



Mennonite World Conference Global Youth Summit

Global Youth Summit Report to the General Council Tuesday, August 12, 2003

Introduction

From August 7 through August 10, 2003, more than 220 young Anabaptists from 28 countries met in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe under the auspices of the first Global Youth Summit (GYS) organized by the Mennonite World Conference (MWC). This report represents the convictions, visions, and possible directions for action that have emerged as part of the discernment process at the GYS. We envision this report as a basis for continued conversation and dialogue with our local churches, conferences and with MWC rather than as a list of resolutions or expectations. In this spirit, we have identified four broad subjects that have emerged out of the GYS process which we believe are important to communicate with the larger church body: 1) the process of the GYS, 2) youth commitments, 3) the role of local churches and conferences in responding to its' young people and 4) the role of the MWC in responding to its' young people. In each area, we have tried to provide a number of concrete actions that we believe would help to strengthen both young people and the church. We offer these possibilities as a starting point for further discussion.

The Process

The GYS is more than a three-day event. Over the past two years, it has involved the committed efforts of young people and other interested church members from around the world. In its initial conceptualization, GYS was envisioned as involving a three-phase process: a survey phase, a phase of discussion and discernment in Zimbabwe, and an action phase. As part of the survey phase, 28 youth delegates from 23 countries were identified and given the responsibility of administering a survey to young people in their respective conferences. The survey sought to identify the most critical issues in the life of young people in the church as well as possible responses to those issues. The 28 delegates compiled a summary of the surveys from their respective conferences and sent it to the GYS planning committee who wrote an overall summary of all the reports. Critical themes included unemployment, educational challenges, violence and struggles with being a Christian in a pluralistic world and are summarized in a previous report submitted to the General Council. The survey results provided the basis for conversations among delegates and participants at the GYS in Zimbabwe.

During phase two, the GYS in Zimbabwe, delegates and participants from around the world discussed the commonalities and differences in the issues that they are facing but shifted focus from the issues themselves to responses to the issues. For the better part of two days, delegates and participants met in continental caucuses and then gathered together as a global body to share their discussions and ideas. The delegates then took what they had learned in these two days of meetings and met in three groups comprised of representatives from each continent. Their task was to identify common visions and to concretize some possible actions for beginning to address the concerns of the youth.

Phase three of the GYS process is an action phase. We envision this report as the basis for an ongoing engagement with the GYS process and hope it suggests some possible actions that



Mennonite World Conference Global Youth Summit

young people and the church can take in response to what we have learned in phases one and two.

Youth Commitments

The GYS has provided a forum for young people to share and strengthen their commitment to an ongoing relationship with the church. Perhaps one of the most important consequences emerging from the GYS is a more expansive and deeper sense of fellowship among young people in the Anabaptist tradition. The GYS proved to be a time of great encouragement and support for the youth to continue their calling in Christ. In addition, young people discussed ways of concretizing their relationships, commitments and identity as Anabaptist youth. The following points outline the commitments that the youth have made.

- ***Networking and Communication***
 - A commitment to cooperation at the national, continental, and global levels
 - A commitment to keep in contact with youth delegates from GYS
 - A commitment to assist in preparing the next GYS delegation
- ***Commitments to Service***
 - A commitment to give our time for service
 - A commitment to take risks and initiative
 - A commitment to continued presence and involvement in home churches and local conferences
 - A commitment of mentoring and discipleship to young people
 - A commitment to share our gifts
 - A commitment to live an Anabaptist life and to follow the example of Jesus
- ***Submission***
 - A commitment to work with and follow the leadership of our local, continental, and global leaders.

The Role of Local Churches and Conferences

As part of the GYS process, young people identified possible ways their local churches and conferences could support them. The following outline represents concrete suggestions that we hope will lead to an ongoing dialogue with our local churches, conferences and leaders.

- ***Networking and Communication***
 - Organize national and continental youth conferences
 - Provide for better dissemination of Mennonite events, concerns and happenings to young people. For example, ensure that youth have access to the *Courier*.
 - Facilitate more visits and exchanges between church youth nationally, continentally and globally
 - Seek ways to provide access to communication technologies that will allow young people to stay in contact with each other



Mennonite World Conference Global Youth Summit

- ***Inter-Generational Dialogue and Relationships***
 - Provide for youth representation on church boards and other leadership bodies
 - General Council members should know their GYS delegates and could build mentoring relationships with them
 - Mentoring programs that include mentor training/sensitization to youth context
 - Facilitate regular meetings to discuss relevant topics to youth and adults
- ***Administration and Funding***
 - Provide guidance and give youth responsibilities for funding and administration
 - Provide for ongoing youth fundraising/budgets to support conference travel and youth events
 - Build national and international church-to-church relationships and explore international sponsorships. For example, a church member from Europe would sponsor a youth from Asia who perhaps cannot afford to come and whose church cannot raise enough money
 - Provide an adequate balance of material and spiritual support. For example; support economic and educational initiatives among the young people as well as spiritual nourishment

The Role of MWC

As part of the GYS process, young people identified possible ways that MWC could support them. The following outline represents concrete suggestions that we hope will lead to an ongoing dialogue with MWC.

- ***Networking and Communication***
 - Continue with a second GYS at the next Mennonite World Conference
 - Invite the core group of GYS delegates to meet congruently with the General Council every three years
 - Assist in the organization of continental summits for youth before the next GYS
 - Provide youth with a regular page or column in the *Courier*
 - Help establish a website for GYS participants where continental reports, prayer requests, discussion points, upcoming activities and contacts could be posted
- ***Intergenerational Dialogue and Relationships***
 - Provide for youth representation on the General Council. For example, allow for one youth delegate from each continent
 - Give youth representatives the right to vote on issues pertaining to them



Mennonite World Conference Global Youth Summit

- ***Administration and Funding***
 - Provide guidance and give youth responsibilities for funding and administration. For example, how could a regular column in the *Courier* or a GYS website be administered
 - Help local churches organize international sponsorships to send youth delegates to a future GYS or continental youth conference
 - Communicate and guide strategies for interchurch sharing of material resources. For example, how could churches without access to computers and other communication technologies receive them
 - Provide an adequate balance of material and spiritual support. For example; support economic and educational initiatives among the young people as well as spiritual nourishment

Conclusion

We, the young people of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches, are grateful for the opportunity that the Mennonite World Conference has given us to participate in and contribute to the global church. The GYS has provided space where we have been free to learn about each other and build relationships across the boundaries of language, culture and experience. It has also been a space for learning about and engaging with MWC and our leaders. We hope to see continued cooperation between the generations at both the local and global level.