advocacy and care and an “info-graphic”. These materials are available at www.cpj.ca/climate. *Prairie Messenger*

Some 600 Anglican and Lutheran youth from across Canada assembled in Kamloops, B.C., 14-17 August for the third biennial Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth Gathering (CLAY). The event provided participants with an opportunity for Christian leadership development, varied worship experiences and ways to connect faith to daily life. This year's theme, “Worth It,” applied the question of worth to participants' relationship with God, the church, their friends and their interaction with the wider world. Each evening offered possibilities to have fun and to get to know one another through dance, games, films and conversations about the similar challenges they share in adapting to university life, in contending with the job market and dealing with life in general. *Anglican Journal, Auvidex*

West

An ecumenical Pentecost Evensong celebration held in St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral in Regina on June 8 was jointly led by the Anglican bishop of Qu'Appelle, Robert Hardwick, and the Catholic archbishop of Regina, Daniel Bohan. A covenant between the two churches, signed in 2011, commits both to a minimum of twice yearly prayer

services, alternating between St. Paul's Cathedral and Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Cathedral. The ecumenical service is a very concrete and visible sign of our desire to grow together, said guest homilist, Winnipeg Archbishop Emeritus James Weisgerber, comparing the covenant to a marriage. “The real work,” he said, “comes after the wedding.” *Prairie Messenger*

Islamic and Christian leaders encouraged participants of their second dialogue in Edmonton to live out their faith so others will see them as people of faith and agents of peace and love. Almost 250 people, including Muslims of the Sunni and Shia sects and Christians of the Roman Catholic and Mennonite churches, attended the event at the Edmonton Islamic Academy, September 13. Rev. Kevin Kraglund of the Edmonton and District Council of Churches pointed out that “we share most significantly in the commandment common to Muslim and Christian alike – to love both God and neighbour.” Usama Al-Atar, imam of the Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Association Edmonton said in today's society many people are saying they don't need religion in their lives. “We have to remind people of the essence of religion; the peaceful nature of religion,” he said. “Religion is embracing one another, engaging one another, respecting one another.” Mennonite leader, Carol Penner, stated, “As a Mennonite Christian, it is very important for me to live out my faith so that people, anyone I meet, will know that I am a follower of Jesus.” *Western Catholic Reporter*

The 25th annual Ecumenical Mission of Strathcona County, October 5-8, was led by Fr. Tom Ryan, CSP and Canon William Derby, who jointly led the first mission 25 years ago. “Gospel Call” was the theme of this year's mission. To celebrate this 25th milestone, Canadian choral master, Robert De Frece, wrote a new anthem, “Christ is our Vision”, which was performed at the opening and closing services at Bethel Lutheran Church and at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Sherwood Park. *Edmonton Archdiocese*

The Prairie Centre for Ecumenism held the first week-long session of its new three-year formation program in ecumenism in June with 27 participants from different denominations delving into the theology, history and practice of ecumenism. Centre director, Dr. Darren Dahl, notes that the formation sessions will be held for one week each year, with new students joining returning participants in a cycle of study aimed at deepening understanding and commitment to the call to Christian reconciliation and unity. Upon completion of the three years of study, a certificate will be accorded by St. Andrew's College. “With the launch of this program, the Prairie Centre is taking a major step toward the formation of ecumenical leaders for the future,” said Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen. *Prairie Messenger*

An Anglican and a Catholic church in Regina hosted a vacation Bible school for children this summer. Rev. Trish McCarthy of All Saints Anglican wanted to do something to reach out to the children in the neighbourhood, so she approached St. Martin Catholic Parish and together with the pastoral assistant, Alison Sander, evolved a plan. The school attracted 16 students, eight from each church community.

The idea for the two churches collaborating on a Bible school flows out of the Ecumenical Covenant signed in 2011 between the Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina, said McCarthy. "I thought it a good opportunity to build ecumenism and to reach out to kids of all denominations and show them that we can do something together, that we all believe in the same God, the same Jesus Christ, and make it fun," said Sander. *Prairie Messenger*

The 1st Praise in the Park event brought together churches of various denominations in Regina's Victoria Park on September 6 for a day of Christian music performed by 12 bands and musicians from a variety of churches. "I would like to bring all the churches in the city together," said Pastor Charles Kooger of Sonlight Christian Reformed Church, the activity's chief organizer and chair of the Regina Council of Churches and the Regina Evangelical Ministerial Association. "We are united in following and serving Our Lord Jesus Christ. There are things that separate us, but at the core we are one," he added. Kooger, along with Regina Archbishop Daniel Bohan and pastors from several churches, joined together in front of the stage to welcome everyone and offered a brief prayer for the day. The 600 people who came to enjoy the music could also visit the kiosks and information booths set up by several churches and church organizations. Kooger said everyone was pleased with the way it went and would like to make Praise in the Park an annual event. *Prairie Messenger*

Ontario

An Interfaith Prayer for Peace, held on September 7 in St. Paul's Basilica in Toronto, brought together prayers and readings spanning the Abrahamic faiths of Christians, Jews and Muslims, as well as the wisdom of Buddhists, Hindus, Jains and others. Cardinal Thomas Collins urged some 600 faithful gathered for the prayer to encourage governments to take measures to protect those who are being expelled, starved, and hurt in different ways by the conflicts that surround them. He called on all faith communities "to work together, to act effectively," on behalf of refugees. As Iraqi refugees themselves, Maha Majeed and her family were grateful for the prayers of so many people and grateful for the opportunity to pray. "Prayer is good. We have to pray," she stated. *Catholic Register*

Religious leaders urged the protection of Iraqi Christians and other minorities during a Parliament Hill rally on September 6. "I stand in solidarity with my Christian brethren and other minorities who are suffering in the Middle East and condemn acts of intolerance against them as satanic deeds, contrary to the mercy which the scripture calls us to embody", said Imam Mohamad Jebra. Ottawa Archbishop Terrence Prendergast expressed solidarity with Middle East Christians, especially in Iraq and Syria. He also highlighted the plight of other religious and ethnic minorities suffering at the hands of ISIS and read a statement from Rabbi Reuven Bulka who spoke "as a survivor of many generations of attempts to perpetrate genocide on the Jewish people". *Catholic Register*

"Bridges beyond faith" was the theme of an interfaith symposium and concert held on September 21 at the Metropolitan United Church in downtown Toronto. Organized by the Intercultural Dialogue Institute, the symposium focused on building bridges and reconciling relations between the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam which have been damaged by conflict and violence throughout history. The dark medieval history presented at the symposium revealed persecutions perpetrated by all three faiths. The first of the event's two panels focused on the sources of medieval religious conflict; the second explored medieval ideas of peace as conceptualized by Moses Maimonides, St. Thomas Aquinas and Rumi. Fr. Darren Dias, a Dominican theologian and professor of theology at Toronto University St. Michael's College, commented, "Each religious person – certainly each Jew, Muslim, Christian – in their daily life can live a life of peace and can contribute towards building peace." *Catholic Register*

Quebec

The third Quebec Religious Heritage Forum will take place on November 6 in the Gesù auditorium in downtown Montreal. Making the province's religious patrimony better known and updating the situation of churches in transition from a survey carried out by the Religious Heritage Council are on the agenda of the meeting. Examples of religious heritage restoration as well as new uses for religious buildings will be highlighted. The Forum will conclude with a look at the new Concordia University students' residence which now occupies the space of the Grey Nuns' former motherhouse. *Auvidec*

A conference on "Interreligious Dialogue since Vatican II: Progress, Problems, Perspectives" was given on September 25 at St. Joseph of Bordeaux Parish in Montreal by Msgr. Michael Fitzgerald. An expert in Islam, Msgr. Fitzgerald has taught at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic Studies, worked as a member of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians, occupied the post of president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, of Apostolic Nuncio to Egypt and of delegate to the League of Arab States. This special evening was organized by the Interfaith Dialogue section of the Faith and Spirituality Crossroads organization. *InterFAITH Dialogue Group*

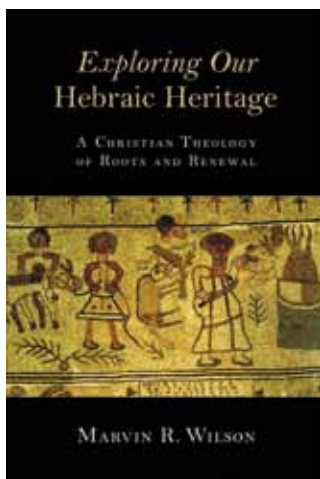
The state of Christian-Jewish relations was the topic of a discussion with invited guests, Rosine Voisin of l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne in France and Dr. Victor Goldbloom who is well known for his career in the promotion of interfaith dialogue at Canadian and international levels. Organized on October 5 by the Inter-FAITH Dialogue Group of Montreal, exchanges at the afternoon event questioned whether we have moved on from decades of passing on attitudes of contempt and disdain to being able to recognize the great spiritual heritage we have in common and move on to relations of mutual respect and esteem. *Inter-FAITH Dialogue Group*

Book Survey

These brief summaries are made from an examination of books received at the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. They are descriptive rather than evaluative.

Exploring Our Hebraic Heritage, A Christian Theology of Roots and Renewal, Marvin R. Wilson, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2014, 304 pages, \$22 US.

In this sequel to his popular book, *Our Father Abraham*, Marvin Wilson develops theological, spiritual and ethical themes of Hebrew scriptures that directly affect Christian understanding and experience. The work draws from both Christian and Jewish commentary in discussing such topics as the theological methodology of the Old Testament, the significance of Abraham in Christian tradition, the uniqueness of Yahweh, Jewish prayer, divine covenant and supersessionism. Christians and Jews have a shared Hebraic tradition which requires a living conversation regarding its meaning. Wilson calls for the church to restore, renew, and protect its foundations by studying and appreciating its origins in Judaism. Marvin R. Wilson is Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts.



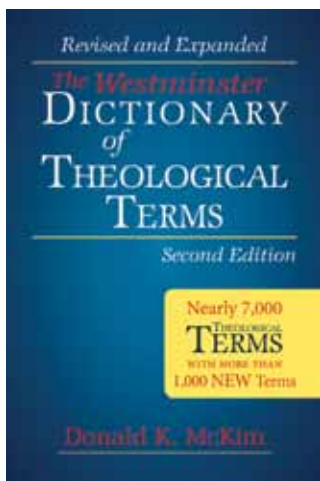
Reformed, and Roman Catholic theologies; social sciences; spirituality; and worship. There are cross-references that link readers to other related terms, an annotated bibliography and a new introductory section that groups together terms and concepts. Donald K. McKim is former Academic Dean and Professor of Theology at Memphis Theological Seminary.

Canadian Islam: Belonging & Loyalty, Imam Dr. Zijad Delic, Kirtas Publishing, 2014, 171 pages.

The author advances that Canadian Muslim identity is not only a result of an Islamic worldview, but is intertwined with the wider society's own policies and interactions with its minority communities. He explores some of these issues in detail, raising questions for both Canadian Muslims and the wider Canadian society. After opening with a profile of Canada and Canadian Muslims, part two tries to answer some hard questions surrounding the interplay between religious and national identities. Part three on constructive integration compares the Canadian model of integration with the French assimilationist model and the Bosnian exclusionist approach. In the final part, some answers to questions on citizenship are presented from an Islamic perspective. This includes scholarly discourses on citizenship taken from early Muslim history as well as from contemporary times. An analysis of these issues through the prism of a religiously pluralistic and culturally diverse Canadian society follows. Imam Dr. Zijad Delic is a religious authority on Islam and an academic who has been selected twice as one of the 500 most influential Muslims in the world. He lives in Ottawa with his wife and their two daughters.

The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Donald K. McKim, Westminster John Knox Press, 2014, 364 pages.

This second edition contains succinct definitions of nearly 7,000 theological terms covering a broad range of theological studies and related disciplines: biblical studies; church history; contemporary theologies; ethics; feminist theologies; hermeneutics; liberation theologies; liturgy; ministry; philosophy; Protestant,





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