

June 2014
 Volume 29, 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

Latin American church leaders seek hope, shared identity

Guatemala City, Guatemala –

On 10-14 February, 137 Mennonite church leaders from 19 countries gathered for the *VII Consulta Anabautista Latinoamericana* (Seventh Consultation of Anabaptists in Latin America). Many in attendance were Mennonite World Conference member churches, and MWC had a major role in sponsoring and conducting the gathering.

Conversations and sessions at the consultation centred on the theme, “Toward a Ministry of Hope: Social Reality, Faith, Word and Pastoral Action.” In addition to energetic singing, lively worship, a wide range of plenary sessions and intense group discussions, the consultation marked a significant step forward in forging a stronger regional identity for Anabaptist-

Mennonite groups in Latin America.

According to several participants who were present at the very first consultation of Latin American church leaders in 1986, much has changed in the intervening years. “I was very impressed by the fact that all of the presenters were Spanish speakers, deeply rooted in a Latin American context and by the depth of theological teaching,” said Tomás Orjuela Gutierrez, president of the *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* (Mennonite Church of Colombia).

About half of the participants were women. A significant number of youth also attended.

Plenary addresses challenged participants to a renewed commitment to a Christ-centred view of the church as a movement responding to human needs rather than a theological abstraction, an institution or a personal project of a charismatic pastor.



After each presentation at the Consultation of Anabaptists in Latin America, participants divided into small groups to discuss the topic in greater detail. Members of this small group (clockwise, from bottom): Daniel Schipani (with hand lifted; USA/Argentina), Tomás Orjuela (Colombia), Carlos Moreno (Colombia), Jamie Pitts (USA), Martha Gomez (Colombia) and Karen Flores (Honduras). Photo by Luis Ma. Alman Bornes

MWC Commissions gather in Europe



Schoorl, Netherlands – Leaders and members of Mennonite World Conference’s four Commissions came together 19-24 March in Schoorl, Netherlands, for a series of joint meetings. Gathering at the Mennonite Conference Centre Doperaduyn – one of three retreat centres run by the *Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit* (Dutch Mennonite Church) – the approximately 50 participants devoted time to discussion, reflection, worship and strategic planning. Because each Commissions includes people from different parts of the world who don’t often meet face-to-face, the groups devoted the majority of their time to meeting independently. Two joint sessions were also held between the four Commissions. Morning sessions (such as the one pictured above) included a devotional time led by a Commission member; evening sessions involved prayer lead by a Commission officer. A more complete report on these meetings will be published in a future issue of *Courier News*. Photo by Liesa Unger

Several participants described the event as a landmark moment in an emerging Latin American Mennonite identity. César Montenegro, pastor of *Casa Horeb*, a Mennonite church in Guatemala, expressed appreciation for “the sheer fact of the gathering, and that so many groups were represented with a desire to share freely with each other.”

“The lectures, the small group discussions, the sessions, as well as informal conversations, guided brothers and sisters

in the challenges of thinking together on how to build committed faith communities in the different realities we live in our continent,” added Luis Ma. Alman Bornes, of the *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Argentina* (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Argentina)

At the close of the consultation, participants affirmed a set of Anabaptist convictions emerging out of the gathering. To read a complete list of the affirmations, visit the

Continued on page ii



Participants in the Trilateral Dialogue Commission at work (left to right): Kenneth Mtata (Lutheran, Zimbabwe/Switzerland), Sarah Hinlicky-Wilson (Lutheran, France/USA), Rebecca Osiro (Mennonite, Kenya), William Hein (Catholic, Italy/USA). Photo by Eleanor Miller

Continued from page i

MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org

The consultation was sponsored by Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite World Conference and the *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Guatemala* (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Guatemala), with the primary organization leadership coming from the *Seminario Anabautista Latinoamericano* (Anabaptist Seminary of Latin America, or SEMILLA).

— Adapted from articles by John D. Roth and Luis Ma. Alman Bornes

Mennonites, Catholics and Lutherans hold second round of dialogue on baptism

Strasbourg, France – The Trilateral (Catholic, Lutheran, Mennonite) Dialogue Commission on Baptism met for its second meeting on 26-31 January. The general topic of the dialogue, which is to extend over four years, is “Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church.” The theme for this year was “Baptism: God’s Grace in Christ and Human Sin.”

“We are all trying to rethink the issues in terms of the 21st century, not only the 16th century,” noted John Rempel of Canada, a Mennonite World Conference delegate to the dialogue.

Mennonite participants who presented papers on this year’s theme were Alfred Neufeld of Paraguay and Fernando Enns of Germany. Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga of Colombia and Gregory Fairbanks of

the United States and the Vatican presented papers from a Catholic perspective. And Friederike Nüssel of Germany presented a paper from a Lutheran perspective.

According to a joint release, the commission also continued to study the baptismal rites of each participating Christian tradition, with special attention in this meeting to the Lutheran tradition, particularly regarding the contextualization of baptismal rites in the African region. The commission began its working days with prayers and joint reflections on biblical texts relating to baptism. The meeting was hosted by the Lutheran World Federation and took place at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg.

In addition to those mentioned above, Mennonite participants included Rebecca Osiro of Kenya and Larry Miller of France.

The third meeting of the trilateral commission will take place in February 2015 in the Netherlands, hosted by Mennonite World Conference, and discuss the theme “Baptism: Communicating Grace and Faith.”

MWC leader calls for ‘mission from below’ at annual consultation

Chicago, Illinois, USA – At the annual consultation of the Council of International Anabaptist Ministries (CIM), Mennonite World Conference general secretary César García posed a provocative question: “What would happen if, following the example of monastic orders, there would

be a ‘vow of poverty’ in multicultural mission teams for everyone?”

The question focused one of his proposals for how North American mission agencies might respond to shifting global realities.

García’s proposal arose from the reality that some cooperative efforts between North American and Global South agencies have failed in the past due a significant financial disparity between members of the same team.

“An Anabaptist emphasis on simplicity as a requirement for each member of the team regardless of the country of origin could help us to avoid many problems,” he said.

This call for a new style of missionary presence – also



César García, MWC general secretary

referred to as “mission from below” – capped several presentations by García at the CIM consultation, which brought together representatives from North American mission and service agencies.

The theme for the day was: What is the place of the North American mission agency amidst shifting realities in the global context? The consultation this year was held in part as preparation for the next MWC Assembly scheduled for 21-26 July 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

According to Stanley Green, executive director of Mennonite Mission Network and one of the organizers of the consultation, “The global shifts that are impacting all of us call for what I would refer to as ‘Third Way mission’ which moves beyond imperialism on the one hand, and the abandonment of our mission calling on the other, to an engagement with our global partners that is characterized by mutuality and interdependence.”

For more on the consultation, and to read a complete transcript of García’s comments, visit the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org

Indian women theologians gather for first time

Bhilai, India – The first-ever gathering of Theologically Trained Anabaptist Women in India (TTAWI) was held 3-5 January at the Mennonite Church in Bhilai, marking a milestone in the history of Anabaptist churches in India.

According to a report by TTAWI organizers, women in India have long had a desire to form such an association. But that vision became a reality only recently, through a series of meetings in cooperation with

Continued on page iv

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
- 28A No.16-41 Piso 2, Bogotá, Colombia
- 8 rue du Fossé des Treize, 67000 Strasbourg, France

Financial snapshots

This update offers a year-end look at Mennonite World Conference finances in 2013.

Unrestricted Core Revenue

In 2013, MWC's global revenue for our core unrestricted activities came to \$843,671. This total is a 10 percent decrease from 2012. In other words, giving for core activities from both churches and from individuals declined in 2013. We relied on our reserves to make up for the decline in core contributions, but this is not a long-term solution. MWC is looking for new means by which to increase core revenues in future years.

Unrestricted Core Expenses

In 2013, MWC's core expenses came to \$840,780 – a 10 percent decrease compared to 2012. Given that our core mission is to facilitate and support the global Anabaptist community, a major expense is the salaries of 15 full- and part-time staff who help to accomplish this. Another significant expense relates to communication tools – tools we use to build up the community of faith around the world.

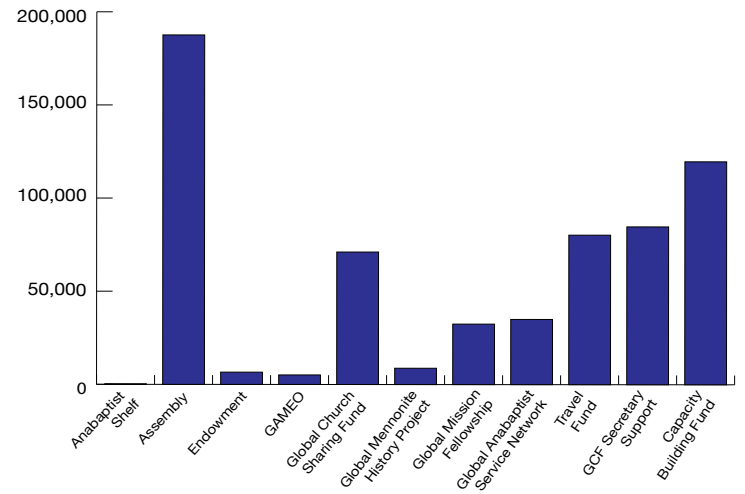
Restricted Funds

During 2013, MWC received more than \$600,000 in contributions specifically designated for one of our restricted funds. Included in this total giving was \$187,603 given in support of the Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly. In addition, MWC received a special gift of \$119,696; the monies were put into the MWC Capacity Building Fund, which will allow MWC to undertake some new initiatives and help extend and grow its mission with the global church.

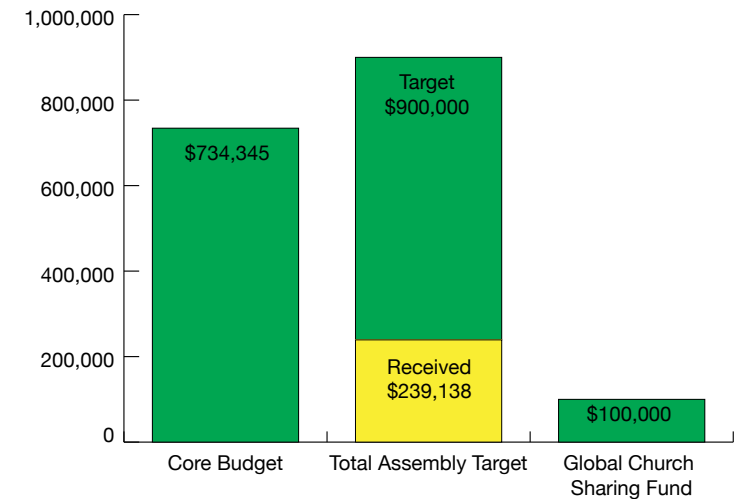
2014 Fundraising Targets

In this year leading up to Pennsylvania 2015, we hope that contributions will stay strong for our core activities, even while enthusiasm and funds are raised for the Assembly. We are seeking contributions of \$734,345 for our core activities, and \$100,000 for the Global Church Sharing Fund, along with the \$660,000 that are still needed for the Assembly. Please consider how you can support our global church community in 2014.

2013 Restricted Fund Contributions

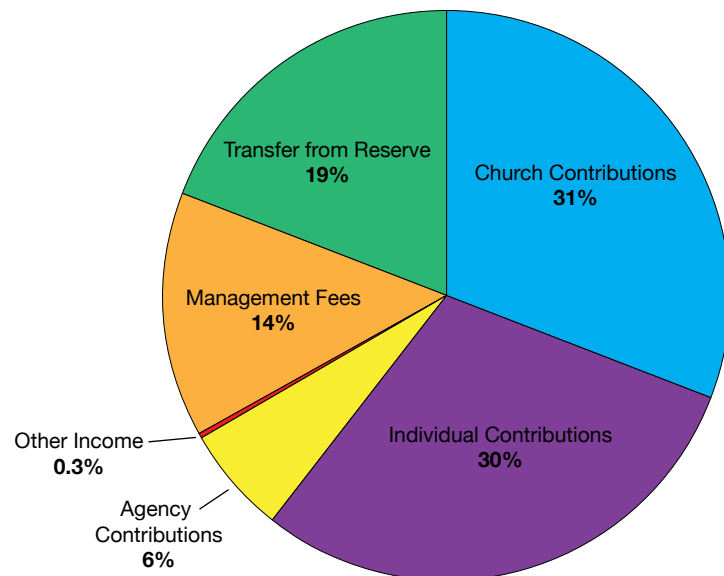


2014 Fundraising Targets



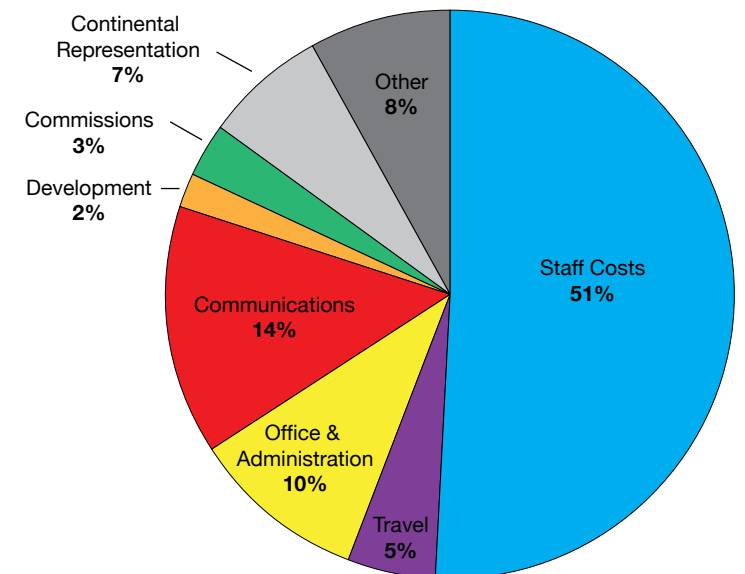
2013 Unrestricted Core Revenue

Total Funds: \$843,671



2013 Unrestricted Core Expenses

Total Funds: \$840,780





Participants in the 2012 Bearing Witness Stories Project consultation at Goshen College, Indiana, USA. Photo by Kaeli Evans/Goshen College

Website collects and shares stories of 'costly discipleship'

For centuries, *Martyr's Mirror* – Dutch Anabaptist Thieleman van Braght's 1685 collection of martyr stories – has been the main source for Anabaptist stories of costly discipleship. But a new initiative, initiated by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA) at Goshen College (Goshen, Indiana, USA), seeks to expand beyond these original tales.

While *Martyr's Mirror* remains inspiring and relevant, it does not include the testimonies of the Anabaptists who have also suffered for their faith in the years since 1685. Building on the spiritual legacy of *Martyr's Mirror*, ISGA's Bearing Witness Stories Project has begun to gather and circulate these stories of costly discipleship within the Anabaptist global communion, extending from the 1500s to the present.

Many of these stories are now available online at www.martyrstories.org, a new website sponsored by the ISGA.

The Bearing Witness project aims to encourage faithfulness to the way of Jesus, while also strengthening relationships within the global Anabaptist church. Though initiated by ISGA, the project was endorsed by Mennonite World Conference in 2012 and is a collaborative effort led by a steering committee that

includes representatives from six different Anabaptist groups worldwide. The idea germinated during a consultation at Goshen in 2012, which included 40 people from over nine different countries (representing at least six Anabaptist communities).

At the website, visitors can read a variety of stories from different continents and church communities. They can also submit stories via the "Share a Story" form on the site.

John D. Roth, director of the ISGA and secretary of the MWC Faith and Life Commission, wants the site to be helpful to those in the Anabaptist tradition: "I hope that the site could become a useful resource for teachers at church-related schools, pastors, perhaps individuals looking for weekly devotional material," he said.

– Adapted from a release by Elizabeth Miller, Goshen College

Celebrating Peace Sunday 2014

Every year, MWC member churches are invited to observe Peace Sunday on or near 21 September (International Day of Peace). Beginning in May, MWC will circulate worship materials for churches to use in their celebration. The 2014 materials focus on the theme "Prayer and Praise: The Spirituality of Peace." This year's material was prepared by the Brethren in Christ Church in Nepal. It reflects many years of struggle and persecution, and the lessons, perspectives, and images that have helped them through very difficult times.

Please consider joining together with brothers and sisters in the global Anabaptist church family to observe Peace Sunday this year.

- Pray for the GKMI churches in Indonesia who are dealing with the effects of a 14 February volcano eruption on Mount Kelud on the island of Java. The impact is "quite huge," according to Adhi Dharma, the general secretary of the GKMI, an MWC member church.

- Praise God for the 22 women – from Tanzania, Kenya, Congo, South Africa, India, Korea, Paraguay, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico – who received the International Women's Fund scholarships awarded by Mennonite Women USA (MW USA) for 2014. These women are all studying theology and church leadership in local Bible schools, colleges, or universities, to prepare for pastoral leadership, teaching, and pastoral care in their communities. MW USA annually awards \$10,000 to be divided

among women who are referred by local church leaders. These scholarship funds have assisted more than 80 women over the past 15 years. Graduates have gone on to serve in significant leadership roles in their congregations, conferences, and internationally, with organizations like MWC.

- Pray for Swiss Mennonites as they campaign against proposed government legislation that would ease restrictions on arms exports from their country. The Anabaptist Forum for Peace and Justice, a working group of the Conférence Mennonite Suisse (Swiss Mennonite Conference), has urged member congregations to participate in a postcard campaign against the proposal from Parliament's Defense Committee.

News Briefs

Continued from page ii

the Mennonite Christian Service and Fellowship of India (MCSFI) and All-India Mennonite Women (AIMW). In 2012, the TTAWI was inaugurated in the triennial conference of the AIMW.

In this first gathering, around 20 theologically trained women participated from almost all the eight constituencies of the Mennonite church in India. The theme of the gathering was "Streams of Living Water" (Song of Solomon 4:15). Resource persons helped to uncover what it means to be streams of living water in the church, society and the home. The presentations highlighted that Jesus is the Living Water and those who are in him become sources of living water to quench the thirsts of the needy, oppressed and suffering.

The gathering also included two special sessions: one on

Anabaptist distinctives, which sought to help participants understand their tradition's theological roots, and a second on violence against women in the home, society and church.

This first gathering also saw the election and the formation of the executive committee of TTAWI. Leaders include Rechal Bagh as president, Archana Netam and Suja Phinehas as joint secretaries and Elizabeth Kunjam as treasurer.

"We praise God that theologically trained women in India are united now and have a platform which will further sustain them in their continuing education, spiritual life and contribution to the life of the church," said Rechal Bagh in her report on the event.

– Adapted from a report by Rechal Bagh

Courier/Correo/Courier (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, Harrisonburg VA 22802-2434 USA. Periodical postage paid at Harrisonburg VA. Printed in USA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Courier, 1251 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg VA 22802.

News Notices Newsletter
Courier/Correo/Courier

Mennonite World Conference | European Mennonite Conference | Mennonite World Conference | Mennonite World Conference

Volume 29, Number 3

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Courier News is available on request. Send all correspondence to: MWC, Calle 28A No. 16-41 Piso 2, Bogotá, Colombia.

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