

# *COURIER*

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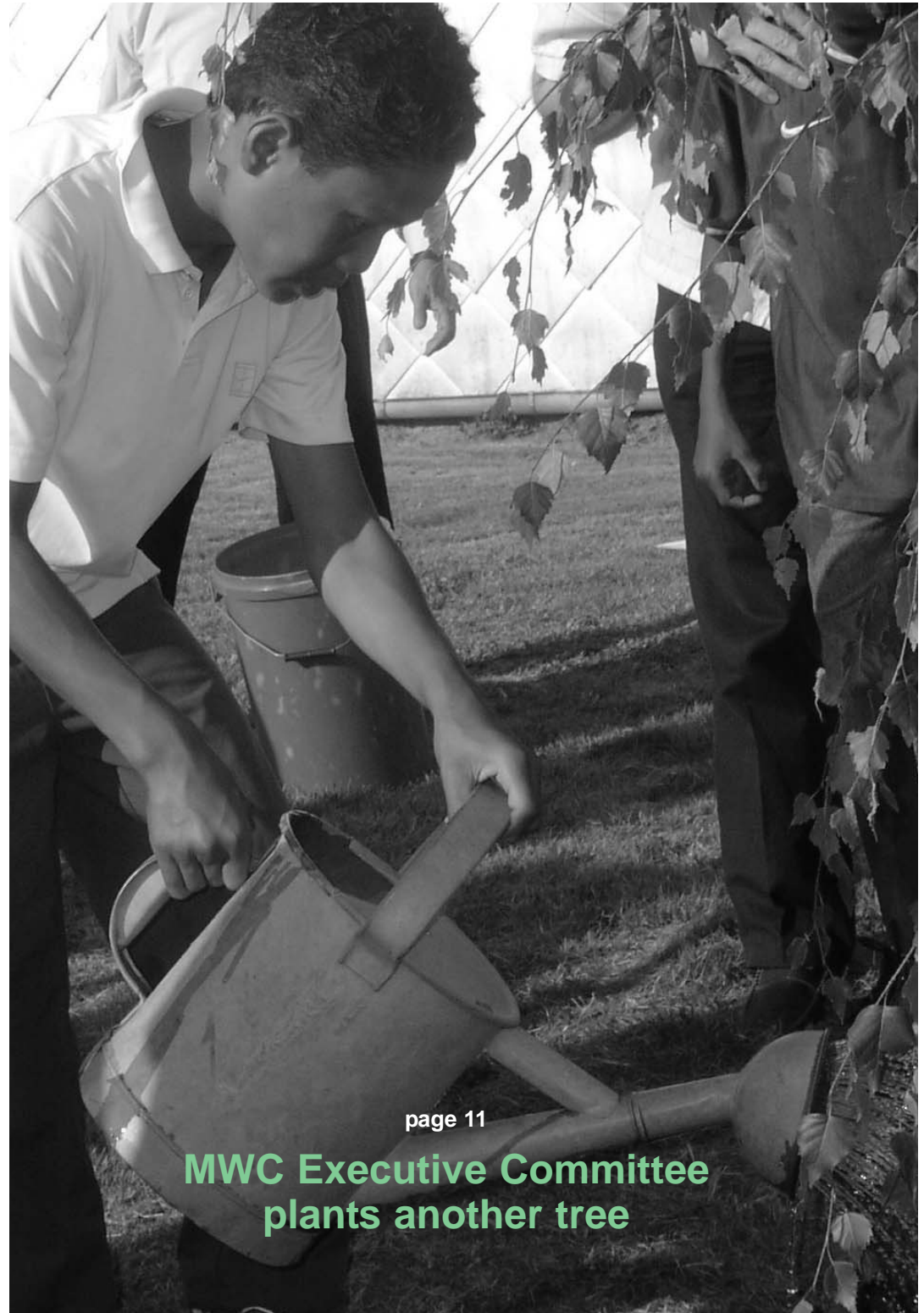
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# A tale of two cities

by Larry Miller

Last June, at a reconciliation conference between Anabaptists and the Reformed Church in Zurich, Switzerland, planners asked MWC executive secretary Larry Miller to preach in the Grossmünster. This was a remarkable invitation, since in 1525 Ulrich Zwingli had used this pulpit from which to denounce the Anabaptist movement. This article is excerpted from Larry's Grossmünster sermon.—Editors

What began in this very place nearly five centuries ago—with one group of people gathered around one Bible listening to one man (Zwingli) preaching daily from the Gospel of Matthew—has resulted in at least two communities, two identities, and two traditions. Too often these have been one over against the other.

The Reformed tradition of the church can be described as state-church or a peoples' church, a community open

to all citizens without exception while giving allegiance to the Lord. By contrast, the Anabaptist-related traditions of the church are as the community of disciples following Jesus in life daily, separated from the world while witnessing to it.

**Confessing our sins.** A biblical basis for Reformed theology can be found in Zechariah 2:1-9. Here Zechariah addresses an appeal to those still living in exile, exhorting them to return to the city whose new conditions he envisions. This city will be an open city, a city for exiles, a city for a great multitude of people and other creatures. It will be a city that needs no walls for security and cohesion because the Lord himself will be present to protect and to provide. "I will be a wall of fire all around it, says the Lord, and I will be the glory within it."

From a 16th century

Anabaptist point of view, this passage must have seemed more like a "condemnation" of the Reformed Church's practice of state-church theology than the model for it. For Felix Manz and his siblings in the faith, Zurich or its church was finally not an open city, not a new Jerusalem, not a place of justice and peace to which they or a multitude of others could return from exile.

They did not have the impression that Zurich authorities were depending only on the presence of the Lord for the city's protection, provision and glory. This city must have felt to them like a closed city, one in which they were declared foreign, one from which they were exiled outside the high wall or into dark death in the waters of the Limmat.

Anabaptists, on the other hand, ground their understanding of the city in Matthew 5:14-16. In this passage, Jesus addresses an

appeal to those who have voluntarily exiled themselves from established society in order to follow him. He sets before them the vision of a new city, a new society, a new community that is not "of the world" yet fully "in the world." And not only will this city be fully in the world. It will be there as "salt and light." It will be there in such a way that no one can avoid tasting it or seeing it, how it lives, whom it follows, on whom it depends for protection and provision, whom it glorifies.

For some of us who claim the Anabaptist tradition as our own, these words of Jesus resonate more like a

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*The Zurich reconciliation gathering of May 2004 included words of confession and forgiveness from both Reformed and Anabaptist leaders (from left): Dan Nighswander, general secretary, Mennonite Church Canada; Setri Nyomi, general secretary, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Geneva; Reudi Reich, president, Reformed Church of the Canton of Zurich; and Larry Miller, MWC executive secretary.*

“condemnation” of significant parts of our history than their source or inspiration. Several of the earliest radical reformers, including Felix Manz, no doubt envisioned large-scale transformation of society or at least vigorous witness to it through communities of believers living in its midst. But after persistent persecution, many found

### **Toward reconciliation and healing**

“MWC exists ...to relate to other Christian world communions and organizations,” reads a part of MWC’s mission statement adopted by the General Council in August 2003.

A first step in fulfilling this mission is to look at the past, including those relationships that were broken for various reasons. In this issue, C/C/C focuses on steps being taken to bring reconciliation and healing to these relationships with other Christian groups.

themselves sooner or later in tightly knit, separatist communities, without significant prophetic or evangelizing fervor. Many of us have voluntarily stayed there, marginalized, little more than a footnote in church history. More recently, many of us have found relief in some form of accommodation to host societies. After lighting the lamp, we hid it under the bushel where it neither illuminates good works nor provokes offerings of glory to God.

### **Sharing our gifts.**

Fortunately, this tale of two cities—the open city inhabited by the Lord and the city set on a hill glorifying God—reminds us not only of our limits. It also points to gifts we have received and can offer one another and to others. The Bible not only calls us to confession. It also calls us to share God-given gifts in the body of Christ and beyond.

Today, in the spirit of Zechariah, you—Reformed Christians—open your city and the church in it not only to daughters and sons of those put to death or exiled

in the 16th century and later. More importantly, you open yourselves to another look at the convictions those exiles incarnated. Today you take steps toward right remembering, toward right relations, toward fuller communion with former adversaries.

Today you demonstrate your openness to depend on God for protection and provision. You manifest your faith that the Lord will be the wall of fire around you and the glorious presence in your midst. This is a precious gift and a clear message to the Anabaptist-related community worldwide, indeed to the whole ecumenical church.

As the Reformed Church, you have lifted up Jesus as Lord of all, not only of the church but of the whole world and everything in it. The church is called to shape society as much as possible according to God’s will, they said. If the issue of peace is adequately to be addressed, you add, looking Mennonites straight in the eye, the gospel must be related not only to questions of war and military affairs but also to all

that constitutes life in the institutions of civilization that were intended to preserve and enhance human life—families, economic and technological systems, cultural and political patterns. After all, it was a theology of Reformed orientation that was most able to give guidance and language to the resistance of Protestants to Hitler, partly in the form of a “Confessing Church.”

Since then, several generations of Mennonites have received much from Reformed teachers and partners: from Karl Barth, André Trocmé, Jacques Ellul, Jürgen Moltmann, Milan Opocensky, Lukas Vischer, to name only a few. Thank you for this gift.

As Anabaptists, we may find it simpler to see what others can give us than what we can give them. When other Christians look at today’s descendants of Anabaptists, they typically see several gifts. When they look at Amish, they see the gift of simplicity. When they look at Hutterites, they see the gift of economic sharing. When they look at Mennonites, they see the gift of peacemaking. Each of these gifts does have something to do with living as a

**Cover:** Pierre-Louis Hege, 15, waters a tree planted at the Le Hang church in Bourg-Bruche, France, during a meeting of the MWC Executive Committee in early August. Pierre-Louis is the grandson of Charles Goldschmidt, who, until his death in May 2004, was the last known living person to attend the first MWC conference in Basel, Switzerland, in 1925 at the age of 11. MWC's Executive Committee has established a tradition of planting a tree at each of the locations where it meets annually (see page 11).

Cover photo by Eleanor Miller

free church, as a believers church, as a peace church, as a community of disciples living as salt and light in the world.

In the book, *Body Politics, Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, the most influential Mennonite theologian of the 20th century, John Howard Yoder, names five components of life in the city built on a hill which give light if appropriately extended into the world:

- “Binding and loosing” (Mt. 18:15ff.), known also as the “Rule of Christ,” a biblical process of reconciliation and moral discernment.

- “Breaking bread together,” also called the “Lord’s Supper” and the “Eucharist,” understood as including or implying economic sharing among the members of the community of believers.

- “Baptism,” practiced as entry into a community where social, ethnic, and national categories and hierarchies no longer apply or separate.

- Living the “fullness of Christ” in which every member of the community—and not only the pastor or preacher—has a distinctly identifiable, divinely validated and communitarian empowered role.

- Applying the “Rule of Paul” (I Cor. 14), that is,

making decisions through a process in which every church member may be inspired by the Spirit to speak, then validating that word by the consensus of the entire group.

Are these gifts that 21st-century Anabaptists have to offer to other Christians and the world? Perhaps, sometimes, when we actually practice what we preach. But in any case, I expect that Reformed Christians will be surprised to hear these practices called typically “Anabaptist.”

After all, most of them are at least partly rooted also in earliest Reformed convictions. And their rediscovery by 20th-century Anabaptist historians and theologians is rooted in dialogue with 20th-century Reformed historians and theologians. Even the gifts we may have to offer you are in some sense gifts you have already given to us!

### **Making all things new.**

Our traditions are important to us. They are important to us because we believe them to be vehicles of truth and, perhaps even more, because they are places of belonging: they are our traditions, our identities, our places of belonging.

Shortly after the Mennonite World

Conference began dialogue with the Catholic Church under the theme “Towards a Healing of Memories,” I received an anonymous letter leveling the charge that we were “betraying the blood of the martyrs.” To offer confession, to respond to confession, to take steps toward reconciliation and then beyond reconciliation into fuller unity can feel like betrayal of truth and loss of identity.

But these fears assume that identity is something static and its preservation contingent on defending “our” tradition over against “others” traditions. Yet the Lord is the wall of fire around us and the glory in our midst. We who have confessed our faith belong neither to ourselves nor to our traditions—each of which contain distortions. We belong to Jesus Christ and to the one body of Christ in whom “everything becomes new.”

There is, after all an ultimate biblical vision of the

new city, one no doubt inspired by and fulfilling the earlier visions of Zechariah and Jesus.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... and I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God ... I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And this city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations” (Rev. 21:1-2, 22-27).

This new city is our common horizon. It is our shared future.

*A new capstone at the Limmat River marks the death of Felix Manz and other Anabaptists. The Grossmünster is in the background.*



John E. Sharp





## Mennonite-Catholic dialogue:

# *Toward the healing of memories*

**F**or the past five years, a dialogue has been taking place between representatives of the Catholic Church and Mennonite World Conference. MWC has been responsible for arranging for participants from the Anabaptist perspective, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Catholic Church for that perspective.

After a series of five week-long conversations, the group of 14—made up of seven Mennonites and seven Catholics—issued a report of their work, titled “Called Together to Be Peacemakers.”

This report reviews the historical ruptures separating the two traditions and their respective theologies and discipleship practices. Each group then drafted a statement in which it recognizes its errors of the past and asks forgiveness of the other. The report concludes with a joint section, “Toward a Healing of Memories.”

In it the participants make this statement:

“Together we, Catholic and Mennonite delegations, recognize and regret that sixteenth century Christians, including Catholics and Anabaptists, were unable to resolve the problems of the church of that time in such a way as to prevent divisions in the body of Christ that have lasted to the present day.

“Together we acknowledge and regret that indifference, tension, and hostility between Catholics and

Mennonites exist in some places today, and this for a variety of historical or contemporary reasons. Together we reject the use of any physical coercion or verbal abuse in situations of disagreement and we call on all Christians to do likewise. We commit ourselves to self-examination, dialogue, and interaction that manifest Jesus Christ’s reconciling love, and we encourage our brothers and sisters everywhere to join us in this commitment.”

*Courier / Correo / Courrier* directed several questions about the dialogue experienceto members of both the Mennonite and Catholic delegations for their perspectives on the dialogue experience. We were particularly interested in their comments about the healing component of the joint statement.

Responding are these members of the Catholic delegation:

- John A. Radano, Vatican City, who served as co-director of the dialogues, along with Larry Miller of Mennonite World Conference;
- Drew Christiansen, USA, associate editor of *America* and a scholar of social ethics and peace;

Mennonite delegation members represented in the answers are:

- Helmut Harder, a systematic theologian from Canada;
- Mario Higueros, Guatemala, a retired seminary educator;
- Neal Blough, France / USA, a specialist in Anabaptist history and theology;

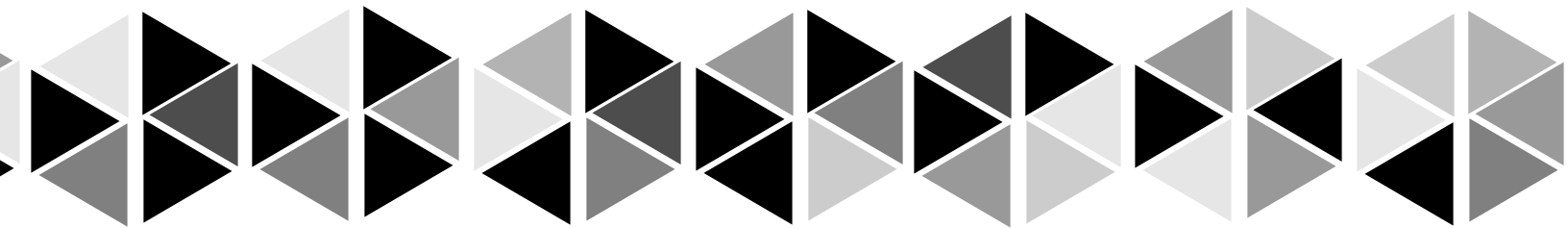
*C/C/C: Why is this dialogue important?*

**Blough:** First of all, that it simply took place. In spite of a strong emphasis on peace, Mennonites have not been strong players in ecumenical dialogue. Somehow peace between divided Christian families has not been a priority.

Protestants and Mennonites in North America don’t deal with the 16th-century split, since they assume it was the right move. But some of us who live as Mennonites in an overwhelmingly minority context, where we’re unknown or considered a sect, have been pushed into relating to other Christians without necessarily choosing to do so and have discovered the difficult theological issues involved.

**Radano:** One obvious importance is the fact that Mennonites and Catholics met to speak with each other for the first time about issues over which they separated more than four centuries ago. This is especially important because we know that Christ prayed for the unity of his disciples on the night before he died (John 17:21). We believe it is the will of Christ that his disciples be one.

**Higueros:** It was important to me because I came to better understand the difference between the official stance of the Catholic Church and its practice in Latin America. Having studied at a Catholic university and having had ecumenical exchanges for



many years with priests and lay Catholics at base communities in Guatemala and Central America, I've been aware that many times local practice does not follow the official position.

The importance of the dialogue does not imply merger or infidelity to our own tradition and needs in today's world, where there are more than enough tensions and aggressiveness between religions.

**Christiansen:** This is the first dialogue to look at church history as a church-dividing issue. Though there remain differences of perspective, the achievement in this dialogue of a common re-reading of that history is an especially significant contribution to reconciliation among Christians.

In addition, from the Catholic side, at least, the agreement on peacemaking helps accelerate a trend away from just war toward nonviolence in the social teaching ministry of Pope John Paul II.

**Harder:** For almost five centuries, Mennonites have been mindful of their schismatic origins and their repercussions, particularly the acts of violence done against Anabaptists. But until now no serious effort has been made to revisit that past history with the questions: Can Mennonites and Catholics respect each other as human beings? As Christian churches? As brothers and sisters in Christ? The five-year dialogue has opened these questions on an international scale.

Through dialogue with Catholics and others, we can see how it might be possible to claim rights to the space described in Ephesians 4:4-5: "There is one body and one Spirit ... one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."

*C/C/C: Why is the last section, "Toward a Healing of Memories," so important?*

**Blough:** It shows that the Catholic Church is serious in its pursuit of better relationships. Such a request for forgiveness should not be taken lightly, nor should it be seen as a strategic move to bring Mennonites back into the fold. Looking seriously at the past—including past mistakes—is an integral part of our faith. By doing so, we can learn much about others and ourselves and move toward the future in different ways.

**Radano:** It calls us to search our souls, to look at each other in a new way, free of the mutual stereotypes which have existed for centuries. It calls us to start again—because it is the will of Christ to do so.

**Christiansen:** The final section transforms the dialogue from one between theological experts and church officials into a matter of profound religious conversion for members of both churches. The healing of memories demands not just a notional assent to new theological formulations of doctrine but a surrendering of prejudices and long-held stereotypes resulting in mutual acceptance.

*C/C/C: In your opinion, what has been accomplished so far through five years of Catholic-Mennonite dialogue?*

**Harder:** The dialogue has opened up issues that have stirred negative memories and attitudes for many years. For Mennonites, the most important of these issues has to do with the persecution that was leveled against the Anabaptists. Do the Catholics think this was justified? Catholics have wondered why the Anabaptists could so easily disrupt the unity of the church. Do the Mennonites think this was justified?

During the five years of dialogue there was considerable growth in understanding and appreciating each other's perspectives and positions. Although we did not avoid the diffi-

cult issues, overall we focused more on the positives than the negatives. We found considerable overlapping agreement on our understanding of the church, on baptism, and on peace theology.

**Radano:** We looked at things through the eyes of the other, and perhaps were able to see some aspects of history in a new way. We were also able to see that in the religious clashes of the 16th and 17th centuries all Christian groups suffered, all had their martyrs, and all have something for which to repent. In our divisions, witness to the gospel has suffered.

In our study of the church, baptism, and the Lord's Supper / Eucharist, we were able to see that we share much more in common than we thought. I also believe we have more in common than we thought in regard to the church and peace. We have the possibility of giving common witness in matters of peace in today's world.

**Blough:** Reading a dialogue report is not the same as being part of a dialogue. What can't be read or felt in the text are the relationships that have been built, the arguments and confrontations that took place, and the joys and sorrows of frank discussions. Each sentence in the report was read, discussed and sometimes modified many times over. Only by being part of such a process, on whatever level, in whatever context, can one begin to understand why such relationships are important.

What better way to discover who we are than to have representatives from various parts of the world come together and explain to other Christians who Mennonites are. This requires honesty and humility on the part of Mennonites and helps us to take our own shortcomings more seriously. I know better now why I am a Mennonite and not a Catholic.



But no longer can I be a Mennonite without close relationships to Catholics. We are not self-sufficient.

**Christiansen:** The dialogue dispelled a lot of misunderstandings and found a surprising amount of common ground. In addition, the Catholic delegation rejection of religious coercion and the Mennonite delegation recognition that there was papal-led reform even in the Middle Ages helped clear the air dramatically, to name just two items.

*C/I/C: What still needs to be done in Mennonite-Catholic relationships?*

**Harder:** It is not enough for several persons to encounter Catholics on the international level over five years and expect that the dialogue is over, that we have said the final word for all Mennonites and Brethren in Christ churches on this subject. It is crucial that local churches seize the opportunity to advance mutual understanding of the Catholic Church locally and, if possible, enter into discussion with Catholic Christians at the local level.

**Blough:** I hope that dialogue will happen between Catholics and Mennonites on the national, regional, and local levels throughout the world. I hope that those who have reservations about the dialogue will openly express their points of view and that serious exchange may happen with them.

**Christiansen:** The first task is for Catholics and Mennonites to get to know one another. Mennonites have only recently emerged from isolated communal existence and are therefore little known to most Catholics. Catholics are so numerous and have so many ecumenical and interfaith contacts that they tend to overlook their Mennonite neighbors. Regions where Mennonites and Catholics live in close proximity—like eastern

Pennsylvania and northern Indiana and Iowa and Manitoba in North America—should take the lead in such encounters.

**Higueros:** I would like to see a Latin American popular version of the dialogue and its achievements. We need to share the findings with Latin American churches with the utmost sensitivity, taking into account an existing major rejection among them of all dialogues. I would also hope we could convene similar discussions in our continent of other themes of crucial importance, such as church growth and the impact of new religious movements.

**Radano:** Hopefully the report will be discussed by Mennonites and Catholics together. This type of reception will help change attitudes, and it will help us to see one another in a new way, deepening our willingness to work together and pray together.

Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting

Christian Unity must build on this experience of dialogue. We need to continue to keep in touch with each other.

*Alan Kreider (USA), a Mennonite historian of the early church, joined the dialogue for the session in the year 2000. He summarizes his experience and learning this way for C/I/C:*

It was a joy to see Catholic and Mennonite scholars and church leaders engaging in disciplined and sustained conversation. It was important, not least, for us Mennonites—some of whom have learned much from Catholic scholarship—to feel that Catholics were taking us seriously.

As a Mennonite, I grew up wanting to take Jesus seriously, and I've been saddened to see how uninterested I and my tradition have been in Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17. I sense that unity will come not the least through relationships. So the friendships that were formed in this dialogue—and that will last!—point the way forward.

## The purification of memories

**T**he healing of memories requires, first of all, a purification of memories. This involves facing those difficult events of the past that give rise to divergent interpretations of what happened and why. ... A purification of memory includes an effort to purge "from personal and collective conscience all forms of resentment or violence left by the inheritance of the past on the basis of a new and rigorous historical-theological judgment, which becomes the foundation for a renewed moral way of acting." ...

A healing of memories involves also a spirit of repentance, a penitential spirit. When Christians are divided and live with hostility towards one another, it is the proclamation of the Gospel that often suffers. ... Therefore, Christians separated from one another, including Catholics and Mennonites, have reason to ask God's forgiveness as well as forgiveness from each other. In doing so, they do not modify their convictions about Christian faith. On the contrary, a penitential spirit can be another incentive to resolve, through dialogue, any theological divergences that prevent them from sharing together "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 1:3).—*from sections 192 and 198 of "Called Together to Be Peacemakers, a report of the International Dialogue between the Catholic Church and Mennonite World Conference"*

## Introducing the new MWC Executive Committee:

# God wants to do great

**M**ennonite World Conference has a new Executive Committee. In August 2003 in Zimbabwe, General Council members from each continental region recommended two people from their caucus for election to six-year terms. One member of the previous Executive Committee and nine new members were elected.

The new executive met for the first time in Strasbourg, France, from July 29 to August 4, 2004. Out of that meeting the following profiles developed:

### Joren Basumata, Calcutta, India:

Joren is the director of the Calcutta Bible Institute. He and his wife Ira Basumata have one married daughter and one 3-year-old grandson.

When the Asia caucus chose him to represent them on the Executive Committee in Bulawayo, Joren was reluctant to accept. He did and now, after his first meeting in Strasbourg, counts it an opportunity and honour.

In Strasbourg, Joren listened carefully to discussion on the documents he had read, but he says he may need one more year to understand the challenges, plans, and responsibilities which he needs to shoulder along with other executive members.

*Vision for MWC:* that we share the tasks ahead by looking towards God continually; then we will be able to accomplish a lot for God's glory.

### David Villalta Benavidez, San José, Costa Rica:

David and his wife Ana Maria Carballo Avendaño are the parents of three married and two adolescent children. David was ordained in San Jose, Costa Rica, in 1981, and, after a missionary term in Ecuador, moved to Hilliard, Ohio, in 2004, where he is pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Hispana. He ministers to people from Latin America

who struggle to send money to children and other family members in their countries of origin.

David wants to see executive members report to the churches in their region about how God is at work. These reports will serve as an encouragement and offer biblical and theological tools for people to use in their communities. "I believe that God wants to do great things through us," he says.

*Vision for MWC:* that the executive works as a team to respond to the needs of Mennonite churches around the world.

### Dieudonné Fimbo Ganvunze, Democratic Republic of Congo:

Fimbo is a pastor and the Executive Secretary of the national inter-Mennonite committee in this country. He and his wife Delphine Pumbu Gambanda are the parents of two girls and three boys.

This is Fimbo's second term on the MWC executive. He is especially appreciative of the fine spirit and good team work he sees on the executive and believes members have much to learn from each other as they work together for the sake of MWC.

*Vision for MWC:* that we continue to be an instrument of unity for Mennonites, Brethren in Christ, and other Anabaptist groups around the world; that MWC, in collaboration with the Global Mission Fellowship, helps conferences and mission agencies discern our mission, going beyond North-South endeavors, with the South as the object of mission.

### Nancy Heisey, Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA:

MWC president, Nancy Heisey, has been married to Paul Longacre for 23 years, and they have two married daughters. Nancy teaches introductory and upper level Bible classes at Eastern Mennonite University, and she leads Bible studies in her congregation. Recently she chaired a meeting of Bible and religion professors in Mennonite Church USA colleges. Nancy spends her spare time with granddaughters aged 5 and 3, her elderly parents, and crocheting an afghan.

As MWC president, Nancy recalls a visit she made to the Phumula Brethren in Christ congregation in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in 2002. After preaching about Jesus helping the small boy share

2003-2009

## MWC Executive Committee

Photos by Merle Good, Eleanor Miller, and J. Lorne Peachey

Joren Basumata  
INDIA



David Villalta  
Benavidez  
COSTA RICA





# Great things through us

his lunch with the crowd from John 6, she joined guests and church leaders “for a delicious meal together prepared in the midst of scarcity experienced by church members. One host joked that I should take an ice cream cone out of my bag and share it. That was a wonderful touch of friendship between guests and hosts. And I realized that someone was truly listening when I preached!”

*Vision for MWC:* that more women and men, who carry out the witness of the church in many different settings, will understand that they are part of a worldwide fellowship of prayer, giving, and concern through MWC.

**Danisa Ndlovu, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe:**

Danisa was elected vice-president of the Executive Committee in August 2003 by the General Council.

He and his wife Treziah have two daughters—Thinkgrace, 15, and Trustworthy, 13—and a son, Devotion, 11. The eldest son in a family of five, Danisa, lost his father in 1984 from injuries sustained in an assault by soldiers. His mother, 72, is still an active Christian.

Danisa is beginning his second five-

year term as the national bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe. He taught at Ekuphileni Bible Institute for nine years and has served as conference secretary and as an evangelist.

As MWC vice-president, Danisa visited the USA and Canada last year and got a feel “for what it means to be involved with a global family of faith. I sensed the need to focus on our strengths, those issues that unite us, without compromising our evangelical faith.”

*Vision:* to discover what MWC’s community / communion model will birth in coming months and years. “I pray that we are ready for the ‘fun ride’ as we allow God to lead.”

**Joshua Okello Ouma, Suna-Migori, Kenya:**

Moderator of Kenya Mennonite Church Conference with 7 dioceses and 120 congregations, Joshua has worked with leaders of the Luo, Masai, Saba, and Kuria tribes in his country to defuse tribal tensions which threaten the peace of many.

Before Joshua’s former wife died, they had five children. Now he is mar-

ried to Deborah Adhiambo Okello and is the father of six more children.

Joshua says he was pleasantly surprised at the Bulawayo Assembly that Africans who did not even know him had enough confidence in him to elect him to the executive.

*Vision:* that MWC be a channel for reaching many with the message of being faithful to God in their daily lives and bearers of peace for a broken world.

**Markus Rediger, Münsingen, Switzerland:**

Markus is president of the Conference of Swiss Mennonites. He has also served the church as president of the Youth Committee and editor of the Swiss Mennonite youth bulletin. Markus and his wife Marianne Rediger-Berger have three teenage children.

Markus was born into an Anabaptist family of several generations. Over the past 20 years, he has been an agriculture professor, directed or managed agricultural cooperatives, and worked on professional publications, public relations projects, and information services. Currently, he is doing graduate

**Eudonné Fimbo**  
Ganvunze  
CONGO



**Nancy Heisey**  
USA



**Danisa Ndlovu**  
ZIMBABWE



**Joshua Okello Ouma**  
KENYA



**Markus Rediger**  
SWITZERLAND



**Eddy Sutjipto**  
INDONESIA



studies in corporate communications management.

Markus always longed to “move beyond my congregation.” His first link to MWC was at the 1984 assembly in Strasbourg, France, where he spoke to youth. For Markus, the nine days in Zimbabwe were an experience of communion that far surpassed his expectations. The dedication and gratefulness of brothers and sisters there was moving.

*Vision for MWC:* to create connections between conferences, congregations, and brothers and sisters in the worldwide community. “I want to align myself in God’s horizon and help build signals of reconciliation in a world that yearns for it.”

**Eddy Sutjipto, Jakarta, Indonesia:**

Eddy, born in Java, was schooled in both English and Chinese. At age 18, he began 19 years of work with a building contractor. Then after completing a masters degree, he started his own construction business in 1989.

According to Chinese tradition, it was Eddy’s duty as the only son to pray for his dead father. At the same time, his girl friend persuaded him to attend her Christian church. Amid the conflict he felt between his family tradition and Christianity, Eddy prayed for a sign. When his mother gave him freedom to become a Christian, that was his sign. Eddy was baptized and he and Daisy were married in 1976. They have two grown daughters.

Eddy moved his family to Jakarta in 1981 and there got involved in a small Mennonite group. That led Eddy to the Indonesia national conference and the



*Two others are members of the Executive Committee by appointment. Paul Quiring (above left) joined the group in 1998 as treasurer. From Fresno, California, USA, Paul is president of a family construction and development business.*

*Larry Miller, Strasbourg, France, has been MWC’s executive secretary since 1990. On those occasions when he gets to introduce his granddaughter Sidonie (above) to the Executive Committee, all business comes to a standstill.*

MWC Winnipeg assembly in 1990. What a surprise to discover such a huge Mennonite family and such hospitality!

Eventually, Eddy became moderator of the GKMI conference in Indonesia. In 2002, he participated in MWC’s Global Gift Sharing Project partnership training in Ghana and a year later in East Africa.

*Vision for MWC:* having Mennonites in the whole world strengthen each other.

**Peter Stucky, Bogotá, Colombia:**

Peter was born in Medellín, Colombia, to missionaries who came from USA to Colombia in 1945. He has lived most of his life in Colombia and now is pastor of the Teusaquillo Mennonite Church as well as president of the national church. He and his wife

Leticia Rodríguez have three sons.

The armed conflict in Colombia also involves churches, but Peter says the Mennonite church believes it should be an agent of peace in the style of Jesus, even suffering if necessary. He says that, as part of the Executive Committee, he is coming to realize that Anabaptist brothers and sisters in many countries of the southern hemisphere, like those in Colombia, pay a high cost for their Christian faith.

*Vision:* that MWC be

an instrument to unite Anabaptist churches amidst their diversity as well as be a vehicle to express mutual support and solidarity in difficult times; in addition that MWC churches grow in their Anabaptist identity.

**Thijn Thijink-van der Vlugt, Enchede, Netherlands:**

Thijn is pastor of a congregation where she and other members stand at the railway station every Wednesday, holding up a peace banner and passing out pamphlets to explain their cause. It was the peace stance and her desire to take her children to Sunday school that attracted Thijn to the Mennonite church in the first place after a search that had taken her to several other groups.

She is married to Jan Thijink, and the couple has an adult son and daughter. At age 40, Thijn returned to college and then seminary. She plans to retire from her position as pastor in 2005 so she can devote more time to MWC.

Thijn started planning to go to Assembly 14 in Bulawayo as a member of her local congregation. By the time she left home she had the portfolio of General Council

Peter Stucky  
COLOMBIA



ThijnThijink-van  
der Vlugt  
NETHERLANDS



Naomi Unger  
CANADA



David Wiebe  
CANADA



member. Then she got the “MWC virus,” and returned home as a member of the Executive Committee representing Europe. She feels her long walk in discovering the Mennonite church has prepared her for such a time as this.

*Vision for MWC:* to promote relations among Christians of different denominations.

**Naomi Unger, Rabbit Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada:**

Since 1982, Naomi Unger has been part of a lay ministry team assisting her pastor husband Don, who has a three-church charge: Glenbush, Rabbit Lake, and Mayfair congregations in northern Saskatchewan, Canada. Don and Naomi are parents of three adult children.

Besides giving leadership to youth and women’s groups, in worship, and in Sunday school for many years, Naomi has also served on several national boards with the Mennonite church in Canada. She is a high school English teacher, has taken several seminary courses, and with her husband served with Mennonite Central Committee in Nigeria and Tanzania.

*Vision for MWC:* That members of our faith families become increasingly connected to each other and recognize the benefits that come from sharing ourselves with each other in Christ.

**David Wiebe, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada:**

The son of home missionaries, David spent his early years with Icelandic people in the northern inter-lake region of Manitoba and later in the Ukrainian community in the south. After graduating from college, he did evangelism across Canada with a Christian jazz / rock music group. Later, he married Valerie, now a marriage and family therapist. They have three adult children.

David has been employed by the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren for 15 years, first as Christian education director and for the past five years as executive director.

Despite what he describes as “little interest in international connections,” in 1990 David attended MWC’s assembly in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. He didn’t like what he per-



Merle Good



Max Wiedmer

**MWC and trees**

*Trees have been important symbols in Anabaptist history. That tradition continued when the Executive Committee met in Strasbourg, France, July 29-August 4, 2004.*

*Top left: During an excursion to Anabaptist historical sites, MWC Executive Committee members and staff stopped at this oak tree at Le Salm. Oral tradition has it this tree was planted in 1793 in recognition of Jakob Kupferschmitt’s efforts to secure exemption from military service for Anabaptists during the French Revolution.*

*Bottom: Each time it meets, the executive plants a tree. In August the group traveled to the Mennonite church in Bourg-Bruche. This site was chosen because the Mennonite church in Strasbourg does not have adequate space for a tree and because Bourg-Bruche was near the “Mennonite tree” at Le Salm (see above).*

*Each MWC tree has this plaque at its base: “In honor of God’s creation and the church universal.” The practice began in 1998.*

ceived as “liberal theology.” But a visit in 2000 with then-president Mesach Krisetya and Larry Miller in Winnipeg was a turning point for David and his views of MWC. He decided to attend the General Council meeting in Guatemala that year and go to the Zimbabwe assembly in 2003, visiting Congo and

Angola enroute. On a trajectory of increasing international awareness and vision, David was elected to the MWC executive in Zimbabwe.

*Vision:* That MWC would continue to grow as a reflection of the values of the kingdom of God so powerfully that it has an impact on all member conferences.

# Executive Committee chooses Paraguay for 2009 Assembly

## USA suggested as site for 2015 event

Strasbourg, France—Assembly 15, the next MWC global gathering, will be held in Paraguay in mid-July, 2009. MWC's Executive Committee reached unanimous agreement on the site at its annual meeting here July 29-August 4.

The committee also adopted a new style of decision making, learned about new developments in global gift sharing, and spent time praying for suffering brothers and sisters.

The executive considered two invitations to host Assembly 15. One came from eight Mennonite conferences in Paraguay with a mix of members from Spanish-speaking, German-speaking and indigenous language groups.

The second invitation, to host the assembly in Eastern Pennsylvania, came from the Brethren in Christ General Conference, Mennonite Church USA and the US Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

Larry Miller, MWC executive secretary, and Ray Brubacher, associate secretary

for events and administration, conducted studies of both locations in May. They reported that a global gathering in either country was feasible, though neither site was free of concerns.

The Paraguayans, for example, have no history of working together to host a conference and no one facility adequate to host an assembly.

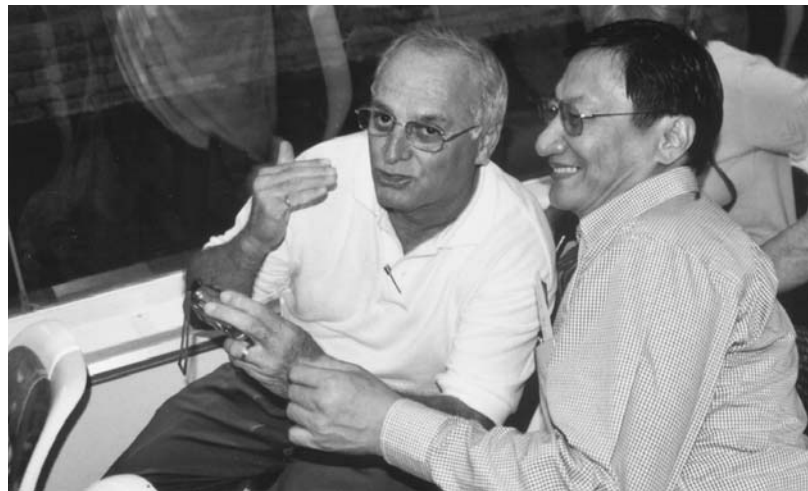
While experience and facilities are adequate in eastern Pennsylvania, many wondered about the difficulty of getting visas to enter the USA, particularly for people from the South.

**Latin America's turn.** What tipped the executive decision in favour of Paraguay—after much discussion, reflection, and prayer—was that it seemed Latin America's turn to host an assembly. The only one in this region was in Brazil in 1972.

When making their decision, Executive Committee members encouraged USA member conferences to consider offering an invitation to host the assembly in 2015.

The executive made the decision on the Assembly 15 site by consensus, a change from traditional voting.

*At the end of a week of working together, Executive Committee and staff gather for a communion service.*



Nancy R. Heisey, MWC president, introduced the concept and process of consensus early on the first meeting day. She noted the importance of “getting the sense of the meeting.”

“What fits MWC's community / communion model?” asked Larry Miller. Some early Anabaptists appear to have made decisions by consensus while many later moved to voting, which tends to build adversarial camps, he said.

Interest in the new model grew with discussion, and executive members agreed to make all decisions in the week-long meeting this way.

Sharing gifts in the global Mennonite and Brethren in Christ family continued to be a strong theme at the meeting, with new emphasis on church-to-church relationships.

Pakisa Tshimika, associate secretary for networks and projects, reported that links between two Congolese Mennonite conferences and Mennonite Church USA, initiated in Zimbabwe last August, have progressed, with conversations on how to proceed taking place in both countries.

“The premise of church-to-church relationships is that a church can better carry out its ministries in

*Executive Committee meetings aren't all work. Here David Villalta Benavidez (left) and Eddy Sutjipto check out a digital photo David took during a boat tour of the canal and river surrounding Strasbourg.*

concert with or by using the gifts of other members of the faith community,” Pakisa told the executive.

**Sharing with new churches.** The executive agreed to continue distributing funds from the Global Church Sharing Fund to new member churches from the global South. A new decision requires that these churches send delegates to two General Council meetings before the funds are released.

Despite gloomy financial projections a year ago, particularly with so many uncertainties around the 2003 assembly in Zimbabwe, Paul Quiring, treasurer, reported that 2003 ended with a surplus and that accounts will balance in 2004.

The executive spent time in prayer for MWC-related churches in difficult situations around the world. They also sent a letter of concern and support to the Mennonite church in Vietnam, where six of its





leaders have been imprisoned.

Ironically, the same day the executive decided to hold Assembly 15 in Paraguay they learned of an explosion in an Asunción supermarket, where Mennonites regularly shop. Immediate reports did not name Mennonite victims but extended family members and friends were among the dead. A letter of condolence was sent to the Mennonite churches in Paraguay.

**Other business.** In their Strasbourg meeting, the executive endorsed nominees from each continental region for a new Youth Continuation Committee (YCC). Members chosen were active participants in the first Global Youth Summit (GYS) in Zimbabwe in August 2003. They will make decisions on implementing actions from the GYS report.

The report on the five-year dialogue between Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was officially received for study in MWC member churches.—*Ferne Burkhardt*

## Watu Wa Amani conference is first for African historic peace churches

*Nairobi, Kenya*—The first ever conference of delegates from African historic peace churches was held at Watu Wa Amani August 8-13.

Mennonites and Brethren in Christ came from Congo, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe. Quakers came from Kenya, Rwanda, Congo, and Burundi. Church of the Brethren were there from Nigeria.

These churches all face tough questions: What does it mean to be a peace church in the midst of violent civil conflict? Does the “historic peace church” identity, birthed in other places and times, have anything to contribute?

This identity has not been central to many African churches, so reinterpreting peace language provoked much discussion. There were also many stories of struggles to live as people of peace.

**Christians killed, churches destroyed.** In Northern Nigeria, the Muslim majority seeks to impose its law on the whole

society. Bitrus Debki from Kaduna state reported: “One of our pastors, who encouraged his congregation to find peace and not fight, had his church surrounded by Muslims on a Sunday morning. They set the church building on fire and shot all the people, including the pastor, when they tried to escape.”

**Fighting nonviolently.** To respond peacefully is not easy. When churches are repeatedly burned, and Christians are attacked, some members of the EYN (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) call for revenge. Toma Ragnjiya, a peace worker, said, “I am not a pacifist. I will not just be passive. I prefer to fight, but nonviolently!”

Representatives of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe spoke of state-sponsored violence in the 1980’s. Albert Ndlovu talked about the young and unemployed who are sent to “national service” camps for military training to act against any who raise ques-

tion about authorities.

Currently Zimbabwean churches are organizing opportunities for change, including engaging government authorities in dialogue. Churches represent one of few remaining non-governmental entities with whom the government talks.

Cathy Mputu, a Mennonite from Kinshasa, and Ramadhani Kokosi, a Quaker from Bukavu, talked about violence, looting, systematic rape, and killing in Congo. The population is caught in the middle of the struggle between armed groups. Churches rely on prayer but also work at strengthening grass-roots peace activities.

Building peace and reconciliation is also part of the story. “Our national process of forgiveness was able to break a cycle of violence,” said Siaka Traoré of Burkina Faso.

Cecile Nyiramana reported on the churches’ efforts to rebuild relationships after conflict and war in Rwanda. “The country is traumatized, with 120,000 to 130,000 people now in prison,” said Nyiramana. “We want to establish a culture of peace. Right now the Quakers are the only peace church in Rwanda.”

**Renewed village.** David Niyonzima, a Quaker from Burundi, closed the conference with: “My peace depends on other’s peace. In Africa, people are communal. Restoration requires a whole village, and we who are members of the historic peace churches must constitute a renewed village.”

—*Robert Herr and Judy Zimmerman Herr*

### Partnership recognition

Executive secretary Larry Miller (left) presents a piece of Alsatian pottery to Ron Mathies, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee, during the MWC Executive Committee meeting. During Ron’s tenure as head of MCC, from which he is retiring, MWC and MCC have deepened their partnership as they work side by side in various places throughout the world.





## Andean Anabaptists focus on restoration, working together

*Isla Margarita, Venezuela*—Under the theme, “Restaurando en el amor desde el evangelio integral” (Restoring in love from a holistic Gospel), 85 representatives of 10 Anabaptist conferences or clusters of churches met here for the

## GYS enthusiasm, work continue around the globe

*Strasbourg, France*—MWC continues to receive reports of activities and conferences for youth building on the enthusiasm and interest generated by the Global Youth Summit in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in August 2003.

**Indonesia.** The Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI) Synod held its first-ever workshop for youth in May. The meeting was attended by more than 60 church leaders of all ages.

Speakers were Pastor Sugiharto of the Sola Gratia Church in Semarang and Elina Ciptadi, Indonesia’s delegate to GYS.

**Zambia.** Lively singing, dancing, and drumming characterized the first national youth conference in this country. More than 800 young people were present for talks and group discussions centered on the theme, “Restored Youth.”

The conference also featured sports, mini-concerts, and a quizzing contest between the churches present.

**Europe.** “Dealing with Differences” was the theme for an international youth conference in Groningen, Netherlands, in October. The event featured worship, workshops, and an excursion.—*from reports by Timotius Adhi Dharma and Mthokozisi Ncube*

second Andean Anabaptist Congress, September 22-26, 2004.

Participants came from Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador with fraternal visitors from Bolivia, Canada, and USA. Delegates from Peru, unfortunately, were unable to obtain visas.

Five workshop leaders focused on restoration for individuals, women and family, church, community, and society.

Women attending learned about an effort to bring together women theologians in the region. Alix Lozano, director of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary of Colombia, reported on a meeting between seven Latin American women and African women theologians at MWC’s assembly in Zimbabwe.

Latin American women plan to organize and conduct activities similar to those being carried out by the African women, a result of MWC’s Global Gifts Sharing project.

The first step is to create an inventory of Latin American women who have completed a theological degree, are currently taking theological courses, or are working in pastoral roles. Next will be meetings within a country or cluster of countries and then regional or continental gatherings.

Several congress sessions provided opportunities to plan other regional efforts. Of special interest was the delivery of newly printed Latin American Anabaptist Sunday school materials, a project that developed out of common needs expressed in previous regional meetings, and coordinated by the SEMILLA and CLARA pub-

lishing and distribution programs.

The congress also revisited the idea developed two years previously to establish an Anabaptist Andean Seminary. The group named a commission to develop a plan for this seminary.

Another regional emphasis taken a step further in this gathering was the Andean Justice and Peace Network. Jenny Neme, co-director of JustaPaz in Colombia, gave a report, after which congress participants asked JustaPaz to give leadership in forming the network.

César García encouraged Latin American conferences involved in transcultural mission to participate in the Global Mission Fellowship formed in 2003 in Zimbabwe.—*from a report by Linda Shelly*

## Mozambique BICs hold first meeting

*Beira, Mozambique*—The first annual conference of the Mozambique Brethren in Christ Church took place here July 9-11, 2004.

With the theme, “Building an Invisible Church,” the conference participants discussed giving, contributing to national development, and improving the spiritual life within the body of Christ.

The Mozambique BIC Church has more than 2,500 members in 33 congregations located in five provinces. In addition to evangelism and church planting, the church is providing theological training to 23 church leaders by extension from two centers.

Brethren in Christ first explored ministry in Mozambique in 1986.—*Timothy C. Lind*

# Why did

by Danisa Ndlovu

**I**t has been many years since my father died. But time has failed to steal my memory of or love for him. I cannot forget him, even if I wanted to. I belonged to him and he belonged to me. I called him father and he called me son. We were part of each other.

My father was special to me. Not that he was an exceptionally good father. No, he was not a Christian. He drank and smoked. I abhorred the times when he came home drunk. But I understood him.

He was frustrated. Times were hard. He had lost everything that made a man respected in society. At least that is what he thought. He had lost his cattle to successive yearly droughts. Educating us had not paid off as he had dreamed.

As a young boy still growing up, I was a victim of his wrath on several occasions. Not that he hated me, but that is how he understood how to be a father. Yet it was during our happy moments together that I could read from his eyes his love for me. Alone in the woods or in the fields, we shared those special times.

Father cared about people and their relations in the community. He was a respected community leader, a kraal-head. People brought their concerns to him. He presided over gatherings and sorted out concerns and disputes. For many years he was the chairman of the local school board. He had no public enemies. He was a simple, loving, and depend-

*courier*

# my father have to die?

able member of his community. He was not a politician. He was just interested in the welfare of his family and that of the community.

In 1984, my dad was working in the Beit-Bridge rural area as a storekeeper. Political tensions in the region were high. Often the people were beaten or harassed for no known reason by a Korean-trained army deployed to parts of the country where the ruling party felt like it did not have a strong hold.

Eight soldiers in uniform came to the store and demanded beer from my dad. He had none to offer. They did not believe him and decided to torture him. They filled his mouth with bottle tops, then, to get the desired effect, hammered him with gun butts several times all over.

**T**hough so severely injured, he could not get immediate health care. For two weeks the area was completely sealed off. No traffic was allowed in or out of the area. In the circumstances and in his suffering, dad had to become his own doctor and dentist. He pulled out five of his teeth that had been cut loose by the bottle tops. By the time he finally found his way to a hospital, it was too late. The damaged jaws had become badly infected.

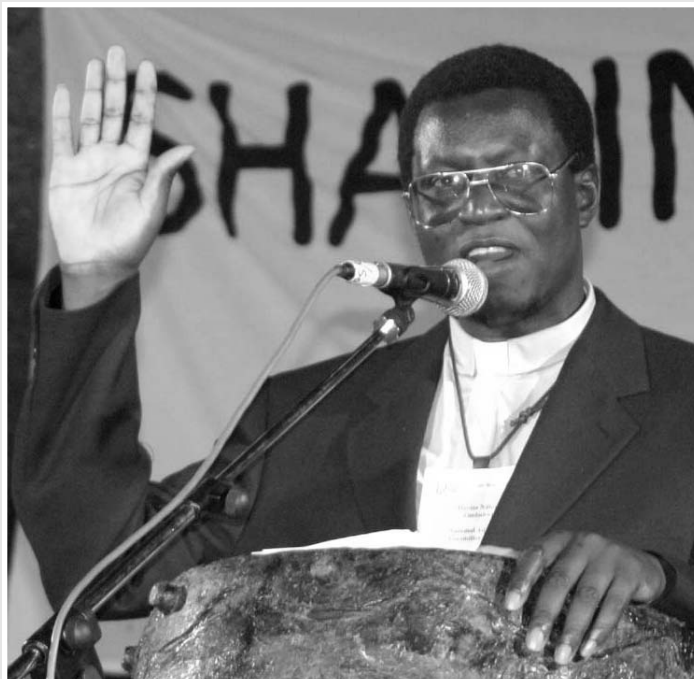
It was almost a month before I heard of my dad's plight. There was no one to blame. I remember walking in the hospital ward looking for my father. My mind was searching for answers. Most likely the soldiers who had beaten him were young men

like me. Why? What cruelty! Why were they so mean and inhumane?

I could not recognize my father until he called my name. There before me was my dad with a disfigured face. Something in me just gave. I sobbed uncontrollably. I wept as though dad had just died in front of me. He was in great pain. His was different from the pain I was going through. At that moment we seemed to enter into each other's pain, and yet neither of us could explain what the other was feeling.

Pain is invisible and yet real. It pierces. Sharp! Deadly! Merciless. In my pain I was gripped with anger against the government, the ruling party, and the army. The government had passed a law granting military personnel immunity from arrest for crimes committed while on duty. In my anger I wanted revenge. My mind transported me to a world of its own where the impossible became possible. It is in that world that my vengeance was carried out. It was my dad's voice that brought me to the world of reality as he begged me "Son, don't. Son, don't."

My dad was in the hospital for two months. It was clear to me that his days were numbered. Something deep in me told me so. I was always afraid of hearing the worst. The news came on a Sunday morning as I was getting ready to go to church. He had died the day before. Unlike when I first saw him in the hospital, this time Scripture came to my mind. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or



terrified ... for the Lord God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6). There was nothing to hold on to except God's promises.

As I drove home for the funeral, in the silence of my thoughts, I tried to pray, but I had no words to say. I tried to sing. No song came to my lips. No human being could bring any comfort. My dad was gone. No more to be seen or talked to. I was afraid of what the future without him would hold.

**T**o experience the death of a family member is to enter a path of loneliness. It is an inward journey, but it is not a silent walk. It is filled with debates and resolutions.

As I grieved for my father, it was failure to find answers that tortured to me. I knew that the Lord was with me at all times. Sometimes it felt like God was a spectator at my grieving, yet he taught me some lessons out of this loss. The cruelty that my father went through was a sign of the lost state of the world. God wanted me to

*Bishop Danisa Ndlovu as he presided over the activities of MWC's Assembly 14 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe in 2003.*

learn what it means to love and forgive my enemies. God, who is in control of all things, allowed me to go through such a painful journey so that I could have a full appreciation for pain suffering and grief.

The question, "Why did my father die?" remains true even today. Maybe I will never know the answer for the rest of my life. It is a good question, but maybe to God it has little or nothing to do with my love and commitment to him. His Word says: "And we know that in all things God works for good to those who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

*Danisa Ndlovu, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, is vice-president of MWC and bishop of the Zimbabwe BIC Church. His story is used by permission from a forthcoming book to be published, first in Ndebele and perhaps later in English, by Doris Dube and Barbara Nkala.*

Perspective:

# *Like a city set on a hill*

by Milka Rindzinski

A quality we Christians share with our predecessors, the people of God in the Old Testament, is that of being displaced. Spiritually we are expatriates. Psalm 137 tells us that the deported Israelites sat down by the waters of Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion and asked themselves, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?”

The Zion we dream about is the kingdom of God. And sometimes circumstances around us make it difficult to discern that God’s kingdom is at hand.

However, the kingdom of God is taking shape among us, no matter where we are, when we assume the identity of Jesus’ followers and disciples. “The kingdom of God is at hand,” John the Baptist proclaimed (Matthew 3:2). From then on, we Christians have kept walking in and towards it, inviting people around us to join. Sadly, we ourselves sometimes decide to get out of the kingdom.

Jesus did not leave his disciples without first praying to the Father for them. He also prayed for us, his future disciples, to ensure the presence of his Holy Spirit within us. So, we are the church, his body, whom he called to be the light of the world, a city set on a hill to shine before all people (Matthew 5:14).

What could be accomplished by a handful of followers of Christ, a minority in a crowded and complex world?

Wars and every form of violence, famine, pandemics, all degrees of madness confront us wherever we are. We may become so overwhelmed that we want to weep. On occasions we almost lose sight of the true kingdom of God and tend to take our own comfort, our nation, our organization as an expression and manifestation of God’s kingdom. When we do this, we feel called to

Merle Good



defend what we believe to be the kingdom against all odds.

We Christians know that we are in the world but not of the world, but many times the world encloses us in such a way that it becomes difficult for us to disentangle ourselves. We are sent as sheep in the midst of wolves. We are advised to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. But many times we do not behave wisely or innocently.

We are called to be one, as Father and Son are one, but many times we are not willing to be one. This unity is important, Jesus said, so that the world may know and fully understand God’s love. It was out of his love for us that God sent Jesus to us to show us how to practise the same kind of love for each other and toward our neighbours. It is with the kind of love which God loved Jesus Christ—and now us (John 17).

We are also called to love our enemies, or those who consider us their enemies. Can we do that? We are called to pray for our rulers no matter how unjustly they may act. Is that possible? We are called to be tolerant towards those who think differently. Can we listen patiently while others express their points of view?

At the same time we are called to be the voice of the voiceless who suffer injustice. We are called to love peace and justice and to work intentionally towards a just and peaceful world. This may turn out to be extremely dangerous for us. It may involve a lot of suffering and even cost us our earthly lives. Do we dare to do that?

I invite all of us to pray intensely for each other as we renew our commitment to be the kind of kingdom citizens that God expects us to be—and that the world so desperately needs us to be.

*Milka Rindzinski, Montevideo, Uruguay, is editor of CJC/C.*

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*courier*

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