



2002 Quarter 4

# *courier*

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**Bulawayo  
remains site  
for global  
assembly**

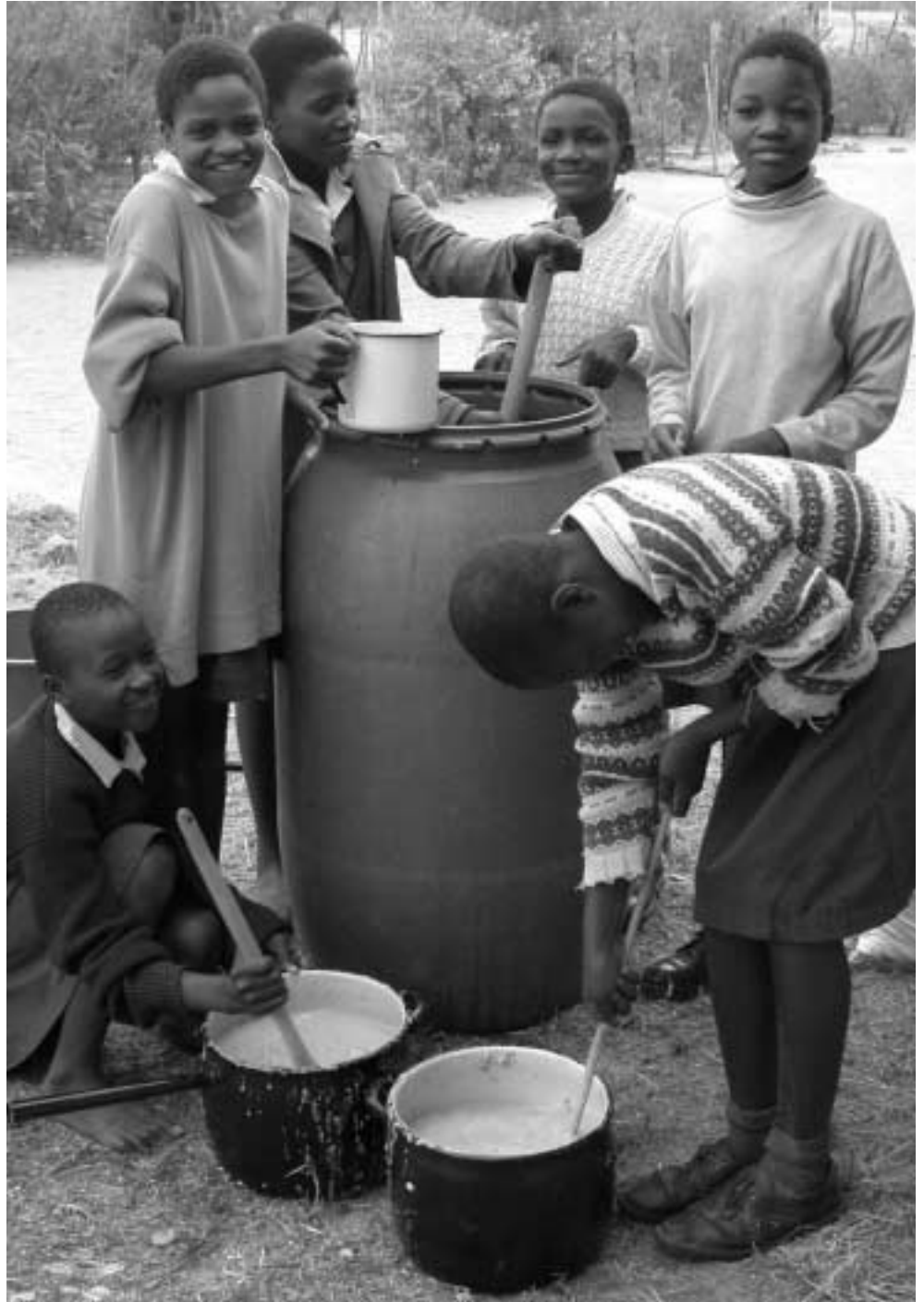
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## Mennonite world calendar

### 2002

October 25-30 Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue # 5, Akron, Pennsylvania, USA

### 2003

January 24-28 Asia Mennonite Conference Executive Committee, Manila, Philippines  
February 20-23 11th Southern Cone Mennonite Congress, Buenos Aires, Argentina  
August 6 MWC Executive Committee, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
August 7-9 MWC General Council, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
August 10-11 Global Missions Fellowship, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
August 11-17 Africa 2003, MWC 14th Assembly, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

**Cover:** *Girls at Matopo Primary School stir a pot of mahewu—a mixture of soya, ground nuts, sugar, and vitamins added to water to make a highly nutritious drink for lunch for each child at the school. Matopo is the site of the first Brethren in Christ mission in Zimbabwe. It will be one of the places visited by many Africa 2003 Assembly Scattered participants.*

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# MWC Executive Committee reaffirms Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, as site for next Mennonite and Brethren in Christ assembly

*Bulawayo, Zimbabwe*—The next worldwide assembly of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ will be held here in August 2003.

The Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee unanimously made that decision during its annual meeting August 2-6, 2002, in Bulawayo.

Following six days of work, discussion, and prayer, much of it around the advisability of holding MWC's 14th assembly in this country, the executive committee said: "[We are] convinced that God is indeed calling the worldwide Mennonite and Brethren in Christ family to convene in Bulawayo next year" (see following page).

The statement reaffirms the decision of the MWC General Council in 2000 to say "yes" to an invitation from Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in Africa to hold the 14th MWC assembly in Bulawayo, headquarters for the 27,000-member BIC Church of Zimbabwe. In recent months some people, particularly in North America and Europe, have questioned the advisability of holding a large international gathering in Zimbabwe. The questions focus on three issues:



*MWC Executive Committee members look over Hall 3 at the Zimbabwe International Exhibition Centre in Bulawayo. The mass Assembly Gathered sessions are scheduled to be held here.*

(1) safety, especially in light of the September 2001 attacks in the United States;

(2) alleged human rights abuses by the Zimbabwean government related to contested elections and the government's land redistribution program; and

(3) food shortages due both to the lack of rain for several years in southern Africa and land distribution.

To help them find answers, MWC officers and staff talked extensively with BIC church leaders in Bulawayo as well as with members of the Assembly Gathered local planning committees. They also fanned out to six of the 14

BIC congregations in Bulawayo on Sunday morning, talking with both pastors and parishioners.

"The church in Bulawayo would not have the courage to call brothers and sisters from around the world to come here if it were not peaceful," Bishop Danisa Ndlovu told them. "Our hearts would break if our invitation were turned down." Ndlovu heads the BIC church in Zimbabwe.

Ndlovu encouraged Mennonites and Brethren in Christ from other countries not to stay home because of food shortages or the country's political issues. The church in Zimbabwe would find it helpful for their sisters and brothers to come here to understand the situation better and to discuss together how to meet the challenges facing African churches, he said.

"I would not be human if

I would say I am not afraid," Ndlovu continued. "But what frightens me are the expectations [of those who will come]!" At the end of the six days of meetings, the MWC executive had no doubt that the Zimbabwean church could meet expectations. They noted especially that church groups across Zimbabwe are holding monthly prayer sessions for the coming assembly, many praying that internationals will not be afraid to come to Bulawayo.

MWC officers and staff also consulted widely with civic leaders as well as with the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and with Lutheran, Anglican, and Roman Catholic spokespersons. All these people, representing a variety of viewpoints, encouraged MWC to hold its world assembly in Bulawayo next year and pledged their



*MWC treasurer Paul Quiring, USA (left), and president Mesach Krisetya, Indonesia, ponder the future during an Executive Committee discussion of finances at the Bulawayo meeting.*

Church dinners in Zimbabwe include a tradition of hand washing before the meal. Here Ray Brubacher, Canada, MWC associate secretary, enjoys the tradition at a supper for the MWC Executive Committee and local committees hosting Africa 2003 Assembly Gathered in Bulawayo next year.



cooperation to help make it happen in whatever way possible.

In addition to many hours of meetings, the MWC contingent visited the Zimbabwe International Exhibition Centre, the proposed site for Assembly Gathered. They also looked at hotels, lodges, and dormitories where participants will be housed. Executive Committee members and staff spent Sunday afternoon in prayer,

fasting, and small group discussions; and on Sunday evening they shared what they had heard and what they sensed the Spirit was saying to them.

**Discerning the Spirit.** "If we have faith in Jesus Christ, all our worries, all our fears will never happen," Bishop Ambrocio Porcincula of the Philippines told the gathering. "Whenever any of my pastors express fear, I tell them they are not true Anabaptists!" he said.

"The idea to meet in Bulawayo ... came through searching and prayer," Bishop Joram Mbeba of Tanzania said. "While we can't deny the physical realities, we need not be fearful."

Nancy Heisey of the United States, MWC president-elect, said: "Mennonites and BICs have to realize we are living in a world of injustice and violence; this is the world in which we are called to be the people of God. An assembly in Zimbabwe can be a critical response to the kind of world in which we live."

"We will have to get used to meeting in different parts of the world in the face of suffering," said Hugo Moreira of Uruguay. "I do not believe that things [around the world] are going to get better."

John A. Lapp of the United States summed up what he was hearing from the executive and the

Bulawayo church this way: "The critical issues in Zimbabwe are not nearly as acute as political conflict in the Congo, religious violence in Indonesia, economic despair in Uruguay, or personal safety in the United States. ... If an [MWC] assembly cannot be held in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, it likely cannot be held anywhere in the South," Lapp said (see related story on page 7). The Executive Committee agreed.

"Mennonites and BICs are like oysters," Mesach Krisetya of Indonesia, MWC president, told the group in a devotional following the decision. "We, too, are very extraordinary creatures who can use a wound to build a pearl. We don't have the power of guns and politics," Krisetya said, "but we do have the power to overcome evil with good. That is why we must come to Bulawayo in 2003."

Assembly Gathered, the

*A statement from the MWC Executive Committee issued during meetings in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, August 2-6, 2002:*

## Reaffirming Bulawayo

In July 2000 the Mennonite World Conference General Council accepted with enthusiasm the invitation of the Brethren in Christ Church, Zimbabwe Conference, to hold the next world assembly in Bulawayo in August 2003.

Since the July 2000 decision, Zimbabwe has frequently been in the international news. This has generated questions, particularly in North America and Europe, about the wisdom of holding an assembly in this country.

After three days of reporting, discussion, and prayer, we unanimously reaffirmed the earlier decision. We listened to spokespersons

of the church describe Zimbabwe reality and worshipped in six of the 14 Brethren in Christ congregations in the peaceful city of Bulawayo.

We were moved by the planning being done by the local Brethren in Christ committees. The chair of the prayer committee reported that all congregations are having monthly prayer sessions to prepare for the assembly. They are especially "praying that international congregations will not be afraid and that they will come" to Bulawayo. The biblical phrase "fear not" permeates the testimony of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe.

As representatives of Mennonite and

Brethren in Christ around the world, we want our decisions to be rooted in the gospel and the church, which as the body of Christ lives amidst a variety of human situations. We believe the church is called to be present as a sign and announcement of God's love for the world. MWC exists to support member churches wherever they are located. We urge all member churches to accept the responsibilities of interdependence and solidarity with each other. As Mennonites and Brethren in Christ, with our long commitment to the way of peace and suffering for righteousness sake, we stand ready to meet in strategic locations throughout the world.

Bulawayo part of Africa 2003, scheduled for August 11-17, will feature worship sessions, Bible studies, an international choir leading congregational singing, seminars, a Global Church Village, a Global Youth Summit, and other gatherings at the exhibition centre. A second part of Africa 2003, Assembly Scattered, will give participants the opportunity to visit churches in various African countries.

Projections are for 1,500 internationals and 4,000 Mennonites and Brethren in Christ from Zimbabwe and Zambia to attend Africa 2003. Even so, treasurer Paul Quiring of the U.S. told the executive that registration fees, as in previous cases, may not cover the cost of this assembly. The executive encouraged staff to promote Africa 2003 vigorously as well as to find ways other than registration fees to fund the gathering.

**Other business.** While discussion and a decision about next year's assembly dominated the August 2002 annual meeting in Bulawayo, the executive also heard reports and made decisions on other issues:

- *MWC-MCC cooperation.* The MWC Executive Committee approved a joint memo of understanding and cooperation, previously approved by Mennonite Central Committee, that calls for the two groups to have observers at each other's meetings and to cooperate

when at work in the same countries. MCC pledges to give priority to working with MWC-member churches, and MWC agrees to alert MCC to special needs that arise in areas where its churches are located.

"We are eager to continue the conversation about cooperation," said Karen Klassen Harder, MCC's chair, "but we want you [MWC] to take the leadership."

- *Global History Project.* John A. Lapp, project coordinator, reported on

several days of meetings with African writers immediately prior to the Executive Committee sessions. The writers have pledged to have their volume ready for distribution by Africa 2003, Lapp said.

- *Women in ministry.* African Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women theologians also met prior to the Executive Committee gathering. The executive reaffirmed the efforts of MWC's Global Gift Sharing staff, who have been overseeing gatherings of these



*Teas both mornings and afternoons allowed participants to enjoy the Zimbabwe winter sun. Justina Heese, Executive Committee member from Canada, is at left and Mesach Krisetya, MWC president, in the center. Sylvie Gudin Poupaert, MWC staff member from France, is on the right.*

We are mindful of the turbulence of our world since the conspicuous events of September 11, 2001, as well as turmoil on the African continent. Zimbabwe, like other nations, has its share of political and economic problems. It is precisely in such a time and place as this that the theme of our assembly, "Sharing Gifts in Suffering and in Joy," represents our calling and commitment.

**O**ur committee has been inspired by its interaction with the Brethren in Christ in Zimbabwe. We listened as local church members observed problems in Zimbabwe public life and how these sometimes affect church members. They do not foresee problems for international visitors. These church representatives invite those attending Africa 2003 to come to Zimbabwe

with the eyes of faith, rather than with views influenced only by politics or the media.

While in Bulawayo members of our committee and staff consulted widely with local civic leaders as well as with the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, Lutheran, Anglican, and Roman Catholic spokespersons. All these people, representing a variety of viewpoints, encouraged MWC to hold its world assembly in Bulawayo and pledged their cooperation.

After enjoying the hospitality and fellowship of the Brethren in Christ, after experiencing the situation on the ground, after listening to the voices of God's people in Africa, the MWC Executive Committee is convinced that God is indeed calling the worldwide Mennonite and Brethren in Christ family to convene in Bulawayo next year. We expect a large body of

constituents to come to Bulawayo August 11-17, 2003. All of us will be inspired by fellowship with sisters and brothers from around the world, and we will learn from and bring encouragement to the church in Africa, especially the church in Zimbabwe.

For the glory of God and the peacemaking witness of the people of God.—MWC Executive Committee: *Fimbo Ganvunze*, Democratic Republic of Congo; *Justina Heese*, Canada; *Nancy Heisey*, president-elect, USA; *Bedru Hussein*, vice-president, Ethiopia; *Mesach Krisetya*, president, Indonesia; *Nicolas Largaespada*, Nicaragua; *Joram Mbeba*, Tanzania; *Larry Miller*, executive secretary, France; *Hugo Moreira*, Uruguay; *Paul Quiring*, treasurer, USA; *Ambrocio Porcincula*, Philippines; *Ineke Reinhold-Scheuermann*, The Netherlands; *Stefan van Delden*, Germany

women (see additional story on page 12).

• *Inter-church relations.*

Larry Miller of Strasbourg, France, MWC executive secretary, reported that the series of five dialogues with the Catholic Church will conclude in October. He told the Executive Committee that while most MWC member churches support these dialogues, they have caused concern for others.

The committee did approve appointing a joint MWC / Lutheran World Federation study commission to examine the language of the Augsburg Confession. The confession, which condemns Anabaptists, is still being used by Lutherans worldwide and is troubling for Mennonites in Europe and elsewhere in their relations with other churches. The commission will build on national

Lutheran / Mennonite dialogues in Germany, France, and the USA.

• *Global Anabaptist missions.*

The MWC Executive Committee also met with the Global Anabaptist Mission Consultation (GAMCo) Continuation Committee to explore a possible network for Mennonite and BIC global mission work. The group agreed to call a global mission gathering next year in Bulawayo immediately preceding Africa 2003.

“Mennonite World Conference is a discerning community, where the international and the local meet,” Miller told the gathering. “It is here that we express love, create peace, and promote unity.”

More than 70 people from around the world attended one or more of the events associated with the Executive Committee gathering for 2002.

## Enthusiasm for global assembly spreads across African churches

*Strasbourg, France*—With Africa 2003 less than one year away, Africans in several countries have their sights set on Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, for the 14th MWC assembly.

Administrators in the Bulawayo office, who recently took registration forms to Zambia, were surprised when 500 were snapped up within 20 minutes. “My prayer has always been getting at least 150 coming [from Zambia],” says Dothan Moyo, national coordinator; 256 Zambians have registered so far. “We can expect 500 to come to Bulawayo next year,” says Zambian Bishop Shamapani.

The enthusiasm of the three Mennonite communities in Congo has led them to request 150 registration forms. While Mennonites

from the West fly over the vast continent in relative comfort, Congolese Mennonites will spend days of grueling travel by rail and bus through several countries to get to Bulawayo.

Business people in Tanzania are considering chartering a bus to put the long, expensive trip to Zimbabwe within the reach of Tanzanian Mennonites. Another bus load may come from Malawi.

Meanwhile, young people from the Church of the Mennonite Community in Angola are the first to submit ideas for a Youth Summit discussion at the assembly. More than 200 youth in the Luanda area helped complete the survey sent to member churches around the world in preparation for the summit.

In Zimbabwe, the political situation, a troubled economy, drought, and food shortages have created hardships, but members of Brethren in Christ churches there are finding ways to prepare to host international visitors. Many have little cash, but they are gathering “in-kind” donations—like cows for planners to sell or slaughter for food for the assembly. They are testing other ideas, like beginning now to set aside small quantities of essential commodities that could be in short supply by next year. Many also plan to host guests in their homes.

Enthusiasm for Africa 2003 is spreading across this continent, which for the first time will host the MWC assembly. For many this will be their one opportunity to worship and fellowship with the global church family, and they are making exceptional efforts to be part of it.

### MWC tree-planting at

**Mpopoma:** Children watch intently as Bishop Danisa Ndlovu of Bulawayo (center), Mesach Krisetya, MWC president (left), and Bedru Hussein, MWC vice-president, plant an *Albezia Gummifera* tree, an indigenous evergreen, outside the Mpopoma Brethren in Christ Church in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Hundreds of people gathered in the churchyard for the tree-planting ceremony after the worship service on August 4. Each year since 1998, the MWC Executive Committee has planted a tree at its annual meeting. The inspiration for this ceremony comes from the Mennonites of Tanzania, who have been undertaking a massive tree-planting operation as a conservation effort and as an income-generating project for the church.



# 17 reasons to go to Bulawayo

"If MWC is to continue to represent global Mennonites and Brethren in Christ, we need to come to Bulawayo. Not to come would send a profoundly unfortunate message to the majority of Christians and Mennonites who now live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America."

That was the conclusion of John A. Lapp after three days of Executive Committee discus-

sion on the site for next year's assembly. Lapp, executive secretary emeritus of Mennonite Central Committee, was in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, during meetings of the Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee.

He, along with Jethro Dube, MCC co-country representative in Zimbabwe, was asked to be a listener to discussion on the

feasibility of holding Africa 2003, the 14th MWC assembly, in Bulawayo next year. Lapp, from Pennsylvania (USA), coordinates the MWC Global Mennonite History Project.

On Sunday afternoon, August 4, the executive met in small groups for reflection, discussion, prayer, and fasting. In the evening, Lapp gave the following report:

## *What we heard*

- 1 that the invitation is "Woza! Come. God has something here for you";
- 2 that the host Brethren in Christ Church invites us enthusiastically and "our hearts would break" if Africa 2003 did not materialize;
- 3 that there is excitement about the assembly theme and program and the opportunity for fellowship and exchange of insights with Christians from more than 50 countries;
- 4 that the Christian church offers hope in Zimbabwe and coming here will bring encouragement and inspire hope in the visitors;
- 5 that the political and religious leaders in Bulawayo, representing a variety of viewpoints, welcome us and do not consider current problems as reasons not to come;
- 6 that there are critical issues in Zimbabwe related to the government, the economy, food shortages, some public mismanagement, and HIV/AIDS—all of which receive much media attention;
- 7 that the critical issues in Zimbabwe are not nearly as acute as political conflicts in Congo, religious violence in Indonesia, economic despair in Uruguay, or personal safety in the U.S.;
- 8 that caution is needed in making public statements about the political realities in Zimbabwe;
- 9 that despite some lawlessness, mostly in rural areas and during political campaigns, most people consider Zimbabwe a safe country for its citizens and international visitors;
- 10 that our world is turbulent, and it is impossible to have a foolproof assembly or any other meeting anywhere at any time;
- 11 that North American and European Mennonites and BICs who have expressed insecurities, fears, and skepticism about travelling to Zimbabwe are sometimes subject to misinformation and distorted interpretation;
- 12 that if an assembly cannot be held in Bulawayo, it can likely not be held anywhere in the southern hemisphere, where the majority of Mennonites and BICs now live;
- 13 that it is no more outrageous to meet in Bulawayo than to be convinced that the church is global and universal, and the assembly is one way for the church to be seen as the worldwide body of Christ;
- 14 that the assembly budget is based on 1,500 international and 4,000 Zimbabwean participants;
- 15 that risky endeavours require vision, prayer, courage, and good planning.

## *What we did not hear*

- 16 anyone say the assembly should not be held in Bulawayo in response to the executive secretary's question to the Executive Committee: "What is God calling us to do with Africa 2003?"
- 17 any hint from the BIC Church in Bulawayo that the assembly should not be held here.

# MWC Advent prayer calendar 2002

During the season of preparation for the celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ among us, MWC invites the global Mennonite and Brethren in Christ community to 24 days of united prayer for ourselves and for our world. The prayer requests in this Advent calendar were gathered from members of the MWC Executive Committee and staff when they met in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, this past August. The design is by Judith Rempel Smucker, Akron, Pennsylvania, USA.—*Editors*

SHARING GIF

**23** Pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven, especially that Mennonites and Brethren in Christ may truly become brothers and sisters in the Lord.

**22** Pray for socio-economic stability in the Philippines, especially for an end to sporadic gunfights between the Philippine armed forces and Muslim rebels.

**1** Pray that God will give new vision and strength so that our whole life becomes a prayer that seeks God's love and justice in the world.

**2** Pray that Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in North America will become increasingly involved in doing God's work of peace and justice

**3** Pray for the leadership of the Meserete Kristos Church, Ethiopia, needing to cope with a rapidly growing church and to find ways to incorporate a younger generation.

**4** Pray for rain for Zimbabwe so that a sufficient harvest next year will help ease political and socio-economic struggles in that country

**5** Pray that Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Canada will be energized by the vision of God's activity in the world, so that each one is motivated to do God's work.

**6** Pray for the writers, editors, and translators of the Africa volume of the Global Mennonite History: Alemu Checole, Bekithemba Dube, Eric Kumedisa, Barbara Nkala, John A. Lapp, and Arnold Snyder.

**7** Pray for the Asia Mennonite Conference Executive Committee, scheduled to meet January, 2003, with MWC leadership.

**8** Pray for Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in the USA that, at this time of a "war against terrorism," they may be courageous witnesses for peace.

**9** Pray for Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania facing divisions based on tribes and clans. Pray also that the ministry of women may be fully recognized.

MINI SUFFERING

T S



**24** Pray that the clouds of uncertainty and misgivings be cleared away so that God can direct the church to ways of sharing gifts in suffering and in joy.

**21** Pray for Mennonite and Brethren in Christ students and other young people who are preparing to attend Africa 2003, that they will have open hearts to hear God's voice in a new cross-cultural situation.

**20** Pray for the churches in the Congo and other African countries as they take on responsibility for their own work and find new ways to be partners with mission agencies.

**19** Pray for a day when women in Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches do not feel hindered from using their God-given gifts.

**18** Pray for Dothan Moyo, MWC national coordinator in Zimbabwe, and his family as he oversees preparations for Africa 2003.

**17** Pray for the Philippine Integrated Mennonite churches as they help establish an Asian Regional Youth Discipleship Training Center.

**16** Pray for Ludia Mbeba, wife of Bishop Joram Mbeba, whose right leg was amputated as the result of a train accident in Tanzania on June 24, 2002.

AND IN JOY

**15** Pray for Jaime Prieto, the author of the Latin America volume of the Global Mennonite History.

**10** Pray for the writers of the Asia volume of the Global Mennonite History: I.P. Asheervadam, Adhi Dharma, Paulus Pan and M. Yamade.

**11** Pray for the people of Uruguay and Argentina, where industries have closed down and there is little work as the result of injustice and corruption, both within these countries, and in relation to the global world economy.

**12** Pray that God will provide the resources to develop a new Meserete Kristos College for leadership training.

**13** Pray for peace in the Great Lakes area of Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda.

**14** Pray for Bishop Danisa Ndlovu as he leads the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe as it prepares to host Africa 2003.

# Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy

by Ferne Burkhardt

*Editor's note: The next three issues of Courier / Correo / Courier will carry features on the Africa 2003 theme: "Sharing Gifts in Suffering and in Joy." In this first article, C/C/C's news editor, Ferne Burkhardt, tells what intangible gifts she and her colleagues received when they visited the children at the Matopo Primary School south of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, last July.*



Left: Nomaguga Sibanda, age 11, stirs a pot of mahewu, a high-protein drink for lunch for her 430 classmates, at Matopo Primary School. Above: Talent Sibanda, also 11, dreams of being a doctor so he can help others. After school each day, he works in his grandparents' garden so they can sell vegetables to pay his school fees.

Wrapped in a wool blanket, I sip steaming tea in my room at a lodge in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, at the end of July. I wonder if Talent, Nomaguga, Trymore, Sicelo, and Gogo are warm. I met them today at Matopo while visiting the site of the



first Brethren in Christ mission work in Zimbabwe, begun in 1898.

The wind whistles outside my window. Is it creeping into their grass-roofed huts in the countryside as they sleep at the end of this chilly, overcast day? It is their winter.

As I recall my visit to the Matopo Primary School, I think of Talent Sibanda, 11, in grade five. He is an orphan whose grandparents have given him a home. His only living sibling, an older sister, works as a maid in the city. As I talk to Talent, one of the 430 children at the school, he stretches his bare feet closer to the fire in the centre of the classroom.

Talent's hike to school is only two kilometres, much less than the 8-km walk for some of the children. Before

*Gogo MaSibanda (right) lives with her great-grandson, Sicelo Ncube, in the countryside near the Matopo Primary School, run by the Brethren in Christ in Zimbabwe. Gogo, 85, says she has taken care of her orphaned great-grandsons for several years. Sicelo and his cousin Trymore grin when they say it is they who take care of their great-grandmother.*

and after his classes, which start at 8:00 a.m. and go until 4:00 p.m., he works in his grandparents' garden. They sell the vegetables to pay his school fees. Talent grins broadly as he tells me he loves to play soccer and that he hopes to be a doctor some day.

In the schoolyard, Nomaguga Sibanda, also 11, squats on the ground, vigorously stirring a pot of *mahewu* to a smooth paste. Classmates help her pour the mixture into a barrel of measured water which will yield a one-litre drink for each child. ORAP (Organization of Rural Associations for Progress) supplies the high-protein powder, mostly soya and ground nuts laced with sugar and vitamins, for the drink.

Some children may get little food for several days in addition to this diet supplement, explains Patience Ncube, a teacher. When children faint or can't concentrate on lessons, teachers know they are hungry. Patience says teachers give these children basic rations from the school's reserves.

My Mennonite World Conference colleagues and I watch as the children gather in orderly lines in the courtyard. Many have poor shoes or none at all.

They shiver in the cold, but they sing lustily for us and smile as they return to class. If only we had sweaters and socks to hand out.

Trymore Moyo, in grade three, and Sicelo Ncube, grade seven, are excused from school so they can join our group in the van and take us to visit their home. We bump along a dirt road to their great-grandmother Gogo MaSibanda's compound. Gogo rises from her seat beside a small fire in front of the doorway of a brick storage shed. She gives us a warm welcome. Gogo is 85, she says, and has cared for the orphaned boys for two to three years. Trymore says mischievously that he takes care of Gogo.

Clearly, caring is given and received by all three. The boys help cook, carry water from a well a kilometre away, and gather firewood with a donkey cart. Their work in the garden resulted in good orange and tomato crops this year. Now Gogo will be able to hire a man to replace the grass roof on her sleeping hut, which termites destroyed. But there isn't enough for school fees. The generosity of others covers that cost.

Gogo pulls her tattered, black shawl over her face to keep the smoke out of her eyes. She tells me that she attended the Mtshabezi girls' mission school long ago and ever since has been part of the BIC Church. She still walks to worship services when she can.

**B**efore we go, Lorne snaps some pictures of the family on his digital camera. The boys laugh with delight when they see their images. Lorne will find a way to send them copies of the prints. I give Gogo a small handmade gift in a zip-lock bag. She accepts it with surprise and delight. She is nearly overcome with joy and gratitude when Ineke hands her a new, warm shawl.

On the return trip from the countryside to the luxury of the lodge, I ponder the inequities in the world. I saw suffering today but also joy in the faces of Zimbabwean children and an old woman. It was an unexpected gift I will long treasure.

I listen to the wind, still raging, and finish my cold tea. Gogo is surely warm under her new shawl. I'm not sure about the children.

## Registration forms available worldwide

Even though it's months away, now is the time to register for Africa 2003, MWC's 14th assembly. This includes participation in Assembly Gathered, in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, August 11-17, 2003, and Assembly Scattered, hosted by MWC member churches in Africa before and after the Bulawayo event.

Registration packages were mailed to all Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations in North America in June; a second mailing was scheduled for October.

European congregations and conferences have received registration materials, and by now forms are available in the offices of all 87 MWC member conferences around the globe.

The package includes a registration form, which outlines costs for accommodations, meals, and travel to various Assembly Scattered locations and sightseeing. There is information on a wide range of tour groups, special information for youth and young adults, a program outline for the days in Bulawayo, general information on various topics including medical services, food, weather, money, and opportunities for participation.

Registration forms can also be accessed for copying on the web sites of MWC ([www.mwc-cmm.org](http://www.mwc-cmm.org)) and MTS Travel ([www.mtstravel.com](http://www.mtstravel.com)). Online registration, however, is not possible for this assembly.

What will it cost? Estimates for the six days of Assembly Gathered, including travel from Toronto or New York, modest but comfortable lodging, food and registration fees range from \$2,500 to \$3,000 US (\$3,800 to \$4,200 Cdn). Additional costs for Assembly Scattered and sightseeing tours will each range from several hundred to more than a thousand dollars, depending on options chosen.

Contributions to the MWC Travel

Fund to assist brothers and sisters in the southern hemisphere to attend Africa 2003 are invited on the registration forms.

A late fee will apply to all registrations post-marked after January 31, 2003. More information is available on the MWC web site or by phone at 519-571-0060.

*A familiar sight to participants in Assembly Gathered will be this spire (right) in the central plaza of the Zimbabwe International Exhibition Centre, venue for MWC's six-day event in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.*



## MWC Travel Fund gets prize money

Winners in a June 5, 2002, competition in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, were MWC's Travel Fund and the air. The annual "Commuter Challenge" in the region encourages participants to reduce harmful vehicle emissions by walking, riding a bicycle, or car pooling instead of driving alone in a car.

Mennonite Savings and Credit Union, who placed second overall in the percentage of staff who participated, donated its \$100 prize to MWC's Travel Fund. This marked the first year that staff from this financial institution participated in the event.

Sharon Snider, a member services representative at the Kitchener MSCU branch, which is located in the same building as the Mennonite World Conference office, suggested the donation to MWC. Snider said she thought of the Travel Fund because the Commuter Challenge is also about travelling.

## Women theologians share joy and pain of call; invite women worldwide to join the conversation

*Bulawayo, Zimbabwe*—Thirteen Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women theologians from far-flung areas of Africa met here for the first time July 31 to August 1. They discovered they share similar struggles in having their leadership gifts recognized. The women—representing separate regional gatherings held since last November in the Democratic Republic of Congo, southern Africa, and east Africa—reported on those events.

Mennonite World Conference was sponsor of the theologians' gatherings in Africa. It brought together

representatives from the regional gatherings in connection with the Executive Committee meetings in Bulawayo. Nancy Heisey, MWC president-elect, chaired the women's meeting.

The women theologians identified five "critical issues" as common to the regional reports: (1) opportunities for theological study and scholarships; (2) opportunities for women to use their gifts and training in the church; (3) recognition and ordination of women as pastors; (4) networking; and (5) addressing other women's

issues, especially economic needs.

The women agreed to raise these concerns with local, national, and global leaders, most of whom are men. They also plan to share a report of the continental meeting with other African women's groups and theologians and to invite women theologians in other countries to join the conversation. They will request that women theologians be included in the Africa 2003 Assembly Gathered program and that women's crafts be exhibited during the assembly.

The common problem of a lack of funds for study generated animated discussion. There are more women than men studying theology in their regions, so why do men get most of the scholarships? they wondered. One suggestion put forward was to ask donor agencies not to channel scholarships through national or regional church offices, since men are usually in charge.

The women, some of whom met here for the first time, expressed great joy in songs and prayers, but they also grieved the absence of Ethiopian women, who had planned to come. Nardos Mamo, from Ethiopia, had attended a meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, to help plan the gathering for East African women theologians that was to be held in July in Ethiopia. However, on May 24, Ethiopian church leaders decided that the July conference should not be held in Ethiopia and Ethiopian women should not participate. The meeting was held in Arusha, Tanzania.

The women meeting in Bulawayo a month later wrote a letter to their Ethiopian sisters, expressing their sadness over the issue as well as their encouragement and support for them. The letter, sent to the chair of the executive committee of the Merestes Kristos Church in Ethiopia, asked him to convey the message to women theologians in Ethiopia.

"Meeting with these African women theologians was breathtaking. They have explored the gifts they have to offer the church and are seizing every opportunity to lead," said Heisey after the meeting.

### Studying, mothering, and planting churches

**A**nnie M'Bwana, 23, sits in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, with women theologians from six other African countries. She is from Malawi. During the meetings, she has to divide her attention between Jacob, her six-month-old baby, and reports, exchange of ideas, and discussions.

Others take turns holding Jacob so his mother can take notes and concentrate. From their faces you can tell taking care of Jacob is a privilege and a pleasure.

Getting to Bulawayo last July was not easy for Annie. On her way she got stuck at the Harare airport for six hours when airport procedures took so long she missed her connection.

"When I was almost desperate," she says, "I

remembered the name of a Brethren in Christ (BIC) pastor in Harare, found help to locate his telephone number, and called him. Soon, I was taken to Barbara Nkala, a BIC church member, who hosted Jacob and me. Then she put us on the overnight train to Bulawayo."

Annie was born into a Muslim home. She became a Christian in 1996. As is usually the case, her Muslim family threw her out. She was taken in by her uncle. Years later her father became a Christian, too.

Three years ago she married Jonathan, a professor at the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi. "Half way through my third and last year of theological studies at the college, I had to discontinue because of my pregnancy," she says.

"My aspiration is to resume studies so that I may get my certificate in



*Annie M'Bwana traveled from Malawi with her son Jacob to attend the women theologians' meeting in Bulawayo.*

theology," she says. Annie feels called to be an evangelist. This year she and her husband planted three churches in Muslim areas. "We reach Muslims little by little; we visit them time after time, befriending them," Annie says.



Rebecca Osiro, Kenya (left), Evelyne Mthombeni, Zimbabwe (center), and Hellen Bradburn, Tanzania, share a laugh during teatime at the theologians' meeting in Bulawayo in August.

#### World Fellowship Sunday:

## Africans prepare materials for global Anabaptist worship

*Strasbourg, France*—African Mennonites and Brethren in Christ, primarily from the Democratic Republic of Congo, are producing the materials for World Fellowship Sunday 2003. The theme for the Sunday is "Living in Hope and Joy."

World Fellowship Sunday offers an opportunity for the global Anabaptist family to worship and pray in solidarity wherever they are. Traditionally observed on the fourth Sunday of January, next year's fellowship Sunday will be January 26, 2003.

Mennonite World Conference arranges for its continental regions, in rotation, to prepare materials for this special service.

2002 Quarter 4

Materials for the 2003 event will be sent to all Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches around the world in November 2002. The materials include suggestions for scriptures, songs, stories, prayers, and sermons.

Churches around the world say they appreciate both the idea of having a World Fellowship Sunday and the materials they receive from MWC.

"We invite guests from other countries and ask them to contribute to the [World Fellowship Sunday] service," reports Andrea Lange, a pastor in Germany.

Mary Anne Isaac, from College Community Church in California, USA, reports

## Andeans form new congress

*Quito, Ecuador*—Delegates came from Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Peru to the Anabaptist Andean Gathering of churches and conferences held here August 6, 2002. Before they left, they took action to create the Congreso Anabautista de la Región Andina (CARA).

Colombia and Venezuela had held joint Anabaptist gatherings in the 1980s. But this year's event was the first time they were joined by churches in Ecuador and Peru. More than 70 delegates were at the Quito meeting.

In forming the new congress, the delegates chose a coordinating committee with representatives from each of the four countries. They decided to meet every two years.

Theme for this year's gathering was "The Anabaptist churches face the challenges that confront Latin America." Victor Wall

of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Paraguay was the main speaker.

"We must work towards the centrality of an evangelistic discipleship involving the church as a whole according to the great commission," Wall said. He also stressed striving for peace and reconciliation as a way of life in the context of mission and of creating a culture based on kingdom values.

The delegates noted that Andean churches face significant challenges. Among those they identified were these: (1) working toward creating an Andean United Anabaptist Seminary; and (2) creating a Justice and Peace Network integrated with conferences in each country.

The next gathering will be in 2004 in Venezuela.—*César Moya and Patricia Urueña, Mennonite Mission Network workers, Ecuador*

that last year her congregation's service focused on the gospel as both local and global. A dialogue sermon suggested how members of the congregation could be world fellowship participants.

Patriona Livingston from France says that her church chose to have a family worship service last year including youth and children. Two youth lit candles as each prayer request was made.

University Mennonite Church in State College, Pennsylvania, USA, celebrated the Lord's supper on WFS last year with breads from several different countries. The worship

leader told the congregation something about each country, led a prayer for its people, and incorporated songs from all the countries in the service.

Hans Adolf Hertzler, Germany, says, "The idea of organizing a specific day to link Mennonite churches has been well received," though churches would like more information about the countries being featured.

Eleanor Miller from the MWC Strasbourg office says this year that will be available on the MWC web site: [www.mwc-cmm.org](http://www.mwc-cmm.org).

# What has Bulawayo to do with Steinbach?

by John A. Lapp



Little did we know, when we first dreamed of the Global Mennonite History Project some seven years ago, how relevant it would be. This project is now being developed as the geographical center of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in the world is moving from the North to the South.

This is also true for all of the Christian church. Philip Jenkins in a new book, *The Next Christendom: the Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford 2002) says that soon more than two-thirds of all Christians will be in “the global south,” and that does not measure the increasing influence of ethnic Christian groups in Europe and North America with strong southern linkages. Jenkins highlights the youthful and economically impoverished character of the new Christian majority—characteristics

The first two volumes of the Global Mennonite History are scheduled for release in 2003: the Africa volume at the 14th Assembly in Bulawayo and the Latin American later in 2003. Asia is scheduled for 2004 and North America and Europe by 2006. Donations for the project are welcome and may be sent to MWC offices at 8, rue du Fossé des Treize, 67000 Strasbourg, France, or 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1 Canada.

which stand in sharp contrast to the Christian movement in the North and already are the source of considerable tension.

Recognizing this novel situation for the Christian movement, MWC decided to sponsor the global history project as a means for nurturing “a sense of belonging together, promoting mutual understanding, and stimulating the renewal and extension of Anabaptist Christianity worldwide.” Through the project, writers from the major continents are encouraged to preserve memory, collect stories, and put into their own voice the history of the church on their continent.

Our expectation is that the Africa volume will be available at the 14th MWC Assembly next August. The other volumes on Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America will become available in subsequent years.

In a July 24-August 1 meeting in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, the writers and advisers for the Africa volume wrestled with how to tell the story in such a way that churches in Africa will have a greater understanding of who they are. What makes these churches African? Can the experience of the Brethren in Christ in Zimbabwe and Zambia make sense to the Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) in Ethiopia, which in turn needs to understand itself alongside the Communauté Mennonite au Congo? Each of these three large churches are connected to nineteen other Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Africa. The goal of this

*The writers and advisers for MWC's Global Mennonite History Project look at photographs Eric Kumedisa (center) has collected for his section on Congo (from left): Alemu Checole (Ethiopia), John A. Lapp (USA, coordinator), Samuel Assefa (assistant to Alemu), Eric Kumedisa (Congo), Bekithemba Dube (Zimbabwe), and Arnold Snyder (Canada, editor).*

history is to suggest what is African about the more than 400,000 Mennonites and BICs on this continent.

At this same meeting, the authors probed how to tell the Africa story in such a way that churches in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America would come to recognize the African churches as sister communities in the global family. After all, this is a global history. The church in one continent is part of the church on six continents.

American church historian Dana L. Robert has written that “the strength of world Christianity lies in its creative interweaving of the warp of a world religion with the woof of its local contexts.” The classic question of western theology is, “What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?” The question for Mennonites may be: What does Bulawayo, a city in Zimbabwe, have to do with Steinbach, a small town in Canada?

How do we write so that the story that captivates readers in Matebeleland

(Zimbabwe) will also interest those in Manitoba (Canada)? One poignant moment in our meeting occurred when Barbara Nkala of Zimbabwe, who is writing the chapter on the African context, observed that she didn't really understand our tradition until she fellowshipped with Dutch Mennonites for two weeks in September 2001.

We also explored the connections of the Mennonite / Brethren in Christ story with other Christian groups. In Africa, as elsewhere, the Anabaptist church is a minority and gains much strength from its close connections with other churches.

For example, the Brethren in Christ in Zimbabwe send some of their most promising young pastors for training at the Theological College of Zimbabwe on a new campus in Bulawayo, sponsored by the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe. The three Mennonite churches in the Congo are members of the Church of Christ in the Congo (ECC) and hence the World Council of Churches. Many members of the MKC have roots in the Ethiopian Coptic Church.

So we asked: how can we write this history as a way of sharing our story with other Christian friends in Africa and throughout the world?

**T**hese issues are not unique to Africa. The writers of the volumes on Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America also face questions about the character of the church in its context, the local church and its connectedness to the worldwide Anabaptist tradition, and the interaction of this voice with other Christian traditions.

Each local church or conference, perhaps each local congregation, incarnates the gospel in a particular way. The historian, perhaps more than anyone else, recognizes that the unity of the church is as fragile as it is diverse. That is why every effort we make in the church's ministry, including the writing of history, must strengthen the common witness, which is indeed the calling of MWC.

*John A. Lapp, Akron, Pennsylvania, USA, is coordinator of MWC's Global Mennonite History Project.*

## Mennonite congregations in profile:

# *Karlsruhe Mennonite Church*

**I**f you ever have the opportunity to worship with the Mennonites of Karlsruhe, Germany, you'll find their church on a hilltop amidst a beautiful countryside. Here, where forest and farmland meet, is the Mennonite retreat center, Thomashof, from which horizons both literally and spiritually are far and wide.

You arrive at the friendly, simple church building after traveling on a long, winding road from the town of Durlach, now part of Karlsruhe, where the congregation was founded in 1901. On Sunday morning, you see the people come from their houses in Karlsruhe, Durlach, and other nearby communities or from their farmsteads in the neighborhood.

Many are over 60 years of age. But the 125-member congregation also has several young people—and an active youth group of some 30 members. It is the group in the ages between these two that is underrepresented.

Bernd Dyck, a member of the Leitungskreis (leadership group) blames this in part on the economy. Several families have left the area for other cities because of the job opportunities there. But conflict has also been hard on the congregation.

Some 10 years ago a woman pastor was installed, but she was ousted by the more conservative members after one year. In the process, some members left to join other churches, while others stayed to work out the problem. Eventually the pastor went on to another church, but the situation had been resolved to the point where she could send a letter of congratulations to the congregation last year on the occasion of its 100th anniversary.

The worship at Karlsruhe is simple, usually led by pastor Wilhelm Unger. Several musical instruments accompany the singing. Once each month the congregation holds a potluck after worship, with people staying together

for a greater part of the afternoon.

Recently the congregation opened a secondhand store in one of the poorer parts of Karlsruhe. One of the volunteers there, Renate van der Smissen, reports this store rapidly evolved into a place where people come to meet and talk, filling a social need not foreseen when the store was first opened. The congregation is hiring a young woman from Kenya with experience in managing a store to join this venture in Germany.

**A** big event in the history of the congregation was hosting MWC's Assembly VI in 1957. The secretary of MWC at the time, Theo Glück, is now, at 92, the oldest member of the Karlsruhe congregation; he lives close enough to the building so that he can walk to church.

The congregation also reaches out to others around the world. It has made funds available to Rodney King, North Carolina, USA, a volunteer worker with refugees, to reunite a family from Iraq. The congregation also takes regular offerings for relief and missions and peace-related work. Approximately three-fourths of its budget goes for these activities while one-fourth is used for its own maintenance.—*Ed van Straten, European regional editor for Courier / Correo / Courier.*



*Top: Inside the Karlsruhe church during a special weekend for children of singing, stories, games, workshops, and food. Inset: Pastor Wilhelm Unger with his wife Liesa.*

# Come with the eyes of faith

by Larry Miller

I was in Zimbabwe as the fast-track land redistribution program imposed by the government there was coming to a confrontational climax. During that extended visit, colleagues and I consulted widely with civic and religious leaders.

These people, representing a diversity of persuasions and viewpoints, spoke with clear and united voices on the subject of convening an international Christian gathering in Bulawayo one year from now. Come, they said. Come and see. See our situation with the eyes of faith. Then stand in solidarity with us.

"The more the outside church comes to Zimbabwe, the better," insisted Goodwill Shana, vice president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and chair of the Evangelical Association for Justice and Peace in southern Africa. "The world is isolating us in order to bring change. But the more eyes we have in Zimbabwe, the better it is for us."

Christian leaders in the country and the region are themselves not blind to the realities. "We are aware," said the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in a public statement issued earlier this year, "of many incidents of violence and intimidation both before and during the elections and of the uneven playing field as factors that marred the conduct of the election and preclude us from confirming it as free and fair."

Another important Christian group, based in the southern Africa region and reporting on a pastoral visit to Zimbabwe, writes: "It is crucial for Zimbabwe to address land distribution as a matter of the greatest urgency. However, the present process for doing this is absolutely destructive both to those involved and to the land itself." White people represent only one percent of the country's population, but at least 70 percent of the commercial farms, occupying vast tracts of the most fertile land, belong to them.

The statement continues: "We recom-

mend that some form of truth commission could be crucial to establishing justice and reconciliation in Zimbabwe because there have been many incidents of violence and human rights violations" against specifically targeted local groups and individuals.

Aside from the abuses of the past two years, food has recently been used as a political weapon, resulting in suffering for many. And many could die as a result unless those responsible know that they will be held accountable and change their course of action.

Should we convene an international church gathering in these conditions? What if there is still a food shortage or even starvation next year? What if there is still an abusive government in the country? Danisa Ndlovu, bishop of the host Brethren in Christ Church, believes that "to change the venue due to food shortages would be hypocritical. It will not in any way change the Zimbabwean situation. It will only help those who would be privileged to attend the conference at another venue since they will dine and be filled while some of our people in Zimbabwe are starving."

Goodwill Shana says: "I'd rather have peace and justice than food. If no one comes to Zimbabwe, that changes nothing. You just leave us alone to starve. Even if you send relief, we still do not have the solidarity we need. If anyone objects to your coming to Zimbabwe, I would love to talk with him or her."

All of these leaders confirm what my own experience suggests: international visitors are not only safe in Bulawayo but desired and received with gracious hospitality. More importantly, the African churches deserve to see our eyes and hear our voices of support and solidarity, both in their place during Africa 2003 and in our places before and afterwards.

*Larry Miller, Strasbourg, France, serves as executive secretary of Mennonite World Conference.*



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