

2003 Quarters 3 & 4

courier

Volume 18, Nos. 3 & 4 • A publication of Mennonite World Conference in English, Spanish, and French



**What we have
we give**

**A report of
Africa 2003**

What we have we give

By the time Africa Day was on the schedule in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, all of us attending MWC's 14th Assembly knew how appropriate the sub-theme was that the Africans had chosen: "What we have we give."

For we were receiving in abundance: friendship, food, hospitality, love, prayers, smiles, hugs, gifts. In spite of their country's hardships and economic difficulties, the Brethren in Christ of Zimbabwe were truly sharing their gifts with us "in suffering and in joy."

Because it was the host continent, Africa went last at the assembly, where morning and evening worship services were planned each day by people from a different continent. Africa Day was

While C/C/C confines its coverage this issue to Assembly Gathered, Africa 2003 was much more. Next issue we will feature Assembly Scattered with a report on a visit to Kenya, and the experience of Zimbabwean hospitality. We will also report on a Holy Spirit in Mission conference in Ethiopia.

Saturday, August 16, in a week of worship and Bible studies which began August 11.

Afternoons featured workshops and tours and a Global Village, where groups from around the world shared their crafts and their music. This assembly had the first-ever Global Youth Summit. Also meeting were a Global Mission Fellowship and MWC's General Council, including two of its sub-groups—Peace Council and Faith & Life Council.

The assembly's official registration total was more than 6,200.

Larger numbers came on opening night and for the concluding Sunday morning service. More than 4,400 came from Zimbabwe and 1,800 from other countries around the world.

In this issue, C/C/C attempts to paint a picture of what happened during assembly week in Bulawayo through words and photos. We hope what we produce here will be a memory gift to those who were in Bulawayo. We also trust it will be a significant window on the global Mennonite and Brethren in Christ world for those not able to be with us in Zimbabwe.—*Editors*



J. Lorne Peachey

The spire above became the landmark for MWC Assembly Gathered participants finding their way around ZITF grounds. With map in hand, they located the spire and then found the appropriate building for their next workshop or worship service.

Contributions welcome

Courier welcomes news, feature stories and ideas, and photographs about Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowships. Send manuscripts, ideas, and photographs to the regional editor listed below. Submissions may be by regular mail or via email.

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Cover: Sibuyile Jele (left) and Thabisa Balovi of Zimbabwe proudly show the rice they have prepared in their outdoor kitchen to help feed up to 7,000 participants at Mennonite World Conference's Assembly Gathered in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, August 11-17, 2003.

Cover photo by Laurie Oswald

Information on MWC and electronic copies of C/C/C available at www.mwc-cmm.org

courier / correo / courrier

(ISSN 1041-4436) is published quarterly by Mennonite World Conference, 8, rue du Fossé des Treize, 67000 Strasbourg, France. It seeks to nurture community, communication, and cooperation in the worldwide Mennonite and Brethren in Christ faith family, a part of the Anabaptist movement. Publication office: *Courier*, 616 Walnut Avenue, Scottsdale, PA 15683-1999, USA. Periodical postage paid at Scottsdale, PA. Printed in USA.

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Courier / correo / courrier is mailed free on request to anyone desiring a copy. Send manuscripts and address changes to C/C/C, MWC, 8 rue du Fossé des Treize, 67000 Strasbourg, France. Email: Strasbourg@MWC-cmm.org.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Courier*, 616 Walnut Ave., Scottsdale, PA 15683-1999 USA

Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy

by Barbara Nkala

Mennonite World Conference's 14th Assembly was a miracle. Zimbabwe's food and fuel crises have been steadily getting worse. Yet God made possible the august assembly that congregated at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) in Bulawayo, August 11-17.

It was young children who set the tone for this gathering. During the opening service, Thobeka Maphosa, eight years old, said, "We all need one another. We must be concerned about each other, in health and in sickness."

"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it," Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:26. And how well that was demonstrated during the assembly days.

I was so impressed by regional and international visitors who took a great step of faith to come to Zimbabwe

when the situation was not conducive to visits by internationals. That was an open declaration to us in Zimbabwe: "No matter what," it said, "we are coming to stand with you!" What faith! What care! What wondrous love!

Our visitors also brought many food items and other gifts while nationals hosted many of the visitors and local participants. Despite the wretched situation all around, Assembly Gathered was a hive of joyfully sharing one with another—both our sufferings and our joys.

Many people gave much to make this assembly happen, both financially as well as in kind. MWC staff and the numerous volunteers gave precious time and talents before and during the conference. Many of them missed out on various organised activities and worship services to pay attention to the areas for which they were responsible.

This was love in action, for it was for the good of the conference delegates.

There's the example of Nickson Ndlovu, who took time off as a Wanezi Mission ambulance driver to work at ZITF during assembly week (see next page). Or there's the example of Jacqueline, a 14-year-old Canadian who spearheaded a fundraising drive to raise more than \$1,800 U.S. so that Zimbabwe children could have Sunday school materials.

These are just two of many examples of people who gave of themselves so that others could receive joy and blessing. Those who had much gave so that those who had less could also be part of what was happening in Bulawayo.

Four offerings were taken during the worship services, resulting in more than \$22,600 U.S. being received, a huge sum in Zimbabwean terms. This money will be used for conference expenditures as well as for the development work at Nono Mission, a new Brethren in Christ (BIC) initiative. Again, this all resulted from the sharing of gifts in the body of Christ.

Music also became a way through which we gave and received. Many groups from different countries presented songs that lifted the spirits of the participants. Often, we were left wanting more.

One of the conference highlights was the singing of the MWC International Choir, made up of talented musicians from all over the globe. Their songs

Barbara Nkala (left), Harare, Zimbabwe, served as moderator for the public sessions at Assembly 14. The director of the International Bible Society for Zimbabwe and Malawi, Barbara is also a writer and publisher.





J. Lorne Peachey

were in different languages, accompanied by many different instruments. The choir truly gave so much of their time and talent to enable the assembly to glorify God in song.

The choir gave, and the assembly received their inspiring and soothing music. Many tell me they still can hear their music in the air. Grateful applause from the assembly participants was a gift to the singers, who were happy to use their talent for the edification of the body of Christ.

From my seat at the side of the stage, I found the Bible studies, testimonies, and sermons to be inspiring. I'll never forget Latin American Day, when we worshiped around the theme, "In Christ We Suffer with Hope and Celebrate with Joy." After listening to the rich Mennonite and BIC theology of peace, a Zimbabwe brother said, "I have been struggling for years to forgive government and the people who killed my relatives during the mid 1980s. Now I realise I am not alone, and I must forgive to get healing. I have to work at that."

Then there was the sermon by Siaka Traoré from Burkina Faso on Africa Day around the theme, "What We Have We Give." Siaka gave a vivid illustration of how Africans give what they have. In his culture, a guest is honoured by being presented with a live chicken. "The guest should not say the chicken

is small or sick," Siaka said. "The gift should be accepted as it is. The visitor then hands it back to be prepared. ... The North should accept our chicken as it is without weighing it or criticizing it or looking down upon it," Siaka went on. It is the heart condition, the giving of one's best as the widow's mite that should count.

Assembly afternoons were packed with various activities that helped us interact, learn, share, and bless one another. One of the most profound workshops I attended centered around dealing with pain and grief. Several persons shared stories about the painful death of a loved one and what they learned from God through that experience.

One sister from Zimbabwe, MaSibanda, said, "I came to the meeting burdened, with a heavy heart. I thought my problem was peculiar only

Typical of more than 280 volunteers who helped make Assembly 14 happen is Nickson Ndlovu, an ambulance driver for the hospital at Wanezi Mission, Zimbabwe. Nickson took a month off from his job to help out with transport, meeting internationals at the airport and taking participants to numerous places in the city. "I like conferences," Nickson said. "And I want to be with others in their service to God and the church."

Registration day on Monday, August 11, brought more than 4,400 Zimbabweans to the ZITF. Many waited in long lines for name tags and conference bags.

to me. When I listened to the testimonies, I found that some of the sisters had suffered much more than I had in their losses. My heart cried for them. I found healing and I thank God."

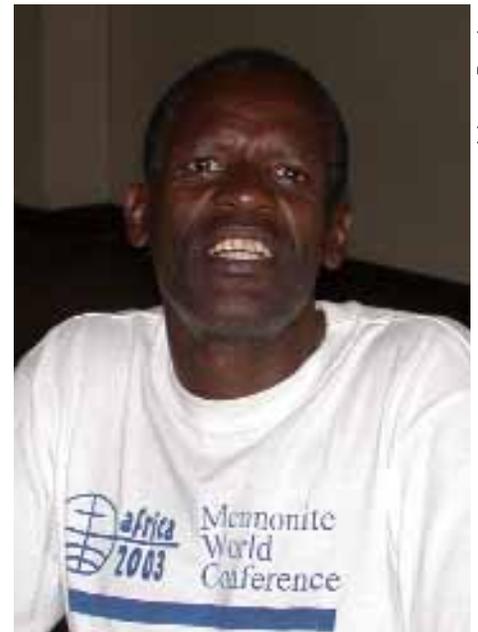
What a touching way of sharing in suffering, weeping together, and then laughing together in joy!

Then there was the quilt. More than 100 women and some men did magnificent work on an HIV/AIDS quilt. Many embroidered the names of loved ones who had died from this plague. Then the 234 patches were joined together to make a quilt that beautifully illustrated the oneness of the many who had worked on it.

That quilt sang a beautiful song: We are one in suffering and in joy—Mennonite or Brethren in Christ, black or white, from the North or from the South, rich or poor, learned or illiterate.

When preparations for this assembly first started in Bulawayo more than two years ago, it all seemed like a far away dream. Now it has come and gone, leaving all of us richer for the sharing that took place and the togetherness that will continue.

May God be praised as Mennonites and Brethren in Christ around the globe continue to share our gifts in suffering and in joy.



J. Lorne Peachey

A full plate at a church conference is no small gift

by Paul Schrag

Tattered Bible in hand, Christopher Moyo sat in the front row of Hall 4 at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair August 15 and summed up the Mennonite World Conference assembly from a Zimbabwean's point of view.

"The spiritual food and the physical food both are very good," he said.

When a man barely manages to feed his family, a full plate at a church conference is no small gift.

Gifts large and small were exchanged August 11-17 when about 7,000 Mennonites and Brethren in Christ—approximately 5,000 of them Africans—gathered for MWC's 14th Assembly.

It didn't take long for them to make the conference theme, "Sharing Gifts in Suffering and in Joy," much more than words.

Here were African women, sharing the gift of encouragement with those who feel called to church leadership roles.

"The Holy Spirit moves wherever it wills," said Béatrice Kadi Hayalume, Congo, during a workshop featuring African women theologians. "The same Spirit who gives gifts to men gives gifts to women."

Here were North Americans, learning about responses to suffering as Mennonite Central Committee workers told of Zimbabwe's food shortage.

"I take my mind back into the rural areas, and I shed tears," said George Nyathi, food coordinator for MCC and the BIC Church in Zimbabwe. "Even in the city, hunger is hitting hard."

Here were people of many

nations, feeling joy in music as cheering and dancing African women massed in front of the Global Church Village stage where a Zambian choir was singing.

"What I enjoy most is the music," said Nomqhele Ndlovu of Zimbabwe. "Even if they are singing in another language, I still enjoy it."

spotlight on the Brethren in Christ Church. Zimbabwe's entire Anabaptist membership of 29,000 is BIC.

At conference worship services, the Zimbabwean BIC women's "church uniform"—white hats and white blouses—was the dominant clothing style.

And the assembly gave vis-

and most successfully.

"The hand of God was really mighty, because everything we prayed for was answered," said Ethel Sibanda, a member of the national coordinating committee in Zimbabwe.

Ethel told the Sunday morning worship crowd how her committee and assembly



Everett J. Thomas

Everyone who shared as a giver and a receiver could quickly answer the question, "Can anything good come from Africa?" posed by one of the conference preachers, Siaka Traoré of Burkina Faso.

Among many good things was the way the assembly placed people from 58 nations into a new Anabaptist family portrait. This portrait had black and brown faces in the majority, reflecting the fact that more Anabaptist church members now live in Africa than in any other continent.

The assembly also placed a

itors from around the world a glimpse into the lives of Zimbabweans, who are enduring drought, political unrest, and runaway inflation currently at 364 percent.

"It's quite an honor that you ... come and share our sorrows," said Treziah Ndlovu of Zimbabwe while waiting in line for lunch. "You will witness what we experience and tell others. Life is getting tougher and tougher each day."

Not the least of the assembly's many blessings was the fact that it was held at all,

Many people gave gifts from the worship hall platform, including this presentation of an HIV/AIDS quilt stitched together during the week.

staff had walked the streets of the conference site praying for each venue. "We declared before the Lord that this was holy ground," Ethel said.

Thousands of her sisters and brothers around the world would agree.

Paul Schrag, Newton, Kansas, USA, is editor of Mennonite Weekly Review.



Assembly 14 worship services

Sharing the stories of God's faithfulness

J. Lorne Peachey



The silent skit was jarring. As a Latin American family sat down to dinner, three armed men broke into the house and killed the father.

Several scenes later, the bereaved and impoverished family found their way into the embrace of a loving congregation. Eventually, several family members were baptized. The story ended with the new Christians sharing the gospel with many others.

Breaking character, the

actors then moved through the audience and flung handfuls of seeds into the crowd to reiterate the message: All Christians are expected to sow the seeds of the gospel wherever they go.

The skit, which concluded the evening worship service on Latin America Day, August 14, at MWC's 14th assembly, was just one example of the ways people from each continent shared their churches' experiences as they led worship.

On Asia Day, August 12, shouts of "hallelujah!" rang in the worship hall.

Top: Up to 7,000 attended each day's services, filling both the main floor and bleachers. Left, top: Mary Oyer leads singing during North America Day. Left, bottom: Eunice Khanye directs the Choral Sounds from Bulawayo during the opening worship.

Ambrocio Porcincula of the Philippines in his high-volume preaching urged, "Let us joyfully celebrate life in Jesus."

The joy that Ambrocio spoke of was accompanied by the awareness—and for some the personal experience—of suffering in many parts of the world.

"Hundreds of millions of people around the world live without hope, without peace," Ambrocio said, adding that he didn't think Europeans and North Americans understood such suffering.

Hendro Soeradi of Indonesia told of healing in the Indonesian Mennonites' GITJ conference, known as a synod, after conflict split the synod in two in 1996.

In 1999, reconciliation was accomplished, and good relationships have been restored.

Bringing the morning

Laurie Oswald



Everett J. Thomas

Right, top: Claude Baecher, France, Bible study leader on Europe Day, challenged Mennonites to “remain (menō).” Sylvia Shirk-Charles translates. Right, below: Ambrocio Porcincula, Philippines, known to his MWC friends as the “Hallelujah Bishop,” had his audience praising God with “hallelujahs” and “amens” while preaching during Asia Day.

Bible study message on Asia Day, Shant S. Kunjam of India spoke of the mysteries of the fellowship of Christ’s suffering. “There are things that cannot be known apart from suffering for Christ’s sake,” he said.

On Europe Day, August 13, Bible study leader Claude Baecher of France played with the word “remain,” which is *menō* in Greek, used 11 times in John 15. He emphasized the importance for *Menō*-nite people remaining in Jesus so that our fruit will *menō*.

In the evening, Fernando Enns of Germany preached on Ephesians 6:10-20. He said the church needs to put on the armor of God to fight not only the inner battles

but also the battles of terror, war, starvation, corruption, and torture, all the results of the arrogant use of power.

Enns challenged Mennonites and Brethren in Christ to share their convictions of peace with the ecumenical fellowship of churches.

In her evening sermon on North America Day, August 15, Mary Anne Isaak, a Mennonite Brethren pastor from Fresno, California, USA, said, “Jesus came into our hurting world to break down all dividing walls and to reconcile all groups to each other and to God.”

During the morning service, Lindsey Robinson, conference minister for Lancaster Mennonite



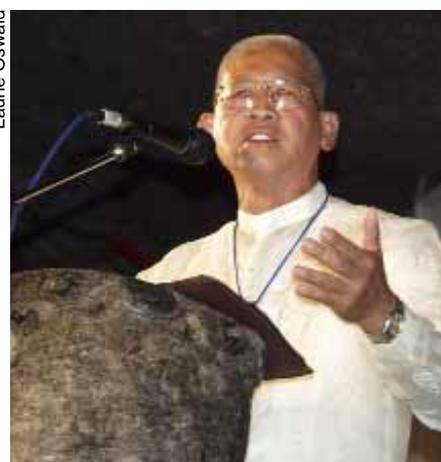
Conference, USA, contemplated Paul’s prodding of the Corinthian church to appreciate each other as gifts.

“Giving ourselves to each other, sharing with each other, praying with each other, encouraging each other, and being willing to lay down our lives for each other all become a base for the powerful witness of God’s grace,” he said.

“What we have, we give,” the Africa Day theme, captured a fundamental reality of many African cultures and set the tone for the day, introduced by Bishop Philip Okeyo of Kenya. As the day built, it became clear that the African church has many gifts to offer the global church.

Worship services included testimonies. On Africa Day,

Laurie Oswald



August 16, Alemu Chekole of Ethiopia told of losing his sight at age 8 due to a severe infection. His father took him to Addis Ababa, where he was one of the first students in a school for the blind run by Mennonite missionaries. He received love, an education and the gospel, and went on to become a high school teacher with two university degrees. His life story was one of the triumph of God’s power. He challenged participants to give whatever one has to God.

From reports by Everett J. Thomas, Paul Schrag, Susan Brandt, Ron Ross, Arli Klassen, and Keith Regehr for Meetinghouse, a consortium of North American Anabaptist publications.



Left: During Assembly 14, African-Americans initiated talks with Africans about how their ancestors had treated each other in the years of slavery throughout the Americas. The talks resulted in a reconciliation foot-washing ceremony during Africa Day. Here Deusilene Martins Milhomen (left), Brazil, washes the feet of Precious Dladla, Zimbabwe.



Laurie Oswald

Above: Members of the International Choir include (from left): Anita Hein-Horsch, Germany; Deusilene Martins Milhomen, Brazil; Nyamisy Steven Mangana, Tanzania; Eunice Khanye, Zimbabwe; Raema Mintasih, Indonesia; Florent Malu-Malu Lungungu, Congo; I. Matsung Ozukum, India; Ndumiso Mlilo, Zimbabwe; Jan Marten de Vries, Netherlands; and Byran Moyer Suderman, Canada. Other choir members were: Herbert Mwaanga Nkaso, Zambia; Amos Lopez, Cuba; Agus Setianto, Indonesia; Mauricio Medina Benavides, Colombia; Apeku Leticia Amasika, Ghana; Lwazi Sibanda, Zimbabwe; and Ammeral Johnson, USA. Right: Marilyn Houser Hamm, Canada, was the co-leader and provided piano accompaniment.



Laurie Oswald

International choir builds global unity

by Laurie Oswald

It didn't matter that Ammeral Johnson didn't read music or know Ndebele. The International Choir member said she felt the heartbeat of global songs wrap around MWC worship like a prayer everyone knew.

"Even if we didn't understand the words fully, we got the meaning," Ammeral said.

An African-American from Hampton, Virginia, USA, Ammeral and the other 17 choir members from around the world helped lead worship for MWC's Assembly Gathered August 11-17.

Absorbing the meaning in many languages and musical scores was what the choir did every day beginning two weeks prior to the assembly, said Marilyn Houser Hamm, a musician from Canada who was the choir co-leader.

The 18 choir members, fluent in a total of 16 languages, brought riches to the treasure chest of daily worship from their lands—Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, and Africa. These riches included many songs from Africa.

The African song, "Hakunka Akaita Sa Jesu," wasn't even in the songbook brought together for the assembly, but this song topped the worship charts. Reserved Europeans and expressive Africans alike danced and raised their arms in praise to the words (see below).

"The expression of the assembly theme—"Sharing gifts in suffering and

in joy"—happened in many powerful ways," Marilyn noted. "We found ways with music to name and share our pain that transcended our differences and brought an amazing joy and celebration in God's Spirit."

To help assembly participants connect as God's family, the choir first had to be formed into a musical family.

"[It] happened so quickly—even within the first two days," said Marilyn. "There was an amazing openness to one another from the very beginning ... and a strong willingness to enter into the space of another person who taught us his or her music in their language and brought us into their culture."

Marilyn gives credit for this family togetherness to the grace of the Holy Spirit. "We would have made no headway if we hadn't prepared ourselves spiritually," she said. "And the way music is, it gives back energy, and constantly renewed us, along with the support given to us from the whole assembly."

Laurie Oswald is news service director for Mennonite Church USA.

Hakuna akaita sa Jesu (Hakuna)
 Hakuna akaita saye (Hakuna wo)
 Hakuna akaita sa Jesu (Hakuna)
(There is none like Jesus)
 Hakuna-kuna wo
(No, there is none)

(Tamhanya)
 Tamhanya-mhanya kwese kwese
(We ran everywhere)
 Tatenderera kwese kwese
(We turned round and round)
 Tatsvaga-tsvaga kwese kwese
 (Tamushaya)

(We searched everywhere)
 Hakuna-kuna wo
(But we found none like Jesus)

"This has been a taste of heaven"

Jubilant music, communion mark final assembly worship

For decades after coming to Africa, Brethren in Christ missionaries prohibited dancing in church.

A century later, worshippers at the MWC's 14th Assembly appeared to have the most fun when they let the music move them.

One song, "Hakuna Akaita Sa Jesu," really got them going. Worship leaders kept bringing it back by popular demand.

And so at the final service on Sunday morning, August 17, one more time, about 7,000 Anabaptists with smiles on their faces were turning in circles and swinging their arms as they sang in Shona a song that translates

Limukani Ncube of Zimbabwe helps to prepare communion for the believers attending the final Sunday worship service at MWC's Assembly 14.

as: "There is no one like Jesus" (see page 8).

Throughout the week, one way to tell that a song had generated special enthusiasm was to listen for a high-pitched cheer—"le-le-le-le-le!"—from African women.

Probably knowing that many non-Africans didn't have the confidence to cheer like that, when he was leading an impromptu song on Sunday, BIC pastor Glen Ncube urged everyone to "make any sound you can think of" and to wave their Bibles over their heads.

"Our forefathers waved their spears and shields," Glen said. "We wave our Bibles. That is our weapon."

Adding a Western tradition to the week's concluding service, the congregation sang "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow," known to many as "606," its



Wilhelm Unger

number in a North American Mennonite hymnal.

In the Sunday sermon, Nancy Heisey, Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, MWC's new president, said singing brings diverse people together.

"As we are filled with the Spirit, how do we respond? By singing! Singing is something we do because we're human, but now it is also something we do because we are God's children."

Nancy also encouraged her listeners to practice mutual submission. In this way, she said, "we will make space for women's gifts, for the energy of our young people, and for the forms of witness of those who are poor. Then we will truly become the children of God."

Nancy's sermon was followed by a communion service. Outgoing MWC president, Mesach Krisetya, Indonesia, presided.

"We have had a lot of miracles during the week," he said before blessing communion wafers and grape juice. "Jesus fed 5,000; MWC, with the help of Christ, has fed 7,000. Together the believers took

With an exchange rate of 2,500 Zim for \$1 U.S., offering baskets were full. More than \$22,600 U.S. was contributed for MWC expenses and to support a new BIC mission in Zimbabwe.

both the bread and the cup.

The service concluded with words of thanks from MWC executive secretary Larry Miller and Zimbabwe BIC bishop Danisa Ndlovu.

"You have received us with joy in the midst of your suffering," Larry told the Zimbabweans. "You have touched our hearts. We will not forget you."

Danisa addressed the internationals: "We give thanks ... you chose to come and share in our suffering," he said. "There has never been a Christian conference in Bulawayo that brought so many people, so many tribes, so many colors. This has been a taste of heaven."

From reports by Paul Schrag and Everett J. Thomas, editors of North American Mennonite publications.

J. Lorne Peachey



Global village offers trip around the world

by Melissa Aberle-Grasse

Near the center of the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair grounds, where Mennonite World Conference assembly was held, cultural artifacts from around the world were on display in what was called a "Global Church Village." And while thousands of

visitors enjoyed the displays, behind the scenes another purpose was accomplished. Twenty-three youth from four continents worked together to create and staff the sites, forming relationships and insights into each other's lives while they worked.

At each of five kiosks, built to resemble a Zimbabwean home, visitors

sampled food, art, and stories from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, or North America. At Latin America's booth, youth served "mate" tea from Paraguay. From Africa came paintings, carvings, and baskets. At the Asia booth, children especially enjoyed getting "tattoos" of painted henna.

The kiosks also served as

places of conversation, relaxation, and rich encounters between people from various cultures.

"One morning, a Zimbabwean girl asked over and over to taste and hear about mate tea," reported youth steward Carissa Sweigart from USA. "She returned for several days to be the server and tell others about the tea from South America."

At the Africa booth, Dingulwazi Ndlovu of Zimbabwe remembered a conversation with a North American visitor about marital rites.

"In Zimbabwe, if I go to visit my prospective mother-in-law, I dress up and greet her with special respect. In North America, my visitor said, he could show up in his old T-shirt. We would never do that here."

"We got to meet a cross-section of people who attended the conference," exclaimed Mthokozisi Ncube of Zimbabwe. "We had something they wanted to hear about."

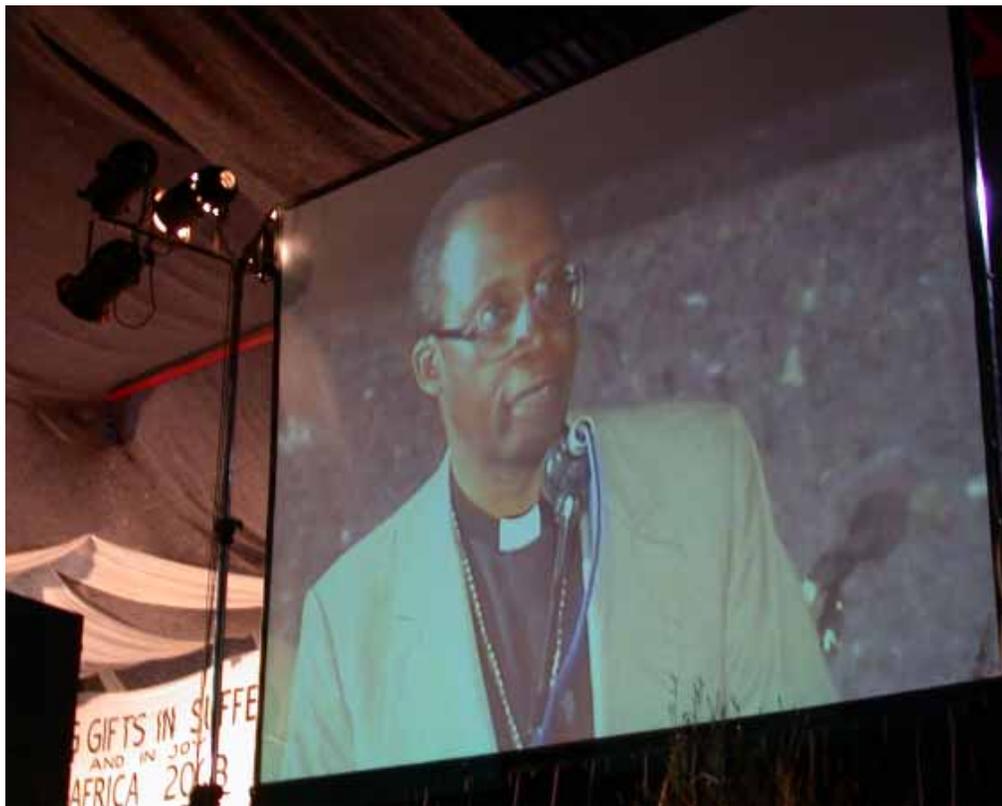
The young people arrived in Bulawayo on July 28 for a week of orientation and work led by Barbara Khumalo and Ronald Lizwe Moyo of Zimbabwe.

"We shared our life stories, worshipped together, and learned about Zimbabwe," she explained. "Then we set to work creating the kiosks. We had to use our imaginations and trust each other."

The group faced many challenges. As they constructed the kiosks, they wondered: Would materials they needed arrive? Would the structures, delayed several days, get built in time?

Through the Global Church

J. Lorne Peachey



Archbishop Ncube visits assembly

Representatives from 13 international churches and organizations were present at some time during MWC's assembly August 11-17. Prominent among them was Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube of Zimbabwe (shown above on one of two large video screens flanking the platform in the worship hall).

An outspoken critic of Zimbabwe's current government, Archbishop Ncube noted that Zimbabwe, once the second richest country in Africa, is now facing huge difficulties. "We had an easy life," the Archbishop said, "but now we are experi-

encing suffering. God is teaching us ...not to waste the gifts he has given us."

Among others addressing the assembly were Goodwill Shana of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and Monsignor John Radano, representing the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Catholic Church.

In his introductions, MWC executive secretary Larry Miller noted that the 13 guests came from bodies that together represent more than three-fourths of the world's Christians. "We as Mennonite World Conference are part of a larger body of Christ," Larry said.



Above: In addition to displays and exhibits, the Global Church Village also featured a center stage for afternoon performances by choirs, dance troupes, and other groups.

Village, the youth put into practice the theme, “Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy.” In the three weeks they were together, two of the 10 youth from Zimbabwe faced deaths in their immediate families. The group felt the void these new friends were facing.

Many youth stewards agreed that the highlight of the program was building relationships with one another.

“We lived together, worked together, played together. We really got to know each other well,” said Alissa Bender from Canada. “Now we have friends from around the world we can connect with.”

Melissa Aberle-Grasse is a freelance writer from Malawi.

The 23 youth stewards included: Alissa Bender, Suzanne Bender, Karina Derksen, Nonhlelo Dube, Jessica Goldschmidt, Angie Janzen, Nonhlelo Thamsanqa Khanye, Mwamba Lubozhya, Jesper Mbole, Vesper Mbole, Likwa Ncube, Mthokozisi Ncube, Sikhanyisiwe Ncube, Dingulwazi Ndlovu, Mthulisi Ndlovu, Caroline Moyo, Ntombizakhe Moyo, Londiwe Ngwenya, Andrew Schrock, Joyous Sikalima, Lulangilo Sikapande, Carissa Sweigart, and Luc Wiens.

Art exhibit creates ‘holy space’

“I feel like I am in a holy place,” said the director of the National Gallery in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, as he wandered among tall, gently swaying fabric panels. What he was viewing was part of a photograph and art exhibit created by Ray Dirks, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

The exhibit, “In God’s Image,” opened at the Zimbabwe National Gallery in July and then moved to the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair grounds for MWC’s 14th Assembly.

MWC has endorsed Ray’s project, which reflects the worldwide Anabaptist family. In consultation with Larry Miller, MWC executive secretary, Ray visited 17 countries that have MWC-related churches.

Living with ordinary people for weeks at a time in cities, towns, and remote villages, Ray was able to photograph their daily lives. He also commissioned and purchased art by professionals for the exhibit.

Ray said that Genesis 1:27, “God created humankind in his image,” drives this exhibit. He included photos “not artistically or technically perfect” to create intimacy and to reflect the ordinary reality of real people.

Visitors to the exhibit in its spartan venue at the fairgrounds said they “felt a part of a global family” as they viewed the photos and art.

A coffee table book based on the exhibit is scheduled to be released in mid-November.



MWC's first-ever Global Youth Summit brings enthusiastic response from 220 young people

‘**A**nybody can count the number of seeds in an apple, but only God can count the number of apples in a seed.’

With this image, Ronald Lizwe Moyo, member of the Global Youth Summit Committee, welcomed delegates and participants to the

first ever Global Youth Summit (GYS) in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. More than 220 young people from 28 different countries gathered in Bulawayo August 7-10 to discuss the challenges facing Christian youth and young adults today.

It's not easy being young.

Living in the Philippines, for example, as one delegate reported, means living amidst poverty, unemployment, crime, political corruption, injustice and disintegration of moral values.

The media and entertainment industry have a “money and power can buy you happiness” perspective, and modern technology bombards with confusing philosophies and ideologies.

Fortunately, MWC church leaders have provided a space for youth to learn, to grow, and to share with brothers and sisters from all over the world. “We have found a voice of our own,” said a delegate.

The GYS began with a survey phase a year ago to discover challenges facing youth all over the world. The survey also focused on how the church and youth can

address these issues. About 1,500 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ young people from around the globe participated in the survey.

The second GYS phase, discussion and discernment, took place in Bulawayo. There were many surprises for delegates during these discussions. The Filipino delegate, for example, was surprised to discover that other Asians as well as Africans and Latin Americans encounter economic, educational, and political situations similar to hers.

At the same time, youth from Europe and North America reported they struggle with getting the “best” job, becoming successful, and trying to remain strong Christians in a pluralistic world.

Throughout their days together, delegates from each continent prepared worship services with songs, dances, plays, testimonies, and Bible studies. These provided a glimpse into the richness of each other's cultures.



Top: One of numerous intercultural discussion groups that took place during the Global Youth Summit. Left: Kendra Yoder, USA, and Elina Ciptadi, Indonesia, make signs for the summit.

Participants felt deeply the theme, “Unity in Diversity,” as nationality and language barriers were torn down by bridges of love, openness, and compassion.

After two days of discussions, five delegates, representing each continent, reported concerns and proposed action to the MWC General Council (see summary at right). Young observers cheered silently as the General Council received the report and invited youth to attend its final meeting.

In the closing GYS session, delegates identified actions for youth, local churches, and MWC. The youth committed themselves to serving local churches, to disciple young people, and to work hand-in-hand with and follow local, continental, and global leaders.

The young people suggested that local churches engage in more inter-generational programs, such as mentoring, and include youth on church boards and leadership

GYS report to MWC General Council

At the conclusion of Assembly Gathered week, delegates and participants to the Global Youth Summit gave a report and recommendations to the MWC General Council, part of which is as follows:

We commit ourselves to:

- Prepare for the next GYS
- Cooperate and communicate with other youth at all levels
- Give time, service, and gifts to the church

How local churches can help us:

- Organize national and continental youth conferences

- Provide for youth representatives on church boards
- Organize mentoring programs for inter-generational relationships

How MWC can support us:

- Hold another GYS at the next assembly
- Invite GYS delegates to meet at the same time as General Council every three years
- Provide a youth page in *Courier / Correo / Courrier* and assist in developing an MWC web site for youth
- Provide for youth representation on General Council

bodies. They asked MWC to continue the GYS and strengthen communication among youth worldwide.

All of this is phase three, the action component.

Wistfully, one delegate wondered if all the commitments envisioned could be fulfilled. But then she went on to conclude that, because of the firm foundation borne

out of the first GYS, youthful energy, together with church leaders’ wisdom and encouragement, is bound to make a mark for the glory of God.

Strong bonds were created at the GYS in spite of racial and cultural differences. Fond memories—drinking the Latin beverage *terere*, linking hands and dancing to

India’s “Yeshu ne hame jeevan diya hai,” and joyously singing “We are going to the Polytech” (site of the Global Youth Summit)—“shall remain etched in our hearts,” said one delegate.

A high level of energy and enthusiasm characterized the gathering. The youth shared a sense of purpose, as well as anticipation that this event could bring about positive changes in the church and the world. Many report they now have a greater appreciation for belonging to a global church, and they have made many new friends from other countries.

The issues presented were complicated and serious, without easy answers. But in Bulawayo, seeds of hope, of faith, and of commitment were planted. In the words of leader Ronald Lizwe Moyo, only God knows what amazing things might grow out of this beginning.

From reports by Louise Anne Porcincula, the Philippines, and Wendy Janzen, Canada

Late-night conversations and games were also popular with many GYS delegates.



Right, photo 1: Heidi Bowman, a student at Eastern Mennonite University, Virginia, USA, enjoys worship during her volunteer work with the children at Africa 2003.

Below, photo 2: Prayer times were also important during the children's worship services.

Below, right, photo 3: A volunteer from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, helps to lead the children's morning worship singing.



Children's activities at Assembly 14

Biscuits, thousands; complaints, zero

Story and photos by Laurie Oswald

Susan Sibanda's greatest joy when coordinating the children's activities at MWC's Assembly Gathered, was the generosity of people who donated massive amounts of "biscuits" (cookies) for snacks.

What may have been one of the greatest joys for many of the children—who sometimes go hungry at home—

was that there were any cookies at all.

More than 700 children and youth, ages 3 through 15, participated in the activities, held at the ZITF at the same time as the adult assembly. They got worship and Bible study time, jumping castles (like trampolines), pony rides, games, and field trips to a game park and a museum.

They also got two square meals a day. This amazed

Susan, of Bulawayo, and the Zimbabwean children, whose country suffers from food and fuel shortages.

"My greatest joy was all the donations that came from locals and internationals—including toys, crayons, and the huge box of biscuits," said Susan, who had 50 volunteer helpers from Zimbabwe and other countries. "We served them tea, lunch, and supper, and the kids were getting platefuls of

food—*sadza*, meat, rice, chicken, and salads.

"It's amazing to have all this abundance. Not even the kids here thought that this event would work. This is all strange for Zimbabwe, the platefuls of food and buses taking them back and forth. They are used to food shortages and not seeing buses run."

"This ... has taught me that people cared enough to come and be with us in our suffering," Susan said. "It has shown me, and the children, that God is great, that nothing is too hard for him."





While nothing was too hard, feeding and supervising so many children from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. was lots of work for Susan and her volunteers. Susan is a teacher in special and physical education and director of a pre-school for about 165 children.

The children's cooperative spirits most impressed Mary Hurst, a mission worker in Australia, who said that many times she saw older children playing with the younger ones and Zimbabwean children and the few international children mixing well.

The children's attitudes and spiritual enthusiasm also impressed volunteer Theodore Lehman, an Eastern Mennonite University, USA, student. He's been a camp counselor and found some differences in children from Zimbabwe and North America.

"Sometimes American children complain about the food, but the Zimbabwean children seem very thankful and eat what they're given," said Theodore. "They are very patient."

"I'm really enjoying these children," he said midway

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through the week. "Their singing is so enthusiastic, and they're so well behaved and hospitable. Even though we've been together for a couple of days already, they still treat me as a special guest."



Top, left center, photo 4: Susan Sibanda, Zimbabwe, coordinator of the Assembly 14 children's program, works with Sophia Mitchell (center) of Zambia and Suzanna Yoder (right) of Ethiopia, children of Mennonite Central Committee workers.

Top, right, photo 5: Singing was a favorite activity with the children during their morning worship services.

Left, photo 6: Two boys from Zimbabwe find a way to amuse themselves before the day's activities begin.

Above, photo 7: Lethiwe Ncube (left) and Nommvuyo Dhlamini (right) of Zimbabwe teach Ndebele words to sisters Leah and Audrey Thill of Paoli, Indiana, USA.



What the Spirit said

God convicted me because I have not been praying for people in other countries—brothers and sisters who are suffering trials. I used to put my finger on a map and pray for people in countries where preaching is prohibited. In Bulawayo, God gave me that burden once again.

—Joren Basumata, India

We who are from North America and Europe must accept the gifts offered to us from the African church—spiritual vitality, hospitality, respect for older persons. May God help us to receive gifts as well as share what we have with fellow believers around the world.

—Art Smoker, USA

Although I could not understand the language, I was moved by the music of the Africans, who used their whole body to give glory to God. And the simple white hats and blouses of the Zimbabwe women—does that have anything to say to us?

—Emebet Mekonnen, Ethiopia

Through attending Assembly 14 in Bulawayo, I was given the opportunity to experience and appreciate the value of communion with one another. We also need to feel the pain of those who are suffering and really need us. We must suffer in Christ with hope and celebrate with joy.

—Obispo Daniel Cabrera, Cuba



TS IN SUFFERING
D IN JOY
CA 2003

l to me in Bulawayo

The unity in Bulawayo was amazing. Here the emphasis was on what we have in common rather than on our differences. We were pleased that women participated alongside men in leadership positions. May that filter down to our congregations.

—*Reimar Goetzke and Beverly Short, Canada*

I was profoundly moved by the commitment to Christ which the Global Youth Summit delegates demonstrated. Their worship was full of movement, their discussions of social responsibility intense, and their work on being disciples commendable. What a gift God has entrusted to us!

—*Wilhelm Unger, Germany*

Our conversations in the Global Youth Summit were strongly centered on social justice, being missional and evangelical, and meeting the needs of people as we care for each other in Christ. I'm confident my generation is going to take the church in some big directions.

—*Sarah Thompson, USA*

Perhaps the one thing we had in common at the conference were the queues. We lined up for transportation, for food, even for entertainment. But this paid off. In the queues I was immensely blessed by others because these lines were for Christ, not for chaos.

—*Isaac Quartey, Ghana*

Feeding

by Doreen Martens

In Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, during MWC's Assembly 14, "Woza" ("come") was never experienced more heartily than at the table.

Among the many miracles at Africa 2003, surely the greatest was the food. Just how does one provide two nutritious, tasty meals a day for 7,000 people or more for seven days in a country with a severe food shortage, amid a serious economic crisis, in a facility lacking commercial kitchen equipment?

With ingenuity, meticulous planning, an army of workers, and the implacable faith of chief planner Thoko Ndlovu, who began working on the food program two years ago.

Each day, assembly goers consumed 1,200 kilograms (kgs) of mealie meal (the basis of Zimbabwe's staple food, a maize porridge called *sadza*), the beef from six to eight cattle, 1,200 kgs of potatoes, 500 kgs of rice and 7,500 oranges or other fruit—plus tonnes of fresh and cooked vegetables and salads, juices, and tea. And all cooked in the Zimbabwean traditional way for big feasts: in gigantic cast-iron pots over open fires. Forty of them in all.

Procuring such quantities presented unique challenges when at the same time drought and the economic crisis were forcing nongovernmental organizations to provide food aid to millions in particularly hard-hit southern and central Zimbabwe.

In spite of the challenges, "I've

Left: Most food for two meals a day for up to 7,000 people was cooked outdoors over open fires in 40 large cast-iron pots.

Right: Food lines were long, but by the end of the week 7,000 or more people were being fed in little more than an hour.

courier



J. Lorne Peachey

the 7,000

always been positive,” Thoko says. “I think it was really God’s guidance that we were able to procure that food.”

Negotiations many months earlier with the grain marketing board in the northern part of the country, where food is more plentiful, ensured that there would be enough maize to fill the assembly needs. Chickens were ordered months in advance from a Brethren in Christ poultry farmer. Contracts were struck with small market gardeners in the area around Bulawayo to grow a variety of vegetables, including carrots, butternut squash, cabbage, and a leafy green vegetable called *choumolier* specifically for the event.

Forty beef cattle were purchased from Wanezi mission station some 80 kilometers from Bulawayo. To ensure healthiness, these were shipped live, hygienically butchered, and refrigerated in a city *abattoir*. These ways of securing provisions meant assembly goes needn’t worry they were taking food out of the mouths of hungry Zimbabweans, Thoko said. In fact, for many poor and rural participants, some of whom paid the equivalent of only \$1 U.S. to attend, the luxury of eating meat daily made this a special celebration.

The pots were hired from a local

company and borrowed from community clubs. Thoko herself made sure there were eating utensils for 7,500 people. Truckloads of firewood were brought in to stoke the dozens of small fires over which the food was cooked.

But finding the goods was only part of the job.

“To set up a menu for the whole week for people from different nations—and make sure that the food was acceptable—that was really the greatest challenge,” Thoko says. “We tried to make it as simple as we could so that at least we were able to serve almost everybody with everything that we prepared for the day. After the first two days, we could see that it seemed to be working.”

Most meals consisted of rice, *sadza*, a meat stew, a vegetable, and a salad, with fresh fruit. The food was traditional Zimbabwean but from recipes developed in Thoko’s “hobby” job—catering to large functions such as weddings and funerals. Previously she had fed up to 3,000 people at a time, but this was her first time cooking for so many for so long.

Fortunately, as the chief executive officer of a luggage manufacturing company that employs 1,700 people,



J. Lorne Peachey

Nothing went to waste. Beef heads (in tubs) were split with axes and then cooked while legs and hooves (background) were barbecued.

Thoko is well-equipped to manage labour-intensive operations. The mammoth task required an army of workers: nearly 120 recruited from community clubs and boarding schools, who were supplemented by local BIC and international volunteers.

These people were divided into teams with assignments for handling starches, meats, vegetables, and the tedious task of washing-up outdoors in large tin tubs. Thoko’s own two daughters, who often help in her catering business, took on the job of laundering 300 dish towels daily.

For BIC members in particular, helping with food meant sacrificing one’s own participation in assembly events.

“That’s the commitment one needs to make, to say I’m doing this to make the conference a success, not for us as individuals, but for the conference as a whole,” Thoko says.

Assembly participants who wandered into the cooking area tucked behind the main dining hall were amazed to see dozens of pots of food simmering



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in the open air, being stirred with large paddles.

Though the means might seem very basic, Thoko says, being able to produce perfectly cooked food in such quantities involves practiced technique. Each leader was responsible for ensur-

ing that the food cooked would be sufficient for the day's needs—a real challenge. That was especially true for the final day, when the participation of many more local church members meant producing the noon meal for as many as 12,000 participants. However,

Mastermind behind the entire Assembly 14 food operation was Thoko Ndlovu, a Bulawayo human resources manager who also has a catering business on the side as a hobby. The photo at right was taken at an MWC volunteer and staff banquet after the assembly was over—"the first time in two weeks I didn't have to cook," Thoko said with a grin.

Below: By the end of the week, scores of people were pitching in to help wash the mountains of dishes, cups, utensils, and pots. Many of them had enthusiastic reports of learning to know people from around the world as they worked together with their hands in dishwater. At left Beatrice Ncube from Zimbabwe talks with Eric Musser of the USA.



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in the end, not that many showed up. The first night was particularly difficult for Ndlovu. Planning had been for 5,000 people, but more than 7,000 showed up, producing an unexpected crush.

There were other hitches besides Monday night. When a supplier failed to deliver some nonperishables before the assembly began, Thoko had to call on her connections as a part-time caterer to locate hard to find items and suppliers willing to take a cheque instead of cash, since the banks were closed for a national holiday. During the week she often had to go out into the city to find things that hadn't arrived as scheduled.

The day before the assembly began, Thoko received a call at 6:30 p.m.; 100 Zambians had just arrived, tired and

What it takes to feed 7,000

- chickens: 5,500
- steers: 39 slaughtered (left-overs equivalent to 8 steers)
- cups: 5,000 purchased
- plates: 4,000 purchased, 3,000 rented
- firewood: 14 seven-tonne truck-loads, cut by volunteers from Emganwini BIC church, Bulawayo
- cooks, servers, other volunteers: 280

famished from a day on a bus without food. Could she help?

Quickly, she went to the assembly site to gather food, rounded up her sister and daughters, started the cooking fires in her own yard and began to prepare a meal. By 10:30 p.m., the food was ready, delivered, and being served to the grateful Zambian group in their lodgings.

"They really welcomed our gesture to assist them," Thoko says modestly about a feat that would have defeated most cooks in countries with many more resources at their disposal than Thoko ever had.

In Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, during MWC's Assembly 14, "Woza" ("come") was never experienced more heartily than at the table.

Doreen Martens is a newspaper reporter who lives in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

courier

Laurie Oswald



Participants crowd HIV workshops, work on AIDS quilt

Some people don't believe Ephraim Disi is HIV positive. He is a Brethren in Christ pastor who looks healthy and energetic.

"I've gathered the courage to speak openly about my status," Ephraim, of Malawi, told a crowded workshop on AIDS during the assembly.

"I ask God, 'Can you keep me for another five years, for another 10 years?'"

Ephraim, 45, was diagnosed with the AIDS virus, in 1996. He was infected by his wife, who has since died. He said she must have been infected by a medical accident.

Now, he is fighting against AIDS by setting an example of openness and by teaching moral behavior.

The tragedy of AIDS in Africa—where the disease claims 6,500 lives a day—was the subject of several Africa 2003 seminars.

Participants told how African Anabaptists and foreign workers are offering compassionate ministries and moral teaching in response to the AIDS pandemic.

In Ethiopia, the Meserete



Everett J. Thomas

Pauline Aguilar, USA, shows the AIDS quilt at the Saturday evening worship service. The quilt, said Pauline, represents a commitment to the struggle against HIV/AIDS in Africa. Hundreds, many of them Zimbabwean women, spent time during the assembly sewing more than 200 patches for the quilt. It was donated to the Zimbabwean BIC church, the quilt will travel in Africa with a message: BIC and Mennonite churches unite in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Kristos Church strongly encourages engaged couples to get tested for HIV. The MKC will not marry a couple if one member is HIV-positive, said Samson Estifanos, director of the church's AIDS prevention program.

The MKC has 475 AIDS orphans among its families, Samson said. An AIDS

orphan is defined as a child who has had at least one parent die of AIDS or whose wage-earning parent cannot work due to AIDS. Nationally, Ethiopia has one million AIDS orphans.

Easter Siziba, chair of the BIC Church AIDS project in Zimbabwe, said one in three Zimbabweans is infected with

HIV. Life expectancy has fallen from 67 to 27 years since the early 1980s. Thirty percent of those who are 15 will not live to be 30.

The Zimbabwean BIC Church has a program of home-based care for AIDS patients, Easter said. The church stresses sexual abstinence before and faithfulness within marriage.

MCC has eight workers in Africa serving specifically in HIV/AIDS ministries, said Sarah Adams, MCC's HIV/AIDS coordinator, who helped lead the workshops along with Pakisa Tshimika of the MWC staff.

Far left: Penetracia Dube (left) and Thokozile Ndlovu, both from Zimbabwe, were among hundreds of women who made patches for the AIDS quilt. Men also helped. At left is Samson Estifanos, Ethiopia, national director of the Meserete Kristos Church AIDS prevention program.



J. Lorne Peachey





Sidonie Swana-Falanga (left), Congo, and Esther Kalambo, Zambia, talk with other women theologians about their leadership call.

God's calling to leadership subject of gathering of African and Latin America women theologians

Women theologians in Africa and Latin America met together for the first time at the Mennonite World Conference assembly here in August. They talked about their God-given gifts of leadership, Bible study, ordination, and impediments they face.

An ecumenical South Africa-based group told a standing-room-only crowd how five women returning from a 1987 conference on theology and social engagement in Johannesburg, South Africa conceived the group.

Since then the 12 Umtata-based women have met for Bible study and sharing experiences in community, school and health programs.

They have published 11 Bible study booklets on theology, women in the Bible, sexuality, AIDS, marriage, parenting, singleness, divorce, aging and death. These are available in five continental regions in English and several African languages. Sylvie Gudin, French editor of MWC's *Courrier*, has begun a French translation.

In another workshop,

African Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women reported on their regional meetings. They are convinced of their call to church leadership and want to share their vision at all church levels. They plan to set up a structure to better connect Mennonite and BIC women theologians within Africa and around the world.

Latin American women wanted to know what was involved to be considered a theologian in Africa. In Latin America, some women are embarrassed to call themselves "theologians," a title

reserved for a high level of study.

Sibusisiwe Ndlovu of Zimbabwe said that a woman who has studied in a seminary, Bible college or institute may be called a theologian but some women, for example in Congo, hold doctorates.

Many Latin American women hold leadership positions in churches, schools and conferences, but "women are not organized as women theologians," noted Alix Lozano of Colombia. "Because of this we are interested in talking to you," she



Above: Rebecca Osiro, Kenya, gives a report to the MWC General Council on behalf of African women theologians.

said. Latin Americans are also seeking staff support from MWC to form an organization of women theologians

Although Béatrice Kadi Hayalume, a teacher of religion in Congo for many years, was to be ordained Aug. 24, few women in Africa are welcomed to church leadership. They asked Latin Americans about ordination in their countries.

In Colombia there are no ordained women yet, but Lozano is in the ordination process, she said. Women are ordained in Nicaragua, Mexico, Uruguay and Brazil, where Deusilene Martins Milhomen is the first married woman to be ordained. It is easier for a single woman to be ordained there because of the issue of submission of a wife to her husband.

African and Latin American women concluded their time together in a circle, receiving each others' prayers.

From reports by Tim Lind, Lydia Penner, and Milka Rindzinski

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Medical team busy caring for ailing guests

by Ferne Burkhardt

The clinic on the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair grounds buzzed with activity during MWC's Assembly 14 August 11-17. Fortunately, the clinic was only a few hundred metres from the main worship hall, so medical staff on duty could at least hear the lively music while they worked.

Florence Ndlovu, a nurse educator at a Bulawayo hospital, planned to take some vacation time to attend the assembly. She also expected to volunteer a few hours at the clinic.

Instead, she managed the clinic and its staff of 10 nurses, a task dropped on her shoulders only about a month before the assembly began. That happened when the person who had received the assignment of heading the medical clinic left the job with no preparations completed.

So Florence set about ordering equipment and supplies and finding and organizing staff. She also found herself at the clinic during virtually all its hours of operation.

Rather than the expected 20 patients a day, handled in 2- to 3-hour shifts, the clinic ran for 11 hours a day and treated 1,500 minor injuries and illnesses from Tuesday through Sunday. A local doctor checked in daily, and several international doctors and nurse practitioners who were attending the assembly but not licensed to treat patients in Zimbabwe, volunteered to

give consulting services.

A few patients were sent to the hospital for x-rays or diagnosis, mostly for sprains or possible respiratory infections. One Canadian was refused admittance to the hospital because she came from near Toronto, an area known worldwide for its cases of SARS, a serious respiratory infection.

The clinic served many Zimbabweans at no charge, though no free medications were dispensed.

Communicating with people who spoke only German, French or Spanish proved the biggest challenge for the staff, according to Florence.

"It was a good experience," said Florence, a member of Brethren in Christ Central Church in Bulawayo, even though she could spend only a few scattered minutes in any of the worship services.

Ferne Burkhardt serves as news editor for MWC and C/C/C.



10 consecutive MWC assemblies

During Europe Day on August 13, Ruthild Foth (left) of Ludwigshafen, Germany, was honored for being at her 10th consecutive Mennonite World Conference assembly. Ruthild's first was at Basil, Switzerland, in 1952. "I like conferences," Ruthild says, "and once you get started, you might as well keep going. I even dream about the crowds."

The biggest change she's seen? "The lectures used to be very high-brow," she says. "Now we have more down-to-earth sermons and story telling." Ruthild also remembers when MWC assemblies had three separate communion services because not all groups felt comfortable communing with each other, even though they were all Anabaptists. "It's much better now," she says.

Honoring Ruthild above is Stefan van Delden, a member of the MWC Executive Committee from Germany and Europe Day moderator.

MWC General Council charts direction

Editor's note: Several MWC-related meetings also took place in Bulawayo immediately prior to, during, or after Assembly Gathered. Reports on these are found on the following pages.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) reconfirmed a direction for the future when its General Council, meeting in Bulawayo August 7-9 and 16-17, adopted a new model for operations. The Council also added a subtitle to its name.

Dubbed the "communion / community model," the operational plan calls for MWC member churches to become mutually accountable to each other and grow in common identity. MWC is to facilitate this process by helping member churches develop a common set of core convictions and common ways of living out these convictions.

At a meeting in Guatemala City, Guatemala, in 2000, the MWC General Council had authorized an International Planning Commission (IPC) to make recommendations for the future of the organization. Out of four options the IPC offered, General

Council chose the communion / community model—one which "confirms a direction that MWC has already been taking," according to Larry Miller, MWC executive secretary.

Herman Bontrager, IPC consultant from North America, says the model calls for MWC churches to act as a worldwide body, not just as independent churches doing things together. "It moves us from just encouraging mutual accountability to actually practicing it," says Bontrager. For example, member churches will be encouraged to intentionally submit to the scrutiny of other MWC churches to learn how what they do might affect other members.

But if General Council delegates could agree quite readily on a direction

for the future, it took much more discussion to decide whether or not to add a subtitle to the name of the organization. The IPC had proposed retaining the name, Mennonite World Conference, but adding a subtitle: either "a communion of Anabaptist-related churches" or "a community of Anabaptist-related churches." After considerable discussion in two sessions, delegates decided on the latter, and the subtitle, "A community of Anabaptist-related churches," will now appear with the name Mennonite World Conference.

Generating even more discussion than a name change was a report on Mennonite-Catholic dialogue in which MWC has participated over the past

'Shared Convictions'

What does it mean to be Anabaptist?

Anabaptists around the world will study a new statement on "Shared Convictions" over the next three years. In Bulawayo, the MWC General Council approved the statement for study and reflection, based on statements of core convictions it had received from 19 of its member churches. The statement reads:

By the grace of God, we seek to live and proclaim the good news of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As part of the one body of Christ at all times and places, we hold the following to be central to our belief and practice:

1. God is known to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.
2. Jesus is the Son of God who showed in his life and teaching how to be faithful, and through his cross and resurrection redeemed the world.
3. The church is a community of those whom God's Spirit calls to turn from sin, acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, receive baptism upon confession of faith and follow Christ in life.
4. The faith community, under Holy Spirit guidance, interprets the Bible in the light of Jesus Christ to discern God's will for our obedience.

5. The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life so we become peacemakers who renounce violence, love our enemies, seek justice and share our possessions with those in need.

6. The faith community gathers regularly to worship, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to hear the Word of God in a spirit of mutual accountability.

7. We seek to live in the world without conforming to the powers of evil, witnessing to God's grace by serving others, caring for creation and inviting all people to know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

In these convictions, we draw inspiration from Anabaptist forebears of the 16th century, who modeled radical discipleship to Jesus Christ. Walking in his name, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we confidently await Christ's return and the final fulfillment of God's kingdom.

MWC's General Council is requesting responses to the "Shared Convictions" statement from member and associate member churches after study in the next three years. This shared convictions statement is to be reviewed at the Council's next meeting in 2006.

Laurie Oswald



Among the actions taken by General Council was the reappointment of Larry Miller, Strasbourg, France, to another three-year term as MWC executive secretary. Larry is shown above during one of numerous platform appearances during Assembly Gathered in Bulawayo.

for future

five years. While delegates did not yet have access to a final report, they did have a recommendation with four parts. One part called for similar consultations to take place in different regions, another for MWC to accept an invitation for a delegation to visit the Pontifical Council of the Catholic Church in Rome.

The report and recommendation were especially troubling to Latin American delegates, who spoke of intimidation and abuses by the Catholic Church in their countries. "We need to take care of what we have received from God, and I believe dialogue with Catholics will weaken our identity as an Anabaptist church," said Oscar Luis Peralta Aguero from Paraguay.

Juan Sieber from Argentina asked, "Is this a step toward looking for institutional unity?"—to which the answer was: no; the dialogue deals with hurts of the past and learning to know one another in the present, not organizational unity in the future.

"The dialogue should continue," said Nicholas Largaespada Alvarez from Nicaragua and a member of the MWC executive committee. "But our representatives need to stand true to our interpretation of God's word."

In the end, Latin American delegates joined those from other continents in approving all parts of the recommendation on Mennonite-Catholic dialogue.

General Council also heard pleas from several African women theologians for more equality in how they are treated as leaders in the church. They told of preferential treatment for male leaders in such things as educational scholarships and church positions and asked MWC to make the treatment of women leaders a priority for its work in the future. The General Council agreed to do so.

Larry Miller, Strasbourg, France, MWC executive secretary, was reappointed to another three-year term with the possibility of yet another three-year term, during which the Council will look for a successor. Council also agreed to provide Miller with a sabbatical of four months or



J. Lorne Peachey

Intense discussions often happened in the continental caucuses, such as the Latin American, above, where ideas and actions facing General Council were first tested.

more during the first three-year term.

Nancy Heisey, MWC president-elect from 2000-2003, assumed the responsibility of president at the end of the meeting, while BIC Bishop Danisa Ndlovu of Bulawayo was named MWC vice-president. Elected to the 2003-2009 MWC Executive Committee were Fimbo Ganvunze, Congo, and Joshua Okello, Kenya for Africa; Joren

Basumata, India, and Eddy Sutjipto, Indonesia, for Asia; David Villalta Benavides, Costa Rica, and Peter Stucky, Colombia, for Latin America; Markus Rediger, Switzerland, and K.J. Thijink-van der Vlugt, Netherlands, for Europe; and Naomi Unger, Canada, and David Wiebe, Canada, for North America. The term for all is six years, 2003-2009.

Peace Council continues work on central platform

The Peace Council, launched six years ago in Calcutta, India, is a forum in which MWC churches can discuss peace issues. The Council, whose membership is also the same as the General Council, held its second session in Bulawayo during two afternoons.

Despite a strong awareness of the Anabaptist peacemaking heritage, the Peace Council felt that a central statement would help create, cement, and maintain awareness of the peace position.

"Anyone who wants to be good at playing soccer has to practice certain skills," noted Paulus Widjaja, Peace Council secretary. "We also have to train ourselves and determine a game plan as peacemakers if we are to reach our goals," he noted.

This year's meetings centered on creating a unified platform on which peace churches could stand.

Widjaja and Judy Zimmerman-Herr, associate secretary for the council, had collected stories from 13 member churches that illustrated key elements of the churches' peace stance.

"Building our theology statement from good working stories helps test the ideas in practice," said Widjaja. "We don't just want a set of good ideas."

A springboard for discussion, the stories were also used to create a document summarizing three areas important to a peace stance: relationships involved in peacemaking; virtues important to peacemaking; and practices that help develop peacemaking.

Development of a peace practice statement is now slated to continue in subsequent meetings of the Peace Council.



Millicent Peart (left) and William Broughton, delegates from Jamaica, follow a General Council discussion. Simultaneous translations using radio-equipped headphones were available during council sessions in English, Spanish, French.

At its meetings in Bulawayo, MWC General Council accepted 10 churches into membership (groups with more than 500 members) or associate membership (groups with less than 500 members):

New members

- *Angola:* Igreja Evangélica Menonita em Angola
- *Ecuador:* Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Ecuatoriana
- *India:* Brethren in Christ Church, Orissa
- *Malawi:* Brethren in Christ Church
- *Bolivia:* La Iglesia Evangélica Anabautista en Bolivia

New associate members

- *Peru:* Iglesia Evangélica de los Hermanos Menonitas del Perú
- *Peru:* Iglesia Evangélica Menonita del Perú
- *South Korea:* Jesus Village Church
- *Venezuela:* Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Shalom
- *Eritrea:* Meserete Kristos Church

Global Mission Fellowship to chart new directions in outreach

For more than 150 years, Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in Europe and North America planned mission efforts in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Now the churches that emerged from those efforts have their own identity and want to discern where the next mission fields should be, in some cases without European and North American involvement.

Meeting in Bulawayo August 9-10, representatives from Mennonite World Conference member churches on five continents and of Anabaptist-related mission agencies voted overwhelmingly to create a new mechanism that will begin to shift mission leadership to churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Called the Global Mission Fellowship (GMF), the plan calls for meetings of representatives of these churches and mission groups at the global level every three years for encouragement, vision-sharing, networking, and cooperating in mission. The frequency of regional meetings will be determined as these are established.

"This is a very significant shift," said Stanley Green, who chaired the committee that created the proposal. "Now the vision for Africa, for example, will originate in Africa and be shaped in Africa, and agencies in North American and other areas will need to discern how to participate."

Such visions emerged quickly in the Africa caucus. For example, Fikru Befirdu,

from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, suggested that the African churches should work together on a new mission to unchurched people, people who are cannibals and practice animistic religions.

"We would like to begin working together, not with the ... outstretched hand but with our own resources," said Damien Lukak Kakhenda from Masina, Congo.

Some representatives worried that money for regional gatherings would be taken from existing programs, many of which already face funding shortfalls.

"Is it right to spend the money on such gatherings rather than on sending missionaries?" asked Chizuko Katakabe from Japan.

Green, president of

Mennonite Church USA's Mennonite Mission Network, acknowledged that North American mission agencies are facing financial challenges that affect how many workers can be supported.

"If the reduction in our capacity [to send mission workers from North America] is met by the creation of a forum that encourages the sending of workers from the South," Green said, "it is an exchange that ought not to be considered a loss."

MWC will relate to the new fellowship by providing staffing, having a representative on the GMF planning committee, and by receiving reports from this committee.

From a report by Everett J. Thomas, editor of The Mennonite, USA.

General Council issues statement on Zimbabwe

In the midst of experiencing the grace and generosity of the Zimbabwe Brethren in Christ Church despite living under great hardship due to difficult political and socio-economic conditions, MWC's General Council agreed to issue a statement on the situation in that country.

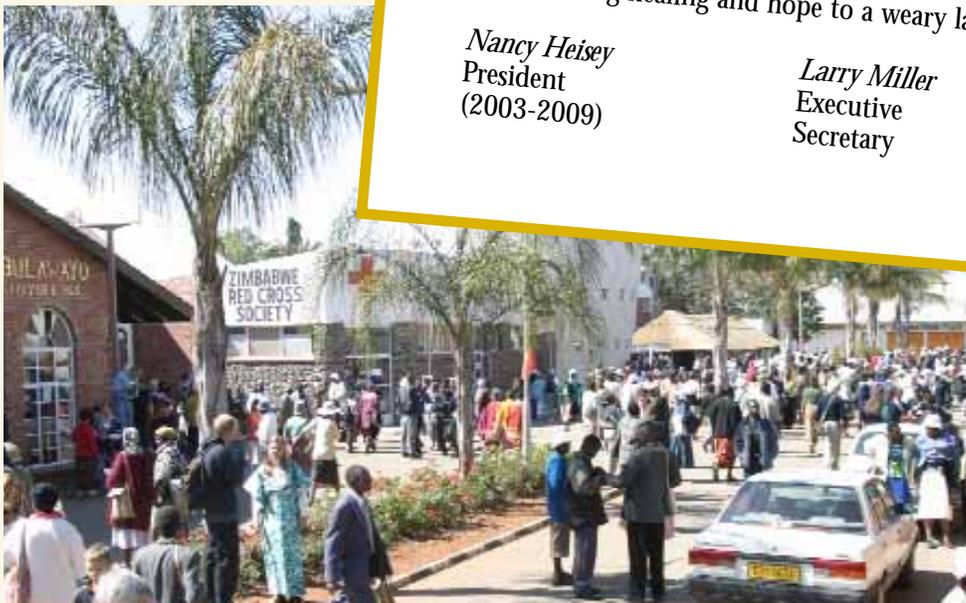
"It has become clear that it is inappropriate to come and say nothing about the situation in Zimbabwe," said Larry Miller, MWC Executive Secretary, to the newly elected General Council on August 17.

Larry explained that he had been in conversation with church leaders over several months on issuing a statement at the end of the assembly. He also noted that the MWC General Council had issued statements on the situations in host countries in previous meetings, most notably Colombia and Congo.

The statement, approved by the General Council, was published in the *Daily News* as a paid advertisement. The government-controlled *Chronicle*, however, refused to accept the ad because it was "political." MWC also distributed the statement to the international Christian press.

Street scene at the ZITF, site of MWC's Assembly Gathered in Bulawayo.

Paul Schrag



MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE GENERAL COUNCIL

Statement on Zimbabwe

The Mennonite World Conference (MWC) is a community of Mennonite, Brethren in Christ, and related Christian churches in 54 countries. The General Council, the governing body of the MWC, composed of delegates of member churches, met in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, August 2003, together with more than 6,200 participants in the every-six-year Assembly. Representing members worldwide, we reaffirmed our unity in the body of Christ, and our solidarity with one another, using as the Assembly theme "Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy" (1 Corinthians 12). As believers in God who wills the well being of all, and as followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we lament situations of poverty, oppression, injustice, violence and war that exist in many parts of the world.

Recognizing Zimbabwe's resilient people and rich natural resources, and having experienced the warm welcome and gracious hospitality of the hosting Brethren in Christ Church, we especially grieve and deplore the current situation of suffering in this country:

- The fear and brutality that result from political oppression and conflict, excessive police powers and arbitrary arrests, and legislation that curtails democratic expression and free assembly.
- The hardship and exploitation that result from economic breakdown, profiteering and corruption, shortages of all kinds, unemployment and endemic poverty.
- The malnutrition and death that result from a humanitarian crisis of major proportions, caused by mismanagement of the economy, drought, massive shortages of food, medical supplies and services, and the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

At the same time, as a global community of faith, we affirm with great joy and deep gratitude:

- The commitment of all parties to the current mediation talks, trusting they will address the key issues of concern, including people's needs, fears and hopes.
- The prophetic voice of the church for justice and peace and the courageous role of its leaders in efforts to resolve as well as to transform the crisis.
- The tenacity, passion, endurance and non-violent action of Zimbabweans in the face of deep distress.

"Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy," we will carefully monitor developments in the next weeks and months, and together with the local Brethren in Christ churches will continue, with increased commitment, to support ongoing advocacy for justice and reconciliation, to provide emergency food resources to the hungry, assistance to the generations at risk from HIV/AIDS, and fervent intercession before God that justice will flow like a river to bring healing and hope to a weary land (Isaiah 58; Amos 4).

Nancy Heisey
President
(2003-2009)

Larry Miller
Executive
Secretary

Mesach Krisetya
President
(1997-2003)

General Council also issued a message to member churches, calling on them to pray for a peaceful solution to the conflicts in Zimbabwe. That statement will appear in the next issue of C/C/C.

Bits and pieces from Assembly 14

C/C/C's news editor Ferne Burkhart picked up the following tidbits during assembly week:

- Marilyn Langeman bought 60 30-metre bolts of cloth for BIC women to make 5,000 Africa 2003 shoulder bags for Assembly 14, "cleaning out" three fabric stores in the process.
- Marilyn also purchased more than four kilometres of cord for name tag hangers. The length for each one was calculated by looping the cord around the neck of the biggest BIC overseer she could find and cutting the rest to size.
- Assembly 14 had seating for 11,000, including chairs and benches throughout the ZITF halls, seminar rooms, and children's area. Staff took an inventory of all chairs and benches not too heavy to move in from local BIC churches and missions and hauled them to the ZITF. Benches alone provided

Thank you

C/C/C thanks the many writers and photographers who helped us with this special issue on MWC's Assembly Gathered. We are especially grateful to the editors and writers of Meetinghouse, a consortium of North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ publications, for providing us with their articles and photos about Africa 2003: Paul Schrag, Everett J. Thomas, Susan Brandt, Ron Ross, Arli Klassen, Keith Regehr, and Laurie Oswald.—*Editors*

seating for more than 2,300 people, based on space internationals would find comfortable. That number could have been increased by 50 percent for Zimbabweans, accustomed to being wedged much closer together.

- James Wenger, USA, reported how one group coped with the long wait for food the first night. "At first we were upset, but then someone said, 'I didn't come all the way to Africa just to complain. Let's sing.'" The group did, for over an hour. Then "we looked up and discovered everyone had gone in ahead of us. We got served at 10:15 p.m., but by then it didn't matter any more," James said.
- Sunday morning's communion service required 7,740 tiny "disposable" communion cups (which, it is reported, will be washed and reused many times). These were set into wooden trays specially built to hold 50 filled cups each.
- Fourteen Brethren in Christ women, including wives of bishops and overseers throughout the country, spent a day in two homes in Bulawayo baking 8,000 communion wafers. They used 20 kg of flour brought from Botswana.
- Each day 33 buses picked up cooks before 6:00 a.m., then volunteers, then Zimbabweans at their BIC churches in Bulawayo, and finally internationals at their dormitories and hotels. At night, they did it again, in reverse order. To be sure they could run, MWC had purchased fuel for them in advance.

Riding the roller coaster

by J. Lorne Peachey

When it's finally over, how does one feel about something that has consumed him for more than two years?

It took me two days before I could get Dumisinkosi Dothan Moyo with enough time to sit down and answer that question—with his cell phone off for the first time in weeks.

"It was like a roller coaster," Dothan said. "So many ups and downs. But now that it's over, in a nutshell, I'd say I'm amazed and awed."

It wasn't how he felt after the first night, when long waits at food lines seemed like a disaster.

J. Lorne Peachey



Though situations were tough and decisions often difficult, those who got to know national coordinator Dothan Moyo soon found that his sense of humor and faith kept him going.

"Local people didn't sleep well that night," Dothan said. But the next day they got to work to straighten things out. "And at least you internationals got a taste of what our life as Zimbabweans is like. Our country should be called 'Queue-wait.' Get it? 'Ku-wait!'"

Disaster turned into impressive service for the rest of the week, at least to most internationals. That's why they gave Dothan and his crew rousing applause for their work, particularly with the food, on Sunday morning during the "thank you" part of the service.

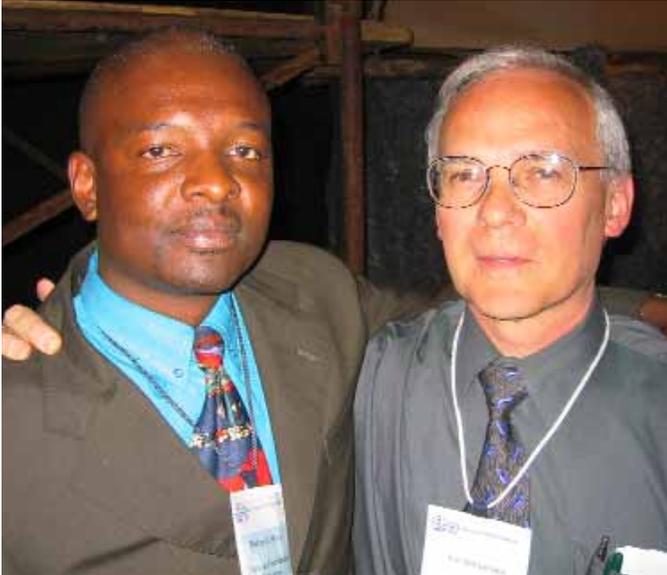
Things went smoothly enough toward the end of the week that Dothan got to spend most of Saturday, Africa Day, actually sitting in Hall 4 worshipping. "That was a highlight of the week for me," he said.

Dothan began working as national coordinator for Africa 2003 in May 2001, first part-time but full-time by June 2002.

How was that possible? "My wife Siggibile and I opened a small family business, which she wanted to run more than me. My new job gave her the opportunity to do so."

Dothan is a registered pharmacist, Siggibile a pharmaceutical technician. Their business supplies pharmaceuticals to government hospitals in Zimbabwe.

Will Dothan go back to the business?



Dumisinkosi Dothan Moyo (left), Zimbabwe national coordinator, and Ray Brubacher, international coordinator, worked together more than two years planning Africa 2003.

“I’m not sure Siggibile wants me back,” he says with a laugh. “She enjoys being in charge.”

Then he says more soberly: “I could go back to pharmacy. Or I could go to South Africa and work and make some money. But what I really want to do is stay and work for the local church.”

Dothan and Siggibile live in Harare, where they attend the 150-member Mount Pleasant BIC Church.

Dothan currently serves as elder. The Moyos are the parents of two—Dumisile, 7, and Zuzumuzi, 4.

Dothan is profuse with his words of appreciation for the MWC staff with whom he worked. He also has a word for those who traveled from around the world to attend the assembly he helped plan: “Tell them I enjoyed my roller coaster ride.”

Accompanying Dothan on his roller coaster ride was international coordinator Ray Brubacher, a member of the MWC Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, staff. Ray’s responsibility was to see that all parts of Africa 2003 came off as planned.

“It all came off beyond my wildest expectations,” Ray said the morning after most participants had left. “When you focus on something for 2½ years, when you see your most optimistic dreams come true, when internationals come in spite of the warnings, when you feed the crowds and stay within your food budget ...”

Ray stops at that, wordless. But you know you have glimpsed the heart of a man most grateful to God and to the host of persons who helped bring off an assembly “beyond my wildest expectations.”

Africa 2003 faces

Pictured below are a few of scores who worked behind the scenes to make sure assembly participants had their needs taken care of so that they could concentrate on what it was that brought them to Bulawayo—to worship God and fellowship with each other. Africa 2003 faces by J. Lorne Peachey & Eleanor Miller



Left: Sihle Moyo, Bulawayo staff secretary; center & right: Marilyn & Ken Langeman, MCCers who spent a year in Zimbabwe preparing for Assembly 14.



Above: Larry Miller, MWC executive secretary; Mesach Krisetya, president; and Kathryn Good, director of administrative services; at the MWC office at ZITF.



Above left: Welcome Khanye, assembly office assistant; right: Margie Brubacher, office receptionist. Bottom photo: MWC staffer Liza Brubacher spent her days counting Zim dollars.

Above: Zimbabwe BIC bishop Danisa Ndlovu, head of the national advisory committee and new MWC vice-president.



Right: Oscar Manzini, Wanezi Mission overseer, and volunteer driver for assembly. Thanks, Oscar, for rescuing my luggage, and that of many others, from customs.—J. Lorne Peachey



Arnold Snyder (left) *Global Mennonite History* editor and John A. Lapp (right), series coordinator, flank five of the 10 writers of the Africa volume (from left after Arnold): Pakisa Tshimika, Alemu Checole, Bekithemba Dube, Eric Kumedisa, Doris Dube.

African history book clears hurdles for release at assembly in Bulawayo

A*frica*, book one of the Global Mennonite History Series, was released during MWC Assembly 14 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, August 11-17. It is the first published history of Anabaptist-related African churches written by Africans.

Writers, some of whom wrote in English and some in French, worked in six countries. When they were finished, the manuscript went to translators, editors, and readers in Africa, Canada, and the USA.

Maps that included the location of Mennonite and BIC missions in remote areas had to be created, and John A. Lapp, coordinator of the project, searched various archives for photos.

The manuscript finally arrived at Pandora Press in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, in April 2003, long after the publishing schedule, set in August 2002, had been abandoned. The book still needed to be designed, laid out, and proofread. It was then electronically transferred in 16-page segments to the

Baptist Publishing House in Bulawayo for printing.

In Zimbabwe, electrical power was being cut at odd times, and ink and paper costs had shot up because of rampant inflation. C. Arnold Snyder, general editor along with Lapp, said in April “there was no way” the book would be ready by August.

“I lived with the book nearly 24 hours a day,” said Snyder, adding that the miracle of release happened only because of “monumental efforts by many people and a lot of prayer.”

Along with others involved in the history project, MWC officials, and guests, seven of the 10 African writers attended a reception in Bulawayo to honour them.

At that reception, they had their own challenges to report.

Alemu Checole, a visually handicapped writer from East Africa, had his Braille writer stolen from a taxi in which he was riding.

When material went missing in Barbara Nkala’s computer, she spent an entire night trying to retrieve it to meet her deadline.

Bekithemba Dube, who with Nkala and Doris Dube, wrote on the churches in southern African, said that finding the stories “was like panning for gold.”

Writers in addition to Checole, Nkala, and Dube are Michael Kodzo Badasu, Erik Kumedisa, I.U. Nsagak, Siaka Traoré, Pakisa Tshimika, and Samuel Asefa assisting Checole.

The book is published by Pandora Press with Herald Press.

by Phyllis Pellman Good

Mesach sings, Bedru prays

Two MWC leaders who will long be remembered for both their ideas—and their manners.

They are two men of the Southern Hemisphere—Mesach Krisetya, with Confucian upbringing, from Indonesia; Bedru Hussein, the child of devout Muslims, from Ethiopia. Together, the two, now Mennonite, led Mennonite World Conference during the last six years. At Assembly 14, they turned over their responsibilities to new hands.

The last six years have seen an unprecedented flowering of MWC activity, and Mesach and Bedru were guiding spirits for all of it, in close partnership with Executive Secretary Larry Miller and other MWC staff.

Dependence to interdependence. Mesach’s ability to think and state himself clearly became apparent at a presentation to MWC’s General Council in 1993. “I used three terms to talk about who we were in the past, who we are now, and who we might become,” he recalls. “Those of us in mission churches have been dependent. Our churches in the Northern Hemisphere are independent. But we all want to become

World Fellowship Sunday

Africa 2003 was a celebration of interaction between churches across national and cultural boundaries. That celebration continues on MWC’s annual World Fellowship Sunday, scheduled for January 25, 2004. European Mennonites have prepared worship materials for this Sunday; these will be sent to all Mennonite and Brethren in Christ national churches.

interdependent. Mennonite World Conference is helping that to happen.”

Bedru says, “MWC is bringing the South and the North together.” Look at all the networks and projects that are underway. They weren’t possible when MWC was primarily assemblies.”

Sometimes the church needs to see these ideals in concrete form. In 2000, Mesach, Bedru, and Larry Miller were invited to address a series of church conferences in Canada. “They called us The Trinity!” Bedru comments. “We made this interdependence visible.”

Mesach says, “The churches of the South are mature now. They aren’t just ‘objects.’ We can have ‘relationships’ now.”

Both Bedru and Mesach believe firmly that MWC must secure its current projects and move resolutely toward developing more. “The formation of the Global Mission Fellowship is a highlight,” says Bedru of the recent cooperative of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ mission groups. “MWC has given space for this. ... Now our member fellowships are learning to know each other.”

Conversing with other Christians.

MWC’s growth—both in depth and in spread—has brought differences among member churches to the surface. While Mesach and Bedru have been advocates of developing stronger relationships with other church bodies, some MWC

Bedru Hussein, MWC vice-president for the past six years, often suggested prayer when the Executive Committee or the General Council faced intense and difficult issues in their discussions.

members have been more cautious, particularly about the formal dialogues between MWC and the Roman Catholic Church during the last five years.

“Many people don’t understand what dialogue means,” comments Mesach. “As we really dialogue with others, our own identity becomes stronger. Our differences reflect our identity. If we don’t have identity, then we compromise; we go astray.”

“It is too costly to be exclusive. I say that because I come from a place where Christians are a minority.”

“It clarifies who you are to be in these dialogues,” agrees Bedru, who also lives where Christians are outnumbered.

Mesach’s burden is to forgive past relationships with other Christians. “In a pluralistic society, we can no longer be exclusive. We should remove any hatred, hard feelings, and bitterness about what has been done to us as Mennonites. Peace starts with ourselves, from within.”

Strength for the future. Trained to teach leadership, Mesach sees some weak spots in MWC’s future which will need alert attention. “The leadership of MWC needs to be stronger. Many churches don’t have strong leaders, so when they send their representatives to the MWC General Council, they aren’t capable participants.”

The South has leadership to offer, Mesach believes, but the churches there should not step into head positions prematurely. “At some point in the future, Larry Miller will want to retire as executive secretary, and we will need a very strong person to succeed him. That individual doesn’t have to be from the South. It isn’t time yet. It’s more impor-

In Bulawayo, Mesach Krisetya led his last MWC General Council meeting as president of MWC. At his last official act, leading communion on Sunday morning, he also sang a song for the assembly.



Merle Good

tant to have a good, qualified person.”

Bedru agrees. “We should work with member churches to help them understand the importance of experience.”

Mesach may be counseling patience for the churches of the Southern Hemisphere, but he urges the global church to pay attention to that part of the family: “MWC should really have a permanent center in the South,” he says.

The term of MWC leadership for these two men may be up, but their interest in the organization’s strong future remains enduring. And they will be missed.

In Zimbabwe, outgoing General Council members recalled Mesach’s sense of humor, which cuts across cultures in a way that allowed him to lead decisively, with minimal misunderstanding or irritation. And they remembered Bedru’s quiet firmness when a way needed to be found through difficult matters. In a tense moment—or a time of celebrating—Mesach would sing or Bedru would pray.

They are leaders who will long be remembered for both their ideas—and their manners.

Phyllis Pellman Good, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA, is an MWC communication consultant.



Merle Good

Perspective:

A place for conversation and worship

by Nancy R. Heisey

As I walked the grounds of the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair during MWC's fourteenth assembly—meeting friends and greeting those I passed whom I did not know, seeing women napping with their babies in shady spots and young people exchanging addresses, hearing the sounds of rhythm and applause coming from the Global Church Village—I asked myself: Why are all these people here? What propelled young and old to make the long trip from North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and other parts of Africa to meet in Zimbabwe?

It was not because this place was exotic that we had come. In fact, the news from Zimbabwe and warnings from many observers in the months before our gathering should have kept most of us away. But we came anyhow, to share gifts in suffering and in joy, because we know in our hearts that God is calling us into a global community of faith. We are beginning to understand enough of that call to know the importance of being together, even if for only a week or two, as part of shaping that community.

Though community is a popular word among Mennonites and Brethren in Christ, being built into God's community is not automatic. It is good to have warm feelings for each other, but feelings are not enough. A community of believers must be a place of invitation, an open-door that says to those looking on: "Welcome. We want you to know and follow Jesus Christ, as we are learning to do. In this group we seek to help each other become more like him."

The model of hospitality, extended by the Zimbabwean BIC hosts to this assembly, gave us a concrete picture of the church as invitation. We saw the hard-working women and men who prepared and served food for thousands, guided us through the fairgrounds and back to the places we were staying, and joyfully taught us their songs. We did not see the many meetings where our hosts struggled with logistical problems that arose during this large gathering—instead we saw mostly warm smiles and outstretched hands, saying to all, "You belong. Become part of us."

A community of believers must also be a place of conversation. We need to talk with and listen to each other, because it is often in this way that God speaks to us. At this assembly, conversations must have been one of the most important activities of the greatest number of people. These discussions sometimes took place in formal settings, such as the official meetings of the MWC councils. Sometimes they occurred as people gathered in workshops, where standing-room-only characterized many sessions, and people lingered after official presentations to ask one more question, exchange addresses, and pick up every available hand-out. Often, the conversations occurred in the food queue or over a drink in mid-afternoon.

A community of believers must also, always, be a people who worship. For our purpose together is to offer thanks to God for the gift of life and praise for God's love. At the assembly, we had the privilege of seeing our differences visibly displayed in our worship. As we shared with one another, we offered to God our gifts of singing, dancing, speech, gifts of money, approaches to the Bible study, and drama. And through all of this, we affirmed, "God is good!"

Our conversation and worship are things we usually do at home, in the widely scattered locations where God has placed us. Mennonite World Conference assembly offered us a face-to-face encounter that can help us know we are not alone as we live out our everyday witness. When we are offered the next opportunity—whether with sisters and brothers across the street or in the next country—to work together on some task of mission, to witness for justice, or to be educated theologically, we will know a bit more about why it matters and what God wants us to become.

Nancy Heisey, Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, became the president of MWC at the conclusion of the 14th Assembly.



J. Lorne Peachey

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