



www.mwc-cmm.org

# *courrier . correo* *courrier*

2012 / 4

Conférence Mennonite Mondiale • Mennonite World Conference • Congreso Mundial Menonita

**2** The Anabaptist  
“tradition”

**4** Heart with four  
chambers

**10** Congolese  
Anabaptist  
identity

**11** Offering our  
blessings to  
the world

**12** World  
Fellowship  
Sunday  
materials

**15** Praying for  
each other



**6** *A century of partnership in Congo*

What does it mean for member churches of Mennonite World Conference to share an Anabaptist identity?  
What is the value of Anabaptist “tradition”—and what does that word mean in a global context?  
What are our Anabaptist understandings of mission and fellowship?

# *The “Anabaptist Tradition”*

Reclaiming its gifts, heeding its weaknesses

By Hanspeter Jecker

**T**hroughout Scripture God repeatedly confronts his people with this insight: if you want to reach the Promised Land, then remember the path in which God has led you until now (Deuteronomy 8:1-2). The parable of the talents (Matthew 25) invites us, as Anabaptist congregations, to ask ourselves what convictions have been entrusted to us as a treasure from our history, and what things we should readily toss aside in exchange for others. Could it be that certain important biblical perspectives have not yet been heard in the world simply because we do not nurture, develop or know how to appreciate those gifts?! Could it be that even the “Anabaptist tradition,” with all of its weaknesses, holds within itself precisely these treasures, which are not to be buried but rather are meant to be developed?

## **A short historical overview**

“Anabaptists.” To some contemporaries in the early centuries of the movement, they were pious lunatics; to the official church they were dangerous heretics; to the government they were seditious rebels. For centuries they suffered persecution and discrimination, were imprisoned and tortured, disinherited

and robbed, forced to flee and even executed. A minority, however, regarded them as earnest Christians who tried to live out what they believed.

Who were these “Anabaptists” who refused to attend worship services in the state church, swear oaths or participate in military service? The beginnings of the Anabaptist movement go back to the Reformation era of the sixteenth century. The Anabaptists shared many convictions with the churches of the Reformation, including a high regard for the Scripture and the centrality of God’s grace. In contrast to the state church, however, the Anabaptists envisioned congregations based on a voluntary fellowship, independent from the state. In 1525, in Zurich, several began to baptize adults. At about the same time, similar movements emerged in the Netherlands, Moravia and other parts of Europe.

Through their criticism of what seemed to be an unholy alliance of church and state, the Anabaptists quickly attracted the anger of those in power. Despite the persecution that quickly ensued, the group—increasingly called “Mennonites” after the Dutch Anabaptist leader Menno Simons (1496-1561)—grew rapidly across Europe. Systematic and intense repression, however, drove the Anabaptist movement into isolation, especially in Switzerland, south Germany, and France. This helped to prepare the way for their growing separation from society. Internal conflicts

led to painful divisions and the emergence of new groups, such as the Amish (1693). In some regions such as the Netherlands and several cities in north Germany, however, Anabaptists enjoyed significant freedoms. Here the separatist impulses of the Anabaptist faith increasingly gave way to integration and cooperation with the surrounding society.

By 1700 intense persecution had nearly eradicated Anabaptism from several regions in Europe. With the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, however, this external pressure generally began to ease. Influences from Pietism and the Awakening in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also led to local congregational growth and prompted signs of new life. Other groups, closely related to the older Anabaptist tradition, also emerged, such as the Baptists (1610ff) and the Apostolic Christian Church (*Evangelischen Täufer-Gemeinden*) (1830ff).

Since the seventeenth century—largely as a result of flight, migration and missions—expressions of the Anabaptist faith have emerged beyond Europe, first in North America, and eventually in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In the twentieth century new impulses from North American Mennonites and the “recovery of the Anabaptist Vision” have led Anabaptists worldwide to deeper reflections on their own roots. Today, for

*Cover: Singers of La Chorale Grand Tam-Tam (Big Drum Choir), at the celebrations of 100 years of contact between North American Mennonites and the Congo. See stories pages 6-9. Photo by James Krabill.*

*Courier / Correo / Courier* (ISSN 1041-4436) is published quarterly by Mennonite World Conference, Calle 28A No. 16-41 Piso 2, Bogotá, Colombia. Publication office: *Courier*, 1251 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg VA 22802-2434 USA. Periodical postage paid at Harrisonburg VA. Printed in USA. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Courier, 1251 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg VA 22802**

Three years ago, the newly appointed Faith and Life Commission was asked to produce three papers that could be used in helping MWC communities reflect on such questions. The papers were presented to the MWC General Council in May (reported in the last issue): “A Holistic Understanding of Fellowship, Worship, Service, and Witness from an Anabaptist Perspective” by Alfred Neufeld Friesen of Paraguay; “Revisiting Our Vision: The Anabaptist Vision,” by Hanspeter Jecker of Switzerland; and “Koinonia — The Gift We Hold Together” by Tom Yoder Neufeld of Canada. The papers will soon be available as a teaching resource.

The last issue of *Courier-Correo-Courier* carried an excerpt of Yoder Neufeld’s paper. In this issue we carry Jecker’s and Neufeld Friesen’s papers, edited and shortened slightly.

both the historic churches and the new churches, the question remains: how can the common theological impulses of the “Anabaptist tradition” find expression in the midst of wide cultural differences?

## Central theological themes

The Anabaptist movement was always colourful and multifaceted. Nevertheless, over time several central themes have emerged, forming the core of what can be described as the “Anabaptist tradition.” While the ongoing task of MWC member churches today is to “test all things; hold fast that which is good!” (1 Thessalonians 5:21), the following are proposed as key central themes of the “Anabaptist tradition.”

### 1. The centrality of Scripture.

Reading the Bible is the point of departure for Christian faith and life. It is to be read expectantly, open to learning from its teachings, and—as a distinctive feature of the Anabaptists—in community. Communal Bible study is centered especially on Jesus Christ, whom the Anabaptists regarded to be the clearest revelation of God. Anabaptist readings of the Bible assume a high degree of readiness to implement concretely what one learns; to do so is a basic element of discipleship. Anabaptists also assume that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is crucial both for the interpretation of Scripture as well as its application.

**2. The voluntary nature of faith and church membership.** The practice of voluntary believers baptism follows from a rejection of obligatory infant baptism. Freedom of faith and conscience implies a rejection of every form of coercion in matters of faith and church membership.

**3. The pursuit of an authentic personal faith.** Receiving salvation does not happen through the mediation of the church, nor through the sacraments, nor through a simple affirmation of “justification by grace,” nor through



Hanspeter Jecker

belief based on the pure letter of Scripture. Rather, we receive salvation through a personal encounter with God, a change of heart and a subsequent transformation of life, all made possible by the Spirit of God. The call to conversion and faith and to Christ-centered discipleship is central.

**4. Establishment of congregations independent from the state.** God and his kingdom are worthy of the highest loyalty in all questions of faith and life. Absolutely crucial for Anabaptists historically has been to maintain a critical, discerning distance toward earthly “principalities and powers” (nation, culture, spirit of the times, etc.).

**5. Establishment of local congregations based on fraternal relationships.** In a community of voluntary believers no one has everything; but everyone has something. This recognition requires that the gifts of the individual contribute to the wellbeing of the whole (for example, in biblical interpretation or in reaching decisions). This leads to an appreciation of “the least of these,” but also to a mutual sharing of burdens, and to the correction of the “strong.” Mutual encouragement and admonition are the foundations for decision-making and conflict resolution, and for becoming a

forgiving—as well as a forgiven—community

**6. “Fruits of repentance.”** The visible and practical consequences of faith are important expressions of thanks for that which has been received. Consistency in word and deed supports the integrity of one’s own claims. Wherever the “fruit of repentance” encounters resistance we turn to Christ for moral courage and a readiness to suffer on behalf of others. The “fruit of repentance” also includes a transformed attitude toward people outside one’s own community. Standing up in solidarity for others in need is crucial.

**7. Love of enemy and renunciation of violence.** God, in the person of Jesus, gave himself up to his enemies rather than destroying them with might and power. Love of enemy, reconciliation, and renunciation of violence are central and essential characteristics of God and God’s people. Overcoming evil with good is an explicit consequence of what it means to follow Jesus and bearing his name. Throughout Anabaptist history, the rejection of oaths and military service, along with a refusal to cooperate with the death penalty and other forms of destroying life, have often been considered as the most distinctive characteristics of their Christian witness.

Photo by Merle Good

# *A heart with four chambers*

A theological foundation for the work of MWC's four commissions  
(Peace, Mission, Faith and Life, and Deacons)

By Alfred Neufeld Friesen

The “Anabaptist tradition” is a historical movement, rooted in the sixteenth-century Radical Reformation, of contextualizing the Bible’s apostolic and prophetic legacy as lived out by the early church. Tradition is a historic witness of moments of renewal and contextualization, a dynamic in need of permanent perpetuation.

The Radical Reformation—triggered by the Protestant Reformation but with roots in the historic medieval church—aimed to restore the church to a believer’s community, an ethic of love, and a Christian existence based on

discipleship to Jesus. It understood the church (the Body of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit) as the visible expression of God’s character, plan and presence in creation—God’s kingdom breaking into human history and moving toward a new creation.

## **On fellowship (*koinonia*)**

God’s saving intervention in the world is summarized by the word *reconciliation*. “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility . . . creating in himself one new humanity . . .

thus making peace, and in his one body to reconcile both to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Ephesians 2:14-16). The peace of God, the reconciling work of Christ and the new birth through the Spirit make possible Christian fellowship in the church. It is a peace that transcends the borders of the church and permeates the world.

The peace work and the peace witness of the church are based on the fatherhood of God, who by his gracious act made us equal in creation and adopted us, by redemption, into his family. The work and

*continued from page 3*

## **Weaknesses and deficits**

This summary attempts to distill several of the most important and distinctive motifs of historic Anabaptist faith in order to make them useful for contemporary Anabaptist-related churches around the world. It is important, however, to be conscious of dangers and weaknesses that can be associated with those same strengths. Unfortunately, we in the Anabaptist tradition have not always succeeded in being alert to those dangers. To learn from our own history requires that we be aware of these specific dangers and weaknesses—and even acknowledge them openly so that they might be corrected and overcome.

1. The Anabaptist emphasis on the voluntary nature of faith has sometimes led to an over-emphasis on the human contribution. One’s own individual “yes” to God can become more important than God’s “yes” to humans.
2. The Anabaptist courage expressed as non-conformity has sometimes led to an arrogant self-righteousness, to a notorious tendency to divisiveness, or to a “retreat from the world” into pious ghettos.
3. The Anabaptist emphasis on the “fruit of repentance” has occasionally meant an elitist attitude, debilitating forms of works-righteousness, or ungracious expressions of legalism.
4. The high moral and ethical expectations of the Anabaptists have occasionally fostered dishonesty and hypocrisy, ungracious and debilitating forms of self-deception, or denial of one’s own failures and shortcomings.

5. The Anabaptist readiness to suffer has sometimes led to bitterness toward government and society, and it occasionally finds expression in attitudes of fear, melancholy and timidity.

6. The Anabaptist emphasis on the local congregation and its uncompromising grasp on the truth of Scripture has sometimes led to a narrow perspective on the larger totality of the church of Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusions**

Light and shadows—both characterize the history and theology of the Anabaptist movement. Several of the emphases noted here as present from the beginning have persisted with ongoing relevance and impact to this day. The themes of the “Anabaptist tradition” are judged today in various ways, both within Anabaptist-Mennonite churches as well as outside the tradition. But when we consider ourselves as part of a global Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship, in which each perspective is inevitably partial, then our varying expressions of the tradition can actually free us—both within our communion as well as in dialogue with other churches—to regard the differences of others not as a threat but as a blessing. They can also help us to accept our differences gratefully as an invitation to conversation and as an opportunity to reflect more carefully on our own convictions.

*Hanspeter Jecker teaches church history and ethics at Theologisches Seminar Bienenberg (Bienenberg Theological Seminary), near Liestal, Switzerland. He is a member of the Schänzli Mennonite church near Basel and president of the Swiss Society of Anabaptist History.*

witness of peacemaking is also based on the way of Christ, the son, who loved and blessed his enemies, inspired restorative justice (Luke 19:8-10), made us ambassadors of reconciliation and gave us the ministry to reconcile (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). The comfort and freedom of the Holy Spirit makes possible the repentance of sin (2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:8); the “new birth from above” (John 3:5); and the empowerment to be Jesus’ ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20)—thus fulfilling God’s intent “to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace” (Luke 1:79). Human institutions of social class, religion, nationality, economics and culture shall not produce “dividing walls of hostility”; rather, the cross of Christ must “put to death their hostility” (Ephesians 2:14).

### On worship (*leitourgia*)

Worship is the appropriate response of creation in honouring the Creator and Redeemer until time gives way to eternity.

The church expresses worship in words and deeds:

a. Words are used to praise God for his wisdom in creation, his holiness in character, his righteous judgment, and his loving mercy in sustaining and redeeming the works of his hand. Worship is expressed by narrating the story of God’s saving work with humankind and with his chosen people. The church worships God by articulating, confessing and explaining to every generation who God is and what God is doing in the world. Worship defines the condition and calling of humanity. The church worships in confession, prayer and song, and—in the discernment of the Spirit—teaches the written legacy of the prophets and apostles.

b. Deeds are as important as words in the praise and the worship of God (Romans 12:1-2; Isaiah 58). The life of the church as the body of Christ itself is worship: “In the same way let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Practice and reflection are both liturgical activities and theological work, commanded to the people of God (Psalm 1:2-3).

### On service (*diakonia*)

Christ, our master, is our model for servant leadership. By always attending the sick and needy, by washing the feet of his companions (John 13:14), by giving his life for his friends (John 15:13) as well as for his enemies, he taught and practiced authentic greatness found in service (Matthew 20:26; 23:11). The apostles urged the church to appoint deacons “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3) so that together, the church could cover the tasks of prayer, proclamation, and service (Acts 6:4).

Christian service fulfills the great commandment of love (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; 1 Corinthians 13), and strives to bring justice, mercy and humility to a broken world (Micah 6:8). Jesus praised the merciful Samaritan, who shared his time and his goods with a victim of violence and injustice. Christian service is always anchored in the Lordship of Christ, who as returning King in the Last Judgment tells us that we serve him by serving the most needy (Matthew 25:31-40).

### On witness (*martyria*)

The church is God’s prophet and proclaimer in the world, giving visibility to God’s will and nature. As chosen people and as the Body of Christ “before the watching world” each disciple, every congregation and the global church are called to bear witness to God’s salvation and his kingdom.

Being the missional and apostolic church of Christ—partaking in God’s mission and in the penetration of God’s kingdom into the darkness of an unredeemed world—means a willingness to sacrifice and to suffer as Christ did. The mission of the pilgrim church implies a readiness to move; throughout history, the covenant people of God have often fled from persecution or been sent as missionaries. They have witnessed from the perspective of exile and marginalization. They have followed the pattern of the dispersed early Jerusalem church: in the great commission, Christ sent out his apostles in the power of the Spirit to disciple all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). Stephen—followed by countless witnesses after him—have borne witness unto death while seeing “heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the



Photo by Merle Good

Alfred Neufeld Friesen

right hand of God” (Acts 7:56). The church is thus called to mission, martyrdom, the triumph of the resurrection, and the glory of the new creation.

### Conclusion

Mennonite World Conference has organized four standing Commissions to give “heart” to the vision of being “linked to one another in a worldwide community of faith for fellowship, worship, service, and witness.” All four activities are as crucial to life and witness of the church as is the good performance of each of the four chambers of the human heart.

When Christ returns, when all human beings are resurrected, when the first heaven and earth are gone and new creation prevails in a New Jerusalem—our worldwide community of Anabaptist related churches wishes to hear the voice of the Lord: “Well done, good and faithful servant... Come and share your master’s happiness” (Matthew 25:21).

*Alfred Neufeld Friesen of Asuncion, Paraguay, is chair of the MWC Faith and Life Commission and an elder in Vereinigung der Mennoniten Brüder Gemeinden Paraguays, the national Mennonite Brethren church. He is president of Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay (Protestant University) and chairs the national association of Protestant churches.*

Vibrant congregations take root in three national Mennonite churches

# 100 years of partnership in Congo DRC

By Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

**M**ennonite mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been a partnership from its inception— long before “partnership” was a fashionable missiological concept.

The first two Mennonites in Congo were two North American women serving with other denominations. Mathilda Kohm began ministry in 1896 through the Christian and Missionary Alliance and Alma Doering in 1900 through the Swedish Baptist Mission. Returning to the United States on furlough in 1906, Doering met William Sheppard, an African-American medical doctor serving with a Presbyterian mission and a strong voice in exposing the atrocities of Belgium’s King Leopold in Congo. During a sea voyage Doering and Sheppard spent hours exploring strategies for sharing the gospel in Congo.

Their discussions bore fruit six years later, when two mission-minded Mennonite denominations called Sheppard to a meeting in Illinois, USA, where he passionately described the need for missionaries in south central Congo and invited the Mennonites to respond.

Both Mennonite churches were led by men of Amish background, who had experienced personal renewal and a commitment to Jesus’ call to discipleship. Henry Egli of the Defenseless Mennonites (today’s Fellowship of Evangelical Churches) and Joseph Stucky of the Central Illinois Conference of Mennonites had already joined hands to reach out to the society around them.

In 1912, following Sheppard’s plea for mission workers, they formed the Congo Inland Mission, commissioning Lawrence and Rose Boehning Haigh, for ministry in Congo. They were soon joined by Alvin Stevenson. The three missionaries threw themselves into hard manual labor to construct shelters and struggled to communicate in the Tshiluba language in two villages along the Kasai River, Ndjoko Punda and Kalamba. The effort took its toll and, before the year ended, Stevenson was

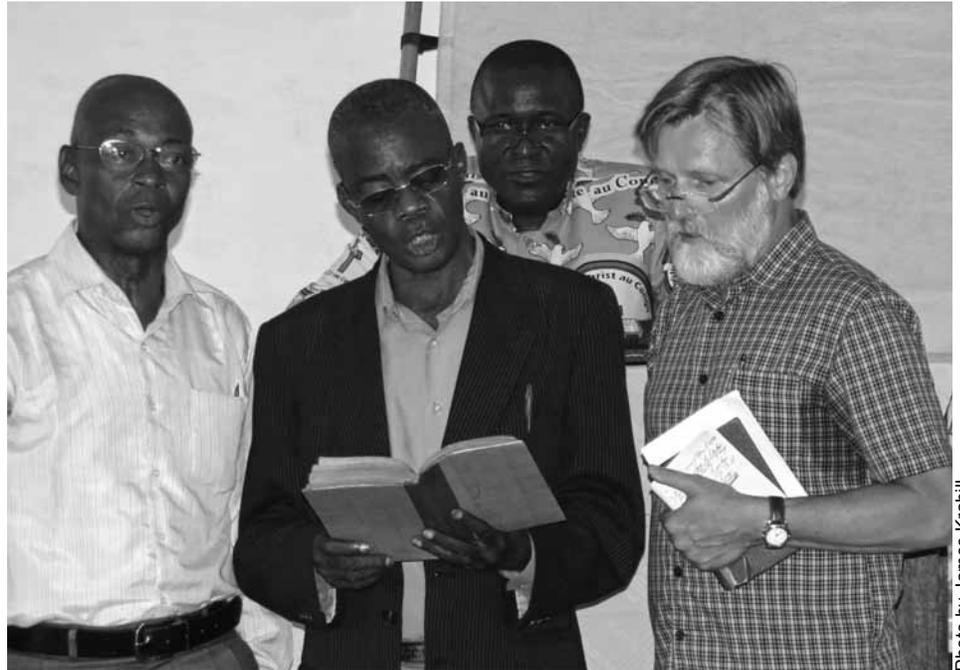


Photo by James Krabill

*Three long-time friends sing “He Leadeth Me” from the Tshiluba hymnbook at the July centennial of mission partnership in the Congo (see page 8). Left to right: Kabasele Bantubiabo, Mennonite leader and chaplain of the Presbyterian-Mennonite hospital and nursing school in Kananga; Lupaya Mishambu, director of the Kalonda Bible Institute; and former Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission worker Rick Derksen of USA. In the background is Joly Birakara, vice-president of CEMCO. During a time of testimony, Derksen remembered how God protected the trio when they were attacked by bandits during a motorcycle trip 25 years ago.*

buried in Ndjoko Punda, far from his widow and three children in America.

Over the past century, Congo Inland Mission, today’s Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, sent hundreds of missionaries to eight mission stations that laid the foundations for Communauté Mennonite au Congo (CMCO, Mennonite Church of Congo), the largest of Congo’s three Mennonite denominations.

Aaron and Ernestina Janzen also went to Congo in 1912. After serving two terms with Congo Inland Mission, they moved to Kafumba in the Kikwit area and developed a coffee plantation to help support a new ministry. This became the first of six Mennonite Brethren mission stations, and was the seed from which the Communauté des Églises des Frères Mennonites au Congo (CEFMC, Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo) grew. Violence erupted in 1960 when Congo declared

independence from 80 years of Belgium colonization. Fearing for their lives and under pressure from their embassies, missionaries handed keys to buildings and cars to the Congolese who were being trained for church leadership. Then, the missionaries fled from Congo.

From this emergency transfer of power, there was no turning back. As North American missionaries began to return Congolese leaders consistently sat on committees and made decisions alongside their North American colleagues.

Meanwhile, near the Tshikapa mission station in Kasai Occidental (West Kasai), conflict between long-established “Lulua” people and Luba migrants from farther east, turned bloody.

In contrast, Congolese Mennonites emphasized a message of Jesus’ love that unites all people into one family. That Matthieu Kazadi Lukuna, the first



## The three Congolese Mennonite church bodies

### *Communauté Mennonite au Congo*

(Mennonite Church of Congo)

**Membership:** 110,000 members in 798 congregations

**Headquarters:** Tshikapa

**Founded:** 1912

**First national chairman:** Matthieu Kazadi Lukuna

**Primary mission partner:** Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission

**Mission stations:** Ndjoko Punda, Kalamba/Mutena, Nyanga, Mukedi, Banga, Kalonda, Kamayala and Kandala

“Let us work together to breathe new life into Mennonite evangelization and mission in Congo. It takes all fingers working together to eat okra sauce, so we commit ourselves to Mennonite unity. Our second century should be a century of strengthening this unity.”

—Adolphe Komuesa Kalunga, leader

### *Communauté des Églises des Frères Mennonites au Congo*

(Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo)

**Membership:** 101,600 members in 874 congregations

**Headquarters:** Kikwit

**Founded:** 1921

**First national chairmen:** Kilabi Bululu and Kusangila Kitondo in 1974

**Primary mission partner:** MB Mission

**Mission stations:** Kafumba, Matende, Kipungu, Masemvu, Kajiji and Panzi

“My vision for our church is to build a true community that strengthens our leadership as a peace church, to empower local congregations to contribute to the growth and development of the church of Jesus Christ and to better our partnerships.”

—Gérard Mambakila, leader

### *Communauté Évangélique Mennonite au Congo*

(Evangelical Mennonite Church of Congo)

**Membership:** 23,600 members in 96 congregations

**Headquarters:** Mbuji Mayi

**Founded:** 1962 by Matthieu Kazadi Lukuna

**Primary mission partner:** Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission  
No foreign mission stations, church founded through Congolese initiatives

“The future belongs to God and we commit it into God’s hands. While recognizing this, we want to build a strong, united and dynamic community—a missionary community whose goal is salvation for all people. In order to do this, we need training that will unleash a mental, spiritual and material revolution to overcome our precarious life situations.”

—Benjamin Mubenga Wa Kabanga, leader

Mennonite Church of Congo president, was of Luba ancestry, leading congregations of many different ethnic groups had not been a problem up to this time of unrest.

Although Kazadi had a wide reputation as a peacemaker, his attempts in the post-independence conflict were unsuccessful. He was eventually forced to lead hundreds of Luba Mennonite refugees back to Mbuji Mayi, the area of their origins in Kasai Oriental (East Kasai).

Though the Luba refugees tried to maintain ties with the Mennonite headquarters in West Kasai, the polarized political climate and the difficulties of travel and communication made this unworkable. By the end of 1962, Kazadi became the president of Congo’s third Mennonite denomination, *Communauté Évangélique Mennonite au Congo* (CEM, Evangelical Mennonite Church of Congo).

Despite the violence of the 1960s, Mennonite educational and medical institutions flourished. During this decade, CMCO’s leaders proposed that since the church in Congo was firmly planted and had able leaders, it was time for North American mission workers to serve within Congolese structures. The fusion agreement became official in 1971.

In 2004 Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission was restructured again to allow for an African locus of leadership, with African, European and North American church bodies sitting around the decision-making table as equal partners.

Today, Congolese evangelists continue to plant churches as they migrate during periods of ethnic cleansing, political

uprisings and job transfers. Mennonite churches, once limited to the southwest of the country, have spread from mission centers throughout the country (see map).

*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen is a writer for Mennonite Mission Network of Mennonite Church USA.*

# Giving thanks and acknowledging pain

Congolese church marks a century of mission

by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

Fifty-some young musicians walked nearly 160 kilometers carrying their drums, luggage and a few babies to attend the centennial celebration of Communauté Mennonite au Congo – CMCO, July 16–22. For a week, the choir members from Djoko Punda, one of the first Mennonite mission stations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, traveled along rugged paths through forests and savannas, crossing rivers on make-shift bridges and spending nights in school rooms.

Chorale Grand Tam-Tam (Big Drum Chorale) arrived in Tshikapa, the headquarters of the church, to lead Mennonites from three continents in praise for “100 years of evangelization and cultural encounters”, the CMCO tagline for the occasion.

In his opening address, the CMCO president, Adolphe Komuesa Kalunga, named weaknesses and failures in the missionary approach of those who came to Congo through Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and its predecessor agencies as he gave an overview of Mennonite history in Congo. He spoke of paternalism, a heavy focus on the spiritual with less concern for conditions that oppressed the Congolese people, and a reluctance to trust the Congolese church with financial management.

However, Komuesa also acknowledged with gratitude these same missionaries, hundreds of them, who were faithful to God’s call to share the good news of Jesus—braving sickness, a harsh climate, difficult living conditions and political instability. Komuesa led the assembly in a moment of silence to remember all who sacrificed their lives in obedience to Christ’s call.

In his concluding address, Komuesa said, “I salute those missionaries who gave of their youth and their lives for our country. I also render homage to their descendants who are still laboring for the welfare of our church.”

Missionary accomplishments were



Photo by James Krabill.

*La Chorale Mille Voix (The Thousand Voices Choir) led by Mobutu Bongela welcomes the international delegation to the Communauté Mennonite au Congo – CMCO (Mennonite Community in Congo) Welcome Center.*

only possible because Congolese people worked hand in hand with their brothers and sisters from the North America, Komuesa said.

Today, CMCO is a member of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, which brings together eight churches and agencies from Africa, Europe and North America.

Approximately 400 participants gathered for the final worship service on Sunday, July 22. Many of them held candles lighted in celebration of the event.

“Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in the second century that begins today, take care of our church,” was Komuesa’s wish as the candles were extinguished as a symbol of the end of CMCO’s centennial anniversary.

During the week-long celebration, CMCO’s story was communicated in many forms—through original songs in the tradition of *griots* (singer-historians), through a book of short biographies of early Congolese Mennonites, through a picture show presented by François Tshidimu Mukendi, Mennonite pastor and historian, and through many examples in sermons and testimonies.

“CMCO has been doing God’s work for 100 years starting in 1912,” sang the Chorale Evangélique Mennonite de Dibumba (Evangelical Mennonite Choir of Dibumba). “Today, we are here to thank God. Now, we are many

Mennonites. May we work in unity to spread the good news of Jesus.”

In succeeding verses, the choir went on to describe how eight mission stations were built.

Although some of the mission station buildings have crumbled into disrepair, the church has thrived. Today, it includes 110,000 members, 798 congregations, 95 schools and seven hospitals—according to a presentation given by Anastasie Tshimbila, a professor at the Mennonite Bible institute in Kalonda, about eight kilometers from Tshikapa.

The most passionate debate at the celebration centred on the decision to ordain women. Of the three Mennonite denominations in Congo, CMCO was the only one still denying ordination to women. La Communauté des Frères Mennonites au Congo (the Mennonite Brethren Church) ordained its first woman pastor in 2000. Communauté Evangélique Mennonite (the Evangelical Mennonite Church) was preparing to ordain its first woman pastor a few days after the end of CMCO’s centennial celebration.

Komuesa was given the mandate for his second six-year term as CMCO president just hours before the centennial festivities began, as the annual general assembly concluded around 2 a.m. on July 15.

Among Komuesa’s accomplishments

in his first term was the construction of a welcome centre. The new facilities enabled CMCO to receive 30 delegates from three continents representing eight Mennonite agencies. Because the centre is within walking distance from the airport, CMCO hopes that it can be used as a guest house to generate income for the church.

The welcome centre was a collaborative effort that included Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, CMCO, building teams from Mennonite Church USA congregations and American volunteer, Arnold Harder, who facilitated the construction process.

Executive coordinator of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, Rod Hollinger-Janzen, coordinated the international component of the anniversary event. He said that the experience communicated how profound relationships within the body of Christ can be. He was moved by the affirmation that choirs from different ethnic groups—Tshokwe, Lulua and Pende—gave each other. People who had

been feuding a few decades ago were now singing about being brothers and sisters.

“This was one way the centennial celebration became an avenue for CMCO members to reaffirm their unity in Christ, and accept their ethnic diversity as a positive and creative reality,” Hollinger-Janzen said. “Our international delegation was also told in many different ways how important it was that we had come.”

Hollinger-Janzen said that CMCO leaders and members repeatedly expressed the desire to continue to nurture fraternal relationships and to partner with the church conferences and agencies which had worked together to plant Mennonite churches in Congo.

International agencies and churches represented at the centennial celebration included: Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission; Fellowship of Evangelical Churches; Mennonite Church USA; Mennonite Church Canada; Mennonite World Conference; Mennonite Central Committee; and the Francophone



Photo by James Krabill.

*Adolphe Komuesa Kalunga, Communauté Mennonite au Congo – CMCO.*

Network (serving the global French-speaking Anabaptist community).

## Congolese Football and Song

When a Belgian school inspector needed to recruit singers for the 1958 World’s Fair in Brussels, he entrusted the task to two missionary women, one of whom was Lodema Short. Short served from 1947–1981 with Congo Inland Mission, now Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission. Her musical abilities, her organizational skills and her relationships with hundreds of students enabled her to choose, and then chaperone, the nine young men who performed as the Happy Singers in Belgium.

A nephew, Dwight Short of Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz, Florida, USA joined the AIMM delegation that traveled to Congo July 12–29, primarily because he wanted to learn more about his famous aunt.

Short was able to record 27 interviews with four Happy Singer members as well as with many of Lodema Short’s students, many of whom are pastors.

“She would love to know that so many of her students have ended up in the ministry,” Dwight Short said.

The principal of Lycée Mioidi, Bernadette Many Kikungo, was one of Lodema Short’s students. “Mama Kanamu [Lodema Short’s African name meaning “trustworthy”] worked very hard here at the school to train church leaders. Even the president of our church [Komuesa] was one of her students.”

Dwight Short has another passion: evangelism through sports. Although the equipment he packed was delayed in transit, four (soccer) footballs brought by other delegation members attracted about 400 young people for a football clinic in Tshikapa. He worked with Robert Irundu Mutundu, the National President of Mennonite Youth in Congo who



Photo by Trisha Handrich.

*Robert Irundu Mutundu, National Youth President for Communauté Mennonite au Congo—CMCO (Mennonite Community in Congo), and Dwight Short plan for future evangelism and sports clinics.*

shares Short’s burning desire “to see kids come to know Christ and grow the church.”

In 2013, Irundu hopes to organize two football events for Mennonite youth in the interior of the country and a basketball clinic in Kinshasa, Congo’s capital city.

*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen,*

# Congolese Anabaptist Identity

By Eric Mukambu Ya'Namwisi

**T**oday's Mennonites are searching for their identity. As Congolese Mennonites, we have reason to fear that certain of our members will abandon their identity, while others have never learned of their rich spiritual heritage. Meanwhile, we are perplexed by the violence imposed upon our brothers and sisters in this country. We confront injustice, economic imbalance, poverty, malaria, cruelty and war. Often, the church doesn't know how to respond.

Despite all the misfortunes that gnaw away at our society, the Congolese Mennonites continue to develop characteristics of the Anabaptist tradition. I offer seven key elements of our Anabaptist faith that I deem to be fundamental for the church's action in the years to come. Perhaps our Western brothers and sisters can also learn from our example, as Congolese Mennonites have held fast to certain of these values.

1. **The authority of God's word.** The church lives under the authority of God's Word by the intermediary of the Holy Spirit. "There is no other foundation than that which has been laid in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 3:11). The Holy Spirit uses God's written word to renew and nourish our faith.
2. **Voluntary membership and discipleship.** The strength of a movement is proportional to the intensity of its members' engagement with it. Baptism confirms a believer's commitment to live as a disciple of Christ, no matter what the cost. By this act, believers declare publicly that they are ready to carry the cross by sharing the gospel through words and actions because of their love for Christ.
3. **A missionary church.** Anabaptists believe that Jesus commissioned the church to go into all spheres of society and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe Christ's commandments. "As the Father sent me, so I send you," Jesus said (John 20:21), and this applies to all believers.

4. **Church as community.** The church worships together, engages in mutual aid, and fraternal love and responsibility for each other, including the sharing of finances. An individualistic and selfish Anabaptist is a contradiction in terms.
5. **Submission to the community's discipline.** In the church, discipline gives birth to a growing faith, unity, service and faithful witness.
6. **Separation from the world.** The kingdom of God is made up of a transformed people that lives in the world, but is, at the same time radically separated from the world. The faithful church considers the sinful world to be a foreign environment whose objectives and ethics are completely different from those that guide the lives of believers.
7. **A church that promotes peace and nonviolence.** Mennonites are best known for peacemaking, even if certain of their conflicts have been taken to courts. As peacemakers, Congolese Mennonites continue to commit to working for peace in their country.

## Agenda for second century: Anabaptist-Mennonite identity in the Congo

Anabaptist teaching becomes ever more urgent as our current generation of youth, our leaders of tomorrow, have never worked with foreign missionaries. Mennonite youth ask their pastors, "Where are you leading us?" The responsibility for communicating Anabaptist identity to them rests on the shoulders of today's leaders. Henceforth, Congolese Mennonites must:

- be a dynamic church that is continually searching for renewal. We must step away from copying the Western church and find our own way to adapt to today's Congo.
- offer our leaders and members

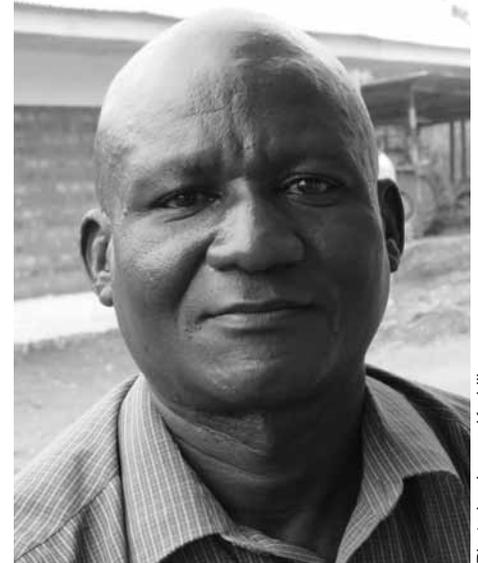


Photo by James Krabill.

Eric Mukambu Ya'Namwisi

teaching and learning materials that emphasize the importance of our Anabaptist identity. Starting with intensive seminars in villages through videos and a contextualized curriculum, we are beginning to develop an Anabaptist network.

- offer scholarships for doctoral-level training for our pastors as soon as possible.

May God grant us the wisdom and courage to be honest and share generously of our great Anabaptist heritage so that we can continue to be the salt and light of the world.

*Eric Mukambu Ya'Namwisi is a peace advocate, trainer and President of the Kinshasa area churches of the of Communauté Mennonite au Congo (Mennonite Community in Congo – CMCO). This article is excerpted from a seminar Mukambu gave at the centennial celebration of CMCO in July (see story, page 8).*

# Offering our blessings to the world

Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN!) is a joint exchange program of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Mennonite World Conference (MWC). The purpose of the program is to foster cross-cultural learning and service for young adults from the Global South.

*Sindy Novoa Caro lives in Bogotá, Colombia, where she belongs to the Casa de Oración church, a Mennonite Brethren congregation. In 2010–2011, Sindy served with YAMEN! in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, as a teacher's assistant in a school for children living near the garbage dump. Since her return to Colombia, Sindy has been helping to coordinate a local support network of former, current and new YAMEN! participants and people who have been part of MCC's International Volunteer Exchange Program. Sindy works for Corporación Belcorp as a zone leader for catalogue saleswomen. Earlier this year, she spoke with Jana Meyer, an MCC worker in Colombia about her experience.*

## How did the YAMEN! experience affect your outlook on the world and on the church?

To know people who live on what they find on the street and yet continue to smile on life made me recognize how privileged [I was] to have water, three meals a day, the embrace of a mother or father, family time during the weekend and shelter at night. I got to know the value of someone who hasn't been able to bathe but who wants your hug and who needs you to tell them that there is a supreme being who loves them and wants to care for them. Back in Colombia, I work in a different way with the people around me. Before, I might have only cared about someone's economic situation. Now in my current work where I have to interact with a lot of people, I'm more interested in who they are as a person, how they are doing.

## How might life have been different if you had not done YAMEN!?

I would be going about my life with the same lack of awareness that many in the world have. Many think that the world owes them something, that the world should be grateful for their existence, that daily blessings are a result of their efforts—not as a result of God's mercy.

## How did you grow in your relationship with God?

Although I was in a place far from my country, not knowing anyone, I never felt alone. I always felt God's support and guidance. Every day was an opportunity to learn from God, to understand what God wanted from me during this time.

## How did you grow in your vision for the church in Colombia?

I learned that the work of taking the gospel to others needs to be done in a holistic way. It's not possible for people to hear that God loves them and seeks them, if they have not eaten for days, if there is no education for them or if an entire society rejects them. How can I presume to talk to them for 15



Photo: provided by Sindy Novoa Caro

*Sindy Novoa Caro with a little friend at a church retreat in Colombia's Choco region.*

minutes and then leave? God wants us to come as Jesus did: giving up our blessings and offering them to the world, teaching by example and supplying physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

## What is your vision for YAMEN!?

I would like to see different young people from Colombia take on this program, motivating themselves to do something for their brother or sister without worrying about the sacrifice, letting themselves be led by God. I would like to see us building relationships with our Latin American sisters and brothers and those in countries we might not be inclined to go to otherwise.

## 2012-2013 YAMEN! Participants

**Patricia Calvimontes Arevalo**, of Bolivia, serving in Guatemala; **Vichara Chum** of Cambodia, serving in South Africa; **Fang Deng** of China, serving in Indonesia; **Glenda Aracely**, of Guatemala serving in Bolivia, **Humberto Lagos Martinez** of Honduras, serving in Cambodia; **MeiLing Dueñas** of Honduras, serving in Nicaragua; **Prashant Nand** of India, serving in Indonesia; **Cindy Trisiantari** of Indonesia, serving in South Korea; **Galuh Florentina** of Indonesia, serving in Cambodia; **Heri Purwanto** of Indonesia, serving in Bolivia; **Youa Xiong** of Laos, serving in Bolivia; **Maria Aranda** of Nicaragua, serving in Honduras; **Paola Duarte** of Paraguay, serving in Mexico; **Shammah Nakawesi** of Uganda, serving in Indonesia; **Festus Musamba** of Zambia, serving in South Africa; **Olivia Muzyamba** of Zambia, serving in Indonesia.

# World Fellowship Sunday

Each year Mennonite World Conference (MWC) encourages Anabaptist-related churches around the world to worship around a common theme, on a Sunday close to January 21. On that date in 1525, the first Anabaptist baptism took place in Zurich, Switzerland.

World Fellowship Sunday (WFS) provides an opportunity to remember common roots and celebrate worldwide koinonia by planning a worship service that will help participants enter into fellowship, intercession and thanksgiving with the global faith family.

The 2013 worship materials below include biblical texts, prayers, song suggestions and sermon ideas. They are the fruit of the joint work of members of Colombia's three MWC member churches: Iglesia Christiana Menonita (Mennonite Church), Iglesia Hermandad en Cristo (Brethren in Christ), and Iglesias Hermanos Menonitas (Mennonite Brethren).

Note, the materials are also available at the MWC website in English, French, and Spanish: [www.mwc-cmm.org](http://www.mwc-cmm.org).

---

## *Justice and the Witness of the Church Today*

The issue of justice gives rise to discussions within all kinds of contexts. God's justice is often contrary to human understandings of justice. We need to understand God's vision and desire for justice as we seek to know him. God's own Word tells us that our thoughts are not his thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9) unless these are renewed by him (Romans 12:1-2).

Government authorities and religious leaders are challenged to promote justice among peoples and communities, but they often fail. Jesus' followers, therefore, need to live out and proclaim God's authentic justice in a world where many forms of injustice exist.

### **OPENING**

We have gathered on this day of Anabaptist World Fellowship to celebrate together God's love for humanity, manifest in his purpose of justice for all. As disciples of Jesus, bearers of a message of justice, let us testify to this purpose through our commitment and message to humanity.

### **OPENING PRAYER**

**Invite a young person to lead this prayer:**

God of justice and mercy, who has shown us the way of humility, we have gathered on this day to receive your Word. Let it guide us in putting into practice one of your qualities and desires: justice. Our hearts suffer as we observe the unjust world in which we live and we want to bear testimony to all those who doubt you.

### **Congregational response:**

We direct our praise and prayers to you with gratitude and love, for all eternity. Amen."

### **SONGS**

Each congregation should choose songs and hymns that fit with the theme and with their tradition. Spanish songs suggested by the planning group include:

*Buscad primero el Reino de Dios* (traditional; Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God)

*Las cimas andinas* (author: Santiago Benavides)

*Tenemos Esperanza* ("Why We Have Hope" by Federico Pagura; for English translation and video see <http://iglesiadescalza.blogspot.ca/2010/07/tenemos-esperanza-why-we-have-hope.html>)

### **STORIES OR TESTIMONIES**

Ask two or three people ahead of time to prepare testimonies (old or recent) that reflect the commitment of Anabaptist individuals or communities in the struggle for justice in local or other contexts. Instead, or in addition, a video or photographic exhibition of these testimonies can be shown.

### **BIBLE READINGS**

Invite different members of the community to participate in reading these Scriptures: Micah 6:6-8; Psalm 103:1-6; Matthew 5.1-10;

### **MESSAGE OUTLINE**

Based on Micah 6.8 and John 8:3-11.

**Theme:** God's Justice Restores.

**Introduction:** In most of our societies, the notion that justice means retribution has predominated. In the prophetic message of the Bible and in Jesus, however, we find another paradigm: restorative justice.

**A. Comparison between the retributive and restorative justice.** *Restorative justice* recognizes that in a conflict, whether interpersonal or social, broken relationships exist. In the process of doing justice, people and their needs are central, and justice is more than simply compliance with a legal and institutional framework. *Retributive justice* is based on safeguarding the legal order of a society and punishing the offenders without regard for the reparation and restitution of persons and broken relationships in a conflict.

**B. Jesus' example in John 8.3-11.** In this passage Jesus takes a restorative position when faced with a woman accused of adultery. Jesus does not justify her action, yet he is interested in her as a person and her need to be restored. Moses's law considered the option of stoning and condemning her alone. Although there was another person involved, only she was held responsible. Jesus showed another option: God's justice that restores.

**C. The prophet Micah issues God's call for mercy and humility before God.** Those who intend to do justice or promote justice must consider God's other two demands: mercy and humility. Mercy implies our ability to put ourselves in the place of others before judging them, to know their particular situation and needs, and to deeply feel what is happening to them and their reality, seeking only their well-being. Humility before God involves the ability to recognize our own mistakes before judging those of others; to desist from our individualistic pretensions and to think about others; to recognize our inabilities before God and others; and to depend on God in our judgments and actions.

**Conclusion:** In the present, as in the past, the community of Jesus' disciples is called to exercise justice that restores. To achieve this we must learn to see others with eyes of mercy and to humbly recognize our need for God. We can promote justice and be witnesses to justice according to God's heart, only if we exercise Micah's demands and follow Jesus' example in our life and actions.

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Here we express the ways in which we have acted in an unjust manner, both as individuals and as a community. Ask different persons in the community to express, through prayer, responsibility for various injustices that you have observed in your local, national or world context.

## PRAYER OF PETITION

In prayer, present the requests of the Anabaptist world community, that our communities may become better witnesses of justice, that we may commit ourselves to exercise



Illustration by Ryan Roth Bartel

restorative justice at all levels of our relationships. (See page 15 for some requests.)

## OFFERING

Ask the congregation, "What could we contribute at a personal, family or congregational level in order to promote God's restorative justice?" Suggestion: Have the congregation write their commitment on the worship bulletin or a piece of paper and present it to the Lord in prayer.

## CLOSING

Song (suggestion: *Padre, quiero alabarte*. Song #5 in the International Songbook from Paraguay 2009) and final blessing. Ask God that our communities all over the world may witness to justice. You may point out a concrete situation of injustice (whether economic injustice or the way women or children or ethnic communities are mistreated). Then, as a local community, commit yourselves to work for change.

## FOLLOW UP

Encourage your local church community to share with other communities at national and world levels—to exchange notes about the commitments you expressed in the offering time. Commit yourselves to pray for each other during the year.

## Arli Klassen appointed to MWC fundraising role

*Kitchener, Ontario, Canada*—Arli Klassen of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, began work October 1 as Development Manager for Mennonite World Conference. Her duties are focused on fundraising and donor relations, initially concentrating on North America, and in mid-2013 broadening to include global fundraising.

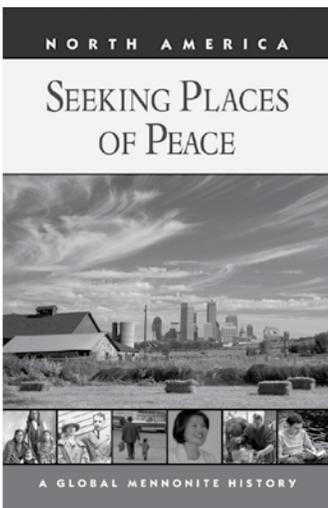
“I am passionate about the global church,” commented Klassen. “We don’t understand God fully,” she added, “until we get to know people from other cultures and hear about their understanding of God.”

Klassen previously worked in leadership positions with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for 12 years, including the last four years as international Executive Director.

When announcing Klassen’s appointment, César García, MWC General Secretary, said he was pleased and excited to have her join the staff team. “When I met Arli several years ago, her interest in walking with those who suffer in the global church impacted me. ... Her availability to listen to the global church and her interest in it is something I appreciate and welcome in our global family.”



Photo by Ron Rempel



## Final Global History volume completed

*Kitchener, Ontario, Canada*—The North American Mennonite history, the fifth and final volume in the Global Mennonite History Series, was released in late September 2012. *Seeking Places of Peace* by Royden Loewen and Steven M. Nolt, completes the Mennonite World Conference History Series, which has been overseen by historians John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder.

The new 400-page book is organized into three sections: “Settling in North America, 1683-1950”; “Integrating in North America, 1930-1980”; and “Growing in North

America, 1960-2010.” Currently available only in English, it can be ordered from the publishers, Good Books, at: [www.goodbooks.com](http://www.goodbooks.com) and Pandora Press at: [www.pandorapress.com](http://www.pandorapress.com).

## Mexican churches commit to confronting violence and injustice

*Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico*—Delegates from the six national church conferences that form Iglesia Anabautista Menonita Unida de México (IAMUM, United Anabaptist Mennonite Church of Mexico) gathered here August 2–5 for their

third assembly. The meeting drew nearly 120 participants from around Mexico as well as from Colombia, the U.S. and Canada.

Ricardo Esquivia, a Mennonite peace leader from Colombia, provided biblical teaching and reflection on the theme “Be and Act as a Church that Works for Justice and Peace.”

Much of the teaching was focused on the church’s call within contexts of violence. “If we do nothing against violence, we are responsible for the violence that exists,” said Esquivia, whose work has put his own life in danger.

Delegates committed themselves to two goals: working together toward having an official, united

voice both inside the church and in relation to the broader Mexican government and society; and developing ways to support victims of violence and help prevent violence.

The IAMUM delegates also recognized a need for a deeper understanding of their own history and Anabaptist theology as essential for the living of one’s faith.

*From IAMUM reports*

## Ndlovu speaks at peace march

*Bulawayo, Zimbabwe*—On Saturday, September 22, MWC President Danisa Ndlovu was the main speaker and guest of honour at an ecumenical peace march in his home city of Bulawayo. The event was mounted by women associated with the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum and Organization, whose board of trustees Ndlovu chairs.

In addition to Zimbabwe’s Brethren in Christ Church, of which Ndlovu is bishop, the march also involved leaders from the Lutheran, Presbyterian, and other communities. The march coincided with the International Day of Prayer for Peace.



Isaak Bergen (left) President of IAMUM AR and member of Chihuahua’s Conference CEMM, summarizes an action plan for setting up new IAMUM committees. Speaker Ricardo Esquivia (right) was on hand for consultation.

Photo by Rodrigo De Avila

# For your prayer...

## Europe

Leaders of the Mennonitische Freikirche Österreich (Austrian Mennonite Church) meet January 25–27 to carry forward a renewal process that began in early 2011, following the dissolution of the Salzburg congregation. MFÖ chairman Reinhard Kummer and secretary Martin Bodobri request prayer for: increased networking and resourcing within the MFÖ, along with a contagious vision and godly passion among leaders.

On February 1–2, the board of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden (AMG, Association of Mennonite churches in Germany) and board members of the three AMG-member conferences will meet to discuss the future needs and interests of the churches. One issue they will grapple with is the how the church can promote conflict transformation among

young people in the context of the German army's efforts to promote military service in schools.

Pray for discernment and wisdom for those leading the search for a new president for the Conférence Mennonite Suisse (Swiss Mennonite Church).

## Africa

Pastor Joly Birakara-Ilowa, vice president of the Communauté Mennonite au Congo, requests prayer for peace in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Since April of this year, more than 200,000 people have fled their villages and fields due to clashes between militias and the army, bringing the total number of internally displaced people in DRC to more than 2 million. In recent years Mennonites have established a number of churches in that part of the country (see Congo stories, pages 6–10).

Pray for Lawrence and Juanita Coetzee, recently affirmed for ministry in the Grace Community Church of South Africa. Lawrence, GCC secretary, was ordained on

September 23, during the church's annual convention.

Pray for continued peace and stability in Ethiopia, following the deaths in August of Prime Minister Meles and Abune Paulos, patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox church (the predominant religion in Ethiopia)—both of whom played a significant role in extending freedom of worship in Ethiopia.

José Muinga, president of the (IEIMA) Mennonite Brethren in Angola requests prayer that the Mennonite churches in that country provide a strong witness for peace.

## Latin America

The Iglesia Evangélica Menonita (Evangelical Mennonite Church) of El Salvador desires a spiritual awakening and vision for mission both locally and cross-culturally. Leaders are praying and working toward a new church plant in the capital San Salvador and a ministry with the Mennonite Brethren church in Angola.

Pray for safety and health for Nicaraguan Mennonites who live in the shadow of the Chinandega volcano, which

has been active this year. Pray for continued progress in efforts of the indigenous Wounaan people of Panama in securing land rights. The Wounaan ethnic group, which includes many members of the Iglesia Evangelica Unida Hermanos Menonitas (Mennonite Brethren) have experienced violence and exploitation from outside groups in recent years.

## Asia

According to Joren Basumata, MWC General Council member, half a million people in the eastern state of Assam, India, have been affected by interreligious violence. Many Christians, including Basumata's brother's family, have had to flee their homes. Homes and churches have been destroyed and some people have been killed. Please pray for peace and reconciliation in that region.

## North America

On October 1, Arli Klassen began her work as MWC Development Manager (see page 14). Pray for her as she leads the creation of a North American strategy for fundraising and capacity building.



*courrier  
courier  
correo*

Volume 27 • Number 4

César García  
Publisher

Ron Rempel

Chief Communications Officer  
Byron Rempel-Burkholder  
Editor

Ryan Roth Bartel  
Designer

Eleanor Miller  
Communications Assistant

Sylvie Gudin  
French Translator

Marisa & Eunice Miller  
Spanish Translators

*Courrier - Correo - Courier*, published quarterly by Mennonite World Conference in English, Spanish, and French editions, is available on request. Send all correspondence to C-C-C, MWC, Calle 28A No. 16-41 Piso 2, Bogotá, Colombia.  
email: [info@mw-cmm.org](mailto:info@mw-cmm.org)

[www.mw-cmm.org](http://www.mw-cmm.org)

## Help with the costs of *Courrier - Courier - Correo*

C-C-C is published by Mennonite World Conference on a non-subscription basis. However, readers are urged to contribute \$40 US, \$40 CAD, or 35€ toward the costs of printing and distribution. Those who are able are invited to give more on behalf of those in the MWC family who have less.

Find enclosed \$\_\_\_\_ in US funds.

Find enclosed \$\_\_\_\_ in Canadian funds.

Find enclosed \_\_\_\_€ in Euros.

*Mail to MWC*  
2529 Willow Avenue  
Clovis CA 93612  
United States

*Mail to MWC*  
50 Kent Avenue  
Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1  
Canada

*Mail to MWC*  
8 rue du Fossé des Treize  
67000 Strasbourg  
France

Check my address label on the back of this form for corrections.

Please send it electronically to the following email address and cancel my print subscription: \_\_\_\_\_



## You are not alone!

By César García

**Y**ou're not alone. That sentence echoed in my mind last May in Switzerland, when the MWC General Council heard a call to prayer from places of persecution, family distress, conflict over land, devastation due to climate change, shortages of food and limited financial resources.

It was not the first time that phrase had made such an impression on me. Several months earlier, MWC Vice-President Janet Plenert shared how, at a gathering of MWC officers, she met with a pastor from a nearby country where religious persecution is severe and the Christian faith prohibited. "We are not alone," the pastor shouted after an "Alleluia" at the end of a prayer time during the meeting.

"You're not alone," we sang at the Global Assembly 15 in Paraguay, led by the song's composer himself, Bryan Moyer Suderman. I cannot forget the power of these lyrics. The first time I heard them was in a meeting in Canada. I had traveled there to share about the suffering and sorrows my church in Colombia was experiencing.

My tears flowed as a Canadian sister opened the meeting using a video with Bryan's song as background. We were not alone! We were part of a global family! There were people who cared for us—brothers and sisters with a different language, a different culture, but with the same love and interest that Jesus shows to his people!

All these memories came back in Switzerland as I listened to stories of suffering among our MWC members around the world. *We* are not alone. *They* are not alone—are they?

Incredible as it seems, some churches do not see why a global community is important. There are wealthy churches who appear concerned about taking God's kingdom to other places, yet fail to notice that an essential part of that kingdom means being a global, interdependent church that is able to walk alongside members who suffer and celebrate with those who experience joy.

"Sharing Gifts in Suffering and in Joy" was the motto of the Global Assembly 14 in Zimbabwe. There we learned about generosity in spite of difficult situations. Why did we need to

talk about suffering? According to Joan Chittister, "Suffering is what enables us to understand the other... It is the ground of compassion... Suffering is what puts us in touch with the rest of the human race."

In Switzerland we talked about our identity as Anabaptists and about our need to build community in a global way. We discussed the work we do through our four MWC commissions. We grappled with the need to build strategies of global communication in the coming years. We did all this with one goal in mind: to build a base for a *broader, global, intercultural compassion*.

Oliver Davies defines *compassion* as "the recognition of another's condition, entailing a degree of participation in the suffering of the other, an embrace of that fellow-suffering, and a preparedness to act on their behalf." Can you imagine the impact that our global community would have if we acted as one body, moved by God's Spirit on behalf of those who are suffering? Can you envision a global community that is aware of the condition of the other? A global community that prays for each other and celebrates together?

As our Colombian church knows well, this is already happening around the world. And it will continue happening more and more. This is our prayer and our commitment! Come! Join and support our global family! In Bryan's words:

You're not alone, we are one body.  
You're not alone, we stand with you.  
You're not alone, your time of suffering is our suffering, too.  
And I know the day is coming when we  
will be rejoicing anew.

*César García, MWC General Secretary,  
works out of the head office in Bogotá,  
Colombia.*

