

# Anglican and Roman Catholic ecumenists meet in Quebec

September 17-19, 2009

Two new members brought added energy to the fall meeting (September 17—19, 2009) of Canada's Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue as it convened in Quebec City to consider next steps in its thirty-eight-year ecumenical journey.

It was a first ARC Canada meeting for Rev. Donald Bolen, who is now Chancellor and Director of Ecumenism for the Roman Catholic diocese of Regina. Father Bolen brings with him years of experience of international ecumenical work, having been stationed in Rome with the Pontifical Commission for the Promotion of Christian Unity, where he specialized in the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission.

Ven. Bruce Myers, the other new member, was welcoming the dialogue to his own city. He recently completed a master's degree in ecumenical studies at Bossey in Switzerland, and has returned to the Anglican Diocese of Quebec where he serves as Archdeacon and works closely with Bishop Dennis Drainville, the host and co-chair of the meeting.

The "veterans" of the dialogue welcomed the newcomers into a set of questions currently facing ecumenists in many parts of the world. *Inter-church dialogue is no longer a novelty*. Nearly forty years of scholarly and prayerful work by Anglicans and Roman Catholics has produced volumes of agreed, inspiring theological teaching. This published work illustrates how profoundly the two traditions are at one on vital areas of doctrine, once the dust of centuries-old conflicts has been cleared away. Yet for most church members, it is hard to see practical results of the new insights in day-to-day church life, polity and governance. How can ecumenists convey the good news of reconciled understandings of faith to more people? How can progress towards unity be celebrated in dioceses and parishes? How can we help create an ecclesial context encouraging new, united deeds, rather than more words? The dialogue agreed to invite and assist bishops of both their churches to design and lead liturgies that would act as "harvest festivals", thanking God and educating people about the historic fruits of twentieth-century ecumenical effort. They also committed themselves to writing, in publications accessible to all church members, essays on the history and the significance of what international, national and local ecumenical work has achieved, and what still needs to be done.

Beginning from a summary paper written by Dr. Susan Brown, members of the dialogue discussed the impact of ARCIC's agreed statements on church life in Canada, and the relationship between the dialogue in Canada and developments on the international level over the past four decades. Many encouraging responses and initiatives were noted. However, no one can deny that on some points, the two churches in the dialogue have moved apart in recent years: over the ordination of women, for example. Currently there is the possibility that the Anglican Church of Canada, like its sister church in the United States, might make decisions about the church blessing of same-sex marriages that would set back the goal of visible unity with the Roman Catholic church. Members of the dialogue raised many questions about the meaning of this possible development. Does it affect shared moral teaching only, or does it also imply a widening ecclesiological gap? What does it mean

when an individual Canadian diocese decides synodically to act in a way that seems to challenge a moratorium requested by a General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada and by the Archbishop of Canterbury? Is the idea of “moratorium” open to interpretation? On the pastoral level: when new convictions of conscience have grown strong in members of a church—people in whom the life of faith is evident—should pastors respond in new ways that respect the conscience of the believers concerned? On the doctrinal level: how can churches recognize an authentic, Spirit-led “development of doctrine”, distinguishing between such a development and the pressures of generational change in the surrounding culture? What modes of consultation with ecumenical partner churches befit a church in the process of considering a change with which a partner church does not agree?

At other points of the three-day meeting, members of the dialogue spent an evening of discussion and prayer with seminarians and faculty of the Grand Séminaire de Québec; and enjoyed a morning event at the Anglican Cathedral that was open to all. Host Bishop Drainville, and Roman Catholic co-chair Bishop François Lapierre, spoke on Saint Paul and the ecumenical task (honouring the Year of Paul initiated by the Vatican). The closing event was a heartfelt and grateful farewell to Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, for many years an anchor of this dialogue and a beloved colleague. She has been appointed Director for the new office of Unity, Faith and Order for the Anglican Communion, and will be moving to London in November to take up this new responsibility.

*The members of the dialogue present at the September 2009 meeting were:*

***For the Anglican Church of Canada:***

*Bishop Dennis Drainville, Diocese of Quebec (Co-chair)*

*Ms. Ann Cruickshank, Montreal*

*Ven. Bruce Myers, Diocese of Quebec*

*Rev. Dr. David Neelands, Trinity College, Toronto School of Theology*

*As staff for the dialogue: Rev. Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, Director, Department of Faith, Worship and Ministry of General Synod*

***For the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops:***

*Most Rev. François Lapierre, Bishop of Saint-Hyacinthe (Co-chair)*

*Rev. Don Bolen, Archdiocese of Regina*

*Dr. Susan Brown, King's University College, University of Western Ontario*

*Dr. Catherine Clifford, St. Paul University, Ottawa*

*Rev. Jacques Faucher, former Director of Ecumenism, Diocese of Ottawa*

*Rev. Dr. Luis Melo, S.M., St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba and Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Archdiocese of St. Boniface*

*Rev. Dr. Gilles Routhier, Faculté de Théologie, Université Laval, Québec*

*As secretary on behalf of the CCCB: Ms. Janet Somerville, Toronto*

*Regrets:*

*Dr. Joseph Mangina, Wycliffe College, Toronto School of Theology*

*Rev. Kevin Flynn, Saint Paul University, Ottawa*