



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Prairie Centre for Ecumenism director Jan Bigland-Pritchard (far right) addresses local church leaders during the ecumenical prayer service March 24: (l-r) Rev. Deb Walker of the United Church of Canada, Retired Anglican Bishop Rodney Andrews, Lutheran Bishop Cindy Halmarson, Rev. Bill Blackmon of the Evangelical Ministers' Fellowship, Bishop Jerold Gliege of the Evangelical Orthodox Church, Mennonite Pastor Jerry Buhler, Rev. Amanda Currie of the Presbyterian Church, Jay Cowsill of the Society of Friends, Roman Catholic Bishop-elect Donald Bolen, and Bishop Bryan Bayda of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon.

Ecumenical prayer service held on the eve of new bishop's ordination

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

An ecumenical prayer service was held on the eve of Catholic bishop Donald Bolen's episcopal ordination, reflecting his own years working for Christian unity as well as a tradition of ecumenical dialogue in Saskatoon, home of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism.

Leaders of local Christian churches as well as guests involved in ecumenical dialogue from around the world were among those who gathered March 24, 2010 for the service at St. Paul's Cathedral in Saskatoon. The celebration included prayers for Bolen, a reflection on the word of life, and a presentation of the gifts that different denominations bring to the world.

"I don't think I've ever heard of an ordination which began with an ecumenical service – now that's saying something about how far we still have to go," said Bishop Brian Farrell, a native of Ireland who worked with Bolen at the pontifical Society for the Promotion of Christian Unity in Rome.

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“You have a bishop who is totally committed to the cause of Christian unity. I hope that you will welcome him with an open heart,” Farrell said in his opening remarks.

Taylor Croissant, a United Church of

Canada seminarian from St. Andrew’s College in Saskatoon, led the call to worship. During a prayer of confession, the assembly acknowledged failures to heal the divisions that exist among the followers of Jesus and asked for strength to build bridges of love and understanding.

Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Wainwright, co-chair of the Methodist-Roman Catholic international dialogue, Roman Catholic bishop-elect Donald Bolen, and Bishop Brian Farrell of the Pontifical Society for Promotion of Christian Unity (left to right) listen as Dorothy Fortier and Jamie Horn proclaim a series of scripture readings during an ecumenical prayer service March 24.

Bishop Dennis Drainville, the Anglican Bishop of Quebec and co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue in Canada read a passage from the first letter of John, from which Bolen took his episcopal motto “the word of life” (1 John 1:1). A series of scripture verses related to the word of God were presented by Dorothy Fortier of St. Anne Roman Catholic Parish and Jaimie Horn of the Mennonite faith community. The scripture verses also formed the framework of a reflection by bishop-elect Bolen on the source of his motto.

“Major ecumenical gains in recent decades have to do with an increasingly common understanding of what that word is, how we hear that word and how we share that word in scripture and tradition,” said Bolen.

Bilateral dialogues in recent decades have addressed the relationship between scripture and tradition, one of the “classic controversial themes” dividing Christian churches, he said. He proceeded to quote from Methodist-Catholic, Lutheran-Catholic and Anglican-Catholic documents released in recent years to show that differences in this regard have largely been resolved through patient and persevering dialogue.

These dialogues have spoken of tradition as the transmission of the gospel through time, Bolen related. “Tradition has been seen as a dynamic process, communicated through each generation: what was delivered once and for all to the community of the apostles by Jesus himself,” he said, while the scriptures are the uniquely-inspired witness to divine revelation and remain the highest authority in matters of faith. As the Methodist-Catholic dialogue has stated: “Scripture was written within Tradition, yet Scripture is normative for Tradition. The one is only intelligible in terms of the other.”

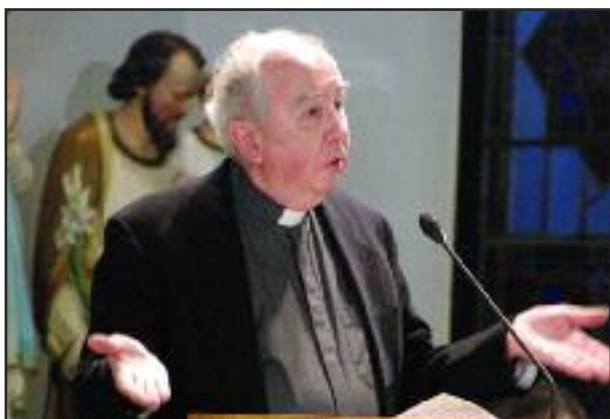
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“if we have come to an increasingly common understandings of that word which God speaks to us, that word with which God sends us forth to live and proclaim, what does that ask of us then, in the present? What does that call us to do together?”

Bolen identified one area for mutual effort, citing the first letter of Peter, which calls for Christians to give an account of their hope to others. “In our culture and in our day we all know that it is increasingly difficult, even for those who desire to believe, those who desire to have a strong faith, to believe with heart and mind and soul,” he said.

“I think there’s a moment of opportunity where we can work together and think together and pray together to come to a new found way of living our faith, but also for giving an account of our faith, standing before our world and saying there are very good, profound and intelligent reasons for believing that the good news proclaimed by Jesus Christ is true and it’s authentic and deserves our full commitment.”



Dr. Geoffrey Wainwright, co-chair of the Methodist-Roman Catholic international dialogue.

Dr. Geoffrey Wainwright, co-chair of the Methodist-Roman Catholic international dialogue, also gave a reflection, describing the ongoing international dialogue between the two denominations. “We seek to work at doctrinal issues, to find out how we are converging and can seek to converge even further,” in an ongoing effort to fulfill the prayer of Jesus in John 17 that his followers would be one, in order that the world might believe.

The new bishop’s motto “the Word of life” is taken from “an astonishingly dense and rich passage of scripture,” Wainwright observed, reflecting on the description in the first letter of John about seeing, hearing and touching “that which was with us from the beginning.”

Wainwright noted that a statement on revelation and faith by the Methodist-Catholic dialogue, entitled “The Word of Life” grew out of a reflection on this same scripture passage. It was followed by a statement entitled “Speaking the Truth in Love,” on teaching authority in the Church, grounded in the letter to the Ephesians, and by the most recent dialogue “The Grace given You in Christ,” which focuses on the nature and mission of the Church, centred on a passage from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians.

A theme of John Paul II’s ecumenical ministry was that efforts towards Christian unity should not merely be an exchange of ideas, but should be an exchange of gifts, said Wainwright, noting how the Methodist hymns of Charles Wesley have been a gift to the Christian world, and in particular to Saskatoon’s new bishop.



The theme of a gift exchange continued, as Nick Jesson, the ecumenical officer for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, called forward local

church leaders to present a symbol of one of the gifts of their particular Christian tradition.

Retired Anglican Bishop Rodney Andrews presented a Book of Common Prayer on behalf of recently ordained Saskatoon Anglican Bishop David Irving, as Jesson described the importance of the prayer book in Anglican life over the past four centuries.

Bishop Cindy Halmarson of the Saskatchewan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, carried up an image of Luther's rose, a symbol of Martin Luther's theology, Jesson said.

Rev. Bill Blackmon of the Evangelical Ministers' Fellowship carried forth a book of the scriptures, recently translated into yet another of the world's many languages; while Bishop Jerold Gliege of the Evangelical Orthodox Church presented readings from the Apostolic Fathers.

Pastor Jeremiah Buhler of the Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan presented a peace lamp as a symbol of his denomination's commitment and focus on peace. Rev. Amanda Currie of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church brought up a copy of the Presbyterian "Book of Forms," and bishop-elect Bolen presented a copy of the Catholic lectionary.

Jay Cowsill of the Society of Friends presented a candle as a symbol of truth, peace and integrity; while Bishop Bryan Bayda of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon carried up an icon.

Finally, Rev. Deb Walker, chair of the Riverbend Presbytery of the United Church of Canada brought up a rainbow-coloured bunch of balloons as a symbol of the diversity and generosity of God's creative Spirit.

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Bishop Cindy Halmarson brought forward Luther's rose.



Bishop Bryan Bayda brought forward a sacred icon.



Rev. Bernard de Margerie led the local church leaders in a final blessing.

Rev. Jan Bigland-Pritchard, director of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, then presented the local church leaders with their task to take up the yoke of Jesus (Matthew 11:29-30) and to tend the flock of God in their charge (1 Peter 5:2-3).

Rev. Bernard de Margerie, founder of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, then led the leaders of the Christian churches in a final blessing.

Music ministry for the celebration was provided by a joint choir from McClure United and Holy Spirit Catholic churches, which recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of a covenant of shared life and ministry; as well as by the ecumenical Queen's House Taize Music Ministry.