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Juan Francisco Martínez makes a point during discussion following his presentation to a symposium on Anabaptist-Pentecostal relationships at the recent MWC General Council sessions.

Cover—Tea time during the MWC General Council sessions in Pasadena, California, USA, March 7-15, 2006: Barbara Hege-Galle, Germany, talks with Matiku Thomas Nyitambe, newly elected Executive Committee member from Tanzania. Between them in the background is Paulus Hartono of Indonesia, whose entry into the United States was delayed because of mistaken identity (see page 7).

Photo by Markus Rediger

When Anabaptists relate to Pentecostals

by Juan Francisco Martínez

Editor's note: Pentecostalism's roots are in Southern California, where the movement began in 1906. In recognition of this 100th anniversary, while meeting in the area where Pentecostalism began, MWC's General Council spent two sessions talking with Pentecostal leaders on the relationship between the two groups around the world. This article is adapted from a presentation during that dialogue.

For some Anabaptists, Pentecostalism is a completely separate movement with which they have little regular encounter. The two movements are seen as being mutually exclusive. Pentecostals are either outside of these Anabaptists' experience or people with whom they only relate outside the life of their own congregations.

In other words, Pentecostals are merely one of many Christian denominations with whom one might relate at some point.

Other Anabaptists have had negative experiences with Pentecostals or charismatics. Some Pentecostal preachers have publicly accused Anabaptists of not having the Holy Spirit. Others have actively sought to draw people out of Anabaptist churches. These actions have divided churches and created a great deal of pain. These Anabaptists see Pentecostals as people in direct competition who are making the ministry of

Anabaptists much more difficult.

Then there are the Anabaptists who have found that Pentecostalism or a charismatic experience strengthens their commitment to Anabaptist theology. They have found that they can bring together their Pentecostal or charismatic experiences and their commitment to an Anabaptist understanding of their faith. These people made peace with Pentecostalism by incorporating it into their understanding of what it means to be an Anabaptist. These people are intentionally Anabaptist and joyfully charismatic.

This variety among Anabaptists and their relationships to Pentecostals has been carried into the mission field. There have been missionaries sent by Anabaptist mission agencies who have recruited Pentecostal pastors or have incorporated Pentecostal churches into their midst without much formation in Anabaptist theology. These pastors and congregations have become part of Anabaptist conferences assuming that they did not have to make any significant doctrinal changes. Some people in the pew even assume that Mennonites are another Pentecostal denomination.

There are also people who are part of Anabaptist churches who have had strong charismatic experiences and who conclude that Anabaptist distinctives are no longer crucial in light of their new experiences. Members with this perspective might view Anabaptist-Pentecostal relationships as a conversa-

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tion among likeminded people or as an opportunity to help other Anabaptists understand the importance of their Pentecostal or charismatic experiences.

A particularly painful part of the modern Anabaptist experience with Pentecostals has been the loss of individuals, churches, or even groups of churches to charismatic movements. The people who have left have done so voluntarily, but those who have stayed have experienced a great deal of pain in these experiences. The movement of people between Anabaptism and Pentecostalism has almost always been in only one direction.

In light of these varied experiences, what are some of the issues for both groups as we relate to each other in the future?

Issues for Anabaptists: In Harold Bender's vision of the 16th century Anabaptist movement, the more "Pentecostal" of the early Anabaptists were not considered part of the Anabaptist core. These more spiritualist and fiery preachers did not fit into Bender's definition of Anabaptism. Though this has changed as Anabaptist scholarship has developed, I would argue that the more "Pentecostal" or "charismatic" of our 16th century forbearers have not been fully incorporated in the broader vision of an Anabaptist identity for today.

New relationships with Pentecostals will be an important opportunity to recognize how charismatic our own history is. As John Driver reminds us in *Radical Faith*, 16th century Anabaptism was a spiritual renewal movement of which there have been many in the history of the church.

Pentecostalism is a newer manifestation of this movement. Our stories are much more linked than either one of our movements may be ready to admit.

Anabaptists also need to recognize that our spiritual forbearers struggled with the relationship between Spirit and Word, strongly opting for Word within a couple of generations. Dialoguing with Pentecostals will likely invite us to reconsider the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of our congregations. It will also help us recognize the Spirit's role in such crucial Anabaptist distinctives as our peace commitment,

social justice, service alongside the poor, prophetic witness, and similar issues.

Anabaptists have often been called the "quiet in the land" for several different reasons. One of them has been the inability for many to clearly define a mission of proclamation in the world or to clearly identify how one does evangelism and mission from a distinctively Anabaptist perspective.

Dialoguing with Pentecostals will give Anabaptists the opportunity to think about mission. On the one hand, Pentecostal evangelistic fervor tends to be contagious. We will likely become more enthused about our sense of mission as we relate to a movement that freely shares its faith.

But it will also be an opportunity to recognize the contributions that Anabaptists can make to others. Many Pentecostals and charismatics desire to understand how to be a church that addresses issues of peace and justice. In other words, they want to practice holistic mission. Even as some Anabaptists see their theology as an impediment to effective mission, many Christians are looking to Anabaptist theology as a model for being a church in mission in the world.

Issues for Pentecostals.

Anabaptists are a very small movement, and Pentecostals are overwhelming in size. We have not had much impact on them. There are few points of encounter between our movements and the places where Anabaptists are relatively strong.

Yet it might help Pentecostalism to reflect on the fact that they also began as a counter-cultural community with pacifistic tendencies and a simple lifestyle. But as their social situation improved, they have tended to lose sight of this crucial part of their beginnings. Talking to Anabaptists might bring Pentecostals an opportunity to reconnect to this part of their heritage.

Even as some Pentecostals have been learning from liberation theology about having a prophetic witness in the world, they might also learn from Anabaptists about being that

intentional community that lives out its faith together as a witness to God's work in the world.

Pentecostal churches among the poor might also be able to learn from the Anabaptist practice of church as community, one that speaks prophetically in the world

The Anabaptist understanding of the role of community in reading and interpreting Scripture might also be a useful tool for Pentecostals. Anabaptists solved the Spirit-Word tension, in part, through a community based hermeneutic, something Pentecostals might want to consider as they relate to us.

Both Anabaptism and Pentecostalism began as renewal movements. Each sought to recover a sense of the radical faith presented in the New Testament. As John Driver puts it in *Radical Faith*, "All these movements were inspired to a larger or lesser extent in the vision and expectation of the kingdom of God. Since the early centuries to our time, the biblical vision of God's reign has determined their mission agenda. This legacy continues to exist in communities committed to evangelize and serve those who are the most deprived: drug addicts and lawbreakers, the hopeless, the marginalized and displaced in the large cities, the refugees and the immigrant, the victims of oppression."

For Jesus, these ideas were a mission: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come" (Luke 4:18-19, NIV).

May this declaration guide both Anabaptists and Pentecostals as we relate, dialogue, and learn from each other.

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Rejoicing, mourning, and worship combine with business at MWC's General Council sessions in Pasadena, California

Pasadena, California, USA—Encouragement for those who endure persecution. The first official summary of beliefs shared by Anabaptists around the world. An African woman's plea for equality with men. Setting a goal to do peace work with Catholics.

These were among the highlights when some 240 Mennonites and Brethren in Christ from 44 countries gathered March 9-15, 2006,

to nurture the global Anabaptist movement.

They came for Mennonite World Conference's General Council, a meeting held once every three years to foster unity and cooperation among more than a million Anabaptist members worldwide. The General Council is also the governing body of MWC.

"When the global church gathers, we rejoice and we mourn," said Larry Miller of France, MWC executive secretary, at a worship service at William Carey International University, site of the two-week gathering.

Participants from the Los Angeles area's ethnically diverse Anabaptist churches swelled the crowd to about 600 on Sunday, March 12.

Timotius Katrisno, Indonesia, reacts to a plenary discussion by showing a card. General Council session made decisions by consensus, with delegates showing orange cards for agreement or approval and blue cards for disagreement or if they had questions.

Reasons to rejoice included the testimony of Vietnamese leader Hien Tri Truong, who told of Mennonites' perseverance amid religious repression and the release of six imprisoned church members—the last on March 2 after two years in jail (see page 17).

"Although at times it seemed the church would be scattered, through the grace and mercy of God the church stands firm," Truong said.

CPT death. Mourning followed word of the death of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) worker Tom Fox, whose body was found in Iraq on March 9. MWC member churches in North America are among CPT's

staunchest supporters. Council delegates also noted that CPT began after an address by Ron Sider on peacemaking to an MWC assembly in 1984.

Fox, a Quaker, was the first to lose his life to violence in CPT's 20-year history. His death was "a reminder of the costliness of following the gospel of peace," said Jeff Wright, head of the Center for Anabaptist Leadership, hosts for the council gathering. Wright made his remarks at the March 12 worship service.

Encouragement for persecuted believers continued the next day with prayer for Bishop Lesly Bertrand and the Grace Assembly Network of churches he leads in Haiti.

Below: Pastor Makinto of the Center for Anabaptist Leadership, hosts for the two-week gathering, was in charge of worship services. These featured music groups and speakers from Anabaptist ethnic groups in the Los Angeles and surrounding areas.

This issue of *Courier / Correo / Courier*, focuses on MWC's General Council sessions in Pasadena, California, USA, March 7-15, 2006.

Meeting every three years, the General Council is made up of representatives from each of MWC's member churches. A total of 97 delegates from 43 countries were at the Pasadena meetings. Fifteen could not attend because they were denied visas (see page 7).

The General Council also functions as a Peace Council and a Faith and Life Council, for which we've included separate reports. In addition, MWC, in cooperation with Mennonite Central Committee, co-sponsored a consultation on service immediately prior to the General Council sessions. A total of

240 participated in one or more of these events, making it the largest MWC gathering ever in relation to a General Council meeting, according to MWC executive secretary Larry Miller.

Writers for these reports include Ferne Burkhardt, Ron Byler, Elina Ciptadi, and Phyllis Pellman Good. Photos are by Alex Miller, Eleanor Miller, Lisa Unger, Wilhelm Unger, Markus Rediger, and J. Lorne Peachey.

Special thanks to Paul Schrag of Mennonite Weekly Review and Everett J. Thomas of *The Mennonite*, for permission to use excerpts from their reports for *Meetinghouse*, a consortium of North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ publications.—Editor



Bertrand told of his escape from death February 18 when 12 armed bandits opened fire in a church in Croix-des-Bouquets, killing one worshiper and wounding four. He described the attack as politically motivated.

Bertrand's network of 27 congregations has formed a partnership with Franconia Conference of Mennonite Church USA. He plans to apply for Grace Assembly to become one of MWC's member conferences.

General Council delegates prayed for Truong and Bertrand and the Vietnamese and Haitian believers they represent—two examples of MWC efforts to support churches in suffering.

Shared Convictions.

In an historic action, the council approved a statement of shared convictions to give members around the world a clearer picture of beliefs Anabaptists hold in common (see separate story on page 9).

Council also heard reports of a five-year series of dialogues between MWC repre-

Concepción Villeda Recinos from Guatemala shares her views during one of numerous floor discussions during the two-week event.

sentatives and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Catholic Church. Afterwards they endorsed several new initiatives with the Catholic Church.

One goal is to start joint peacemaking efforts. If the Catholic Church is receptive to the idea, Anabaptists and Catholics would propose "a concrete plan of action for a specific situation of conflict that would demonstrate the existence of viable and practical alternatives to military action."

Preferably, this would happen in a place where violence affects both Anabaptists and Catholics, such as Congo or Colombia.

Also in 2007, MWC will organize a delegation to visit Rome, at the invitation of the Pontifical Council. Then, in 2008 and '09, MWC and the Pontifical Council would organize two consultations



"in regions of the world where Mennonites and Catholics encounter each other in significant and perhaps problematic ways."

Equality for women.

During the sessions, various delegates told of their experiences in being church in their home countries. One of these was Rebecca Osiro of

Kenya, who gave a calm but passionate call for the acceptance of women as equals with men in African churches.

Representing the African Mennonite Women Theologians group, Osiro called for removing barriers that reserve pastoral roles for men and that prevent

(continued on page 6)



Far left: Rick Derksen, Juan José Romero, Max Wiedmer, and Markus Rediger during a General Council discussion.

Left: Hien Tri Truong, secretary of the Vietnamese Mennonite Church (right) with interpreter Don Sensenig. In his testimony to the General Council, Truong said he believes he would have been the seventh Mennonite leader imprisoned in Vietnam had he not escaped from his country. He is currently living in the United States.

Rejoicing, mourning

(continued from page 5)

women from using all their gifts in ministry.

"We are ready to be by your side as co-workers in the field," she said. "Even in abject disillusionment, we have hands by which Jesus can lift us up."

Osiro praised the Mennonite Brethren in Congo for ordaining a woman, Kadi Hayalume, in 2004. She said she hoped more ordinations of women would follow.

Paraguayan representatives encouraged council members to promote attendance at the next MWC assembly in Paraguay in July 2009.

"The presence of the global Anabaptist family will



General Council plenary sessions were interpreted simultaneously into three languages—English, Spanish, French—and occasionally into Portuguese. Above, left, Alvin Neufeld of Paraguay listens in on the Spanish interpretation. Right: Jessica Alampay Lozano was one of 36 interpreters who worked throughout the General Council and AMIGOS sessions.

have a favorable impact on the country and also a positive influence on our churches," said Alfred Neufeld Friesen of Paraguay.

In other business, the council:

- Approved a program plan for 2006-09, which includes a goal to "shift a

significant part of MWC's administrative capacity to the global South" by opening a regional office in Africa or Asia. "We think it is imperative that MWC not have all its offices in the global North," Miller said. MWC currently has offices in Strasbourg, France; Kitchener, Ontario (Canada) and Fresno, California (USA).

- Heard that the second volume of the Global Mennonite History Project, the book on Europe, will be published in June. The Africa volume came out in 2003.

- Accepted the 565-member Nepal Brethren in Christ Church Society as a full member of MWC.

- Elected Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe as MWC president-elect. He currently serves as vice president and will succeed Nancy Heisey of the United States as president in 2009.

- Appointed Larry Miller to serve as MWC executive secretary through 2012.

—Paul Schrag

General Council mourns death of CPT worker

During its sessions in Pasadena, MWC's General Council received word that Tom Fox, 54, a Quaker from Clear Brook, Va., had been found dead in Iraq after being held hostage since November. Fox was a worker with Christian Peacemaker Teams.

General Council expressed "deep grief" at Fox's death in a letter to CPT.

"We mourn with you the loss of this courageous man, whose life and words testified to the power of the nonviolent love of God in Jesus Christ," the letter said. It was signed by Nancy R. Heisey of the United States, president; Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, vice president; and Larry Miller of France, executive secretary.

The letter noted MWC's connection to CPT's beginning.

"We recall that the challenge to begin the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams was given at the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Strasbourg, France, in 1984," the MWC officials wrote.

That challenge was made in an address by Ron Sider, now president of Evangelicals for Social Action. He had called Christian peacemakers to be willing to take the same risks for peace that soldiers take in war.

CPT was founded two years later, in 1986, with the support of Mennonites and other peace churches.

The MWC letter to CPT was accompanied by handwritten notes of sympathy and support from General Council members.

The letter noted that Anabaptists around the world can identify with those

who suffer and die for their faith.

"During our gathering, we have heard other stories of sisters and brothers in other places who suffer as they share the good news of God's love and as they work for justice and peace in communities wracked by many forms of violence," the letter stated.

"Thus, many of us have in a deep, personal way experienced the mourning you now experience and share in your ongoing, profound commitment to God's way."

The council also spent time in prayer for Fox's family and for three other hostages captured at the same time as Fox.

These three were freed peacefully by the captors two weeks after the Pasadena conference.—Paul Schrag

Council frustrated when visas denied to MWC delegates

Seventeen delegates were denied visas by the United States government to attend the gathering in Pasadena. MWC leaders were clearly frustrated about these denials.

"We are struggling with the forces of globalization," MWC president Nancy Heisey said. "The economic powers that are trying to keep us apart are very strong. How can we be the church if we cannot meet together? We must renounce their efforts to keep us apart."

Before the council adopted a statement in response, Mennonite Church USA executive director Jim Schrag addressed the council on behalf of all delegates from the USA: "We apologize for our country's action," said Schrag. "We understand that our country is a giant, but it is a fearful giant."

The General Council's statement noted: "We have not received a clear explanation from United States immigration authorities as to why our delegates were refused visas. From our contacts with these authorities, we can only conclude that these are arbitrary refusals based on the unfounded fear that our delegates will attempt to settle permanently in the United States. We wish to remind these authorities that our delegates are church leaders with deep commitments and responsibilities to their families, churches, and home countries."

The statement also called for General Council members to pray for USA policy



Above: Ray Brubacher of the MWC staff prepares a visual display of empty chairs for those denied visas at the March 12 worship service. Right: This list of those denied entry into the United States was on display throughout the week.

makers, to ask for a full explanation for the denials, to invite USA churches to voice their disapproval, and to join with other Christian world communions to work at immigration issues.

—Everett J. Thomas

Those refused USA visas for Mennonite World Conference

John Adetah Tetteh	Ghana
Dick Akpan Ekerete	Nigeria
Khohlwani Moyo	Zimbabwe
Damien Pelende Tshinyama	Congo
Odon Mukashiyenu Tshimbadi	Congo
Gerard Mambakila Kabemba	Congo
Benjamin Mubenga wa Kabanga	Congo
Claude Kito Katushi	Congo
Lambertine Mumbamda Fuamba	Congo
Sidonie Swana	Congo
Abraham Freddy	Costa Rica
Sandra Compos	Costa Rica
Alfredo Siquic Acte	Guatemala
Ofelia Garcia Hernandez	Mexico
Graciela Dolores Blanquez de Quintero	Venezuela
LEON PULA	SOUTH AFRICA
TREZIAH NDLOVU	ZIMBABWE

Indonesian pastor held at airport on way to General Council

Paulus Hartono of Solo, Indonesia, was held for two hours at LAX airport in Los Angeles, California, upon his arrival for MWC's General Council on March 6.

Paulus Widjaja, also with the Indonesian delegation, explained that the U.S. government is highly suspicious of all males ages 15 to 40 from seven designated countries, of which Indonesia is one.

"When we apply for a visa

to the U.S., we must complete an extra form for that reason," Widjaja said.

Hartono filled out the form and then received his visa marked with two stars, "a warning to U.S. customs."

Widjaja said, "I went to get my luggage, but I couldn't find Paulus (Hartono). I looked all around and finally saw him in a room with a customs officer having a 'second inspection.'"

Hartono, a pastor active

in peacemaking in the tension-filled area of Solo, spoke quietly about his experience.

"Last year I was refused a visa to the U.S. So I just saw this as a new experience! It was a lot of paperwork and questions. I was treated politely," he said.

Apparently Hartono's name and finger prints were similar to someone on a list of "wanted" persons.

—Phyllis Pellman Good

Symposium concludes Anabaptists and Pentecostals can help each other

Anabaptist churches and conferences should “explore what is missing in our life as a community that makes people hungry for what they find in Pentecostal churches.”

That was one conclusion of a findings group following a symposium on “Global Anabaptism and Global

Pentecostalism: Creating Understandings.”

The symposium was part of the MWC gathering in Pasadena for the Faith and Life Council. The symposium was organized to recognize (a) that 2006 is the one hundredth anniversary of Pentecostalism, and (b)

Pentecostalism began in Southern California, also the site of the 2006 MWC event.

Symposium speakers were two Fuller Theological Seminary professors: Juan Martinez, a Mennonite Brethren; and Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., a Pentecostal.

“Our [Anabaptist] spiritual forebears struggled with the relationship between Spirit and Word,” Martinez said. “They strongly opted for Word within a couple of generations. Dialoguing with Pentecostals will likely invite us to reconsider ... the Spirit’s role in crucial Anabaptists distinctives like our peace commitment, social justice, service alongside the poor, prophetic witness, and similar issues.”

Describing Pentecostalism as a movement that emphasizes the Holy Spirit’s power to transform a believer’s life, Robeck noted that, now that they are 100 years old, Pentecostals are beginning to experience what other, older groups, like the Anabaptists, have already experienced, such as the lack of interest of their youth.

“While in a sense all Christians are Pentecostals,” he said, “we need to ask how all of us tap into the power of the Holy Spirit today.”

In discussions following, some noted that Pentecos-

talism has positively influenced global Anabaptist churches while others said the impact was not always positive.

Elina Ciptadi of Indonesia said she likes to move and shout when she worships. “I have never seen in Mennonite teaching that we only worship a certain way,” she said.

Matiku Thomas Nyitambe of Tanzania, however, noted that “a spirit of splitting up has entered our churches” as a result of Pentecostalism.

“We need to remember that the New Testament calls us to live in the path of Jesus as well as in the path of the Holy Spirit,” Martinez said at the conclusion. “I sometimes ask: What is more miraculous? To speak in tongues, or for the rich to give up their money?”

Recognizing that Pentecostalism and Anabaptism are both restorationist movements based on Acts 2 and considered radical alternatives to mainstream culture, they can benefit from each other, the findings group said.

—J. Lorne Peachey



New to the Executive Committee: General Council elected two new members to the Executive Committee at the Pasadena meetings: Matiku Thomas Nyitambe from Tanzania (left) and Elizabeth del Carmen Vado Sandoval of Nicaragua.

Matiku is a retired pastor, hospital administrator, and government employee who worked in rural development. He is the father of five. Matiku would like to see MWC strengthen its work with congregations in peacemaking.

Elizabeth is a preacher, Sunday school teacher, and the mother of two sons. She has worked in theological education, particularly with Semilla, the Latin American Anabaptist seminary. Elizabeth hopes her time on the executive will help advance the cause of leadership of women in the global church.

Matiku and Elizabeth join these continuing MWC Executive Committee members for the next three years: Nancy Heisey, USA (president); Danisa Ndlovu, Zimbabwe (vice-president & president-elect); Joshua Okello Ouma, Kenya; Markus Rediger, Switzerland; Peter Stucky, Colombia; Eddy Sutjipto, Indonesia; Thijn Thijink-van der Vlugt, the Netherlands; Naomi Unger, Canada; David Wiebe, Canada; Paul Quiring, USA (treasurer); Larry Miller, France (executive secretary).

Prayer was a vital part of the Pasadena assembly, both in formal settings—where delegates offered prayers each day for churches in difficult situations around the world—or in more informal settings such as at right.



Council adopts statement of beliefs

In a historic action, MWC's General Council approved a statement of shared convictions to give members around the world a clearer picture of beliefs Anabaptists hold in common.

This is the first statement of beliefs adopted by leaders of the global Anabaptist community.

The statement is not meant to replace conferences' official confessions of faith, according to MWC president Nancy Heisey. Instead, "groups are free to use it for theological conversations," she said. It can also be used by those who do not have a formal confession. It is also intended to help define Anabaptism to others.

The discussion of shared convictions started in 1997 in MWC's Faith and Life Council. After collecting faith statements from member churches, the council brought a first draft to the 2003 MWC assembly in Zimbabwe. Revisions were made based on responses from member churches over the past three years, leading to adoption at Pasadena.



Mennonite World Conference

A community of Anabaptist-related churches

Shared Convictions

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

1. God is known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.
2. Jesus is the Son of God. Through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples, redeemed the world, and offers eternal life.
3. As a church, we are a community of those whom God's Spirit calls to turn from sin, acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, receive baptism upon confession of faith, and follow Christ in life.
4. As a faith community, we accept the Bible as our authority for faith and life, interpreting it together under Holy Spirit guidance, in the light of Jesus Christ to discern God's will for our obedience.
5. The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life so we become peacemakers who renounce violence, love our enemies, seek justice, and share our possessions with those in need.
6. We gather regularly to worship, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and to hear the Word of God in a spirit of mutual accountability.
7. As a world-wide community of faith and life we transcend boundaries of nationality, race, class, gender and language. We seek to live in the world without conforming to the powers of evil, witnessing to God's grace by serving others, caring for creation, and inviting all people to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

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

*Adopted by Mennonite World Conference General Council
Pasadena, California, USA
March 15, 2006*



MWC's Peace Council urges churches to be a 'culture of peace'

Do visitors to Anabaptist churches realize they are entering a culture of peace? Is peace bad news? Is there a dichotomy between evangelism and peace? Can peace churches grow?

Delegates to the Pasadena 2006 meeting confronted

questions such as these in several sessions devoted to Peace Council agenda.

A new book, *A Culture of Peace: God's Vision for the Church*, by Alan Kreider, Eleanor Kreider and Paulus Widjaja, formed the basis for worship and much of the

discussion during Peace Council sessions. The book is MWC's Anabaptist / Mennonite Shelf of Literature selection for 2006.

In several Peace Council sessions, the authors traced the idea of the church as a culture of peace from Justin, a second century Christian martyr, and even earlier to the founding of the church as recorded in Acts. In the book, they write: "Pentecost brought together Jews from many parts of the ancient world (Acts 2:9-11) ... [and]

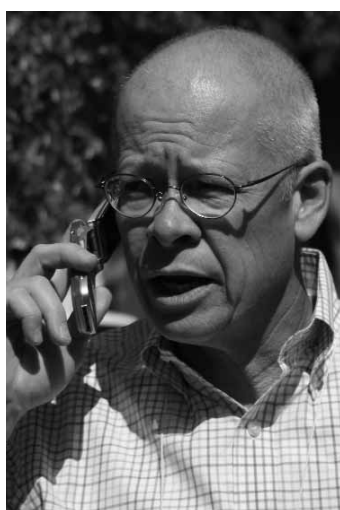
transformed the linguistic chaos of Babel (Genesis 11: 1-9) into peace and harmony."

Peter and Cornelius.

The Kreiders and Widjaja drew on the story of Peter, a Galilean Jew, and his dinner in the house of Cornelius, a Roman officer, in the pagan city of Caesarea, the headquarters of Roman power in Palestine, a dangerous city full of soldiers, violence and non-kosher food!

There Peter began to understand that God shows no partiality. This event was a breakthrough in the history of the church. It showed that God's reconciling love is not an addition to Christian faith but is its very heart. Peace is a natural part of what it means to be Christian, as

CULTURAL DIVERSITY: Latin Americans with their maté, North Americans with their cell phones—both were part of the Pasadena scene. Left: Oscar Luis Peralta Agüero, Paraguay; right: MWC treasurer, Paul Quiring, USA.





natural as a next breath.

In separate presentations, later discussed in inter-continental caucus groups, the authors spoke about peace in worship, in the workplace, and in wartime. Alan Kreider urged thinking about war in times of peace. Under the pressure of war, he said, it is hard to discern God's will, and Christians tend to think like everybody else. We need to shape our reflexes, he said, referring to the story of early Anabaptist Dirk Willems, who on impulse saved his pursuer who broke through thin ice. Willems was immediately captured by that same officer and later executed.

Among questions raised and discussed in groups was Widjaja's observation that the economically disadvantaged melt mission and peace together while the more advantaged in the church see

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a dichotomy. How do we address this challenge?

Stories from various countries demonstrated the importance of community in the church's becoming a culture of peace. What steps is God urging us as individuals and congregations to take to embrace fully God's vision for us?

'The least among us.'

Other questions focused on domestic violence, the abuse of power, the role women are allowed to take in the church, how we can protect "the least among us," and what impact our response to these issues has on the church as a culture of peace.

In its concluding session the Peace Council affirmed three commitments: to have churches be "sanctuaries of peace;" to choose non-violence as non-negotiable; and

Corralling 240 people to look in the same direction can be a photographer's nightmare. Alex Miller (right on step ladder) tried with those attending the MWC gatherings in Pasadena (above). He is assisted by Joel Sherk of the Center for Anabaptist Leadership who coordinated the local arrangements for the event.

to stand against all forms of taking human life.

In other business, delegates heard reports on a 2004 conference of Historic Peace Churches in Africa and about plans for a Historic Peace Church conference in Asia. They also learned that Paulus Widjaja has been appointed to represent MWC on Mennonite Central Committee's Peace Committee.

Delegates also approved



designating the Sunday closest to September 21, International Peace Day, as an MWC Peace Sunday. For 2006, this will be on September 24.

—Ferne Burkhardt

Church confronts wealth gap, calls for economic sharing

"Anything less than dramatic, sweeping economic sharing in the worldwide body of Christ today is flatly unbiblical, scandalously disobedient and heretical."

This statement by Ron Sider, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, captured the attention of some 240 delegates and guests at a service consultation held in Pasadena immediately prior to the General Council sessions.

Sponsored by MWC and Mennonite Central Committee, the consultation focused on the role of "global deacons" primarily within MWC member churches but also in service beyond those limits.

Sider, author and professor at Palmer Theological Seminary, laid out six biblical and theological foundations for service:

God's love for us prompts

us to love others, serving them by doing what is in their best interests; every person is created in God's image and is precious; service must respond to both material and spiritual need; Jesus' gospel is the good news of the kingdom in which all things, including social relationships, are being restored to what the Creator intended; the cross is the foundation of service since Jesus' death was for the sins of everyone; and we serve each other because we are the one body of Christ.

What if wealthy folks gave 20% of their income to the church and one fourth of that 20% to MWC? Sider mused.

"That will never happen unless there is massive revival," he said.

In small groups, participants shared examples of



service from post-tsunami encounters between Muslims and a Christian doctor in Asia to development of a business cooperative among indigenous people and German Mennonites in Paraguay to churches in Zimbabwe who "adopt" orphan children and pay their school fees.

The groups called for better information sharing; for developing human resources and providing training along with material aid; speaking out against abuse, racism, and the abuse of power; greater advocacy from North American and European Anabaptists on behalf of churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America who struggle with unfair trade, armed conflicts, drug, and immigration issues; and for the church to lament historic divisions created among Anabaptists of different traditions.

Some "next steps" suggested by a listening group included delegates sharing

When asked if their agencies would accept responsibility for the next steps in confronting economic disparity in the church, MWC's executive secretary Larry Miller (left) and MCC's director Robb Davis agreed to symbolize that commitment by walking in each other's shoes for a time.

what they heard at the consultation with their congregations; developing a study guide on the biblical foundation of service from an Anabaptist perspective along with an analysis of contemporary socio-economic structures; and holding regional service consultations.

The listening group also called on MWC and MCC to create a forum to implement dialogue and prayer on issues of diakonia among churches in the three years before the next MWC assembly to be held in Paraguay in 2009.

—Ferne Burkhardt

How big is the gap?

Although Africa represents 43.26% of MWC membership," said service consultation moderators Pakisa Tshimika and Ron Mathies, "its wealth represents only 0.85% of the estimated wealth of the total MWC membership."

Tshimika, MWC's associate executive secretary, and Mathies, former executive director for Mennonite Central Committee, said that in contrast to the poverty of African members, North American members own 88% of the aggregate wealth while comprising less than 26% of total MWC membership. The MWC constituency in Asia, which is almost as large as North American membership, has only 2% of the wealth.

"There is widespread economic disparity that dramatically impacts the life of the global church," said a listening committee at the end of the consultation. "Faithful living out of the gospel of Jesus Christ requires radical economic upheaval (jubilee)."

—Everett J. Thomas

A different way of operating

Following the General Council sessions in Pasadena, Tim Miller Dyck of Meetinghouse interviewed MWC President Nancy Heisey for her reflections on the significance of the meetings she had just led.—Editor

Q: How will you remember Pasadena?

A: By the fact that we started out with almost 15% of our delegates not there because they were denied visas by the U.S. government.

Q: What was your reaction?

A: I was furious when I heard how people were treated. I think everybody was. But yelling and screaming won't do any good. This is not just a Mennonite question. This is a very broad Christian question.

It's not just a problem with the USA. Canada refused about 60 visas for Lutheran World Federation a few years ago. I heard of delegates to the World Council of Churches meeting in Brazil this year refused transit visas to go through Great Britain. This is basically rich nations versus poor nations.

People tend to think of visas as security-related paranoia, at least in the U.S. But the people who didn't get visas were all from poor countries. This is economic discrimination.

It is widespread in the G8 countries that Christian organizations have a very difficult time getting visas for delegates from poor countries. What does it

mean for us as an international fellowship if we can never meet in the North because northern countries don't let people in? Our churches are here. For me, it is important that we are able to meet and fellowship in all the places where we live and witness.

Q: From your perspective, what significant happened at Pasadena?

A: We worked through the final draft of the statement on Shared Convictions. I see this and the membership document as the most significant organizational and identity-building things we worked on.

Q: What is the membership document?

A: It opens some additional ways for people to formally participate in MWC activities. We're a body of churches, so the fundamental membership is church conferences and denominations. Those are the people with a voice, those who can participate in decisions.

What we've done is define some categories by which other groups could have a voice. They won't participate in our decision-making—that's for member churches only—but they could have a formal role in discussions.

Q: What kind of organizations?

A: We're looking at groups like International Committee of Mennonite Brethren or the Brethren in Christ Fellowship or agencies like Mennonite Mission Network or Global Mission Fellowship.

Q: What is coming up for MWC?

A: Before the General Council, we held a day-long consultation on service, looking at how churches serve one another. Mennonite and BIC churches are very good at service. But we are realizing that, in a world with great economic disparities, we haven't done a good job at thinking through what service means in a church-to-church context.

There is a commitment for much more focused energy on what the deaconate should look like among sister churches.

Q: What kind of aid?

A: We're talking about Mennonites here—internationally and inter-church. That is the whole point.

Congregations have deacons. One thing that deacons do is to ensure the material wellbeing of the congregation. The question is what we do with that need in a global fellowship. What does it mean that we have member churches in Zimbabwe, where people are getting by on one meal a day, while we in northern churches have too much to eat? How would we structure sharing and serving one another in that inter-church relationship in a way that is life-giving to everyone?

One of the things we talked about at the meeting was whether we wanted to make a specific call to northern churches to do something concrete. People weren't quite ready to go there. But it is a question before us. I think that the Paraguay 2009 assembly is the next point when we would check that question.

Q: Anything else?

A: One of the things we did in Pasadena was adopt a different way to make decisions—consensus. We didn't get it down pat, but it was very significant to find our way to a different way of operating. It was particularly significant when talking about Shared Convictions. The consensus model helped us have a very wholesome discussion.

After almost two weeks of General Council and other meetings, MWC president Nancy Heisey (left) relaxes with two other members of the Executive Committee: Thijn Thijink-van der Vlugt, Netherlands (center) and Naomi Unger, Canada.



AMIGOS sets \$100,000 goal for Paraguay

MWC's global youth committee, AMIGOS, concluded its meetings in Pasadena with a commitment to raise \$100,000 (US). The money will help Anabaptist-related young people attend a Global Youth Summit (GYS) in 2009 in conjunction with the next MWC assembly in Paraguay.

The first GYS was held in Zimbabwe in 2003. MWC at that time raised enough money to subsidize 15 delegates from Africa, Asia, and Latin America to attend.

AMIGOS expects the \$100,000 fund to partially subsidize 50 delegates and cover AMIGOS' operational expenses until 2009.

AMIGOS chairperson, Elina Ciptadi, says her experience as a delegate to GYS 2003 was life changing. She encourages churches and individuals to support GYS 2009 to equip young leaders



AMIGOS at work in Pasadena (from left): Barbara Kaercher, Germany; Sarah Thompson, USA; Amandus Reimer, Paraguay; and Elina Ciptadi, Indonesia, chairperson. Khohlwani Moyo, Zimbabwe, was unable to attend because the U.S. government denied his visa.

with direction and global perspective.

Ciptadi says, "In GYS 2003, young leaders discerned their roles for the church and the contributions they could make. They also shared experiences of grief and joy in serving the Lord. These young leaders, many coming to GYS 2003 feeling alone and worn out, went home encouraged and with clear directions as to what

they need to do to make a difference."

Ray Brubacher, MWC associate executive secretary for events, says, "GYS 2003 started a youth awakening in the global Mennonite family. It raised strong young leaders with a global perspective and increased the global church's awareness on youth issues. Based on such positive results, MWC agreed that Global Youth Summit needs to continue."

AMIGOS fund raising will take place in many forms: calls for donations; church or individual sponsorships, especially to fund a delegate from the southern hemisphere; matching funds;

and sale of goods.

Conferences interested in sending a delegate to GYS 2009 will be challenged to help fund their own delegate.

AMIGOS, made up of a representative from each of five MWC continental regions, has as its goals:

- exploring ways for youth around the world to share important faith and life issues,
- expand networking and avenues of youth communication locally, regionally, and globally,
- incorporating youth more meaningfully into the life and leadership of the church.

A new twist on 'glamour'

Sarah Thompson, North American representative on MWC's youth committee, AMIGOS, was named one of *Glamour* magazine's "Top 10 College Women" in the USA in 2005.

Thompson, 21, a senior in women's and international studies said she entered the contest for a bit of fun; winning was not a serious ambition. "My friend convinced me to apply. I didn't think *Glamour* would want anything to do with a young activist Mennonite whose history taught her to question mainstream culture's

emphasis on physical appearance, makeup, and fashion.

"I decided to apply ... because I wanted to affirm all women and men who are working for positive social change and doing antiwar work," she said.

In a feature in the October issue of *Glamour*, Thompson said: "The act of forgiveness is essential to social change." She also discussed her Mennonite faith, making this likely the first time the word "Mennonite" has appeared in this fashion publication.

Before the conclusion of MWC General Council meetings in March, AMIGOS had received a \$2,000 commitment from a young professional, who said, "In our family, we have the habit of giving 100 percent of our first month's salary for God's work. This is our way of offering the first fruit of our labor. When I received my first salary seven years ago, I told my family that I would do it but never actually did; however, the thought never left my mind. Therefore, in affirmation of AMIGOS' vision, I commit my latest month's salary as a delayed first offering to God."

The Anabaptist vision in Southern California

Mennonites in southern California look a lot like the global Anabaptist world. That's why holding MWC's General Council on the campus of William Carey International University (WCIU) in Pasadena made a lot of sense to Jeff Wright, conference minister for Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference (PSMC).

PSMC, a member area conference of Mennonite Church USA, includes 32 congregations in the greater Los Angeles area. The 2,400 members in these congregations come from 41 nations. More than 90 percent are people of color, and almost as many were born outside the United States. Virtually all of these members are new to the Mennonite church, and more than half have come to faith in Christ in a southern California congregation.

"For many of our members from countries like Nigeria, India, or Indonesia, the General Council meeting was a chance for them to see their

A fiesta program for MWC delegates and guests on Friday evening highlighted the cultural diversity of Los Angeles area. Included was music and dance by various groups, such as by women from Los Angeles Faith Chapel (below left) and Jan Kouttjie (right).



family of faith from their country of origin for the very first time," said Wright.

The WCIU campus is also home to the Center for Anabaptist Leadership (CAL), the organization that provided local coordination for the General Council gathering. Wright also serves as CAL's executive director.

Wright wonders whether the global Anabaptist community is facing the same urban challenges that Mennonites are facing in southern California. "We want to help MWC think about the cities just as MWC is helping us think about the world," he said.

Wright sees southern California as a global mission field. He says PSMC congregations are racially diverse, not because of a comprehensive church planting strategy, but because of a leadership development strategy. "We find interesting people called by God to do audacious things and give them the resources to respond to their call," he said.

These new congregations and their leaders have developed a commitment to Anabaptist core values, such as discipleship, community, and peacemaking. "People learn these values as we articulate them over and over again, and they

learn that this is what it means to be Mennonite," said Wright.

The CAL offices also serve as the southern California mission and conference offices for PSMC. These offices help create identity for these southern California congregations as they learn what it means to be Anabaptist. "We are able to experiment here on behalf of the whole Mennonite Church USA with minimal risks to see if it works," said Wright.



Jeff Wright

He sees synergy between his roles as director of CAL and conference minister for PSMC. He spends his days equipping PSMC ministers to be effective leaders in their local communities. He's particularly concerned about the 1.5 generation, that is, ministering to youth who have been Americanized but who still live in first generation immigrant households. "If we want to keep replicating leaders, we're going to need to learn how to keep this generation in the church," he said.

Wright also sees a need for Anabaptists in North America to maintain constructive dialogue between historic Anabaptist values and global Pentecostalism. "Mennonites here are learning how to be both Anabaptist and Pentecostal," he said.

Wright observes that many southern California congregations include leaders and members who are undocumented immigrants, and he urges the church to speak out for just immigration policies and for the rights of immigrants.

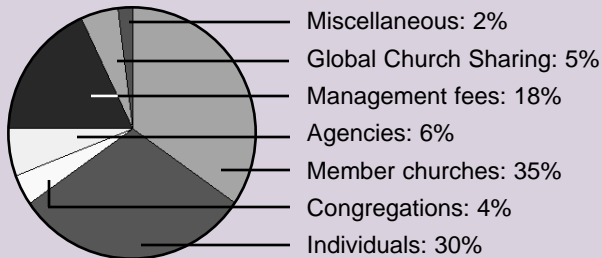
In addition to the PSMC of Mennonite Church USA, other MWC member denominations with congregations in southern California include the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Conservative Mennonite Conference, and the Brethren in Christ. —Ron Byler



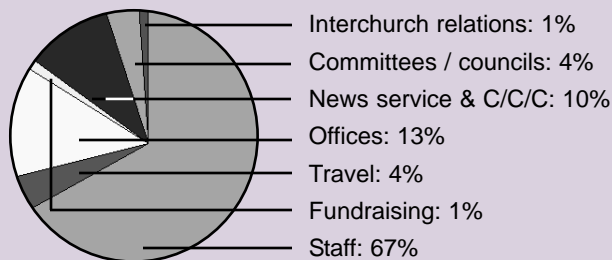
MWC balances budget in 2005

With strong contributions from member churches, congregations, and individuals, MWC ended the past year with a balanced budget, according to treasurer Paul Quiring and accountant Karen Martin Schiedel. Charts below show MWC funding sources and uses.

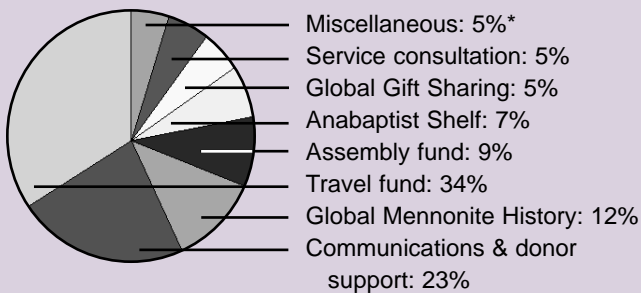
Unrestricted contributions: \$616,000^{USD}



Unrestricted expenses: \$616,000^{USD}



Restricted contributions & expenses for projects: \$280,000^{USD}



*miscellaneous includes Global Music, *In God's Image* distribution, AMIGOS, and Congo Forum for Conversation

WCC finds consensus on peace

Porto Alegre, Brazil—The World Council of Churches (WCC), representing 560 million Christians in 100 countries, held its 9th assembly here February 14-23, 2006.

A major action of the delegates was approving the initiation of an ecumenical peace council at the end of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) in 2010 / 2011. This motion was brought to the floor by Mennonites from Germany. A major ecumenical peace declaration will be prepared before this date.

Tagged the “youngest assembly,” 15% of the 3,838 participants were youth, the highest number ever, but still short of the 25% target WCC has set for itself. Youth stewards demonstrated during a plenary session against the “false promise.”

Among the 691 delegates, advisors and visitors were 16 Mennonites, 25 representa-

tives from Brethren and Quakers, 150 youth stewards. Several members from the Mennonite Church in Buenos Aires, Argentina, participated in the meetings.

“I consider WCC a forum, something like a marketplace full of colourful and loud people, who won't shut up, but who will speak up about the problems in the world because God tells them to do so,” said Isabell Mans, a youth delegate from the Association of Mennonite Congregations in Germany.

Nancy Heisey, president of Mennonite World Conference, attended as a delegated representative and participated as an advisor to the Public Issues Committee.

The gathering included an evening walk against violence through Porto Alegre led by Bishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa.

India church to celebrate 100 years

Dhamtari, India—Bethel Mennonite Church in Balodgahan will mark 100 years in a jubilee celebration October 29-30, 2006. The church is part of the Mennonite Church in India.

Bishop Mahlon and Sarah Lapp were pioneer mission-

aries who established the Balodgahan mission station. In 1906, Mennonite Board of Missions (now Mennonite Mission Network) started boarding schools for girls and boys, a home for widows, a training centre, and other schools.

The church is inviting brothers and sisters of the MWC family, especially those who had family members who served as mission workers, to join the celebration.

“God has blessed us on various occasions. We request prayer for this event that it will be successful and we will give God all the glory,” says the invitation.

—Pranod Kumar Singh

Korea's first Anabaptist church celebrates 10 years

Chuncheon, South Korea—Jesus Village Church, the first Anabaptist church in the country, celebrated its tenth anniversary in January with a potluck meal, video remembrances, a historical book, personal sharing, and many bows, handshakes, and hugs. The festivities included a cake with candles, communion, and a message by

Cha Sungdo, one of the JVC founders.

Sang-Uk Nam, JVC coordinator, wrote a book about JVC's history for the celebration.

Jesus Village Church, a body of 40 believers, began on the first Sunday of 1996 after three years of intense study by a cell group concerned with the professional-

ism, hierarchy, institutionalism, and legalism of the traditional Christian church in Korea. After learning about the Reformed and Anabaptist churches, members felt led by the Holy Spirit to join the Anabaptist-Mennonite community and connect to rediscovering the New Testament Church.

—Bob Gerber



With the release of Pham Ngoc Thach (second from right) on March 2, all six Mennonite evangelists and church workers who had been imprisoned in Vietnam are now free. Together for the first time six days later, they are (from left) Le Thi Hong Lien, Nguyen Thanh Nhan, Nguyen Van Phoung, Nguyen Hong Quang, Thach, and Nguyen Hieu Nghia. Thach was imprisoned the longest—for two

years—following an incident in March 2004 involving government undercover security agents. All six have consistently denied their pastoring and evangelism work violated any Vietnamese laws. The Vietnamese Mennonite Church believes that the concerns expressed by international governments, agencies, and churches led to the release of these leaders.

Vietnam authorities recognize Mennonite congregation

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
—The Ho Chi Minh City Committee for Religious Affairs has recognized the Binh Thanh Mennonite congregation in the city.

On March 6 the committee approved the request for registration of religious activities of the Vietnam Mennonite Church represented by Rev. Nguyen Quang Trung.

This represents a significant development in a process begun by Trung in the mid-1980s.

In 1976, Mennonite church property had been appropriated by the local government, so Trung's home became temporary headquarters of the church.

Reports indicate that a prominent Baptist congregation in Ho Chi Minh City and some Adventist congregations were also recognized at the same time.

Trung, president of the Vietnam Mennonite

Church, and leaders of the Baptist and Adventist groups were contacted by the Religious Affairs Committee in August, 2004, and invited to submit documents in preparation for registration. Trung was committed to do this, but members of the Mennonite church administrative committee objected to his conversation with government officials at a time when six Mennonite leaders were imprisoned and awaiting trial.

After action was taken to remove Trung from church leadership, he formed a separate church administrative committee and continued the process.

Several months later, Mrs. Le Thi Phu Dung, wife of imprisoned pastor Nguyen Hong Quang, also contacted the city's religious affairs personnel to pursue registration for the Mennonite congregation in the city's

District 2. This congregation, however, is not recognized in the recent government order.

The District 2 congregation was the one repeatedly harassed by local authorities following the arrest of the six leaders in a 2004 incident. Since Pastor Quang was released from prison in amnesty last August, harassment has lessened.

Attendance at their Sunday evening worship services is now approaching the same numbers as before the incident, and leadership training sessions are taking place.

Recognition by the Ho Chi Minh City government officials of the Binh Thanh congregation applies only to the city. Trung reported that the city officials promised that they would inform officials in other areas of this action, so it may eventually affect churches in other places.

Missiologist named as leader of GMF planning committee

Strasbourg, France—The Global Mission Fellowship (GMF) Planning Committee has named Willi Ferderer from Rahden, Germany, as interim staff person. He will serve through the September 2006 GMF Gathering in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Peter Rempel, former staff person, had resigned to become executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba in Canada.

Ferderer is secretary of the DMMK (German Mennonite Missions Committee).

Johannes Reimer, GMF representative for Europe, says: "Willi Ferderer brings a whole range of experience and knowledge to the committee. He is multilingual, and his knowledge of Russian will help to plan and run the conference in Almaty."

Ferderer says that what attracted him to the position was "the variety of God's people in the Anabaptist family, the common, global view of the GMF in missions, and the desire to serve our wonderful, living God together."

Willi Ferderer



The world church changed me

An interview with Milka Rindzinski

by Nancy Heisey

When I was named president-elect of Mennonite World Conference, Milka Rindzinski interviewed me for *Courier / Correo / Courier* as a way of introducing me to MWC members and supporters. When I heard that she was retiring as editor, it seemed a good time for me to interview Milka to thank her for her work.

I have observed Milka as a strong, steady presence at MWC meetings, gathering prayer requests from executive committee members, providing quiet translation into Spanish, and working hard with other communicators to send out the MWC story around the world. When I talked with her further, I learned, to my delight, that her involvement was much more extensive and interesting than I had even imagined.

Nancy: How did you become part of the Anabaptist family of faith?

Milka: I became a Mennonite through the English language. I was working as a secretary in Montevideo, Uruguay, and studying English as well. When I ran into problems registering for my fourth year of English classes, a friend suggested that I contact a North American who taught English. He was a Mennonite missionary, James Martin.

When we started classes, James asked me how I wanted to practice conversation. Since I saw Bibles and commentaries on his desk, I said I wanted to study the Bible. I had a notebook where I wrote down questions, and then we would discuss them in English class.

The biblical message changed me. I went through an earthquake in my life. I was baptized in January, less than a year after I started taking English classes, on a Sunday close to the time we now celebrate World Fellowship Sunday. The day I was baptized I felt the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit. James gave me a small book of Menno Simons' writings translated into Spanish, which helped me recognize the theological concepts that would shape my faith.

Nancy: How did you get involved with MWC?

Milka: After I was baptized, I began studying at the Evangelical Mennonite Theological Seminary in Montevideo. In 1972, I was invited, along with other students, to attend the MWC assembly in Curitiba, Brazil. I was asked to give a report on Latin American churches and social realities.

At that time there were several military dictatorships in Latin America. In the final paragraph of the Spanish text of my presentation, I made some comments about the political situation that were missing in the English translation. A brother from Argentina noticed this cut and urged me to read these words in English at the meeting, which I did.

Nancy: What are some of your best memories of work with MWC?

Milka: Everything! The world church changed me. When Raul Garcia of Argentina was president of MWC, he talked about the need for communicators within MWC. My pastor urged me to offer my skills for this work. When I went to Raul, he said, "We were waiting for you!"

A Spanish proverb says, "El mundo es ancho y ajeno" (the world is wide and strange). Through MWC, however, I found that the world was not strange. Instead, I enjoyed getting to know many different people from around the world. I had had unreal ideas about people from other continents, but when we met, I discovered that they were sisters and brothers. I was impressed with their friendliness, the vitality of their faith, their musicality, and their joy, sometimes in the middle of difficult times. I could die today and be satisfied with my life because of the wonderful experiences I've had meeting people.

Nancy: You are known as the collector of prayer requests within MWC. How did you get involved with this ministry?

Milka: I don't know why this job fell in my lap. I realized I had to be in



Milka Rindzinski Montevideo, Uruguay, acknowledges applause from General Council members when she gave her final report as editor of Courier / Correo / Courier at the Pasadena meetings.

touch with all the news from member churches, and in that news I discerned needs for prayer. I hope to continue this ministry even now that I won't be editing *C/C/C*. I've enjoyed including requests and stories about small, less well-known churches within MWC.

Nancy: What are your prayers for MWC?

Milka: We need to continue to be with the poor. I pray for all member churches of MWC, especially those in North America. North American Mennonites live in a powerful empire, and I know empires don't last forever. I pray that North American Mennonites will do all that is possible to call their governments to do justice, and that they will have the wisdom to discern how to grow as part of the global community even as their political and economic situation changes.

Nancy Heisey, Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, serves as president of Mennonite World Conference.



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Requests for prayer from MWC churches around the world

- Give thanks for a successful Mennonite World Conference mini-assembly in Pasadena, California USA, March 7-15. Some 240 representatives from 44 countries attended (see reports this issue).
- Pray for a change of policy that unjustifiedly inhibits the global functioning of Christian faith communities when governments deny entry visas to delegates, such as happened with the Pasadena assembly.
- Pray for the gathering of the European Mennonite Regional Conference (MERK) scheduled for Barcelona, Spain, May 25-28. The theme is: "Freedom Is Commitment: Living God's Will."
- Pray for vision to discover the many forms that violence and injustice may take in apparently peaceful societies, churches, families, and schools.
- Pray for the first meeting of Central American Mennonite Women Theologians, scheduled for July 16-17, 2006, in Costa Rica. Ofelia García of Mexico will be the presenter.
- Pray for the Consulta Anabautista Menonita de Centro América (CAMCA) July 18-22, also in Costa Rica. May these sessions be filled with meaningful encounters with God.
- Pray that the recently released Spanish version of the 2003 selection for the MWC Global Anabaptist Mennonite Shelf of Literature, *Sharing Gifts in the Family of Faith*, will inspire and uncover gifts in those who read it.
- Pray for those attending the Global Mission Fellowship meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan, September 20-24, under the theme, "Emerging Mission: From all churches to all people."
- Pray for God's mercy on the bereaved as the result of natural and provoked disasters around the world. Pray also for sanity on those that may be guilty of inflicting suffering.
- Thank God for the ministry of Delton Franz, former director of the Mennonite Central Committee's Washington Office (USA), who died March 6. Franz served as MCC's primary liaison to the US government, bringing the concerns of MCC workers and partners around the world to policymakers on Capitol Hill.

Help with the costs of Courier / Courier / Correo

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Former managing editor J. Lorne Peachey has been named editor of C/C/C. With him below is Eleanor Miller, communications assistant.



Perspective:

Thirty-four years—and still growing

by Milka Rindzinski

While 1 Corinthians 13 is a Scripture that's recited often, particularly at weddings, I would like to underline verse 11 and apply it to my experience with Mennonite World Conference:

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a woman, I gave up childish ways.

One may be childish even when one is grown. And, looking retrospectively, in many senses I was like a child when I initiated my pilgrimage with MWC. Was that in Curitiba in 1972, or even earlier? One way or another, I kept in close touch with MWC ever since: as translator of news, as correspondent for Latin America, and as part of task forces that spent several months getting programs ready for MWC assemblies, until I officially became part of the editorial staff of the MWC quarterlies, *Courier / Correo / Courier*.

I was quite brave to accept that responsibility. I had never been an editor. Never had I studied to be one. I learned a bit along the way, but I never graduated—as my colleagues knew, and our readers probably did too. That was a growing edge—as was (and still is) my ability to express myself in the English language. Lately, I have resorted to saying that I speak Uruguayan English, although my country is not bilingual; the official language in Uruguay is Spanish.

Along the years, in my work as editor, I have seen the MWC body of churches grow in love, in acceptance of one another, in knowledge, in discernment, in solidarity and service, in accountability, and in efforts to put into practice the integral gospel of Jesus Christ.

During my years with MWC, I've seen the developments of several things that are especially noteworthy and valuable:

- the projects of discernment and sharing of gifts and the movements these have produced;
- the openness to dialogue with other Christian confes-

sions and, at the same time, the importance of cultivating and sharing our own Anabaptist roots;

- MWC's work with youth;
- the global history project, written from the point of view of nationals;
- the promotion of churches in the southern hemisphere.

As I leave the position of editor of *Courier, Correo, Courier*, I am back to translating for MWC and for other church bodies, and to being a correspondent for *C/C/C* for Latin America—all of which I will enjoy enormously.

I am not so arrogant as to say that I have grown all I could. I may have gifts to discern and cultivate, yet. But I can affirm that to a large measure what I am today I owe to my relationship with Mennonite World Conference churches around the world—my own church in Uruguay included.

—*Milka Rindzinski*



While Milka Rindzinski has retired as editor of Courier / Correo / Courier, she will continue as a correspondent and as a translator for MWC. Milka will also continue to gather prayer requests for this publication.

courier

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