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2011/ 1

Conférence Mennonite Mondiale • Mennonite World Conference • Congreso Mundial Menonita

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Reflections on the Global Anabaptist Service  
Consultation, 2010



Elizabeth Soto Albrecht preaches on Mark 10:35-45 at the Friday evening service of Assembly 15 in Asunción, Paraguay in July 2009. Photo by Lowell Brown

# *The gospel made flesh*

by Elizabeth Soto Albrecht

One of the most important teachings of the Gospel of Mark is the cost of discipleship, especially as it relates to the call to service. The story I have been asked to interpret reveals a particular dimension of service with which we do not often deal. Mark 10:35-45 sheds light on the internal struggles related to service. We shall study the text and then come back to our present reality, identifying those struggles and blessings.

Earlier in Mark 10, Jesus recognizes the humiliation suffered by the wife whose husband has divorced her. Next, Jesus blesses the boys and girls, ignoring the objections of his own disciples. Then we find the call to the rich young man who is unable to give up his possessions. Finally, we come to the texts that

announce Jesus' death. All these events, which appear prior to our text, have a great deal to do with the theme of Christ's service. The cost of discipleship is being determined.

Now, we listen to the absurd request of James and John. They have made this request, perhaps taking advantage of the fact that they are alone with their friend Jesus. As brothers, they divide the powers between themselves very well—one on the right and the other on the left. They consider it proper to request rights from a king. Jesus responds like a king, stating the requirements: to drink from his cup

and to receive the same baptism as his. It is clear that John and James are willing to do so, but then Jesus acknowledges that he does not have the authority to grant that request.

When the other disciples hear of this absurd request, they become indignant. Might they have been angry because James and John had beaten them to a request that they too were entitled to make? The power struggle begins and Jesus responds by indicating that the kingdom he has come to announce is not like the kingdoms of the Gentiles, such as the Roman Empire, where kings reign

*Courier / Correo / Courrier* (ISSN 1041-4436) is published quarterly by Mennonite World Conference, 8, rue du Fossé des Treize, 67000 Strasbourg, France. Publication office: *Courier*, 616 Walnut Avenue, Scottdale, PA 15683-1999, USA. Periodical postage paid at Scottdale, PA. Printed in USA.

**POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Courier*, 616 Walnut Ave., Scottdale, PA 15683**

over their subjects. "It should not be like this among you," Jesus says. "Whoever wants to be the first among you must become the servant of all" (v.43).

**W**hile others worry about being first, about who will be on the right and on the left, Jesus is concerned about serving, about reaching out to those who are despised. This is a gesture of solidarity by Jesus, first of all identifying with them, for Jesus knows how it feels to be treated as inferior. The act of serving not only means extending one's hand to the downfallen, but also becoming equal with them, taking on their struggles as one's very own. This is what it means for the gospel to become flesh.

I wonder how our Anabaptist ancestors would interpret the story in Mark. I can see a historic parallel between James and John, who were vying for power, and the Protestant religious traditions that arose in the sixteenth century. The Zurich Reformers were protected by the city government. But the radical Anabaptists resisted that temptation; their only protection was the teaching of Christ in the Gospels. The majority were peasants who were hungry and thirsty for justice, and for the liberating truth of God. As they fled, they took in people oppressed by the feudal system of their time.

In her essay, "The Spirituality of Service," Susan Classen makes a necessary distinction between the theology of service, which emphasizes doing, and the spirituality of service, which emphasizes being. She says: "The spirituality of service reminds us that our starting point is not the action itself (the ministry, project, activity or event), but rather the act of serving is a result of living connected with God, the Fountain of our love." As we serve, we are confronted with our own ego, revealing what is false and what is true within us. Susan concludes, "Service is based on giving freely and receiving freely."

Mark 10 ends with the story of Bartimeus, the blind man who, in contrast to the disciples, only needs to see in order to keep on living. The gospel

tells us that Bartimeus received what he wanted, and then in verse 52, "after he was healed he followed Jesus along the road." He is the only one in Mark 10 who receives what he asks for.

In my opinion, the early Anabaptists could see Jesus and recognized the truth; they were the Bartimeus of their time. They were like the women, rejected and used by the feudal system; they were also like the boys and girls who in that age had no worth at all. They knew that Jesus came for them, to serve them, to give them dignity, to empower them; not to be superior or better than others but rather to become bearers of the values of the kingdom of God.

But I offer a word of caution: As Anabaptists, we should not cling to service in order to obtain God's favor. Even service can become a way of competing and obtaining recognition. Instead, we are called to serve like Jesus. This means restoring people's lives; taking the risk of losing what little one has left; giving life to others even though it might cost one's own life.

It means that the proud become more humble, and the humble become more confident. When service is truly authentic, the person who gives and the person who receives are both transformed by the grace of God; the roles of the receiver and of the giver are reversed.

**A**n Anabaptist pastor is aware that he or she is a servant of the congregation. A pastor's spirit of service is recognized as part of his or her calling, because it is through service to others that one finds oneself. As we serve we confront our own fears, faults and defects; it is where we truly test what we believe in and where other concepts emerge, helping to shape us along the way.

As chaplain at the General Hospital in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, I provide pastoral service. I have found that God is present as I serve the neediest, as I share the pain of a father who has lost an adolescent son; of a mother who has lost her third pregnancy and knows she will not become the mother she had yearned to be.

As a pastor I have learned that God

does not bestow power on those who seek power as John and James did, who seek to enter into the life of praise and recognition. Rather, God gives us new eyes to see as Bartimeus saw. We see that the call to serve does not mean solving other people's problems. When we give bread to someone who is hungry, we enter into his or her life and we understand reasons for the hunger. To serve means entering into other people's lives just as Jesus entered into Bartimeus' life.

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*In this issue, Courier-Correo-Courier continues a series of articles adapted from the sermons and Bible studies at Assembly 15, meeting under the theme, "Come together in the way of Jesus Christ." The sermon by Elizabeth Soto Albrecht (these pages) and the Bible study by Jenny Neme (pages 4 -5) were both on the sub-theme, "Serving Like Christ."*

*Cover: Pascal Kulungu (right), director of Congo's Centre pour la Construction de la Paix, Leadership et Bonne Gouvernance (Centre for Building Peace, Leadership and Good Governance), makes a point at a breakout group at the Global Anabaptist Service Consultation, August 6 to 9, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Beside him is Janet Plenert (left) of Mennonite Church Canada Witness.*

Photo : J. Lorne Peachey

# Serving the world by calling for justice

by Jenny Neme

**W**e live in days of upheaval, poverty and natural disasters. The words spoken in Isaiah 58:1-12 are not only relevant to these times, but also to the people we represent in the Mennonite World Conference. In this study, I would like to paraphrase God's words to Isaiah and invite you to make these words your own. Imagine God speaking to you—pastor, leader, young person, woman, man. Imagine that these words are for your people, for Africa, Asia, America and Europe, for the whole world.

1. *God said to Isaiah* (verse 1): There exists a relationship between God and Isaiah. For a relationship to exist there must be prior communication and mutual knowledge. God knows Isaiah's capabilities and his degree of influence over the people of Israel. Aware of this, God prompts Isaiah to act.

2. *Shout it aloud; do not hold back* (verse 1). God urges Isaiah to denounce sin in such a forceful way as to have an impact on the people. Isaiah is to identify the injustices suffered by the people and to call the oppressors to responsibility. He must also confront those who should be acting justly but are not doing so.

God is calling believers today, too, to speak up whenever acts are committed which infringe upon human dignity. As churches, how much time do we spend discussing what is happening in society, why these things occur and who is responsible? God warns Isaiah that these actions will cause fear, and that he himself will experience fear. But fear of what? Fear of being branded a crazy person, of being ignored? Of being killed? Alternatively, could it be a fear that people will actually change? Despite the presence of fear, God invites Isaiah—and each of us—not to become paralyzed by fear. God encourages us to realize that our fear is real and yet to have confidence in the Almighty God, placing our protection in his hands.

3. *Confront my people (the people of Israel)* (verse 1b). What is meant by *confront*? By action or omission, people are mutually responsible for what is happening and this responsibility must be owned. God urges us to understand the problems of our times, to see and understand the pain of our brothers and sisters and then to be creative in educating people regarding what is wrong, and thus to bring about real change.

4. *People will question God* (verse 3a). "Why have we fasted if God has not seen it?" Sometimes we believe that God does not see what we do or don't do. Sometimes churches in my country eventually become aware of injustice, but only when it appears on their doorstep—when legal or illegal armed groups have killed a pastor or when young people have been recruited to fight, or when families of their churches have been displaced from their home towns because of threats by armed agents. Only then do they become aware of the need for the "true fasting" which God desires of us.

5. *Your prayers and requests do not match what you do* (verses 2 and 3b). On the one hand, we plead for compassion, we ask for better laws and better living conditions, but on the other hand we do not carry out rightly what is within our reach. We mistreat our brothers and sisters, we quarrel at home and we make unfair decisions in church.

6. *This is not the kind of fasting that pleases me* (verse 5). God tells Isaiah that the people's religious practice is not what God has chosen for them. God is categorical in

telling Isaiah that the people are mistaken. Instead, this is what God wants:

Justice must be put into practice, and the people must seek justice (verse 6). God clearly defines where injustice lies, mentioning specifically those who are unjustly imprisoned, slaves, and others who are mistreated. God points out not only the violations of physical well-being, but also of their personal and collective dignity. These are real actions committed against real people, persons that belong to the same community as the prophet.

God calls for mutual help, seeking to put an end to the gap between the haves and the have-nots so that all may live in dignity (verse 7). It is a call to live for others. Justice means that all human beings are able to exercise their rights and respect the rights of others. The challenge is to develop mutual responsibility so others can also live in dignity.

Practicing our understanding of God and our relationship with God means discerning and teaching God's Word, with prayer and fasting. But it also involves developing actions and processes among people and communities so as to fulfil God's promises. When this is done, God says several things will happen:

- *Your light will break forth like the dawn.* A real live testimony tells more than do billboards or ads in the press. It is about God's presence in people and communities, who, having endured suffering and received support, experience the hope of the God of life—and then share this with others.
- *Your wounds will soon heal.* Injustices leave marks and inflict wounds. But it is possible to heal them; it involves actions and processes that acknowledge

Practicing our understanding of God and our relationship with God means discerning and teaching God's Word.

## Serving like Christ

the injustice and yet recognize that God is here to heal. Injustices cannot be erased from people's memories; a scar usually remains that reminds us of what has happened. When it has healed, the scar does not hurt anymore, but it reminds us that these injustices must not be repeated, that the pain must not be perpetuated, that we must work to achieve the conditions that make justice possible.

7. *If you follow the way I have set for you ... surely I shall answer your call for help* (verses 9 and 10). Begin with yourselves, with your relationship with others, putting into practice the justice that God wants for the people. The result will be that "your light will rise in the darkness." God knows that we want to teach his Word and show people the reality of the God of life. But the reality of God will have a greater impact on the people when we follow God's way.

8. *Your spirits will flag and you will tire* (verse 11)—not only physically but also spiritually. Perhaps we will lose hope. But God tells Isaiah, "Look, I am aware of this, which is why I urge you to put your faith into practice and to trust me as your God."

9. *If you lead the people in this process, they will rebuild what is in ruins* (verse 12). They will resurrect what is dying and will strengthen what already exists. God tells Isaiah that when the people channel their gifts, talents and abilities towards God's plan to seek justice, the results will be striking.

In God's exhortation to Isaiah, service is the constant theme. As we put into practice God's call, however, we face the following challenges:

- *Developing a permanent relationship with God.* This includes getting to know the gifts and talents that God has given us as well as our difficulties. As churches, our call is to identify these gifts in our communities, cultivate them and help to put them into practice.
- *Knowing our reality.* Actions that lack knowledge of our reality can get out of



Jenny Neme leads a study on Isaiah 58:1-12 at the Friday morning service of Assembly 15. Photo by Lowell Brown

- focus. It is necessary to plan and determine the relevance of the actions.
- *Calling attention to the injustices that we experience and recognizing that we cannot escape them.* We must raise our voices to expose and denounce the injustices, but we also have to recognize our role in announcing the good news.
- *Recognizing our humanity and our dependence on God.* We recognize that we are afraid, our body is deteriorating and we are discouraged. God reminds us that he is with us and that we need not be paralyzed. Our confidence in God enables us to carry on.
- *Not waiting for injustice to appear on our doorstep before we act.* We can carry out preventive actions and seek to understand what God's call is in this day and in this place.
- *Shaping proposals that will facilitate viable actions.* The starting point for these actions should be our own practice in our local churches; then we can extend them to our communities, governments and legislative bodies and to whoever does wrong.
- *Developing a spirituality that includes prayer and action.* It requires cooperation, community, fostering relationships with others and overcoming our differences. Justice is both a means and an end.
- *Remembering our goal.* God desires that men and women live in peace and in justice, in a world where the possibility still exists to rebuild and bring about the good.

*Jenny Neme directs the Christian Centre for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action, JUSTAPAZ, a ministry of the Mennonite Church of Colombia. A focus of her work has been the victims of violence.*

# Stuttgart multiplied

## Lutherans and Mennonites keep reconciling

Last July in Stuttgart, Germany, delegates to the Lutheran World Federation assembly formally asked the Mennonite World Conference community of churches to forgive Lutherans for 16th-century persecution of Anabaptists and for distorted portrayals of Anabaptist Christians since then. The event was widely reported in the church media, the MWC web site and the last issue of *Courier-Correo-Courier*. Several regional and local reconciliation events took place in the months following, and others are planned. Here is a sampling.

### Vienna, Austria

On October 26, for the first time in history, the Lutheran Evangelische Kirche A.B. in Österreich invited Mennonites to its annual assembly as visiting delegates. "It is up to us, with mutual respect, to begin a good relationship [in our] working together in the service of Jesus Christ and to the world," Bishop Michael Buenker told the delegates.

The gathering included a greeting from Johann Schoor, president of Mennonitische Freikirche Österreich (Mennonite Free Church in Austria), in which he expressed gratitude for the Stuttgart action and a hope "that for many years we will be able to work together for the good of our country, whether in evangelism or service, and also in fellowship and prayer."

Schoor summarized how the Mennonitische Freikirche was begun through Mennonite Brethren missionaries from North America. From 1960s roots in Vienna's Tulpengasse congregation, numerous other free-church congregations have emerged in Austria. Several of these claim Anabaptist identity and one belongs to the five-congregation Mennonitische Freikirche.

The beginnings of the Mennonite Brethren church in Russia 150 years ago, Schoor said, were positively influenced by a Lutheran pastor, Eduard Wüst. Schoor, who was born to a Catholic father and an evangelical mother, has had positive connections with Lutherans through his ministry involvements. While the Mennonitische Freikirche Österreich is small, he noted that the door is now open for significant relationships with Lutherans.

—*Johann Schoor*



*Johann Schoor (l), president of the Mennonitische Freikirche Österreich, and Dr. Michael Buenker (r), Bishop of the Evangelische Kirche A.B. in Österreich, extend hands of fellowship.*

### Hamburg, Germany

The University of Hamburg's Institute for Peace Church Theology and the Association of Christian Churches in Hamburg hosted a one-day forum on October 30 entitled, "Reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites: How is this possible?" Students and instructors from the university and community members from various churches gathered to explore the roots of the Stuttgart action and its implications for the churches in Germany.

The day included a series of lectures by both Lutherans and Mennonites. Bernhard Thiessen, pastor of the Mennonite church in Hamburg and Altona, opened with stories that illustrated the movement from Lutheran persecution of Anabaptists in Germany to the current atmosphere of friendship and tolerance. MWC General Secretary Larry Miller of Strasbourg, France, gave the main address on the day's theme.

From that background, Alexander Roeder, pastor of Hamburg's Michaelis (Lutheran) Church, noted that the

Stuttgart action was consistent with Lutheran theology of grace, but it needed to be lived out as local churches and individual members earnestly seek reconciliation.

Dr. Fernando Enns, Professor and Director of the Institute for Peace Church Theology, then explained how Lutherans and Mennonites are already working together in the Institute. He noted that theologians will now seek new beginnings as they seek to understand the theological differences that remain between the two groups. The University of Hamburg, he noted, is the only German university whose theology department formally includes and recognizes Anabaptist faculty.

The conference continued with open-mike forums with participation from Baptists, Catholics and Orthodox, reflecting on broader issues of church unity. One speaker expressed a hope that the Stuttgart action might foster a greater acceptance of Baptists and other free churches in the state school system. A Syrian Orthodox attendee saw

Stuttgart as a model for the healing of rifts among Orthodox Christians.

The climax of the day, for many, was a concluding festive communion service in Hamburg's Mennonite church, shared by participants of many backgrounds.

—Joel Driedger

## Waterloo, Canada

Mennonites and Lutherans filled the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary (WLS) chapel for a worship service of repentance and healing, the evening of November 25, followed by a day of presentations by representatives of both communities.

Hosted by WLS and Conrad Grebel University College (CGUC), the participants remembered, read Scripture, prayed and sang together under the leadership of Michael Pryse, Bishop of the Eastern Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and David Martin, Executive Minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Readers of both churches retold persecution stories, punctuated by the African song, "Senzeni Na?" (What have we done?). As in Stuttgart, worshippers used Holy Land olive oil to mark a cross on their neighbour's hand, symbolizing healing, and then heard stories of new collaborations between Mennonites and Lutherans.

The conference, entitled "Confessing in Faith: Healing between Lutherans and Mennonites," continued the next day with presentations by MWC Executive Staff member, Bert Lobe; Conrad Grebel professors Jeremy Bergen and Tom Yoder Neufeld. Lutheran presenters included David Pfrimmer, WLS dean; Kristine Lund, WLS assistant principal; and Bob Kelly, WLS professor.

In an interesting twist, Kelly spoke on a traditional Anabaptist theme of discipleship, while Yoder Neufeld spoke on grace, emphasized by the Lutherans.

The conference also included the presentation of a study and worship guide, developed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and Mennonite Church Canada for members of both churches who seek greater understanding and fellowship.

—Ferne Burkhardt

## Interchurch links enrich 2010

*The "Mennonite action" at the July 2010 assembly of the Lutheran World Federation was a watershed moment for Anabaptist-Mennonite relationships with other Christian communions. But several other global church assemblies were also occasions for bridge building and understanding.*

*World Communion of Reformed Churches, Grand Rapids (Michigan, USA), June 17-27. MWC General Secretary Larry Miller brought greetings in a plenary session.*

*General (World) Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, Atlanta (Georgia, USA), June 24-July 3. Larry Miller gave greetings in the closing session, July 3, with about 60,000 people in attendance. He also was interviewed for an SDA-produced Romanian television program on Anabaptists and other radical Christians.*

*Baptist World Alliance, Honolulu (Hawaii, USA), July 28-August 1. Former MWC Executive Committee member, David Wiebe, attended on behalf of MWC and gave greetings.*

*Organization of Africa Instituted Churches (OAIC), Nairobi (Kenya), August 12. MWC officers were guests at a meeting of OAIC leaders taking place just after the MWC Executive Committee meeting in Ethiopia. Their purpose was to learn more about OAICs, whose 20th-century history as radical, prophetic communities has much in common with early Anabaptist history. One AIC leader even called 16th-century Anabaptists the "AICs of the 16th-century Europe."*

*We honor your commitment to a lifestyle that seeks to be consistently faithful to God's intention for humanity and all of creation. We want to learn from your practice of Church, which takes seriously not only the local church but also—as we experience so profoundly here these days—the global church.*

—Larry Miller, in his July 3 greeting to the world assembly of Seventh Day Adventists

*The meeting with the leadership of the Africa Instituted Churches was . . . an eye opener and a bridge builder. I left Nairobi convinced they are truly members of the family of Christ. . . . Areas of collaboration that could be explored together are HIV/AIDS, leadership and development and theological reflections on issues of common interest.*

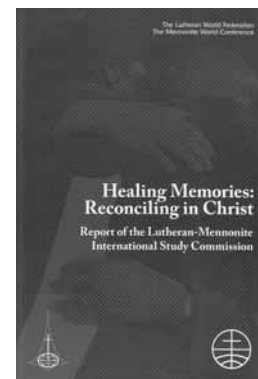
—Danisa Ndlovu, reflecting on the Nairobi OAIC meetings

*Some issues take 500 years to solve. Let us persevere in "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" and let us hear the Spirit as he directs us into unity as a church for the mission of his Kingdom.*

—David Wiebe, addressing the Baptist World Alliance

## Lutheran-Mennonite international report available

*Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ, Report of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission* helped lay the foundation for the historic reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites last July in Stuttgart, Germany. The 120-page book offers historical background on the early condemnations of Anabaptists by Lutherans, new perspectives on what that history means today and next steps towards a future as reconciled communities of faith. The product of four years of work by the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission, the book was presented at the LWF eleventh assembly in Stuttgart. The book is available in English, German, French and Spanish from MWC and LWF offices (Price 5€ or \$8 plus postage). A pdf version is also available free on-line at <http://www.mwc-cmm.org>.



# MWC adds Anabaptist voice to Global Christian Forum

**A**nne-Cathy Graber grew up in a French Mennonite home, but much of her time since then has been devoted to life with other Christians, witnessing to and working for Christian unity (see sidebar).

It was natural, therefore, that the resident of Paris, France, was asked in 2009 to represent Mennonite World Conference on the continuation committee of the Global Christian Forum (the GCF). This was the first time that the Forum had invited MWC to appoint a representative to the committee.

The GCF, which has been steadily growing since informal beginnings in 1998, aims to bring leaders of all Christian churches in the world together at one table to foster mutual respect and to address common challenges.

The GCF sponsors both continental and global gatherings for getting acquainted, spiritual sharing and theological discussion. The second global gathering, expected to draw some 300 global church leaders, will take place this coming October 4–7 near Jakarta, Indonesia. MWC will be invited to send several representatives.

According to Anne-Cathy, a major function of the GCF is to “encourage conversation between representatives from long-established church traditions and those from the newer evangelical and Pentecostal denominations.”

Most participants represent churches or church families; others represent inter-Christian organizations, such as the World Evangelical Alliance, the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students and the World Council of Churches.

Many of these groups have avoided each other in the past. Evangelicals and Pentecostals, for example, participate in the GCF, but most have never been part of the World Council of Churches. Yet the realities of global church growth, especially in the South, have made it urgent to search for greater knowledge and understanding of each other.

“Our meetings always begin with the sharing of our faith journeys with Christ, in our own words,” says Anne-Cathy. “It’s a fundamental exercise that allows each of us to see the other in a new way, through the eyes of Christ. That is how the stereotypes we have of each other can fall away—and can even convert us!”

The conversations also touch on each participant’s conception of mission. “It is urgent that we learn from each other, not standing over-

against each other, but in communion with each other. It’s the integrity of the church that is at stake here!”

The GCF conversations also explore the meaning of Christian unity. “It’s not about ignoring differences among Christians,” Anne-Cathy explains. “But we do need to hear what the term *church* means to each participant in order to better understand what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ—and then to live it out.”

Anabaptists are one of the smallest



Photo by Byonn Rempel-Burkholder

*Anne-Cathy Graber’s involvement in the Global Christian Forum follows many years of involvement in inter-communion conversation. It began at age 18, when she started her university studies in musicology. Although she was to work for several years as a musician, she also had a strong desire to live out the vision of peace and reconciliation with which she had grown up.*

*Her pursuit led her at age 20 to join the Communauté du Chemin Neuf (Community of the New Way), an international Christian community of French origin. “I found myself involved with Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians of all sorts—including evangelicals. Despite differences, these Christians were committed to witness to, and work toward, unity among churches.”*

*Anne-Cathy, now in her forties, is a member of a celibate order within the Communauté du Chemin Neuf and one of the community’s leaders. At the same time she is a member of the Eglise Evangélique Mennonite de Strasbourg (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Strasbourg) where she has served as ordained preacher and elder.*

*Her congregation and the Communauté du Chemin Neuf together have called Anne-Cathy to her current ministry as an itinerant pastor for peace, reconciliation and Christian unity. This year she is completing doctoral studies at the Protestant theological faculty of the University of Strasbourg. Her thesis is on ecumenical understandings of the role of Mary.*



groups participating in the Forum, Anne-Cathy says, but they bring important contributions. “The gift of Anabaptist-Mennonites is to be a bridge between ancient churches, such as the Orthodox, and the newer churches, such as the Pentecostals.”

Also, she says, when there are areas of tension in inter-communion conversation, “the Anabaptist-Mennonite church has something to bring, because of its history of peacemaking.”

Anne-Cathy also stresses that Anabaptists have much to receive as well. For example, “Orthodox churches impress upon me the importance—and the price—of tradition, while the love of the Pentecostals for the Holy Spirit challenges me to pay attention to the relationship between the church and the Holy Spirit.”

“We are discovering that the body of Christ is more complex and varied than we realize,” she continues. “We are surprised, for example, that others have already been working at peace, some longer than others. We can thus work out our own theology of peace in the context of giving and receiving.”

**A**s a member of the GCF continuation committee Anne-Cathy was “very moved” by the “Mennonite action,” which she witnessed at the Lutheran World Federation assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, last July.

“We sometimes need concrete signs—such as the anointing with olive oil in Stuttgart—to express repentance and pardon. These signs can be opportunities for creativity in celebrations in our fellowship.”

For Anne-Cathy it was significant that the event took place at an international gathering. The “wound” of persecution took place in the heart of Europe several centuries ago and then was exported to other continents.

“It was therefore important and touching to see this movement of repentance and pardon be carried out as much by the churches of the South as by those of North. That’s the witness of the ‘universal church!’”

—Byron Rempel-Burkholder

## Anabaptist themes echoed at Third Lausanne Congress in Capetown

*Cape Town, South Africa—* At least 30 mission and church leaders represented Anabaptist-related communities at the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization here, October 17 to 24. The gathering, which attracted 4,000 mission leaders, pastors and academics from 198 countries, grew out of the “Lausanne Movement” that followed the first congress in Switzerland in 1974.

According to Richard Showalter, chair of Mennonite World Conference’s Mission Commission, organizers billed the event as possibly the “most representative event in church history” and the “first event of its kind in the digital age.”

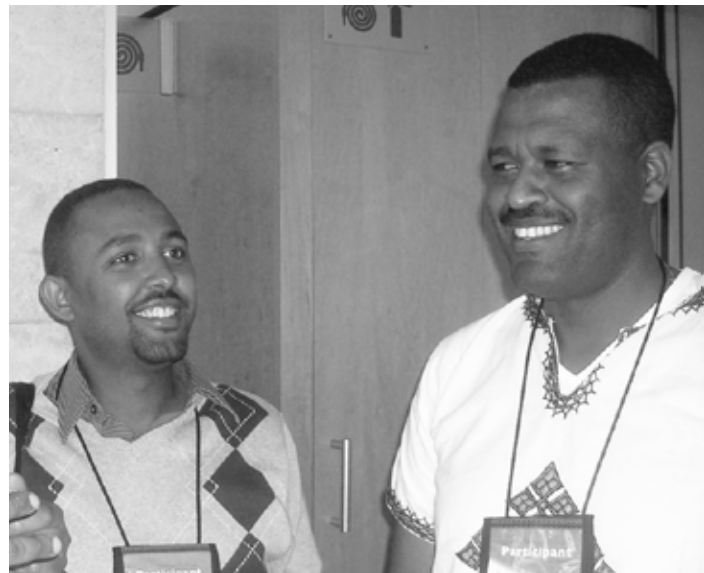
Delegates listened to international speakers, studied the epistle of Ephesians in plenary lectures and small groups, attended workshops and compared notes on mission strategy and practices.

Anabaptist participants, said Richard, were gratified by the attention to themes that Anabaptists often emphasize. “Much more than the first two Lausanne congresses, significant attention has been given to such topics as reconciliation, integrity, simplicity and justice,” he said.

The “Cape Town Commitment,” shaped by Lausanne leaders before and during the congress, declared: “God commands us to reflect his own character through compassionate care for the needy, and to demonstrate the values and the power of the kingdom of God in striving for justice and peace and in caring for God’s creation.”

Richard also noted that the focus on evangelization was embedded in theological and strategic reflection on the nature and the unity of the church. “Lausanne appears to be getting more ‘churchly’ as the years pass,” he noted.

Two days before the end of the conference, 22 of the Mennonite or Brethren in



*Yemiru Tilahun (right), mission and evangelism director of Ethiopia’s Meserete Kristos Church, with Bezalem Fisseha, a leader in the Emmanuel United Church of Ethiopia, which originated in the 1990s in the Coptic Orthodox Church. Bezalem was mentored by Meserete Kristos leaders. The Meserete Kristos Church is the largest church body belonging to the Mennonite World Conference.*

Photo by Richard Showalter

Christ delegates attended an Anabaptist noontime huddle. Most had received a significant boost for their mission activities back home.

One theme that emerged in the sharing was the suffering church. “It was awesome to hear first-hand testimonies of the plight of Christians striving to minister the gospel in the Middle East, India and China,” said Barbara Nkala, an elder in the Brethren in Christ Church of Zimbabwe.

As the congress ended, Richard observed how the 16th-century European believer’s church was foundational to the emergence of the missionary movement of the past 300 years. “The Lausanne movement is deeply indebted to the suffering faith of the Anabaptist movement.”

The congress is particularly significant for the work of the new commissions of MWC, said Richard. “One hundred years ago, mission was considered to be at the periphery of Christian theology and it was often marginalized in the churches. Today it is front and centre. Cape Town 2010 both confirmed and illustrated this movement.”

## Central Americans gather for 35th consultation

*San Marcos, Carazo, Nicaragua*—Ethics and commitment were the focus of this year's meeting of the Consulta Anabautista Menonita Centroamericana (CAMCA), September 8 to 10. The 35th meeting of the longstanding theological consultation was marked by a strong showing of women theologians, who had held their own gathering immediately prior (see next item).

In all, 18 men and 36 women participated—most of whom serve in Bible teaching or leadership in Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and Panama.

Keynote speaker Silvia Regina de Lima Silva of Costa Rica led the group in reflecting on the theme “Conversion and discipleship: An urgent call to the faith community to live the ethics of the Kingdom.”

Participants were challenged to revisit their own conversion as they sought “new alternatives to project the kingdom of God.” As their summary report reminded them, conversion is only a starting point. “We will overcome only by following the model of Jesus, who rose above temptation by abiding in God's Word . . . in daily practice,” the report said.

The delegates also elected a new board of directors, drawn from the participating denominations. Its president is Fada Luz Pérez, (Asociación Misión Evangélica de los Hermanos en Cristo en Nicaragua/Brethren in Christ in Nicaragua).



Participants in the CAMCA meeting included 36 women.

### Women theologians meet separately

In a gathering just prior to the CAMCA meetings—their third inspired by the example of MWC sisters in Africa—Central American women theologians explored the theme, “Considering the role of women in church: New biblical paradigms from the daily routine,” through studies, storytelling and discussion, September 6 to 8.

“Biblical and theological reflection from a woman's perspective is a story that builds from the periphery,” reported Sandra Campos and Olga Piedrasanta in summarizing their insights. “At church, a reflection has grown from the presence of women in the different ministries. It's been a long process, even slow—but steady, diverse and very rich.”

The women declared six commitments to enhance the church's mission, particularly in the lives of women: strengthen Bible study; promote dialogue

on gender equality; promote leadership that reconciles the biblical with the contextual; promote theological exchanges among women in various countries and organizations; “awaken and nourish” a spirit of sisterhood among women in leadership; and acknowledge the value of a woman's body as “sacred space.”

The gathering included the launch of a book entitled *El mensaje liberador de Jesús para las mujeres hoy* (The liberating message of Jesus for women today). The book contains reflections, presentations, a declaration prepared at the 2009 Paraguay gathering of the Anabaptist Women Theologians of Latin America and eight Bible study guides for women and men who are committed to the building of God's reign here and now.

At the conclusion of the conference, the group also appointed a new work team coordinated by Albania Molina of Honduras and including representatives of eight other conferences that belong to CAMCA.



Photo by Merle Good

### Former MWC Executive dies in auto accident

*Makoko Musoma, Tanzania*—Matiku Thomas Nyitambe, a prominent leader in the Kanisa la Mennonite church of Tanzania (KMT), was killed in an automobile accident October 3, while driving from his ancestral home of Kirongwe, Tanzania, near the Kenyan border. His wife Penina sustained relatively minor injuries and was released from hospital the next day.

Matiku was General Secretary of the KMT from 2001 to 2007, and was serving on the KMT Executive Committee at the time of his death. The conscientious and much-loved pastor served on the Mennonite World Conference General Council 2003 to 2006 and on the MWC Executive Committee from 2006 to 2009. He also served in various government capacities in Tanzania.

## Taiwan church commits to renewal

*Taipei, Taiwan*—At their annual assembly October 31 – November 3, pastors and delegates from Taiwan’s 21 Mennonite churches committed themselves to renewal in mission. Much of the gathering’s business built upon a special summit a year ago, when leaders evaluated the strengths and obstacles to growth of their conference, the Fellowship of Mennonite Churches in Taiwan (FOMCIT).

The gathering, hosted at Taipei’s Adoration of Light Girls Middle School, opened with a communion service that drew upon the image of crushed grain and grapes to emphasize unity of believers. Sheldon Sawatzky, FOMCIT General Secretary, preached on the miraculous catch of fish recorded in Luke 5:1-11. He challenged the delegates to launch out into the deep water, to go to new places, to try new methods, to have a new attitude of humility and obedience to Christ’s command in mission.

In response, the 50 delegates stood in an act of recommitment. They then performed a “wishing tree” exercise promoted by the Mennonite World Conference in the World Fellowship Sunday materials for January 2011.

On paper fruit and leaves, each wrote their wishes for an ideal church, then posted them on a poster image of a tree. Each delegate also selected a wish to pray for during the prayer times.

From small groups and plenary discussion, the delegates established goals and action steps for the next five years. The goals include the mounting of a website and

prayer network; the development of discipleship materials from an Anabaptist perspective; the development of an Anabaptist study centre in cooperation with an existing seminary; the appointment of a new general secretary; the strengthening of the function of FOMCIT’s board of directors; and the planting of three new churches, beginning in southern Taiwan.

The delegates also adopted a mission statement based on Mennonite core values: “Based on Jesus Christ the foundation, build a community with a mission of love and peace.” In keeping with the statement, FOMCIT’s theme for 2011 will be: “Be disciples of Jesus, proclaim the gospel of peace.”

The assembly was grounded in inspirational input from members and visitors. Morning devotional messages set the tone for each day. Pastor Titus Liao spoke on new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and guest Samson Lo, Director of Multi-cultural Ministries for Mennonite Church Canada, explored the theme of servant leadership.

During a concluding sharing time many delegates expressed what for them was the high point or of greatest significance during the assembly. “This was a different kind of meeting than in the past. It is an opportunity for breakthrough,” said one. “There are challenges, but we have talented persons to help us make a new beginning,” stated another.

– *From reports by Sheldon Sawatzky, General Secretary, FOMCIT*



*Elder Xiao Hui-Ying of the Zhong-He Mennonite Church in Taipei sticks a fruit on the wishing tree.*

## Indian churches unite for Peace and Justice Sunday

*Kolkata, India*—The Bharatiya Jukta Christa Prachar Mandali (BJCPM), one of eight member churches of Mennonite World Conference in India, celebrated its annual conference day on August 22.

But this year, according to BJCPM General Secretary Ravindra Raj, the tradition was expanded through thematic focus. Instead of asking churches simply to pray for BJCPM pastors and collect money for a general fund, denominational leaders asked churches to explore “God’s Justice and Peace” both locally and regionally.

In their worship that Sunday, most of the more than 100 BJCPM congregations read from Isaiah 58, heard similar sermons and prayed for vulnerable communities in India. These included exploited tribal groups and oppressed Dalits (“untouchables”) and

Muslims across the country; Christians of Kandhamal, Orissa, who were recently persecuted by Hindu extremists and forced to flee their homes for hastily set-up squalid government refugee camps; and people with leprosy and mental illnesses.

Proceeds from the Sunday were designated for workshops for pastors and leaders on the biblical basis for God’s justice and peace. Two workshops were planned for November among leaders of Andhra Pradesh Conference and Zion Fellowship in Orissa. Other workshops will likely follow.

With a membership of around 4,000 BJCPM (India United Missionary Church), headquartered in Kolkata, is spread across six regional conferences in eastern and southeastern India and represents six language groups.

## Chilean young adults serve and travel in Uruguay

A group of nine youth from the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Chile (IEMCH) experienced service, learning and cross-cultural relationships during a visit to Uruguay, July 16-26, 2010.

The first stop was in Artigas, northern Uruguay, where a Mennonite Chilean, Ricardo Díaz, had planted a church. In addition to participation in worship services, the group helped with evangelistic outreach to the town's youth gangs and among poor townships on the border with Brazil.

"I was struck by the great spiritual need in people," said Andrés, 16. "I felt like God was using me. I could sense people's love and their sadness when we left. I will never forget that feeling."

Nicole, 21, enjoyed being able to "share the Word of God with children who do not have access to Sunday school."

The group also travelled to Montevideo, the capital, where they participated in a gathering of more than 150 area young people. The Chileans shared about their activities in Chile, and the group leader, Christian Bustos, preached.

The visit also included an opportunity to reconnect with



Young adults from Chile shared their faith in the streets and learned to know their Uruguayan sisters and brothers.

Frank Schroeder, a Uruguayan delegate to the Global Youth Summit at MWC's Assembly 15 in Paraguay.

"Our aim," said Christian, "is that our churches get to know each other better, exchange gifts and make plans for more future activities."

—from reports by Cristian Bustos, Chilean youth leader

## Ethiopian youth explore Anabaptist identity

Last August 1, during the MWC Executive Committee meetings in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, some 75 young people from 23 congregations of the Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) met with the MWC Youth Task Force (YTF) for a time of information sharing and fellowship.

Ayub Omondi Awich, the YTF African representative

who led the session, noted that "many of them [came] to learn about the work of the Youth Task Force and about Anabaptist identity."

The five members of the Task Force, appointed at the Global Youth Summit associated with the MWC assembly in 2009, have a two-year mandate to create and begin implementing a blueprint for global youth networking in the MWC community. Ayub Omondi and Elina Ciptadi-Perkins were present in Addis

to present their plans for approval and then to work on making Young Anabaptist Network a permanent structure within MWC.

At the youth meeting Ayub, along with Tigist Tesfaye of Addis Ababa (who also attended the Global Youth Summit) and a team of MKC youth leaders, shared the Executive Committee's positive response to the blueprint and invited ideas for implementation.

In small group discussion,

participants supported three key ideas:

- Face-to-face interaction among Anabaptist youth, whether through church-to-church relationships within a country (including among MWC-member churches) or through international gatherings.
- The creation of more youth-friendly teaching material on what it means to be an Anabaptist. One of the frequent questions asked during the event was, "What is the difference between an Anabaptist and a Mennonite?"
- Vigorous communication about exchange programs and service opportunities among youth and young adults.

The Addis Ababa meeting was the second conducted by the YTF in its efforts, wherever it travels, to hear feedback on the blueprint. The first was in Strasbourg, France, last February, drawing participants from France, Germany and Switzerland.

—from reports by Elina Ciptadi, MWC staff for YTF

## From West Bengal to New York

This year, Sumana Basumata of India has been serving as the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) intern in the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) United Nations Liaison Office in New York City, USA.

During the year-long stint, she assists with the United Nations Nongovernmental Organization Working Group on Israel/Palestine, which works to promote peace in Israel and Palestine, a particular passion of hers.

She also helped to run the annual seminar that the MCC UN Office organizes for students from Mennonite colleges in North America.

"I'm learning a lot about how different organizations collaborate with the UN work

and MCC's work in different countries," she said. Eventually, Sumana dreams of a career with an international organization that promotes peace education among children and youth.

Sumana, the fifth MWC intern to serve at the MCC United Nations office, hails from the small town of Alipurduar in India's West Bengal region. She is a member of the Little Flock Fellowship, which belongs to Bharatiya

Jukta Christa Prachar Mandali (United Missionary Church), one of eight MWC member churches in India. Sumana also represented her church at MWC's Global Youth Summit in Paraguay in 2009.



Photo: Doug Hostetter

## Relief aid flows South to South in 2010

Last year's news was heavy with reports of disasters, both natural and human-made. Thousands of lives were lost, and countless people were made homeless in Haiti, Pakistan, Indonesia and parts of Africa. As usual, responses of North Americans and Europeans were widely reported. Less often reported, however, were the responses from countries of the South. Here are just a few of the stories we received:

### Zimbabweans to Haitians

In the wake of the January 2010 earthquake that killed over 200,000 people in Haiti, the Brethren in Christ Church (BIC) of Zimbabwe responded with a gift of over \$1,000—a large sum in what MWC President Danisa Ndlovu (of Zimbabwe) describes as a “meltdown” economy. The occasion for a special offering was Danisa's inauguration for his third term as a BIC bishop. Representatives attending the event took the need to their local congregations the next Sunday as well. The money was forwarded to Mennonite Central Committee for its relief work in Haiti.

Following the event, Danisa reflected on how Zimbabweans themselves have depended on the compassion of global brothers and sisters in the past. “Seeing the devastation in Haiti, it was clear that we too needed to help! Acting out of compassion has nothing to do with having much or less; it begins with taking one's eyes off one's own challenges, real as they might be, and focusing on the needs

of others. It was a God given opportunity for the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe to do just that.”

### Singaporeans to Congolese

When members of the Mennonite Church of Singapore heard of the July 2 fuel truck explosion that killed 300 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo—51 of them Mennonite Brethren—the congregation's board met quickly and decided to help.

Through email, they told the congregation that they would collect a “love offering” the following Sunday. Their goal was to send the money with Elina Ciptadi-Perkins, MWC youth task force member, who was about to leave for MWC Executive Committee meetings in Ethiopia, where she would see Congolese colleagues.

Elina reported that, even though such offerings are unusual in her church of less than 80 members, the church contributed \$2,000 toward a fund for the affected families, many of whom had lost one or both parents in the explosion.



Photo by Paulus Hartono

An MDS banner identifies the Mount Merapi relief shelter supported by members of the GKMI Mennonite Church of Indonesia.

### Indonesians to Indonesians

On October 26 the Mount Merapi volcano erupted in Magelang, Central Java. In coming days it was to displace some 300,000 people living within a 20-mile radius of the volcano. Almost immediately after the eruption, the Mennonite Diakonia Service (MDS), the peace-building and service arm of the Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI) Mennonite Church, was in action, sending volunteers to help run a shelter for people who had fled their homes. GKMI

congregations provided food, basic sanitation services, trauma counseling, children's activities and medical care to some 1300 people who were evacuated from their homes. One church even sent volunteers to give free haircuts and massages to victims. Currently, MDS is working in close partnership with MCC to facilitate longer-term aid—not only for victims of the Merapi eruption but also for those affected by two other disasters the same month: flooding in eastern Indonesia and the tsunami that hit Indonesia's Mentawai islands to the west.

## MWC contributing carbon tax to green projects

*Strasbourg, France*—In recognition of the environmental impact of their global work, Mennonite World Conference staff and executive committee members are now imposing a surcharge on themselves for each mile that they travel by air.

The proceeds of the tax will go to the MWC's Global Church Sharing Fund, says MWC Deacons Commission secretary Bert Lobe, who developed the plan from earlier proposals and worked with MWC administrator Karen Martin

Schiedel and MWC development consultant Henry Hildebrand to move it to reality. Proceeds will be earmarked specifically for environmentally green projects of MWC-member churches.

The key is that we're walking the talk," said Hildebrand. "We felt that what we're doing here gets us started. If we need to change something, it's easily done." In coming years, for example, if the tax is applied to all delegate travel for the General Council meetings of

2012 or the MWC assembly in 2015, MWC could consider partnering with another organization for a major project, rather than supporting the smaller projects of the Sharing Fund.

Based on a formula of \$50 per 1000 kilograms (2200 pounds) of carbon, the plan is expected next year to generate \$2500 of income toward the Sharing Fund.

## Peachy retires as *Courier* editor

Strasbourg, France—Lorne Peachey had long held a secret wish to work for Mennonite World Conference some day. Still, the invitation in 2001 to become editor of MWC's three-language magazine surprised him.

"I knew next to nothing about editing a publication produced in three languages for readers across many cultures in many countries," admits the resident of Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, USA.

Lorne became managing editor of *Courier-Correo-Courrier* in 2002 and editor in 2006. He retired after completing his final issue of 2010.

Lorne began working part time for MWC while continuing as director of marketing for Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union (now Everence Federal Credit Union).

He brought a wealth of training and experience. After earning an MA in religious journalism from Syracuse (New York) University in 1967, he edited four publications for the Mennonite Church in North America: *With*, a youth magazine which he founded, 1968; *Christian Living*, 1973-1984; *Gospel Herald*, 1990-1998; and *The Mennonite*, 1998-2000.

Then came *Courier-Correo-Courrier*

for a global audience. "I tried to bring what I learned and believed to *C-C-C* to help readers read an article or news story the whole way through," he says.

"Lorne gave a lot of attention to

design," says Phyllis Pellman Good, a former *C-C-C* editor. "He was a 'soldier.' He kept at it and at it. It was important to him that all issues looked good . . . [and he] made the magazine consistently attractive and interesting."

"A publication with international coverage requires careful balance of news," adds Milka Rindzinski from Uruguay, who worked with Lorne before he replaced her as editor. "I learned to know and appreciate Lorne's character, his openness, his sensitivity."

"Any organization that finds a good person for its staff is very lucky; Christians say blessed!" observes Danisa

Ndlovu, MWC president from Zimbabwe. "Lorne was a well of wisdom, always exhibiting a deep sense of commitment to his work. His gentle spirit and unassuming personality gained

him respect from all those around him."

More than the hard work and travel, it is the wonderful people from around the world who stir up the warmest memories for Lorne. He was overwhelmed when he received a card or email message from every MWC Executive Committee member after his wife Emily died of cancer in 2004.

Taking comprehensive notes at all Executive Committee and General Council meetings left him more tired than any other

assignment, he says. But finding Swiss chocolate from Markus Rediger, Executive Committee member from Switzerland who was also a journalist, made the task more pleasant.

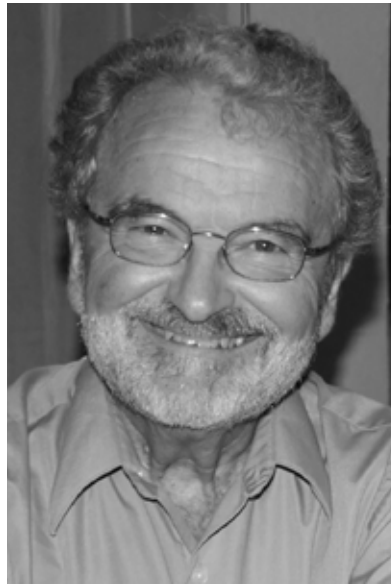
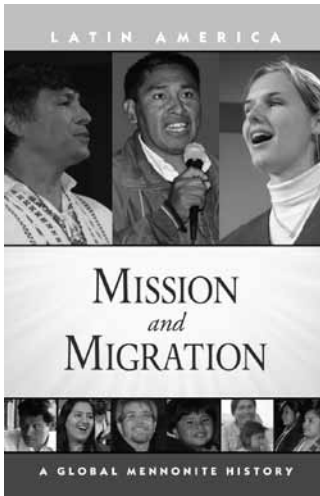


Photo by Markus Rediger

## New MWC resources available



*Mission and Migration: Latin America* by Jaime Prieto Valadores is the third volume in the Global Mennonite History series. Available in English, with the Spanish edition com-

ing in 2011, it highlights the driving forces that led to the establishment of 103 separate Anabaptist-related conferences in 26 countries. Published jointly by Good Books and Pandora Press, it can be ordered through Amazon.com or from Pandora books at [bookshop@pandorapress.com](mailto:bookshop@pandorapress.com) (price \$11.95). Other volumes available are on Africa and Europe (available from Good Books and Pandora Press). Volumes on Asia and North America are expected in 2011.

*"Stories of Service"* (DVD) provides seven inspiring mini-documentaries about compassionate ministries of local MWC-related churches. The

DVD, produced by American Mennonite Michael Bade, is available in English, French and Spanish. It comes with a booklet of discussion and worship resources for using the DVD in congregations. Available from the MWC offices in Canada and France (Price 15€ or \$20.00 including postage).

*"Beyond Assemblies"* (DVD) is a four-minute promotional video in English, Spanish and French that explains how MWC members-communions are serving each other between the assemblies and networking in a variety of ways. Appropriate for use in worship and education settings, it begins with footage of the 15th MWC Assembly in Paraguay and goes on to highlight

MWC efforts in mutual aid, leadership development and peace advocacy. The DVD is available in NTSC format and can be ordered from MWC offices in Canada and France (Price \$5 or 3€ plus postage).


*Website updates.* Early in 2011, the MWC site will have a new look and improved interactivity. According to MWC webmaster, Hansuli Gerber, it will include an upcoming events feature as well as easier access to downloadable documents and audio-visu-als. Another new feature will be online subscriptions to the MWC news service. The site will be easier for users for whom Internet access is slow and unstable. He also notes a need for translators for the many resources.

“I got to do what I like to do for people I love and call my own, and MWC was a large part of what made that possible for me,” concludes Lorne. “I have been incredibly blessed and I thank God for the privilege of serving in Christ’s kingdom as a communicator.”

“*Serving and communicating*,” added MWC General Secretary Larry Miller, “are precisely the right words to describe Lorne’s ministry among us. He may have known little about editing a multilingual publication when he began. But long before the end, Lorne was both serving gently and communicating powerfully across the countless cultures of the global Church—a little like the Holy Spirit.”

Byron Rempel-Burkholder from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, named MWC’s news editor in June 2010, also succeeds Lorne Peachey as editor of *Courier-Correo-Courrier*.

—Ferne Burkhardt


<p>Volume 26 • Number 1</p>
<p>Larry Miller Publisher</p> <p>Byron Rempel-Burkholder Editor</p> <p>Eleanor Miller Communications assistant</p> <p>Sylvie Gudin French translator</p> <p>Marisa &amp; Eunice Miller Spanish translators</p>
<p><i>Courier - Correo - Courrier</i>, published quarterly by Mennonite World Conference in English, Spanish, and French editions, is available free on request. Send all correspondence to C-C-C, MWC, 8 rue du Fossé des Treize, 67000 Strasbourg, France. Email: <a href="mailto:Strasbourg@mwc-cmm.org">Strasbourg@mwc-cmm.org</a>.</p>
<p><a href="http://www.mwc-cmm.org">www.mwc-cmm.org</a></p>

## ‘I thank God ... for all of you’

by J. Lorne Peachey

More than eight years ago, when my friends heard I was joining the staff of Mennonite World Conference, they made what I considered to be envious comments: “Oh, now you get to travel all over the world!”

Turns out they were right. As managing editor and later editor of *Courier-Correo-Courrier* (C-C-C), I’ve been from Zimbabwe to Paraguay to the Philippines. Plus a dozen or more other countries that I went to on my own while in different parts of the globe.

What neither my friends nor I could know when I said “yes” was that I would also face some of the most difficult work of my life. True, I had been trained as a journalist. But I knew next to nothing about how to edit a publication produced in three languages circulating to readers across many different cultures in many countries.

For C-C-C is a unique magazine. A communication consultant told MWC a couple of years ago he could find no other publication that attempts to do on a global scale what C-C-C attempts to do.

I had to learn fast. I also had a competent staff of writers and translators who helped make the task manageable—and fun!

I also soon discovered that saying “yes” to editing C-C-C also brought with it another equally challenging assignment: taking notes at Executive Committee and General Council meetings. Along with my colleague, Ferne Burkhardt, MWC news editor, I needed to concentrate all day long in extended meetings, trying to record accurately what I heard as many tried to express themselves in English, not their native language, or through an interpreter.

(In those meetings, I also discovered that a hotel or retreat center conference room is pretty much the same worldwide, whether in Manila or Los Angeles or Addis Ababa.)

Yet travel and hard work are not what I remember most about my eight years with MWC. My warm memories are of the people I met, wonderful people from around the world, particularly the members of the MWC Executive Committee.

As we met together at least once a year—they to direct the work of MWC in establishing a global Anabaptist community, and I to record that work for the readers of C-C-C—these people became my friends. Close friends. Indeed, when my wife Emily died of cancer in 2004, I received a card or an email message

from everyone on the MWC Executive Committee at that time.

To this day, I consider them to be part of my extended family. From this family I have learned a great deal:

- *About not taking myself too seriously.* In 2002, during a sightseeing trip to an animal reserve in Zimbabwe, an Executive Committee member tripped and fell on a rocky path. As she lay there on her back, with others scurrying around to offer help and sympathy, she looked up at me and said, “Now, Lorne, you know what a fallen woman looks like!” Even with the tremendous responsibility of directing a global church, representing God’s kingdom in a conflicted world, one has to retain a sense of humor and the ability to laugh at oneself, even in embarrassing situations. *Thanks, Inneke.*
- *About doing little things to encourage others.* How often, as I worked at my computer, concentrating on what was being said, did I glance down to find Swiss chocolate on my table. These from an Executive Committee member who was also a journalist and communicator, one who knew how to make the task fun and pleasant. *Thanks, Markus.*
- *About how to be a true friend.* This past year, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a new Executive Committee member told me about the pain of losing his father when he was young. As we talked, he discovered I had a son his age. “You could be my father,” he said. “And you my son,” I replied. We agreed then it would be so, for the rest of that meeting—and for the rest of our lives, even though we may see each other rarely, if ever again. Allowing someone into your life, sharing your deepest joys and pains, what a privilege of friendship! *Thanks, Adi.*

The stories I could tell about my good encounters with many others could go on and on. As I remember them, like the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:8, “I thank God through Jesus Christ for all of you” (New Living Translation). I am grateful to be part of a community of believers that transcends borders and barriers to be one with each other.

My prayer is that my brief time serving the global church may have helped in a small way to establish God’s kingdom of justice, mercy and love in our world.

*Peace!*

# Neither a mouse nor an elephant

By Pakisa K. Tshimika

I often brag about not fearing anything. Then when I accept a challenging assignment, I wonder if I'm as fearless as I claim. That's how I felt after I agreed to lead the planning of the second Global Anabaptist Service Consultation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in August 2010.

The first consultation, held in California in 2006, was incredibly energizing for me. That meeting brought together most of the MWC General Council members and their service agencies. The consultation was so energizing that it led to a recommendation that MWC create an ongoing forum on diakonia and service ministries among Anabaptist-related churches. The second consultation in Addis, four years later, was the next step in that process.

As the meeting approached, I became fearful. The consultation was only for service agencies, departments or commissions themselves, not the broader General Council group. The purpose was to determine whether there actually was an interest in the development of a network in which MWC member churches and their related service agencies could work together on common questions, concerns and programs.

I worried that we might spend most of our time during the consultation struggling with issues of mice and elephants in the room—large agencies, versus small. To my surprise and joy, however, I saw that by the end of the first day, elephants and mice were not going to dominate the consultation regardless of their size or their budget.

I still get goose bumps whenever I read the statement of affirmation to which the participants agreed. To me, the statement was an expression of a people determined to work together. A comment from someone who might have been considered a “mouse” said it well: “It is good for us to be around one table together as a diverse family. Just as we affirm that we are making decisions as equals, we also affirm that we want to contribute material support, as equals.”

The comment reinforced my observation of the last twelve years: when Mennonites and Brethren in Christ churches or institutions meet under the MWC umbrella, they feel vulnerable and yet safe. Power becomes less important than the desire for unity. Some might be perceived as mice and others as elephants, and yet all members feel equal.

If that was the case in Addis, now what? I think the

consultation opened the door to opportunities to forge a new era for service within our member churches and in the world. Our witness will be enhanced if the sense of transparency and unity that prevailed in Addis would continue in the future. For several reasons, I am optimistic that this will happen.

A provisional task force will follow up the results of the consultation and organize a third one in 2012, in conjunction with MWC General Council. At that time, a final decision will be made on the nature of a global service entity, its membership and its relationship with Mennonite World Conference. The period before then will allow everyone to reflect on what took place in Ethiopia and to covenant with others to follow God's call for unity in the ways we serve within the church and outside the church.

- We have an opportunity to speak together the language of *relationship and covenant*—language that comes from the heart—rather than that of *partnership*, which we have difficulty applying because it is not from our biblical and theological heritage.
- We have an opportunity for *true gift sharing* as we recognize that the resources we have are from God who expects us to share them, not use them to develop our *power base* or to make others feel like mice in front of elephants.
- We now have an opportunity together to dig deeper to discover the *roots of pain* that erode the spirit of those among whom we are called to serve, both inside and outside the church.
- Now that we know that mice and elephants can work together around the same table, we can also ask the hard question of why most Mennonite and Brethren in Christ church members in Africa, Latin America, parts of Asia and in certain pockets of North America tend to be among the *poorest of the poor*.

As it was for the prophets of old, we need no longer hide in the cave because of our fear. Instead, we are part of a company of trusted sisters and brothers.

*Along with Reg and Phyllis Toews, Pakisa Tshimika spearheaded the Addis Ababa service consultation. Tshimika is a Global Church Advocate for MWC.*