

The Anglican Church of Canada



L'Église anglicane du Canada

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## ***“Don de Dieu”***

*A Message from the Primate on the eve of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 2014*

In services marking this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we will be exchanging a sign of peace with the greeting *“Don de Dieu”* which means *“Gift of God”*. The peace and unity we share in Christ is God's gift to us and to the world. How we embrace and embody its beauty and grace is the opportunity this Week of Prayer affords the whole church.

Canadians prepared the resources for this year's liturgy and daily reflections. They chose as a theme Paul's rhetorical question in addressing divisions in the church in Corinth, *“Has Christ been divided?”* (1 Corinthians 1:13). The question calls us to confess the scandal of disunity and its marring effect on the witness of the church catholic. This week always has about it a spirit of repentance and renewal.

There can and ought also to be a spirit of rejoicing in the work of the councils of the church that support ecumenical dialogue and foster a stronger common witness to the gospel of Christ.

I view the World Council of Churches (WCC), founded in 1948, as a *“don de Dieu”*, a gift of God, an instrument for calling the churches into a more visible unity. In 2013 the WCC published a document entitled *“The Church: Towards a Common Vision”*. The fruit of 20 years of ecumenical conversations, it is an extraordinary ecumenical achievement setting out an ecclesiology in which the church, serves the divine plan for the transformation of the world. We can be proud that several Canadian Anglicans are currently serving the World Council of Churches in very significant roles:

The Rev. Canon John Gibault is the Director of the Commission on Faith and Order:

Ms. Natasha Klukach is the Program Executive, Church and Ecumenical:

*Living the Marks of Mission*

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Bishop Mark MacDonald is the Regional President for North America. He was elected at the WCC Assembly in Busan, Korea last year.

Canadians have always had a deep commitment to ecumenism. Like the World Council of Churches, the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) is also a *"don de Dieu"*, an instrument for drawing together Christians of many traditions: Anglican, Roman Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical, Free Church, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox. The CCC is in fact one of the broadest and most inclusive national councils of churches in the world.

Canadian ecumenism has been nurtured through the very fine work of the Canadian Center for Ecumenism in Montreal and the Prairie Center for Ecumenism in Saskatoon.

In the 1960s Christians in Canada were drawn together through a number of coalitions for social justice. Over time they evolved into movements like Project Ploughshares, the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada, the Canadian Church's Forum for Global Ministries, and the Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives commonly known as KAIROS.

A number of Canadians provide strong leadership in ecumenical conversations at every level. The Rev. Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, a Canadian priest, serves as the Director of Unity Faith and Order for the Anglican Communion. A huge piece of her work consists of staffing a number of international ecumenical dialogues.

Bishop Linda Nicholls of Toronto is a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. Only in Canada has there been a national dialogue spanning the 40 years of this international one. And it is becoming clear that with Pope Francis, there is more hope for these dialogues than ever.

The Rev. Canon Philip Hobson and Ms. Natasha Klukach, both of the Diocese of Toronto, serve as members of the international Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue. Two more Canadians will soon be named to international ecumenical dialogues being renewed between the Anglican Communion and the churches of the Oriental Orthodox and Reformed traditions.

Bishop Michael Pryse, of the Eastern Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, serves as co-chair of the International Anglican Lutheran Co-ordinating Committee which monitors and supports conversations between Anglicans and Lutherans in many parts of the world. Canada leads the way through its Full Communion relationship between our churches. It was our delight to meet in Joint Assembly in Ottawa in 2013. Our theme was "Together for the love of the world".

We are happily engaged in a new round of dialogue with the United Church of Canada, seeking new models to give visible expression to the unity our two churches share.

For many years we have partnered with other churches in ecumenical shared ministries that have proven to be a real blessing in many communities across the country.

The measure of the Anglican Church of Canada's commitment to ecumenism is reflected in our decision to make the Coordinator for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Officer into a full-time position. Archdeacon Bruce Myers, a priest from the Diocese of Quebec, works with the ecumenical officers of the dioceses, staffs all our ecumenical dialogues, and co-ordinates faith and order conversations. With respect to peace and justice work, he works closely with the Primate, the General Secretary and our Director of Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice and our Special Advisor for Government Relations. Bruce has a great mind and a huge heart for this work. For our church he is a "don de Dieu", a gift of God in our midst. I ask for your prayers for him and his ministry.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the local councils of churches and ecumenical ministries in communities all across Canada. These groups draw neighbourhood churches together for events like Christmas lessons and carols, Good Friday walks, Easter sunrise services. They draw communities together in prayer in times of civic or national celebration and in times of tragedy. They are on the frontline of many social services including food banks, breakfast for kids, or soup kitchens, community dinners and out of the cold or heat programs. They are supporting shelters for the homeless and safe havens for those who are escaping domestic violence. They are supporting community programs for those struggling with addictions. They give strength to a strong community voice for the most vulnerable in our society. Without a doubt, each of these local church councils and ecumenical ministerial is a "don de Dieu" in the community it serves.

In this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity let us be mindful of the great "*Don de Dieu*" the great gift of God's peace and unity in Christ for us and for the world. And let us pray that as church leaders, church councils, and neighbours in faith we may embrace and embody that gift with passion and perseverance for the glory of Christ and the good of the world.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "+ Fred". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz

Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada