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Mennonite World Conference
A Community of Anabaptist related Churches

Congreso Mundial Menonita
Una Comunidad de Iglesias Anabautistas

Conférence Mennonite Mondiale
Une Communauté d'Églises Anabaptistes

News Briefs

Japanese Anabaptist leaders call to “keep the peace”

Oita, Japan – On Japanese Constitution Memorial Day, 3 May, fourteen Japanese Mennonite and Brethren in Christ leaders issued a call against proposed amendments to the Japanese constitution, particularly to article nine, the so-called “peace article.”

On the same day, national newspapers released polls showing that proposed amendments to the constitution are gaining support.

Under article nine of the constitution, drafted in 1947 by Allied occupation forces and adopted by the national Diet with extensive support of the nation, the “Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.”

Further, article 96 of the constitution states that amendments must pass both national governing bodies with a two-thirds majority and must gain majority support in a national referendum.

The governing Liberal Democratic Party, led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, is proposing to relax the amendment approval process in article 96. Further, the government is advocating for changes in article nine – changes which would create a National Defense Force with fuller military powers than those of the existing Self-Defense Force.

“With these developments at a time of unprecedented tensions,” wrote the church leaders, “we as Anabaptists/ Mennonites who have opposed all wars and have experienced

martyrdom among more than a few members must acknowledge that we are being put to the test. As an historical peace church, now is not the time to close our mouths and keep silent. It is time to stand up by the power of our Lord Jesus and say that war is the greatest of sins and that we must not open up any path that would cause our country to engage in war again.”

The church leaders sent their message to Protestant periodicals in Japan and also to periodicals of Anabaptist/Mennonite churches in North America. To read their complete statement, visit www.mwc-cmm.org

Ecuador ministry partners reunite

Quito, Ecuador and Bogotá, Colombia – A reunion of the “Ecuador Partnership” brought together Mennonites from Ecuador, Colombia and the United States for March 2013 visits in both Ecuador and Colombia.

The partnership includes *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* (Colombian Mennonite Church), Central Plains Conference of Mennonite Church USA, and Mennonite Mission Network.

For four days partner representatives visited with congregations in Quito and Riobamba, Ecuador. Then, along with representatives of the Ecuador churches, they flew to Bogotá for a week of fellowship, learning and partnership meetings.

Leadership for *Iglesia Cristiana Anabautista Menonita* in Ecuador is being provided by César Moya and Patricia Urueña, MMN workers originally from Colombia. They have served in Ecuador since 2000. The conference in Ecuador has three congregations and 70



Quito Mennonite Church is beginning a program to help prevent pregnancy among 10-14 year olds in the Jardines del Inca neighbourhood. Alyssa Rodriguez from Iowa City, Iowa, USA is working with this team. From left: Josué Moina, Brigitte Moina, Lizeth Moina, Alba Silva, Alyssa Rodriguez and Karla Sanchez. Photo by Linda Shelly

members. They have initiated the process of becoming associate members of Mennonite World Conference.

From a Mennonite Mission Network release by Holly Blosser Yoder

European Mennonite leaders seek renewal of identity as peace church

Elspeet & Amsterdam, the Netherlands – At their annual meeting last fall, European Mennonite leaders expressed strong interest in renewing their identity as an active community of Christ’s peace. Peace witness concerns were among several topics discussed at the gathering, held 23-25 November.

Fernando Enns, theology professor in Hamburg, Germany and in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, delivered a stirring challenge to the assembled delegates on the topic of being a peace church. As Europe’s church membership numbers continue to dwindle, Enns concluded, Mennonites need to remember that God’s

comprehensive shalom for both church and world is central to its mission. Peace is thus not an option but lies at the heart of the gospel.

The conversation following the presentations made it clear that there are many opportunities for congregations and conferences to work for peace in society, reported Markus Rediger in a statement posted to the MWC website.

As one expression of his conviction, Enns has assumed responsibility for the content of a multimedia project – euMENNet – that seeks to “sharpen the Mennonite identity in Europe for the future.” The project is an initiative of the International Menno Simons Center in the Netherlands.

The project, scheduled for completion by mid-2014, will seek to tell the story of European Mennonitism through videos, texts and data. Enns hopes that the project will contribute meaningfully to public debate about the role of religious communities in European society.

In so doing, it will address questions like: What connects

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MWC leaders convene during the annual meeting of European Mennonite leaders. L to R: César García, Henk Stenvers, Andy Martin, Liesa Unger, Otto Bleker. Photo Markus Rediger

the Mennonite groups scattered across Europe? How much do they differ from one another? What is their story? What has been their influence on European history and societies? What can we learn from their stories?

Adapted from news articles by Markus Rediger and Jan Willem Stenvers. To learn more, visit the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org

MWC responds to election of Pope Francis

Bogotá, Colombia – After the 3 March election of Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio as Pope Francis, Mennonite World Conference issued a letter of congratulations and also sent



Henk Stenvers (left) and Rainer Burkart represented MWC at the inaugural services for newly elected Roman Catholic Pope Francis

two of its leaders to 19-20 March inaugural services in Rome.

In a 14 March letter to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU), César García, MWC General Secretary, wrote: “Without a doubt the ministry of Francis as the first Latin American – and the first Jesuit – Pope will bring new impetus to our relationships.”

García expressed his belief that the history of MWC dialogues with the Catholic Church “will create important spaces for

our churches under the pontificate of Pope Francis.” García referred to the 1998-2003 Mennonite-Catholic dialogue, as well as the more recent trilateral dialogue on baptism – involving Catholics, Mennonites and Lutherans – begun in December 2012.

“Sharing in the same Latin American background, I was especially touched by Francis’ attitude when he bowed to the crowd after asking prayer from the many people that had come to receive him,” wrote García. “His attitude of humility has been a special blessing for me as a Latin American.”

Attending the inaugural services in Rome, at the invitation of the PCPCU, were Rainer Burkart of Germany and Henk Stenvers of the Netherlands. Burkart is a member of the MWC Faith and Life Commission and Stenvers of the Deacons Commission. They had an opportunity to meet representatives of other Christian World Communions and also greet the Pope personally.

Congolese visitors seek resources for their fast-growing church

Elkhart, Indiana, USA – A quest to learn how Mennonite Church USA congregations and agencies find resources for their ministries brought Macaire Kilambo Kabanga and Roussel Kumakamba, lay leaders in *Communauté Mennonite au Congo* (Mennonite Church of Congo - CMCO) on a recent month-long tour of the United States.

“Our church is growing,” said Kumakamba, who is a national director of Congo’s social security network. “How will we find the resources to support

this growth?” CMCO, a member of Mennonite World Conference, currently has close to 800 churches and 110,000 members.

In their exploratory trip that took them to Indiana, Kansas and Washington, the two Congolese leaders said they were impressed with how individuals give generously and voluntarily to church infrastructure and ministries.

“This sets a beautiful example for our congregations,” Kumakamba said. “However, so many of our members live in poverty that what they give is only sufficient to maintain the most basic infrastructure.”

Kilambo, who owns a trucking business based in Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo, said that



Macaire Kilambo Kabanga (left) and Roussel Kumakamba, lay leaders in *Communauté Mennonite au Congo*. Photo by David Fast

if resources were available, CMCO would have more influence to transform lives within the country and in surrounding nations. “We would have grown beyond Congo into neighbouring countries, because Congolese Mennonites have a strong missionary spirit,” he said.

The two men brainstormed about areas of development that could benefit their church: agricultural projects, animal husbandry, fish ponds, public

transportation, building construction and the manufacture of furniture from Congo’s bountiful forests. “I’m convinced that if we bring together the innovations of North America and those of Congo, we will end up with good results,” Kilambo said.

Kilambo and Kumakamba paid for their travel expenses to the USA from personal funds. Their visit was hosted by Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission with help from Mennonite Church USA congregations and agencies.

From a Mennonite Mission Network news release by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

Church and community hall a place for district gatherings

Nuagaon, Odisha, India – In early May 2013, the Brethren in Christ Church in the state of Odisha, India, reported the completion of construction of a church and community hall and pastor’s quarters in the village of Nuagaon. The new facility, which can accommodate at least 500 people on the floor, will be used to conduct the annual prayer meeting and leadership training program for the leaders of 27 churches of the Kandhamal district. Conference chair, Bijoy Kumar Roul, expressed gratitude to Mennonite World Conference for the contribution of \$10,000 US from the Global Church Sharing Fund toward the cost of construction. The remaining \$7,000 US was donated by Brethren in Christ churches. The Brethren in Christ Church Orissa, an MWC member conference in southeast India, has 155 congregations with a total of 5,830 members.



The new church and community hall built by the Brethren in Christ Church in Nuagaon, Odisha, India

Commissions Update

The four MWC commissions support and extend the work of our global communion between and beyond the assemblies.

The commissions have been described as the four chambers of one heart, which seek to link the worldwide community of Anabaptist-related churches for fellowship, worship, service and witness.

Commissions prepare issues or materials for consideration by the General Council; give guidance and propose resources to MWC or member-churches; and facilitate MWC-related networks or fellowships working together on matters of common interest and focus.

Here are a few short glimpses into the work of MWC commissions over the last several months and in the near future.

Deacons Commission

Members of the commission will make two visits this year – one to Angola in September, and the other to India in October, where they will participate in celebrations surrounding the golden jubilee of the Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India.

Faith and Life Commission

Secretary John Roth is planning an ecumenical gathering of MWC and Lutheran World Federation representatives, to be convened in Goshen, Indiana, USA, in July 2013.

Mission Commission

The Mission Commission rolled out an expanded webpage in May. The updated site features information about the commission and related networks, a “starter reading list” that records “foundational” books and articles about Anabaptism and mission, and a link to an extensive bibliography on Anabaptism and Mission. Visit the site at www.mwc-cmm.org

Peace Commission

Secretary Jack Suderman is collecting resources that member-churches can use to identify conflict levels in their congregations, and developing a paradigm for dealing with these conflicts as they arise.

“What do you love about MWC?”

MWC staffers describe their favorite things about our global fellowship.

Len Rempel

Chief Operating Officer
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada



“First and foremost, MWC is part of the church of Jesus Christ. It is not a large organization, but it reaches into many local congregations around the world and it fits the Anabaptist principle of being grassroots and being about people and relationships.”

Kristina Toews

Web Communications Worker
Bogotá, Colombia



“I love that MWC is a global family, a true family where we share our gifts, learn together and support each other. God has richly blessed me through the relationships I have with sisters and brothers all around the world.”

Arli Klassen

Chief Development Officer
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada



“I love that MWC is about strengthening all of us in our faith through cross-cultural and cross-conference relationships.

As Paul says to the Ephesians, it is ‘with all the saints’ that we can begin to comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of God. It is through our differences that we can learn and support each other in what it means to be Christ-followers in our own cultures today. I love to explore those differences in order to grow.”

Financial Snapshots

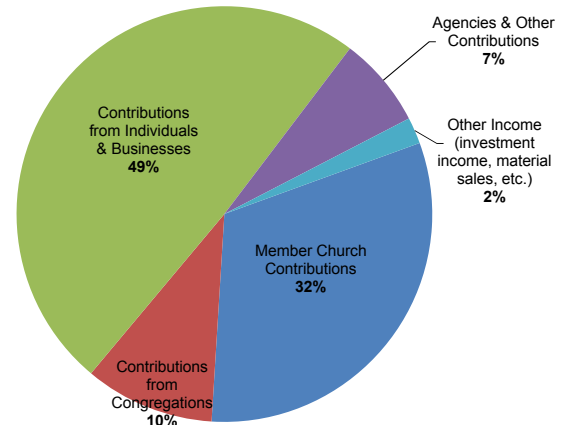
Average annual income for operations (2008-2012) was \$689,000. In addition, MWC received designated contribu-

tions and registration income for special funds including Assembly Fund, Travel Fund and the Global Church Sharing Fund (annual average \$850,000)

Where the Money Comes From

MWC Operating Budget

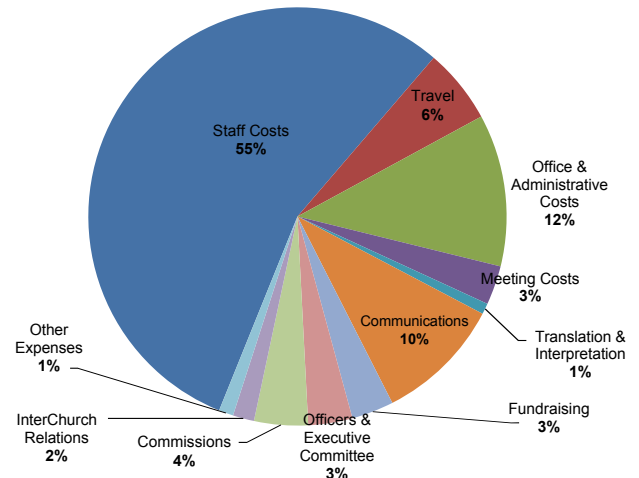
based on averages 2008-2012



Where the Money is Spent

MWC Operating Expenses

based on averages 2008-2012



Sign Up to Stay Connected

Write info@mwc-cmm.org to sign up for a monthly e-alert called *MWC Info* and to get on the list to receive MWC’s newsletter and magazine by regular mail or by email: *Courier/Correo/Courier*. These are available in English, Spanish or French. When signing up for either or both of these publications, give your name, country and language preference.

Also take time to be informed and inspired through the MWC website (www.mwc-cmm.org) and through the MWC Facebook page.

Prayers

Pray for César García of Colombia, MWC General Secretary, as he visits with member churches on all continents and shares God's vision for the church as expressed in Revelation 7:9.

Kyong-Jung Kim, MWC General Council member from the Jesus Village Church in South Korea, an associate member of MWC, is asking our church family to pray for Korea. During this time of rising tension between North and South Korea, pray for God's mercy and revelation to bring reconciliation and unity to both governments. Also pray that both governments, and those of neighbouring countries, do not get involved in provocative/military actions that lead to evil. Pray for the Christian churches that they may unify their voice to pray and act for peace.

complex visa issues. Since the announcement of the location for Assembly 2015 in the USA, members of the committee have been concerned about their ability to acquire visas in a timely fashion. According to outgoing YABs chair Kristina Toews, acquiring visas is "especially difficult for young people from the Global South" because they are "young, don't own property, aren't married and don't have children, don't have money in the bank and don't have steady work that they can show as reported income." These are the main factors the USA looks at when determining whether or not to grant visas. Not having the voice of these young leaders, Toews adds, would be a significant loss for the Assembly gathering. Pray that the Spirit will move the hearts and minds



MWC Executive Committee

Praise God for the members of the MWC Executive Committee, consisting of two representatives from each continental region, which met in Akron, Pennsylvania, 23-28 May, 2013 to review program plans for the coming year. Pray for them as they seek to strengthen links between churches in their region and the global Anabaptist community of churches.

Pray for the Young Anabaptists (YABs) Committee as its members continue to navigate

of government officials and make the visa process smooth and simple.

Pray for those members of our global fellowship who recently experienced the sting of death, including the family and friends of Lisa Christano, a member of the GKMI Church in Kudus, Indonesia, who passed away on Easter Sunday, 31 March. She was the wife of Charles Christano, who served as Mennonite World Conference president from 1978-1984. Pray

also for the family and friends of Mario Mendez, a member of the Mennonite Church Casa Horeb in Guatemala, who passed away on 6 April, 2013. He was the husband of Leonor de Mendez, who was on the MWC executive committee from 1990-1997. May our God of peace comfort these families – and all other families who suffer – at this time.

Praise God for congregations that are embracing the conviction that peace is integral to the gospel. For example, the Anabaptist Mennonite Church of Buenos Aires, in the bulletin for its 19 May Pentecost celebration, included the MWC peace poster. "We have seen it important to... reflect about peace," wrote Luis Maria Alman Bornes. "It seemed to us that this poster should not just occupy a central place in our physical worship space, but also that we should be conscious of the profound message that it communicates,

and we can do this by making it central also to our liturgy."

Pray for PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. as they work for peace in the Philippines. They are a Mennonite peace and reconciliation consulting group, belonging to the Integrated Mennonite Church, Inc., a member church of Mennonite World Conference. Pray for peace among Christians and Muslims in the Philippines. Praise God that the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches has publicly expressed its concern to preserve the gains of the peace talks and to publicly support the continued dialogue.

Praise God for the stories of faithfulness from Anabaptist Christians around the world – stories that inspire and encourage us in our Christian walk.

For up-to-date prayer items, visit www.mwc-cmm.org

Resources

Peace Sunday 2013

The MWC Peace Commission has developed worship resources for use by member-congregations for the 2013 Peace Sunday, to be observed on Sunday, 22 September. The resources revolve around Psalm 23, which contains "a strong image of peace," as believers celebrate sitting at the table in the presence of their enemies, according to the Peace Commission.

This year's resources use movement, image, art and ritual to explore the theme of peace. They begin with the idea that art (construction) is the opposite of war (destruction). While it is difficult to do art together in a time of worship, there are ways of making art to interact together.

To access the worship resources, visit www.mwc-cmm.org

"Stories of Service" videos now online

Produced by Michael Bade of Mennonite Central Committee prior to the 2009 Assembly in Paraguay, the "Stories of Service" video series features tales of ordinary people in ordinary churches doing service in their own communities. Through these stories, viewers are transported around the world, from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe to Aceh, Indonesia, from Seattle, Washington, USA to Bogotá, Colombia. The videos feature several MWC member-churches and former and current leaders, including Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, current MWC president, and Pakisa Tshimika, former MWC associate general secretary.

Until recently the videos were available only in DVD form. They can now be viewed online at www.mwc-cmm.org

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