

# Courier Correo Courier

April 2013  
Volume 28, Number 1



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World Conference**  
A Community of Anabaptist  
related Churches

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Mundial Menonita**  
Una Comunidad de  
Iglesias Anabautistas

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Cover Photo: During the recent Southern Cone meetings in Chile, members of the Latin American Anabaptist Women Theologians Movement passed a ball of yarn from person to person. The interwoven strands illustrate the network formed through mutual support with unity in Christ. Photo by Puertachile

# Communications

## Former editors reflect on MWC communications

### Milka Rindzinski

Editor 1997-2006



A very positive aspect of MWC is the opportunity to learn about, recognize and value other cultures. In my task of translating, I came to appreciate the way others used images and metaphors to describe Christian faith. I especially valued how

an African woman theologian interpreted the old traditional sacrifice of a young girl to get rain on the fields as a prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice: the Creator preparing the way for his universal plan.

Another important personal experience came many years ago, during a meeting of the MWC Executive Committee in which the conversation centred on writing the history of the churches on every continent. On impulse I stood up and said, "Yes, but that should be from the local perspectives." When we went out on break, a brother from Tanzania affirmed what I had said. His comment assured me that we were going in the right direction.

One day *Courier/Correo/Courier* changed its look to a "deluxe" publication in terms of quality of paper, photos and writing, becoming the beautiful magazine we have today. Is it perhaps too precious? I know of no others of the same quality published in our global ecclesial context.

Are there any changes that should be sought to achieve greater balance? Most MWC news and feature articles are still principally written and edited by professionals from the North, unavoidably from their own point of view. Why not explore national publications in all continents to select news to be quoted in *C/C/C*? Then we would have a publication that included all points of view.

### J. Lorne Peachey

Managing Editor 2002-2006, Editor 2006-2010



Accepting the invitation to join the staff of *Courier/Correo/Courier* brought its share of surprises. After editing magazines for the U.S. Mennonite Church for more than 30 years, I thought I knew most of what there was to know

about print journalism. I soon discovered I knew very little, at least as it applied to international communication.

For instance, I learned how complex language can be. I thought I knew how to edit so the result was simple communication. Yet how often would my translators come back to me and tell me there was no way to translate an English idiom or phrase into either Spanish or French!

My goal always was to publish *C/C/C* in more languages than English, Spanish and French. MWC includes far more than these three tongues. But constraints on funds and personnel never permitted this step.

We did experience some successes. For one, we began printing the French edition for the Congolese churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This was a first step in realizing my dream of printing the quarterly magazine in-country, thereby reducing the biggest expense in publishing *C/C/C*: international distribution. But the constraints of financing kept us from fully realizing that dream.

*C/C/C* is an important part of the glue that holds the MWC world together. The challenge for MWC will be to find new glue, whatever its form. I am confident it will happen.

### Byron Rempel-Burkholder

Editor 2010-2012



I feel enormously blessed to have been *Courier/Correo/Courier* editor and news service writer during some key moments in MWC history, particularly the Lutheran-Mennonite reconciliation events in 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany,

and the shifting of MWC's general secretariat to the Global South at the end of 2011. What an honour!

One of the goals of my work with *C/C/C* and the news service was to facilitate the sharing of our diverse stories of being Anabaptist in a changing world – stories of how we experience God in our cultures, stories of churches helping each other in material and spiritual ways, stories of the ways we support each other in sharing in God's mission to bring good news to the world.

At times this important and necessary work was relatively easy. But the sharing of stories and experiences at the grassroots level, from South to North, and East to West, was more difficult. Yet this is increasingly important to us in the global community. I was privileged to have a part in facing the challenge of doing that effectively.

I am thrilled to see the task being carried forward by a larger and younger Communications team, which is forging new vehicles designed to reach more and more people in the MWC family, and in nimble ways. I wish the Communications team continued wisdom and creativity in making available to us all the wonderful stories of God's work among us, in all corners of the MWC world.

## Timeline

1976

First issue of *MWC Newsletter*, a quarterly publication; introduction of MWC logo, which is still in use

1984

*MWC Newsletter* discontinued

1986

First issue of *Courier*, a quarterly magazine, with David Shelley as Editor. A Spanish edition, *Correo*, also started.

1990

Willard Roth appointed Editor of *Courier*

1997

Milka Rindzinski appointed Editor of both *Courier* and *Correo*

2000

Phyllis Pellman Good becomes Assistant Editor of *Courier*. Magazine becomes trilingual, with English, Spanish and French (*Courier*) editions

2001

Ferne Burkhardt becomes News Editor

# Then and Now

## Abiding goals and changing channels

by Ron Rempel

**T**his issue of *Courier/Correo/ Courier* reflects some changes: a new design, an inserted newsletter. An accompanying article announces other changes in the overall communication plan of Mennonite World Conference, including a new website and a monthly email alert.

Though the channels are changing, the overall goal of MWC communications remains unchanged. That goal was succinctly expressed by former MWC President Million Belete of Ethiopia, when he introduced the MWC newsletter in 1976: "It [the newsletter] is meant to inform and acquaint. Only as we know more of each other can we intelligently pray for and be of help to each other."

In 1986, the newsletter was replaced by a magazine called *Courier*. Then-General Secretary, Paul Kraybill, wrote: "We don't know enough about each other. We are a worldwide community, but our knowledge is local and limited. In spite of our presses, publishers and publications, there is no international messenger!"

In choosing *Courier* as the name of MWC's publication, Kraybill invoked pre-internet means of communication by persons entrusted with "bearing messages to and from every part of the world." At the same time, Kraybill noted that within the MWC family too much information was flowing along the spokes of a wheel with the Global North at the centre. He envisioned a communication system that was more like

"a web or grid with intersecting lines." When Larry Miller became General Secretary in 1990, he reaffirmed the role of *Courier* as "one instrument for the continuing work of nurturing community, communication and cooperation in our worldwide family of faith."

He summarized the mandate of MWC with the following terms: connector of member churches in ways which move beyond the parent-child relationship; convener of regional and international church to church conversations; communicator of biblical vision in Anabaptist perspective within the Mennonite family and the larger Christian church.

Twenty-two years later, when César García became General Secretary, he named the nurturing of global community as one of his top priorities. "People want to have relationships around the world," he wrote. "This is possible through good channels of information and communication. Each member of our local congregations needs to have access to MWC."

This ambitious goal for MWC communication, pursued now for almost forty years, remains only partially realized. In revamping *Courier/Correo/Courier* and in revising our communication strategy, we hope to better pursue this goal now and into the future.

**Ron Rempel, of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, is Chief Communications Officer for MWC.**



<p><b>2002</b></p> <p>J. Lorne Peachey appointed Managing Editor</p>	<p><b>2006</b></p> <p>Peachey appointed Editor; beginning of trilingual name plate <i>Courier/ Correo/Courier</i></p>	<p><b>2010</b></p> <p>Byron Rempel-Burkholder appointed News Editor and Editor of <i>Courier/ Correo/Courier</i></p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>Ron Rempel appointed Chief Communications Officer and News Editor</p>	<p><b>2013</b></p> <p>Devin Manzullo-Thomas appointed Editor of <i>Courier/ Correo/Courier</i> and related newsletter</p>	<p><b>MWC Publications</b></p>
<p><b>2002</b></p> <p>Debut of first MWC website, developed by Meg Sabulsky of Franconia Menonite Conference</p>	<p><b>2007</b></p> <p>New website in four languages (English, Spanish, French, German) developed by Larry Leuenberger</p>	<p><b>2010</b></p> <p>New website, developed by Hansuli Gerber, uses English with some translated material</p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p>New website developed by Peaceworks and Ron Rempel. All content in English, Spanish and French with mobile viewing capability.</p>	<p><b>2013</b></p> <p>Kristina Toews appointed Web Communications Worker</p>	<p><b>MWC Website</b></p>

# MWC announces new communication strategy and staff

2013 will be a year of change and transition for the MWC Communications team, as it adds new personnel and carries out a new strategy for sharing stories and resources with the global faith family.

A new communication strategy, approved by the MWC General Council at its May 2012 meetings in Switzerland, will expand the reach, frequency and content of MWC publications.

Central to the strategy is a new website ([www.mwc-cmm.org](http://www.mwc-cmm.org)) which was launched in early November. Users can switch between English, Spanish and French and most content is available in all three languages.

A second part of the strategy is an increased use of electronic communication. Beginning in 2013, MWC introduced *MWC Info/Info CMM/Infos CMM*, a monthly e-alert that provides links to recent news stories, prayer requests and other information on the MWC website.

The third part of the strategy involves changes to print communications. Beginning in 2013, *Courier/Correo/Courrier* will be published every other month as a four-page newsletter. With the subtitle "News/Noticias/Nouvelles," the newsletter will include recent news, prayer requests, organizational updates and other timely material. Twice a year, the newsletter is inserted into a 16-page magazine.

The magazine will carry the same name and will include inspirational articles, study and teaching documents and longer features that are not time sensitive. Both the newsletter and the magazine will be published in English, Spanish and French and available electronically or in print form. Helping to carry out this expanded

communication strategy are two new staff members. Devin Manzullo-Thomas of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA, began a half-time position as MWC Editor and Writer in January 2013. In this role he helps to



**Devin  
Manzullo-  
Thomas**

**Kristina  
Toews**

generate stories and edits MWC publications. Additionally, Kristina Toews of Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada, joined

the MWC staff as a Web Communication Worker, beginning in February 2013. In this role Toews manages web content, serves as editor of the monthly e-alert and provides leadership for social media initiatives, among other responsibilities.

In their new roles Manzullo-Thomas and Toews join Ron Rempel, Chief Communications Officer, and Eleanor Miller of Strasbourg, France, Administrative Assistant for news and publications, on the MWC Communications team.

— Ron Rempel



## Sign up for MWC electronic publications

1. *MWC Info*, a monthly e-alert with news and updates
2. The electronic version of *Courier/Correo/Courrier*, a bimonthly publication

To receive one or both of the above, send your name, email, country and preferred language (English, Spanish or French) to: [info@mwc-cmm.org](mailto:info@mwc-cmm.org)

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# Being a Peace Church

## How are we doing?

by Robert J. Suderman

**W**e estimate that there are 9,500 congregations throughout the world that are part of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) family. These congregations are found in every continent and in every imaginable context. This means that there are, potentially, thousands of active communities of the peace of Christ functioning in many contexts in need of reconciliation. The vision of the MWC Peace Commission is to encourage, nourish and resource these agents of peace.

With this vision in mind, we wanted to hear from the member-churches of MWC. We asked them to answer a simple question: “How is your church doing in its desire to be a Peace Church?”

### What did we learn?

It was encouraging and very moving to read the responses. They were vulnerable and provided profound and intimate windows into the lives of MWC member-churches. They put us in touch with the challenges faced and the efforts engaged by the churches in their desire to be effective ambassadors of peace in our broken world. Here's what we learned:

1. All respondents expressed a deep desire to be a “Peace Church.” They understood that as being communities of Jesus’ disciples and actively nonviolent in their contexts.
2. All respondents talked about important and creative ways that they are working at strengthening their identity as Peace Churches.
3. Most respondents pointed to important “official” statements that identified them as churches with a Peace Church vision.
4. All respondents indicated that there is a gap (some wider than others) that separates the official statements of the church from the life of the church and congregations.
5. All respondents identified important and daunting challenges they face in their efforts at being a Peace Church.
6. Respondents indicated that the understanding of peace is shifting from reaction (do no harm to others) to action (do good for others).



Robert J. Suderman, secretary of the MWC Peace Commission, presents on the findings of the Peace Audit during a meeting of the General Council in May 2012. Photo by Merle Good

7. All respondents said that they need more resources and resourcing to strengthen their identity as Peace Churches.

### What are the challenges?

The most moving parts of the responses were those that talked about their contextual challenges to being a Peace Church. (To read the full report, visit [www.mwc-cmm.org/article/peace-commission](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/article/peace-commission)) It is clear that our vision for 9,500 effective communal peace ambassadors at work in each context is a very high calling. Two things are very evident: the peace vocation is extremely important and necessary, and pursuing that vocation is exceptionally complex.

Space does not permit me to delve into all the details. But let me give a taste of the challenges that we face:

**From Canada:** The numbing impact of individualistic materialism, affluence and comfort shield us from the broken worlds of poverty, revolution and violence.

**From Honduras:** The continuing influence of machoism in gender and social relationships eclipses the peace of Christ.

**From Taiwan:** The militarized atmosphere generated by thousands of Chinese missiles aimed at every part of Taiwan makes it difficult to love our enemies as Christ commanded.

**From Indonesia:** We stumble in forming a peace-church identity because the pastors of our churches graduate from seminaries that do not teach peace.

**From Spain:** We share a “basket of love” with each other, but we need to do much more.

Any one of these challenges is formidable enough. When all are put together, we can see the enormity of our vocation. Peace is badly needed in our world, but practicing it is complex. Perhaps the clearest lesson we can learn from the responses is that we will not be “unpremeditated” Peace Churches. We’ll need to work at it – intentionally, overtly, and strategically.

### A pressing question

I remember a visit we had with the leaders of a semi-rural congregation in central India. They told us that their children and grand-

## Who Responded to the Peace Audit?

When the MWC Peace Commission asked, “How is your church doing in its desire to be a Peace Church?”, 21 (out of 100) member-churches from four continents responded.

The participants were:

### Asia and the Pacific

1. Brethren in Christ Church Orissa, India
2. Bihar Mennonite Mandli, India
3. Gilgal Mission Trust, India
4. Fellowship of Mennonite Churches in Taiwan
5. Persatuan Gereja-Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia
6. Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa (oral), Indonesia

### South America, Latin America and the Caribbean

1. Hermandad en Cristo, Colombia
2. Convención Iglesias Evangélicas Hermanos Menonitas Nivacle, Paraguay
3. Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de El Salvador
4. Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña, Honduras
5. Konferenz der Mennonitengemeinden in Uruguay
6. The Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago

### Europe

1. British Conference of Mennonites, United Kingdom
2. Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland, Germany
3. Asociación de Menonitas y Hermanos en Cristo en España, Spain

### North America

1. Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Canada
2. Mennonite Church Canada
3. Conservative Mennonite Conference, USA
4. Mennonite Church USA
5. U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches
6. Brethren in Christ General Conference, North America

### Africa

Unfortunately, we received no responses

children no longer know what it means to be “Mennonite.” They were sad about this, and asked: “What is MWC going to do about that?”

The question from India is profound. It identifies a preferred theological identity. It also says that this identity must be accompanied by congregational and church behaviours that deliberately stimulate and strengthen this identity.

### What is MWC doing about it?

MWC is responding in several ways. First, we are continuing to promote our “Shared Convictions,” prepared by MWC in 2006. They provide a common foundation for our desire to be an Anabaptist Peace Church. They are there to be studied, shared and used.

Second, MWC has approved a number of resources for member-churches looking to strengthen their Anabaptist-Mennonite identity. Books like Alfred Neufeld’s *What We Believe Together*, Paulus Widijaia’s and Alan and Eleanor Kreider’s *A Culture of Peace* and C. Arnold Snyder’s *From Anabaptist Seed*, are all good resources on Anabaptist identity from a variety of angles (historical, theological, etc.). (For a complete list of books, visit [www.mwc-cmm.org/article/books](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/article/books)) The final reports from the Mennonite-Lutheran and Mennonite-Catholic international dialogues are very helpful documents that could be adapted to the teaching ministry of the church. And the three papers recently discussed and approved by the MWC General Council are another instructive and useful set of resources. (To read the papers, visit [www.mwc-cmm.org/article/faith-and-life-commission](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/article/faith-and-life-commission))

Third, the MWC Faith and Life Commission plans to offer “identity workshops” to churches requesting such resourcing. The Commission hopes that these seminars can be face-to-face, dynamic and stimulating, as questions of Anabaptist identity are explored together with key resource teachers.

Fourth, MWC plans to place regional representatives in each continent. Such individuals can encourage member-churches in that region to work

together at the peace-related questions and challenges.

Fifth, the MWC Peace Commission has designed an attractive “Peace Poster” that will helpfully remind us of the centrality of peace in the gospel of Christ. (The poster is included as an insert in this issue of the magazine.) We hope that this visual resource can find a prominent place in the worship spaces of MWC congregations. Additionally, the Peace Commission is working to produce some guidelines for conflict assessment and management.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, MWC provides an opportunity and a real-life structure that enables member-churches from all over the world to say, “We belong together.” Someone will surely ask: What do you belong to? Why do you belong? Why is it important to belong? These questions are excellent opportunities to clarify our identity and vocation as a Peace Church.

**Robert J. Suderman is Secretary of the MWC Peace Commission.**



**This poster, developed by the MWC Peace Commission and designed by Glenn Fretz, is intended to remind MWC member-churches of the centrality of peace in the gospel of Christ.**

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Front row (from left): Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga, Turid Karlsen Sein, Cardinal Koch, Alfred Neufeld. Second row: Musawenkosi Biyela, Rebecca Osiro, Kaisamari Hintikka, Gregory J Fairbanks. Third row: William Henn, Larry Miller, Theodor Dieter. Fourth row: César Garcia, Marie-Hélène Robert, Kwong-Sang Peter Li. Fifth row: Luis M Melo, Fernando Enns, John Rempel.

## Baptism the focus of trilateral dialogue by Mennonites, Catholics and Lutherans

**Rome, Italy/Bogota, Colombia**  
An international trilateral dialogue between Mennonites, Catholics and Lutherans was held in Rome, 9-13 December 2012.

According to a joint release issued after the meeting, the overall theme of the five-year process is "Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church." The release further stated: "This innovative trilateral forum will allow the dialogue to take up questions surrounding the theology and practice of baptism in the respective communions."

The three international communions came to the inaugural meeting with a history of bilateral dialogues with each other. MWC held wide-ranging conversations with the Catholic Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity from 1998 to 2003, and with the Lutheran World Federation from 2005 to 2008. The topic of baptism – a

point of significant difference between the three groups – surfaced in each of these exchanges. Mennonites practice adult baptism, and Catholics and Lutherans infant baptism.

The trilateral meeting in Rome, with five representatives from each communion, included summary presentations on past dialogues on baptism. Fernando Enns of Germany presented for MWC. The meeting also included principal papers on the introduction to the understanding and practice of baptism. Alfred Neufeld of Paraguay and John Rempel of Canada presented for MWC.

Other MWC participants included Rebecca Osiro of Kenya and Larry Miller of France. MWC General Secretary César García of Colombia was an observer.

The group will convene for its second round of conversations in January 2014 to study "Baptism: God's Grace in Christ and Human Sin." Future topics in following years will include "Baptism: Communicating Grace and Faith" and "Living Out Baptism."

## Chile hosts global family at 15th gathering of Southern Cone Anabaptists

**Angostura de Paine, Chile –**  
After a two-year delay caused by the massive earthquake of 2010, the Mennonites of the Southern Cone gathered for their traditional biannual meeting from 23-27 January 2013, in Angostura de Paine, Chile, about 55 kilometres south of Santiago. It was the first time Chilean Mennonites hosted the event.

About one hundred Anabaptists from six Latin American countries – Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil and Chile – attended the

of Paraguayan origin, drew attention to this missionary vocation, arguing that it has allowed Latin American Anabaptist churches to quadruplicate their membership in the last 30 years.

The gathering included a number of presentations and workshops. Plenary speaker Robert J. Suderman discussed "biblical foundations for *shalom*." MWC officers Danisa Ndlovu (Zimbabwe) and Janet Plenert (Canada) described the service of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites that took place in Stuttgart, Germany in 2010. Mónica Parada and Carlos Gallardo, pastors of *Iglesia Menonita Puerta del Rebaño*



Folkloric dance ensemble *Los del Huerto* lead worship during the Southern Cone meetings in Chile. Photo by Puertachile

gathering. They were joined by visitors from Central and North America and by MWC officers.

The *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Chile* (IEMCH), which became the one hundredth MWC member-church in 2011, organized the event. With a dozen congregations throughout the country, the IEMCH reflects the missionary vocation of the Latin American Anabaptist churches. In a presentation during the gathering, Titus Guenther, Canadian professor

in Concepción, Chile, reflected on making the commitment to a Mennonite peace witness in their own faith communities and families. According to Gallardo, "The true following of Christ is found on equity, in building up a community in which we can look at each other face to face as equals." César García, MWC General Secretary, and Rodrigo Pedroza, Latin American representative of the Young Anabaptists (YABs) network, presented the work of their organizations.

The Southern Cone gathering also provided an opportunity to share through praise and art. With typical costumes and instruments of the farmers of central Chile, the group *Los del Huerto* sang and danced to lively traditional music such as *cuecas* and *guarachas*. IEMCH youth offered a presentation on the different regions of continental Chile and Easter Island, using images and traditional dances. On two evenings during the gathering, representatives from Argentina and Brazil played praise songs with Latin American rhythms and lyrics that exalted the commitment to peace and justice.

– Felipe Elgueta, with collaboration of Violeta Fonceca

## Latin American Women Theologians gather in Chile

**La Angostura, Chile** – The fifth gathering of Latin American Anabaptist Women Theologians took place in conjunction with the fifteenth annual Southern Cone Anabaptist Mennonite Congress, held here 23-27 January 2013. The gathering was attended by sisters and brothers from the six countries of the region, plus visitors from Canada, the United States, Zimbabwe, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico.

Some 45 women theologians participated in the three-day gathering, which included a series of workshops and worship services. Two of the presentations were led by Monica Parada, pastor of the *Puerta del Rebaño* Mennonite congregation in Concepción, Chile.

Monica's workshops focused on challenges faced by women leaders, including domestic issues, ethnic tensions, violence (both physical and emotional) and other forms of subjugation and repression.

A third workshop, led by Gladys Siemens of the MWC Deacons Commission, celebrated the tenth anniversary of the movement of Latin American Anabaptist Women Theologians.

The gathering included times for women leaders across Latin America to share their experiences. Valeria Alvarenga



In a workshop on examining violence against women, participants were invited to plant the seeds of dreams they wanted to see come true. Photo by Puertachile

Taumaturgo, pastor of a Mennonite church in Recife, Brazil, described her ministry among women whose husbands are serving prison sentences.

Aurora Rinaldi, of the Mennonite congregation in Trenque Lauquen, Argentina, recounted her year-long journey of being invited to serve her community as a pastor.

– Ester Bornes; translated into English by Milka Rindzinski

## MWC regional representatives bridge local, national and global church bodies

Over the last several years, MWC member-churches have called for the appointment of continental regional representatives – staff members who can aid member-churches in connecting with the larger body of Anabaptist believers. MWC continues to pursue this goal, while facing some challenges.

“It is our dream to arrive at the 2015 Global Assembly in Pennsylvania with regional representatives working in their respective continents,” said César García, MWC General Secretary. Financial limitations have slowed the process, he added.

The first regional representative was placed in North America in 2009. Bert Lobe of St. Jacobs, Ontario, Canada, served in that capacity, nurturing relationships with MWC member-churches across North America. He completed his term of service at the end of 2012.

Lobe's successor, Lynn Roth of Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, began his work in January 2013. “I have always felt a strong call to the ministry of the worldwide church,” Roth told MWC news service at the time of his appointment. “It is exciting to have the opportunity to work with the North American church as it engages with the worldwide community of believers.”

MWC leaders are working to appoint regional representatives in Europe and Asia in 2013. “We have received suggestions for candidates and are participating in ongoing conversations among our churches in these continents,” reported García. Financial obstacles continue to slow the process, although García sees hope. “I trust that the desire of our constituency for regional representation will be translated into the global financial support required for this task,” he added.

“All of us need to know what it means to follow Christ in other

contexts,” García commented. “Regional representatives will help to connect our local and national churches to one another and to the global communion in order to facilitate such learning. These leaders will serve as bridges, facilitating the flow of information and allowing us to work interdependently, while avoiding duplication of efforts in our missional task.”

## Mennonite World Conference compiles directory of global Anabaptist community

Mennonite World Conference recently compiled a World Directory listing churches rooted in the 16th century Radical Reformation in Europe, particularly in the Anabaptist movement. This faith family includes more than 1.7 million baptized believers in 243 national conferences of churches in 83 countries.

In this directory, 100 of the national conferences of churches in 57 countries are identified as members or associate members of Mennonite World Conference. These Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches include 1.28 million baptized believers, which represent 72.5% of the total in the global faith family.

The directory can be accessed online at [www.mwc-cmm.org/article/world-directory](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/article/world-directory)



World Directory 2012  
Directorio mundial  
Répertoire mondial



Communion is served during the Mennonite World Conference General Council meeting last May in Switzerland. Photo by Merle Good/MWC



## Nepal believers dedicate concrete church building

**Babiya, Nepal** – In November 2012, believers from the Behelwa Brethren in Christ (BIC) Church celebrated the completion of their new church building – a structure built with assistance from the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Global Sharing Fund.

The congregation held a dedication service on 30 November. Hundreds, including leaders from neighbouring churches, MWC and the BIC Executive Board, attended the event. Cynthia Peacock of India, chair of the MWC Deacons Commission, was the chief guest. After a Scripture reading and a dedication prayer, she unveiled the stone plate fixed on a wall outside of the church and then opened the door

ago during the monarchy, when preaching the gospel and conversion was illegal. Today, despite persecution and restriction from the government, over one hundred believers, including children, participate in the church worship service. After meeting outdoors or in various temporary shelters for years, the congregation decided to purchase the land and construct a concrete church building.

They collected some of the money and also received some funds from the BIC Church Nepal Conference. Funds from the MWC Global Church Sharing Fund, received through the BIC Nepal Conference, made the construction of the church a reality.

**From a report by Shemlal Hembrom, chair of the Nepal Brethren in Christ Church and a member of the MWC Deacons Commission**

of congregations from around the globe sent reports on their fellowship to MWC.

### **Bogotá, Colombia**

About 600 believers from three different MWC member-churches – *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita*, *Iglesia Hermanos Menonitas*, and *Iglesia Hermandad en Cristo* – came together for a joint service on Sunday, 27 January. MWC General Secretary César García preached, while pastors, leaders and members from different congregations in Bogotá alternated in leading the service, singing with the congregation and praying. According to Magali Moreno, a MWC staff person headquartered in the Bogotá office, the event was a “true local fellowship,” as believers from different national conferences came together in the spirit of unity and mutual love.

“To me,” Baxter preached, “this story captures what we remember on World Fellowship Sunday. [It is] a celebration of worldwide community and the gifts we receive as we take each others’ pain into our hearts and learn to better understand ourselves and God’s vision of justice through our interactions across differences and distances.

“I’m grateful for World Fellowship Sunday,” Baxter concluded, “because I think our hope is renewed by reminders that we work for justice as a global community... We need to hear stories of courage, of creativity, of change – no matter how small or slow – to remind us that God is indeed working through the church and other communities around the world to bring justice and teach us the way of humility in the process.”

### **Yogyakarta, Indonesia**

That same spirit of sharing and learning pervaded the World Fellowship Sunday service held at the Muria Christian Church of Indonesia (GKMI) congregation in Yogyakarta. Several international guests shared their individual faith journeys, reflecting the various cultures in which they were raised and came to know Christ. One speaker, Shammah Nakawesi from Uganda (who is living in Indonesia as a participant in the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network [YAMEN!]), described growing up in between a Christian and a Muslim family. She decided to follow the way of Christ as a teenager. In her homeland, she reported, Sunday mornings are quite loud as energetic singing and dancing are a major part of church meetings.

The service also included a sermon from Janti Widjaja, the pastor of the congregation and a member of the MWC Faith and Life Commission. Widjaja preached on John 8:3-11, wherein Jesus encounters the Pharisees and the woman caught in adultery. She described how the tale teaches us about the importance of forgiveness and peace, two cornerstones of the Mennonite faith.

### **Upala, Costa Rica**

In this city near the Costa Rica/Nicaragua border, members of the *Asociación de*



**The new concrete church building in Babiya, Nepal, constructed with assistance from MWC Global Church Sharing Fund.**

for everyone to enter into the building.

Ramesh Soren, the pastor, led the worship service, which included a time of worship through song and a message from Cynthia. Her message emphasized building up the kingdom of God by believers sharing and caring for each other’s spiritual, emotional and physical needs and also becoming a relationship building community inside and outside of the church.

The Babiya BIC Church is one of the village churches among the Santal community close to the city of Biratnagar in eastern Nepal. The congregation started in a house two decades

## Celebrating the church’s ‘just witness’ on World Fellowship Sunday

Each year, Anabaptist-related churches around the world celebrate World Fellowship Sunday by worshipping around a common theme. Typically observed on or near 21 January – the date, in 1525, when the first Anabaptist baptism took place in Zurich, Switzerland – World Fellowship Sunday provides an opportunity to remember common roots and celebrate our worldwide *koinonia*.

In 2013, the common theme was “Justice and Witness of the Church Today.” A number

### **Minneapolis, Minnesota**

Faith Mennonite Church celebrated World Fellowship Sunday with a guest sermon from Aryn Baxter, a graduate student doing research on higher education development initiatives. Baxter used the children’s book *14 Cows for America* as a way to describe the fellowship experienced when different culture groups make intentional efforts to learn from one another. In the book, a Masai student in the U.S. brings news of the 11 September 2001 tragedy in New York City to his village in Kenya and inspires a gift to America of 14 cows. In this village, a cow is precious property and is believed to bring comfort to its owner.

*Iglesias Cristianas Menonitas de Costa Rica* (Association of Mennonite Churches in Costa Rica) observed World Fellowship Sunday on 3 February. According to Sandra Campos, one of the Latin American representatives on the MWC Executive Committee, more than 450 people from congregations all around Costa Rica “gathered to celebrate God’s faithfulness, enjoy fellowship, and give thanks to God together with the global Mennonite family of faith.”

To read more reflections on World Fellowship Sunday 2013, visit the MWC website at [www.mwc-cmm.org/article/world-fellowship-sunday](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/article/world-fellowship-sunday)



## Commissions Update

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

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

What do the commissions do? Commissions prepare issues or materials for consideration by the General Council; give guidance and propose resources to MWC member-churches; and facilitate MWC-related networks or fellowships working together on matters of common interest and focus.

Here are a few short glimpses into the work of MWC commissions over the last several months.

### Peace Commission

The Peace Commission is working on a list of conflict intervention guidelines for use by MWC member-churches. An initial draft of the guidelines were approved during the May 2012 meetings in Switzerland, and a second draft is currently being prepared.

### Deacons Commission

The Deacons Commission has distributed monies from the MWC Global Church

Sharing Fund in support of numerous projects around the world: the construction of a Brethren in Christ-supported community development centre at Siriguda, Rayagada District, India; the expansion of a Japanese Mennonite Fellowship-sponsored recovery effort that provides housing for families displaced by the 2011 nuclear disaster at Fukushima; and the translation of C. Arnold Snyder’s book *From Anabaptist Seed* into Korean, among others.

### Faith and Life Commission

In January 2013, John D. Roth (Secretary) represented MWC and the Faith and Life Commission at a conference on church-state issues sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Phoenix, Arizona, USA. Roth gave a presentation on behalf of MWC, drawing on the recent Peace Audit and the MWC “Shared Convictions.”

### Mission Commission

The Mission Commission is working to draft some “principles of mission” from an Anabaptist perspective. After writing and revision, the document will be approved by the Executive Committee and then placed on the MWC website for use by member-churches.

## Prayers of gratitude and intercession

**1** Praise God for the 9,500 congregations around the world that identify themselves as “Mennonite” or “Brethren in Christ” or “Anabaptist” and that are seeking to be agents of God’s peace in their contexts.

**2** Pray for Lynn Roth of Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, who began as Mennonite World Conference North American Representative in January 2013. Part of his responsibility is to organize a prayer network for the next MWC Assembly to be held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA, 21–26 July 2015. Pray also for Liesa Unger, MWC Chief International Events Coordinator, and Howard Good, National Coordinator, as they work on plans for the 2015 Assembly.

**3** Praise God for the opportunities that MWC has to dialogue with other worldwide Christian communions, to share Anabaptist understandings, to learn from other traditions and to discern together what Jesus’ prayer for unity in John 17 means for Christians in our time.

**4** Through a website called Injustice in Panama ([www.injusticeinpanama.wordpress.com](http://www.injusticeinpanama.wordpress.com)), Mennonites in Panama are asking for prayer to help bring resolution to a longstanding dispute focused on land claims of the indigenous Wounaan community. The website notes progress made in January 2013 meetings involving the Wounaan leadership and political leaders. It requests prayer for wisdom and objectivity

on the part of government officials and for strength, patience and solidarity by the advocates for the Wounaan, “so as to be a good witness at all times.” The website was established by members of *Iglesia Evangélica Unida Hermanos Menonitas*, a member-church of Mennonite World Conference.

**5** Praise God for answered prayers, that Amán and Rosa Guillen, partners in mission in Tierra Nueva, Mexico, were reunited after he was kidnapped by armed men while they were hiking. Unfortunately, incidents like this are frequent in Mexico. Pray for the Mennonite churches in the North regions (in this case, Chihuahua) and for the development of new missions with a culture of peace.

**6** Pray for the *Communauté Mennonite au Congo* (Mennonite Church of Congo) as they come to the aid of inmates at the Tshikapa prison in the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to Pastor Joly Birakara, “This prison has become a place to die, rather than a place for the incarceration or education of prisoners, as almost every month there is at least one death due to malnutrition. Prisoners are very poorly fed and sleep on the ground.” In light of these conditions, the Mennonite Church of Congo has decided to help the prisoners of Tshikapa with food and other necessities on the last Sunday of every month. Pray that they will be emissaries of God’s peace in this place of fear and death.



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MWC General Council met in Basel, Switzerland in May 2012 and confirmed plans for MWC's 16th Assembly in Pennsylvania.

# Faith family to meet in Pennsylvania 21-26 July 2015

The global Anabaptist family of faith will come together in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA, in July 2015 for the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly – to share in fellowship, worship, service and witness. The last Assembly was celebrated in Asunción, Paraguay in 2009. The 2015 Assembly will be an artwork of many pieces, compared to a quilt. The event will include the Global Youth Summit, service projects, discussion groups, children's program, Global Church Village, workshops, worship services and a lot of music and singing.

## MWC staff team is at work

The team has started to work on program, logistics, fundraising and visa together with the National Advisory Council which represents host churches.



Lynn Roth

Lynn Roth of Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, MWC's North America Representative, oversees the Fundraising and Visa Task Force. He is also

organizing a prayer network that will pray for the Assembly in the next 30 months. Howard Good of Lititz, Pennsylvania, USA, MWC's National Coordinator, has started his work on Assembly logistics. One of his first tasks was to confirm the Assembly site – the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA. Leading the team is Liesa Unger of Regensburg, Germany, MWC's Chief International Events Officer, focusing on assembly program.

## Planners invite theme ideas

Assembly planners invite the global community to suggest theme ideas for Pennsylvania 2015. The Assembly theme as well as the Program Oversight Committee, consisting of one representative of each continent, will be selected during the meeting of the MWC Executive Committee in May 2013.



Liesa Unger and Howard Good at Farm Show complex, where the next Assembly will be held. Photo by Len Rempel

## Bookmark could have your photo



In the 30 months leading up to Pennsylvania 2015, MWC will produce a different bookmark every month as a reminder to pray for the Assembly and to plan to attend. The bookmark will feature people who are planning to come to the Assembly in Harrisburg. The January 2013 bookmark features Sumana

Basumata, India and Tigist Tesfaye, Ethiopia, members of the Young Anabaptist (YABs) Committee. One of the next bookmarks could have your picture on it. Send a picture of you among a group of people in your congregation and you might be selected for one of the next bookmarks. Send photos to: [pennsylvania2015@mwcc-mm.org](mailto:pennsylvania2015@mwcc-mm.org). Full size bookmarks can be printed and trimmed from a PDF file available on the MWC website at [www.mwcc-mm.org/article/global-assembly](http://www.mwcc-mm.org/article/global-assembly)

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**Mennonite World Conference**  
A Community of Anabaptist related Churches

**Congreso Mundial Menonita**  
Una Comunidad de Iglesias Anabautistas

**Conférence Mennonite Mondiale**  
Une Communauté d'Églises Anabaptistes

# 'The Winds of Anabaptism

Chilean Mennonites



Attendees at the recent Southern Cone meetings, hosted by the Mennonite churches of Chile, extend their hands in prayer. Photo by Puertachile

by Titus Guenther and  
Karen Loewen Guenther

“**T**he winds of Anabaptism are blowing!” These enthusiastic words from Chilean Mennonite church member, Felipe Elgueta, are an apt description of the dynamic life of emerging Mennonite churches in different regions of Chile. While most Mennonite churches in Latin America originated either by migration or mission, the Chilean Mennonite churches arose as a result of members’ own ingenuity, much like the Pentecostal churches did throughout the 20th century. As Jaime Prieto concluded in *Mission and Migration* (Global Mennonite History Series – Latin America, 2010), “Chile is an example of a country where Anabaptist initiatives have developed and grown internally as Chileans have embraced Anabaptist faith and practice.”

How did Anabaptism catch on in Chile? Some credit is due to Chilean-Canadian Jorge Vallejos, a church planter and pastor who, in the 1980s, suggested to his Chilean church friends that they adopt the name “Mennonite.” Early on, Daniel Delgado, now president of the *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Chile* (IEMCH), was moved

when he heard the story of Dirk Willems, a 16th-century Dutch Anabaptist martyr. He was also impressed by the holistic service of Mennonite Central Committee workers in neighbouring Bolivia, who showed no partiality with regard to religion, ethnicity, social class or gender. Carlos Gallardo and Mónica Parada, upon learning about Anabaptist ecclesiology in a course on the Radical Reformation taught by Titus Guenther, suddenly felt a kinship between their own understanding of the life of the church and the historic vision of the Anabaptists.

The Chilean Mennonite congregations, some almost 25 years old, emerged from quite different backgrounds. Most grew out of a Pentecostal background. One congregation, *Iglesia Menonita Puerta del Rebaño* (The Door of the Sheepfold Mennonite Church), arose in the context of a university community in Concepción, developing its Mennonite identity as a result of influence from visiting Mennonite teachers like John Driver, César Moya and Delbert Erb. As mentioned above, this group is led by Carlos Gallardo and Mónica Parada, two former seminary students. Importantly, these churches arose some distance from each other, within different social contexts. These differences made for difficulties in relating to each other. However, recent developments – including

# are Blowing'

## celebrate growth and global connections

joint involvement in the staging of the 2013 Southern Cone conference, a gathering of Anabaptists from six South American nations – has helped to reduce the “distance” between the groups.

All these churches minister in situations of chronic poverty. Their community outreach focuses on family, women’s and youth issues. Women carry the bulk of the responsibility for these ministries – as much as 70% of the workload, according to one male leader. They prepare food, visit the sick, support families in need and walk alongside people with addictions. A vivid illustration of this point comes from Gladys Delgado (Daniel’s wife). One day, an abandoned youth – the child of alcoholic parents – showed up at the Delgados’ church. Gladys invited him into their home. Four years later, he still lives with them, and is now actively involved in the life and ministry of the church.

These Mennonite churches also demonstrated their care for the suffering in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Chile. Though of limited means themselves, these believers nevertheless loaded up three vans of supplies and delivered them to the people hardest hit by this natural disaster – not just the Mennonites, but those from other evangelical churches as well.

The identity of these Chilean Mennonites is captured well in this brief anecdote from Daniel Delgado. When asked by a police officer, “What does the Mennonite church do anyway?”, Daniel replied, “We are doing the work you are hired to do, but we do it for free.”

In addition to their social service work, the Mennonites of Chile show a keen awareness of the need to share the gospel with their neighbours. Samuel Tripainao, pastor of the Peñaflor church and secretary of IEMCH, captures well the sentiment shared by most Mennonites in this country: “When we go out on the street, our witness is accompanied by a sandwich and a cup of coffee.” And their service is not limited to their immediate communities only. From time to time, pastors travel to more distant places, including neighbouring Argentina, to fellowship with and strengthen sister congregations and to lend a hand in local evangelism. When Samuel heard about the conflict over land ownership in the region where many Mapuche (aboriginal) people live, he declared that “this would be a good place to start a church,” as an effort to bring peace and healing to this community.

A report on Mennonites in Chile would

be lacking without a reference to the Anabaptist renewal occurring within the sizeable Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile (UBACH). Omar Cortés – a worker in both the Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network U.S. programs, as well as a Baptist seminary professor – has played a central role in this movement. Through his teaching on the Radical Reformation, Omar has helped the Baptist Church to rediscover its Peace Church roots. In 2008, UBACH and Mennonite Church Canada entered into a sister church relationship. Whether this will continue under UBACH’s new leadership, remains to be seen.

Our personal experience visiting a new church community, started by two Baptist seminary professors, suggests that there is much vitality in this renewal movement.

**“When we go out on the street, our witness is accompanied by a sandwich and a cup of coffee.”**

These Christians are vitally interested in Anabaptist ecclesiology and practice, and are very inclusive, emphasizing the themes of peace, justice and compassion in their songs and liturgy.

Two further church initiatives in the south of Chile should be mentioned. One was started in Valdivia by three women – Wanda Sieber, Marlene Dorigoni and Waleska Villa – from the Argentine (Patagonia) Mennonite Church. The other, also in the Valdivia region, is led by Eastern Mennonite Mission workers Mike and Nancy Hostetter.

Until recently, the Mennonites of Chile often felt isolated from the larger Anabaptist movement, but such sentiments are starting to change through the visits of Mennonite Mission administrators and teachers from North America and neighbouring countries. Members’ participation in the biannual Southern Cone conferences and the 2009 Mennonite World Conference assembly has also significantly combated these feelings of isolation. As a result of these connections, IEMCH recently became the one hundredth member-church in the MWC family.

Another milestone in the life of the Chilean Mennonite churches occurred this year, when they hosted the Southern Cone conference for the first time. This event brought together men, women and youth in the daily tasks of cooking, serving and cleaning, as well as in organizing and

presiding over the program.

Given their multifaceted, holistic ministry, the Mennonites of Chile face a number of challenges. First, there is a need to prepare new and younger people for leadership roles. Most current church leaders are older; a new generation will soon need to arise to take up their mantle. However, at present, most young peoples’ preparation for future service is limited to helping in the ministry with children and youth.

There is also a lack of biblical and theological knowledge and training among the leaders. What’s worse, there is little evidence that the emerging generation has access to further formation in this regard. *La Puerta* (Concepción), with one student enrolled in a seminary theology program, is the exception.

A third challenge relates to the retention of members and individual congregations. Currently, almost as many members leave as are gained. A fourth issue is gender equality, which continues to be a challenge for many of these congregations, especially in the area of pastoral leadership. Participation in the wider church helps to overcome their isolation and open them up to the larger Mennonite family. This will hopefully result in greater openness to other faith families.

Nevertheless, the winds of Anabaptism continue to blow through the Mennonite churches of Chile. These Chilean believers are strengthened through the support of Mennonites from around the globe, and in turn the Chileans are opening other Mennonites’ eyes to what it means to be Anabaptist. These encounters are a wonderful opportunity for the sharing of diverse gifts that complement each other. The older churches, grounded in a more biblical-theological formation, can share their wisdom and experience, while the younger Chilean churches offer their brothers and sisters the benefit of fresh insights derived from reading the Bible with new eyes.

**Titus Guenther, Associate Professor of Theology and Missions at Canadian Mennonite University (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada), and Karen Loewen Guenther, a retired ESL teacher and freelance writer, are currently in Chile on special assignment with Mennonite Church Canada Witness.**

# ‘Learning to Know Each Other Better’

Researchers embark on a global study  
of MWC member-churches



In 2012, MWC partnered with the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA) at Goshen College (Goshen, Indiana, USA) to launch a multi-year, multi-part research initiative. The goal? To develop a more nuanced picture of the MWC constituency specifically, and the global Anabaptist church generally.

The project has two components. The first, the Global Anabaptist Profile (GAP), is a survey structured around MWC’s “Shared Convictions” that aims to collect demographic data as well as information on beliefs and practices. The second component, the Bearing Witness Stories (BWS) Project, will seek to gather personal stories of discipleship and suffering, in the spirit of the *Martyrs Mirror*.

Recently, *Courier/Correo/Courrier* connected with project personnel to discuss the initiative, its impetus and its progress thus far.

## What was the impetus for this research initiative on global Anabaptism?

**John D. Roth (JR):** The global Anabaptist church has been undergoing a dramatic transformation in the past 30 years or so, growing from approximately 600,000 members in 1980 to nearly 1.7 million today. Although MWC has worked hard to facilitate exchanges among its member groups, we are still very much in a process of learning to know each other better. The project is one step in helping to clarify a better sense of the basic demographical information, while also gathering much more detailed information about the beliefs and practices, hopes and dreams of MWC member churches.

## Have there been other such efforts to study the beliefs and practices of the international Anabaptist-Mennonite community?

**Conrad Kanagy (CK):** Not many. Several years ago, Richard Showalter – then-president of Eastern Mennonite Missions and chair of the MWC Missions Commission – and I inaugurated the Multi-Nation Anabaptist (MNA) Profile. Ours was an effort to learn more about the beliefs and

practices of the international Anabaptist community, and specifically those national churches connected to EMM. The results of that study were recently published in the book *Winds of the Spirit* (Herald Press, 2012).

**Alfred Neufeld (AN):** *Winds of the Spirit* is excellent proof of how a profile study can stimulate theological work and contribute to renewal of identity. We expect that the GAP will similarly help our Commission in its efforts.

**CK:** The GAP will be broader in scope than the MNA, and we hope it will yield even greater insights.

## How do you plan to gather stories for the “Bearing Witness” project?

**JR:** One aspect of the project will focus on pulling together stories in a more intentional fashion from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries (i.e., from the completion of the *Martyrs Mirror* in 1685 to the present). But we also want to gather stories from the contemporary church, and especially from Anabaptist-Mennonite churches in the Global South.

In August 2012, some 40 people from

nine countries (and representing at least six different Anabaptist groups) met at Goshen College to develop a framework for the BWS. The consultation made it clear that gathering stories is never a simple process. We hope that a combination of active personal solicitation, the Internet, public appeals and the use of existing networks (like MWC) will slowly generate interest.

**What progress has been made thus far on the project?**

**JR:** Following nearly a year of conversations with MWC leadership, mission agency executives, representatives from Mennonite Central Committee and a host of interested individuals, the ISGA received preliminary approval for the project by the MWC Executive Committee at its May 2011 meeting, with final approval confirmed at the meeting of the General Council in May 2012.

In August 2012, a sub-group of the MWC Faith and Life Commission met to review the logistics of the GAP. Also in August, Conrad organized a consultation with several other Mennonite sociologists, each with extensive experience in cross-cultural surveys, for counsel regarding methodological questions. In late October we finalized our sample, and in November the MWC office in Bogotá sent out official letters to a representative sample of 25 member-churches, inviting them to participate. Right now we are responding to questions and confirming which groups wish to take part in the project. We hope to complete the survey in 2013-2014.

**It's common these days to find North American researchers going to the Global South to conduct these kinds of studies. I'm sure that you're sensitive to this perception with the current project. What steps have you taken to address this perception?**

**JR:** Yes, some might have the perception that this is a purely North American academic project that is "extracting" information from the global church. That is a false impression, though I do understand the concern. Clearly, the ISGA – which is located in the USA – is a catalyst for the project, and all of the funding comes from North America. But we see this as a project owned jointly by all the member-churches in the MWC family. The survey itself is based on the MWC Shared Convictions that resulted from a long process of discernment that included input from groups around the world. Each participating group will have a chance to add to the GAP questions that are specific to its setting. And the results of each participating group's survey will be made available in an accessible form to the leadership of each church.

Gathering information is not an end in itself; the information is clearly intended to help the church – both locally and in its global/MWC expression – to be more faithful followers of Jesus.

**How do you think the data gathered in this project will help MWC in its work of linking the global Anabaptist community?**

**AN:** In the 16th century there was a "multi-genesis" of Anabaptist beginnings: the Dutch-North German group, led by Menno Simons, was quite different in culture, history, spirituality and political setting to the Swiss-South German group that began 1525 in Zurich. And both groups had considerable differences from the movement led by Hans Hut and Thomas Müntzer, and from the later "Heavenly Kingdom" at the city of Münster.

Today, young Anabaptist churches – those within an Islamic context in Indonesia or Nigeria, within a Spanish Conquista-rooted Catholic context in Latin America, or within the "underground church" movement in China – have quite different spiritual

lives and day-to-day struggles than our Mennonite church members in Holland or Switzerland, in the USA or Canada. But we need each other and we need to understand each other.

**CK:** In the Book of Revelation, Jesus Christ has a message or word for the seven churches of Asia. I like to imagine that the work of MWC in this project will be one more way of hearing – partially, of course – Christ's word to us in these early years of the 21st century.

**Participants**



**John Roth (JR)**  
Director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA) at Goshen College and Secretary of the MWC Faith and Life Commission



**Alfred Neufeld (AN)**  
Chair of the MWC Faith and Life Commission



**Conrad Kanagy (CK)**  
Associate Director of the Global Anabaptist Profile project

**Give a gift to MWC**

Your prayers and financial gifts are deeply appreciated. Your contributions are important. They will:

- Enable expanded communication strategies to nurture a worldwide family of faith
- Strengthen our communion's identity and witness as Anabaptist Christians in our diverse contexts;
- Build up community through networks and gatherings so that we can learn from and support each other.

Go to [www.mwc-cmm.org](http://www.mwc-cmm.org) and click the "Get Involved" tab for prayer requests and on the "Donate" tab for multiple ways to give online. Or mail your gift to Mennonite World Conference at one of these addresses:

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**John D. Roth, Director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen College (Goshen, Indiana), leads a discussion at the Bearing Witness Stories Project consultation, held 5-8 August 2012 in Goshen. Photo by Kaeli Evans**

## Called to be a Global Communion



Some years ago a woman with a foreign accent – a friend of mine – knocked on the door of one of our churches in Bogotá. That church’s pastor – another friend of mine – opened the door. The woman was evangelizing that neighborhood and started to talk with my friend without knowing about his Christian commitment. He invited her to talk, thinking he would give testimony to this foreign missionary that maybe belonged to some strange religion.

They were talking for several minutes before they discovered their common faith. The surprise grew even bigger when they realized they both were members of the same tradition – Anabaptism – and, more than this, that they were members of the *same* Mennonite denomination. She was shocked to learn that there are around 12 Anabaptist churches in Bogotá. For several years this woman, who had come from a European country, had been serving in this city as a missionary under the auspices of her Mennonite church, without being in touch with Colombian Mennonites of her same church family.

I would like to say that the story of my pastor-friend and his European missionary visitor is just an isolated case. However, similar stories are repeated again and again around the world in places where Anabaptist churches and agencies serve without knowing what other members of our global communion in the same place are doing. Anabaptist presence lacks power and impact when worldwide communication among our members and institutions is not fluid. This is one of the reasons why Mennonite World Conference has revisited and revised its communication strategy. This issue of *Courier/Correo/Courrier* describes how that new strategy is being implemented by harnessing the power of new media and prudently investing our resources where they’re needed most. The result, we hope, will be better communication among our members around the world.

Communication has the same root as other important words in MWC’s mission and vision: *communion* and *community*. It is not possible to have real communion with those with whom we do not communicate. It is impossible to build a global community if we do not talk each other on a regular basis. It is not possible to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15), if we do not know their joys as well as their sufferings.

Good communication makes possible the sharing of resources, experiences, gifts and weaknesses in a way that strengthens our service and testimony. Good communication enables us to network teams for more efficient and effective work in church planting, peacemaking, social development and education. What could happen if this work is done in a multicultural way and as an expression of Christ’s church? What could happen if we see our global family as an organic body that is interconnected and intercommunicated, instead of just a network of institutions? What could happen if we avoid duplication of efforts, while celebrating differences and diversity?

Some weeks ago I went to a meeting of Mennonite pastors in Bogotá. There were my two friends: the pastor and the European missionary. These two leaders have learned to communicate and to work together. As a result, the church has grown in many ways. Can we imitate their example? Can we keep building a global community through better communication? May we be one, so that the world may believe that Jesus was sent by our Father (John 17:21).

**César García, MWC General Secretary,  
works out of the head office in Bogotá, Colombia.**

## Courier Correo Courrier



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