



Reports from Canada, South Africa and the Vatican

Canadian 4 way dialogue deepens

The heads of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) have agreed to co-ordinate their responses to "events that transcend" their borders, such as natural disasters.

They could, for instance, issue a joint pastoral letter in response to a natural calamity and invite their members to contribute to relief and recovery efforts through one of their four relief agencies, said Archdeacon Bruce Myers, General Synod's co-ordinator for ecumenical and interfaith relations. Myers served as staff support at the meeting.

Leaders of the four churches reached this agreement when they met for a day and a half of informal talks last December in Winnipeg. Since 2010, the heads of these four churches have met for informal talks, "becoming colloquially known as the *Four-Way*", said Myers.

The Anglican Church of Canada's primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, ELCIC Bishop Susan Johnson and Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori were joined in the meeting by the new presiding bishop of the ELCA, Elizabeth Eaton.

"Broadly speaking, these informal conversations are aimed at exploring ways to extend the implications of our Anglican-Lutheran full communion partnerships across the international boundary," said Myers. "What more could we be doing as North American churches in full communion?" The Anglican Church of Canada and the ELCIC have been in full communion since 2011, as have the ELCA and the Episcopal Church.

The leaders also agreed to explore ways of addressing the Doctrine of Discovery "as a step towards reconciliation with indigenous people in North America," said Myers. The Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church have both repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery. The Anglican church, however, "has only begun to try to give tangible expression to that renunciation," said Myers. When it renounced the Doctrine of Discovery at the 2010 General Synod, the church pledged a review of its policies and programs to expose the doctrine's historical impact and end its continuing effects on indigenous peoples. The Doctrine of Discovery was a principle of charters and acts developed by colonizing Western societies more than 500 years ago.

At the meeting, Hiltz also informed the other bishops about his church's recent decision to designate the seventh Sunday of Easter as Jerusalem Sunday. In response, the other three churches "pledged to explore the possibility of making it a common observance," said Myers.

Each leader also agreed to prepare a devotional piece for different Sundays in Advent, to be made available for individual or congregational use in their churches during the 2014 Advent season.

They also agreed to look at what they might be able to say collectively in response to an ecumenical convergence text on ecclesiology called *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. The document was issued March 2013 by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Described by Myers as "groundbreaking," the text addresses what churches might say together in areas such as peace and justice in the world, and how they might grow in communion and overcome past and present divisions. Theologians "from the widest range of Christian traditions and cultures" produced the text for the WCC.

Canadian Roman Catholics and Anglicans committed to dialogue

Canadian Roman Catholics have expressed the hope that the Anglican Church of Canada would seek input from its ecumenical partners as it continues discussion concerning a resolution to amend the church's marriage canon to allow same-sex marriage.

The marriage canon resolution was discussed at a joint meeting of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Bishops' Dialogue (ARCB) and the Anglican-

Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada (ARC Canada) held last December. Anglican Bishop Linda Nicholls, ARC Canada co-chair, reported on the Anglican-Lutheran Joint Assembly held last summer, which included an explanation of the said resolution passed by General Synod.

Nicholls assured her Catholic counterparts that since the resolution states that action taken on the marriage canon must demonstrate “broad consultation,” this could be interpreted to include consultation with the church’s ecumenical partners, including the Roman Catholic Church, said Archdeacon Bruce Myers, General Synod co-ordinator for ecumenical and interfaith relations, who assisted the ARC meeting as staff. [On Jan. 6, the primate of the Anglican Church of Canada appointed Nicholls as a member of the commission on the marriage canon, which will conduct a broad consultation on the proposed change to the marriage canon.)

Catholic members stated that consultations were necessary since “any decision our church takes regarding our understanding of marriage will have implications for our relationships with other churches,” said Myers.

The resolution (C003) asks CoGS to prepare and present, in 2016, a motion to change the church’s Canon 21 on marriage “to allow the marriage of same-sex couples in the same ways as opposite-sex couples.” It also asks that the motion include “a conscience clause so that no members of the clergy, bishop, congregation or diocese should be constrained to participate in our authorize such marriages against the dictates of their conscience.”

At the meeting, Anglican and Catholic bishops also agreed that they could have issued a joint declaration about the controversial Charter of Values and the proposed end-of-life care legislation in Quebec. Quebec Anglican and Catholic bishops had issued separate statements about the issues and a joint declaration would have offered “an even stronger Christian witness,” said Myers. It also would have been a good opportunity to put into practice a 2006 international agreed statement between Roman Catholics and Anglicans that invited them both to “join together in making contributions to public life, giving voice to Christian perspectives on important social questions,” he added.

Before the ARCB meeting, the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada (ARC) also met separately and continued its work on the “Common Witness Project.” The project came out of a common desire to help provide both churches with resources they can each use as tools for teaching and evangelization “and at the same time, witness to the immense agreement on matters of faith that Anglicans and Roman Catholics share,” said Myers.

Myers said the ARC is trying to produce a series of “short, accessible” reflections on “big questions” that people often ask, such as “Why is the world the way it is?” “What is my mission in life?” “Why believe?” and “Why pray?”

Historically, the Anglican Church of Canada’s dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church in Canada is its longest ecumenical conversation, said Myers. ARC first met in 1971, and the ARCB in 1975. “Through thick and thin, both churches have remained—and remain—committed to the dialogues,” he said.

Meetings always include common prayer, including a celebration of the eucharist, which alternates between Anglican and Roman Catholic rites. “Because intercommunion doesn’t yet exist between our two churches, dialogue members who can’t receive the eucharist from the celebrant come up to receive a blessing instead,” said Myers. Such celebrations remind them “just how much we have in common in terms of the way we worship and how we understand the sacraments,” he said. At the same time, it is a painful reminder of how they still can’t “gather together around the same eucharistic table to share in the sacrament of unity,” he added. Nonetheless, it offers both sides “an almost visceral impetus to continue our dialogue so that we can remove the remaining obstacles to full communion between our two churches, the outward and visible sign of which will be sharing in the one eucharist.”

The social time component of the meeting is equally “if not more, important,” said Myers. Personal relationships are built over a shared meal, a cup of coffee or a walk. “It’s in those encounters that caricatures and stereotypes really start to fall away and you really come to recognize the other as a fellow member of the body of Christ.”

Many pupils still face poverty and hopelessness - Archbishop of Capetown

Despite improvements in the matric pass rates, the deficiencies in South Africa's educational system still "sentence many a pupil to a life of utter poverty, hopelessness and inequity," says Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba of Cape Town.

In a statement on the matric results issued today, Archbishop Makgoba said:

"As an anxious parent who has waited with the rest of the country this year for matric results, I want to congratulate those who have worked hard and earned impressive results. Thanks to the teachers and parents who supported them.

"The Department of Basic Education needs a pat on the shoulder for better results all-round. But it has to be said that despite the improvement in passes at the bachelor's level, a 30 percent pass rate is still woefully inadequate.

"Yet again, the relationship between poor school infrastructure and results is evident in the Eastern Cape. We urge educators to summon up the determination to turn this around, and we in the church commit ourselves to shoulder responsibility for pushing for change.

"For those who did not make it, it is not the end of the world. We urge you to rewrite exams, or re-register for this year. Sadly, the deficiencies in our educational system still sentence many a pupil to a life of utter poverty, hopelessness and inequity.

"In our 20th year of democracy, and a month after Madiba died, I call for us all to commit ourselves to a better education for all with a bias in towards redress in rural and township areas."

Pope limits ‘monsignor’ honour for diocesan priests

Pope Francis has decided to limit the honour of “monsignor” among diocesan priests and grant it from now on only to those at least 65 years of age.

The change, which is not retroactive and does not affect Vatican officials or members of religious orders, was announced in a letter from the Vatican Secretariat of State to nunciatures around the world, along with instructions to inform local bishops.

Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, apostolic nuncio to the United States, informed US bishops of the new policy in a letter dated December 30. Msgr Ronny E Jenkins, general secretary of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, forwarded the letter to the bishops on Friday.

Of the three grades of monsignor – apostolic protonotary, honorary prelate of His Holiness and chaplain of His Holiness – only the last will be available to diocesan priests who meet the new age requirement.

Bishops must resubmit any pending requests for papal honours in accordance with the new rules.

Archbishop Vigano's letter did not give a reason for the change, but Pope Francis has often warned clergy against the temptations of careerism and personal ambition.

The archbishop noted that there had been no change regarding the granting of ecclesiastical honours to laypeople.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, noted on Monday that Pope Paul VI had reformed the system of ecclesiastical honours in 1968, reducing the number of titles to three.

"Pope Francis's decision thus follows in the same line, with further simplification," Father Lombardi said.