

Mennonite World Conference Global Anabaptist Service Network

Terms of Reference

In response to network meetings at St. Chrisshona in Basel Switzerland

Background

On March 7 and 8, 2006, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) General Council members, representatives of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ service agencies, and other interested individuals met in Pasadena, California to discuss the meaning of *diakonia* within the worldwide Anabaptist body of believers. The theme of the consultation was “*Service as a Mandate for Global Anabaptist Family.*” The intention of the consultation was to take an internal look at what it means to serve one another within the global family.

Participants at the Pasadena Consultation recommended that MWC commit to a process of serious dialogue, action and prayer on the theme of *diakonia* among Anabaptist related churches, leading up to the World Assembly of 2009, and that MCC be invited to jointly sponsor this initiative. The process was to consider including: 1) the creation of an on-going forum on *diakonia* and service; 2) regional consultations preliminary to a global consultation in 2009; and 3) collection of further stories and examples of existing service initiatives within congregations and conferences.

It quickly became clear that not all of these objectives could be fulfilled prior to Paraguay 2009. However, MWC and MCC did produce a DVD of stories of existing service initiatives in several Mennonite and Brethren in Christ-related churches. The Mennonite World Conference task force that was organized to follow up on the Pasadena consultation also affirmed the possibility of developing an ongoing space or structure for service-related agencies, organizations, and institutions to work on common questions, issues, and program.

In line with the above perspectives, the MWC General Council approved a 2009-2012 Program Plan (July 2009) that includes an intention under the goal of “encouraging and enabling gift-sharing relationships,” of convening a “Global Anabaptist Forum on *Diakonia* and Service.” The Addis Ababa, Ethiopia consultation (August 2010) was based on the assumption that, in following up on the 2006 service consultation and the action in the Program Plan, a second consultation was needed to determine what form global linkage between Anabaptist-related service groups should take.

The primary purpose of the Addis Ababa consultation was to determine interest in developing a global forum or network where MWC member churches and related entities could work together on common questions, concerns and programs. The theme for the Addis Ababa consultation was “*Coming Together in the Way of Jesus Christ for Service in Church and the World.*”

The participants at the Addis Ababa consultation agreed on the following:

- To provide a space or entity under MWC auspices in which every member relates in an interdependent way in order to more effectively serve the church and the world.
- To support this space or entity with our finances, personnel, gifts, and skills.
- To affirm global ownership and equal accessibility to North and South.

- To sustain both local and global church connections for effective relationship and ministry.
- To maintain each agency's identity and autonomy-in-communion.
- To build accountability and transparency at all levels; local, national, and global.

Furthermore, the participants agreed to establish a *Provisional Task Force* to serve until May

2012 when further decision can be made. The role of the Provisional Task Force was to:

1. Review organizational relationships
2. Develop communication strategies and plans to keep participating entities informed of progress
3. Prepare a data base of entity activity and information
4. Map service entities and relationships
5. Plan for beyond the provisional period
6. Pursue the possibility of inviting additional entities to join this developing entity
7. Define the responsibilities of task force staff. MWC will negotiate with all participating entities to staff the work of the Task Force.
8. Establish a preliminary budget for the implementation of the next steps. MWC will negotiate with all participating entities to fund this budget.

The Provisional Task Force held two face-to-face meetings in January 2011 in Asuncion, Paraguay and in Fresno, California in October 2011. One of the major discussions was about the organizational placement of the service network. The Provisional Task Force members, after reviewing all of the conversations about future placement of the service network within MWC structures, including responses from the MWC Deacon and Mission commissions and the MWC Executive Committee, *agreed by consensus to accept the invitation of the Mission Commission and recommend to the service network and to MWC that the service network be lodged under the Mission Commission.*

Representatives of 38 service agencies from 21 countries met in Basel, Switzerland in May

2012 to review and approve in principle the terms of reference for the Global Anabaptist Service Network and to lay the groundwork for the service network to function. Nineteen of these agencies announced that they would join the network and an additional 14 agencies said they would strongly consider doing so. Participants appointed a coordinating committee of five persons and designated three persons to represent them on the Mission Commission.

Vision

A global network of Anabaptist-related church agencies and organizations committed to the wholistic gospel of Jesus Christ and the mission of the church through service ministries in our communities, nations and world as expressed in the *Shared Convictions* of Mennonite World Conference.

Mission

The Global Anabaptist Service Network (GASN) seeks to strengthen the capacity of Anabaptist churches and their agencies to reach out in service to “the widow, the orphan, and the alien” as witness to God’s love and compassion for all and to seek transformation and promote justice in our communities.

As such, the task force is recommending that the Service Network join the Global Mission Fellowship as a network of the Mission Commission of the Mennonite World Conference General Council.

The general goal of the Mission Commission is to:

- Link arms in mission – north, south, east, west.
- Pray for each other, encourage each other, and partner together as God leads us.
- Learn from each other.
- Share resources in mission – prayer, personnel, teaching and finances.
- Recapture in every part of the church the apostolic vision of the whole body of Christ engaged in faithful discipleship, filled with the Holy Spirit, and reaching out to all those around us and beyond us to whom the Lord leads us.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the Global Anabaptist Service Network are:

Connection

- Provide a space for service agencies and organizations to connect with each other
- Promote awareness and understanding of the work of the Service Network agencies and organizations as ministries of the church
- Provide opportunities for the global Anabaptist church to give counsel to Service Network agencies and organizations

Collaboration

- Encourage better and stronger collaboration among member agencies and organizations
- Increase channels of communication and interaction among member agencies and organizations
- Work together to accomplish more than member agencies could individually
- Honor the gifts of all members regardless of their size

Capacity building

- Share best practices and lessons learned among members
- Provide opportunities for training, growth and development
- Reflect together on what it means to be an Anabaptist service agency
- Learn about global needs and how to respond effectively

Guiding Values

The Global Anabaptist Service Network is guided by these values:

- **Commitment:** Walking with people who are marginalized is an essential part of God's commandments (Deuteronomy 26:12, Matthew 25:31-46).
- **Dignity:** All members have needs and all members have value to contribute (II Corinthians 8).
- **Unity:** All members belong to one Body; if one part suffers every part suffers with it (I Corinthians 12).
- **Life and witness:** All members are called to be salt and light, announcing and living out the Kingdom of God wherever they are.

Membership

The Global Anabaptist Service Network is a global coalition of Anabaptist church-related service agencies and organizations. A member of the Global Anabaptist Service Network is one –

- Involved in service ministries beyond the congregation in our own communities or country or around the world.
- Self-identified as Anabaptist with formal commitment to the MWC *Shared Convictions*
- With a priority ministry that fits within a broad definition of what service means (e.g., relief, development, healthcare, peacemaking and justice).
- Where formal organization is evident (e.g., Bylaws, departments of other organizations, regular meetings, or a structure and work or action plans).
- Agreeing to share the costs of involvement in the network through the MWC fair share approach or as otherwise agreed to.

Cooperation Guidelines

Members of the Global Anabaptist Service Network will agree to the following basic guidelines:

Wherever a GASN member agency, as donating and implementing agency, starts a project or ministry anywhere in the world it will:

- Consult first with local churches who are members of MWC
 - Seek relationship with Service Network members already in place at the location
 - Talk to other service agencies or service agency members in place
1. There will be mutual respect among Service Network member agencies and organizations in the spirit of II Cor. 8: 14-15 (fair balance between abundance and need).
 2. The beneficiaries of service have a voice in decision-making in the program, beginning with planning and through the implementation and evaluation stages.
 3. Members of the Service Network are financially transparent and accountable.
 4. Service is provided to everyone in need regardless of religion, creed or ethnicity.
 5. Members of the Service Network will work to build bridges of trust within the network and churches at all levels.

Administrative Structure

Coordinating Committee

The Global Anabaptist Service Network shall be administered by a Coordinating Committee whose responsibilities shall include but not be limited to the following:

- Liaison with member agencies
- Liaison with the Mission Commission
- Oversee the work of the network
- Participate in the planning of the commission/network meetings
- Manage nominations of persons to serve on the coordinating committee
- Supervise staff work

Composition of the Coordinating Committee

The Global Anabaptist Service Network Coordinating Committee will be composed of the following members:

- One member from each continental region (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America)
- One member to be appointed by MWC Executive Committee. The Mission Commission will hire a staff person to provide staff support for both networks relating to it.

Internal Organization of the Coordinating Committee

The internal leadership of the committee will include a chair, vice chair, secretary, one or more advisors as deemed necessary with the assistance of a staff person. The chair of the Service Network serves as vice chair of the Mission Commission.

Relationship with the Mission Commission

As a network of the Mission Commission, the Global Anabaptist Service Network shall appoint two individuals (whom should be members of the Service Network Coordinating Committee) to serve as members of the Mission Commission. Nominations will take into account the appointments of the Global Mission Fellowship and the General Council of the Mennonite World Conference to achieve an appropriate balance of continental representation.

Functioning of the Service Network

1. The members of Global Anabaptist Service Network shall meet face-to-face every three years, normally in conjunction with the Mennonite World Conference General Council meetings.
2. The Coordinating Committee shall normally meet face-to-face once every year-and-a-half and also by electronic means as necessary.
3. The two members of the Global Anabaptist Service Network serving on the Mission Commission shall meet as determined by the Mission Commission.
4. Additional meetings of the entire network or of the Coordinating Committee can be called by members as needed and as finances permit

Decision-making Process

As a member network of the Mission Commission of the Mennonite World Conference General Council, our official decision-making process shall be by consensus as practiced during all the official meetings of MWC General Council.

Our Finances

1. The Coordinating Committee shall normally establish a three-year budget for operation and general consultations to be presented for approval by all the members of the network during the face-to-face meeting every three years. The Coordinating Committee will adopt a minimum budget for the initial three year period.
2. Each participating agency or organization shall contribute to the budget according to the fair share system as practiced by Mennonite World Conference.
3. Other arrangements for financial participation, if needed, shall be made individually based on an agency's financial capacity.

Agreed: To adopt these Terms of Reference for the Global Anabaptist Service Network, in principle, as a working document until the Service

Network meets again in 2015.

- Participants of the Global Anabaptist Service Network on May 17, 2012

Pakisa Tshimika and Ron Byler
March 2012

Pakisa Tshimika and Ron Byler
May 2012 in response to participant suggestions at Service Network meetings at St.
Chrishona