

[Highlights of Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue – November 2010]

Canadian group prepares for new stage of Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue

TORONTO, November 2010—In print and electronic news media, the most noticeable feature of life both within and between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church seems to be a set of hotly publicized disagreements, punctuated here and there by painful separations. But the ecumenists who belong to the 14-member Anglican/Roman Catholic theological dialogue in Canada (ARC) see things in a longer time-frame. They met recently with their sights set on celebration, publication, and hope.

This particular national dialogue has been at work for thirty-nine years, with changing membership but a continuing purpose. Meeting from November 11 to 13 in the elegant old limestone buildings of Toronto's Trinity College, the current members fine-tuned plans aimed at making next year's fortieth anniversary of international and Canadian Anglican/Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogue a "teaching moment" for anyone interested in Christian unity.

The business of the fall meeting included firming up details for a prayerful celebration of the 40th anniversary. The date—Sunday, November 13, 2011—was set six months earlier. The site chosen for the national celebration is St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal. An Order of Service for an ecumenical Evensong/Vespers on that day has been prepared by three members of the dialogue and was considered by the whole group. Drafts for some of the essays to be published in special 2011 editions of the journal *Ecumenism*, assigned to be written by present and past members of ARC, were discussed by all present.

The evening prayer service will be made available in print and on web sites as a resource for groups anywhere in Canada who want to give thanks for the fruits of this forty-year ecumenical journey, and to pray for its future.

The need for prayer is dramatically underlined by debates and strains occurring now within and between the two world-wide communions. Dialogue members spent time discussing the reception of—and resistance to—the proposed Anglican Covenant now making its contested way through the Synods of Anglican Provinces around the world. ARC invited Rev. Dr. Ephraim Radner, Professor of Historical Theology at Wycliffe College in Toronto, to open a conversation on the reception/resistance record of the Covenant so far, and on its prospects for the future. Dr. Radner participated in the covenant design group as a representative of The Episcopal Church (USA). Responses to *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, Pope Benedict's instruction on steps and canonical structures for dissident Anglicans who wish to enter into communion with the Roman Catholic Church, were also discussed. Ven. Bruce Meyers, Archdeacon of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec, gave a report on the decisions of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in June 2010.

On the third day of the dialogue, attention turned to the future. There are clear signs that ARCIC 3 (the third phase of the work of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission) will soon publish the names of its members and its plan of work. Its opening focus is expected to be *The Church as communion, local and universal*, including a discussion of how, in communion, the local/universal church comes to

discern right ethical teaching. Members of ARC mapped the terrain of debate within both their traditions on the meanings of “communion ecclesiology”. They set themselves an ambitious reading list so that they can accompany with their own study and analysis the thinking of ARCIC 3, and relate the great theological themes to current issues in the life of the churches in Canada.

The Canadian dialogue welcomed a new Anglican member at this November meeting: the Rev. Dr. Eileen Conway, a priest (retired) of the Diocese of Edmonton. It also bade farewell to its almost-new staff member on the Anglican side. Natasha Klukach, who in 2009 succeeded Rev. Alyson Barnett-Cowan as the ecumenical officer of the Anglican Church in Canada, has, like her predecessor, been called to work at the international level of the work for Christian reconciliation. She leaves for Geneva in December 2010, where she will begin work as Programme Executive: Church and Ecumenical Relations / North American Regional Relations at the World Council of Churches.

Present at the November 2010 meeting:

As co-chairs: Bishop Dennis Drainville, Diocese of Quebec
Mgr. François Lapierre, Diocèse de Saint-Hyacinthe

For the Anglican Church of Canada:

Rev. Dr. Eileen Conway, Diocese of Edmonton
Ms. Natasha Klukach, Department of Faith, Worship and Ministry,
Dr. Joseph Mangina, Wycliffe College, Toronto School of Theology
Ven. Bruce Myers, Diocese of Quebec
Rev. Dr. David Neelands, Trinity College, University of Toronto

For the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Bishop Donald Bolen, Diocese of Saskatoon
Dr. Susan Brown, King’s College, University of Western Ontario
Dr. Catherine Clifford, St. Paul University
Rev. Dr. Luis Melo, S.M., St. Paul’s College, University of Manitoba
Ms. Janet Somerville, Toronto (recording)

Regrets: Rev. Dr. Gilles Routhier, Université de Laval, Quebec
Rev. Kevin Flynn, Dept. of Anglican Studies, St. Paul University