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'That they may be one'

# *Congolese Mennonites express desire for greater unity and cooperation*

by Tim C. Lind

**F**ifty Congolese from different parts of the world's second largest concentration of Mennonites gathered in Kinshasa from November 22-25, 2007, for the first national forum of the Congo Forum for Conversation.

The forum for conversation is a process facilitated by the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) to encourage reflection among Congolese Mennonites about the future of their churches. Its goal is to reflect on new models for relationships with other parts of the global Anabaptist community.

The group embodied a diversity that has rarely been seen before at Mennonite church gatherings in Congo. Made up of an equal number of women and men, the participants included young and old. They came from places like Panzi, Tshikapa, Mbuji Mayi, Kajiji, Kikwit, Kananga, Kahemba, and, of course, the capital, Kinshasa.

There was strong representation from each of the three Mennonite denomina-

tions in Congo: Communauté des Eglises de Frères Mennonites au Congo (Congo Mennonite Brethren Church—CEFMC); Communauté Evangélique Mennonite (Congo Evangelical Mennonite Church—CEM); and Communauté Mennonite au Congo (Congo Mennonite Church—CMCo). Most participants were lay people, but leaders from the three denominations were also invited.

While the forum resulted from an ongoing process, already there have been some surprising results. Foremost of these has been the interest of the Congolese in inter-Mennonite relationships in their own country.

"The group was unanimous in citing this as a matter of central importance," according to Toss Mukwa, consultant to the process, and a member of Communauté des Eglises de Frères Mennonites au Congo. "It came as a great surprise to us as organizers; outside of our expectations."

The strong desire of the participants for greater unity and cooperation among Mennonites of the three Congolese denominations was reflected in the group's decision to change the name of the process. They agreed on Forum de Dialogue Inter-Mennonite Congolais (Congolese Inter-Mennonite Forum for Conversation—CIFC).

Participants also expressed a strong desire for greater awareness of Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage and values.

The CIFC evolved from discussions over a period of several years among the Mennonite denominations of Congo, MWC, mission and service agencies with history of involvement in Congo, and churches in other parts of the world interested in developing relationships with Congolese Mennonites.

**A**ll these groups have noted that in Congo, as in many other parts of the world, models that served in the past for relationships between churches are no longer effective or desirable. It is important to construct new models with input and ideas from all sides, including especially those parts of the global church from which ideas are often not heard and nurtured.

The primary structure of the CIFC is ten "reflection groups" made up of fifteen persons each, in ten different locations around the country. Each group includes Mennonites from all of the denominations present in the particular location. For the past year these groups have been meeting quarterly to discuss a common set of questions, such as:

- What have you learned from the history of relationships of your church with mission and service agencies?
- What were the results of these relationships?
- What are three or four contributions that Congolese Mennonites can

**Cover:** *Ernesto Klassen holds his grandson Hernan as they watch a tree planting by the MWC Executive Committee at Yalve Sanga, Paraguay, last August. The Executive Committee was in Paraguay in preparation of MWC's Assembly 15, scheduled to be held in Asunción July 14-19, 2009. Many of the tours before or after the assembly will include the Chaco, where Ernesto and his grandson live. For more on Paraguay 2009, see pages 8-9.*

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*Congolese Mennonites from throughout Democratic Republic of Congo gathered in Kinshasa November 22-25, 2007, for the first national Forum de Dialogue Inter-Mennonite*

*Congolais (Congolese Inter-Mennonite Forum for Conversation—CIFC). The group at the November meeting agreed to continue the conversation for another two years.*

bring to the global Mennonite community, and vice versa?

- What is the appropriate role for central church leadership in a church where the membership plays an active and engaged role?
- Reflect, discuss, and describe the desired models and roles for future relationships among Congolese Mennonite communities.

The November national forum was an attempt to synthesize and analyze the findings of the various groups, and to plan for the second year of reflection in group meetings. Four representatives of each of the ten groups attended the Kinshasa meeting.

The CIFC is scheduled to continue for another two years of reflection in group meetings and an annual consultation. MWC hopes the CIFC model may be useful in similar efforts elsewhere.

Currently costs of the CIFC process are shared by the Congolese churches and a variety of other churches and agencies: Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, Mennonite Church Canada Witness, Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Brethren Mission and Service International, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Central Committee, and MWC.

*Tim C. Lind, Three Rivers, Michigan, USA, serves as Church-to-Church Relations Coordinator for MWC.*

## *Reflecting rationally and diligently to reach a better future*

*Five CIFC participants reflect on what the recent forum meant for them personally as well as for the future of the Mennonite churches in Congo.*

This first national forum of what became the Forum de Dialogue InterMennonite Congolais provided some historic moments for the participants. We met together in an ideal setting to analyze the relationships of our churches with other churches and agencies and especially to look at possible directions for the future.

For me, it was a particular joy to experience, for the first time, a sense of communion and inter-Mennonite fellowship that I had long awaited.

This opportunity, offered by MWC, allowed my brothers and sisters and me to return to our roots, to our identity, and to our values, all of which have seemed in the past to be only empty words.

It was also very impressive to see 50 people of all ages and genders, both clergy and lay people, from Kinshasa and from the interior of the country, and from all of the Mennonite communities, speaking in a single voice. We were one body, putting aside all that was not in the interest of the

Mennonite churches and their future.

I had not imagined that people would travel 500 km, in conditions such as we have here in Congo, to come together to talk about what it means to be Mennonite.

I thank MWC for having facilitated this grassroots meeting of Mennonites in Congo. It has reminded us to be more aware of our context, the church, and to reflect rationally and diligently in order to reach a better future.—*Jean Jenner Ngolo Gidiata, Ngaba, Kinshasa*

This gathering was unique, because it brought together for the first time members of the grassroots, as Mennonite Christians from different congregations in ten locations throughout Congo gathered to reflect together. These were not church leaders but ordinary members who volunteered to give their time, energy, and intelligence to think and share ideas about the future of the Mennonite churches in Congo and throughout the world. This activity is understood as a part of the ongoing commitment to the sharing of gifts.

In observing the atmosphere of our work together during these three days, I was struck by the enthusiasm that the



*Eugenie Muangala (center) and Kasayi Ndakume converse with Jackson Benandumbe over breakfast at the CIFIC forum. All are from Kinshasa.*

participants had for freely expressing their ideas, and their desire to give the best of themselves for changes in relationships between the Mennonite churches of Congo on one hand and the global Anabaptist community on the other.

Some of these participants, our brothers and sisters from Bandundu Province (Kajiji, Panzi, and Kahemba), walked long distances to attend the

The Mennonite community in Congo is larger than that of any country except the USA. It represents about one fifth of the global MWC membership. Despite the country's size, the Congo churches are relatively isolated from other parts of the global community of Anabaptist churches.

Historically the primary partners of the Congo Mennonite churches have been Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM), and Mennonite Brethren Mission and Service International (MBMSI). Current programme and presence of these agencies in Congo has been much reduced from historical levels. As a result, there is growing interest in Congo in developing new models for churches to relate to each other as equals.

But because of cultural and historic issues, it is very difficult for

meetings. Even to come to the city of Kinshasa took strong commitment because of the lack of transportation and bad condition of the roads. I know others walked a long distance to reach a plane to take them to Kinshasa. That was strong commitment—*Kazadi Germain, Mbuji Mayi*

The crisis in all areas of life in the Democratic Republic of Congo has not allowed the Mennonite churches to remain a model of the faith. Thus a new vision of the church becomes a necessity in order to find ways and means for harmonious development in relationships.

This growing awareness of the need for a change has given birth to 10 reflection groups located throughout the country. As the facilitator of the Forum noted, "Everything changes, everything moves, and everything is different."

Out of our discussions in November, the following priorities for the future of the church were identified:

- healthy administration;
- strategies for self-reliance;
- developing members' capacities;

Congolese Mennonites to contribute ideas and initiatives as equals in interactions with churches and agencies outside of Congo. It is this specific issue that the CIFIC addresses. The group that meets uses the term "forum" in the sense of a medium of open discussion.

CIFIC is a process to nurture the capacity of the Congo Mennonite churches to interact with other churches, groups and agencies—including both existing and new partners—in more mutuality. The process is designed to strengthen and facilitate existing and potential structures and relationships.

CIFIC is expected to continue under MWC administration for a further two years. One of the primary purposes of MWC is to encourage and nurture relationships among its member churches.

—*Tim C. Lind*

- involvement of the grassroots in decision-making;
- appropriate partnerships between North and South;
- conflict management within and between churches.

The CIFIC forum has resulted in a burst of new ideas. The Mennonite churches of Congo must take advantage of these ideas in creating a vision for the church of tomorrow.—*Pascal Mabira, Kananga*

The national forum held last November was a great joy for us, because it allowed us to experience once again—after a number of years of absence—the pleasure of communion and fellowship with other Mennonites. As Tim Lind from MWC also reminded us, what we were doing here would also benefit churches in many other countries.

For me, four key points came out of our discussions:

- the need for the grassroots to take greater responsibility for the church;
- responsible partnerships, implying interdependence between the overseas churches and the churches of Congo;
- proper administration of resources;
- increased partnerships within Congo.

The gathering ended with a commitment from the leaders of our churches to support the ongoing process of reflection for the next two years.—*Fumunguya Mado, UCKIN, Kinshasa*

In addition to the grassroots participation in the forum, equally important was the participation of the legal representatives or their delegates from the churches. They could carefully follow the proceedings while at the same time giving the official views as leaders of the three Mennonite churches.

One of the important contributions of the leaders who were present at the forum is that they provided moral support and encouraged the participants in their efforts.

I am grateful to MWC for organizing the forum. We could work in good conditions with respect to lodging, transportation, and meals. I am grateful to God for protection; we had no illnesses to interrupt our work.

—*Laurent Kamizelo Kianza, Tshikapa*



‘That they may be one’

# So that the world may believe

by Elizabeth Vado

Jesus pronounced what has become known as the “Priestly Prayer” in John 17 a short time before his death and resurrection. This request to the Father reveals Jesus’ profound concern for both his disciples and for future believers that they:

- be kept from the evil;
- become one.

Why? So that the world may believe, even as Jesus and his Father are one.

According to Luke in the book of Acts, the early Christian communities, inspired by the Holy Spirit, lived according to Jesus’ yearning and prayer. They were in one accord, read the Scriptures together, shared all things, partaking of bread and wine and rejoicing together. As a result, the numbers of believers increased every day.

But when the Apostle Paul began his ministry in Palestine and in Asia Minor, he found divided communities. These were the results of the efforts of many preachers who brought different teachings. Paul’s writings reflect this division, particularly in the epistles to the Corinthians.

In Ephesians 4, Paul’s advice is to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. In Philippians 2, he requests his disciples to be of the same mind, have the same love, be in full accord and of one mind, in this way glorifying Christ.

Clearly, the New Testament emphasizes the fact that unity and love in the collective testimony of the believers are indispensable for the proclamation of the gospel.

We who live in the third millennium are facing the same struggles and historical dilemmas of peace and justice. To this we must add the difficult topic of the unity of Christianity.

Jesus’ prayer was prophetic; it fits our times. We are affected by the diverse realities of our world: social, cultural, political, economic, and religious differences separate us.

The Nicaraguan Anabaptist theologian A. Araica, puts it this way:

“We are living the new forms of this globalized society that divide and separate us day after day by means of intolerance, consumerism, reactive violence, lack of solidarity, racial disintegration and fighting between peoples and cultures, a world where ‘sacred wars’ are justified and faith is used to carry out abuses against life.”

In this new global society, we must remember Jesus’ words about unity. In this way, Jesus says, the world will come to believe.

As Anabaptist churches, we must examine our witness to unity as a vital element of discipleship:

*Elizabeth Vado, Managua, Nicaragua, is a preacher, Sunday school teacher, and mother of two sons. She is also a member of the MWC Executive Committee. Here she plays a charango at last year’s meeting in Paraguay.*

- To rebuild the church and its corporate life to be grounded in kingdom values;

- To be a community with a new agenda, opposed to the evil powers, faithful to our mission;

- To be in the world but not to live according to the anti-kingdom values of this world;

- To be a community that seeks integral well-being, that offers support for its members, that fosters economic participation in various ways, that provides in times of want, that practices jubilee, that shares gifts and virtues in times of joy and in times of suffering, that liberates and unites;

- To be a generous community that provides an alternative to consumerism and accumulation and seeks to serve instead of subdue—evidence of our love for our enemies and our practice of peace and forgiveness;

- To be a community that invites others to follow Jesus, that offers help to the stigmatized, that includes instead of excludes;

- To promote a new concept of unity and to believe that the demands of unity and of diversity are reconcilable in Christ.

Unity in diversity embodies God’s design for the fullness of human shalom. It does not consider love as a spiritualized thing that does not belong to this world, like the medieval concept of grace, but a love that is lived daily.

Through unity we can discern the times and the new forms of idolatry that divide us. Personal ambitions vanish, as do hierarchies and the fascination for the mundane. The basin and towel replace the sword. Structures of service and surrender dethrone bureaucracies, and solidarity with the excluded and suffering peoples eliminates borders and exalts Christ’s name!





The Mennonite churches in Uruguay

# Serving God in the midst of stability

by Milka Rindzinski

*This is another in a series of articles on the MWC member churches of the Southern Cone in preparation for Paraguay 2009.*

Uruguay is one of the smallest countries in South America. The name means “river of multicolored birds” in the Guaraní language. The country enjoys political and relative economic stability. Half of its population of 3.5 million lives in the capital city, Montevideo.

Sixty-six years ago the first Mennonites arrived in Uruguay. Today there are three organized Mennonite conferences: *Konferenz der Mennonitengemeinde*, *Consejo las Congregaciones Hermanos Menonitas*, and *Convención de Iglesias Evangélicas Menonitas*.

### *Konferenz der Mennonitengemeinde.*

At the end of World War II, the first group of Mennonites from Europe was led to immigrate into Uruguay. Most of them settled as farmers. They organized three agricultural co-operative colonies almost like the first Christian communities. In 2007, the *Konferenz der Mennonitengemeinde* had some 525 baptized members.

The *Konferenz* runs a children’s home, *Hogar Siquem*, and a boarding house for young people from the colonies studying and or working in Montevideo.

*Consejo de las Congregaciones Hermanos Menonitas.* Another group that migrated to Uruguay were Mennonite Brethren, most of whom later moved to Canada and Germany. In 1966, the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services in

North America sent missionaries to establish churches among the Uruguayan people. Today there are nine MB congregations with a membership of approximately 260.

In 1978 a Bible Institute was started to train leaders. A retreat center, *Villa Maranatha*, with accommodation for some 60 people is a major contribution to the church life for this group.

*Convención de Iglesias Evangélicas Menonitas.* This group is the largest of the three with approximately 700 members in 15 churches. In 1954, the Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM, now Mennonite Mission Network) sent the first mission workers to explore the possibility of planting new churches in Uruguay. The first baptisms took place in 1956.

Also in 1956, the *Seminario Evangélico Menonita de Teología*

(SEMT) began in Montevideo with the support of MBM and the General Conference Mennonite Church of the USA. Students came from Uruguay and neighboring countries as well as from Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico, Canada, and Spain.

Missionaries, newly baptized members, SEMT students and professors, and the colony settlers were all concerned about reaching out. Together they began four new churches and in 1960 organized an Evangelization Board.

As the new churches matured, they expressed a desire not to be considered “missionary churches” any longer. So in 1972 they organized a *Convención de Iglesias Menonitas en Uruguay*.

Several years later, the *Konferenz* and the *Convención* agreed to replace the Evangelization Board with a *Confraternidad de Iglesias Menonitas*. This group was designed to nurture fraternal relationships through periodic worship services. In its most recent meeting in 2007, jointly organized by the three groups, a large meeting room



was overflowing with an attentive audience listening to messages on church unity. This had been an aspiration of many—bringing together the three families of Mennonites in the country.

At first, financial support for the Convención came from Mennonite agencies in the USA. Several years ago, a majority of Uruguayan leaders became convinced that “to receive this kind of financial support was not biblical.” Today most Mennonite pastors in Uruguay are self-supporting.

Because of the instability brought by a country dictatorship that lasted 11 years, the number of students at SEMT decreased considerably and it was closed in 1974.

Education has always been a strong value of Uruguayan churches. So local churches decided to start a training center for the Mennonite churches of Uruguay. Its assignment was to organize an Anabaptist-oriented program for leadership training. Today Mennonite Mission Network of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church



*Ernst Regehr, one of the first settlers at Delta Colony in Uruguay, stands by the rock placed on the grounds of the colony in 2005 to mark 50 years since its founding. The rock is naturally shaped like Uruguay, where German Mennonites established two other colonies in addition to Delta—El Ombú and Gartental.*

Canada Witness are partners with local churches to finance this study center. This means the Uruguayan churches are again receiving funds from our brothers and sisters in the North.

Amid the concert of evangelical Christian churches in Uruguay, what beliefs are particularly emphasized by Mennonites?

Uruguay is a country where there is freedom of speech, of religion, and of conscience—with no compulsory

military service. While our roots are in the 16th-century Anabaptist reformation of the church, it has not become urgent to cultivate specific emphases. But I have no doubt that if the occasion demands, many would be ready to proclaim Anabaptist faith values without measuring the consequences.

*Milka Rindzinski, Montevideo, Uruguay, is the retired editor of Courier-Correo-Courier.*

## That which we once experienced we can give to others

Many times we have talked about our ancestors' readiness to share during those first years when they were resettling in Uruguay and did not have enough. Once, when they needed to collect money to build the first pulpit, they collected 10 times the necessary sum.

I remember that a few days after the catastrophic flood that hit the Uruguayan city of Durazno in May 2007, which left 6,000 homeless, a Christian organization called and asked our churches to contribute to help the victims. What we received was so abundant that a large truck

was required to transport the donations.

Meanwhile we wondered whether there was anything else we could do. During our Konferenz annual meeting in the Gartental colony, we agreed that assisting our neighbor is a fundamental part of our Christian faith, and we started planning. As a result, 165 volunteers went into the flooded area of Durazno on May 19-21 for cleaning, disinfecting, painting, and repairing houses.

We all wore white T-shirts with the slogan, “For Him, for you!” These were seen everywhere against the gray disorder left by the receding flood waters.

We not only cleaned their houses. Many people received medical care, comfort, and encouragement to go on. And a number of them received the most valuable thing of all: salvation through Jesus Christ.

That weekend was very significant for our people. We discovered giving is better than receiving. The joy that God gave us for this “sacrifice” is inexplicable. The “joyful fatigue” that one feels after an event of this sort is immeasurable. God also used that time to strengthen our unity as a church.—*Rainer Kunze, chairman, Konferenz der Mennonitengemeinde in Uruguay*



Paraguay  
2009

## 'Come together in the way of Jesus Christ' to be theme of MWC Assembly 15 in 2009

Strasbourg, France—When Anabaptists from around the world gather in Asunción, Paraguay, in July 2009, the anticipated 7,000 participants will do so around the theme, "Come together in the way of Jesus Christ."

That was the decision of MWC's officers and senior staff meeting in Mainz, Germany, in January. The decision comes after a long process on the theme and wording for the next assembly.

Themes of unity and service rose to the top of a long list of ideas from around the world that were considered by the Executive Committee and the Program Committee when they met in Asunción in August 2007. At that meeting, the Program Committee was directed to do further work on refining a theme for the assembly.

Officers and senior staff decided on the theme's text after hearing suggestions that came out of Program Committee meetings in Paraguay in November.

"The theme of 'unity' is reflected most explicitly in the first words: 'Come together,'" says Larry Miller, MWC general secretary. "The 'way of Jesus Christ' points to the description in Philippians 2 of how to come together, that is, as a 'servant' of one another

and of all." Nancy Heisey, MWC president agrees, "Jesus Christ is our model, the one who empowers us for service."

"The more I think about the theme, the more I enjoy the peace that comes with it," reflects Danisa Ndlovu, MWC president-elect and current vice-president. "This to me is a theme that embraces an invitation as well as a charge to all faithful disciples of Christ. It tells who we are as well as how we should act as faithful and obedient followers of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Miller notes that one of the names for early Christianity was simply "the way" and that Jesus said, "I am the way."

"The 'way' also points to the core New Testament value, in an Anabaptist perspective, of discipleship, of following Christ, of taking up the cross, to the glory of God, as described in Philippians 2," adds Miller.

Executive Committee members agreed in August that the Philippians 2:1-11 passage be one of the foundational scriptures at Assembly 15. As the result of the Germany meeting, planners now also have a theme on which to build as they develop the program in coming months.

### Leadership for Paraguay 2009:

Overseeing preparations for MWC's Assembly 15 are Ernst Weichselberger, Asunción, Paraguay (left), national coordinator, and Ray Brubacher, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, international coordinator.



MWC Assembly 15 Program Committee (back, from left): Ernst Weichselberger, Larry Miller, Markus Rediger, Naomi

## Committee at work plans for global Anabaptist gathering

If choosing a theme for a global assembly took many people spending hours in prayer and discussion [see story at left], planning worship services for that assembly becomes even more time-consuming.

As is often the case, this work involves a committee, a group that works hard, prays together, studies, talks endlessly, and, yes, has fun together.

Six people have been given that assignment by MWC for its next assembly in Asunción, Paraguay, July 14-19, 2009. Three of these represent the MWC Executive Committee, three are from Paraguay. Three staff members and the assembly music coordinator also meet with them.

*Ditrich Pana* represents the three indigenous conferences who are members of MWC in Paraguay. He is a pastor and evangelist. And he speaks more languages than anyone else on the committee—six!

*Juan Silverio Verón* represents the two Spanish-speaking conferences in Paraguay. He is a pastor and a professional family counselor, focusing on building healthy marriages.

*Ed Toews* represents the three



photo by Markus Rediger



Unger; (front) Ray Brubacher, Elizabeth Vado, Juan Verón, Ed Toews, Ditrich Pana, and Paul Dueck.

## ning worship services athering in Asunción

German-speaking conferences who are members of MWC in Paraguay. He is a teacher of music at a Mennonite secondary school in the Chaco.

**Markus Rediger** is an MWC Executive Committee member from Switzerland, where he is managing director of an agricultural information center and a leader in the Swiss Mennonite Church.

**Elizabeth Vado** is an MWC Executive Committee member from Nicaragua. She is a professor of theology and the founding director of a child protection center.

**Naomi Unger** is a representative on the MWC Executive Committee from Canada, where she is a lay minister. She served with Mennonite Central Committee in Africa for over 11 years.

**Paul Dueck**, born and raised in Paraguay but now living in Canada, has been appointed the assembly music coordinator. He is a music teacher in a Mennonite secondary school in Ontario.

Also meeting with the Program Committee are Ernst Weichselberger, National Coordinator; Ray Brubacher, International Coordinator; and Larry Miller, MWC General Secretary.

## Seminar planned at Assembly 15 for global Mennonite business people

*Asunción, Paraguay*—A two-day by-invitation seminar for global Mennonite business people is planned to coincide with the 2009 MWC Assembly 15 in Paraguay.

The seminar is scheduled for July 12-13, immediately prior to the July 14-19 Assembly in the capital city of Asunción.

Plans are to invite several Anabaptist business people from each of the five MWC continental regions to explore the challenges facing Anabaptists in business. Sponsors are Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) along with MEDA Paraguay and MWC.

“We want to spend two days reflecting and learning about the unique opportunities and challenges facing Anabaptist business people around the world,” says MEDA vice-president Howard Good.

Good is planning the seminar with Kurt Falk, president of MEDA Paraguay, and Ray Brubacher, Assembly 15 international coordinator.

“We are very honored to host this gathering,” says Falk. “We have a dynamic and enthusiastic Mennonite business community here in Paraguay, and our members look forward to holding such talks with other business people from around the world.”

“The Anabaptist business community is a vital part of the global church,” says Brubacher. “MWC is extremely pleased to be a part of this gathering. It is fitting that MEDA is giving direction to these conversations, since MEDA began its international work in Paraguay 54 years ago.”

The program, still tentative, is expected to have four components:

1. Business as a calling—how faith influences business.
2. Business opportunities in a shifting global economy.
3. Business as salt and light.
4. How business can address poverty.

Attendance will be kept small and regionally proportionate: five each from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe and

North America, as well as five from the host country, Paraguay.

“We will target active church members, preferably those who own or operate businesses of at least 30 employees,” says Good.

People who want to be considered for invitation by the selection committee should contact Good at [hgood@meda.org](mailto:hgood@meda.org) by April 30, 2008.

## Zimbabwe choir hopes to sing at Assembly 15

*Asunción, Paraguay*—Choral Sounds, a 55-voice Brethren in Christ (BIC) choir from Zimbabwe, wants to sing in Paraguay in 2009.

The choir, drawn from several churches around Bulawayo, shared its music during worship at MWC’s Assembly 14 in Zimbabwe in 2003. Now the youth and young adult choir members and their director, Lusani Nkomo, plan to accompany president-elect Danisa Ndlovu, to Assembly 15 in Asunción, Paraguay.

They remember the thousands of people from around the world who came to their country in 2003. The Zimbabwean singers believe it is important for them to join the global Anabaptist family at the next assembly, says Ndlovu.

“The difficult challenges people in Zimbabwe face does not kill the spirit of giving,” says Ndlovu. “People will give what they can afford.”

Fund raising for the choir’s proposed trip got a good start with a \$10,000 (US) donation from a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Despite numerous challenges, the choir rehearses every Monday night with hopes of realizing their dream to share their music in worship services in Asunción in 2009.

Zimbabweans, in addition to the choir, hope to go to Paraguay 2009. A hurdle for all of them besides finding the money will be getting an entry visa, since there is no Paraguayan embassy in Zimbabwe.

## Asia Mennonites pursue different MWC relationship

Tokyo, Japan—Asia Mennonite Conference (AMC) representatives, meeting here October 10-14, 2007, decided to move ahead on an “outline of merger” with Mennonite World Conference (MWC).

According to the proposal, AMC will become known as the Asia Caucus within the structure of MWC and comply with the MWC constitution. Within the Asia region, however, the organization will continue to carry the name Asia Mennonite Conference in its communication and program.

The question before the delegates was whether AMC and MWC should remain separate while developing a closer relationship or merge structurally in some way. An outline for merger was pre-



At their annual meeting in Tokyo, Japan, last October, delegates to the Asia Mennonite Conference work together on a proposal that would lead to a merger of AMC with MWC.

pared by Larry Miller, MWC general secretary, then revised by the AMC representatives. The proposal will be refined prior to a joint meeting of the AMC and MWC executive committees in July 2008. Implementation may include setting up a MWC-AMC office with a paid facilitator.

Discussions on the relationship between Asia Mennonite Conference and Mennonite World Conference began in 1999. In 2005 the AMC Executive Committee accepted in principle AMC merging with MWC. The following year the MWC Executive Committee stated its readi-

ness to proceed with this option.

In the AMC revised proposal, the AMC conference delegates will be the Asia Caucus delegates chosen in accordance with MWC guidelines.

As part of the AMC merger proposal, AMC will assume responsibility for the formation of an Asian regional mission fellowship related to the Global Mission Fellowship.

The AMC will proceed with planning for the Asia Mennonite youth discipleship training and work camp program for Southeast Asia scheduled for July 2008 in Thailand.

Attending the Tokyo meeting were representatives from Mennonite conferences in India, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, and Japan. Yoshihira Inamine of Japan chaired the sessions.

The delegates also met with pastors in the Tokyo area for a worship service and fellowship meal. On Sunday morning, several delegates also spoke in Tokyo area churches.

—from a report by Sheldon Sawatzky

## Mennonite Church USA builds inter-church relationships

Newton, Kansas, USA—Mennonite Church USA took two steps recently to build relationships with other church groups.

The first step was the acceptance of an apology from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which earlier adopted a declaration expressing regret for persecution of Anabaptists.

In a letter to the presiding bishop of the ELCA, Jim Schrag, Mennonite Church USA executive director, said, “We receive the apology with gratitude for its honesty, courage and humility and accept it in a spirit of forgiveness. ... We pray that God will use this gesture to release both Lutherans and Mennonites from a past that

may have bound us in ways we did not even know.”

The ELCA initiated inter-church conversations five years ago to work at healing the memories of 16th-century conflict. In addition to the apology, the declaration states that many of the condemnations in the Augsburg Confession did not apply to Mennonites—either the forebears of Mennonite Church USA or its current members.

Mennonite Church USA took a second step in inter-church relationships at its national convention in July 2007 when delegates agreed to join Christian Churches Together (CCT), a fellowship of Christian denominations in the USA.

Participants in CCT include Pentecostal,

Evangelical, Roman Catholic, and some representatives from African-American denominations, Orthodox, and mainline Protestant churches.

“The vision for CCT began in 2001 when a diverse group of Christian leaders met and lamented the divisions within the body of Christ,” said André Stoner, director of Inter-church Relations for Mennonite Church USA. Stoner also noted that poverty has emerged as a priority issue for CCT. At a meeting in March, the group agreed that addressing this issue is “central to the mission of the church and essential to our unity in Christ.”

—from The Mennonite

# Siberian church marks 100 years in the ‘shelter of the most high’

*Omsk, Siberia*—A birch forest formed the setting for the 100-year anniversary of the Omsk Brotherhood held here July 29-30, 2007.

None of the churches could accommodate the 1,500 people who attended. A secluded clearing was also a vivid reminder of past persecution, when large gatherings had to be held out of sight of police.

The celebration, under a large tent near the western Siberian village of Miroljubowka (or Alexanderkrone), honored God’s faithfulness over the 100 years of the Omsk Brotherhood and remembered the brutal oppression of the Communist regime.

Special attention was given to the spiritual awakening of the 1950s, which gave rise to the Evangelical Christian Baptist Church, a fusion of the earlier Evangelical Christians, Baptists, and the Mennonites (mostly Mennonite Brethren).

During the celebration, there was preaching, testimonies, historical lectures, choral music and ensembles, and poetry—an important literary genre for the Russian churches.

Five sermons focused on the nature, suffering, and mission of Christ’s church. Four historical lectures were about the devastating times of oppression, spiritual renewal, reorganization, and the so-called time of freedom since the beginning of perestroika.

These four lectures were based on Peter Epp’s 864-page history, 100 years in the

Shelter of the Most High (from Psalm 91:1). Subtitled “The history of the Omsk Evangelical Christian Baptists and their Brotherhood 1906-2007,” this large volume—with 125 pictures, 29 documents and 12 maps—is being made available to each family in the Omsk Brotherhood.

Visitors from Germany, Canada, USA, and Paraguay conveyed greetings via translation during the 100th anniversary celebration. Victor Wall brought greetings on behalf of both MWC and the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB).

## **Bloody persecution.**

The Omsk Brotherhood is an independent conference with 1,350 members in more than 32 local churches. Its vitality today belies a history of bloody persecution, kidnappings, and shootings in the 1930s. During WW II men and women were forced into the “work army.” The brutal persecution continued under Stalin, with many

leading preachers condemned to 25 years in prison. When Stalin died, most believing prisoners were set free.

Spiritual life and faith expression have been shaped by spiritual awakenings in the 1950s after years of prayer, especially by older mothers and grandmothers. Many conversions occurred throughout the villages, where there had been churches before Stalin shut them down.

This was followed by a time of organizing churches, but persecution and imprisonment of many continued. Churches and leaders refused to keep youth and children away from their services; both are held in high regard in the Omsk Brotherhood.

Churches and their leaders learned not to fear official warnings and disturbances. Rather, they courageously developed a kind of “flower protest” when a leader was condemned to prison.

Mikhail Gorbachov’s perestroika made possible a large emigration to Germany,

which began in 1988. Some 3,000 members emigrated over time. By 2006 the brotherhood had 1,350 members.

## **German to Russian.**

New missionary efforts brought changes, most notably the transition from German to the Russian language services. Today the emphasis is on more effective missionary work.

Most church buildings are relatively new and well maintained, with several services a week. Prayer and singing are very important in their services.

Leaders and churches now fear worldly influence and have a cautious attitude towards government and the country as a whole. They are reluctant to get too excited about religious freedom, fears linger that things might again change for the worse. In their view, the possibility of renewed persecution cannot be excluded.

—*from a report by Victor Wall, ICOMB executive secretary.*



*More than 1,500 people crowded into a tent in western Siberia to celebrate 100 years of the Omsk Brotherhood.*

# Anabaptism and living the gospel are the same, Latin American Mennonite church leaders agree

Guatemala City—Some 120 people gathered here November 28-30, 2007, for the 34th assembly of the Consulta Anabautista Menonita Centroamericana (CAMCA).

The group included delegates from every member conference and organization in Central America as well as representatives from Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada, and the Andean and Southern Cone areas.

Peter Stucky, Colombia, and a member of MWC's Executive Committee, addressed the assembly's theme, "The Call to Mission; Reflections and Challenges from an Anabaptist Biblical Perspective."

"To live the gospel and to live Anabaptism are not two different things," Stucky said, "but rather Anabaptism provides a specific way of understanding what it means to follow Jesus. I do not say it is better or worse than the perspectives of other families of faith, but that it is our own, that it enriches and orients us in the midst of the great tensions that we suffer in Latin America."

## False dichotomies.

Stucky also spoke of the false dichotomies sometimes presented: being Anabaptist or spreading the gospel; working for justice and peace or praying and seeking the gifts of the Spirit. Such dichotomies disunite us and tear apart the fabric of the body of the Lord, he said.

Another topic Stucky addressed was the Holy Spirit in Anabaptist history. He opened his presentation by saying, "It is no secret that ... the topic of the man-

ifestations of the Holy Spirit in the church has generated considerable controversy, rejections, sadness, and perhaps some divisions or loss of members and congregations in conferences."

Stucky noted that, on the one hand, people with certain prejudices say some churches don't have the Holy Spirit. On the other, some Anabaptists disqualify the more "lively" churches by saying they are not Mennonite.

**Open invitation.** "It seems that it is difficult for us to live together in respect when it comes to understanding what the presence of the Holy Spirit means in the life of the congregation," Stucky said. "But what is certain is that if we don't give the Holy Spirit an open and enthusiastic invitation in the life of our congregations, we are going to be sowing in

sterile soil, and we will neither be able to evangelize nor give an effective peace and justice testimony."

At the conclusion of the gathering, delegates passed a statement in which they affirmed the call of the Holy Spirit to live and proclaim a gospel that "reveals anti-kingdom values in the world and offers a liberating and integrating message inspired by the Holy Spirit."

The delegates also declared that their churches are an interdependent, committed community; that they would study, reflect, discern, and listen to God's voice through brothers and sisters and the signs of the times; that they would continue their pilgrimage together, aware of their unity amidst diversity; that they would endeavor to recapture 16th-century Anabaptist cornerstones for living out their

spirituality; that they would use their gifts to build better churches, families and a better society; and that they would commit themselves to preserve hope, faith and unity.

**Important time.** Sandra Campos, chair of CAMCA, said at the conclusion: "We are thankful for this time of reflecting together in the light of God's Word about themes that are of interest to us all, and for having been able to make of this occasion a space to enjoy communion and share experiences."

Delegates agreed that future assemblies will be held every two years, alternating with the Hans Denck Lectures offered by SEMILLA, the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary.

—Milka Rindzinski

## Becoming models of love, justice, and nonviolence

*Central American Anabaptist Women Theologians concluded their second regional meeting with this declaration on domestic violence, which was later also adopted by the men and women attending the CAMCA gathering.*

1. As Mennonite Anabaptist faith communities, we lack a clearly defined pastoral accompaniment program for victims of domestic violence. ...

2. As churches we recognize the need to do a biblical rereading that would ... make us responsible as Sanctuaries of Peace and to promote gender equality, respect and the dignity of women.

3. Our highest priority needs to begin with sensitizing ourselves around this theme, recognizing that as a church we are called to promote and

set up domestic violence care programs that include training, prevention, intervention, and coordination with networks of people to accompany victims and to orient women about where to seek referrals in cases of violence.

4. We commit ourselves to be women and men who are bearers and promoters of projects favoring dignified and fulfilled lives in the sectors vulnerable to violence and to unite efforts with committees, conferences, and Christian education programs in our churches.

5. As a part of the body of Christ and in a spirit of unity and reflection, we commit ourselves to be consistent models of love, justice, and nonviolence.





Women from El Salvador attending the second gathering of Central American Anabaptist Women Theologians work together in reviewing what their churches are doing about domestic violence. Men at the consultation did similar work—the first time men and women reflected together on the theme.

## Central American women challenge church to address domestic violence

*Guatemala City*—Domestic violence and the church's response topped the agenda of the second gathering of Central American Anabaptist Women Theologians held here immediately prior to the CAMCA gathering [see story at left]. Some 50 women from Central American countries participated.

"Once again we could rate violence in Central America as alarming and the cost in women and men's lives as high," said Sandra Campos, chair of the meeting. "Domestic violence also takes place in our churches; however we seldom speak about it."

In the first part of the meeting, women from each country summarized the situation in their context. After a presentation by Elizabeth Soto of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA, on "Domestic violence: the great challenge for our churches,"

group work and discussion resulted in a statement on the responsibility of the church to address the issue of domestic violence. It was later taken to the meeting of CAMCA, where it was adopted as a joint statement [see statement at left].

Men attending CAMCA also participated in the discussion. Campos noted that this was the first time in a regional gathering that men and women reflected together on the theme and affirmed that this is a way to raise consciousness about violence in the church. The issue concerns not only women but the entire church.

The gathering also affirmed the work of a committee planning a gathering of women theologians in connection with MWC's Assembly 15 in Paraguay in 2009.

—Milka Rindzinski

## Latin American theological educators explore paths of unity and exchange

*Guatemala City*—Contemporary challenges in theological education brought 45 Latin American Anabaptist-Mennonite theologians and educators together here immediately prior to the CAMCA gathering [see story on previous page] to reflect on ways to unite and exchange resources.

The consultation was also one of three events celebrated the week of November 26-28, 2007, at SEMILLA, the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary. SEMILLA had called together leaders of Spanish and Portuguese Anabaptist theological education programs from across the Americas.

The purpose of the consultation was to find ways for new theological interaction and for more intentional exchange of resources among institutions. The participants agreed to compile a list of Anabaptist theological programs in Spanish and Portuguese, to develop bibliographies, libraries, and courses in electronic or virtual formats to facilitate serving people in different countries, and to find ways to share teaching personnel and increase communication.

Educational institutions participating in the consultation included:

- Latin American Anabaptist Seminary (SEMILLA);
- Colombian Mennonite Biblical Seminary (SBMC);
- Centro Evangélico Mennonita de Teología Asunción (CEMTA), Paraguay;
- Faculdade FIDELIS, Brazil;
- Agrupación Menonita Latinoamericana de Comunicaciones (AMLAC);

- Centro de Desarrollo Ministerial de los Hermanos Menonitas de Bogotá, Colombia;
  - RedPaz, Guatemala;
  - Seminario Teológico Bautista y Centro de Recursos Cristianos Anabautistas por la Paz (CERCAPAZ), Chile;
  - Programa Unido de Educación Bíblico, Argentina;
  - Instituto Bíblico de la Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña, Honduras;
  - Centro de Estudios de las Iglesias Evangélicas Menonitas de Uruguay.
- Representatives from Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Educational Agency, USA, were also present.—*from a report by Saulo Padilla*



**Melani Indah Susanti is MWC's UN intern.** From the Siloam congregation of the Muria Christian Church in Salatiga, Central Java, Susanti is serving as MWC's young adult intern in the Mennonite Central Committee's United Nations office. Susanti's one-year appointment began in August 2007.

## MWC at global Christian forum

Nairobi, Kenya—Mennonites and Brethren in Christ were represented at a historic first gathering of world leaders from virtually all branches of the Christian faith, November 6-9, 2007.

The Global Christian Forum drew 245 church representatives from 72 nations invited here to explore the theme, “Our Journey with Jesus Christ, the Reconciler.”

Participants ranged from Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican to African Instituted, Pentecostal, and Evangelical. By design, about half were from the latter two groups, who usually don’t attend ecumenical events.

MWC representatives were Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, MWC vice-president and president-elect; Patricia Urueña of Colombia, presently serving as a Mennonite missionary in Ecuador; and Larry Miller of France, general secretary.



Lucy Apiyo, a Kenyan Mennonite, and one of the women supported by a scholarship from the committee of African Anabaptist Women Theologians, has died after a brief illness. Lucy was in her second year of studies at KIMA International School of Theology.

Ecumenical gatherings are not new, but never before has there been one of such scope, according to Miller. The World Council of Churches represents only a quarter of world Christians, and it does not include Catholics, who comprise half. Nor does it include most Evangelicals and Pentecostals, the fastest-growing groups.

“This was the first time since the early centuries of Christian history the whole spectrum of leadership in the Christian world sat at the same table,” said Miller.

**Safety and trust.** The process was instigated in the late 1990s by Konrad Raiser, then WCC general secretary. “He said we need a safe place where the whole church can gather, where they can trust each other, where they don’t feel that the WCC or the Catholic Church is trying to take over, and where there are no institutional commitments,” Miller said.

“So it was decided to create a space where the third of the world population that is Christian can sit at the same table and talk to each other and build confidence with one another.”

Out of this grew a series of regional meetings leading up to the global gathering.

The event was neither a theological exchange nor debate but rather a forum where Christian groups could tell their stories about experiencing Jesus Christ as reconciler.

“If [this] continues for a couple of decades, this gathering will someday be viewed as a watershed in 21st century Christianity,” Miller said.



Two containers of beds sent by the Dutch Mennonite organization, Doopsgezind WereldWerk arrive at the Shirati Hospital.

## Dutch Mennonites help launch new health care program in Tanzania

Amsterdam, The Netherlands—A fourth 40-foot container of medical supplies and hospital equipment from Dutch Mennonites arrived in Tanzania in late December 2007. The shipment was sent by Doopsgezind WereldWerk, the Dutch Mennonite Organization for Solidarity and Peace. It was forwarded to the African Mennonite hospitals in Shirati and Mugumu in January 2008.

Dutch Mennonite churches started raising funds for hospitals in Tanzania early in 2005. In April 2007, they shipped 150 hydraulic hospital beds in three 40-foot containers.

**Positive spirit.** When Dutch Mennonites revisited the Shirati hospital in October 2007, they observed a more positive spirit. The “Friends of Shirati,” older missionaries from North America, had become more involved again. The Dutch heard many times that the beds made the difference in moving the hospitals from struggle to hope. They did not expect the impact would be so large, said the Dutch visitors.

Another gift in 2007 from the Dutch Mennonites was a landcruiser to solve the trans-

port problems; until then the Shirati hospital did not have a vehicle.

Along with the Tanzanian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Doopsgezind WereldWerk aims to help provide home care, mother and child health care and an out patient department in an area where there has been nothing. Professional staff at the Shirati Hospital will be paid by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

**Bethsaida.** Doopsgezind WereldWerk has formed the company, Bethsaida, to manage the project. Three co-directors come from both Tanzania and the Netherlands.

With financial support from Dutch Mennonites, Doopsgezind WereldWerk will continue to donate funds to the hospital for building and equipment needs and take responsibility to oversee this new branch of health care for the people of Tanzania.

The Tanzanian Minister of Health has expressed a great deal of interest in what he terms a “pilot project.” He sees it as a model for the whole country.—*Elisabeth de Quant, president, Doopsgezind WereldWerk*



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The dreams and visions of youth:

# Light and salt you can count on

by Nicodème Coulibaly

*This is the final in a series of articles by youth and their dreams for the church. The series was developed by the Francophone Mennonite Network.*

The church as a divine institution has a great responsibility in the world—to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14). Given this role, Jesus sent the church to make disciples of all nations.

As an integral part of the church, youth must take up their responsibilities, both within the church for their own spiritual growth, and also in the world in order to witness to the love of Jesus Christ.

**Building unity.** In our time, youth can play a role in bringing together people from different parts of the world. It is common to see youth saving money and going without things that are important in order to give of themselves to others.

In a spirit of unity, youth want to minimize negative differences to allow Christ to be seen. We are called to imitate the unity that existed between Jesus and the Father: “That they may all be one, as we are one” (John 17:22).

The cooperation between the Mennonite youth of France and of Burkina Faso is an example of this kind of unity that Jesus called for, so that the world might witness the kingdom of God. This lived-out community has given birth to a tool for the proclamation of the good news—a recording studio for Christian radio programs

**Good works.** I dream of a church that accepts its responsibilities when confronted with the challenges of our times and our different contexts. The church in general and youth in particular must give a living witness to Christian moral and ethical values. I dream of seeing young people who are faithful to God and who counteract the judgments of those who see youth as rebels, as loose-living, and lacking in morals.

In Burkina Faso, one of our challenges is to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. We know that infection takes place primarily through sexual relationships. We as youth of the Evangelical Mennonite Church are involved in this fight, aiding the church in its activities of raising awareness and promoting sexual abstinence and faithfulness to one’s partner.

**Working for peace.** I dream of a church that is committed to a culture of peace. Peace is the sense of well-being that everyone longs for. Jesus Christ, our Savior, is the prince of peace, and he wants to spread that peace by reconciling people to God and to their neighbors. The church should invest heavily in looking for and pursuing peace.

The church can work to prevent conflicts and to break down ethnic and racial divisions that exist in many parts of the world. Our world today tends to see violence as a way of expressing and resolving differences. The church, with its responsibility for the stewardship of creation, should put mechanisms in place that will contribute to the prevention of conflict and to its resolution.

**Youth as links.** As youth, we have the privilege of participating in building God’s kingdom. We want to be lights that shine and keep on shining. I dream that our generation will reassure those who have preceded us by demonstrating that they can count on us. We want to follow their example of faithfulness and self-giving.

*Nicodème Coulibaly is a music and worship leader in the Orodara congregation in Burkina Faso.*



## Help with the costs of C-C-C

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Perspective:

# Come together in the way of Jesus Christ

by Larry Miller

To capture attention, a conference theme should have no more than seven words, claimed the communications consultant. To sell the event, a theme needs to be jazzed up a little, chimed in the marketing specialist. Too many words? Not enough music?

No doubt about it, the theme chosen for Paraguay 2009, “Come together in the way of Jesus Christ,” is neither a seductive slogan nor powerful publicity. But the question is: does it point the way to life together in the MWC community before, during, and after Assembly 15 in Asunción?

In earliest Christianity, the way was the “the Way of the Lord” (Acts 18:25, NRSV). Women and men who came together following Jesus Christ “belonged to the Way” (Acts 9:2).

Today, to find this way, don’t bother with Google or Yahoo. Go directly to the New Testament and Philippians 2:1-11, the foundational text on unity and service for Paraguay 2009. Not too many words. Just enough music—in the form of an early Christian hymn (Philippians 2:6-11) pitching the way of Jesus Christ as the way for Christians to come together.

The longing for unity in the church is growing deeper and broader. The call to unity in the global communion is ringing increasingly loud and clear. In this issue of *Courier* alone, we hear that call resonating from the Congo (pages 2-4), from Nicaragua (page 5), from Uruguay (page 6-7), from the USA (page 10), from mature men in Asia (page 10), from visionary youth in Africa (page 15)—indeed, from virtually all parts of the Christian church (page 14).

Biblical texts the program committee proposes for exposition during Paraguay 2009 show us that this longing can be fulfilled if we come together in the way modelled and prayed for by Jesus, then put into practice by the first Christians (Philippians 2-1-11, John 17:16-26, Acts 2:46-47).

But there’s a rub. The way of unity is also the way of serv-

ice or, more exactly, according to Philippians 2 and Mark 10:35-45 (another passage likely on the program in Paraguay), the way of a “servant” or “slave.” Who in the church longs to go the way of the slave?

Some time ago, late at night, at the end of the first day of a meeting between important Mennonite leaders locked in bitter conflict rather than engaged in mutual service, a colleague mediating the conversation sent me a message. “What can be said so far,” he wrote, “is that we have survived and there has been no physical violence—lots of verbal abuse and violence, but such is the church.”

Such is the church? No wonder we long for unity!

The second night, another colleague sent me this email. “After a couple of days with the leadership gathered around the same table, I felt today like it was Pentecost—with the only difference being that I did not hear people speak in tongues. It was a major breakthrough. They all signed an agreement and were able to talk to each other. They shared a meal with the joy of being in each other’s company.”

Such also is the church when, at last, we begin to come together in the way of Jesus Christ. “Whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all” (Mark 10:44).

“Make my joy complete,” Paul wrote to those in Philippi who continued to argue and murmur while belonging to the way. Though not very good as a slogan or publicity, the words of the Paraguay 2009 theme, if put into practice in our communities, locally and globally, will without a doubt make joy—ours and God’s—complete.

Larry Miller, Strasbourg, France, serves as MWC’s general secretary.



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