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Mennonite World Conference
 A Community of Anabaptist related Churches

Congreso Mundial Menonita
 Una Comunidad de Iglesias Anabautistas

Conférence Mennonite Mondiale
 Une Communauté d'Églises Anabaptistes

News Briefs

Mennonites re-affirm pacifism amid Middle East violence

Liestal, Switzerland – While “deeply shaken” by the terror caused by Islamic State (IS) militias in Iraq and Syria, “we believe that the situation does not render pacifist convictions obsolete,” declared the faculty of the Theological Seminary Bienenberg in a statement issued in September 2014.

The statement – entitled “Using violence against violence?” – questions the growing support for military intervention against IS groups as a “moral responsibility compatible with the Christian faith.”

“A peace church position is not equivalent to apathetic passivity,” notes the faculty statement. “We are convinced that evil must be confronted.” They advocate the following alternative means of action: prayer, nonviolent peacemaking operations, help for refugees and the practice of “just policing.”

The statement responds to the objection that the Christian pacifist position is “idealist and naive.” The statement also challenges those who find biblical support for “necessary violence,” citing instead God’s protest against the “logic of violence” in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

“We know that it is only possible to express some of these thoughts when at a safe distance from violent conflicts,” acknowledges the statement. “However, we do not want to let ourselves be paralyzed by helplessness and resignation, but rather we carry on, humbly and with the help of God’s Spirit, in the ‘hunt for peace’ (Hebrews 12:14) as best as we are able.”

Bienenberg is a school founded by the Mennonite churches of France, Germany and Switzerland, many of which are Mennonite World Conference member churches.

To read the entire statement, visit the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org

Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly Update



Young adults from Africa lead worship at the 2009 Global Youth Summit in Paraguay.

Registration for Pennsylvania 2015 now open

Bogotá, Colombia – Online registration for Pennsylvania 2015 opened 20 August 2014 through a redesigned and expanded Assembly section of the Mennonite World Conference website ([mwc-cmm.org](http://www.mwc-cmm.org)).

The site includes information about Assembly Gathered, planned for 21-26 July 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA. Pennsylvania 2015 will be the first-ever MWC Assembly to be held in the eastern USA. The gathering was last held in this country in 1978, in Wichita, Kansas.

The site also includes information about Assembly Scattered opportunities in many locations both before and after Assembly Gathered. (For more details on Assembly Scattered, see the related article below.)

Those seeking details about the Global Youth Summit for young adults, to be held 17-19 July 2015 at Messiah College (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania), should also consult the website.

The website includes program details, schedules of events, lodging options, costs and other essential information for those planning to attend the Assembly which will include participants from around the world.

While the Assembly is still months away, it will be important to register as early as possible in order to ensure preferred choices for lodging and tours.

PA 2015 to include Assembly Scattered

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA – From 21-26 July 2015, Anabaptists from around the world will come together for Assembly Gathered, one part of the next Mennonite World Conference Assembly, Pennsylvania 2015.

But before and after Assembly Gathered, individuals will also have the opportunity to participate in Assembly Scattered.

According to Liesa Unger, chief international events officer for MWC, Assembly Scattered will take place at multiple sites

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Read more about Pennsylvania 2015, the next Mennonite World Conference Assembly!

The next MWC Assembly will be held 21-26 July 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA!

To learn more about the event and to read updates on Assembly preparations, visit the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org/article/pa-2015-articles



Pennsylvania 2015



Leaders in the Mennonite Church British Columbia join with leaders from the Mennonite Cambodia Church to pray for Pastor Tran Dinh Khanh and his wife at his ordination. Photo courtesy of Garry Janzen

Mennonite connections in Canada lead to ordination in Cambodia

Phnom Penh, Cambodia – The growth of Vietnamese Mennonite churches in British Columbia, Canada, has led to closer ministry connections in Cambodia. In early June 2014, Mennonite Church British Columbia (MCBC) sent three representatives to the Mennonite Cambodia Church to ordain Pastor Tran Dinh Khanh.

The Sunday morning worship service included dynamic worship singing, scriptures read aloud, and beautifully choreographed interpretive dances done by the youth. Garry Janzen, executive minister of MCBC, preached and conducted the ordination through interpretation. He shares, “We laid on hands and prayed, then the service concluded with the pastor’s wife singing a beautiful song of love to God at her husband’s ordination. This couple is a great team ministering together.”

Janzen describes the event as a “holy moment.” At one point during the service, he recalls, his emotions welled up and he could no longer speak or sing because of the significance of what God was doing and because of what “Pastor Khanh’s ordination represents

for the Anabaptist/Mennonite movement in Cambodia.”

During their visit to Cambodia, the MCBC group was also able to visit the land purchased to revive a previous ministry in the city of Kratie, and pray a prayer of blessing there. They had a Saturday evening worship gathering and ministry time, “where many people received prayer for healing and other concerns, people were led to faith in Christ and reports of God’s answer to previous prayers were given.”

The MCBC entourage also included Nhien Pham of the North American Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship and pastor at the Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Vancouver, BC, and Canh Ha, a representative of the MCBC Church Health Committee and pastor of the Vietnamese Christian Church in Abbotsford, BC.

MCBC is an area conference of Mennonite Church Canada, a Mennonite World Conference member church.

– Kristina Toews

Mennonite World Conference president to retire from bishop position

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – Danisa Ndlovu, president of Mennonite World Conference, will retire from his position as bishop of

Ibandla Labazalwane KuKristu eZimbabwe (Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe), effective 31 December 2014.

Ndlovu has been bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church since 2000. Beginning in 2015 he will assume a new role with the Susek Evangelistic Association, a United States-based ministry that “is committed to the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ by strengthening and building of the church” through evangelism, conferences and other initiatives. In this new role Ndlovu will help to organize and co-facilitate leadership summits in Africa and elsewhere.

Ndlovu has ministered as bishop during difficult times for Zimbabweans. Government corruption, violence, famine and skyrocketing inflation have resulted in despair and even death. Yet, as Ndlovu told the 2008 General Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church in North America, “In the midst of suffering, God is calling us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices.” Under his leadership, the Brethren in Christ of Zimbabwe have committed themselves to service despite seemingly insurmountable trials.

In reflecting on his years as bishop, Ndlovu counts

the 2003 MWC Assembly in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, as one of his greatest achievements. The Assembly “gave our brothers and sisters around the world an opportunity to put a face to the plight of the Zimbabwean people,” Ndlovu says. “The world had a taste of our strength (and possible weaknesses) as a church, as well as our spiritual vibrancy.”

At the local level, Ndlovu celebrates the maturity he has seen in the Zimbabwean church during his tenure as bishop. He reflects, “Doing business in the church—whether at the congregation, District Council or Conference level—has been seen as an important, integral and sacred part of worship. As a result, during my years as bishop, business session have been for the most part extremely peaceful and worshipful.”

Ndlovu has served as bishop for fifteen years. He will be succeeded by Sindah Ngulube on 1 January 2015. Ngulube has served in various ministry roles in the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe, most recently as overseer for the Harare District.

– Devin Manzullo-Thomas



Danisa Ndlovu, bishop of *Ibandla Labazalwane KuKristu eZimbabwe* (Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe), will retire at the end of this year. Ndlovu is also president of MWC. Photo by Merle Good

MWC recruits new staff members

Bogotá, Colombia – Mennonite World Conference has appointed four new staff members: two regional representatives for Africa, a regional representative for Europe and an executive assistant to the general secretary. The staff members began their new roles 1 September 2015.

The two representatives who will nurture relations with member and associate member churches in Africa are Francisca Ibanda and Rebecca Osiro.

Francisca Ibanda, of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is chair of the MWC Africa Caucus and a member of the MWC Executive Committee. As Central Africa Representative, she will be responsible for relationships with churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Burundi.

Rebecca Osiro, of Kenya, is a theologian-pastor and the first woman ordained to ministry in the Kenya Mennonite Church. She is a member of the MWC Faith and Life Commission and has represented MWC in the trilateral dialogue between Mennonites, Catholics and Lutherans. As Eastern Africa Representative, will be responsible for relationships with churches in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya and Tanzania.

The representative who will nurture relations with member and associate member churches in Europe is Henk Stenvers. Stenvers, of the Netherlands, is general secretary / director of *Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit* (Dutch Mennonite Church) and secretary of the MWC Deacons Commission.

His role as Europe regional representative is combined with his appointment as European Mennonite coordinator, an initiative of the majority of European Mennonite conferences, who also finance the position.

Serving as executive assistant to the general secretary is Sandra Báez. Sandra is senior pastor of the *Iglesia Torre Fuerte* (Strong Tower Mennonite Brethren Church) in Bogotá, Colombia.

In announcing the appointment of these new



New MWC staff members include (top to bottom) Francisca Ibanda (Democratic Republic of Congo), Rebecca Osiro (Kenya), Henk Stenvers (Netherlands) and Sandra Báez (Colombia).

staff members, MWC general secretary César García said, “Our Anabaptist communities around the world have been blessed with wonderful leaders who choose to serve in and through the church, practicing what we believe: that the church has a central role in God’s plan of reconciliation for our world. It is a blessing for us to have these leaders joining the MWC staff.”

– Devin Manzullo-Thomas

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and will allow visitors from across the globe to experience more of Anabaptist-Mennonite history, culture and life in the USA than they would by coming just to Harrisburg.

“Many of the Assembly Scattered sites for PA 2015 also include visits to nearby historical or cultural landmarks. Hosts will introduce their guests to places and activities they’ve read about. But this is more than tourism. By experiencing each other’s settings, we learn to know each other better,” explains Unger.

“This opportunity for fellowship flows both ways,” says Unger. “Visitors learn about day-to-day life in the U.S. and Canada, while also worshipping in Anabaptist-related congregations. And locals are enriched by opening their homes and churches to ‘family’ they would otherwise not have known. This is how lifelong relationships become real.”

Details about Assembly Scattered are available on the MWC website, at www.mwc-cmm.org

Assembly Scattered first occurred as part of the MWC Assembly in Calcutta in January 1997. Because few Mennonites live in Calcutta, MWC leaders worked with churches throughout India, and in other countries in Asia, to host travelers on their way to or from Calcutta. Visitors experienced church life in communities across the region,

and locals who weren’t able to attend the Calcutta Assembly fellowshipped in their home communities with sisters and brothers from other parts of the world who were traveling to or from the Assembly.

– Phyllis Pellman Good

Global Youth Summit to precede PA 2015 Assembly

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA – A Global Youth Summit (GYS) will immediately precede the upcoming Mennonite World Conference Assembly, Pennsylvania 2015.

Organized by the Young Anabaptists (YABs) Committee, an international group of young Anabaptists, the GYS will include worship, discussions, workshops, fellowship and free time, games, concerts, late-evening activities and sports. Attendees at this gathering will be ages 18 and older.

The GYS opens Friday morning, 17 July 2015, on the Messiah College campus in Mechanicsburg, PA, just across the Susquehanna River from Harrisburg, site of the Assembly. GYS concludes late on Sunday evening, 19 July.

To make sure that GYS has representation from Anabaptist-related churches around the world, and to cultivate leadership in those attending, each MWC member denomination is invited to send one young adult delegate.

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The YABs Committee, left to right: Kristina Toews (former chair from Canada); Lani Prunés (USA), North America representative; Marc Pasqués (Spain), Europe representative; Rodrigo Pedroza García (on-screen from Mexico), chair and Latin America representative; Tigist Tesfaye Gelagle (Ethiopia), Africa representative; Sumana Basumata (India), Asia representative; and mentor Ayub Omondi (Kenya). Photo courtesy of Kristina Toews

• MWC has received urgent appeals for prayer from Supreme Council of the Evangelical Community in Syria and Lebanon and from the Middle East Council of Churches. These churches are facing tremendous violence and persecution at the hands of militant groups. As the Middle East Council of Churches stated in their appeal, the international community must “take bold initiatives and to stand against this fierce attack on the passive Christians of Iraq who remain steadfast in the land of their fathers and forefathers where Christianity started.” In response, MWC has called for “a shower of prayer, solidarity and blessing” from its member churches. For more on this call to prayer, visit the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org

• The MWC Peace Commission has called for urgent prayer for countries around the world facing situations of violence: Vietnam, Israel – Palestine – Gaza and Ukraine – Russia.

Vietnam: On June 9, 2014, there was a massive attack by local authorities and police on a Mennonite site of worship and study. Some were beaten. 76 persons were arrested and taken in for questioning. Court cases may be pending. From all reports, significant harassment is continuing. The issue at hand is the legal registration (or not) of the Mennonite church(es). Leaders from all sides of this issue are under significant stress and pressure. We need to pray for them. We need to pray for the local and national authorities. We need to pray for MWC as we seek to respond to a very sensitive issue, both inside and beyond the church. We need to ensure them of our prayers.

Israel – Palestine – Gaza: What is happening there is not what God wills for that region and for the many

suffering there. We feel helpless. But we can lament, and cry out to God. And we must acknowledge that Christian understandings of Zionism and prophecy often fuel the ways that international communities respond in foreign policy, financing, and even arming of both sides. As Christians we must confess our complicity. We pray that concerns for justice and human solidarity will replace doctrine, creed, and vengeance. And we can rejoice and be confident in the knowledge that God can move hearts, souls, and minds.

Ukraine – Russia: Some in the MWC family have long and strong historical ties with this part of the world. Many of our Mennonite brothers and sisters are there, in the midst of conflict, misunderstandings, powerplays, nationalism, violence, and international intrigue. Again the international community is suggesting an embargo on the sale of arms to Russia. We lament that there have been arm sales at all, now or in the past. The persistent but flawed confidence that arming violence is the way to lasting peace is again proving to be superficial and wrong. The confidence that violence can be good and even redemptive is part of the systemic sin that is at play in that region of the world. We need to pray for leaders; we need to pray that the cycle of chronic dependence on the tools of war can somehow be broken in the hearts and minds of people.

• Join in prayer with other Christian World Communions for *Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria* (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) as they face violence being perpetrated by Boko Haram. This situation rose to international concern with the abduction of the Chibok girls, the vast majority of whom are members of EYN. Since then several parents of the girls have been murdered by Boko Haram. Let us hold everyone affected by this violence in our prayers.

Give a gift to MWC

Your prayers and financial gifts are deeply appreciated. Your contributions are important. They will:

- Enable expanded communication strategies to nurture a worldwide family of faith
- Strengthen our communion's identity and witness as Anabaptist Christians in our diverse contexts, and
- Build up community through networks and gatherings so that we can learn from and support each other

Go to www.mwc-cmm.org and click the “Get Involved” tab for prayer requests and on the “Donate” tab for multiple ways to give online. Or mail your gift to Mennonite World Conference at one of these addresses:

- PO Box 5364, Lancaster, PA 17606 USA
- 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 Canada
- Calle 28A No.16-41 Piso 2, Bogotá, Colombia
- 8 rue du Fossé des Treize, 67000 Strasbourg, France

Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly Update

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Delegates must be active members of their churches and ideally be involved in youth work. Each should be recommended by the youth and the pastor of her/his local congregation.

Good delegates, says the YABs Committee, are “committed to service and possess leadership qualities; they're good listeners, learners, and speakers; and they have email access or other ways to stay connected with delegates and other young Anabaptists after GYS.”

Being a delegate isn't a puff job. Before coming to GYS, each delegate must survey a minimum of 50 young adults from her/his national church about the GYS theme. (“Called to Share: My Gifts, Our Gifts” is the theme for the 2015 event.)

More than 700 attended the second GYS held in Paraguay in 2009. YABs Committee organizers hope for 600-1,000 registrants for the 2015 gathering.

For more information about GYS, its activities, and how to register, visit the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org/gys

– Phyllis Pellman Good

MWC tackles visa issue

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA – Recognizing that visitors to the U.S. from the Southern Hemisphere often find it difficult to get visas, MWC is taking steps to try to keep the situation from limiting attendance at its global Assembly next summer.

First, leaders of MWC member churches are going to their district conferences to offer help with registering for the Assembly, obtaining passports and assisting with visa applications.

Second, on the U.S. front, the Herts are preparing letters of invitation to send to Pennsylvania 2015 registrants who need visas. These letters of invitation on official MWC letterhead will demonstrate to consular officers that these persons have a bona fide reason to travel.

Third, the Herts are preparing official letters from MWC which they will send directly to each U.S. Consulate that will be receiving visa applications.

For more details on these preparations, visit the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org

– Phyllis Pellman Good

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