

## Reports from Canada

### **Montreal:**

In Montreal we have had two opportunities in the past year to discuss Interchurch Families with bilingual groups. Both were enlightening experiences for the participants and ourselves.

One group was Roman Catholic pastoral animators. They were responsive and appreciated the exchange because they know that many of their students and/or staff live this reality but had limited personal insight into the interchurch concept.

The second exchange was organized by the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism at their long-standing Summer Institute where we were among several invited speakers. "Interchurch Families" were in fine company as the participants represented several Canadian provinces and a vast array of Christian endeavours. Several were well aware of our existence but to many it was a first opportunity to hear and discuss this reality. They appreciated that we were each attached to our own tradition yet were willing to open ourselves to that of our spouse.

Each group was first asked to reflect on Interchurch families they knew and to consider what they knew about them and their faith-life. This led to them categorizing positive and negative images such as enrichment, problems, tension, inspired by God, impossible, challenges, undesirable, possible sign of unity, pleasure, growth, sharing, respect, negativity. These they discussed in small groups and brought back comments and questions for all to consider. This exercise was a great starter which fostered people's interest and participation.

For us personally, involvement is through the Ecumenical Centre and Édouard's work on that board. Our once lively group has dwindled through changes in church affiliation, relocation, and loss.

### ***Édouard & Joy Bédard***

### **Winnipeg:**

Interchurch families 'work' for the Temmermans this year has revolved around Ray's Masters thesis on the lived experience of interchurch families as domestic church. Having solicited responses from interchurch families in Canada as well as couples participating in interchurch family conferences in the USA and UK, Ray and Fenella were able to attend both conferences, Louisville in June and Swanwick in August, where Ray interviewed a number of couples who had responded to the surveys.

With Ray's work demanding he travels so much, work continues on the thesis, though FAR slower than Ray had hoped. He was delighted to be invited to participate in the second conference on Receptive Ecumenism, to be held at Durham University under the auspices of the Centre for Catholic Studies in January 2009, where he will renew his acquaintance with several theologians and others who have been involved with interchurch family groups and associations before, and looks forward in particular to

hearing a presentation by Dr Bernard Prusak of Villanova University, Pennsylvania, on "Receptive Ecumenism From Below: the Voices of Interchurch Families".

### ***Ray and Fenella Temmerman***

#### **Regina:**

Regina, Saskatchewan (CANADA) Over the past year, Darrel and Maureen Chastkiewicz have continued a very active role in educating and informing churches and engaged couples in Regina and area, about interchurch families. They have given two presentations at local deaneries in the Archdiocese of Regina, and one presentation to the Regina Council of Churches. In attendance were various clergy, parishioners and mixed marriage couples. They have connected with many new interchurch couples. Maureen continues to work as a representative on the Archdiocese Ecumenical Commission, and the Regina Council of Churches. Darrel and Maureen continue sharing their story and AIF information at marriage preparation. In February 2008, their "home" Catholic church asked them to speak on a specific marriage preparation session called, "Marriage and Spirituality". It is a wonderful opportunity for them to reflect back on how their interchurch life has enriched the spirituality of their marriage (and continues to do so), and share that with engaged couples.

Maureen and Nick Jesson (Saskatoon) attended the Western Diocesan and Eparchial Coordinators of Ecumenism Conference in Lumsden, Saskatchewan (November 2008), and Darrel attended the evening event which was open to the public. They gave interchurch marriage a voice, requested awareness for the needs of interchurch families and emphasized the realities interchurch families face on a regular basis.

### ***Darrel and Maureen Chastkiewicz***

#### **Calgary:**

A special event in the life of the Vandervoort family was Nicole (14 at that time) deciding to take confirmation classes in the United Church last spring. She was already confirmed in the Catholic Church and when approached by their Minister, she thought it would be meaningful to also "affirm" in the United Church since she has been as much a member of that church as the Catholic.

The Minister asked if Suzanne (Nicole's mother) would like to take the classes with her and decided she would to see what they were like in the United Church. As it turned out, on May 25, mother and daughter were both "affirmed" in the United Church. Says Suzanne, "This was a very special and moving service as while I thought I was doing this mostly "for" Nicole's sake, I realized that I truly felt like a member of Northminster and that they were fully welcoming me into their family. I know that this day caused some people to be confused (they think I am letting go of my Catholicity), but in my heart, I feel that I am a member of both Churches. I am a "Christian" no matter what building I'm in."

### ***Mark and Suzanne Vandervoort***

Return to [IFIN 2008](#)

[←Previous](#) | [Next→](#)