

**Faith and Witness Commission**  
**Report to the Governing Board**  
**November 2014**

Breathe into us the wind of unity that recognizes our diversity  
*Liturgy for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2015*

Note: This Report has been updated after the Commission on Faith and Witness meeting during the November 2014 CCC 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Assembly. Please see the updates below in **bold**.

Leadership and Staffing

Chairperson: Rev. Dr. Gilles Mongeau, SJ (CCCB) [until November 5, 2014]

Steering Committee: Dr. Paul Ladouceur (OCA), Rev. Dr. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast (MCC), Rev. Richard Vander Vaart (CRC-NA)

Associate Secretary: Dr. Mary Marrocco

We welcome as our brand-new Coordinator for Faith and Witness, inaugurating this role, Ms. Maria Simakova.

We extend our thanks and best wishes to Dr. Thomas Hentrich, outgoing Assistant Coordinator for Faith and Witness.

Publications:

Leading up to the publication of the past CFW triennial discussions on Salvation, we are planning to release short 250-word versions of the papers presented during our deliberations. These summaries will be released on CCC social media and website through the Communication Officer Jesse Hair. We are also working on a video resource based on these papers and geared towards young adults.

**Update on Communications and Publications: At the November meeting, the CCC Communications Officer, Jesse Hair, agreed to implement within a month suggested modifications concerning the Commission on Faith and Witness on the CCC website as contained in a document (dated 24 October 2013, modified 19 November 2014, presented by Commission member Paul Ladouceur) in consultation with Paul Ladouceur.**

Triennium Topic

The topic for this triennium is Theology of Christian Witness in an Age of Religious Plurality. During this triennium, CFW members prepare responses to the WCC working document entitled “Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding” from the theological perspective of their denominations. The CFW meeting at the November 2014 CCC Assembly is the third meeting of several that were planned as ways to study this question and plan a resource publication.

At the November 2014 meeting, we will listen and respond to further reflections on the WCC “Religious Plurality” document (depending on Commission members’ Assembly participation). There will be a review of responses thus far, a consideration of the convergences and divergences emerging, and a discussion of the particularly Canadian contribution to the WCC Religious Pluralism discussion (this CFW session will be open to all Assembly participants). A Commission member will write up the results of this discussion as a report

for our next meeting, identifying which points we want to review for further conversation. We will appoint a writing team to explore some initial ideas for a document.

This is what we plan for future meetings:

- Spring 2015 – enhanced Bible study; finish conversations; receive initial report back from the writing team.
- Fall 2015 – enhanced Bible study as before; receive further reports from the writing team. At its fall 2015 meeting, the Commission will engage the question of a new topic, and decide what the topic will be and how to pursue it during this triennium as we finish the past topic.

The Commission welcomes questions or recommendations from the Governing Board about this work in progress.

### Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The theme for 2015 is “Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a Drink’” (John 4:7),” and the focus is on Brazil, particularly on the need for unity in the face of violence and religious divisions (challenges addressed by the Christians in Brazil who prepared the WCC Week of Prayer resource).

Last year marked a significant increase in Week of Prayer participation because it was focused on Canada. We are working to maintain this level of participation – both through the CCC channels and through a close cooperation with the Prairie Center for Ecumenism in Saskatoon and the Canadian Center for Ecumenism in Montreal. We continue to self-publish and promote the website ([www.weekofprayer.ca](http://www.weekofprayer.ca)) as a means of accessing the Week of Prayer resource, while also providing a print resource for those who desire it.

The English Week of Prayer materials have been available for distribution since May 2014. Unfortunately, we have encountered a proofreading issue with the French version, which has now been resolved, and the French materials are available for distribution.

In mid-November, an email from Karen Hamilton will go out to the CCC church leaders, encouraging them to promote the Week of Prayer celebration in their denominations and directing them to the 2015 resources. A similar email will go out to Canadian military chaplains by the end of November.

We are collecting data from congregations about their Week of Prayer events in 2014 and 2015. Josh Valley, the CCC communications intern, will write an article highlighting these celebrations and promoting the 2015 Week of Prayer, which will be published on the CCC website in December 2014.

Maria Simakova, the new Coordinator for the Commission on Faith and Witness, plans to contact three Orthodox parishes in late November to explore the possibility of their participating in the Week of Prayer. If her contacts are successful, we could begin establishing a closer connection of Canadian Orthodox churches to this event. Josh Valley has agreed to write another article for the CCC website (and possibly for Canadian Orthodox online publications), if this initiative takes off.

As part of 2014 Assembly, the Week of Prayer Writing Team is coming together for a special meeting. Ordinarily, the Writing Team meets twice a year, in January-February and March. During these times, the CFW Week of Prayer Writing Team works on the materials created by the joint writing and editorial teams of WCC and PCPCU for a given year. Every year, the WCC/PCPCU materials are prepared by a joint ecumenical writing team in a designated country, which chooses a scriptural text and theme to prepare a written resource. This resource is then distributed worldwide. The CFW Week of Prayer Writing Team receives and adapts these materials for use in Canada, and creates additional resources appropriate to the Canadian context.



# THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DES ÉGLISES

As part of the November 2014 special Week of Prayer Writing Team's meeting during the Assembly, the Commission on Faith and Witness and the Writing Team will have a joint session. Questions to be considered include 1) the regular oversight of the Writing Team's work by the Commission on Faith and Witness and 2) the place and mission of the Week of Prayer within the wider work of the Commission and the CCC, responding to the GB's recommendation that the Week of Prayer should become a "flagship" event that promotes the mission of the CCC and encourages financial support of its work. **Update: After the joint session of the Commission on Faith and Witness and the Week of Prayer Writing Team, The Faith and Witness Commission requests a note from the Governing Board stating its understanding of the purpose of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and the relationship of WPCU to Faith and Witness and the CCC.**

The Writing Team continues to promote the liaison with both the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism in Saskatoon and the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism in Montreal in working on the Week of Prayer. The Writing Team will meet with the representatives of PCE and CCE at the Assembly to discuss possibilities for closer cooperation. **Update: At the Writing Team meeting in November, Darren Dahl (PCE) and Norman Lévesque (CCE) have agreed to actively collaborate on promoting the CCC Week of Prayer resources on the PCE and CCE websites and through their communications channels, and have offered helpful suggestions on adapting the Week of Prayer resources for the Canadian context.**

We are encouraging the GB to promote the Week of Prayer through their channels, provide input, and send in event data and pictures, especially as we are working to maintain the high level participation in this event in 2015.

This report will be updated online [[www.councilofchurches.ca/70th-anniversary-assembly-important-documents/](http://www.councilofchurches.ca/70th-anniversary-assembly-important-documents/)] after the Writing Team's special meeting at the Assembly. We respectfully invite the Governing Board's input and comments. **See updates in bold above.**

At present, **members of the Writing Team** are:

- Rev. Susan Climo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (chair)
- Rev. Dr. Nancy Hardy, United Church of Canada
- Rev. Val Kerr, Anglican Church of Canada
- Norman Lévesque, Canadian Centre for Ecumenism
- Rev. Damian MacPherson, S.A., Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Ann Stainton, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Janiece van Oosterom, Christian Reformed Church in North America-Canada
- Maria Simakova, Coordinator, Faith & Witness (*ex officio*)

## Other Initiatives

**"Off the Record" discussions.** At our November meeting during the Assembly, we expect a lively discussion on the question of "What are the limits of civil liberties?" The purpose and value of these discussions is to allow for space to discuss ecumenical issues without denominational 'restrictions'.

**Update: Collaboration and cooperation among CCC, the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, and the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism.** Subject to Governing Board approval, the Directors of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism and the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism (or delegate) will be welcomed as members of the Faith and Witness Commission. At the November meeting during the Assembly, we have agreed to promote cooperation among these three organizations.



# THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DES ÉGLISES

**Promoting Ecumenical Dialogues in Canada.** A working group for the Commission has prepared a proposal for the **6<sup>th</sup> Forum on Ecumenical Dialogues**. This proposal will be received by the Commission at its November 2014 meeting, and a new working group will be established to prepare the upcoming Forum. **Update:** A working group has been struck, including members of PCE and CCE (Directors or delegates), to sponsor a Forum for Dialogues in Saskatoon on 22-23 June 2015, and again in Montreal in 2017.

## **Current working group includes:**

Dr. Gail Allan, United Church of Canada  
Dr. Paul Ladouceur, Orthodox Church in America  
Rev. André Lavergne, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
Archdeacon Bruce Myers, Anglican Church of Canada  
Dr. Mary Marrocco, Associate Secretary for the Commission on Faith and Witness (*ex officio*)  
Maria Simakova, Coordinator for the Commission on Faith and Witness (*ex officio*)

## **The Forum on Dialogues working group also gratefully acknowledges the participation and contributions of:**

Dr. Darren Dahl, Prairie Centre for Ecumenism  
Norman Lévesque, Canadian Centre for Ecumenism

Previous Fora on Ecumenical Dialogues were sponsored by Faith and Witness and held in Toronto (2002), Ottawa (2004), Winnipeg (2007), and Mississauga (2011, as part of the November GB Meeting). The current working group's proposal envisions a 2015 Forum on Dialogues and a 2017 Forum on Dialogues. Dates and details will be decided by the Commission during its November 2014 meeting.

We are pleased to be working in close collaboration with PCE and CCE, and are grateful for the opportunity to meet with their representatives to discuss the Forum during the Assembly.

This report will be updated online [[www.councilofchurches.ca/70th-anniversary-assembly-important-documents/](http://www.councilofchurches.ca/70th-anniversary-assembly-important-documents/)] after the working group presents its proposal to the Commission at the Assembly. We respectfully invite the Governing Board's input and comments. **See updates above.**

## Christian Inter-Faith Reference Group

The Commission on Faith and Witness continues to staff the CIRG, which presents its own report to the Governing Board. Fr. Jaroslaw Buciora (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada) is our Faith and Witness representative to CIRG.

## Biotechnology Reference Group

Fr Cyprian Hutcheon (OCA/Vice President) is our Faith and Witness representative to Biotech.

## Commission Membership

We are delighted to welcome four new members of the Commission:

Sr. Gill Goulding, CJ, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Ms. Huda Kandalaft, Presbyterian Church in Canada  
Rev. Theodore Paraskevopoulos, Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto, Canada  
Rev. Lane Scruggs, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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**LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DES ÉGLISES**

At present, the Commission is experiencing a shortage in membership, and we encourage all member churches to delegate representatives to participate in our proceedings and discussions.

Next Meetings

Spring 2015: 8-10 March, Cobourg, ON

Fall 2015: 26-28 October, Montreal

Report Respectfully Submitted By

Dr. Paul Ladouceur / Dr. Mary Marrocco / Maria Simakova

Steering Committee Member / Associate Secretary, Faith and Witness / Coordinator, Faith and Witness

Appendix 1  
Membership of Faith and Witness Commission  
As of November 2014

Dr. Gail Allan, United Church of Canada  
Rev. Andrew Allan, Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec  
Rev. Peter Avgeropoulos, Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto, Canada  
Rev. Craig Bowers, Anglican Church of Canada  
Rev. Dr. Jaroslaw Buciora, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada  
Rev. Eric Dyck, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
Dr. Ibrahim El-Behery, Coptic Orthodox Church of Canada  
Dr. Patrick Fletcher, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Sr. Gill Goulding, C.J., Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Rev. Dr. Lambros Kamperidis, Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto, Canada  
Ms. Huda Kandalaf, Presbyterian Church in Canada  
Very Rev. Dr. Ihor Kutash, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada  
Dr. Paul Ladouceur, Orthodox Church in America  
Rev. André Lavergne, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
Rev. Dr. Gilles Mongeau, S.J., Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (Chair, until November 5, 2014)  
Rev. Dr. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, Mennonite Church Canada (Interim Chair)  
Rev. Theodore Paraskevopoulos, Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto, Canada  
Prof. Richard Schneider, Orthodox Church in America  
Rev. Lane Scruggs, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Rev. Dr. Ian Sloan, United Church of Canada  
Rev. Dr. Robert Steffer, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Rev. Richard Vander Vaart, Christian Reformed Church in North America-Canada  
Rev. Alexei Vassiouchkine, Orthodox Church in America  
Rev. Pishoy Wasfy, Coptic Orthodox Church in Canada

*Ex Officio:*

Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, CCC General Secretary  
Archpriest Cyprian R. Hutcheon, CCC Vice-President  
Dr. Mary Marrocco, Associate Secretary, Faith and Witness  
Ms. Maria Simakova, Coordinator, Faith and Witness  
Emma Burns, Recording Secretary

Appendix 2  
Draft Triennial Plan

<p>October 2012  Cobourg         November Governing Board Presentation on Topic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reports from committees</li> <li>- New Member Initiation</li> <li>- Review past publications</li> <li>- Begin planning Forum on Dialogues</li> <li>- 3 Round Spiritual Conversation on Present Topic to uncover direction and consensus, remaining issues: what is the Spirit saying to the F&amp;W commission?</li> <li>- writing group assigned</li> </ul>
<p>March 2013  Montreal</p>	<p>Reports from committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new topic selection: invite input from other groups as preparation</li> <li>- final conversations on Why be a Christian</li> <li>- report from writing group</li> <li>- follow up on forum planning</li> </ul>
<p>October 2013  Montreal</p>	<p>Reports from committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- discussion of new topic begins</li> <li>- draft of Why Be a Christian presented</li> <li>- 2014 week of prayer</li> <li>- follow up on forum planning</li> <li>- bible study extra time</li> </ul>
<p>March 2014  Cobourg</p>	<p>Reports from committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- discussion of new topic continues</li> <li>- follow up on forum planning</li> </ul>

	- bible study extra time
November 2014 held in conjunction with CCC assembly Mississauga	Reports from committees - 2 <sup>nd</sup> round on new topic, leading into 3 <sup>rd</sup> round conversation on what emerges for us - writing group assigned on new topic
March 2015 Cobourg	Reports from committees - final conversations on new topic - report from writing group
<p>*Send delegate(s) to Summer Ecumenical Institute every 2<sup>nd</sup> year</p> <p>*See if we can establish correspondence-type relationship with both centres of ecumenism, to receive regular information on their activities during our meetings</p>	