
SHARING THE GOOD NEWS TODAY

REPORT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC/UNITED CHURCH DIALOGUE
ON EVANGELISM/EVANGELIZATION

DIALOGUE ON EVANGELISM/EVANGELIZATION

Report of RC/UC Dialogue
*** September 1990 - October 1995 ***

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS DOCUMENT	2
INTRODUCTION	3
I. WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION/EVANGELISM?	4
II. WHY BE INVOLVED IN EVANGELIZATION?	7
III. HOW SHOULD WE EVANGELIZE?	9
IV. WITH WHOM DO WE SHARE THE GOSPEL?	14
V. WHO ARE THE EVANGELIZERS?	17
VI. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES FOR EVANGELISM	19
THE DIALOGUE PROCESS	28
PARTICIPANTS	30

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS DOCUMENT

In this booklet we share with you the results of our conversations about why and how we, as Christians, should share with others what we believe about God revealed in Jesus, ourselves and the world in which we become conscious of God's gracious presence. We have found that the discussions in which we have participated have enriched and clarified our own perceptions of what evangelism/evangelization means, why it is important and what it entails in the concrete. The fruits of our own dialogue have led us to encourage you to enter into similar discussions at the parish/congregational level.

It would be ideal, of course, if some occasion could be found for Roman Catholic parishes and United Church congregations located in close proximity to one another to meet together to discuss evangelization/evangelism. Perhaps, for example, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity would provide an opportunity for such a joint venture. Even though the use of the booklet for joint discussions would be preferable, it could also be used with profit by a single parish or congregation as a means of helping people to understand more fully what evangelism/evangelization involves.

We have designed this booklet to help you to facilitate the discussion we hope will take place. In each of the booklet's sections, the first part summarizes briefly what we have discovered about our two faith communities by thinking together about evangelism/evangelization. Following each of these sections you will find a few questions and selected quotations from Scripture and/or from documents regarded as significant in one or other of our two faith communities. These questions and quotations can be used as springboards for small-group discussions.

INTRODUCTION

As we move into the twenty-first century, the contexts in which the Gospel is proclaimed pose different challenges to our churches from those existing at the end of the nineteenth century. Since then, our confidence in the fundamental values of the West which had been bound up with our proclamation of the Good News has been shaken by many events. These include: the experience of devastating world wars, the spectre of nuclear danger, increasing threats of ethnic conflict, and the prospect of ecological disaster. In the industrialized Western societies, problems of violence, unemployment, family breakdown and an unprecedented level of secularization have drastically altered the religious context. Consequently, both of our churches are now raising fundamental questions about how we witness to the Good News and to whom. We are challenged to discern how to proclaim the Good News, destined by God for all people, in a way which is respectful of those to whom the witness of the Good News is given.

Our dialogue group of Roman Catholic and United Church people has reflected on evangelism/evangelization as an issue concerning both questions of missionary activity to other countries and non-Christian peoples, and of mission to our own culture. Both our churches experience decline in church membership as well as renewed vitality of various kinds. We have tried to understand both the negative and positive effects which the contemporary context has had on Christian evangelism.

We have discovered that evangelism/evangelization is understood in various ways by members of our faith communities. In both churches there are those who want to carry on evangelical activity as a straightforward process of challenging persons to repent, to accept Jesus, to be baptized and to grow in faith. Others see evangelical activity as involving also work for social justice and for the

transformation of patterns of social existence. Some see attempting to meet whatever needs persons might have as evangelism/evangelization, without any explicit proclamation of Jesus' invitation to be converted or oriented to God. Differences in understanding how evangelism/evangelization occurs do not so much divide our denominations as cut across denominational boundaries.

I. WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION/EVANGELISM?

a) What we have learned:

We believe that God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ is Good News for all times, all peoples, and in all places. The risen Christ lives among us, empowering us by the Spirit to love one another as God has loved us. Christ has entrusted to the Church this message of reconciliation and has commissioned us to make it known.

The terms "evangelization" and "evangelism", however, provoke a variety of reactions due to the diversity of images associated with them. For many Roman Catholics "evangelism" connotes a proclamation of the message of the Gospel which is emotionally coercive and rather fundamentalistic, while "evangelization" connotes a more nuanced and respectful presentation. Many members of the United Church are wary about both terms because of the abuses of the past but would see "evangelism" as a more familiar and accessible word. From this point on in this dialogue report, the two terms will be alternated without distinction.

Both the Roman Catholic and United Churches understand evangelization as the process by which a person attempts to make another aware of the Good News of Jesus Christ, that God's unconditional and reconciling love sustains the universe and is available to all.

Since the Church's very existence is rooted in the mandate to share the message of the Gospel, every aspect of ecclesial life (conversion, catechesis/education, community celebration, witness, the struggle to promote justice and peace, inter-faith dialogue) contributes in some way to the evangelization in which the Church is engaged. The primary aim of evangelism is to share something valued by us with the other, for the benefit of the other. While its purpose is not to proselytize or to augment the numbers of a particular faith community, one of a Christian's greatest blessings is membership in the body of Christ.

b) Questions:

- If you were to ask the regular church-goers of your parish or congregation what the purpose of the church is, what do you think they would say? What would you say?
- Is there any church task or function which has little or no effect upon the sharing of the Gospel?

- With what term for “evangelization” or “evangelism” do you feel most comfortable? Why?

c) Some texts to think about:

Matthew 28:19 “go and make disciples of all nations”

Romans 10:14 “how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard: and how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?”

The *Basis of Union* of the United Church describes the Church as “a visible and sacred brotherhood . . . organized for the confession of His name, for the public worship of God, for the administration of the sacraments, for the upbuilding of the saints, and for the universal propagation of the Gospel.” (Article XV)

Vatican II’s *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* describes the Church as “in the nature of a sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men,” (Article 1) and as the new “people of God” to whom all are called to belong “in order that the design of God’s will may be fulfilled: he made human nature one in the beginning and has decreed that all his children should be finally gathered together as one (cf. John 11:52)” (Article 13)

II. WHY BE INVOLVED IN EVANGELIZATION?

a) What we have learned:

We share an understanding that to be a follower of Jesus is to want to share with others freely and lovingly what Jesus means to us. We believe that Jesus Christ reveals the salvation which God continues to offer humanity through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Church, a community of diverse peoples constituted as a communion by the sharing of a common life of grace, offers to humanity the hope that harmony and fellowship among all peoples is a real possibility.

The official position of the Roman Catholic community is that God, through Jesus, announces salvation and makes it possible even to those who, through no fault of their own, do not confess faith in Jesus Christ in an explicit way. Nevertheless, Roman Catholics are convinced that to come to believe in Jesus and to be united with and supported by a community of believers in the Church is to make fuller use of the means which God has provided. Thus, respect for non-Christian faiths is not meant to diminish efforts to evangelize, though it certainly alters the methods employed.

It is not easy to characterize the "official position" of the United Church. While the articles of faith of its *Basis of Union* imply that all are lost who do not confess Jesus as Mediator, recent General Council statements have situated the witness of Christians to

people of other faiths within the context of respectful dialogue. This means that while United Church people generally believe that Jesus reveals God's salvation to the world, there is not unanimity as to whether only Jesus effects this salvation.

We conclude that the members of the Roman Catholic and United Church communities regard themselves as called to witness to God's saving work by sharing the Good News with other people.

b) Questions:

- What Gospel values are exhibited by people of other religious traditions? people of no religious traditions?
- What do you as a Christian have to share with a person who has no apparent religious belief?
- Responses to a recent national survey indicate that a high number of Canadian Christians no longer feel an urge to spread the Gospel. How would your parish or congregation respond to such a question? Do you think that the proclamation of the Gospel is an option for the Church?

c) Some texts to think about:

John 3:5 "No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit."

Romans 2:14-16 "When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts."

Romans 13:8 "The one who loves another has fulfilled the law."

Acts 10 (the Cornelius story), esp. 10:34-35 "Then Peter began to speak to them: I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

III. HOW SHOULD WE EVANGELIZE?

a) What we have learned:

The dialogue group affirms that evangelization should be holistic in nature, both "serving the faith and promoting justice" (P. Arrupe, SJ). To overlook either aspect is to create an imbalance in our theology and faith. In an earlier structuring of the General Council Offices, the United Church called one of its boards "Evangelism and Social Service", an indication of such an understanding of evangelization.

Aware of the shadowed history of evangelism throughout the centuries, and of the realities of our pluralistic culture, both communities agree that

evangelization is to be carried out in a non-coercive manner. This means respect for the dignity of persons, all of whom are loved by God and to whose lives God is already present in a gracious way. For the author of the First Epistle of John, the primary form of evangelical witness is the sharing of love by those who are compelled to love because they have experienced the love of God (1 John 4:7). We do not serve the Gospel by belittling the religious views of others.

The dialogue group affirms that God's Spirit is the "principal agent of evangelization". (*Evangelization in the Modern World*, 75) Those whose lives exhibit love and mercy give evidence of a gift from God implanted already within their hearts, or of the Holy Spirit working, perhaps anonymously, in their hearts. The dialogue group notes that among the signs of "new life" within contemporary Canadian society one might include the current growing sensitivity to human values, the greater concern to protect the environment, a commitment to a more just society and to the equality of men and women. While affirming the uniqueness and the universal relevance of the Christian faith, both dialogue partners recognize that God may be at work in a saving way in all religions.

Both communities acknowledge the powerful witness to the Gospel which is given through concrete actions, through social justice work, everyday kindnesses, standing up for what one believes to be right no matter what the cost. To do these things is to help people to experience the power of love and to provide an occasion for them to acknowledge God as its

source.

Some ways of proclaiming the Gospel affirmed by both churches include:

1) **Personal Witness**

Evangelization begins with the individual. Wherever we are, we are called to witness to the Gospel in speech and action.

2) **Preaching of the Gospel**

Since Vatican II there has been a significant recovery by the Roman Catholic Church of the place of the Bible in the Church, and, in particular, of the place of the Bible and of the preached word in the liturgy. Both communities continue to affirm the value of gospel preaching as a means of evangelism.

3) **Liturgy and Sacraments**

Similar to the Roman Catholic recovery of the importance of the preached word, Protestants generally have been in the process of recovering the importance of the entirety of the liturgy, not just the preaching of the word. Though differing in the number of sacraments, both dialogue partners agree that worship and sacramental life are vehicles of evangelization. John Wesley, for example, believed that the Lord's Supper is "an ordinance of conversion".

4) **Catechetics/Bible Study**

We see catechetics and Bible studies as systematic means to present God's message. They are adapted to different age groups and to specific places and situations.

5) **Mass media**

Sometimes we wonder if we should make use of the mass media to maximize the exposure of the Gospel. Should we enter into the competitive world of the commercial media? Even if we cannot compete with stronger voices, the use of mass media, when affordable, makes it possible to reach millions of people.

b) **Questions:**

- As you reflect on the course of your own faith journey, which moments stand out as ones in which the Gospel was presented in a particularly compelling manner?
- What do you think is the relation between church teaching and social action in a community's capacity to share the message of the Gospel?
- Vatican II stated that "the church must take the road of poverty to announce the gospel" (*Decree on Mission*, 5). How does your parish or congregation understand poverty?

c) Some texts to think about:

James 2:14-17 "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?"

1 Peter 3:15-16 "Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence."

The Mission of the Redeemer by Pope John Paul II states that "the witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission: Christ, whose mission we continue, is the 'witness' *par excellence* (Rv. 1:5, 3:14) and the model of all Christian witness." (Article 42)

The Congregation as Evangelist of the United Church refers to the dialogical nature of evangelism in these terms: "In the process of dialogue with another - inside the Church or outside - we meet the Christ fleshed out once again in human form. God has arrived a long time before we arrive in that person's life journey." (p. 14)

IV. WITH WHOM DO WE SHARE THE GOSPEL?

a) What we have learned:

Proclaiming the Gospel to those who have never heard it remains a priority for both dialogue partners. The contemporary situation, however, suggests that our evangelical efforts may need to be directed to areas closer to home than has traditionally been the case. Pope John Paul II has recently noted that "entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and the Gospel" (*The Mission of the Redeemer*, 33). The dialogue group recognized that, for many Canadians, the Church is a discredited institution: impersonal, male-dominated, defensive and rocked by scandal. Many have been left disillusioned, disaffected and disoriented by the Church. An even greater number today, especially young people, are simply indifferent to religion and see the Church and its message as irrelevant. How can the message of the Gospel be offered again to such people in a credible form?

We affirm that Christians themselves must continually be open to the proclamation of the Word of God in their lives in order to be effective evangelizers. One might argue that evangelism should be directed first towards those who are already involved in a Christian faith community. John Paul II's reference to a "second" or a "new" evangelization indicates the ease with which Roman Catholics speak of evangelizing

the Church itself. The United Church would not usually use the word "evangelization" to refer to the revitalization of faith among nominal Christians, preferring to speak of Christian development and growth. Yet, *The Congregation as Evangelist*, states: "Our people, good evangelizers though they be, need continually to be evangelized by the 'Good News' story" (p. 66).

The United Church considers worship and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist/Lord's Supper as opportunities for people to profess their faith and recommit their lives in obedience to Christ as Saviour. Stewardship education is also intended to be an integral year-long thrust in congregational life to ensure people's commitment of time and money to the life and mission of the Church locally and in the world. For Roman Catholics, the Eucharist is the means *par excellence* of nourishing the Christian life. It is described as "the source and summit of the entire preaching of the Gospel" (*Constitution on the Liturgy*, 9, 10).

The Roman Catholic and United Churches agree that attempts to nourish and/or revitalise the faith of the baptized are necessary. However, Christians ought to respect the members of Christ's body in churches other than their own and, hence, refrain from "sheep-stealing." We do not regard other Christians as objects of the sort of "evangelization" better described as proselytism, which encourages a change of denomination, unless individuals seek such a change of their own accord. A common life of faith and grace already unites all of the baptized and encourages

co-operation among Christian groups in evangelism.

b) Questions:

- What are some of the concrete ways in which your parish or congregation fosters faith development among people?
- How does your church reach out to those who are disillusioned and/or indifferent to Christianity?
- Are there new ways of being the church that will enhance our ability to deliver the Gospel in a credible way to contemporary men and women?

c) Some texts to think about:

1 Corinthians 2:9 "We are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building."

1 Corinthians 10:10 "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."

Philippians 2:3-5 "Do nothing from selfish ambition

or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”

V. WHO ARE THE EVANGELIZERS?

a) What we have learned:

Both the Roman Catholic and the United Churches agree that the Church exists to share/embody the Good News. A sign and manifestation of God's reign, the Church is “a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God” (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 13-17) As God's people and Christ's body, the Church must be ready to give an account of its hope and to share its faith, hope, and love with others. Since the Gospel is God's Good News of liberation and salvation for the whole of creation, it is God who is the primary evangelist. As the sacrament of God's presence, Jesus of Nazareth is for Christians “the first and greatest evangelizer.” (*Evangelization in the Modern World*, 6) By his life and ministry and in the power of the Spirit, Jesus Christ affirmed that in him God's reign was already inaugurated, even though it still needed to grow to completeness. Himself sent forth by God, Jesus of Nazareth sent forth his disciples as an evangelizing body. Through his Spirit he empowered them to proclaim God's Good News to the whole world. Still today, it is the Spirit, sent by Christ, who initiates the whole evangelization process.

Without the Spirit, Christian evangelism is impossible: all attempts to spread the Good News which rely on human confidence alone are powerless.

Both Roman Catholics and United Church people are convinced that *all* Christians have a responsibility to share the Gospel with others. The mission of the Church does not belong only to the ordained. We agree that all Christ's followers are called to evangelize according to their particular vocation within the Christian community.

b) Questions:

- In what ways are you an evangelizer? in your family? at work? in the church community? in the wider community?
- In what ways is your congregation/parish an evangelizing community?
- How does your congregation support other Christian communities in their evangelizing endeavours?

c) Some texts to think about:

Acts 1:8 "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

John 4:39 "Many Samaritans from that city believed

because of the woman's testimony."

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church from the Second Vatican Council states that "All the disciples of Christ should everywhere on earth bear witness to Christ and give an answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope of an eternal life which is theirs (cf. I Pet. 3:15)." (Article 10) "through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself." (Article 33)

The Congregation as Evangelist of the United Church says: "We believe that the whole congregation is called to be the evangelizers in our time. It is not the gift, the charisma of just a select few. It is the responsibility of the many to do, to be and tell the Christian story." (p. 67)

VI. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES FOR EVANGELISM

The Gospel is always proclaimed in a specific time and place. As the dialogue group reflected on evangelism in the Canadian context of the late twentieth century, some challenges emerged as particularly pressing. This short list is not, of course, exhaustive. There may well be other concerns in your area which are at least as important as those we have chosen to include. We invite you to use these four as models upon which to develop your discussions further.

Secularization

a) Some Observations:

It is clear that for a great number of Canadians religion plays little or no role in their lives. Our society has moved from a sacred understanding of life to an understanding of life often devoid of any reference to the sacred. This is seen by some as a liberation from the archaic thought forms and observances of the institutional church or as a necessary evolution of the human spirit from childhood to maturity. Many others are quite unaware of any possible value or importance within religious traditions, and have become completely indifferent to religious expression. They perceive their lives as whole and complete without any reference to the sacred. This situation, which has been frequently interpreted as destructive to the life of Christian communities, can also be, and perhaps should also be, interpreted as a tremendous opportunity for evangelization.

The way is clear for a forthright proclamation of the Gospel but the way is also clear for many other influences which appear to offer contact with the holy, for example, New Age movements, which include beliefs and practices incompatible with historic Christianity (e.g., reincarnation and channelling). They often present an attractive vision of peace and harmony for all of humankind which has struck a chord with the disenchanting among us. The churches are perceived to be unresponsive to a deeply felt need among these searchers. And for Christians, here is the challenge to our communities - to be such authentic witnesses to the Christ that searchers are drawn to the Christian community.

b) Questions:

- To what extent has secularization affected your Christian community?
- To what extent has secularization affected your own perception of the world?
- What do you think we have to change in our lives to become more authentic witnesses to the Christ?

c) Some texts to think about:

John 3:17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him."

Romans 12:2 "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Inculturation

a) Some Observations:

The dialogue group took inculturation to mean the process of synthesizing faith and culture done by a people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. United Church people can approach "inculturation" as a rough synonym for "contextualization." Basically, it is the integration of faith values into a culture in such a way that the Gospel takes root

in the soil of local culture. The Christian faith enhances and strengthens the values of a culture to the extent that they are true and authentic. It modifies and corrects them in so far as they are distorted.

Both communities have become increasingly aware recently of the need to distinguish the Gospel from the cultural framework of Western Europe. Despite the obvious difficulties involved in cross-cultural conversations and in determining whether or not a proposed expression of the Gospel really does justice to it, a serious effort needs to be made to inculturate the Gospel message in non-Western and non-European cultures (e.g., Aboriginal, African, Asian, Latin American). Canada, unlike the United States, has tended to regard a diversity of cultures as a richness to be cultivated. This has meant, however, that the challenges associated with inculturation which used to confront us primarily in the arena of foreign missions, now confront us here at home. Furthermore, the increasing secularization of Canadian society produces a new cultural context for the proclamation and the hearing of the Good News. Many cherished features of church life appear alien to second-generation secularized Canadians.

Different cultures express the one faith in different ways, and in so doing frequently highlight aspects of the Good News that may not otherwise be seen. We need to be more conscious of this fact. How poor we would be had North American churches been deprived of the liturgical expressions of Afro-American people! How slow we have been to appreciate the gifts brought to the church by Native spiritualities! We have every reason to anticipate that our efforts to take seriously the diverse cultural contexts of Canada will lead us to a fuller understanding of the Good

News. Nevertheless, no one culture can in itself express the fullness of the Gospel. As the sun's light shines through the many colours of a stained glass window, so does the light of the Gospel shine through the many cultures of our world, in rich diversity.

b) Questions:

- What features of worship in your church would be alien to or easily misunderstood by a secularized Canadian attending church for the first time?
- What Christian groups in your area express their faith in ways different from yours? What can you learn from them about the meaning of the Gospel?

c) Some texts to think about:

Acts 10:35 "But in every nation, the person who fears God and does what is right is welcomed by God."

Galatians 2:15 "If you, being a Jew live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews."

The 1966 United Church *Report of the Commission on World Mission* affirmed that if we could dissociate our presentations of Christ from the western (Greek) cultural interpretations it might "allow (Christ) to assume the dress in which He can speak most meaningfully to people brought up in other ways."

Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation on *Evangelization in the Modern World* states that "the split between the Gospel and Culture is without doubt the drama of our time" (Article 20)

Justice and the Environment

a) Some Observations:

Christian witness to the Gospel message is weakened when verbal expressions of belief are not accompanied by obedience to God's will as revealed in Jesus Christ. Commitment to justice is, therefore, an essential part of our response to the Gospel. Relevance to the whole person and the whole person's relationships means that evangelism cannot be restricted to the personal sphere. As well, faithful response to the Gospel involves repentance and renewed relationship not only with God and the neighbour, but also with the whole created order. We owe a particular debt to Canada's aboriginal peoples for their witness to the spiritual meaning of our interdependence with all other creatures.

While, as created in God's image, humans have a unique power, responsibility and accountability in the creation, we also take our place as creatures among creatures in our witness and praise to God. As those invited to take up their stewardship of life as partners, not owners, of the created world, Christians can work with others to restore sustainable relationships throughout the created order.

The dialogue group concluded that Christians are called not only to honour the image of God in every neighbour, but are also called to live in a relationship of respect with creation.

b) **Questions:**

- We are now becoming aware of the many ways we have failed to take account of our dependence upon the environment. What can we do, as individual Christians or as churches, to show greater reverence for creation?
- You are invited to dramatize the first reading below. Then reflect on the story from each character's experience.

c) **Some texts to think about:**

Luke 16:19-31 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table."

Romans 8:19-23 "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God . . . We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now;"

Interfaith Dialogue

a) **Some Observations:**

Interfaith dialogue is dialogue among members of the major religions of the world. Oriented and intimately related to the

proclamation of the Gospel, interfaith dialogue is an essential component of the evangelizing mission of the church. It tries to affirm dialogue rather than proselytizing, and encourages an attitude of humility rather than one of arrogant superiority. This is evangelism in the sense that it promotes religious values found in the gospel message such as peace, harmony, love, and respect for one another. This will mean learning to reject the negative stereotyping of persons of other faiths which has characterized centuries of Christian thought. It will mean serious study and encounter with persons of other faiths, educated from the beginning to be open to friendship with such persons, and learning to think always about the needs and problems of the world as a whole.

One image emerging from such discussions is that of the healing work of God. What do we need to do to allow the process of healing to function effectively? What do we do wrong that blocks the possibility of God healing the world? Wars of religion are as prominent in our time as they have always been.

Interfaith dialogue encourages love and respect rather than conflict and aggression. Such dialogue does not seek to achieve perfect theological agreement but to foster the mutual recognition of religious values. It calls members of different religious traditions to live among each other in peace and respect.

b) Questions:

- What are the attitudes in your faith community toward other faiths? Do you find yourselves slipping into

easy stereotypes as you discuss other religions? Give an example.

- What do you think is to be gained by active participation in interfaith dialogue? How do you see such dialogue relating to evangelism?
- How would you recognize God's presence in a person of another faith?

c) Some texts to think about:

Matthew 8:5-13 (the Centurion's faith) "Now when Jesus heard this, he marvelled, and said to those who were following: Truly I say to you: I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel." (8:10)

Acts 17:22-24 "And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, *to an unknown God*. What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.'"

The 1936 United Church General Council approved a statement from a Report of the Special Committee which stated: "I have not come to destroy but to fulfil' indicates the correct attitude of Christianity to non-Christian religions. There are elements in non-Christian religions which are common to Christianity...."

The Mission of the Redeemer by Pope John Paul II states that God "does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression even when they contain 'gaps, insufficiencies and errors.'" (Article 55)

THE DIALOGUE PROCESS

Under the sponsorship of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) and the United Church of Canada (UCC), the Canadian Roman Catholic/United Church Dialogue Group, from 1990-1995, turned its attention to the topic of evangelism/evangelization in Canada. As a result of the caucus and plenary sessions at the first meeting, it was agreed to focus the discussion primarily upon terminology, the history of the changing notion of mission, and examination of key church mission documents. Providing the basis for much of the discussion for the second meeting were *The Congregation as Evangelist*, a key UC General Council document, and Pope Paul VI's 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelization in the Modern World*. It was agreed to test the former text both in a United Church context in Quebec and a Roman Catholic context in New Brunswick. The results of this study were reported to the group at the third meeting. Also at this third session, the dialogue group reviewed Pope John Paul II's encyclical *The Mission of the Redeemer*.

Over the next several meetings, assisted by prepared papers and responses, the dialogue group continued to explore the topic. At the fourth meeting, Dr. Ian Rennie was invited as a resource person to give a presentation on evangelism from the perspective of the

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. In addition to presentations by dialogue members on *The Church in the Modern World*, faith and culture, and New Age spirituality, the fifth meeting was attended by the UC Moderator, Rev. Stanley McKay, who shared both general and personal reflections on what it means to be a Christian and an Aboriginal in Canada. At the sixth meeting, Rev. Christine Gross (UC) and Rev. William Marvee (RC), two ministers from local churches in the area, served as resource persons. Sensitive to the needs of their respective communities, they offered valuable insights and suggestions which have been incorporated into this report. To get a better feel for the various concerns of parishioners, the dialogue group, at its seventh gathering, met with members from RC and UC parishes in Aylmer, Quebec. At the eighth session, the dialogue group heard a presentation by Sister Eva Solomon, CSJ, on native spirituality and spent time in editing this report. The primary focus of session nine was the consideration of two recent documents with implications for our dialogue: *Towards a Renewed Understanding of Ecumenism* from the United Church and the Roman Catholic *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*. At the tenth and eleventh sessions we returned to our editorial work on the evangelization document.

PARTICIPANTS

The dialogue group includes six participants from each church as well as an Anglican observer. Meetings are held twice a year.

Roman Catholic

Susan Mader Brown (1990-95) holds a PhD in systematic theology and is a member of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at King's College, London, Ontario.

Lorraine Caza (1990-95) is a member of the Congregation of Notre Dame. She holds a PhD in Theology and teaches biblical theology and moral theology at the Collège dominicain in Ottawa.

Donat Chiasson (1990-95) is the Archbishop Emeritus of Moncton. He is co-chair of the RC/UC Dialogue and a member of the Episcopal Commission for Ecumenism.

John Cole (1990-95) teaches mathematics and physics at Cabot College of Technology and Applied Arts in Newfoundland. His doctoral thesis was on ecumenism.

Donna Geernaert (1990-95) is a member of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax. She holds a PhD in systematic theology and is the staff person responsible for ecumenical and interfaith relations at the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Emmanuel Lapierre (1990-95) is a Dominican priest with a Masters in Theology, Medieval Studies. He is associate director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism in Montreal.

Philippe Thibodeau (1995) is a diocesan priest from Halifax. Currently, he is the director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism in Montreal.

André Villeneuve (1994-95) is a Dominican student brother with an interest in Christian/Muslim dialogue. He is working on his Masters in Theology at the Collège dominicain in Ottawa.

United Church

Roy Ameron (1990-94) holds a BA and BCL and practises law in the West end of Montreal (Dorval).

Gary Gaudin (1990-95) is a pastor at St. Stephen's United Church in Vancouver. He has just completed his doctoral thesis on Jewish/Christian relations.

Michael B. Hare (1990-94) is an ordained minister serving at Knox United Church in Terrace, BC.

Hal Llewellyn (1990-93) is an ordained minister and Principal of Queen's Theological College in Kingston, Ontario. He holds a PhD in Systematic and specializes in Systematic Theology and Pastoral Theology.

Sheila McDonough (1990-94) holds a PhD from McGill in Islamic Studies and teaches in the Religion Department at Concordia. Her most recent book is, "Ghandi's Responses to Islam".

Phyllis Smyth (1990-95) is an ordained minister. She is director of pastoral services and a CAPPE teaching supervisor at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal.

Keltie Van Binsbergen (1995) from Alberta, is studying for ordained ministry at the United Theological College in Montreal.

Peter Wyatt (1995) has served as a pastoral minister for 25 years. He holds a doctorate in historical theology (Calvin's Christology) and currently serves as the United Church's General Secretary for Theology, Faith and Ecumenism.

Deanna Wilson (1990-94) is an ordained minister at St. Stephen's-on-the-Hill United Church, Mississauga. She has worked in Jewish-Christian Dialogue, and Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue for the Toronto Conference of the United Church.

Anglican Observer

Elizabeth Hutchinson (1990-95) is a lay person who has worked in the church, mainly as a volunteer, in Britain, India, and Quebec. Currently, she is a consultant for women's concerns in the diocese of Montreal.