

The Report of the CABF Representative to The Canadian Council of Churches

In early November 2022 I accepted the role of representative from the CABF Council to the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). In assuming this role, I became a member of the Governing Board of the CCC which is comprised of official representatives from the member churches. I followed Bert Radford in this role and attended my first meeting on November 16-18. The meeting was held at a Retreat Centre in Mississauga which I attended virtually. The loss of Richard Schneider, a former president of the CCC was marked, and several of the highlights of the meeting included:

- The welcoming of Kairos, the North American Baptist Fellowship and the Canadian Council on Justice and Corrections as affiliates of the CCC.
- A powerful presentation on the 2023 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity theme “Do Good, Seek Justice” by two BIPOC representatives from the Minnesota Council of Churches
- A presentation on military chaplaincy and prison chaplaincy by the chair of the Interfaith Committee on Canadian Military Chaplaincy (by Imam Michael Taylor – a colleague of mine in chaplaincy in the Correctional Service of Canada)
- Insightful presentations on the changing religious landscape in Canada based on 2021 Census data by *Halo Canada* and Waybase.

While attending this meeting virtually, I realized the importance of “being in the room” at these meetings, connecting with other members, affiliates, and observers, so in May I travelled to Quebec City for the spring meeting of the Governing Board on May 14th-26th, 2023.

The Spring Meeting of the Governing Council was held at the Augustinian Monastery in old Quebec City. This was a unique meeting of the Council, which normally meets in the Toronto area. The decision had been taken to meet in Quebec City to take time during the gathering to explore the religious and social context around the recent adoption of Bill 21 by the the Quebec National Assembly. This focus shaped many of the presentations offered at the meeting. Some highlights included:

- Appointing Peter Noteboom to another five-year term as General Secretary of the CCC
- Insightful presentations about the current religious situation in Quebec concerning *secularism*, *laïcité*, and *pluralism* by Quebecois academics.
- A presentation by a Member of the National Assembly on the details and foundations of Bill 21.
- A visit to the Grand Mosque of Quebec where six members were killed in 2017 - we had a tour of the Mosque, an interfaith conversation and attended evening prayers.
- The final plenary session involved a very rich exchange between Roman Catholic, United Church, Anglican and Evangelical (a professor from Laval) leaders on collaboration in the contemporary church in Quebec given the challenges posed by Bill 21.
- Affirming of a decision by the Executive Committee of the Council to have the Church Council on Justice and Corrections merge with the Council where it was birthed a number of years ago.

It is privilege to represent CABF on the Governing Council of the CCC and I look forward to continuing this role on your behalf.

Respectfully Submitted,

Hugh Kirkegaard

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