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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



A mass choir from the Mennonite congregation in Hualien, Taiwan, performs during the FOMCIT 60th anniversary celebration in October 2014. Photo courtesy of Sheldon Sawatzky

Taiwan Mennonite Church celebrates 60 years

Taipei, Taiwan – On 25-26 October 2014, more than 1,100 Taiwanese Mennonites attended a gala celebration to mark the 60th anniversary of the Fellowship of Mennonite Churches in Taiwan (FOMCIT). FOMCIT is a Mennonite World Conference member church.

Held at the China Youth Activities Center in Taipei, the two-day celebration focused on the theme “Legacy, Renewal, Expansion.” The first day of the celebration focused on praise and thanksgiving, and included a skit on reconciliation and a number of musical performances, including a rendition of the hymn “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” performed by the hand chime choir of the New Dawn Educare Centre, a FOMCIT institution for persons with mental handicaps.

The second day of the celebration included a two-hour worship service featuring

testimonies, singing, and a sermon by Titus Liao, chair of the FOMCIT board of directors. The celebration concluded with a banquet spread out on 95 round tables seating up to 12 persons each.

Reflecting on the anniversary celebration, FOMCIT General Secretary Robert Chang stated, “My deepest impression is that we have faith in the Lord who hears prayer. Because of your intercession, we work together to complete the mission that cannot be completed on its own. . . . May the Lord be glorified, and grant us His power. . . . With God’s grace, together we can change the world.”

For more on the celebration, visit the MWC website at mwc-cmm.org

– Sheldon Sawatzky

Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly Update

Prayer network launched for Pennsylvania 2015

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA – Mennonite World Conference is establishing a prayer network, recognizing the importance of prayer as preparations are made for Pennsylvania 2015, the global Assembly being planned for 21-26 July 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

“We are confident that the Assembly will be a wonderful time of worship, celebration and engagement next summer,” Lynn Roth, MWC North America regional representative, reflected. “The Program Committee is putting together a week of amazing music, meditations, worship, seminars and arts performances and events around the theme of ‘Walking with God.’”

“As with all of the Assemblies in recent years, we will face significant challenges that will allow us to experience God’s presence and answers to prayer,” said Roth. Worries

include obtaining visas for registrants, adequate participation among North American church members, health concerns and international events that prevent travel.

Roth sees the prayer network as a primary means by which to address these and other concerns. He adds, “We are organizing an event that will bring people together from all over the world. I believe it can happen only if it is bathed in prayer and is God’s doing.”

The idea for a prayer network for Pennsylvania 2015 came from the *Ibandla Labazalwane Kukristu e-Zimbabwe* (Zimbabwe Brethren in Christ Church), who hosted the MWC Assembly in 2003. Given the many challenges in the country at that time – scarcity of food and fuel, weak economy and an unreliable government – Ethel Sibanda, a member of the Zimbabwean church, stepped up to lead a prayer network, to bathe the Assembly needs in prayer. The network included

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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

Honduran Anabaptist groups reconcile

La Ceiba, Honduras – After decades of misunderstanding and little collaboration, *Organización Cristiana Amor Viviente* and *Iglesia Evangelica Menonita Hondureña* (IEMH), the two largest Anabaptist groups in Honduras, have publicly reconciled with each other and are actively working at improving their relationship. Both are Mennonite World Conference member churches.

In August 2013, leaders from both groups met with other church leaders from around the world at the Holy Spirit in Missions Conference in Changi Cove, Singapore. The conference was organized by the International Missions Association (IMA), an association of about 21 Anabaptist mission bodies established for prayer, mutual support and partnership. Many are MWC member churches.

and leaders of both groups are taking concrete steps to encourage fellowship at all levels of the church. In July 2014, Montoya accepted an invitation to attend the annual assembly of IEMH in La Ceiba.

“I was invited to give a series of talks to pastors and leaders from across the country who participated in the assembly,” said Montoya. “There Adalid and I informed them of what happened in Singapore, and they were pleased with our testimony and gave a vote of affirmation for walking together more closely and forgetting what has happened in the past.”

While the two churches never engaged in large-scale conflict with each other, there have been tensions between them since the 1970s.

IEMH was established in 1950 through the work of several missionary families from Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), an agency of the Lancaster Conference of Mennonite Church USA, a MWC member



Carlos Marín Montoya (far left), president of *Amor Viviente*, and **Adalid Romero** (third from left), president of *Iglesia Evangelica Menonita Hondureña*, formally reconciled during the Holy Spirit in Mission conference in Singapore in August 2013. Here, the pose with fellow conference attendees (from left) **Samuel López**, **Antonio Ulloa** and **Javier Soler**. Photo courtesy of Javier Soler

As conference participants gathered to share in the Lord's Supper, Carlos Marín Montoya, president of *Amor Viviente*, publicly asked for forgiveness from Adalid Romero, president of IEMH, for “all the damage you have received from us in the past.”

“Brother, you are forgiven,” responded Romero, and the two groups committed to mutual forgiveness, fellowship, collaboration, and support between the groups.

Momentum for improving the relationship has grown,

church. IEMH began in the city of Trujillo, a maritime port two to three hours from the nearest city, La Ceiba, and ministered primarily to the rural poor in the area.

Amor Viviente was established in the 1970s by EMM workers Ed and Gloria King, who developed a ministry to youth immersed in drugs and alcohol. It became a fast-growing charismatic discipleship movement that spread throughout Honduras.

– Adapted from an EMM news release by **Chris Fretz**



Leaders of European Mennonite conferences lay hands on and pray for Roman Rakhuba and the Mennonite Church in Ukraine, at their annual meeting. Photo by Liesa Unger

Ukrainian Mennonite leader shares of church trials

Lisbon, Portugal – Roman Rakhuba, a leader of the Mennonite Church in Ukraine, shared the trauma of recent military actions in his country during his first-ever participation in the annual gathering of leaders of European Mennonite conferences.

He shared how the church is responding in the face of lost homes and a mandatory draft for their young men. They are trying to find ways to support each other if people need to evacuate, even having evacuation plans hanging in the church.

After hearing Rakhuba's reflections and stories, all the leaders at the meeting gathered together to pray for Rakhuba and the church in Ukraine. On

his Facebook account, Rakhuba described it as the most moving moment of his life.

This all occurred during a meeting held 17-19 October 2014, hosted by the Mennonite Brethren Church in Portugal. This annual meeting began years ago as a gathering of a few long-standing Mennonite churches, but has since grown into a time of connection and mutual support between Mennonite leaders from all over Europe.

Henk Stenvers, MWC Europe regional representative, described the meeting as a time of “sharing our challenges and concerns, discussing peace issues and Mennonite identity and trying to think about ways to work together. In this way we want to create a network of Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren churches in Europe.”

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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

“Why are you an Anabaptist?”

Members of the MWC community share their reasons for embracing an Anabaptist identity.

Ernst Bergen

Treasurer
Paraguay



“I’m an Anabaptist because God loves me.”

Adi Walujo

Member, MWC Executive Committee
Indonesia



“I’m an Anabaptist because, to my understanding, Anabaptists live as Jesus lived.”

Cisca Ibanda

Central Africa Regional Representative
Democratic Republic of Congo



“I am an Anabaptist because I was touched by their Bible teachings and their doctrinal principles.”

Robert J. Suderman

Secretary, Peace Commission
Canada



“I am an Anabaptist because I understand Jesus to be the key to Christian faith and life, and I’ve decided to accept that as a framework for my life.”

Prem Prakash Bagh

Member, MWC Executive Committee
India



“I am called to be Anabaptist because I believe in life eternal which comes through Jesus, who died for me.”

Arli Klassen

Chief Development Officer
Canada



“I am an Anabaptist Christian because I love how Anabaptist churches take Jesus’ commands seriously to

love God, love our neighbours and love our enemies. Actions matter.”

Lani Prunés

Member, Young Anabaptists (YABs)
USA



“I’m an Anabaptist because I love God’s desire for his children to seek peace, justice, and to walk humbly with him.”

John D. Roth

Secretary, Faith and Life Commission
USA



“I am an Anabaptist-Mennonite because I have found here a community of faith that helps me to love Jesus

more fully, to share that love with others and to experience glimpses of the coming Kingdom of God.”

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Participants, who are leaders of national churches and the MWC Executive Committee members for Europe, represented a diversity of countries: Netherlands, Switzerland, Ukraine, France, Spain, Portugal and several conferences from Germany. David Wiebe, president of the International Community of Mennonite Brethren, was also present as a guest.

– Kristina Toews

Congregations seek reconciliation with Ghana Mennonite Church

Pimpimso, Ghana – The Ghana Mennonite Church (GMC) experienced an act of reconciliation at its 49th annual conference, held 10-11 October 2014 at the Pimpimso congregation, a new church plant of the GMC’s Somanya district.

The reconciliation occurred between the northern Ghana churches and the rest of GMC. The northern churches had withdrawn from GMC a

focused on procedure. It was agreed that the northern churches would write a letter requesting reunion with GMC. Once this letter is received, another meeting will be held to formalize the new situation.

One of the remaining difficulties is clarifying the number of churches currently connected to the northern group. When the northern group split off some years ago, there were roughly nine churches in that area. But some recently split off from the Mennonite church, due to the influence of a prophet in the area. The current estimate places the number of northern churches between 4-6.

Currently, GMC consists of 28 congregations with a baptized membership of around 5,000. GMC is a Mennonite World Conference member church.

– Based on a report by Wes Bergen

Workshops strengthen Anabaptist identity in India

India – A jointly sponsored series of workshops have helped to strengthen Anabaptist



Presenters at the India workshops on Anabaptist identity (left to right): Sandra Baez, Shant Kunjam, Robert Suderman and Christina Asheervadam. Photo courtesy of Carol Zook

few years ago, and recently expressed interested in rejoining the main body.

The act itself occurred on 11 October, as the executive of the GMC sat down with representatives from the northern churches. Since the northern churches wished to rejoin GMC and GMC wished to have them, the meeting was brief and most of the discussion

identity across India.

In a collaborative effort, the Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India (MCSFI), Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and Mennonite Central Committee India (MCCI) hosted a series of four workshops across India from 20 October to 3 November 2014. As a follow-up to similar initiatives

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in the last three years, these workshops included four primary objectives: (1) to stimulate a better understanding of Anabaptist identity; (2) to prepare a core of leaders for ministry within the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches of India and Nepal; (3) to move to a greater sense of unity among these churches; and (4) to encourage vibrant congregational life through a focus on the Bible.

Event organizers report that “all of these objectives were met to a great extent.”

Forty to 60 people attended each workshop. The workshop team was led by Jack Suderman of Canada, secretary of the MWC Peace Commission, and included speakers Shant Kunjam, bishop of Mennonite Church India; Sandra Baez, pastor of the Iglesia Menonita Torre Fuerte (Torre Fuerte Mennonite Brethren Church) in Bogotá, Colombia; and Christina Asheervadam, professor of theology at the Mennonite Brethren Centenary Bible College in Hyderabad, India. The music coordinator was Irene Suderman of Canada, and translation was conducted by Sushant Rajat Nand of Mennonite Church India.

According to a report from conference organizers, the workshops were well received and had a significant impact on participants’ sense of Anabaptist identity. They credited the speakers with provoking participants “to think with open minds about some controversial topics like modes of baptism, the role of women in the church and leadership roles in the churches using gifts of the Spirit and shalom in all areas of life.” Moreover, they added that the team “communicated well across language, cultural and experience barriers with good interaction, group discussions and clarifications.”

At three of the workshops, the sessions were augmented by a presentation from César

García, MWC general secretary. García’s presentations were much appreciated by participants, and event organizers add that the “face-to-face experience [with García] brought participants to a better understanding that MWC is ‘all of us.’”

– Based on a report by Cynthia Peacock, Carol Zook, Gordon Zook and M. K. Masih

In Memoriam: Joram Mbeba (1930-2014)

Musoma, Tanzania – Joram Mbeba, a bishop in *Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania* (Tanzania Mennonite Church), died on November 22, 2014 at the age of 84.



Joram Mbeba (1930-2014)

He completed undergraduate and graduate studies in the United States and then returned to Tanzania for a career in teaching and education administration until his retirement in 1985. From 1985 to 1990, he served as a general secretary in the South Mara Diocese of Tanzania Mennonite Church and was consecrated as bishop in 1990, retiring from church service in 1999.

From 1990 to 2003, he served on the Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee as a representative of Anglophone Africa.

He is survived by his wife, Ludia Mbeba, two daughters and several grandchildren.

• Pray for brothers and sisters in Bhutan, where the door is closed for the gospel and they cannot openly share about Jesus or build a church. The only official religion is Buddhism and if caught sharing the gospel believers are arrested and imprisoned. One brother has been in prison for over two years. Pray for the material needs of these believers and that God will call people to follow Jesus in this place.

• At meetings in mid-October 2014, the leaders of European Mennonite churches prayed for the Mennonite church in Ukraine and urged others in the global Anabaptist communion to hold up this church in prayer. They ask for prayers for wisdom to be faithful disciples in times of war and violence, prayers for strength and support as the Ukrainian church is reaching out to a great number of refugees, and prayers for wisdom as the church walks with people who are suffering.

Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly Update

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both those who planned to attend Assembly as well as those unable to attend but who wanted to assure hospitality for their church’s guests.

“We have learned from the Zimbabweans,” says prayer network coordinator Joanne Dietzel of Strasburg, Pennsylvania. “We invite everyone who believes in prayer and the global church to join the prayer network, even those who may not be planning to attend Pennsylvania 2015.”

To join the prayer network for Pennsylvania 2015, visit the MWC website at mwc-cmm.org/article/prayer-network

– Phyllis Pellman Good

Pennsylvania 2015 morning speakers announced

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA – The lineup of morning speakers at Pennsylvania 2015, the upcoming Mennonite World Conference Assembly to be held 22-26 July 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, has just been announced.

Each morning of the Assembly will feature a different speaker, invited by one of the four MWC Commissions, to give

a talk on a specific theme. Each of the themes builds on the main Assembly theme, “Walking with God.”

For Wednesday, 22 July, the Faith and Life Commission has invited Rebecca Osiro (Kenya) and Tom Yoder Neufeld (Canada) to address the topic “Walking in Doubt and Conviction.”

For Thursday, 23 July, the Peace Commission has invited Nancy Heisey (USA) to address the topic “Walking in Conflict and Reconciliation.”

For Friday, 24 July, the Deacons Commission has invited Shant Kunjam (India) to address the topic “Walking in Autonomy and Community.”

For Saturday, 25 July, the Mission Commission has invited Hippolyto Tshimanga (Canada/Democratic Republic of Congo) to address the topic “Walking in Receiving and Giving.”

The Young Anabaptist (YABs) Committee will choose speakers to respond to each of the morning talks. They will announce their lineup of respondents soon.

For full profiles of each of the morning speakers, as well as the announcement of the young adult respondents, visit the MWC website at mwc-cmm.org