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about their lives
and the church**

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**Gently, step
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Mennonite world calendar

2003

July 31-August 3	Holy Spirit in Mission Conference, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
August 2-4	Reseau Francophone, Kinshasa, Congo
August 6-18	Africa 2003, MWC 14th Assembly, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
August 6	MWC Executive Committee
August 7-9	MWC General Council
August 10-11, 18	Global Mission Fellowship
August 11-17	MWC Assembly Gathered
	MWC Councils: Faith & Life; Peace
	Assembly Scattered before and after Assembly Gathered in various locations

Cover: Responses to a Global Youth Summit committee survey indicate young people are eager to serve the church (top & bottom right). Bottom left: children at the Matopo Primary School, site of the first Brethren in Christ mission in Zimbabwe.

Cover photos:

Top—Liesa Unger
Bottom left—J. Lorne Peachey
Bottom right—Christian Mandtler

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Just take us seriously

Young people talk about their lives and the church

Mennonite and Brethren in Christ young people haven't given up on the church. Quite the contrast. They believe the church can help them solve their problems and meet their needs—if only the church will take them seriously.

One doesn't have to read far in reports from young people around the world to come to that conclusion. From Zambia to Japan, Brazil to the United States, young people are saying the same thing: we face tremendous problems in today's world, the church could help us solve these problems, to do so it must listen to us and then invite us to help find solutions to what life brings us.

The reports come in response to a survey sent to a youth representative in each of Mennonite World Conference's 84 member conferences earlier this year. The purpose of the survey is to discover some of the challenges, agendas, and concerns of Anabaptist young people around the world. The responses are currently being gathered in preparation for a Global Youth Summit to be held with MWC's Assembly Gathered in August. Survey results will form the basis for discussion and activities there (see sidebar).

The survey asked four open-ended questions. The answers are surprisingly similar, given the respondents diverse contexts and sometimes difficult situations. Some are in rural agricultural communities, "where [we] do not yet have access to computers, Internet, land, or cell phones" says a respondent from the Congo. Others are in urban areas, confronted, as a Bolivian young person writes, by "a double morality [that] prevails in the mass media, and [by] consumerism and materialism spreading throughout all spheres of society." Some live in countries with long histories of being at war (Angola)



Liesla Unger

Young people share a meal following a Sunday morning worship service in Bolivia.

or are preparing to wage war (United States).

Despite the diversity and complexity of national and regional experiences, common themes emerge from the responses:

1. What serious challenges do young people face? Issues related to *work* are identified by Mennonite and BIC young people as their number one concern, regardless of where they live. Young people in the South (Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean), where unstable economic, political, and social contexts make it difficult to find work, are tempted to take drastic steps to help themselves and their families survive. "Many girls have become involved with being commercial sex workers," writes a youth from Zambia. "Both boys and girls have enrolled in illegal trading such as cross-border

smuggling, just to meet basic needs." From Zimbabwe: "Male youth are resorting to crime to survive, and female youth are prostituting themselves for basic commodities like mealie meal and bread."

Job concerns of young people in the North (North America, Europe) have more to do with economic security and finding meaning in work. "The slack economic situation and the increasing rate of youth unemployment present a further challenge as it evokes a feeling of insecurity young people have to deal with," writes a representative from Germany. From Japan: "Many enter the workplace not really understanding what they studied or why they are working; they are just floating along. In addition, there is no sense of achievement of what they have done. ... Many young people jump from job to job just earning enough to have some fun for a



Above: A young woman from the Congo trains in design and carpentry. Below: Anabaptist youth leader from Indonesia leads singing during a youth retreat.



while. Such a sense of important things just being temporary is a concern.”

Closely related to the challenges of finding a job—or the right job—are issues related to **education**. Young people from poorer countries are the most forthright in what this means for them.

“Education in Angola costs at least \$500 US per year for secondary [school],” writes a youth from that country. “It is difficult for most families to find such amounts.” Many areas in India lack good educational institutions. “[Schools] are in towns and cities, where poor parents cannot think of sending their children. So youth go astray because of a lack of proper education,” writes a youth from there.

Going astray and the moral and ethical consequences of a lack of education are often closely associated with **politics**. In whatever country they live, young people are not blind to political processes and often see them as causing many of the problems young people face.

“Young people are skeptical about the government, since it is well known that there is a lot of corruption at administrative and legal levels” (Bolivia). Young

people regard politics as “being used for personal profit, instead of as a way of working for the common good of society” (Mexico). “Politicians and political parties take advantage of the ignorance of the people. They utilize them as their vote bank but hardly do anything for them.” Also, “If you ... don’t have money [for bribes], you can’t get a good job” (India). Corrupt politicians look for “school leavers” to train in violence “as a necessary element of the struggle” (Zimbabwe).

The state of the world—and the apparent lack of ideas, energy, or even zeal on the part of many adults to do anything about it—has many young people feeling alienated and **searching for meaning**.

“Young people do care about a Christian life,” writes a German respondent. But “they are faced with fast-moving times and a great variety of choices and possibilities. ... To orient oneself is seen as a growing difficulty—what or whom to believe, where to involve oneself.” From Japan comes a report of anxiety among young people, who often live in “the family-less family. ... Individuals may live in the same house but carry on autonomous lives.”

As a result young people often turn to their peers and to the media for their orientation. “The media exercise a considerable influence on youth ... that can negatively affect how youth use their money, how they see their physical appearance, their reputations, their performance,” says the Swiss representative. Says the GYS delegate from Mexico about peer influence: “The attitudes of non-Christian youth have more influence on Christians than the other way around.”

Violence and how to respond to it are also challenges for Mennonite and Brethren in Christ young people. The representative from the Mennonite churches of the USA says that young people “are struggling with the peace and nonviolent ethic of the Mennonite church. Many [are] uncertain about how to respond to terrorism ... in light of the events of September 11.” Concerns about violence as experienced in their cultures (drugs, prostitution, sexual exploitation, smuggling) also permeated the responses of young people from many other countries.

2. What critical issues hinder spiritual growth? Living in a world with challenges such as these makes it difficult for anyone to live a Christian life, especially youth.

“Young adults have to find food for themselves without money,” says the Zambian representative. “During such times, more young people ... run away from God and indulge themselves in illegal activities like drugs to earn a living. ... The church cannot [come to their aid] because they cannot even support their pastors.”

Even those young people who do attend church find it difficult in many cultures. Young people in many areas of Kenya “cannot attend church regularly because they have to look for food all the time, including Sunday. Those who do come to church cannot concentrate because they are worried about their house rent, food, clothing, and medication.”

But a more common difficulty for young people in growing in their spiritual lives is relating to a church they see as outdated, out of touch, old fashioned. Some comments from around the globe:

“[Youth] find church boring and uninteresting ... traditional and slow, whereas outside there is so much more

entertainment” (India). “Youth aren’t attracted by [a quiet, reserved style]. Many young people leave the church and don’t go back because they don’t feel accepted” (Brazil). “Religious socialization that insists on traditional decisions and the doctrines of the congregation doesn’t allow youth to make their own choices” (Switzerland).

“The lack of musical instruments [in church] leads many youth ... to attend revival churches where there are musical instruments, strong praise and singing, and where the pastors are well dressed” (Congo). In some Congolese towns three or four churches on the same street are filled mostly with young people who are “looking for what their parents were unable to achieve.”

3. How can the church help its youth? What changes do Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches around the globe need to make to appeal to young people and help them with the challenges they face? Young people want to feel they are a part of the church. As the Brazilian delegate puts it, “At church the young person ought to find love and a lot of dialogue, leaving judgment aside.”

The delegate from Japan expressed an almost universal response to the MWC

survey, saying, “[Our] hope is that the church will become a place where ideas can be exchanged freely.”

Openness is the key word for many young people. “When youth make requests, they should be taken seriously,” says the Swiss delegate. “It is important to be open and honest with youth,

Youth, young person, young adult

An issue the GYS Planning Committee had to resolve was the definition of terms. In some cultures youth refers to high school age persons; in others you are considered young until you marry. “The other part of the issue is that 16-18 year olds in some areas may face the same kinds of issues that 25-30 year olds are dealing with in other cultures,” says Andy Brubacher Kaethler, a member of the committee. “We went with the 18-25 age bracket for delegates, so that span was not too wide, but it also caught at least the upper end of how North Americans define ‘youth.’”

Global Youth Summit Committee



Ronald



Angela



Andy



Vikal



Liesa

Young people find their voice

Mennonite World Conference’s Global Youth Summit (GYS) emerged out of a concern to give young people an opportunity to voice their hopes and concerns. Last year MWC invited its 84 member conferences to appoint a youth delegate to lead in surveying young people about their lives and their feelings about the church.

The GYS Planning Committee began to receive survey results in December. Some delegates polled 150-200 young people, sometimes in dozens of congregations. The first response was received from Angola, where, after 30 years of civil war, “this was the first time youth have had such an opportunity to express their own view about their life situations,” according to the Angola delegate.

GYS delegates will gather in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in August as part of MWC’s Assembly Gathered. Other young people

from around the globe are being invited to join them in discussing survey results and ways to address the concerns of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ young people all over the world.

The summary, “Just take us seriously” that appears on these pages, is based on the first 22 responses returned by mid-January. David Lind and Kendra Yoder of the United States are summarizing the reports for the GYS Planning Committee: Ronald Lizwe Moyo (Zimbabwe), chair; Andy Brubacher Kaethler (Canada), Liesa Unger (Germany), Vikal P. Rao (India), and Angela Opimi (Bolivia).



Christian Mandtler

giving them clear responses. ... The church should look at the changing values of society with an initial neutrality rather than being automatically negative to what is new."

The respondent from the Anabaptist churches in the Dominican Republic urges churches to keep a good relationship with young people, supporting their activities, encouraging and loving them, "which is what they need the most."

Young people want the church to listen to their concerns, writes the USA delegate. They want the church "to build relationships with them instead of making them feel like 'doubtful Christians.'"

Other ideas for how the church can minister to its young people include providing Christian training and guidance; providing mentors and role models for young people; allowing more participation by youth in the life of the church, including its worship services; supporting economic and educational initiatives that young people may take; and praying for them.

4. How can young people contribute to the life of the church? Global Youth Summit representatives indicated young people are ready and willing to help the church find solutions to the challenges and problems they face. The most often expressed way to do this is by being living examples of faith. "By living a true Christian life," writes a young person from India, "I can keep a model of mercy, honesty, and love in front of [other] youth so that they may also grow in the spiritual life."

The delegate from Switzerland adds:

Young people are ready to be used in the local congregation. Here youth lead singing during a service in Germany.

We can "remain strong in faith, be honest ... count on the help of Jesus, pray, take care of our relationship with God."

Young people can counsel each other, too. "Nothing quite beats peer-to-peer counseling," writes the Zimbabwean delegate.

Several youth delegates mentioned praying for the church and for one's country. "Congolese youth and young adults, deceived by the political, social, and economic life of the country, have given themselves to a life of prayer because they believe God doesn't reject anyone," writes one.

From Angola comes this suggestion: "We need to assist the government and the churches in carrying out workshops which promote cultural activities which will sensitize the population to cultivate harmony and tolerance toward [each other]." Some young people say they are open to working with the church to

find ways to improve the economic and educational life not only of young people but also of everyone in their church and community.

As they continue to receive more responses, the planning committee is designing the program of the August summit to help young people address these concerns and begin to work at finding ways to cooperate at finding answers to the challenges they face.

Reading through the responses leads one to believe that this project will be an opportunity for Mennonite and Brethren in Christ young people to embrace their diversity while emphasizing their common journey as Anabaptists. When young people from around the globe "summit" in Zimbabwe next August, they will have the opportunity to provide leadership in challenging the larger church to action in relation to its youth.

The delegate from the USA puts it quite simply: "Young people want to be listened to, and they want to have a voice in the decision-making process."

Countries and conferences of GYS delegates' summary report

Angola	Igreja da Comunidade Menonita em Angola
Congo	Communauté des Eglises de Frères Mennonites au Congo (CEFMC)
Kenya	Kenya Mennonite Church
Zambia	Brethren in Christ Church, Zambia
Zimbabwe	Brethren in Christ Church, Zimbabwe
India	Bihar Mennonite Mandli (BMM)
India	Bharatiya Jukta Christa Prachar Mandali
India	Mennonite Church in India
Japan	Nihon Menonaito Kirisuto Kyokai Kyogikai
Philippines	Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines, Inc.
Germany	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland—MJN Youth Ministry
Germany	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland—Juwe Youth Ministry
Switzerland	Konferenz der Mennoniten der Schweiz (Alttäufer)
Brazil	Associação das Igrejas Menonitas do Brasil (AIMB)
Bolivia	Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Boliviana
Colombia	Iglesia Christiana Menonita de Colombia
Uruguay	Convención de Iglesias Evangélicas Menonitas en Uruguay
Dominican	Conferencia Evangélica Menonita Dominicana
Mexico	Conferencia Menonita de Mexico
Congo	Communauté Mennonite au Congo (CMC)
France	Association des Eglises Evangéliques Mennonites de France
USA	Mennonite Church USA
Indonesia	Persatuan Gereja-Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI)

When give becomes get

by Barbara Nkala

God's children are like the marula tree. Each person is gifted differently and shares from the abundance of the heart.

In Ndebele, we have a proverb which says, *Izandla ziyagezana*. That means, two hands help wash one another. One hand cannot be really clean, as it can't wash off dirt well on its own. In essence, people do well when they help one another.

When I was a little girl, we used to play a game using a "three star tassel" type of grass. This game was played to jeer at a person who asks for a favour but who is not willing to give or to do anything for other people. Two bits of grass were pulled from the stem and intertwined at the tassels.

As one end of the grass stem was pulled, the tassels jiggled either facing the stingy person or facing the one jeering. A chant accompanied this process: "When you want from others, it's, 'Yes, yes!' When others need from you, it's 'No, no!'" This game encouraged young people to give to others whenever there was need, because it was a shame to be mocked that way.

I think of a tree, the beautiful marula tree. Dig up and chop the roots, and the tree is dead! No juicy fruit, no

munchy crunchy nuts, no swaying branches or dancing leaves, no solid trunk to stand on. The sprawly roots that worm deep into the soil seek water and food for the whole tree. They give to the trunk, which gives to the branches, that give to the leaves and the flowers and fruits. The seed from the fruit makes procreation possible.

The leaves of the marula tree might be pretty, and the marula fruit might be juicy, but that does not mean they are more important. The leaves and the fruit cannot dangle in the air without the other parts of the tree that hold them. The parts are all interdependent.

God's children are like the marula tree. Each person is gifted differently and shares from the abundance of the heart. Give begets get. It is true that no one is an island.

In 1999, I learned that a distant cousin I'd never met or heard of before, Agnes, was in Parirenyatwa Hospital in Harare, where I live. Her mother had left her and gone back to Zambia to care for her other children. Agnes was going to undergo a mastectomy. Zimbabwe had more capable doctors to handle that operation.

When I visited the hospital, I found that Agnes was in the same ward as another woman, also from Zambia, Janet Zulu. Janet was there for the same operation. When both came out of the hospital, we took them home. They had to remain in Harare for chemotherapy and reviews for three months.

My family enjoyed having them, and they even developed friends among other family members from church. They were both much better when they left for home in November.

Unfortunately, Agnes contracted another infection and died before the year was through. But Janet has been doing fine and has kept on coming to

Zimbabwe for her reviews. She is like a sister to me now.

Why am I telling this story? Just today, January 13, 2003, I got a telephone call from Janet in Zambia to let me know that she had sent my family a bag of mealie-meal. All the way from Zambia! As if she knew that we only have two weeks supply before we run out. I am touched by her thoughtfulness.

Another time when Janet was in Harare for a medical review, she brought our family some sugar. We had very little at the time. Like mealie-meal, sugar is very scarce in Zimbabwe.

I last bought a bag of mealie-meal off a shop shelf in October 2001. But I have had constant supplies through friends, acquaintances, and relatives who keep us adequately stocked. When I marvel at their kindness, they remind me of long forgotten kind deeds a family member did for them.

I see God's caring and faithful hand in all this. I see that giving begets getting in the family of God. Surely, I am not meant to live only for myself as part of Christ's body. Yes, indeed, *izandla ziyagezana*.

Barbara Nkala, a writer and publisher, lives in Harare, Zimbabwe. She currently serves as the director of the International Bible Society of Zimbabwe.



She and her husband Shadrack, executive director of Telco Internet, are members of the Mount Pleasant Brethren in Christ Church in Harare. They have two grown daughters and a son.

This is the second in a series of three on the theme for Africa 2003—"Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy"—which will appear in Courier / Correo / Courrier prior to the international gathering of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ scheduled for Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in August. —Editors

The Brethren in Christ Church
takes root in Zimbabwe:

Gently, step by step

by Doris Dube

When the Brethren in Christ Church (BICC) originated in the United States in the late 18th century, the majority of its members were in farming. Even so, church leaders volunteered their time, money, and service, travelling across America and Canada preaching the good news.

As their commitment grew, some started feeling a burden for non-believers in other lands, particularly across the seas. Eventually, the denomination took steps to send missionaries to Africa. Miss H. Frances Davidson and Miss Alice Heise with Bishop Jesse Engle and his wife were the first volunteers to the African mission field. They traveled across the seas with no specific destination until they arrived in Cape Town. There they had an interview with Cecil John Rhodes.

Rhodes owned a lot of the land in southern Africa. The mission team requested and were given land to set up a mission in the hills of Matopo in what was then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. The four from the U.S. spent time in Bulawayo, learning the



language and buying supplies. On July 4, they set out for Matopo with an 18-foot wagon and three tons of supplies drawn by 18 donkeys. This journey lasted two days and three nights. On July 7, they arrived at the site where Matopo Mission School is today. Chief Hlukanisa Mlandu welcomed them to the area.

The Matabele people also welcomed the missionaries with open arms and love. They listened to the gospel but did not plunge into this unknown belief immediately. Gently, step-by-step, the light of Jesus found room in some of their hearts because the missionaries taught them patiently and did not despise what they were used to. The missionaries set up houses, planted a garden, started doing home visits and

opened the first school on October 11, 1898, in a 16-foot by 16-foot tent. There were 12 students on the first day. The primary aim of teaching Africans to read was so that they could read the Bible.

The mission station became the center from which the four did outreach. Eventually the BICC had a mission station at Mtshabezi, which was founded as a refugee center for girls who were fleeing arranged marriages and as a school for those who could not walk all the way to Matopo. Many preaching points also became schools.

As learning took place, a need to minister to souls and physical bodies became obvious. Health centers were established, and today the BICC has two hospitals and a number of clinics



Students at the Matopo Mission Primary School in August 2002. Matopo was the site of the first mission outpost for the Brethren in Christ missionaries from North America who arrived in 1898.

in Zimbabwe. These health centers are serving their communities as the country battles with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other illnesses. The BICC AIDS project is administered from one of these centers.

There are farms that grow vegetables and keep animals. Book rooms also developed to make Bibles and stationery available to support schools. These book rooms compete well with others in the country. Many developments and ministries resulted from church planting, but the greatest thrust was and still is education and evangelism.

In August 1998, the BICC in Zimbabwe celebrated 100 years. They launched a book, *Celebrating the Vision*, which tells that story. That book is partly a reminder of the wealth of

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human resources that have come from the work of the BICC. Many leaders and professional people who are having a positive impact on Zimbabwe today came through the church's institutions.

Six nationally chosen bishops have led the church. Many women with special gifts are active in the church, and some wives of pastors do get the chance to be in leadership. Some do pastoral work, but the church has not ordained any of them even if they have gone through training at a Bible institute. During the war of liberation, when many men fled from rural to urban centers, it was the women who kept the rural congregations alive and provided leadership.

When women have their Thursday

afternoon meetings, and during their Women's General Conferences, they minister to each other in powerful ways. Among the women are some of the greatest prayer warriors the church has had. A woman, Ethel Sibanda, is leading the prayer team for the 2003 Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Zimbabwe. In the fight against HIV/AIDS, it is generally women who give their time to serve as home-based care givers to the sick.

The church has organized men's meetings and the men, too, have a men's conference once a year. Youth, an arm of the church, have their own youth director and enjoy lots of activities at congregational, district, and national levels.

The structure that the church inher-

ited from the missionaries is still in place. The General Conference, made up of representatives from congregations who meet once a year for five days of worship and business, is the governing body. During the rest of the year, the Executive Board governs. Representatives from the six church districts and overseers who look after the spiritual life of the church make up the board. The bishop presides over the board and works through the overseers. Under them come the pastors, deacons, lay preachers, and then the local congregation.

A visitor to Zimbabwe on any Sunday morning would find BICC members at worship services throughout the country. Men, women, youth, and children all worship and learn together with church-related activities attracting more and more worshipers. In urban areas, most church buildings are full, with children sitting on the floor and some members standing because of lack of space. In rural settings, the size of congregations varies depending on the locality.

Worship style has changed from conservative to moderate, embracing a bit of a Pentecostal style but not in such full force that it would turn off the more conservative members.

The peace stand is enshrined in our doctrine, and we are working to give it more visibility.

The BICC in Zimbabwe has many challenges ahead. It is still reaching out to the lost and sharing the gospel.

Today there are 290 congregations. As part of its five-year goals, the church plans to plant 40 more congregations.

In 1998, part of our centennial celebration was to send a missionary to plant a church in Botswana; that effort

A popular tourist attraction in southern Africa are the unique rock formations at Matopo. It was here that the Brethren in Christ established the first mission station in Zimbabwe in the late 1800s.

has borne fruit. The church is teaching its members to be responsible in the use of resources and to be self-sufficient in caring for its workers. It has also intensified its discipleship program.

When the missionaries left and nationals took over leadership, the church faced bankruptcy because money was no longer coming from the mother church. This crisis challenged the Zimbabwe BIC church to examine its giving patterns and to restructure its financial management policies. The church is doing much better now in supporting its workers and sustaining its programs.

As education has always been part of our ministry, the church has plans to start a university at Matopo Mission, where it all began when the first missionaries arrived. Former students are taking up the challenge to make this dream come true. Turning a secondary school into a boarding school in the Phumula District is also serving the church in that area.

The “go ye” message of Jesus is still as valid as it was 100 years ago. Now instead of a small team of missionaries, a multitude of nationals in Zimbabwe who have heard the message are taking up the challenge to reach others.

Doris Dube and her husband, Jethro, are co-country representatives for Mennonite Central Committee in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She serves as Africa editor for Courier / Correo / Courrier and is one of the authors of Celebrating the Vision, the history of the Zimbabwe BICC.

Zimbabwe BICC growth in 2002

Baptized members, 2001	27,961
Increase by baptism	1,274
Increase by return to church fellowship	63
Increase by transfer from other denominations	39
Subtotal	29,437
Decrease by death, dismissal, resignation	224
Baptized members, 2002	29,218





by Sanelisiwe Dube

The beauty of Africa

Picture this: 1848—Matabele Territory, Kwa, Bulawayo. It is “inxwala,” the festival of the first fruits, and a beehive of activity at the heart of the king’s kraal is evidence of the excitement in the midst of the Ndebele people. The sound of drums beating can be heard echoing in the surrounding hill land, and the king approvingly looks on as a group of young, well brought up girls raise the dust to the heavens in a passionate dance! They stamp their feet energetically, all the while baring white-toothed smiles to the world. On the side lines the young men watch in admiration while clapping their hands with equal enthusiasm. This is a scene of joy, a scene of tranquility. This is Africa!

The scourge of poverty, underdevelopment, civil wars, and ethnic disputes has led to Africa being labeled, “The dark continent.” While other countries develop technologically, Africa seemingly remains at a stand still.

With over 70% of her countries considered Third World, many have given up the hope of ever seeing any beauty in this land. And yet, beauty does not only lie in advancements; sometimes it’s in what others choose to ignore. Under-development has given Africa the advantage of retaining much of her natural beauty.

For example, in the north, the sun rises over a serene African jungle. Its rays reflect orange on the surface of a lake, where numerous creatures—from the rock lizard to the giraffe—rise with the sun. These creatures represent the wealth of Africa in the beauty of its nature.

- From the mist-covered Drakensburg mountain range to the stunning pyramids;
 - From the East African Rift Valley to the rolling hills in the Matopos;
 - From the captivating Lake of Stars in Malawi to the rumbling smoke that thunders along the Zambezi River;
- Africa is beauty embodied!

Did you know that Africa is considered to be a continent with rich cultural background? To me, culture refers to the

preservation of identity and the education on much needed morals. As a child, I was often told that, “Don’t play on the road, or you’ll be cursed with blisters” or “Make sure you wash behind your ears because if you don’t so much dirt will accumulate there that a garden of carrots will sprout on them!”

While none of this was true, these sayings did educate me on the importance of certain factors in everyday life.

Culture shapes who we are and what we become. Africa is blessed in being able to maintain its culture. It is this culture that has ensured that those suffering from HIV and AIDS are taken care of. In African culture it is almost taboo to permanently hospitalize the sick. As a result, they are kept and cared for in the home. This means that over the years, many in Africa have been educated on the basics of home-based care while also learning about the risks and dangers of this deadly disease. Isn’t this a beauty indeed?

The poet Keats wrote, “A thing of beauty is a joy forever, its loveliness increases, it will never pass into nothingness.” This expression is so true of Africa. Africa may be torn apart by civil wars, underdevelopment, and sickness. But there is a way around this. We need to teach ourselves to look beyond misery to hope and beauty. For Africa is beautiful. Viva Africa!

Sanelisiwe Dube, 17, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, wrote this essay and recited it to the MWC Executive Committee and staff during a festive celebration at the conclusion of six days of meetings in Bulawayo in August 2002. Sanelisiwe is the daughter of Jethro and Doris Dube, who serve as Mennonite Central Committee co-directors in Zimbabwe.



Mennonite-Catholic international dialogues aim to bring understanding and reconciliation

Akron, Pennsylvania, USA—“Memory and Reconciliation” was the theme for a day of reflection when the fifth in a series of Mennonite-Catholic international dialogues took place here last October.

Co-sponsored by Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the dialogues began in 1998. They have been held annually since and participants are working toward issuing a final report in 2003. Helmut Harder (Mennonite, Canada) and Bishop Joseph Martino (Catholic, USA) are co-chairs.

The general purpose of the dialogues is to promote better understanding of positions about Christian faith held on each side and to contribute to overcoming prejudices that have existed since the sixteenth century between Mennonites and Catholics.

With this objective in

mind, the fifth session worked toward developing a final report of the dialogue. This report will describe (1) the nature and the purpose of the dialogue; (2) the results of the discussion on different interpretations of church history; (3) future considerations of more contemporary theological themes, such as the nature of the church, sacraments and ordinances, and mutual commitment to peace; and (4) issues related to the healing of memories between the Catholic Church and Mennonites.

This fifth dialogue was held at the headquarters of Mennonite Central Committee in Akron, Pennsylvania, USA. On Sunday, October 27, the joint delegation attended the worship service of the Akron Mennonite Church, where they were warmly welcomed. After the service, a number

of the congregation's members met with the delegation to talk about the dialogues. The delegation also visited area Amish and Mennonite communities to become better acquainted with the contemporary life of these churches.

A further meeting aimed at completing work on the dialogue's final report is scheduled for March 2003, in Strasbourg, France.

Other Mennonite participants in addition to Helmut Harder included: Neal Blough (France), Howard J. Loewen (USA), Nzash U. Lumeya (USA / Congo), Mario Higueros (Guatemala), Andrea Lange (Germany) and MWC executive secretary Larry Miller (France) who also serves as co-secretary for the dialogues. Catholic participants come from Kenya, The Netherlands, Italy, and the USA.



Mesach Krisetya, Indonesia, is current president of MWC.

Krisetya challenges churches to turn warship to worship

Strasbourg, France—Mesach Krisetya, president of Mennonite World Conference, challenged Mennonites in the Lancaster, Pennsylvania (USA), area to “turn your warship into worship (transformed by God)” during a week of missions and spiritual renewal meetings for five congregations in the Melling district.

Krisetya, from Indonesia, preached nine sermons from November 3 to 10. Inviting Krisetya to speak was an attempt to broaden people's views of Mennonites in the world, according to Paul M. Zehr, bishop of the district.

Krisetya challenged the 700 attendees to give more attention to peacemaking and less to the United States economic and military machine. More than \$2,000 was contributed to Mennonite World Conference by the five congregations meeting together for a joint service on Sunday morning.

Ethiopian conference on the Holy Spirit in mission to precede MWC's global assembly in Zimbabwe

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia—Mennonites and Brethren in Christ traveling to MWC's 14th assembly in Zimbabwe this August are invited to consider putting Ethiopia on their itinerary July 31-August 3 to attend a conference on “The Holy Spirit in Mission: the Acts of the Holy Spirit in Anabaptist Churches Today.”

Sponsored by the International Missions Association and the Meserete Kristos Church of Ethiopia, the gathering will focus on the signs of the Spirit's work in

Ethiopia, a country that has experienced explosive church growth during times of persecution. Today this country has one of the fastest-growing Anabaptist communities in the world.

Conference participants will meet courageous Ethiopian Christians and worship and fellowship with other Anabaptists. They will join in praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on MWC and on Anabaptist churches around the world.

Registration for the conference (\$100US) covers three meals (Wednesday is a day of fasting), breaks, and

transportation to and from the airport and to and from the conference sessions. Participants are responsible to arrange travel to and lodging in Ethiopia.

More information and registration details are available by calling 1-717-492-9534 or via email at growingleaders@earthlink.net

The International Missions Association is made up of representatives of mission agencies on five continents associated with Eastern Mennonite Missions, Salunga, Pennsylvania, USA.

Latin American consultation focuses on leadership style

Club Campestre Teotihuacán, Mexico—The Evangelical Anabaptist Mennonite churches in Mexico hosted the 6th Latin American Anabaptist Consultation October 9-12, 2002. A significant change for this consultation was the participation of youth.

The discussion during the three-day event focused on Anabaptist leadership in Latin America. Participants agreed that the Anabaptist model of leadership has been thoroughly analyzed in Latin America. Now it is time to put this style of leadership into practice in the context of globalization and neoliberalism. The leadership style of these forces aims at ostentation, self-promotion, and success. By contrast, an Anabaptist style of leadership teaches faithful discipleship and the simple lifestyle exemplified by Jesus.

Women should get more space in the church for the development of their leadership gifts, participants agreed. Women exercise ministerial leadership in a few Latin American countries, but they are rarely appointed to conference leadership positions. Recognizing and promoting the equality and complementary qualities of men and women is fundamental in discerning the most appropriate ways to

More violence against Christians in Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia—Christians in this country continue to be the targets of violent acts. On December 29, 2002, a Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) in Mekele was looted and burned. All property was destroyed and a member in the church compound severely beaten. This

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make God's work known in a world growing more chaotic.

Consultation participants also discussed the place of youth in the church and the leadership gifts of the new generation. They noted that young people are eager for the opportunity to serve the Lord and the church.

The consultation also focused on spirituality. Participants noted that spirituality is often seen as piety, devotion, or withdrawal from the world. Instead, spirituality needs to be seen as the healing of soul and body as well as the healing of human and social relationships. Biblical spirituality is to live within the material world in situations that

Indonesian Mennonites join interfaith call for peace

Solo, Central Java—An estimated 2,500 people sat in the pavilion at the Sultan's Palace here on Sunday, January 12, for an inter-religious peace rally. Dressed in matching T-shirts, they declared 2003 as the year of the "Peoplehood of Peace."

Paulus Hartono, a GKMI (Mennonite) pastor, who leads a small congregation in the city, played a key role in the interfaith committee that organized the gathering.

Solo has been the scene of inter-religious, inter-ethnic and economic tensions in the past years. Amid threats of

war and violence, the committee spent many hours networking and organizing the large rally. In addition to Mennonites, Catholics and other Christians, the forum included members of the Muslim, Confucian, Hindu and Buddhist religions, the organization of university students, and the palace of Surakarta.

At the rally, enthusiastic applause interrupted a peace oration by Mesach Kristeya, MWC president, five times. Then Mennonite lay people, Muslim teens, Chinese business people, and Catholic nuns joined hands across the pavilion to declare 2003 as the year of peace.

The T-shirts, provided by the Mennonite community with assistance from Mennonite Central Committee, became a uniting symbol. As people in matching shirts came from across the city, they could easily identify others heading



Part of one of several discussion groups during the 6th Latin American Anabaptist Consultation held in Mexico in October.

demand practical answers, encouraged by the Spirit.

Consultation speakers were Ricardo Esquivia (Colombia), Ofelia García (Mexico), Juan Martínez (USA), Fernando Pérez

(Mexico), and Olga Piedrasanta (Guatemala).

The 7th Latin American Anabaptist Consultation will be held in Costa Rica in 2005.—*Fernando Pérez Ventura, Mexico*

in the same direction.

Solo is one of two cultural centers of Central Java. In recent years, 12 outbreaks of violence have left the city scared.—*Dan and Jeanne Jantzi, Indonesia*

Four join MWC staff

Strasbourg, France—MWC's staff has increased by four to help with Assembly 14.

Sihle M. Moyo, formerly part of the BIC youth office in Zimbabwe, began full-time work as an administrative assistant in MWC's Bulawayo, office July 1.

Ken and Marilyn Langeman, Manitoba, Canada, joined the MWC off in Bulawayo in August. They are being seconded to MWC by Mennonite Central Committee.

Tom Frank, Connecticut, USA, is a new volunteer securing funds for MWC. Tom is a former executive with Procter & Gamble and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Dutch Mennonites affirm Africa 2003 participation

Elspeet, The Netherlands—The Dutch Mennonite Conference will take part in the Mennonite World Conference assembly, scheduled to be held in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, August 11-17, 2003. At the biannual meeting of its highest decision-making body last November, representatives from 90 congregations approved the action.

Official support for attending the assembly in Zimbabwe had been in some doubt. Chief concern was whether going to Zimbabwe would be seen as support for a government that violates human rights.

The Dutch also questioned if they could speak out on their concerns while in Zimbabwe without endangering their hosts, said Henk Stenvers, general secretary of the Mennonite Church in the Netherlands.

Church leaders invited MWC to send an officer to the Elspeet meeting. Ray Brubacher, associate secretary, attended.

“Ray showed us that MWC takes [our] concerns seriously and how carefully MWC monitors the situation in Zimbabwe,” said Stenvers. “The disappointment of the hosts if we would not accept their invitation was also important in the decision.”

Brubacher explained that MWC’s

MWC executive secretary, Larry Miller (left), with Dothan Moyo, Africa 2003 national coordinator in Zimbabwe.



Street scene from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, planned venue for Assembly Gathered August 11-17.

presence as a church gathering, not a political one, should not be construed as endorsing Mugabe’s government. Even though Westerners are free to criticize the government in their own country, he advised that it is important for internationals “to behave as guests” while in Zimbabwe.

Preparing for Africa 2003

From congregations around the globe come reports of activities to prepare for MWC’s 14th assembly and make it possible for others to attend:

- In Fresno, California, USA, after learning that, for every \$43 raised, someone from the global South could attend, children at College Community Mennonite Brethren’s vacation Bible school raised \$793US for Africa 2003;
- *Die Brücke*, a bi-monthly publication of the two main Mennonite conferences in Germany, is donating 10% of subscription revenue for 2002 and 2003 to the MWC Travel Fun;
- Harrisonburg (Virginia, USA) Mennonite Church plans to send its pastor, Beryl Jantzi, to Africa 2003. The congregation is also funding registration and travel for Efrain Hernandez Marengo of Managua, Nicaragua, pastor of the Santa Rosa Brethren in Christ church. The two congregations have had a “sister” relationship for the past several years.

Mennonite congregations in profile:

Choele Choele churches of Argentina

Choele Choele, Argentina, is a city with a population of 15,000, situated by the Rio Negro. Across the river is the 35,000-hectare island of Choele Choele, most of it irrigated with a system of channels. All kinds of vegetables, fruits, and pastures are cultivated in this rural area.

Several churches have sprung up on this island through contacts established over the years. In 1969, Floyd and Alicia Sieber, with son Juan, arrived in the Rio Negro Valley to begin the first Mennonite missionary enterprise in southern Argentina. The Evangelical Mennonite Church in Argentina and Mennonite Board of Missions, USA, jointly sponsored the Siebers.

Growth in the first years was limited. Then in 1972 the Sieber family experienced for the first time the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This experience—reforming and radical—restored in them the concept of submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ, the use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the call to make disciples. This was the beginning of new life for the Siebers and the church.

Today the church is led by a pastoral team of five, a council of elders, and the leaders of different church ministries. Membership is mostly families. Several members hold university degrees in medicine, engineering, and law.

Some 200 children, 70 teenagers, and 70 young adults attend Sunday schools. Almost all young people and some teenagers are serving the Lord in different ministries.

Five years ago the Lord moved the church to decentralize its ministries and plant groups in different neighborhoods. Now there are four congregations in different areas. All meet in the main building every Sunday evening, and then during the week hold other activi-

Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy
Africa 2003 theme

ties in various the Choele neighborhoods.

Worship services are quite informal. They consist of an extended period of praise and adoration, including public prayer, intercession for healing and liberation, according to the leading of the Spirit. Preaching and teaching based on the Word of God take preeminence.

Mutual help and care of the needy abound in the church. The congregation considers social work as a natural, integral part of preaching the gospel.

A missionary call to go to the surrounding areas has led people who met the Lord in the Choele Choel congregation to start new faith communities in towns in Valle Medio.

The church runs a Bible Institute with more than 100 students. With



José E. Rodríguez

Young people join in singing during a Sunday morning worship service at the Choele Choel Mennonite Church.

other churches in the area, it is involved in what is called the Patagonic Missionary Project (PMP). The cooperative work has already sent eight missionaries to different parts of Patagonia and to Valdivia, Chile.

Seven students from the congregation are at the Intensive Missionary Seminary in Choele Choel this year getting ready to go to the mission field. Many others are being trained for ministries at local churches and as missionaries. There is much enthusiasm in churches about taking part in God's work in the world.

In 1995, the congregation began a partnership with a group of brothers and sisters in Illinois (USA). It has been a beneficial relationship for the Choele Choel congregation. Through the years the groups have exchanged both material and spiritual resources.

What started out as a small endeavor more than 30 years ago has developed into a thriving group of disciples to the glory of God. Maranatha! —*Juan Sieber*

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A call to prayer

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise.—James 5:13

- Conflict goes on in Colombia. Pray for peace there along with social justice, freedom, and well being for all. Pray that there may be negotiations that lead to the construction of a new country.
- The Sixth Latin American Anabaptist Consultation in 2002 marked the beginning of a new style of reflection for Latin Americans. Pray that faith and hope may continue to be strengthened amidst gloomy events.
- Christians continue to be targets of violent acts in Ethiopia, where Muslim and Eastern Orthodox religions are dominant. On December 29, 2002, a Meserete Kristos (Mennonite) Church (MKC) in Mekele was looted and burned. Pray for the MKC's evangelistic and mission efforts in this difficult time of opposition.
- Pray for the leaders and followers of the different faiths in Indonesia that, instead of hating, fighting and killing each other, they may direct their efforts against the common enemies, of injustice, ignorance and poverty.
- Thank God that the good news is being made known to the people of India. A reporter from there says, "Pray for the non-Christians more than for the Christians." Since Pentecost, there has been conflict between the people of the New Spirit and people of the old spirit, who are not our enemies, he says. The people of India need the concern and goodwill of all Christians.
- Pray for Iraq and world leaders considering war there. "We pray for peace and for your people," said John Rempel to a dejected Iraqi diplomat as he left the MCC UN Office in New York City. "That is the only thing that can help. Only God can save us from war," the Iraqi official replied.
- Pray that God's Spirit will guide the preparation for the global community to gather next August. A Mennonite Brethren Church in Fresno, California (USA) reminds us: "Woza! Zimbabweans are inviting us to come. God longs for Christians around the world to impact each other's worship, mission, and lifestyle."

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'Dear God, please surprise me!'

by Milka Rindzinski

Beatriz Barrios, senior pastor of La Floresta Mennonite Church in Montevideo, Uruguay, had a prayer: "Dear God, please surprise me!" she prayed. Then an email arrived from her friend, Anna Kauffman, asking Beatriz if she would like to attend the Mennonite World Conference Assembly 14 in Africa. Anna, a former missionary to Uruguay, now retired in the USA, had planned to go. However, health problems made such a long trip inadvisable. She therefore decided to cover all of Bea's expenses, including some money to buy presents for her hosts in Bulawayo.

So last August, Beatriz wrote to the MWC Executive Committee: "The Lord has known my heart's desire to visit the African continent and to attend a worldwide meeting, my first one. ... I hope to meet some of you personally. I always see your faces in *Correo*. God bless you!"

Beatriz's surprise from God is just one example of what is happening in the La Floresta congregation. For years we were just a handful of faithful brothers and sisters. While we wanted to be a light on a hill, people around us didn't seem to have material or spiritual needs. Life for them went by quite smoothly. But we persevered, prayed, and hoped.

Then the situation in our country began to deteriorate. With it God had a surprise for our small congregation. Somebody dreamed that there were no empty seats in our building for Sunday worship. It was a vision. We were expectant. Soon, by ones, twos, and whole families, people started to come. We kept unfolding more chairs.

Our services have become happy celebrations. Our youth help lead worship with guitars and percussion and are eager to learn. They come with questions and ideas. Their parents

and other adults find at La Floresta a space to express their frustrations and their anger—sometimes at each other. We face the conflicts when they appear. The church is becoming a school for Christian life. Our building is used almost every day for different activities. What a delightful surprise!

Our pastoral team has its hands full now. Growth brings challenges. We are going through a process of healing and discipling. The congregation needs to mature to be able to serve more people in a better way and to be able to model what we proclaim. As new people arrive, we need to discern gifts and how to put them to use for the advancement of God's kingdom. We still have much more room. We can open up folding walls. But we do not need to yet.

We are also aware that we belong to a family of churches with a vision and a call. Reports coming from our brothers and sisters in Colombia, in Africa, and elsewhere, edify us and move us to intercessory prayer, often to tears.

La Floresta, like other Mennonite churches in Uruguay, has its eyes fixed on Africa 2003. We are thankful we can help send delegates to MWC's Global Youth Summit and to the General Council. And we have dreams. We want to begin as soon as possible an exchange of our gifts, South-to-South.

Beatriz has sent in her registration for Africa 2003. It is her response to God's surprise through her friend Anna.

*Milka Rindzinski, Montivedeo, Uruguay,
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