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**Javier Soler, chair,
Global Mission
Fellowship**



Global Mission Fellowship holds historic meeting in Kazakhstan

More than 3,000 attend opening rally in the “city of apples.”

Almaty, Kazakhstan—This country has not been the focus of mission efforts for any of the 42 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches and mission agencies that assembled here September 17-22, 2006, for the second meeting of the Global Mission Fellowship (GMF). So why Kazakhstan?

Johannes Reimer, Bergneustadt, Germany, a GMF planning committee member, was largely responsible. Born in Kazakhstan and reared in neighboring Uzbekistan, Reimer said, “Kazakhstan is a unique mission frontier, where Muslims are coming to Christ in unprecedented numbers. Thirty-two of the 100 expatriate Christian workers in the country have Mennonite affiliation. While several GMF member agencies have workers in other Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan is an exciting option for the GMF, even though we didn’t have an official inviting agency or church.”

On an exploratory trip to Kazakhstan, Reimer connected with the Kazakh Evangelical Alliance and the Turkish Kurultai, an association of Central Asian Turkic pastors. Both groups warmly welcomed the GMF and the opportunity to connect with the global church.

The unique assembly which resulted included 91 GMF participants from 36 countries, the Kurultai, and a Kazakh mission partnership—all together to talk about missions in the “city of apples.”

Javier Soler, GMF chair, and Ahaman Egizbaev, president of the Evangelical Alliance of Kazakhstan, welcomed more than 3,000 guests to the opening rally at the Silk Road Vision Center in the Grace Church. After a parade of flag-waving internationals, a fifty-member Kazakh youth choir led the group in singing, while another group of young people danced on the edge of the stage.

In his opening address Danisa Ndlovu, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, vice-president of Mennonite World Conference, said, “I used to associate mis-

sions with the West. But in this era, every congregation, no matter where it is, if it’s part of the true church, it should be involved in missions. We are all part of the emerging missions movement” (see Ndlovu’s address on page 6).

Mixed audience. The following three days Wilbert Shenk, Anabaptist missiologist recently retired from the Fuller School of Intercultural Studies, Pasadena, California, USA, gave three addresses to the united assembly on missions (see article on page 4).

Schenk noted it was diffi-

cult to address such a mixed audience—one which ranged from highly educated missionaries and church leaders to semi-literate new Christians who did not even have the Scriptures in their own language.

He said, “I’m very gratified to witness this upsurge in mission initiatives from the global South. I hope that networking through GMF will help to encourage the sending of international and intercultural teams into situations of inter-ethnic conflict in which the gospel of reconciliation is desperately needed.”

Three GMF participants—Ruben Dreidger, Uruguay; Rudolph Wiens, USA; and Alexander Neufeld, Germany—gave Bible studies on the book of

Cover: Javier Soler, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, Global Mission Fellowship chair, wears the traditional robe and cap presented to him as a gift from the Kurultai who hosted the GMF conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan this past September.

Photo by Steve Plenert

Young people from the worship team welcome Global Mennonite Fellowship visitors to the Nur Church in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The Nur Church is a group of 400 indigenous Kazakh-Uighur Christians who worship at 15 different branches.



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Javier Soler (left), GMF chair, and Larry Miller (right), MWC general secretary, in Kazakh robes and caps. Between them is Ahaman Egizbaev, president of the Evangelical Alliance of Kazakhstan.

shipping Turks.

As he led the concluding communion service, Siaka Traoré, a Mennonite leader from Burkina Faso who also serves on the GMF planning committee, said, "During these days here I've rejoiced to see how the Kazaks have made Jesus their own."

Traoré, from a Muslim background, told the Central Asians, "I was educated to believe Islam was the only way. I thirsted for God. I tried to please God with rites and fasts. In my thirst I found Jesus. Jesus is the center of all my life. He wants to be in all aspects of our lives. His transformation in

our lives will transform others. May God bless you in that pilgrimage."

Willi Ferderer, Rahden, Germany, who serves as staff person for GMF, said he is grateful for the new vision Turkic Christians have of the global church. "They are a suffering church," he said. "But it's powerful for them to know that they are not alone. This meeting gave the small evangelical church here a big boost and positive visibility with the government."

"It's also been good for GMF members to see what God is doing here," Ferderer added. "Many in Europe are afraid of Muslims. This shows another side of what's happening in the Muslim world."—*Jewel Showalter, staff writer for Eastern Mennonite Missions, Salunga, Pennsylvania, USA, wrote this report for Global Mission Fellowship.*

Jonah. Even though Wiens and Neufeld both spoke in Russian, connecting with the majority audience in their language, young Turkic pastors thumbed vainly through their New Testaments trying to find Jonah. (Many of the Turkic languages do not yet have a translation of the Old Testament.)

Leaders of the World Evangelical Fellowship and the European Evangelical Alliance each gave major addresses emphasizing the reality of the global body of Christ and the fact that the rest of the church is standing in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Central Asia, sharing in their sufferings.

A Kazakh Christian historian, Bayeke Manarbek, introduced a new book in which he is reconstructing the Christian heritage of the Kazakh people. He said that the Parthians, present on the day of Pentecost, first brought the gospel to Central Asia, where there was a strong church until it was decimated by Tamerlane in the 15th Century.

"Because of the Arab and Russian empires, we have forgotten our Christian

roots," Manarbek said. "But since 1990, these ancient roots are giving birth to new trees. We Christians came alive through the prayers of our ancestors, and your prayers. God is calling us to again take the gospel along the length and breadth of the Silk Road."

Church growth at 30%.

Before this conference, many GMF participants knew very little about Central Asia and its 300 million people, which stretch from Turkey to western China in what is known as the Turko-Persian world. Until 15 years ago, this was a restricted area, but the church is now growing at a rate of 30% per year.

Each evening the Kazakh planners led in celebrations vibrating with testimonies, preaching, songs, and dances.

When the Uighurs broke out their traditional instruments one evening, the floor quickly filled with gyrating Turkic dancers. Soon even the more inhibited and uncoordinated internationals were drawn into the dance by the irresistible joy and beckoning arms of the wor-

GMF and MWC

Birthered in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, three years ago, the Global Mission Fellowship (GMF) is made up of mission workers from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America along with representatives from Mennonite World Conference (MWC). In Kazakhstan, members of the GMF met separately from the other groups present for both plenary and continental caucuses on two different days.

During one such session, GMF voted to move toward becoming a commission of MWC, making it an integral part of MWC's structure with an emphasis on missions and witness. They also agreed to continue funding GMF activities through a "fair share" formula based on the per capital gross domestic product of the representatives' countries.

GMF and MWC staff will work on restructuring based on these votes and will present the next steps for action at the 2009 MWC assembly in Paraguay. Current plans are for GMF to meet once every three years, including each time MWC meets in a global general assembly. The GMF planning committee appointed Janet Plenert (North America) as chair and Siaka Traoré (Africa) vice-chair for 2006-2009.

Forming disciples who think and act like Jesus

by Wilbert R. Shenk

A defining characteristic of the modern mission movement has been the emphasis on effective strategy. The concept of strategy originated with military campaigns, but in the modern period this concept has been used widely in economic and social planning. Mission strategy was borrowed from the modern economy with its emphasis on rational planning.

Strategy is pragmatic. The goal of such planning is to achieve maximum results with minimum resources. Even as early as 1819 strategic plans for world evangelization were being proposed.

Transforming mission. The goal of Christian mission is to bring about the transformation of the lives of men and women through the gospel. But missionaries can distort and limit the gospel. It occurs when the means used in carrying out missionary witness is inconsistent with the gospel or inappropriate to a particular context so that the gospel is misrepresented.

Four strategies have been influential in the history of Christian mission over the past 2,000 years. These are:

(1) *Mission as proselytism.* Today the notion of proselytism stirs strong negative reactions. The Hebrew *ger* means “stranger, sojourner, resident alien.” In Greek it refers to “one who has approached, a newcomer.” The New Testament uses proselyte for “a convert to Judaism” (Matthew 23:15; Acts 2:10).

Over time proselyte took on a negative meaning because it was associated with exerting undue pressure on people to change their religious affiliation. Jesus denounced the Jewish leaders for proselytism and condemned this kind

of mission (Matthew 23:15). Jesus was not interested in winning people to a particular religion. His passion was that they encounter the living God and be transformed by God’s power. Even so, there is proselytizing mission today.

(2) *Mission as conquest.* From the fourth century, as Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire and Christendom emerged, the government used various means to “Christianize” the entire population. Church and state agreed that if other means failed, people should be forced to join the church. This included using lethal force to destroy religious and political opponents.

The Christian crusades against the Muslims in the Holy Land between 1099 and 1291 has left a permanent blot on the Christian record. Starting in the fifteenth century and continuing for three centuries, European exploration and conquest of other parts of the world was also linked to the extension of Christendom.

(3) *Mission as spiritual escape.* Starting in the seventeenth century, the Pietist-Evangelical Awakening was marked by commitment to the whole gospel. From this came remarkable creativity in terms of personal conversion, social reform, anti-slavery, equality for women, and missions.

On the other hand, by the 1880s conflicting theological developments emerged. One group argued that the kingdom of God could be established in the present by vigorous application of the gospel to social problems. Another group insisted that since Christ’s return was imminent, the priority was to prepare souls for the final judgment and heaven. Both groups based their approaches on a lop-sided

interpretation of the gospel.

The first two of these strategies are based on premises that contradict the gospel. The third reduces the gospel to one dimension. Yet all three have been historically important strategies of mission. The fourth strategy is inherent in the gospel itself.

(4) *Evangelization.* Evangelization is the process of bringing people into encounter with Jesus Christ so they become Christ-like and live under God’s reign. In the process, as illustrated by Cornelius and Peter, both the evangelizer and the evangelized are transformed (Acts 10).

Crossing frontiers. Mission is essentially about movement and change. Mission challenges the status quo by introducing something new, the gospel, which the Apostle Paul calls “the power of God” (Romans 1:16).

One meaning of frontier is a barrier or boundary that must be crossed in the course of carrying out a mission. But a frontier is also a place where a decisive engagement takes place. John’s Gospel asserts that Jesus is the “sent one,” and he incorporates his disciples in this “sending” into the world for the sake of the world (John 20:19-23). Those who are “sent” leave what is familiar and cross boundaries as a witness to God’s redeeming mission.

Following his baptism, Jesus the Messiah confronted Satan in the wilderness. Immediately following, Jesus began his public ministry by claiming Isaiah 61:1-2 as the basis of his ministry (Luke 4:18-19). This is the messianic strategy of mission.

In his ministry, Jesus recognized that sin pervades the entire human experience. God’s good creation, including its



Claude Baecher

rich variety, is continually spoiled by sinful actions against creation and one another. Inter-ethnic conflict has marked human existence throughout recorded history. Difference and variety are readily demonized. The “principalities and powers” operate in ordinary human realities to subvert God’s purposes.

Michael Ignatieff says we are in “a new age of violence. The key narrative of the new world order is the disintegration of nation states into ethnic civil war; the key architects of that order are warlords; and the key language of our age is ethnic nationalism” (*Blood and Belonging*, 1995).

These conflicts represent a major mission frontier today. Messianic strategic thinking calls us to face our contemporary situation from three perspectives.

(1) *Theological imperative.* Central to the work of Jesus the Messiah is the fact that he makes possible a two-dimensional reconciliation: between God and humankind and between humans (2 Corinthians 5 and Ephesians 2). Through the work of rec-

onciliation, Jesus Christ brings about the new creation.

(2) *Contextual imperative.* Context shapes the human condition. Cain’s murder of his brother Abel (Genesis 4) tells us that violence has always been a part of the human situation. The twentieth century is regarded as the most violent in human history because of the scale and intensity of warfare. Disciples of Jesus the Messiah cannot ignore this reality.

(3) *Missiological imperative.* Jesus’ mission was to proclaim the “gospel of peace” (Isaiah 52:7) in this violent world. As his disciples, we must confront the violent situations in today’s world in the spirit and power of Jesus.

An Anabaptist view of mission.

What can we learn about messianic mission strategy from the sixteenth-century Anabaptists? They never used the word strategy. Instead they tried to practice what they believed most honored Jesus Christ.

Three overarching themes defined the Anabaptist theology of mission: (a) an Anabaptist theology of mission is

Women at the Nur Church in Almaty, where close to 400 believers from an indigenous Kazakh-Uighur group are members. Following their conference, GMF participants visited this church for worship and a festive meal. “This is a little taste of heaven before the big taste!” the Nur Church pastor said afterwards.

rooted in the work and message of Jesus the Messiah; (b) an Anabaptist theology of mission assumes a dynamic relationship between church and world with the cross as bridge between the two; and (c) an Anabaptist theology of mission is embodied in the faithful community of the Messiah that lives in the eschatological tension of the kingdom already present but not yet fulfilled.

By its example of vigorous missionary witness, the Anabaptist movement suggests that the essential strategy of mission requires forming disciples who think and act like Jesus the Messiah. Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus’ disciples accompanied him wherever he went. He invested fully in training his disciples so that no matter where they would go or the circumstances in which they found themselves in the future, they would act in ways that would honor Jesus, their Lord and Master. We cannot improve on this messianic strategy today.

Wilbert R. Shenk served as professor of mission history and contemporary culture at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, USA, from 1995-2005. Previous to that he was director of overseas ministries for Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Indiana, USA (1965-1990), where he currently lives. This article is an adaptation he made for Courier / Correo / Courier from his three presentations for GMF at Almaty, Kazakhstan.



From all churches to all people

by Danisa Ndlovu

It is time we experienced partnerships around the world in our personnel recruitment and in bringing missions development programs to all our Bible schools and seminaries. Everything must be done to demonstrate that we are but one body of Christ.

1. Missions is everyone's responsibility

This is a time of a new awakening in missions! There was a time when missions were associated with the West. Today we stand united in the understanding that missions are to be associated with every church anywhere in the world. Every congregation, no matter how isolated and remotely placed on the globe, if it is part of the church, must be involved in missions.

It is significant for me, coming from the southern edges of Africa, a product of North American missions, to be here in Kazakhstan encouraging my brothers and sisters in Christ to be in missions!

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus commanded us his disciples to take the

gospel to every person in every home, village, town, city, and country with the intention of making disciples. We are not only to be purposeful about it, we are also to do it with care, grace, and without fear. Our obedience to the command can only be fully demonstrated when we willingly reach out to those we ordinarily care less about and find joy in seeing them become a part of the kingdom of God.

Those of us who have yielded to the Lordship of Jesus Christ must of necessity always consider ourselves as warriors and angels of peace, love, and light. We must be always ready to bring down Satan's walls of darkness that divide us as creatures made in God's image. We must be ready at all times to usher in new hope in Jesus Christ.

2. The cost of doing missions

In considering missions from all churches to all people, I am reminded of what Tertullian wrote in the year 200: "We are a new group but have already penetrated all areas of imperial life—cities, islands, villages, towns, marketplaces, even the camp, tribes, senate, the law-court. There is nothing left for you but temples" (Apology 37).

For those early Christians to realize positive results, they had to overcome tremendous odds of their time. But they were willing to bear the cost, which sometimes meant losing their lives for the sake of the gospel. They embraced the essence of what Jesus requires of every disciple: to take up the

cross and follow him (Matthew 10: 37-39).

Today we need to return to a similar enthusiasm for sharing the gospel. As for the first and second century church, obedience and commitment to Jesus Christ and his cause should be seen as a virtue.

3. The message of missions

From the beginning, God has been involved in missions. God's mission, since the fall of humankind, has been to reconcile humanity with himself.

We live in a fallen, broken, and sinful world. Many of our countries are either directly or indirectly involved in devastating conflicts. Corruption has not spared any sector of our societies, including the church. Hatred has left peoples divided by race, tribe, religion, economic status, and color.

There is no way we as churches and mission organizations can ignore these facts and still think we can effectively do missions. As loyal citizens of our nations, we cannot ignore the fact that the condition of our world has a bearing on our message.

This picture of our world remains a clear testimony that humans need God. Our world needs Christ—now! Any delays will have devastating consequences, for many souls will die without Christ. God, who has redeemed us and given us a clear message of reconciliation, invites us to join him in his mission.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18, Paul writes:

This article is adapted from a sermon Danisa Ndlovu preached at the Global Mission Fellowship in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in September.

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

4. Partnership with God in missions

It is, therefore, a privilege for us to be a part of God's mission. Missions is about God reaching out in love to the world. It is about God so loving the world that he sent his only begotten Son (John 3:16). It is about obeying Jesus when he said to his disciples, “Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, I am sending you...” (John 20:21-22).

We are to carry out the mission of God as originally planned that all nations be blessed and, ultimately, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11).

This understanding of missions should spur every church to action: resisting every form of self appeasement and comfort before reaching any who have not been evangelized.

5. The burden for doing missions

A close study of people in missions reveals a clear sense of call and burden for the lost. Their inspiration is the desire to see the unsaved getting an opportunity to hear the Good News and have the opportunity to make the life or death choice.

The apostle Paul sums up what is carried in the hearts of those who do missions: “I am obligated both to the Greeks and non-Greeks, both the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you in Rome. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1: 14-16a).

We must have this sense of call in order to be able to stand when times of testing come our way. We will have

ridicule from the world. Very often those who take the gospel cross culturally will be misunderstood. More often than not we will be despised, reviled, called names, and unjustly condemned for the sake of the gospel.

Even so, together with Paul, we must never be ashamed of the gospel but continuously believe in its power to change the lives of those who reject us and our message. God's messengers get encouragement in that God uses the humble and despised for his glory.

6. The role of the church in missions

Peter describes the church as “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, ... [to] declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” He goes on to say, “Once you were not a people, but now you are a people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9).

God has always set apart a people

through whom his love, mercy, and rule is demonstrated to the world. Once Israel was this people. Today, God has positioned the church to be this people.

Mission does not originate with the church but with God. At the same time God calls the church to participate in missions! The church comes into the picture as an agent, a willing agent to carry out God's mission of declaring the will of God on earth.

Every church must be more than a place where believers come together to sing, listen to each others' testimonies, pray, and listen to the preacher deliver a sermon. If we are going to make a difference in our world, every congregation must be some form of school for missions.

In our churches disciples must from time to time encounter real-life stories from the mission field. They must experience the joy of participating in various forms of supporting mission work. They must have opportunities to

Claude Baecher

Guests who went to the Nur Church following the GMF gathering in Almaty enjoyed a dinner after worship. They sat on cushions on the floor and ate a meal of salads, fermented mare's and camel's milk, horse meat, and besh-parmak (the national dish of roast lamb, potatoes, noodles, and onions).



train in practical ways of doing missions both within and without their national boundaries. In the church disciples should be trained to accommodate, welcome, and embrace each other as family regardless of nationality, race, tribe, culture, and skin pigmentation. Disciples must be taught and trained to see and love the world God's way.

When our congregations become such schools of learning, all disciples will become qualified to reach all people. When our churches become schools of missions, there will be, around the world, a multiplication of experiences similar to that of Antioch: "While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul to do the work to which I have called them.' They fasted and prayed and sent them off" (Acts 13: 2-3).

The authority for sending personnel to missions, to all people, is vested nowhere else but in the church. No other organization or agency should attempt to contest that authority.

Janet Plenert, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, shown here with a traditional Kazakh headdress, is the new chair of the Global Mission Fellowship.

Steve Plenert



7. Partnerships in missions

Doing missions in our complex world requires us to be complex in our approaches. The business world talks about "partnerships," groups developing around common interests. Through partnerships businesses find ways of penetrating markets they could not otherwise access if tried alone.

We who do missions are aware of the challenges we face as a result of the foreign policies, immigration regulations, and presence or absence of religious freedoms in our nations. For this reason churches and mission agencies

need to consider partnerships to face these and many other challenges.

Partnerships in missions are a result of our fellowship with one another. Where there is fellowship, there is a sharing of ideas and resources and a genuine desire to understand and work with each other. Fellowship resulting in partnership is built on mutuality, equality, and trust. Real fellowship in the early church enabled believers to be "one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (Acts 4:32).

It is time we experienced partner-

Vision statement:

Global Mission Fellows

PREAMBLE

The God whom we serve is a missionary God. Conversations between the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and global mission leaders have led to the mutual desire to establish a Global Mission Fellowship that will enable the Church around the world to better fulfill our common calling in God's mission. This document outlines key theological / missiological assumptions, as well as organizational and structural relationships of this Global Mission Fellowship and Mennonite World Conference.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Church at all levels—local, national, regional, and global—exists to participate in God's mission to the world.

Drafted in 2003, this statement of Global Mission Fellowship vision and its relationship to Mennonite World Conference has been adopted by both groups.

1.2 God's mission through the Church involves conveying the whole gospel of Jesus Christ across spiritual, cultural, economic and political boundaries as well as within a church's local settings.

1.3 The Church's mission includes ministries in word and deed to persons and peoples outside the community of Christ with the goal of making disciples and bringing these new disciples into fellowships of believers.

1.4 The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed through a spectrum of evangelistic, disciple-making and humanitarian/social activities, including preaching, teaching, intercessory prayer, fasting, healing, deliverance, church planting, social services, disaster relief, development aid, peacemaking, advocacy for justice, conflict mediation, discipling, and training and equipping others for mission.

1.5 Every church, whether at a local, national or regional level, has the responsibility to develop and sustain in biblical ways its God-given gifts for doing and being in mission.

ships around the world in personnel recruitment and in bringing missions development programs to all our Bible schools and seminaries. Everything must be done to demonstrate that we are but one body of Christ. Then we who do missions can truthfully say, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1Corinthians 12:26).

God is in the world, reconciling all people to himself. Let us, therefore, in obedience to the call of Christ, commit all that we are and have, all

our strength, all our hearts and minds, all our souls to sharing the gospel with every person in every home, village, town, city, and nation. Salvation is for whosoever believes. Let those who believe be made disciples worthy of the kingdom of God—always submitting to the authority of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Danisa Ndlovu (right), Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, is vice-president of Mennonite World Conference and bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church of Zimbabwe.



Wilhelm Unger

hip of Anabaptist-related churches

1.6 Anabaptist-related churches and mission groups desire consultation and cooperation in order to increase capacity, mutual accountability, collaboration, and stewardship of resources for cross-cultural mission.

2. GLOBAL MISSION FELLOWSHIP

2.1 Mennonite World Conference (MWC) will facilitate a Global Mission Fellowship where Anabaptist-related churches and mission groups can meet for encouragement, vision-sharing, networking and cooperating in mission.

2.2 All Anabaptist-related churches and mission groups interested or engaged in cross-cultural mission may send representatives to the Global Mission Fellowship.

2.3 Each member may have one representative with voting privileges in the Global Mission Fellowship.

2.4 The Global Mission Fellowship will gather every three years, alternately in conjunction with the MWC Assembly.

2.5 Every member will contribute on a fair share basis to the costs of the Global Mission Fellowship.

2.6 The gatherings of the Global Mission Fellowship will be organized by a Planning Committee which will include a representative selected by each continental region within the Global Mission Fellowship and a representative selected by Mennonite World Conference.

2.7 Mennonite World Conference General Council members will participate in the Global Mission Fellowship every six years when it gathers in conjunction with the MWC Assembly. On the alternate three years the Planning Committee of the Global Mission Fellowship will report to Mennonite World Conference for interaction and counsel.

3. REGIONAL MISSION FELLOWSHIPS

3.1 The Global Mission Fellowship will encourage regional Anabaptist-related churches, conferences and

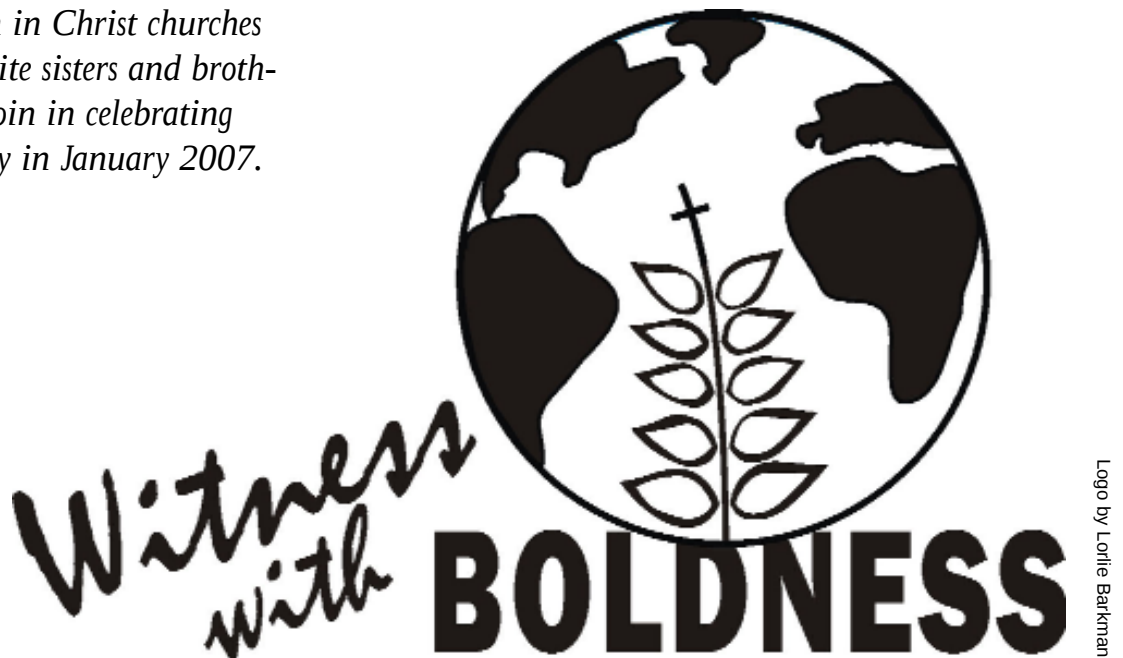
mission groups to provide space for and facilitate regional mission fellowships where Anabaptist-related churches and mission groups from a region—at least two countries but no more than a continent—can meet for encouragement, vision-sharing, networking, and cooperating in mission within as well as beyond their region.

3.2 The leadership of Anabaptist-related national churches and/or mission groups that are engaged in cross-cultural mission will be encouraged to participate in their regional mission fellowship.

3.3 Regional mission fellowships will be encouraged to provide a channel for relationships and cooperation with Anabaptist-related mission groups from outside the region who are engaged in the region.

3.4 The participating groups will share funding of the regional mission fellowships.

Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches from North America invite sisters and brothers around the globe to join in celebrating World Fellowship Sunday in January 2007.



Biblical text: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Suggested hymns

(all suggestions are from the *MWC International Songbook* 2003; or select hymns from your tradition)

"Amazing grace" (#10)

"Come receive his joy" (#23)

"Lo, I am with you to the end" (#45)

Each year, MWC encourages members of our global family of faith to celebrate our worldwide communion, usually on the fourth Sunday in January. In 2007, we have chosen two Sundays, either January 28 or January 21, since the latter is the anniversary of the first Anabaptist baptism in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525.

Countries from a different continental region take turns preparing materials for WFS reflecting the life of the church in their area. This year, a team from North American churches has written these materials based on Jeremiah 1:4-10. As Jeremiah confronted evil, offered hope, and built up the people of God, the church today needs to speak the same message in society and culture.

What appears on these two pages is an adaptation of the materials MWC sent to each national conference. You are encouraged to make copies and use these ideas in ways that will help you enter more fully into fellowship, intercession, and thanksgiving with and for your global faith family.

Please have someone from your church record how you celebrated WFS and send your report to MWC. We want to share your experiences and insights with others in the worldwide family of faith.

—Larry Miller, MWC general secretary

Prayers: local and global

See the prayer requests from each continent on page 15.

Story for children

Raindrops

After the rain, a puddle of water stood in the yard. Abby, wearing her old yellow raincoat and red boots, saw the sky reflected in the water and leaned down for a closer look. Then more raindrops fell, and a few of them landed in the puddle. Each drop rippled outward, connecting with the others. "They're making friends." Abby exclaimed, running to the house. "Come and see the raindrops making friends!"

Jesus wanted his disciples to be like raindrops. He commanded them to go out to all people and teach them about God.

When Jesus touches our lives, he wants us to be like raindrops. He wants us to ripple outward and share the good news. When we're excited about Jesus, we will share that with other people. We want others to know how wonderful it is to have a friend like Jesus. After all, it's hard for a raindrop who loves Jesus to stay in one place.

Think about how you might be a raindrop for Jesus today. Then, start rippling!

—from *101 Devotionals with Children* by June Galle Krehbiel (Herald Press 1999; used by permission)

Prayer

Dear Jesus, I want to be a raindrop for you. Fill me with your love as I reach out to others. Amen.

Clincher

Eternal life is yours. Celebrate. Don't hold this good news to yourself. Tell everyone.—Sally Schreiner

Sharing

In advance, ask several individuals to tell their stories of witnessing with boldness, or of courage in the midst of suffering for their faith, or of their vision for bold and Christ-like congregational activity.

Sermon

Adapt any of the ideas below—or of the resources elsewhere on these pages—for your use:

- When God called, Jeremiah gave an excuse, but his real reason was fear. God delivers us from timidity and fear with the promise of power and constant presence. Such boldness is a gift from God. Jeremiah needed to actively trust God for the courage to speak to a hostile audience. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave boldness to the disciples (John 20:19-22, Acts 1:8; 2). When persecuted, the early church did not pray for their safety but for greater boldness in witnessing (Acts 4:23-31).
- Youth are called to God's work, to make sacrifices. They are given boldness by God. Some biblical examples are Jeremiah; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Mary, the mother of Jesus; and Timothy. Youth today want a relationship with God and to make a difference for Christ in our hurting world.
- God commissioned Jeremiah by touching his mouth. Jesus promised that his disciples would be given the words to say when they were opposed and persecuted (Matthew 10:16-20). The early Anabaptists immersed themselves in the Bible, using the words of Scripture as they spoke to each other, witnessed to unbelievers, testified in court, and sang in prison. God calls us, like Jeremiah, to confront evil and offer hope.

Closing hymn

"God of grace and God of glory" (#34)

Sending / benediction

The Lord says, "Go to all to whom I send you. Speak what I tell you. Do not be afraid. I have put the words in your mouth. I am with you." The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

A profile of North America

North America is a continent of contrasts. In Canada and the United States, there is both great wealth and deep poverty and homelessness. There are vast natural resources and great beauty as well as the ugliness of greed and environmental abuse. There are positive democratic traditions as well as cynicism and mistrust of political systems.

Both countries have been settled by immigrant peoples, but the fear of strangers and racism has led to hurtful social policies. Both countries have historical Christian roots, yet secularism, neglect of the poor, and the myth that violence solves problems abound.

The challenge for the North American church is to live faithfully and sacrificially for Christ, to engage with a culture that is materialistic, self-centered, and glorifies violence without conforming to that culture. Religious pluralism, which leads to being hesitant about witnessing for Christ, also challenges the church.

For some churches, faith is equated with nationalism. Others equate faith with personal piety. But there are also churches which are passionate about evangelism and peace and social justice, building sharing communities, and reaching the postmodern generation.

Mennonite and Brethren in Christ denominations reflect this diversity within our congregations. We want to listen to our youth and young adults who want to be committed to a church that is making a difference, locally and globally. We want to do God's will, to demonstrate God's saving grace, and to follow Jesus Christ into the broken places of our world. And we want to do so with boldness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Though family is important, Christian love needs to be shared

In a Mennonite congregation in Canada, attendance was going down. The members needed to decide whether to stick to their beloved ways—which included services in English and German—or to change to accommodate the newcomers moving into the neighbourhood. These neighbours were immigrants, many from areas experiencing severe conflict, such as Laos, Vietnam, Rwanda, Serbia, Bosnia, Iraq, Iran, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Sudan.

The people in this congregation loved their hymns and worship style. They loved the way they celebrated Christmas, the food they shared, the

serenity and sober atmosphere of the worship service. And, most of all, they loved each other. They were like family. They supported each other when they got sick and old. Yet many families moved away, and it was difficult to attract neighbours who knew no German and very little English.

So the congregation decided that, although family is important, Christian love needs also to touch those not yet in the church. It offered English classes to new immigrants, help with school work for children, legal aid to get Canadian citizenship papers, counselling and help in searching for jobs and hous-

ing. Most importantly, it offered warmth and relationships.

The church began to change. Worship was livelier, using several languages and different songs. There was more noise because many children came. The food changed. The older people learned to love the newcomers. And the newcomers learned what it means to be Christian, Mennonite and Canadian. Some wanted to be baptized.

Today that congregation is alive and growing and it understands better how the gospel of Jesus Christ needs to be shared with those who have not yet heard or responded to it.—*Jack Suderman*

MWC releases 2nd book in global history series

Strasbourg, France—The second volume in the Global Mennonite History series has been released. *Testing Faith and Tradition* tells the story of Mennonite churches in Europe.

Much has been written about Anabaptist beginnings in Europe in the 16th century, but until now, far less has been available about the years that followed. Frequent wars during the past 480 years strained these Mennonite churches immeasurably, especially when their governments battled each other. This volume recounts those torturous and formative experiences.

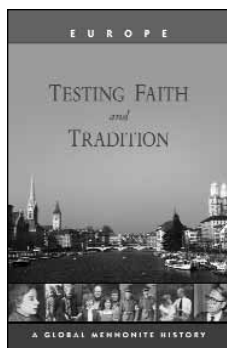
Included in this volume are the distinguishing features of the cultures of the Dutch, French, German, Swiss, Russian, and—more recently—the U.K., Italian, and Spanish and their influences on the Mennonite churches. The unique cultural and historical differences of these churches are a key part of the history told in this 324-page volume.

Many Anabaptist-descended churches throughout Europe are declining in membership, but they are not without reinvigorated faith and hope. The writers from within these fellowships have told a frank and highly engaging story.

European reviewer, Michel Ummel, says that by discussing the book in local congregations “we will better understand where we come from and where we are going.”

Hanspeter Jecker of Switzerland and Alle G. Hoekema of The Netherlands, were co-editors of the Europe volume.

The book, currently available only in English, was first released at the European Mennonite Conference (MERK) in Barcelona, Spain.



Zambia BIC church turns 100

Macha, Zambia—A century ago, two courageous Brethren in Christ missionaries, H. Frances Davidson and Adda Engle, set off to plant a church in Zambia. Today, what began as a mission in the bush of south-central Africa, has grown into a mature and significant part of the body of Christ.

August 16-20, the Zambia BIC Church, along with Brethren in Christ World Missions (BICWM) held a centennial celebration at Macha Mission. More than 2,000 people from 150 congregations across Zambia—along with guests from Malawi, Zimbabwe, the Netherlands, and North America, including church leaders and former missionaries—travelled to Macha for the celebration.

The crowd proved to be too large for the church building, so after the first evening the celebrative services moved outside to a large tent, set up to shade the stage and dignitaries and some participants; many others sat on benches in the sun.

An original drama by Deacon Chindolo featured Frances (Rachel Copen-

haver) and Adda (Stellah Jongolo) arriving in their wagon pulled by two oxen (pastors with cowbells) and meeting a rather feisty Chief Macha (Pastor Muzwanaheni). Ron Herr depicted an old headman going from discouragement to hope as he talked to God.

The celebration was a joyful time of many songs, some of them original; dances; sermons; communion; and an address by the Honorable Lupando Mwape, Zambia's vice-president. He challenged the church to use its gifts and, above all, to show love.

Offering baskets were passed on several occasions to establish an endowment fund for evangelism and church planting. Warren Hoffman presented Bishop Hamukang'andu with a commemorative plaque on behalf of the BICC in North America.

“The centennial celebration is over, and we praise God for his presence through the celebrations ... [and for] the grace of God that has led and is leading us in the church,” said Bishop Hamukang'andu. M. H. Mudenda and Robert Mudaala co-chaired the planning for the event.—*from Intercom, the Zambia BICC monthly missionary newsletter*

Congo churches organize week of peace

Grands Lacs, Congo—In response to MWC's call for Mennonites around the world to observe the first-ever Peace Sunday last September 24, the *Eglise Mennonite des Grands Lacs* (EMGL) decided to hold a week of peace activities, according to a report from Mutabesha Bahati.

Monday and Tuesday, September 18 and 19, were dedicated to praying for peace in families, churches,

Africa, and other continents. On Wednesday EMGL had a Bible study on reconciliation. Thursday and Friday the teaching was on non-violence and the gospel of forgiveness. Saturday the women's group met to pray for peace in the world.

The week culminated on Peace Sunday with a six-hour worship service featuring songs, plays, and a sermon on peace by Pierre Zihindula. Charles Mbuyi

talked about Mennonite identity and peace to more than 170 persons who gathered for the event.

In a commitment to peace ceremony, those attending wrote down the names of persons who had offended them and burned the papers as a sign of forgiveness. The day closed with a fraternal meal.

“We want to keep Peace Sunday a regular activity for our churches,” Bahati writes.

Correction: In the last issue of C/C/C, we incorrectly identified the author of the article, “The day joy came into my life,” as Kazuko Ono. The writer was Aiko Tanase. Our apologies to both authors.



Participating in the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at 50th anniversary celebrations of SEMT / CEMTA were (from left): Ernst Weichselberger, president of CEMTA's board of directors and recently appointed national coordinator for MWC's Assembly 15 in 2009; Andreas Friesen, pastor of the Mennonite Church in Lolita; Nancy López, a third-year theology student; Helmut Siemens, academic director of CEMTA's department of theology; and Marlene and Werner Franz. Werner serves as the general director of CEMTA.

Latin American seminaries celebrate 50 years

San Lorenzo, Paraguay—
“What you have heard from me before many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). This verse permeated the August 10-12, 2006, celebration of the combined witness of two Anabaptist seminaries in

Latin America over the past 50 years.

Seminario Evangelico Menonita de Teologia (SEMT), the Mennonite seminary in Uruguay, opened its doors in 1956 and then closed 18 years later. Centro Evangélico Menonita de Teología Asunción (CEMTA), the Mennonite seminary in Paraguay, had its beginnings in 1977 and continues today.

Featured at the anniversary were a symposium on “Theological Education in and for the 21st Century,” a choral seminar, worship, and thanksgiving.

Symposium speakers started with Anabaptist theological principles, continued with an analysis of post-modernity in the Paraguay context, and concluded with proposals for theological education at CEMTA.

The dedication of a new building housing a library and an auditorium was part of the 50th anniversary of the Latin American seminaries.

Attending the celebration were 48 former students and pastors from different churches, as well as 72 students of CEMTA and of the Instituto Bíblico Asunción (IBA), both university-level schools of theology.

Paul Dueck of Canada directed a choral seminar during the celebration; its students performed during a Friday evening musical program. The CEMTA choirs also sang hymns highlighting God's faithfulness.

Anniversary activities closed with a thanksgiving service. The program included historical reflections, a biblical message, songs by the choirs, words of appreciation, testimonies, and greetings.

The anniversary celebration also included the inauguration of a new library and auditorium and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque.

Participants came from different parts of Paraguay and from abroad.—from a report by Renate Penner

Peace endeavors receive awards for global work

Three Mennonite-Anabaptist groups or individuals have received awards for their work in promoting peace from international organizations during the past year.

Justapaz. The Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation (SWEFOR) awarded its prize for nonviolence to Justapaz, a ministry of the Mennonite Church in Colombia.

Headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, SWEFOR said it made the choice because “Justapaz in Colombia is a source of inspiration for individuals and other nonviolent movements on how it is possible to work with active nonviolence in spite of the risks of a violent society.”

John Paul Lederach. The Polytechnical University of Nicaragua awarded its annual Order of the Culture of Peace to John Paul Lederach, South Bend, Indiana, USA, an international consultant on conciliation and mediation. The university said Lederach's Mennonite faith and work “distinguish him as an ethical model, a person who coherently has integrated belief and action.”

Christian Peacemaker Teams. CPT has been awarded the first-ever Michael Sattler Peace Award by the German Mennonite Peace Committee (DMFK). Also supported by the Evangelical Church of Rottenburg, the Catholic peace organization Pax Christi, and the city of Rottenburg, the award recognizes CPT's nonviolent work in various parts of the globe.



Central America women hold first meeting, gain voice in CAMCA

San José, Costa Rica—Women from across Central America met here last July for the first-ever gathering of Anabaptist women theologians and Bible students.

Goals for the gathering included talking about women's roles in church, identifying the context in which Central American women operate, reflecting on misinterpretations of the Bible on women's roles in the life of the church, and agreeing on future actions.

A total of 73 women from several Central American countries attended. Many stayed on for the subsequent Consulta Anabautista Menonita de Centro



Some of the participants in CAMCA—the Consulta Anabautista Menonita de Centro América. Many of those at this gathering had already attended the first-ever meeting of Central America Anabaptist women theologians, which took place at the same location in Costa Rica.

América (the Central American Anabaptist and Mennonite Consultation—CAMCA). At the latter, a proposal was made to include women as delegates with both voice and vote.

“[Women] understand

God's *kairos*, the moment when the Spirit breathes new life into each of them. The fact that they have attended this gathering is a sign that there is a profound yearning in them to revitalize church life with a new vision involv-

ing their participation as agents of transformation in God's kingdom,” said Manuel Izaguirre, who made the proposal.

The assembly approved and elected Alina Itucama of Panama as a member of the CAMCA board of directors.

During their meeting, the Central American women theologians named Concepción Villeda, Guatemala, and Albania Romero, Honduras, co-chairs for future gatherings. Graciela Amador, Nicaragua, was named secretary, and Sandra Campos will continue to serve as overseer.

“Without any doubt, this first meeting of Central American women theologians has been a great success,” said Campos. “We attained most of our objectives and even more than we expected. God has been faithful.”

This gathering is part of a worldwide effort led by MWC to encourage women in theological training and pastoral ministries. Similar gatherings have been held in different regions of Africa since 1999.—*Milka Rindzinski with reports by Sandra Campos and Ofelia García*

PARAGUAY 2009

Ray Brubacher



Rogelio Duarte, National Coordinating Council:

Hope for a stronger peace church

Asunción, Paraguay—“I hope international visitors will learn to know the difference between Uruguay and Paraguay,” jokes Rogelio Duarte when

asked about his dreams for MWC's Assembly 15 to be held in his home country in 2009.

Rogelio is the Recording Secretary for the National Coordinating Council, where he represents the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita del Paraguay.

Rogelio also has more serious hopes: that Paraguayans will develop a better understanding of who Mennonites are; that newer churches will deepen their understanding of what it means to be Christian from a Mennonite perspective; that Assembly 15 will help all Mennonites become a stronger peace church.

Rogelio was born in the Chaco, just across the Paraguay River from Asunción. He began attending a Mennonite Church at age 15 “just to do something different.” The strong sense of community led him to ask for baptism at age 17 even while in the military. Later, he came to appreciate peace as central to the gospel. He says the peace witness of the churches in Central America has been particularly inspiring to him.

Since 1980 Rogelio has served as a pastor in both Paraguay and Argentina. He is currently on a ten-month leave from the Centro Evangélico Menonita de Teología Asunción (CEMTA), where he teaches spiritual formation and evangelism.

Rogelio and his wife, Martha, have four children ranging in age from 19 to 25.—*Ray Brubacher*



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Larry Miller
Publisher

J. Lorne Peachey
Editor

Ferne Burkhardt
News editor

Eleanor Miller
Communications Assistant

TRANSLATORS

French Sylvie Gudín
Spanish Milka Rindzinski

INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE GROUP

Africa Danisa Ndlovu
Asia Eddy Sutjipto
Europe Markus Rediger
Latin America . . . Peter Stucky
North America . . . Naomi Unger
Staff Ray Brubacher
Pakisa Tshimika

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Requests for prayer from MWC churches around the world

Africa

- Tribal wars, clan divisions, food shortages and famine in some areas afflict many parts of Africa. Pray for God's mercy on his people in those areas.
- Tribal differences and personalities create splinter groups within Anabaptist-related churches. Pray for a new spirit of unity and that church leaders in the MWC community look for ways to reconcile with those groups.
- HIV/AIDS is increasing in Africa. Many countries receive assistance from Western governments and international NGOs (non-governmental organizations), but corruption hinders aid from reaching the most needy. Pray that God will change the hearts of African leaders to be fair to their citizens.

Asia

- Amidst natural disasters, social restlessness, and economic slow-down, pray that God will enable governments to cope with multiple problems, give leaders wisdom in making decisions, and give them the ability to make significant improvements.
- Various national and international mission boards do evangelism among the 85% of the 200 million people in Indonesia who are still non-believers. Pray that God will open more hearts to believe in Christ. Pray for courage and wisdom for evangelists in proclaiming the good news, despite much oppression and opposition.
- Christian faith and witness is thriving in many countries. Praise God for the many who believe in Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. Pray for these Christians and that many more will join in following Christ.

These requests for prayer were adapted from those distributed by MWC with the World Fellowship Sunday materials (see pages 10-11).

Europe

- Pray for church growth in Europe.
- Pray for openness to put God's will into practice in our churches and countries.
- Pray that we do not forget the poor, strangers, and immigrants and that we will keep our eyes open for the disadvantaged in our society.

Latin America

- In some parts of the continent, people are victims of kidnappings, terrorist activities, and other hidden crimes. Many, including Christians and leaders, lose their lives. Pray for God's will to be fulfilled in these areas.
- Pray for the Mennonite leaders in Paraguay preparing for MWC's Assembly 15 in 2009. Many different groups, including several indigenous ones, are represented on the planning team. Pray for unity and the witness this brings to many in Paraguay.
- Pray for governments who are under tremendous pressure from powerful outside countries to submit to their economic and military demands. This pressure often results in terrorist activities, which can affect the church in various ways.

North America

- Commitment to the values and goals of God's kingdom in the face of social pressure is difficult. Christians are tempted to join government agenda and to support unjust wars and extreme measures to fight against terrorism. Pray for the North American church as it faces this pressure.
- While the church is growing elsewhere in the world, it is struggling in North America. Pray for renewal and for renewed church planting efforts.
- Pray for a heart of generosity and for the release of wealth that the church might share with others and that governments will allocate more funds for international aid.

Perspective:

Emerging missions

by Javier Soler & Janet Plenert

The paradigm of Anabaptist missions is changing. That is true in both the structure of missions and the way in which missions is carried out. All this became part of the discussions at the meeting of the Global Mission Fellowship (GMF) in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in September 2006.

Following that gathering, two GMF leaders talked with Courier / Correo / Courrier about this new face of Anabaptist missions. Javier Soler, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, has been chair of GMF since its beginning in 2003. Janet Plenert, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, was elected chair of GMF at the recent meeting in Kazakhstan.

Javier: Many of us have had great results in the past as we have worked to reach those near us with the gospel. But this work has just been on the part of some of us—missions from some churches to some people. Our way of talking about missions now should be in terms of emerging missions—from all churches to all people. GMF is just starting to open up the possibilities of all of us working together for the sake of God's kingdom.

Janet: GMF made a very significant decision in Almaty. We agreed to work toward becoming a commission of Mennonite World Conference. I believe this will strengthen the global Anabaptist church in its mission. It ensures that the mission of the church does not function separately from the rest of the body. And it also ensures that the church has a significant voice in calling itself to the task of gathering all things together in Christ, who is the head.

Javier: We in both the South and the North have to change our way of thinking about missions. We must unite to fulfill the work the Lord has commissioned us to do.

Janet: Our gathering in Kazakhstan showed both the traditional mission-sending bodies and the newer mission-sending bodies that we need each other to work together at the vocation of the church. In the 21st century, it is simply not viable, nor acceptable, for us to work in isolation from other parts of the body.

Javier: This was very much illustrated for us in our venue in Kazakhstan. This is an area of emerging missions, with a history of persecution and suffering. Very few people here have had the opportunity to be involved in the mission of the church before.

Janet: While Kazakhstan appears in the history of Mennonite migrations, it is not a place where there are any Mennonite groups currently at work.

At the same time, I was inspired and delighted by the warm welcome and enthusiasm with which we from GMF were received by the people of Kazakhstan. These Christians were passionate, vibrant, eager to learn, enthusiastic, even fervent in their faith witness. We have much to learn from them.

Javier: As I witnessed the devotion, simplicity, and the natural way in which these people live out the gospel, I was affirmed in thinking that there are many ways of doing missions. Worshipping with the people of Kazakhstan gave me a clearer view of the opportunity God is opening for the people of both the North and the South to work together in missions.

Janet: Kazakhstan reminded us of the urgency of the agenda of missions. But we can only meet the challenge as we work together. Both Javier and I believe GMF can be an excellent way through which this can happen.

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616 Walnut Avenue
Scottdale, PA 15683-1999
USA