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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'Eglises Anabaptistes

News Briefs

Francophone Mennonites hold consultation on theological education

Kinshasa, DR Congo – The Francophone Mennonite Network, working under the auspices of Mennonite World Conference, attempts to foster relationships and projects among French-speaking Mennonites from three continents. The first consultation on theological education among francophone Mennonites was held at the *Centre Universitaire de Missiologie* in Kinshasa, 26-28 February. Forty-five participants came from nine different countries.

interdenominational Evangelical institutions.

The consultation had a number of components. First, participants were invited to get to know one another and their respective contexts in relation to theological education.

Second, the consultation featured three presentations on various topics: theological education in Congo, theological education and Muslim-Christian relations and theological education and Mennonite-Anabaptist identity throughout history.

Third, in response to the consultation discussions, a continuation committee and four working groups were put into place to explore different avenues of collaboration.



Mundedji Badia Ngundu (left) of DR Congo, presided at the final communion service of the consultation, assisted by Richard Lougheed of Canada and Max Wiedmer of Switzerland.

Informal conversations within the network have often focused on the importance of theological education in relation to Mennonite identity. However, no French-language Mennonite theological school currently offers the possibility of a seminary degree, and therefore many pastors, preachers and elders are trained in

Another consultation will be planned for 2016 somewhere in Africa. If possible, participants who will be at the MWC assembly in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA (July 2015) will plan a gathering.

– Neal Blough

Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly Update



Pennsylvania 2015 will offer Anabaptists from around the world an unparalleled opportunity for cross-cultural fellowship and worship. Photo by Merle Good

You are invited to Pennsylvania 2015!

The Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches of the United States warmly invite their sisters and brothers from all parts of the world to the next Mennonite World Conference Assembly, Pennsylvania 2015. The global event will be held 21-26 July 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

Pennsylvania 2015 will be a week of worship, fellowship and service with our community of faith from around the world. Everyone is welcome – interested members of congregations, leaders representing their churches, families with children and youth groups. (Young adults, ages 18+, are invited to attend the Global Youth Summit [GYS] from 17-19 July.)

For program details, and to register for Pennsylvania 2015 or GYS, go to mwc-cmm.org/pa2015. And to be part of the ongoing conversation about Assembly, go to facebook.com/MennoniteWorldConference

Why attend?

- The music will be heavenly. Each day will begin with singing, led by a multinational worship team.
- Each morning one of MWC's four Commissions will present a meditation, and a young adult will respond. Afterwards, everyone attending will join a small, multicultural group for fellowship and discussion of the morning's theme.
- Afternoons will be filled with workshops, service opportunities, local tours, sports activities and performances and exhibits in the Global Church Village.
- Each continent will contribute to each evening worship service, with testimonies, singing, prayer and times of encouragement.
- Pennsylvania 2015 will be a taste of heaven as we worship together in many languages and cultures, an experience that none of us can fully replicate in our own congregations.

Catholic and Mennonites collaborate on church building restoration

Kitchener, Ontario, Canada – In Ukraine a former Mennonite church building is being restored and transformed – with the help of Canadian Mennonites – into a Greek Catholic church.

This development, according to observers, is an example of Mennonite-Catholic collaboration in the spirit of other exchanges over the past decade or so.

former Schoensee church “is the fruit of the renewal of the Catholic Church in Ukraine.” Snyder Belousek is executive director of Bridgefolk, a North American-based movement of Mennonites and Catholics with an annual gathering to learn from each other’s traditions.

He further pointed out “a parallel of sorts” between the experience of Ukrainian Catholics and that of Russian Mennonites. The former lost their churches, had no legal protection and survived as an underground church during the Soviet era. Russian Mennonites also were not officially



The partially restored sanctuary of the former Schoensee Mennonite Church, now a Greek Catholic Church. Photo courtesy of George Dyck

The Mennonite church in the former village of Schoensee (now Snegurovka) was originally built in 1909. During the post-October 1917 revolution Soviet era, when Mennonites were forced to leave, the church building was used for storage and then fell into disrepair.

Recently the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine secured ownership of the building and a retired Catholic priest from the Czech Republic, Father Peter Trenzky, is giving leadership to the restoration as well as to the congregation, which has started to worship in the building.

In learning about the restoration project, individuals associated with the Mennonite Centre in nearby Molochansk (formerly Halbstad) offered to help. The Centre was established in 2001 in the former Mennonite Girls’ School (*Maedchenschule*) to provide a range of community services.

According to Darrin Snyder Belousek, the renovation of the

recognized by the Soviets and assimilated with the Baptists.

“Both churches faced repression under similar circumstances from the same oppressor,” commented Snyder Belousek, “and had to make costly choices to keep faithful.”

Bridgefolk was formed shortly after the start of the 1998-2003 International Mennonite-Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue organized by Mennonite World Conference and the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

For more on this collaboration, including more images of the church, visit the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org

– Ron Rempel

New Anabaptist conference emerges in South Korea

Seoul, South Korea – A new conference of Anabaptist

congregations has emerged in South Korea.

The Korea Anabaptist Fellowship (KAF), formed in 2010, became an official conference of eight congregations and an associate member church of Mennonite World Conference earlier this year. The decision was finalized at the fellowship’s May 2014 meeting, held at the Peace and Joy Church in Nonsan, South Korea. At that meeting, Namshik Chon and Sang-Uk Nham were elected as the president and the contact person for the new conference, respectively.

According to Nham, the formation of this new conference follows several years of church growth among South Korean Anabaptists. The oldest Anabaptist community in South Korea, Jesus Village Church, began in 1996. Since then, it has planted three new congregations. At the same time, numerous South Korean pastors and seminary students discovered Anabaptism through their studies and through books published by Korea Anabaptist Center and Daejang-gan Publishing Co., two initiatives of South Korean Anabaptists, and as a result established churches in the country. More recently, in 2013, two Anabaptist congregations took root through church planting partnerships with the Pacific Southwest Conference of Mennonite Church USA.

Amid this growing interest in Anabaptism, reports Nham, KAF was founded “to promote Anabaptist church planting in Korea [and] to help and facilitate the practice of Anabaptist perspectives in members’ Christian faith.” The growth

of the fellowship ultimately led to its establishment as a conference.

“Forming a conference is a small step,” adds Nham. “But this step will lead us a higher stage, where we can work together with many churches interested in Anabaptism, and where we can promote new church planting and mutual caring among members with a proper level of protection and accountability. In this stage, we will be a light of hope, full of joy, to minister to others.”

– Devin Manzullo-Thomas

Burkina Faso church experiences ‘explosion of baptisms’

Elkhart, Indiana, USA / Burkina Faso – Recent baptisms have swelled the membership of *Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso* (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso) by 34 percent, according to recent reports by Mennonite Mission Network and Siaka Traoré, national president of the Burkina Faso church.

“I cannot explain [this wave of interest, other than to say] that I believe God wants to grow the church,” Traoré said.

In July 2013, the church reported a membership of 420. By the end of April 2014, the total membership was 563. Of the new members, 44 were baptized in the weeks around Christmas. And in the three Sundays surrounding Easter, 63 were baptized in five different congregations.

“I’m blown away by this explosion of baptisms,”

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Lydie Yougbaré emerges from her baptism and into the fellowship of the Bobo Dioulasso congregation of *Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso* (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso). Photo by Frank Nacanabo/MMN

“What do you love about MWC?”

MWC staffers describe their favourite things about our global fellowship.

Lynn Roth

North American Representative
Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA



“MWC provides me with the opportunity to learn to be a more faithful disciple of Christ and to appreciate all

the gifts of the global Anabaptist church. This happens as I learn about the joys, challenges and faithful responses of my worldwide and North American Anabaptist brothers and sisters.”

Sarah Cain

Administrative Assistant
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada



“I love the way MWC connects people from all over the world and shares their stories. I love hearing about

the work being done through the Global Church Sharing Fund and seeing how it helps congregations from all over the world. I love knowing that while our struggles may be different, we all love and worship the same God and are living for him.”

John D. Roth

Secretary, Faith and Life Commission
Goshen, Indiana, USA



“MWC offers a constant reminder that the Body of Christ is truly international. I love the fact that the Anabaptist-Mennonite

seed has taken root in cultures far beyond Europe and North America.”

Commissions updates

The four MWC Commissions support and extend the work of our global communion between and beyond the assemblies.

The Commissions have been described as the four chambers of one heart, which seeks to link the worldwide community of Anabaptist-related churches for fellowship, worship, service and witness.

In March 2014, the four MWC Commissions met for a rare face-to-face meeting in Schoorl, Netherlands. (Most of their work is done online.) Here are a few short glimpses into their work during those meetings.



Leaders of the MWC Commissions (from left): Richard Showalter (chair, Mission), Alfred Neufeld (chair, Faith and Life), Paulus Widjaja (chair, Peace), Rafael Zaracho (secretary, Mission), John Roth (secretary, Faith and Life), Robert J. Suderman (secretary, Peace), Henk Stenvers (secretary, Deacons) and Cynthia Peacock (chair, Deacons)

Mission Commission

The Mission Commission is drafting an Anabaptist theology of mission. The draft will be presented to the Global Anabaptist Service Network and Global Mission Fellowship, both of which function under the umbrella of the Mission Commission, for review. Finally, the document will be presented to the MWC General Council for approval and adoption.

Faith and Life Commission

In partnership with the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) and the Mennonite Education Agency of Mennonite Church USA, the Faith and Life Commission is planning to convene a “Global Educators Conference” at the 2015 Assembly in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

Additionally, in its ecumenical involvements, the commission

is exploring ways to promote the results of the MWC dialogue with Seventh-day Adventists in local congregations.

Deacons Commission

The Deacons Commission re-affirmed the regular rotation of Koinonia delegations to Latin America, Africa and Asia, respectively. This plan had been affirmed at an earlier meeting, but its implementation has been delayed by logistical problems and more pressing visits. The commission hopes to put this rotation into place after making decisions about the size of delegations and the financing of visits.

Churches.” One resource already in place is “Guidelines for Involvement in Member-Church Conflict,” available online (www.mwc-cmm.org) in English, Spanish and French. The commission is currently revising “Reconciling Our Perspectives, Restoring Our Relationships: Dialogue and Understanding Within Mennonite World Conference,” which provides guidelines for dealing with interpersonal and inter-group conflict within the MWC community.

For a full report on the recent Commissions meetings, visit the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org

Fellowship and dialogue shape MWC Executive Committee meeting

Soacha, Colombia – Tears flowed freely as a Mennonite World Conference delegation of international visitors exchanged stories and blessings with members of *Iglesia Menonita de la resurrección* (Mennonite Church of the Resurrection) in Soacha, Colombia on 18 May 2014.

The delegation, with persons from around 18 countries, was en route to Bogotá from a Catholic retreat centre in Fusagasugá, where they had met for five days. The meetings included the Executive Committee, the YABs (Young Anabaptists) Committee, a representative from each commission and some MWC staff.

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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

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Members of the Soacha congregation shared stories about their ministry with persons displaced by violence in their communities. They sang. They danced. They shared food with the delegation in their street-level facility called *Comedor pan y vida* (literally, dining room or cafeteria for bread and life).

They extended their hands in blessing to the international visitors who responded with their own stories that resonated with those they had heard.

“Thank you so much for coming,” exclaimed Adaia Bernal, leader of the Soacha congregation. “Don’t lose contact with the umbilical cord to the base communities that make up the church.”

Networking challenge

The ongoing challenge of helping to connect Anabaptist-related communities around the world was high on the agenda during the Executive Committee meeting. To increase its own capacity to build relationships globally, the committee began its meetings with a training session on intercultural competence.

and the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Deutschland* (Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Germany).

Upon affirmation of this decision by the MWC General Council, the total MWC membership will be 103 national churches in 57 countries with about 1.3 million baptized members.

World Fellowship Sunday and the one lunch offering

To help fund its networking ministry, MWC requests a “fair share” contribution from member churches on each continent. Every member church contribution is linked to its capacity to give, based on its relative wealth and relative size, and all contributions are valued.

MWC leadership is promoting the idea of inviting congregational members to annually donate the equivalent of what one lunch would cost in their context.

MWC already promotes World Fellowship Sunday each January, an invitation for Anabaptist churches all over the world to celebrate the global Anabaptist communion. Some

congregations already hold an offering for MWC on World Fellowship Sunday.

Whether fasting together, eating together, or offering together, the gift of the local value of one lunch per member on World Fellowship Sunday is an easy way for the global community to take shared responsibility for its life together.

– Ron Rempel



• Pray for Sang-Min Lee (pictured above), the first Mennonite conscientious objector (CO) in South Korea. He was recently sentenced to 18 months in prison for refusing, on the basis on his faith, to complete his mandatory military service. Pray for peace and joy for Sang-Min and for his parents. His parents are Christians, but didn’t agree with his stance on the peace position, and thus rejected this

action by their son. Pray also for the Anabaptist churches in South Korea, which are few, but should come together with a unified voice on peace issues. Most Christians are very quiet on the CO issue because it requires political action that usually leads to conflict and division. We need much courage to step out of our comfort zone, to a faithful life that is risky but leads to abundant life in Christ.

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said Rod Hollinger-Janzen, executive coordinator of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, which works with the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso through a multi-member partnership council. “I feel great joy because these baptisms testify to the faithfulness of Mennonites in Burkina Faso, who, day after day, act with kindness toward their neighbors and bear witness in a compelling way, so that people say, ‘I want what they have.’”

According to Burkina Faso’s most recent government census (2006), more than 60 percent of the population practices Islam. Only four percent belong to a Protestant denomination.

In a context where Muslims make up the majority of the population, the decision to be

baptized is not to be taken lightly, as it may result in derision and even persecution. Traoré said that he rejoices when people count the cost and still want to be baptized into the Mennonite Church.

Preparation for baptism usually takes place over a three-month period and includes basic Bible knowledge; an understanding of church life; and instruction in evangelism, ethics, practical aspects of Christian living and Mennonite history. The church is in the process of standardizing a curriculum for baptismal candidates.

– Adapted from a news release by MMN, with additional reporting by Siaka Traoré



On Sunday 18 May 2014 the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations in Bogotá met for a joint worship service. On behalf of these churches, Peter Stucky (right) and Diego Martinez Muñoz (left) presented colourful hammocks as a gift to MWC President Danisa Ndlovu (second from right) and President-Elect Nelson Kraybill. Photo by Len Rempel

The committee accepted into MWC membership two national churches, the Brethren in Christ Church in South Africa

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