

June 2015
 Volume 30, Number 3



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

Believers baptism churches meet to share changing understandings

Kingston, Jamaica – A consultation held from 8-10 January at the Theological College of the West Indies (Kingston, Jamaica) involved representatives from six different believers baptism church traditions. They shared their understandings and practices of baptism and explored how their thinking has changed in light of the emerging theological convergence on baptism and growing ecumenical encounter over the past 30 years. This was the first time such a gathering has taken place.

The traditions included the Baptists, Church of the Brethren, Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Mennonites and Pentecostals. The 18 participants came from Jamaica, Kenya, Germany, Paraguay, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Mennonite participants were Fernando Enns of Germany, Alfred Neufeld of Paraguay and Rebecca Osiro of Kenya.

The initiative for the consultation grew out of the annual meeting of Secretaries of Christian World Communions in 2012, which noted fresh thinking and official agreements

around the mutual recognition of baptism between churches who practice “infant baptism” and those who have practiced “believers baptism.”

The agenda of the consultation included presentations from each of the traditions on their past and current teaching and practice of baptism, with attention to how their understandings have changed or developed. A representative of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches was also present to provide input from the wider global discussion on baptism.

The highlights of the consultation, as stated in a report on the meeting, included

- gratitude for the opportunity to have an open and honest reflection on the meaning, practice and shared understandings of baptism among the participants;
- the significance of understanding the Holy Spirit as a source both of our diversity as well as our unity in Christ; and
- the need to recognize the continuity between ecumenical reception of other traditions as church, and the practices that mark each tradition as a unique expression of the body of Christ.

The full text of the report on the meeting will be shared with both the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions and the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC with the hope that it will move the discussion and work on the mutual recognition of baptism and Christian unity forward.

—Ron Rempel

Correction:
 In the April 2015 issue of *Courier*, the country profile by Steven Nolt of the USA (p. 11) incorrectly indicated that there are “almost 12,000 members” of Old Order groups. In fact, there are almost 120,000 members of these groups.

The *Courier* staff apologizes for the error.

Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly Update

Evening speakers at MWC Assembly to offer ‘global feast for the soul’

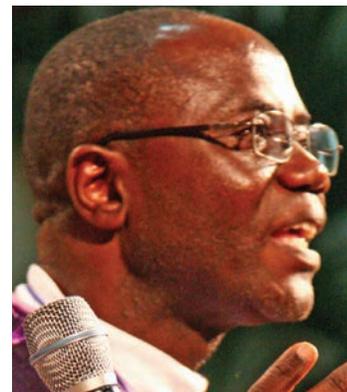
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA – The evening speakers at Pennsylvania 2015, the next Mennonite World Conference assembly, will offer “a global feast for the soul,” according to Don McNiven, a member of the Program Committee for the upcoming global gathering, to be held 21-26 July in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

On Tuesday, 21 July, MWC General Secretary César García of Bogotá, Colombia, will introduce the assembly theme, “Walking with God.” In his presentation, he will focus especially on Luke 24 and speak about “Walking the Road to Emmaus.”

On Wednesday, 22 July, Yukari Kaga of Japan will talk about “Walking in Doubt and Conviction” (I Peter 1: 3-9). Kaga pastors several small Mennonite congregations in Hokkaido. She is chief director of the Peace Mission Center and serves at the Mennonite Education and Research Center in Japan.

Nzuzi Mukawa of the Democratic Republic of Congo will address “Walking in Conflict and Reconciliation” (I Samuel 25: 1-44; II Corinthians 5: 17-20) on Thursday, 23 July. Nzuzi is the team leader for Mennonite Brethren (MB) missions in Sub-Saharan Africa. He is both a professor of missions and an associate pastor of an MB congregation in Congo.

Wieteke van der Molen of the Netherlands will explore “Walking in Autonomy and Community” (Genesis 32) on Friday, 24 July. Wieteke



Evening speakers at PA 2015 will include Yukari Kaga (top), a pastor and educator from Japan; Nzuzi Mukawa (middle), a professor and pastor from the Democratic Republic of Congo; and Bruxy Cavey (bottom), a pastor from Canada.

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Dutch Mennonites celebrate 25th anniversary of home mission project

Almere, Netherlands – Some 30 years ago the *Dooopsgezinde Zendingraad* (DZR, or Dutch Mennonite Mission Board), which had been exclusively oriented toward foreign lands, began a missionary project on its own soil. This decision was motivated by an awareness of the increasing secularization of Dutch society.

This led to the start of a project in a new town called Almere. The DZR established a house of hospitality called *Inloophuis de Ruimte*. It was to be a place where people could easily and genuinely meet with one another – no simple task in a new city like Almere, where everyone is a relatively recent “immigrant.” At *Inloophuis de Ruimte*, these ordinary moments of meeting together are honoured as something holy, something through which the Spirit can and does work.

In November 2014 the start of this mission project was commemorated with a conference meant to cast a thankful but critical eye over the past 25 years and look ahead in hope.

Conference presenters included Stuart Murray, an Anabaptist theologian from the United Kingdom, and Andries Baart, a Dutch theologian and professor at the *Universiteit van Tilburg* in the Netherlands.

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

– Adapted from an article by Gerrit Jan Romeijn

East African Churches strengthen leadership training for rural pastors

Mwanza, Tanzania – Bishops in the *Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania* (Tanzanian Mennonite Church) and Kenya Mennonite Church are working to meet the need for local, affordable training for village pastors.

To do so, they have partnered with missionaries Joe and Gloria Bontrager, originally from the United States, who are developing and implementing

a basic-level curriculum and sustainable model for training church leaders.

The Bontragers travel to various districts to begin the program with a “Training of Trainers” seminar. By teaching the basic material and modeling how to teach, they equip local leadership with all they need to facilitate the 12-course, two-year training on their own.

To date, 15 seminars have been held in seven of the ten dioceses of *Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania* and in five of the seven dioceses of Kenya Mennonite Church. In many instances, bishops also lead the seminars; such was the case in the Mwanza Diocese of Tanzania, where Bishop Albert Randa taught a course on church polity to candidates for ordination.

The program is having a strong impact on the churches because the curriculum is designed to directly address pastors’ gaps in biblical and denominational understanding. For example, leaders asked to have a class specifically on Mennonite distinctives. They were finding that many parishioners did not know what made Mennonites distinct from other denominations.

Another reason for the curriculum’s impact is the Bontragers’ mode of instruction. African teaching is often based on lectures and rote learning, but the Bontragers want to emphasize personal processing, reflection and open discussion. The study material is not focused on simply transferring information, but rather on creating dialogue about how to apply the material.

Church leaders believe these trainings will make



Bishop Albert Randa of the Mwanza Diocese of *Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania* teaches church polity to candidates for ordination. Photo courtesy of Joe and Gloria Bontrager/Eastern Mennonite Missions

Hermanos en Cristo of Nicaragua celebrate fiftieth anniversary



Managua, Nicaragua – The *Asociación Misión Evangélica de los Hermanos en Cristo en Nicaragua* (Brethren in Christ Church in Nicaragua) celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on 7 March 2015 with a daylong celebration. The event included the display of many banners commemorating this milestone in the life of the Nicaraguan church (above).

leadership training for pastors accessible and affordable, allowing emerging leaders to maintain home and family responsibilities. They are also beginning to see the trainings bear fruit as students share what they have learned with others.

– Adapted from an article by Chris Fretz and Amanda Miller, *Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM)*

French Mennonites respond to Charlie Hebdo attack

Ingersheim, France – The *Association des Églises Évangéliques Mennonites de France* (Association of French Mennonite Churches) is committed to “practicing

good” in the wake of the recent terrorists attacks against the journalists of *Charlie Hebdo* magazine, the police officers and the Jewish citizens in Paris.

In a statement released in January 2015, the conference stated that in the wake of the attacks “Christians and churches are called to respond in the manner of their Lord. To hatred, Jesus responded with love; to violence with non-violence; to those excluded, he reached out; to massacres, he called to conversion.”

“It is Jesus’ way of acting that should guide us and incite us to respond to evil by practicing good,” the statement added. The statement also noted the church’s prayers for “those who died . . . [and] their families and close friends.”

“We are in mourning,” the statement concluded. But it also added, “Let us take initiatives to go towards those who feel excluded, especially youth, may we dialogue with our Jewish and Muslim compatriots so as to learn how to truly live together.”

“In the present situation, all churches and all Christians are called in a new way to be peacemakers and to work for justice.”

– Based on a statement by the president of the *Association des Églises Évangéliques Mennonites de France*



Edgardo Sánchez

Mennonite World Conference and Argentinian church mourn death of leader

Bogotá, Colombia – Mennonite World Conference mourns the death of Edgardo Sánchez, a leader in *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Argentina* (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Argentina), who died in a car accident while travelling to his home in Neuquén, Argentina, on Easter morning, 5 April 2015.

Sánchez was also a member of the MWC Executive Committee since 2009, and represented his church on the MWC General Council.

According to reports, Sánchez and his daughter were involved in an accident while travelling home to Neuquén from meetings in Buenos Aires. Both were taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital. Sánchez died several hours later from accident injuries. His daughter survived and was released from the hospital.

Sánchez, age 52, was a pastor and principal of *Fundación Vida* (Foundation of Life) school in Neuquén. His funeral was held 6 April. He is survived by his wife Erica and three children.

“We stand with the family in their loss and grief,” wrote Danisa Ndlovu, MWC president. “This is also a big loss as a family of faith, more so as we look forward with great anticipation to meet [for the July 2015 Assembly] in Pennsylvania.”

Arli Klassen named MWC coordinator of regional representatives

Bogotá, Colombia – Arli Klassen has been named coordinator of regional representatives for Mennonite World Conference, effective 1 July 2015.

In this new half-time role, Klassen will work closely with the MWC regional representatives in various continental regions, including North America, Europe, Africa and Asia. She will also continue to serve MWC as chief development officer, a role she has held since October 2012.

“Arli is the best person to fulfill this role for MWC,” said General Secretary César García. “She has considerable leadership and international experience in multiple roles with Mennonite Central Committee, and as a social worker in other organizations. I am very pleased to have Arli joining us in this adventure of building a global community.”

– Devin Manzullo-Thomas



Arli Klassen, newly appointed MWC coordinator of regional representatives



Additional evening speakers at PA 2015 include César García (left), MWC general secretary from Colombia, and Wieteke van der Molen (right), a pastor from the Netherlands.



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pastors a small rural Mennonite congregation north of Amsterdam.

Finally, on Saturday, 25 July, Bruxy Cavey of Canada will talk about “Walking in Receiving and Giving.” Bruxy is the teaching pastor of The Meeting House, one of Canada’s largest and most innovative churches.

For more information about PA 2015, visit the MWC website at mwc-cmm.org/pa2015

– Phyllis Pellman Good

Part-time registration now available for Pennsylvania 2015

Akron, Pennsylvania, USA – Part-time registration is now available for Pennsylvania 2015, the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly slated for 21-26 July in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA, at the Farm Show Complex.

While encouraging everyone to attend the whole event, MWC leaders acknowledge that some people may not be able to participate for the whole time.

The daily rate for adult registrants from the Global North is \$120 per day (for the days of 22, 23, 24 or 25 July). That grants admission for the first event of the day – international singing beginning at 9:30 a.m. – through the end of the evening worship service at 8:30 p.m.

Part-time registrants may join in friendship groups, attend afternoon workshops and the art exhibit and participate in the Global Church Village and on-site sports activities. Parking or shuttle service is included in the fee.

But tours, service projects, the Anabaptist World Cup and Assembly Scattered are available only to those who register full time.

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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



Panamanian Mennonites share stories and concerns about the struggle for land rights. Photo by Henk Stenvers

• Pray for the *Iglesia Evangélica Unida Hermanos Menonitas de Panamá* (United Evangelical Church: Mennonite Brethren in Panama) as they continue to struggle over land rights. Their plight was shared with a MWC delegation that visited Panama in February 2015. As leaders shared, the church has been involved in a long struggle to have their legally established titles to ancestral land recognized and enforced. Despite existing constitutional guarantees of land ownership, the government is doing little to prevent illegal settlers from taking land, logging and selling trees – especially the cocobolo tree – and using the land for herding.

To read a prayer provided to the delegation by Mennonite Brethren in Panama church leaders, visit the MWC website at mwc-cmm.org/panamaprayer

• Pray urgently for the people of Nepal. On 25 April 2015 they experienced an earthquake of 7.8 on the Richter scale followed by many powerful aftershocks.

MWC has been in contact with its member church, Nepal BIC Church/Brethren in Community Welfare Society. On 27 April Shemal Hembrom, the General Secretary of the church, shared, “Most of our BIC Churches are in eastern Nepal and all our church members

are safe, but two people were injured in Kathmandu while running out of the church. Our church buildings and the homes of our believers have been affected. Please continue to pray for the grieving families and daily life.”

Hembrom also reported that the BIC Church plans to send a team of 15 to 20 volunteers to an area hardest hit by the quake, to provide 1,000 temporary tents, and to assist 4,000 victims with food and medicine for at least a month. They are also planning several reconstruction projects. Their total budget plan is \$225,000 to \$250,000. The church invites prayer for this project and the funds needed to complete it.

For more information on the quake and the response, visit the MWC website at mwc-cmm.org

• Give thanks to God for the continued ministry of the *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* (Colombia Mennonite Church), and its institutions *Justapaz* and *Mencoldes*, with conscientious objectors. A recent historical court ruling in Colombia has ordered the army to process requests for conscientious objection and to not deny exemption requests. It also establishes a strict timeline for the army to resolve said applications. Pray for the ongoing work of this ministry as there are still many barriers to the right of conscientious objection. Read more about this ruling and the work of the Colombia Mennonite Church and *Justapaz* at the MWC website (mwc-cmm.org).

Courier/Correo/Courrier (ISSN 1041-4436) is published six times a year. Twice a year, the newsletter is inserted into a 16-page magazine. Mennonite World Conference, Calle 28A No. 16-41 Piso 2, Bogotá, Colombia. Publication Office: Courier, 1251 Virginia Avenue, Harrisburg VA 22802-2434 USA. Periodical postage paid at Harrisburg VA. Printed in USA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Courier, 451B Pleasant Valley Road, Harrisburg VA 22801.

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/pa2015



Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly Update

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No meals are included in the daily rate, although food will be available for purchase throughout the Farm Show Complex each day. A one-day registration is transferrable to another person, but not to another day.

The part-time rate for children (ages 4-11) is \$50 per day and includes lunch, since the children will eat lunch together as part of their activities. The part-time rate for youth (ages 12-17) is also \$50 per day, but does not include lunch.

For full-time or part-time registration for PA 2015, go to www.mwc-cmm.org/pa2015

—Phyllis Pellman Good

PA 2015 to include art exhibits

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA – The arts will be featured in a variety of ways at PA 2015, the Mennonite World Conference Assembly to be held 21-26 July in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

A juried exhibit of contemporary artwork by artists of all ages and traditions will be held in a central gallery. The

juror will be Theodore Prescott, a sculptor and writer who taught previously at Messiah College (a Brethren in Christ school in Pennsylvania).

A second gallery of artwork will feature special collections related to the history of Anabaptists. The collections include: etchings from copper plates used in the production of the original *Martyr's Mirror*; Molly Kraybill's photos of 100 women from age 1 to 100; Howard Zehr's photos of lives of victims following criminal trauma; and artists from Community Mennonite Church in Lancaster depicting Lenten interpretations of the stations of the cross.

In a display in the top level of the Global Village Area, churches will share their banners, tapestries, art panels and other worship art pieces.

Further, during the gathering, art made by children in their own programs will be displayed in the Children's Arena.

In addition to these exhibits, there will be a number of workshops related to the arts.

For more information, visit the MWC website at mwc-cmm.org/mwc-arts

Courier Correo Courrier

Volume 30, Number 3

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