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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

Congolese youth strengthen ties

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo – In a world where differences and distance often divide people of faith, Mennonite youth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are participating in an exchange program to strengthen ties among the country's three Mennonite conferences.

The exchange program, called *Menno-Monde*, or Menno-World, allows youth to spend a week or two living with a family, attending church and learning to know youth from a Mennonite conference different from their own.

Developed in 2012, the program is sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the three Congolese

The conferences send youth to different parts of the country to help establish relationships that reach across borders that historically have divided Congolese Mennonites.

Designed for people age 15 to 25, *Menno-Monde* has given youth like Gina Molumbe Mongala, 24, the opportunity to explore what it means to be Mennonite in another part of their country. For Mongala, participating in *Menno-Monde* was the first time she traveled "into the country" without her family. "The day I was to leave, I had no appetite all day," she said. Mongala is a member of the Peniel congregation of CEFMC. She visited a congregation in Bandundu City, about 150 miles northeast of Kinshasa, her home area.

"At church one Saturday, I preached to the youth for the



Gina Molumbe, Persévérance Luzindalalu and Judith Malembu-Fumulombi, from Mennonite congregations in Kinshasa, participated in a Menno-Monde exchange during a school break in 2013. Photo by Suzanne Lind

Mennonite conferences: *Communauté Mennonite au Congo (CMCo)*, *Communauté des Églises de Frères Mennonites au Congo (CEFMC)* and *Communauté Évangélique Mennonite (CEM)*.

very first time in my life," she said. "I showed the Sunday school teachers how to use lesson books. Since I am a Sunday school teacher in my own church, I had brought some

European Mennonites gather in Germany



Mainz, Germany – Leaders of European Mennonite conferences met together for their yearly meeting, 18-19 October. Among other topics, they discussed the benefits of having a European Mennonite coordinator. Most important benefits named: getting in closer communication with the smaller churches that have emerged in the last 20 to 30 years; hearing each other's stories; networking with each other; and experiencing the Anabaptist DNA in history and future. Photo by Liesa Unger

booklets for the children and for the teachers."

Menno-Monde, which was developed by MCC Congo's Advisory Committee, has supported five exchanges so far that involved 13 men, 12 women and 39 total congregations. Exchanges take place during school holidays at Christmas and Easter and during a long break in July and August.

So far exchanges have taken place within Bandundu and Bas-Congo Provinces in western Congo, though *Menno-Monde* coordinators hope future exchanges will eventually include Mennonite congregations in central and eastern Congo.

Adapted from an article by Sheldon C. Good for MCC

Sister Care shared globally

Newton, Kansas, USA – What began as a seminar for women in the United States has now

been shared in Asia and Latin America with additional invitations received from Kenya and Trinidad.

Sister Care is a Mennonite Women USA-sponsored program that equips women to continue their own healing journey, to identify God's grace in their lives and to walk with others in compassionate ways that help transform loss and grief.

The Sister Care manual was developed by Carolyn Heggen, psychotherapist and teacher, and Rhoda Keener and Ruth Lapp Guengerich, Mennonite Women USA co-directors. The manual is available in English and Spanish.

About 2,500 women have attended the workshops, 500 from outside the USA.

Heggen says: "It is in great humility that we offer to share Sister Care with our international sisters. They have taught us so much about courage and perseverance,

Continued from page i

about living life with hope and dignity in the face of challenges many of us can only imagine. But we do have resources of education, of free time to create and write, of technology that many women don't have."

In the past year, the Sister Care seminar has been shared in the following places: the All India Mennonite Women conference in Odisha, India; Tansen and Kathmandu, Nepal; Guatemala City; Chihuahua, Mexico; and Bogotá, Colombia. A workshop was scheduled for Santa Cruz, Bolivia in November.

According to Cynthia Peacock of India, "The impact of the Sister Care workshop conducted by Rhoda and Carolyn has been tremendous. I see changes in thought, attitude and courageous steps by women to be seen as valuable creations of God, to be respected, to use their gifts

more on this seminar, see the October 2013 issue of *Courier News*.)

This exercise was repeated in Colombia with Heggen and Elizabeth Soto Albrecht of USA facilitating. The workshop began with an analysis of the Colombian context and its implications for the Andean region, and participants shared about the toll that 60 years of war has had on their country, their community and their families. Time was given each day for personal reflection and profound internal work, and for sharing in community and supporting each other in sorrows and joys.

Following the workshops in Guatemala and Colombia, participants from 12 countries took 1,500 manuals home to their congregations and communities and are leading workshops.

– Mennonite Women USA



Manjula Raul (left), of the Brethren in Christ Church Odisha (India), with Carolyn Heggen, a Sister Care co-presenter, at the All India Mennonite Women conference in Odisha, India. Photo by Rhoda Keener

and to be treated with dignity at home and in the workplace. One example is that women are carefully, but intentionally, finding ways to share their stories of pain and hurt, wanting the church to become aware and do something. More women are looking at themselves in a new way and understand that God loves them as much as the men and wants for all a life of fulfilment and joy."

This workshop in Chihuahua took place five months after the assassination of pastor Josefina (Chepina) Rempening Diaz in Cuahtémoc, Mexico, and helped to heal the pain. The sessions about loss touched the women deeply. They felt both the loss of a pastor and the loss of their sense of security. (For

Japanese conference adopts confession

Hokkaido, Japan – A conference of Japanese Mennonites recently adopted a formal document defining what they believe collectively.

Nihon Menonaito Kirisuto Kyokai Kyogikai (Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference – Hokkaido) adopted a confession of faith during its 61st gathering on 18 May. The conference has 17 churches and about 442 members, and is a Mennonite World Conference member church.

The core principles of the confession are:

- Jesus Christ is the Word of God the Father and is revealed by the Holy Spirit.
- The church is a community of believers, which learns from the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Believers listen to the Lord Jesus Christ, serve each other and love their neighbors.
- Believers care for creation; build peace and justice, which come from Christ; and participate in the work of the kingdom of God.
- Following Jesus' nonviolent way of life, we as believers do not participate in war.

The effort to write and adopt the confession began about 10 years ago. Prior to this time, churches were referencing historical confessions and the confessions of Mennonite Church USA and MWC.

Eventually the community determined that a confession reflecting their unique Japanese Anabaptist perspective was needed. The recently adopted confession was the result of that consideration process.

Adapted from a Mennonite Mission Network news release by Wil LaVeist

French Mennonites plan new churches

France – The Mission Committee of the *Association des Églises Évangéliques Mennonites de France* (French Mennonite Church) plans to launch two new church meetings in 2013 and beyond.

The congregation of Saint-Genis in Pays de Gex, near Geneva, Switzerland, will open

a second meeting place at the end of the year, in Bellegarde, located 30 kilometres from the existing congregation. This is a city without any evangelical witness.

A second church plant, in Haut Doubs in Pontarlier, is in the planning stages. A small group has been formed to pursue more regular gatherings and to discern specific further steps for this project.

Conversation about such church planting endeavors began at the turn of the new century, as French Mennonites began asking themselves how to better let their light shine through the creation of new communities of faith. This interest has been slow in coming to Mennonites, in comparison with the other evangelical churches to which French Mennonites normally relate.

In 2002, the Mission Committee hosted a retreat for about fifty people on the theme of "evangelization and church planting." The focus was taken further through gatherings at the European Theological Seminary Bienenberg in both 2005 and 2006. Between 2010-2011, the Mission Committee and conference co-sponsored a study group whose purpose was to review the theological basis for mission and to clarify the kind of church desired, the steps needed to achieve that goal and the roles of different individuals in the process.

In 2011, the Working Group for Mission in France took over the effort, focusing on even more concrete planning, and developed the current projects.

– Daniel Goldschmidt

Give a gift to MWC

Your prayers and financial gifts are deeply appreciated. Your contributions are important. They will:

- Enable expanded communication strategies to nurture a worldwide family of faith
- Strengthen our communion's identity and witness as Anabaptist Christians in our diverse contexts, and
- Build up community through networks and gatherings so that we can learn from and support each other

Go to www.mwc-cmm.org and click the "Get Involved" tab for prayer requests and on the "Donate" tab for multiple ways to give online. Or mail your gift to Mennonite World Conference at one of these addresses:

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- 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 Canada
- 28A No.16-41 Piso 2, Bogotá, Colombia
- 8 rue du Fossé des Treize, 67000 Strasbourg, France

“What do you love about MWC?”

MWC staffers describe their favourite things about our global fellowship.

Ron Rempel

Chief Communications Officer
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada



“Involvement in MWC is a reminder that my world is larger and more diverse and complex than my congregation, my

denomination, my country. At times that reminder is inspiring; at times it’s disturbing – “an inconvenient truth” (the title of a 2006 documentary about global warming). At times I love that reminder; at times I don’t.”

Sylvie Gudin

French Translator
Elkhart, Indiana, USA



“I love that MWC gives reality to my desire and conviction of being a ‘citizen of the world,’ rather than French

or American, living in USA. When I meet (or read about) members of the Anabaptist family from all around the world, I feel that we belong together and that our different cultures enrich each other and unite us. In very real ways, national borders do not define us nor come between us.”

Liesja Unger

Chief International Events Officer
Regensburg, Germany



“I love MWC because it’s *not* an organization. It is real people in a real world that are connected in real ways.”

Visits with Angolan churches both inspiring and troubling

Angola – “Come and visit us,” urged representatives of Angolan Mennonite churches during the May 2012 Mennonite World Conference (MWC) General Council meeting in Switzerland.

They said they felt isolated and abandoned following the end of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) programming a decade ago, and after some leadership struggles in their churches.

The MWC Africa Caucus, together with MCC, responded to the invitation with a visit 13-30 April 2013.

The April visitors included Cisca Ibanda, chair of the MWC Africa Caucus and a member of the MWC Executive Committee, and Bruno Baerg, area director for MCC Southern Africa. Also in the delegation were Sylvain Mupepe and Anne Yinda from *Communauté des Églises des Frères Mennonites au Congo* (Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo).

The delegation met with leaders of three conferences: *Igreja da Comunidade Menonita em Angola* (ICMA), *Igreja Evangélica dos Irmãos Menonitas em Angola* (IEIMA), and *Igreja Evangélica Anabaptista em Angola* (IEAA). ICMA and IEIMA are MWC member churches; IEAA has applied for membership. The leader of a fourth MWC member conference, *Igreja Evangélica Menonita em Angola* (IEMA) did not participate in the meetings.

Collectively the four Angolan conferences have over 200 congregations and about 18,800 baptized members plus numerous adherents.

The delegation also met with different groups in the churches: deacons, women and youth ministries. In addition, they met with representatives of churches in conflict.

One of the challenges facing Angolan churches, reported the delegation, is the marginalization of former refugees (*regressados*) who fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo and other neighbouring countries during Angola’s long civil war (from 1975 to 2002) and then decided to go back

home. Those who stayed in Angola and survived the war often refused to accept those who had fled and returned.

Many of the church members are *regressados* and do not speak the working language of Portuguese since they spoke French in DR Congo. Other challenges include overall poverty, lack of schools and teachers, high school fees and a literacy rate under 30 percent.

According to Baerg, MCC became involved in the late 1970s with support for Angolan refugees and later placed staff in Luanda, Angola’s capital, to teach English and to work with the Angola Council of Churches in peace and aid programs. In 2005 the MCC program in Angola was shut down, noted Baerg, “due to unavailability of personnel.”

When Angolan church leadership invited MCC to return to Angola, MCC decided it was best to engage the church through MWC to explore what an appropriate response might

international groups.

Follow-up visit yields further insights and experiences

Five months later, a follow-up visit – which occurred in the first week of September 2013 – both inspired and troubled the MWC delegates who participated.

The purpose of this second visit, according to Henk Stenvers of the Netherlands, secretary of the MWC Deacons Commission, was to listen to, encourage and assure church members that they are an important part of the global communion that MWC strives to be.

Others in the delegation included Janet Plenert of Canada, vice president of MWC, and Enock Shamapani of Zambia, a member of the Deacons Commission, who led a seminar on the role of deacons. Others who were slated to join the group – Samuel Martínez Leal from El Salvador and Shant Kunjam from India – were denied visas.



Leaders pose during the recent Deacons Commission visit to Angola. From left: Janet Plenert, Henk Stenvers, José Ngola (president of IEIMA), Enock Shamapani, Garcia Domingos (president of ICMA)

be to the Angolan request.

“One outcome of the April meetings,” said Baerg, “was an agreement that any request for assistance from the three conferences would come via the Inter-Mennonite Conference of Anabaptists in Angola (CIMA).” CIMA was set up in 2003, and needs further structuring, according to the delegation.

After their visit, the delegation recommended the need to reinforce the capacity of church staff to lead and manage church programs, resolve conflicts, implement Anabaptist and Mennonite values, raise the literacy of men and women and train women in income generating activities.

The delegation also recommended support for visits and exchanges by African and

A number of leaders and a choir from Mennonite churches greeted the visitors at the Luanda airport. The song and dance intensified the next morning at a lengthy Sunday worship service as five choirs emerged from the congregation and sang their way to the front.

“There were many meetings that were inspirational,” noted Stenvers. “I was inspired by the members of local churches – the obvious joy they get from their faith and the way they keep going although they are clearly very poor. Inspiring was the story of the bible school student who gets up every morning at 4:00 am to sell soap, wash cloths, toothpaste, etc., near the bus station to earn money to pay for school.”

Continued on page iv

Continued from page iii

At the same time, delegation members felt overwhelmed and troubled by some requests for assistance which seemed to assume that the full solution to needs would come from outside of the country.

In a worship service early in their visit, delegation members emphasized that they came as brothers and sisters, not as a mother or father to the Angolan churches. Later in the week, noted Plenert, “a youth leader publically stated that in spite of what we had preached on Sunday . . . we are their mother and father whether we like it or not because Mennonite is (originally) a white European and North American church. He said that we know our history and are responsible to teach it to them, and provide for them because we brought them this

church.”

The comment stung, noted Plenert. In response, she referred to the church as “a body of many members, not a hierarchy of historic ownership.” Referring to her own experience of joining the Mennonite church although not raised in a Mennonite home, she added, “We are all adopted in, Gentiles who by grace are part of the people of God.”

The delegation met with leaders of the same groups visited by the earlier delegation in April 2013. In addition, Stenvers, Plenert and Shamapani also had opportunity to meet with the disaffected leader of the IEMA and to encourage re-establishment of fellowship with other Mennonite groups.

– Ron Rempel

constantly changing. For that reason we are continually updating the list of videos we link to in this section. We

encourage readers to send their ideas or suggestions for featured videos to videos@mwc-cmm.org

Prayers

• Praise God for the warm welcome given several MWC delegations to Angola in 2013. Pray for the Mennonite churches in Angola, and their leadership, as they strive to deepen their Anabaptist identity and resolve internal conflicts. Pray for their role in changing their country and helping their society transform out of a mentality of a 27-year civil war that ended in 2002. (See full story on pp. iii and iv)

programs offered jointly by MWC and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). One is the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN!), which places young adults from the Global South in other countries of the Global South for cross-cultural learning and ministry. Each exchange includes at least one MWC member church. The other program is the MWC Intern at the MCC United Nations office.

Resources

Shared Convictions brochures now available online

A statement of Shared Convictions, adopted by Mennonite World Conference in 2006, continues to be a unifying element the global community of faith. Several years ago, a brochure listing and explaining these convictions was developed by MWC. The brochure is available in English, Spanish, French and German. A link to the electronic copies of each language version of the brochure was recently added to the MWC website at www.mwc-cmm.org

Volunteer now for Pennsylvania 2015

Are you interested in assisting with Pennsylvania 2015? Applications are now available online for volunteers and/or host families for the next MWC Assembly. Visit the MWC website (www.mwc-cmm.org) for more information and to download an application.

Videos page of MWC website revised

One of the purposes of the MWC website (www.mwc-cmm.org) is to provide easy access to resources for member-churches. Recently, the Videos page of the website was revised and expanded to be a more comprehensive resource for our churches.

The page now contains four pages with different kinds of videos. **MWC Videos** are official videos created for MWC. This section provides a link to the MWC YouTube Channel, which contains a variety of videos, including several from the Assembly 2009 in Paraguay.

MWC Member Church Videos lists videos and video channels from the national churches that make up MWC.

Related Organization Videos links to videos and video channels of organizations that are related to MWC and MWC member churches.

General Anabaptist and Mennonite Videos contains a variety of videos that teach and explain who we are as Anabaptists and Mennonites and our history.

To find these Videos from the MWC homepage, click on the blue “Stories and Resources” tab at the top of the page, then select “Videos.”

What is available to share on the Videos page online is



Members of the Program Oversight Committee for the Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly, met in October 2013 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA, to plan for the gathering. Members include (left to right) Don McNiven, Canada; Vikal Rao, India; Liesa Unger, Germany; Marius van Hoogstraten, Netherlands; Egon Sawatsky, Paraguay; and Thobekile Ncube, Zimbabwe.

• Pray for the Program Oversight Committee for the Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly. Registration for the event begins August 2014 on the MWC website (www.mwc-cmm.org). The program will include rich offerings in music and worship, friendship groups, children’s and youth programming and the popular Global Church Village.

• Praise God for the life-changing experience offered to young adults through several

• Pray for Mennonite Central Committee partner organization, *Asociación Sembrando Semillas de Paz* (Sowing Seeds of Peace Association, known as *Sembrandopaz*), located on the Caribbean coast of Colombia; the founder Ricardo Esquivia Ballestas; and other community leaders, who have received threats and intimidations. One community leader, Jorge Montes, has been arrested on false charges.

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