

Last Thursday night Lionel, Motakiai and I were privileged to share in the service at the Catholic Cathedral celebrating the signing of the Agreement to engage in a National Dialogue for Christian Unity. This was the outcome of eight years of discussions between The Anglican, Catholic and Methodist Churches. They agreed to [form an ecumenical entity to pursue closer ties and share understandings. The dialogue will lead to formal ecumenical collaboration among the churches and other groups in society that want to see progress on issues that are a concern of all New Zealanders.](#)

The Salvation Army and Presbyterian Churches have also been part of the dialogue. Kerry Enright from the Presbyterian Church pointed out that with 90 million Christians in China, the axis of the Christian world has turned in that direction. There are now more Christians in China than in Europe. He reminded us of the need to see both parts of a bifocal lens picture - the church near at hand in the lower section and the worldwide church in the upper section.

Cardinal John spoke of a wonderful moment in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Rome. In a service at St Paul's Outside the Walls, Pope Francis invited Archbishop David Moxham from NZ and an Orthodox Bishop to stand with him to share the benediction - something no pope had ever done before - and right around the interior of that church there are portraits of all past Popes looking down on the congregation!

Rev John Roberts reminded us that being ecumenical is an essential part of being Methodist and Thursday night provided the most stimulating ecumenical event I have been involved in for a very long time. Having the Anglican-Catholic-Methodist-agreement signed in Wellington seemed most appropriate to me. In 1942 when the Council of Wellington Churches continued its earlier life and became part of the network of Councils associated with the National Council of Churches, it was unique in being - as it had been for many years earlier - a Council including Catholic and Pentecostal Churches.

This co-operation is so integral to our work, and it also spices up our own Christian lives by giving us a bigger picture of God's work in the world. Share spicy Easter buns - each person to have a piece of bun. Divide into twos - number off 1, 2 around the table. First person in each pair offer your bun to your partner and share a brief story of how your Christian life has been enhanced - spiced up - enriched through sharing with a Christian church or organisation other than your own. Two minutes - then second person offers their bun to the first one and tells their story.

Back together -

As we eat our buns we give thanks to God for all the ways our contact with others enriches our lives and fits us for working together to the Glory of God.

Methodism was born in song and one of the gifts we bring to you today is contemporary New Zealand songs. I invite you to listen prayerfully as I read the words of one of Colin Gibson's many compositions.

We are many we are one and the work of Christ is done,
When we learn to live in true community...

End with - And we dedicate all that we do in this meeting, in the Annual Meeting and as a Council in the name of Jesus Christ to honour our God and advance God's kingdom. Amen

