



www.mwc-cmm.org

courrier . correo *courrier*

2011 / 4

Conférence Mennonite Mondiale • Mennonite World Conference • Congreso Mundial Menonita

6 Dutch church marks 200th anniversary

8 World Fellowship Sunday: "Hands Reaching Across Borders"

11 100th member church joins MWC

12 Mennonites find common cause with Adventists

14 Reflections on peace

15 Global Church Sharing Fund update



2-5, 16 *Goodbye, and a warm embrace*

Larry Miller completes 22 years with MWC

“As long as the wind is in its sails. . .”

Larry Miller reflects on 22 years at the helm of Mennonite World Conference

by Phyllis Pellman Good

Larry Miller remembers one moment clearly when, as a 38-year-old, he was weighing whether or not to accept the nomination to lead Mennonite World Conference. The year was 1988, 23 years ago, and he was sitting in a university library in Strasbourg, France, where he lived.

“I was working on my dissertation, and I looked up and noticed a book by one of my professors on a shelf. I pulled it down. It was dusty, and no one had ever checked it out. I suddenly realized that I was poised to write those kinds of books!”

Miller was finishing his doctorate in New Testament and was under consideration for a graduate-level teaching position in that field in the Protestant faculty at the University of Strasbourg. But something unexpected had come his way. The European Mennonite churches had together nominated him to be Executive Secretary of Mennonite World Conference.

Larry and his wife, Eleanor, had worked with international students in Paris (for European Mennonites and Mennonite Board of Missions of North America) and in peace activities and inter-church relations (for Mennonite Central Committee). “I was working internationally and ecumenically, and my interest and experience in those areas was growing. But did Mennonite World Conference—which most people understood to be those spectacular, once-every-six-year assemblies—fit my gifts and personality?”

“My growing interest in MWC surprised people who knew me,

Cover: Some of the 1500 Dutch Mennonites, gathered to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the *Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit (ADS)*—Dutch Mennonite General Conference—wave at photographer Marc Pasques of the MWC Koinonia delegation. See story, page 6.



Larry Miller's tenure as General Secretary was marked by his gift of encouragement among other global leaders. Here, in 1991, he stands behind his “big brothers”—Mesach Krisetya (l) of Indonesia, who was to become MWC President in 1997, and Reg Toews of Canada, then serving as Treasurer.

including Eleanor! I sensed, however, that this might be a call to receive life through the global church.”

Miller became Executive Secretary during the closing event of the Winnipeg MWC assembly in 1990. The setting, the music, the ceremony had a touch of the spectacular, but Miller and the organization faced a frightening deficit as the week-long meeting ended.

Today, Miller reflects, “while MWC needed to deal with that reality, and we were able to, I never felt pressure to ‘succeed’ by building a large institution. Instead, the focus was on helping this little boat—MWC—to catch the wind in its sails. The wind was clearly blowing, so the task was to adjust the sails to catch the wind.”

Miller senses that he has served Anabaptists around the world during a time of fundamental change. “My primary calling has been to amplify the

voice of the Global South and its rising. That voice, that capacity, needs more room and opportunity. I’ve often felt like John the Baptist, that something greater is coming.”

A big risk

In January 1997, the first Mennonite World Conference assembly under Larry Miller’s leadership took place in central Kolkata, inside tents on a sprawling school campus. The daring move stood in stark contrast to the just-prior assembly which had been held in a well-appointed convention center in Winnipeg.

“We had potential disasters everywhere,” Miller reflects about the Kolkata event. “Before I joined MWC, groundwork had been laid for the assembly to go the diplomatic, aristocratic quarter of New Delhi. That location didn’t seem right to me.

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*, 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** Changes can also be emailed to info@mwc-cmm.org

“There was no model for holding a global assembly in Kolkata. It was counter-cultural. No other world communion had ever gone to Kolkata for its world gathering. So we had to create ours from scratch.

“Would people come? Could we pull off such a complex event there? Would it work financially? Would attendees be overwhelmed by the city itself?”

The national Indian churches who are members of MWC, along with national MWC staff, worked diligently and with extraordinary perseverance to host a world gathering of some 4,500 Mennonites and Brethren in Christ.

The bold decision and the stark contrast to past gatherings cleared a path for new aspects to be born as part of the assembly program. For the first time there was a Global Church Village, a venue where delegates learned about the life of churches in each continental region through food and cultural displays, and Assembly Gathered/ Assembly Scattered. In fact, these elements worked so well that they have continued in subsequent MWC assemblies.

“My surprise,” says Miller now, “is that no part of the Kolkata gathering ended in disaster. And because we had a good, positive experience, the event allowed Mennonite World Conference to turn a corner. It permitted the reorientation of MWC. I view it as a watershed, make-or-break moment.”

The second assembly that Miller and his team shepherded was held in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Despite the country’s tremulously uncertain political, economic, and food situations, the Brethren in Christ churches provided extraordinary hospitality.

“Zimbabwe raised many of the same questions as Kolkata did. Was it courageous or stupid to bring thousands of people there? But we had survived Kolkata, so even a modest failure in Zimbabwe wouldn’t have wrecked MWC.”

“The church is both local and global”

Perhaps one of Larry Miller’s greatest gifts to Mennonites and Brethren in Christ around the world has been his belief, and consequent actions, that the



“I do not know if you would have accomplished all you did had a very special person not been by your side: my dear soul sister, Eleanor Miller,” says Milka Rindzinski, former MWC editor. Above: the Millers and their children (now married) in Kolkata in 1997, with the parents-in-law of Menno Joel (r). Left to right: Anne-Marie Miller Blaise; Elisabeth Miller Sommers; Menno’s parents-in-law, Larry, Alexandre Miller, Eleanor, and Menno Joel.

church is never just the local congregation, or the denomination, or the world body.

“The church is both local and ‘global.’ It always has been and will always be. The special foundational task for MWC during these years has been to recover this New Testament view of the church. MWC needs to continue to make the global church real, to have it be seen, felt, touched, experienced.”

Gradually but persistently, Miller has created ways to make this daily reality apparent. He helped to conceive of, and then create, the Global Church Sharing Fund. (MWC member churches in the South apply for and receive funds for their ministries, as an expression of Jubilee redistribution.) He guided the

development of MWC’s statement of “Shared Convictions,” brief paragraphs documenting the core beliefs that the scattered Anabaptist churches and fellowships claim. He has overseen the establishment of four commissions under the General Council of MWC, each composed of members from the five continental regions, each pledged to fostering greater faithfulness by MWC member churches and their support of each other. (The four are the Deacons, Faith and Life, Mission, and Peace Commissions.)

“At the same time,” he states emphatically, “the global church without the local church is not fully the church either. One without the other is heresy.”

Miller quickly moves to another theme



“Larry, it has been a privilege to work with you in the Mennonite-Catholic dialogue. I appreciate your deep ecumenical commitment and friendship in that work,” wrote Msgr. John A. Radano, in a tribute. Radano (l) was a staff member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and co-secretary of the Mennonite Catholic Dialogue 1998–2003. To his left are Bishop Joseph Martino and Larry Miller.

which has characterized his leadership of MWC. “Even as we’ve begun to grasp the wonder of what it means to belong to our particular global family of faith, we are still a fragment by ourselves. What is emerging is our increasing connectedness to other Christian world communions. We must see other global Christian churches as part of the whole church universal to which we also belong. We must live within this *whole* church, or we won’t live.

“While the giftedness of our Anabaptist community is being acknowledged by other world communions, the limitedness of it is also. The same is true of these other churches. Together, we’re recognizing our need of each other,” says Miller.

The struggles and the gifts

What difficulties did Larry experience as MWC General Secretary?

“I’ve lived a constant series of good-byes,” he says. “And while I’ve had so many points of contact, they are almost all distant.” The MWC office in Strasbourg, where Miller is based, includes an average of only four administrative staff. All other staff and executive leadership are scattered around the world.

“The work is sometimes heavy and lonely,” he reflects. “But it is always invigorating! This has been a place of life for me, a gift of life.”

What anxieties does Miller have for Mennonite World Conference, which he acknowledges is an organization with uncertainty, heaviness, and fragility?

“We are in a historic transition moment,” offers Miller. “There is decline in the churches of the North. But when you belong to a global body of faith, there’s always a part that’s experiencing new life and a vision that can draw all of us forward. The center of gravity of the global church has shifted South. We must continue to adjust our sails accordingly to catch this new wind of the Spirit.

“With gratitude and joy, I imagine César García (MWC’s new General Secretary-elect), and those with him, picking up the vision for the future. I look forward to seeing how they incarnate it. My experience of working with César has been among my top joys, among my very best MWC experiences. He and his team will live into the future

Blessings on your way, Larry!

I remember the difficult days in early 1996 when you had no visa to India. It was your attitude and faith in the possibilities, your spirit and vision, that kept things moving.

—Margaret Devadason, coordinator for the 1997 assembly

After Marlin [Miller] passed away, Larry nominated me as his big brother. Thanks for helping MWC administration in a way that made MWC flourish in the world. God bless you.

—Mesach Krisetya, MWC President, 1997–2003

Whenever I got impatient with somebody or some groups within the MWC family, Larry always reminded me that no matter what and how, it is better

for those people and groups to be within MWC circle rather than without.

—Paulus Widjaja, Secretary of the GC Peace Commission

A notable achievement during Larry’s leadership was the creation of space for young people and empowering them for church leadership and decision-making.

—Elina Ciptadi-Perkins, president of MWC’s first youth committee, 2004–2009

One of Larry’s greatest accomplishments was taking the assemblies into the global South in ways that really energized the host churches. Larry, may the spark you gave the global church light César’s torch as he leads us into the future.

—Ray Brubacher, organizer for Zimbabwe (2003) and Paraguay (2009) assemblies

“Keep the Faith” have been the words that you, Larry, have frequently shared with meduring the last months. You have taught the meaning of finishing a race in a good way.

—César García, incoming MWC General Secretary

Larry offered to go with me to the hospital to visit Dad. His pastoral presence there was a blessing to Dad and helped me overcome my sense of fragmentation. —Nancy R. Heisey, MWC President, 2003–2009

Larry—visionary par excellence, administrator who inspires, one who values friendship, and fellow disciple of Jesus Christ.

—J. Lorne Peachey, Courier-Correo-Courrier Editor, 2002–2010

[Under Larry’s leadership] no corner was left on the planet where Anabaptist-

“Larry has been the right person, dedicated and invested in the global Anabaptist church at exactly the right time in history,” says Janet Plener, MWC Vice President. Here Miller speaks at the 2009 Executive Committee meetings in Paraguay. To his left are Danisa Ndlovu (see page 16 for his word of blessing), incoming MWC president that year, and Nancy Heisey, who was completing her term as president.



Photo: Merle Good

from their own worlds and contexts, going forward with the Spirit. It is for them to imagine.”

On August 1, 2011, the officers of Mennonite World Conference, plus a few staff and representatives of the four North American MWC member churches, gathered around a big table in Grantham, Pennsylvania. It was the kick-off for organizing the planning of the Assembly 16 to be held in 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Danisa Ndlovu, president of MWC, opened the meeting with a devotional, acknowledging two reasons for anxiety that day: the start of planning for a new assembly, and César García's first official day as General Secretary-Elect.

When it was Larry Miller's turn to address the group, he said, “I can attest,

after 22 years with Mennonite World Conference, that it is not a place of anxiety, but a place that gives life!”

Phyllis Pellman Good, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is a communications consultant with Mennonite World Conference.

Photo: Merlie Good



Transition

At the 2011 Executive Committee meetings in Taiwan, Cisca Mawangu Ibanda of Congo (DRC) presented carved animals to César García (r) and Larry Miller. More than curios, said Ibanda, the animals represent qualities important for their service to MWC. Miller holds his elephant with its trunk down “in a peaceful position.” García, she explained, holds a giraffe with its neck fully extended so that he can see “the landscape of the future.” The transition between the two general secretaries occurred between August and December as García moved his family home to Bogotá, Colombia (the site of the new MWC head office) after studies in the US and traveled with Miller in Europe and North America.

A few words from friends in the MWC world and beyond

oriented communities were not welcomed to explore joining MWC as equals.

—Milka Rindzinski, MWC editor, translator 1992–2008

One of the things I admire about Larry is his discernment in his contacts with the Mennonite church all around the world.

—Raúl García, MWC President 1990–1997

When Larry was first appointed he had to deal with a very large deficit... Exactly a year later I got a call from Larry telling me that the deficit had been eliminated. We were both very pleased.

—Reg Toews, MWC Treasurer, 1990–1996

I remember the reconciliation worship with the Protestant/Reformed church in Zurich in 2004 when Larry preached in Zwingli's pulpit that we belong to one body, despite all of what had happened in history.

—Markus Rediger, Executive Committee member

Larry, you are the most diligent and dedicated person I have ever seen in the Mennonite World Conference. You work hard and fast. Nothing escapes you in remembering details.

—Bedru Hussein, MWC Vice President, 1997–2000

Larry, your quiet, gentle leadership has blessed the worldwide Anabaptist family.

You will, as God promised, keep blessing others.

—Willard E. Roth, MWC editor 1990–1997

May God go with you as you carry your passion for the Anabaptist faith and the global church into ecumenical circles worldwide.

—Ferne Burkhardt, MWC News Editor 2001–2010

Larry and Eleanor are people who love the international bond between the churches, who quietly carry out many missions tasks almost nobody knows of.

—Ernst Bergen, MWC Treasurer

Among general secretaries of Christian world communions, Larry has been a great colleague and source of inspiration.

—Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches

For Lutherans, the reconciliation with Mennonites was a moving moment at our 2010 international Assembly. My own favourite interpretation [of its significance] was Larry Miller's *Courier* article, “What Happened in Heaven on July 22” As characterizes Larry himself, theological depth combined there with generous vision.

—Kathryn L. Johnson, Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs, the Lutheran World Federation

Larry, it has been a privilege to work with you in the Mennonite-Catholic dialogue. I appreciate your deep ecumenical commitment and friendship in that work.

—Msgr. John A. Radano, former staff member, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

As we reflected on the history of the founding of the Mennonites in Europe and that of the African Independent Churches (AICs) we realized that both church families have a lot in common.

—Nicta Lubaale, General Secretary, Organization of African Instituted Churches

I am grateful for Larry's friendly, no-nonsense, insightful presence [at Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions]. As the two representatives of the historic peace churches, we share many values and approaches.

—Nancy Irving, General Secretary, Friends World Committee for Consultation

Larry's grace-filled approach in engaging with others has led to the building of relationships that are honoring to Christ and the gospel.

—Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe, Secretary General, World Evangelical Alliance

Stepping into the future

Dutch Mennonite church marks 200th anniversary



Photo: Marijke van Duin

A highlight of the celebrations was Saturday evening's premier performance of "Mennonites—the Musical," a humorous historical sketch created by Kees Posthumus who stands beside the letter D (for *Doopsgezind*, the name by which Dutch Mennonites are known). The performance was accompanied by accordion music. At right is the ADS logo, taken from Menno Simons' foundational Scripture of 1 Corinthians 3:11.

Elspeet, the Netherlands—More than 1,500 Mennonites were present on Sunday, September 18, 2011 for a final jubilee celebration that marked the 200th anniversary of the Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit (ADS)—Dutch Mennonite General Conference.

Festivities over the weekend took place at Mennorode, a conference centre with Mennonite roots. They featured about 30 workshops under the general theme, "new paths of believing." Topics included non-resistance, aging in relation to congregational development, climate change, sustainability, the story of the 2010 Lutheran-Mennonite reconciliation and reporting on the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in Kingston last May.

Tjitske Hiemstra, minister at the Mennonite congregation of Leeuwarden and member of the jubilee committee, used her workshop to explore new worship practices: "We shouldn't just use the old familiar forms of worship, but need to enter the future with new forms.

Many people want to forge a new path. It's the only way to ensure that we have a future. After all, Menno Simons started something new, too."

Indeed, creativity ran through many of the weekend events. As people gathered in the tent set up for the Sunday gathering, Pieter Post led the singing of songs, old and new. Then, before ADS chairman Otto Bleker could open the celebrations, the youth paraded across the podium in a real-life fashion show. They modelled the clothes that they had made earlier at Menno Night, an event that had taken place a week earlier. The youth sold the clothes and a calendar at the jubilee celebrations.

"This year, we celebrated our past and today, we step into our future", Bleker told the gathering. "We entered into this celebration, this jubilee year with daring words: 'Our song, our way.' You have embraced this theme enthusiastically, because we have our own will, we sing our own tune and we choose our own way."

The service included the presentation of two recently-published books. Haarlem minister, Herman Heijn, introduced his *Via Teijlers gang* (*Through Tyler's Corridor*), on the future of churches, and the opportunities that lie before them. Minister Marion Bruggen then presented *Onderweg: Reisgids spiritualiteit*, (*En Route. Travel Guide for Spirituality*), which she and four colleagues compiled, to invite readers to take their own spiritual voyage of discovery.

Storyteller Kees Posthumus, known in Mennonite circles for his solo performance "Menno Simonszoon," was given 45 minutes to dramatize the story of the whole Bible, assisted by an accordionist and a bass player.

The assembly also welcomed an international Koinonia delegation of Mennonite World Conference (see sidebar), along with outgoing General Secretary Larry Miller. In a short greeting, Miller said that working together with the Dutch Mennonites had given him the greatest joy.

The Koinonia delegation also participated in a tree planting ceremony on Friday evening, marking the historic reconciliation between the Lutherans and Mennonites in 2010, in Stuttgart, Germany. The tree-planting was part of a broader international series of tree plantings emanating from the

Snapshot of the Dutch Mennonites today

The Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit, while incorporated 200 years ago, traces its roots to the Anabaptist communities pastored by Menno Simons in the 1500s. Today, the group represents 118 mostly urban congregations, with about 8,000 members plus 4,000 "friends" and 1,000 children.

The ADS was also host to two Mennonite World Conference assemblies, one in 1936 and the other in 1967.



Tiny van Straten, Ed van Straten (former General Secretary of the ADS and MWC Vice-President 1990–1997) and Ineke Reinhold (former member of MWC Executive Committee), with one of the commemorative publications.



Young and old enjoyed recreational activities, worship and entertainment at the ADS anniversary celebrations.
Photo: Dirk Stenvers

“Luthergarten” in Wittenburg, Germany. (More on the MWC links will be reported in the next *Courier*.)

At the closing service, the conference centre’s minister Marion Bruggen and Pastor Gerke van Hiele of Wageningen, used the image of espionage to recap the year of festivities.

“This year we have been spies within our own tradition, and also partners in the quest of Menno Simons who died 450 years ago,” said Bruggen.

She recounted how the Dutch church was “brimming over with activities” in its variety of commemorations this past

year: the creation of new songs; exhibitions; historical hikes and bike rides tracing Menno Simons’ ministry; an amateur radio event centred in Witmarsum, where Menno Simons lived; and a scientific congress.

The year also included a variety of other commemorations in the ADS, particularly the 100th anniversary of the ordination of Anne Mankes-Zernike, a Mennonite and the first woman to be ordained in the Netherlands, and the 275th year of the Mennonite Theological Seminary, marked by a conference on

“Just Peace” at the Free University in Amsterdam.

In his closing remarks, ADS chairman Otto Bleker said, “More than ever, you have been asked the question: ‘What, exactly, is a Mennonite?’” In answering, Bleker declared: “Feel the community of free believers, who want to travel the path of Christ together, who want a different, just society, who want peace and justice in his name, tomorrow, this year, every year.”

From reports by Dirk Visser and Marijke van Duin

Koinonia delegation brings greetings

A five-person “Koinonia” delegation of Mennonite World Conference representatives participated in the ADS anniversary activities, along with outgoing MWC General Secretary Larry Miller and his spouse Eleanor. The group led two workshops on the global church. Shown at right are delegation members Cynthia Peacock from India, Sandra Campos Cruz from Costa Rica, Marc Pasques from Spain, Thuma Hamukang’andu from Zambia and Bert Lobe from Canada. Hosted by ADS General Secretary Henk Stenvers and ADS theologian and leader Alle Hoekema, the group also spent several days visiting leaders, congregations, and Anabaptist historical sites in the Netherlands.

Koinonia delegations were begun several years ago as a way of showing support for MWC member churches in times of suffering or celebration. The first was to Zimbabwe in 2007, during the country’s economic collapse; the second was to Vietnam in 2008, following the government’s recognition of the Mennonite church there. The Netherlands delegation was the third.



World Fellowship Sunday, January 22, 2012

Hands reaching across borders



Why celebrate World Fellowship Sunday?

We Anabaptist Christians tend to focus on our local congregations. It is here that we experience what it means to be and to live as the body of Christ. Sometimes, though, we forget that we also belong to other Anabaptist-related congregations in our neighbourhoods and beyond. Indeed, the church includes congregations of other Christian confessions near and far in the world-wide Christian fellowship.

We are familiar with the large global assemblies of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC), which take place every six years. Some of us have even taken part. World Fellowship Sunday brings the entire Mennonite and Brethren in Christ communities to our own congregations at home.

The MWC worship materials published each year help us celebrate the world-wide fellowship and to learn more about it. While key parts of it are included here, more can be found at the MWC website: www.mwc-cmm.org. The website also offers a wealth of information on Mennonites and Brethren in Christ around the world.

In May 2012, delegates of the MWC General Council will meet just after the Mennonite European Regional Conference (MERK) in Switzerland. The motto of the 2012 MERK is "Hands Reaching Across Borders", which has also been chosen as the theme of Mennonite World Fellowship Sunday.

We hope that the celebration of World Fellowship Sunday will whet your appetite for the next global assembly of Mennonite World Conference in July 2015 in Pennsylvania, USA.

Rainer Burkart, Germany, member of the MWC Executive Committee

Order of service

Gathering

Call to worship (*see below*)

Worship with Songs and Readings

Reading: Psalm 103:1-11; 19-22

Prayer (s)

Songs from the *International Songbook, Paraguay 2009*

"Praise, I will praise you, Lord" (#2)

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" (#17)

"He is with you all the time" (#31)

Hearing and Responding to the Word

Sermon, based on Genesis 18 (*see page 10*)

Stories

Songs from the *International Songbook, Paraguay 2009*

"Father, I love and praise you" (#5)

"Tengan la Mente de Cristo" (#9)

"Hakuna akaita" (#7)

"In Jesus we are brothers and sister" (#12)

Prayer of Confession (*see page 9*)

Call to Intercession (*see page 9*)

Conclusion

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Song of blessing: "Herr, gib uns deinen Frieden"

Call to worship

There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

—Galatians 3:28

Leader: The time has come.

Let us worship the most high God.

**People: With Christians all over the world,
we gather to worship!**

Leader: The time has come.

The kingdom of God is near.

People: We are assembled here, expectant.

Leader: The time has come.

Believe the good news!

**People: May worship be good news
that inspires and convicts.**

*Sarah Thompson, USA, Marius van Hoogstraten,
the Netherlands/Germany*



Prayer of Confession Reconciliation and unity among Christians

Glory to God, who is generous and kind,
Source of grace and truth.

**God fills our hearts with confidence and hope.
God's love opens us to our brothers and sisters.**

We are delivered from sin through Jesus Christ,
God's ambassador and our Lord.

**The Word calls us all to live in freedom as children of God.
Those who have gone before us believed, and they
answered this call.**

They found eternal grace, promised by God,
not through their own works nor by human might.

**Yet through disagreements and conflicts, their unity was broken.
The powerful abused their power,**

persecuting and killing brothers and sisters in the faith.
Pride led them to scorn one another.

**With truth and humility we ponder the burden and promise
of our history and together we declare each other freed
from our past sin.**

We abandon suspicion and abuse of power
in the name of the One who gave his life for us.

We hear anew God's call to manifest our unity in Christ.

We are grateful for the diverse gifts of the Spirit,
given freely to individual members and to the church.

**We want to serve each other with the special gifts God has
given to each of us**

*and with joy to unite our efforts to spread
the reign of God in this world.
To God alone be glory. Amen.*

*Prepared for the dialogue between Reformed Church and
Mennonites in Switzerland, 2009*

Call to Intercession 2012—a year of change

This coming year will see many changes in the Mennonite World Conference (MWC). For World Fellowship Sunday we invite special prayers that God's presence and guidance may be known. Please pray for:

- **César García** of Colombia, who on January 1 succeeds **Larry Miller** as General Secretary. Miller begins the same day as Secretary of the Global Christian Forum.
- The **transition of the MWC head office** from Strasbourg, France, to Bogotá, Colombia.
- **Preparations for the triennial MWC General Council**, May 20–26 in Basel, Switzerland. The focus is MWC work for 2012–2015, including the appointment of the next MWC president-elect who will assume responsibilities as MWC president at the time of the 2015 MWC assembly in Pennsylvania, USA.
- **Liesa Unger**, logistics coordinator of the General Council event. She will also coordinate meetings of the MWC executive committee, the four GC Commissions, the Young Anabaptists (YABs), the Global Mission Fellowship, the Global Anabaptist Service Consultation and a meeting of global educators.
- The gathering of the **European Mennonite Regional Conference (MERK)** in Sumiswald, Switzerland, just prior to the General Council meetings. This gathering takes place every six years, between the full MWC assemblies. The theme of MERK coincides with that of World Fellowship Sunday—"Hands Reaching Across Borders"—and reflects our desire to follow Jesus and take a stance against segregation and exclusion.

While there will be many changes in our worldwide community, we are anchored in Jesus Christ, who remains the foundation of our celebration of World Fellowship Sunday (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Markus Rediger, Switzerland, MWC Executive Committee member

For more resources, go to the MWC website at: www.mwc-cmm.

Listen to God and act

Seeds for a sermon on Genesis 18:1-8



Bible scholars note that Abram's behavior seems to change after the Lord blesses him, reaffirms the divine covenant with him and commands him and his descendants to circumcise their male children. This change is also reflected in Abram's new name, Abraham. Sarai likewise becomes Sarah. The Hebrew letter *h* is added to their names, signifying this new covenant with God. From now on, with their lives thus intertwined, they will uphold the name of the Lord. "Hallowed be thy name... Thy will be done." Abraham and Sarah are blessed indeed.

Even though Abraham and Sarah have accepted a new task, however, it is obvious that doubts still linger in their hearts. The Lord has said there will be a new future—but when, if ever, will it come to pass? In the beginning of this episode, then, there is a stillness, a fatigue. Abraham sits in front of his tent in the heat of the day. Spring is over, and the earth is scorched, dry and barren. The scene reminds me of "The Wasteland" by the English poet T.S. Eliot: "Here is no water but only rock, / Rock and no water and the sandy road / winding above among the mountains. . ."

Will there ever be new beginnings? There will be, but they take time. The Lord often dwells among us in disguise. In ordinary daily life God can be found, close to our heart and home, so commonplace, yet so special. As Psalm 113:4-6 declares: "The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?"

The Lord wants to be close, to be intimate with people, to rejuvenate and restore, to renew their hopes and foster new beginnings. God visits both the sick and the strong, the needy and the hopeless.

Hospitality

Abraham is only too eager to receive guests in his tent. The biblical storyteller seems to rejoice in relating all the details of his welcome, including the practice of footwashing, a very hospitable procedure. Having welcomed the presence of the Lord in his life, Abraham is now enabled to welcome other people into his life and home.

There is bonding and bridging here. Abraham is bound to the Lord and reaches out to others. One could say he acts like a partner of God. He takes his responsibility for the welfare of God's creatures.

A telling detail in the story reflects what has changed. In the beginning of the story it is recorded that the visiting angels were "above" Abraham (v. 2). But a little later Abraham is "above" them (v. 8). According to one Jewish story, at first the angels did not have much respect for Abraham. To them he was sick and weak, a vulnerable human being. When the angels Michael and Gabriel discovered how hospitable and welcoming he was, they had to recognize his superiority. Here was a human being with an eye to the needs of others. Here was someone in control of his needs and passions. Abraham rose to the occasion and gained their respect.

People can, in fact, grow in stature, outgrowing their natural needs and wishes and limitations. People can learn not to do simply as they wish. "Not my will, but Thy will be done," said Jesus in the garden. For people of faith, there are higher orders.

Hebrews 13 instructs us to "keep being concerned about each other as the Lord's followers should. Be sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests, without even knowing it." In the original Greek New Testament this basic attitude of love is described in several words, including *filadelfia*

(brotherly love) and *filoxenia* (love of stranger).

Biblically speaking, to love is not so much a feeling as something you do. It is a verb, both grammatically and spiritually. Hospitality is given by offering the stranger a place in your home and feeding him this very day. In a world without hospitality no one will ever be truly at home.

Three perspectives

1. In Western societies we struggle with our hospitality. Our societies are changing, and there are new tensions, threats and challenges. Hospitality, or the lack of it, has become a real concern. There is not only a lack of love for the stranger, but also xenophobia, a blend of fear and hate. What does welcoming the stranger mean in this context?

2. Many communities struggle to become more hospitable to those people who have lost contact with the church and who live in a secular society. How do we help people to find a new and relevant connection to the gospel and the Christian community? What does hospitality mean in a missionary context? What do we consider to be vital to our message and what would we actually offer to those outside the church?

3. On a more personal level, let us ponder how to retain or regain an open heart. We have become isolated as free and separate individuals. How do we value tradition and community? How can we grow in faith and life as disciples of Christ, who find new ways to touch the hearts of all? How do we stay one with him in our hearts (1 John 3:17)?

May God's Spirit inspire our hearts and hands.

Gerke van Hiele, the Netherlands

Fighting with lions

One hundredth member of MWC rooted in ministry among poor

Santiago, Chile—“The magnitude of what has just happened has scarcely sunk in among us,” said pastor Samuel Tripainao, after the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Chile (IEMCH) was accepted into membership of Mennonite

from Jorge Vallejos, Sr., an expatriate Chilean church planter in Canada, the IEMCH embraced its Mennonite identity in 1989 and received official government recognition the following year.

The IEMCH congregations conduct active nurture and outreach ministries as well. Worship services take place in the evenings, while Sunday schools for their own and neighbourhood children are held in the morning, they include breakfast, singing and Bible lessons, and conclude with lunch. God’s Word is also taught through “preaching at worship and in the street, and through Bible studies.” Street ministry includes “serving coffee and sandwiches to the homeless.”

Pastors’ retreats, women’s group meetings and ministries, marriage retreats, evangelism trips to distant cities (including to Argentina across the Andes), prison ministry, monthly joint worship services between various congregations, summer camps for catechism culminating with joint baptisms are all part of IEMCH’s ongoing effort to extend the church and witness to the watching world. Once, when a police officer asked pastor Daniel Delgado what his church was about, he replied: “We are doing the work you are hired to do, and

we do it for free.”

Most pastors in the IEMCH are lay ministers. As president, however, Delgado’s church duties do not allow him to hold a professional job. Supported through church contributions, he is able to do visitations, keep the pastors and congregations connected, run the conference’s programs and administer its property.

In the early years, IEMCH often felt isolated. But more recently their hunger for a connection to the wider Mennonite world family has been awakened by short-term visits from Mennonite teachers and mission administrators, their increasing involvement in the biennial gatherings of Mennonites from the Southern Cone (Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile) and the 2009 MWC Assembly 15 in Paraguay.

Titus Guenther, theology and missions professor at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Canada, has worked and taught in Chile.



Youth leader Cristian Bustos (left), conversing with Daniel Delgado, IEMCH president, in front of the Lo Espejo church.

World Conference (MWC) this past May. The approximately 1200-member conference of 14 congregations was the 100th body—and the first in Chile—to become a member or associate member of MWC.

According to Tripainao, IEMCH leaders see this new connection to the world family of Anabaptists as “a recognition of the work they have done for some 20 years.” Youth minister Cristian Bustos sees it “opening greater possibilities for the exchange of our gifts, while putting them in the service of God’s kingdom.”

The IEMCH is one of several independent Anabaptist-Mennonite groups in Chile that have come into being mostly as “native” initiatives. With coaching

The IEMCH churches emerged in poverty-ridden *poblaciones* (poor sectors in and around Santiago, Chile’s capital), so their ministry was, naturally, a combination of Christian social work and evangelism. Relieving poverty, training young people vocationally, battling the drug culture and working at rehabilitation of its victims—all make IEMCH president Daniel Delgado exclaim: “I feel at times as if I were trying to wrest defenseless lambs from the mouths of lions!”

Delgado leads a team of pastors and youth leaders, some of whom have given up well-paying careers and have chosen part-time self-employment in order to free up much of the week for “the work of the Lord.”



Johana Fritis of Iglesia la cueva de Adulam, serves hot chocolate to children in a poor neighbourhood of Santiago, following a Bible class.

Switzerland welcomes General Council, May 20–28

The General Council (GC) of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) will meet at St. Chrischona, Switzerland this coming May 20-28. Following the European Mennonite Regional Conference (MERK) in nearby Sumiswald, the triennial meetings are “an excellent opportunity to meet many Anabaptist Christians from around the world,” says the GC event coordinator, Liesa Unger.

The General Council has more than 120 members from more than 50 countries on all five continental regions, and meets at the MWC assemblies themselves and mid-way between them. The meetings are open for others to attend. European congregations, especially, are being encouraged to welcome GC members on Pentecost Sunday, May 27.

Several related gatherings will take place at St. Chrischona and Bienenberg, both of which are close to Basel, Switzerland. The MWC Commissions—Faith and Life, Peace, Mission, and Deacons—will meet before MERK, as well as the Global Mission Fellowship, Young Anabaptists (YABs), and the Global Anabaptist Service Consultation. A global meeting of educators at Bienenberg is also being planned for the end of the GC meetings.

Contributions to the travel expenses of General Council members will be gratefully accepted.

US funds: 2529 Willow Ave., Clovis, CA 93612;

Canadian funds: 50 Kent Ave. Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1;

Euros: 8 rue du Fossé des Treize, 6700 Strasbourg, France.

Seventh-day Adventists and MWC begin conversation

Silver Spring, Maryland (USA)—Representatives of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the Mennonite World Conference held the first of several theological conversations June 28 to July 1, 2011, at the world headquarters of the 17 million-member Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland.

For four days representatives of both world communions exchanged ideas and perspectives on the theme of “Living the Christian Life in Today’s World.” Mennonite World Conference was represented by Jack Suderman (Canada), assistant Secretary of the MWC General Council Peace Commission and co-chair of the SDA/MWC conversation; MWC President Danisa Ndlovu (Zimbabwe); Tom Yoder Neufeld (Canada) and Valerie Rempel (USA) of the Faith and Life Commission; Henk Stenvers (Netherlands) of the Deacons Commission and Patricia Urueña (Colombia/Ecuador).

During the past several years, said Suderman, the SDA interest in investigating and recovering their Anabaptist affinities led them to seek these conversations.

Adventists and Anabaptists come from diverse historical backgrounds—Mennonites from the Anabaptist movement during the Reformation in the sixteenth century and Adventists from the Second Great Awakening in the United States in the nineteenth century.

But they also share much in common. In a joint statement, SDA and MWC leaders said each shares “a desire to recover the authenticity and passion of the New Testament church, a similar understanding of Christian history, and a strong commitment to be followers of Jesus in their personal lives and in their corporate witness to the world.”

Together they understand that Christians live “in the world” but are not “of the world.” In its early days the Adventist church stressed the importance of community, was pacifist, advocated adult baptism, and encouraged discipleship to Jesus as Lord in ways that were very similar to Anabaptism.

The discussion included candid sharing of challenges facing both churches, including peace-making and military service, ecclesiology, health



Photo: Ansel Oliver

Participants in the SDA-MWC conversations (left to right): William Johnsson (SDA co-chair); Tom Yoder Neufeld (MWC), Robert (Jack) Suderman (MWC); Danisa Ndlovu (MWC); Henk Stevers (MWC); Valerie Rempel (MWC); Teresa Reeve (SDA); Patricia Urueña (MWC); and John Graz (SDA). Missing are: Denis Fortin (SDA); Bert Beach (SDA); Gary Councill (SDA); Peter Landless (SDA); Ganoune Diop (SDA).

and healing, and respect for the environment.

“By sitting down and talking with those of other faiths, we gain a deeper understanding of who they are,” said John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Adventist Church, whose department organized the event.

Danisa Ndlovu expressed his thanks to the Adventist Church for hosting the conversation. “When you see people from a distance you can’t say that you know them,”

he said. “But it is different when you sit down with someone and exchange ideas—now we can say, ‘We know you.’”

The next conversation, to be convened next year in Switzerland, will explore further subjects, such as interpretation of Scripture, eschatology, Sabbath and worship, and areas of common witness and mission.

From reports from the Adventist News Network and Mennonite World Conference

Consultation explores church and school as partners

Winnipeg, Canada—A constant hum of voices animated sessions of the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) Higher Education Consultation at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, June 13–17, as participants from around the world engaged the theme “Church and school: *Compañeros* (co-labourers) in growing people of God.”

Mennonite Brethren church leaders, directors, deans and board members from 30 Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite institutes of higher learning from 17 countries on five continents attended the event.

While ICOMB is a vehicle for partnership between the 18 Mennonite Brethren member conferences in 15 countries, this consultation (the second of its kind) also involved representatives of schools from other Anabaptist groups (including Seminario Biblico Menonita de Colombia, Bogotá; Centro Evangélica Menonita de Teología Asunción, Paraguay; Meserete Kristos College, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) and schools with Anabaptist connections in Lithuania and Russia.

During the five days, each school had 10 minutes to report on their programs, unique strengths, and challenges.

In a plenary session on the first morning, Alfred Neufeld of the Evangelical University of Paraguay and chair of Mennonite World Conference General Council Faith and Life Commission, gave an address on “growing people of faith in the Anabaptist–Mennonite tradition.” “Christians are to transform their context with the biblical message,” said Neufeld. He called on participants to enlarge their understanding of conversion, church and the Kingdom of God, to enlarge their concept of salvation, and to explore the idea of the evangelization of culture.

In another plenary, two Canadians gave presentations on “*compañeros* in growing the relationship between church and school.” Schools that provide theological education are “an arm” of the church, said Canadian Mennonite University president Gerald Gerbrandt. He spoke of schools as not merely a *partner* (parallel entity) but a *part* of the church. He called for the church to sup-

port the school by sending students, seeking to collaborate, funding, praying and providing a safe place for students to ask questions and even to fail as they exercise growing skills in service and leadership.

Interim ICOMB Executive Secretary David Wiebe gave a reverse presentation on “What I (my church) would like the school to contribute.” He asked that schools “be careful in their discipleship role,” and teach not only how to analyze and criticize, but also how to affirm the positive and build on strengths. It is the job of Christian schools not only to teach students to think critically, but also how to live constructively.

A findings committee gave a preliminary report on the consultation with observations falling under the subject headings of listening, reflecting, counselling and acting. Participants affirmed the pursuit of dialogue and greater connection between church and school, but “the language is still dichotomous of church and school,” said Jim Pankratz, dean at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Canada.

“Church and school: we share the



Photo: Karla Braun

Educators from around the world share struggles, joys, and pray together at the ICOMB consultation.

same vision,” said Mexican Mennonite Brethren leader Enrique Rodriguez; “to form in order to transform.” They also share the same challenge: to call people out of the world to advance the vulnerable position of being in relationship.

Karla Braun, Associate Editor, Mennonite Brethren Herald

Education on the agenda at upcoming MWC gatherings

Among resource people and observers at the ICOMB consultation were John Roth, Secretary of the MWC General Council Faith and Life Commission; Bert Lobe, MWC North American Representative; Janet Plenert, MWC Vice President; and Elaine Moyer, Associate Director of the Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) of Mennonite Church USA.

One evening, Moyer and Lobe hosted a session in which they invited ICOMB participants to respond to a proposal for an MWC gathering of education leaders in May 2012 that would “build, strengthen and inspire a clear vision for Mennonite education that transcends a single nation.” The gathering, to be held in conjunction with the MWC General Council meetings in Basel, Switzerland, could lead to a

broader consultation at MWC’s Assembly 16 in 2015.

The initiatives, facilitated through the administrative support of MEA, would build on a half-day symposium held at Assembly 15 in 2009, nurturing networks and exploring the meaning of Anabaptist education in different cultural situations. Moyer and Lobe suggested that the consultations would include more focus on elementary and secondary education, in contrast to the ICOMB consultations, which have concentrated on college and seminary education.

The session’s approximately 30 attendees, affirmed the initiative of MEA and MWC in calling together 20 leaders in May, at the MWC General Council meetings, to explore what might be the shape of a broader consultation at Assembly 16 in 2015.

Glory to God and peace on earth—a personal reflection

by Paulus Widjaja

Earlier this year, May 17–24, I attended the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC), sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Kingston, Jamaica. About 1,000 Christians from many theological paths and countries gathered at the University of West Indies, including some 30 representatives of the Historic Peace Churches. As Secretary of the General Council Peace Commission, I represented Mennonite World Conference.

The conference was convened to celebrate the completion of the Decade to Overcome Violence, but it also looked to the future. The event combined both theory and practical skills, deep theological reflection and sharing of best practices, all around the theme, “Glory to God and peace on earth.” I wish to share some of the things that I learned from the convocation.

Peace in the community

- We in the church often criticize the injustices in society, yet many injustices continue within the church. At one session, when a person from India criticized the caste system for the brutal treatment of the Dalit (untouchables) and lower castes, a Hindu resource person pointed out that the caste system is also very much alive within Indian churches. He encouraged Christians to look within to see whether justice has been implemented in the life of the church before they criticize the injustices in society.
- We need to overcome our sense of identity as victims of violence done by others. This perception of ourselves can lead us into self-righteousness—where we see the other party simply as perpetrator and ourselves as innocent victims.
- We must reject the separation between identity and morality. Too easily, we can claim that our group consists of good people (identity), while at the same time we do harm to other groups (immorality).
- We need to recognize that marginalization happens among us. In the office we may be marginalized by our unjust and oppressive superiors. But at home we can also treat our spouses and our children in similar ways.

Peace with the earth

- The environmental devastation of our earth is terrifying. One presenter noted that the sovereign state of Tufalu in the Pacific Ocean, for example, is about to be completely covered by rising levels of sea water; only 26 square kilometers of dry land remain. If the water keeps rising, Tufalu will be wiped off the map and its citizens will have to live as refugees in other countries. Thus the extinction of a country can happen not only because of foreign occupation, but also because of climate change. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “The world has enough to meet human need, but the world doesn’t have enough to meet human greed.” We must keep this in mind if we wish to save our earth.

Peace in the marketplace

- There will be no peace without economic justice. This means we need to start practicing responsible investment. We have no authority to speak about peace when at the same time we invest our money in greedy corporations that are chasing economic benefits without regard for the resulting environmental damage or social conflict. At the same time, we also need to realize how easy it is for the same market power to co-opt us. Too often, even church leaders who resist economic injustices compromise their principles when they begin to serve in positions of power.

Peace among the peoples

- The convocation proclaimed the centuries-long Just War Theory obsolete in the Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace. This was a significant quantum leap, considering that the churches (Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Mennonite) disagreed about this in the past. However, a new concept, “Responsibility to Protect,” was introduced, which allows for military intervention when human rights and lives are being violated. So the debate now is whether this new concept is actually better, or simply the old Just War Theory in disguise.
- The Bible prefers to use the word *safety* instead of *security* when it speaks about peace. Peace is something that we create—not from above by dropping bombs, but from below by taking seriously community needs. We can challenge the concept of “national security” because it has often been used by the powers to legitimize their violence. The “national security” paradigm must be changed into one that seeks the safety of all parties, both the people to be protected and the people we consider to belong to the enemy.
- As Lisa Schirch, Mennonite presenter, pointed out, the most appropriate symbol of reconciliation is the cross. It reflects three dimensions of reconciliation: upward reconciliation with God, sideward reconciliation with our neighbors, and downward reconciliation with the earth.

My only disappointment with the convocation was that there was no discussion of violence against oneself (suicide), whereas, according to the World Health Organization, 50 percent the world’s violent deaths are suicides. This is the kind of violence that many of us tend to forget. We pay so much attention to the problem of violence among nations and social groups, yet it accounts for only 20 percent of violent deaths in the world. The rest are suicides and interpersonal and family violence. It is too bad that we give such little attention to these areas.

Apart from such small disappointments, the IEPC gathering enlightened me, both intellectually and spiritually, and it strengthened my commitment to peacebuilding. It also brought a new commitment to the church.

Paulus Widjaja of Indonesia is Secretary for the MWC General Council Peace Commission.



Left to right: leadership training facilities in Burkina Faso, Myanmar and Zambia, funded recently through the Global Church Sharing Fund

“A question of equality”— Global Church Sharing Fund update

Earlier in 2011, a family in the United States read Cynthia Peacock’s story about the Deacons’ Commission visit to Ghana (see *Courier* 26.2) and were moved to contribute \$13,000 to the rebuilding of the Pimpimsu church, through the Global Church Sharing Fund (GCSF). Another family in Ontario had enjoyed a relationship with the Ghana church in the past, and simply wanted to help; they also sent a donation.

That’s how the fund is supposed to function: MWC members sharing both their needs and their resources with each other. Today, the GCSF has some 14 projects in

various stages of completion (see chart for a sampling).

The roots of the fund go back to 1995, when Mennonite Central Committee marked its 75th anniversary with a contribution of \$600,000 and Mennonite Mutual Aid, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, contributed \$300,000 to be used to build up the global church.

Over the 10 years following the 1997 MWC assembly in Kolkata, India, these funds from the “Jubilee Account” were distributed to member churches and used for various ministries—publications, evangelism and leadership training, bicycles for evangelists, new or renovated church buildings, musical instruments and many other ministries that might not have been accomplished otherwise.

The distributions spawned more reflection: How could the gifts of *all* members—and not just financial gifts—be discovered and shared freely? Helping to drive that discussion was the book that Pakisa Tshimika of Congo and Tim Lind of the US co-authored: *Sharing Gifts in the Global Family of Faith*.

The scriptural foundations were simple, taken from the apostle Paul: “There is no question of relieving others at the cost of hardship to yourselves; it is a question of equality. At the moment your surplus meets their need, but one day your need may be met from their surplus” (2 Corinthians 8:13-14).

Some recently-funded GCSF projects

Church	Project Goals
Église Évangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso	Anabaptist leadership training centre
Meserete Kristos Church, Ethiopia	Capacity-building among MKC staff
Ghana Mennonite Church	Rebuilding of decaying Pimpimsu Mennonite Church
Bible Missionary Church, Myanmar	Food for 411 rice farmer families affected by floods
Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania	Water supply system for 250 households
Brethren in Christ Church, Zimbabwe	Women’s conference
Iglesias Hermanos Menonitas de Colombia	Community centre for social assistance and biblical teaching
Jamaica Mennonite Church,	Renovation of the Good Tidings church for community outreach

In addition to the Jubilee Account, therefore, the Deacons Account was added to the Fund. Grants from this account have often been made following the ministry of the MWC Deacons Commission in its travels.

Since 2008, 11 GCSF projects have been completed, involving \$159,000 from donors, supplementing a similar amount contributed from the recipient churches. Another 14 are at various stages of completion. Deacons fund gifts generally do not exceed \$10,000, and the reporting structures are relatively simple. After all, this is a gift-sharing mechanism among MWC family, unlike a grant program of less personal development agencies.

Key to the GCSF’s success

is the endorsement and financial contribution of the MWC member church seeking assistance, along with strong connections with the donor group. Sometimes, a three-way partnership is formed between the recipient church, the donor church, and a related church or mission agency.

You or your local congregation can support the Global Church Sharing Fund by sending your contribution to any MWC office. Or you may contribute online in Canadian or U.S. dollars; simply follow the “Donate Now” link on the MWC home page (www.mwc-cmm.org), then “contribute” on that page. Be sure to designate your donation for Global Church Sharing Fund. If you have questions, contact MWC at kitchener@mw-cmm.org.



*courier
courier
correo*

Volume 26 • Number 4

Danisa Ndlovu
Guest Publisher

Byron Rempel-Burkholder
Editor

Eleanor Miller
Communications assistant

Sylvie Gudin
French translator

Marisa & Eunice Miller
Spanish translators

Courier - Correo - Courier, 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: Strasbourg@mw-cmm.org.

www.mwc-cmm.org

Saying goodbye with a welcome embrace

by Danisa Ndlovu

In 1990, I was at Assembly 12 in Winnipeg, Canada, where Larry Miller was appointed General Secretary of Mennonite World Conference. Six years later, I was at Assembly 13 in Kolkata, and observed Larry Miller participating in his first Assembly as General Secretary. On neither occasion did I have the slightest idea that one day I would be yoked together with this great leader to serve the MWC family and the larger church of Jesus Christ. For the last ten years it has been a great honour for me to walk alongside him in ministry.

At the 2003 General Council meeting in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, I was elected to serve as Vice President of MWC. Many times I questioned my wisdom in allowing my name to stand for this role. As host for the Assembly 14 that followed my appointment, however, I was privileged to work closely with Larry and other leaders. It was through their encouragement and affirmation of my leadership that I gained confidence in my candidacy.

One of the strengths that I have observed in Larry over the years is his ability to recognize, affirm and utilize the gifts of others for the benefit of the body of Christ. Wherever Larry goes, the corner of his eye is active, noticing the best in others. He often calls upon people when opportunities arise to serve the global family.

It is during Larry's tenure that MWC burst beyond being just a once-in-six-years assembly. The recent growth of MWC as a dynamic family of churches can be attributed largely to Larry's leadership.

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that the name Larry Miller has been synonymous with MWC and vice-versa. Larry has embodied and articulated Mennonite World Conference's vision and has faithfully lived it out.

It was during his time in office that the numerical growth of the Anabaptist family in the South superseded that of the North. Larry recognized that surge and passionately desired to see it reflected in MWC's leadership, even though it was not within his power to make that vision become a reality.

When Larry indicated his desire to step down from his role as General Secretary, and when his request was officially

accepted by MWC, procedures were put in place to find his successor, eventually leading to this current period of transition. Critical shifts within any global body require good management. Besides the broader organizational interests, the interests of both outgoing and incoming personnel call for careful attention. As MWC's executive officers, we have endeavoured to give our all to address these interests and ensure a smooth transition for our communion of churches.

We have observed and admired Larry Miller's willingness to establish César García of Colombia as his successor. The two men have been working together during a five-month transitional period ending on January 1, 2012, when César officially assumes the post of General Secretary. César has been determined to drink as much wisdom as he can from Larry during this time. Larry, for his part, has embraced César and committed himself to allowing César to squeeze as much as he can out of him in order to ground himself in his new role. Both Larry and César—and all of us in the MWC leadership—are fully aware that the smooth passing of the baton between the two men is as important as the race itself!

As we approach the end of the year, Mennonite World Conference is more than grateful to Larry and Eleanor Miller for almost 22 years of faithful service to the global Anabaptist family. Their accomplishments will not be forgotten; history will keep them alive. We congratulate and wish Larry well as he takes up his new role as Secretary of the Global Christian Forum. He goes to the Forum as one who belongs to us and will still be in contact with us. It is in this respect that as MWC we say good bye to him and yet give him a welcome embrace. He goes with our support and prayers.

Danisa Ndlovu of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, is President of Mennonite World Conference. He is also leading bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church of Zimbabwe.



Photo: Merle Good