



Focus on Floradale

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Floradale Mennonite Church

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Mennonite World Conference - Pa 2015 July 21-26

By *Mary Bauman*

Why would anyone want to attend the 16th Mennonite World Conference? For some people it is like the biggest family reunion you could ever imagine. For some it is a foretaste of heaven—worshipping with so many different nationalities all gathered in one place. For others, they have attended the last 12 con-

ferences and this would mark number 13. Others like to get to know new people, find out what is going on in their lives, where they are from, hear their stories. And for some, like Cliff and me, we looked forward to amazing singing and we were certainly not disappointed.

The Conference was held at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex, a facility covering nearly

1,000,000 square feet. We had been to this same place a few years ago to the Pennsylvania relief sale. There were about 7,500 people who attended which included about 700 youth. Even with so many, people moved from one event to another with little or no congestion. Meticulous care and planning was given to every imaginable detail.

Here is what a day at Conference looked like. Mornings began at 9:30 with worship and singing. A well-trained mixed choir of young people led the singing each day and included people from Spain, Germany, Africa, Mexico, Indonesia, India and, of course, North America. They were accompanied by musicians playing piano, keyboard, different drums, guitars, saxophones and violin. Truly a joyful noise!

Interesting speakers followed the music—2 or 3 each day. At 11:30 we had a short break and then found our way to our “friendship group.” For this, everyone was divided



Imagine being a part of 7,000 people gathered for a multi-cultural worship service, lifting our voices in praise to God. (Photo by Florence Jantzi)

into groups of 15-20 people. Our group had a girl from Switzerland, a man from Kenya, a man from Indonesia, a man from Kansas, some from Manitoba and then 3 couples from Ontario. We met with this same group each day, were provided with suggestions for discussion and really got to know these folks after our four days there.

After lunch, there were workshops on a variety of topics, bus tours to various places or service projects to name a few. Cliff and I went to two workshops, both led by Derek Suderman—very interesting. We also went on two bus trips. The first was to a large dairy operated by Luke Brubacher and his two sons. They milk 1,000 cows each day and recycle all the manure into electricity. You can read about this on the internet.

Our second bus trip was to a hymn sing at the Ringgold Meeting House in Maryland. This place was built in the 1700s, is laid out much like the Detweiler Meeting House in Roseville and has excellent acoustics. The bus ride was 68 miles one way and so driving back to the Conference we started singing on the bus.

Even our driver was Mennonite, joining in the singing and said that was the shortest 68 miles he had ever driven.

Evening worship began at 6:45 p.m., again with lots of singing, some familiar and some new. Again, good speakers, some with an interpreter and always a person signing.

The Conference was officially over on Saturday night, but people were encouraged to visit a local congregation on Sunday morning as they started out for home. I think most churches were prepared to give their guests lunch and this was certainly true at the church we visited—again a real blessing for us.

Now we are home for a week, and in looking back, Cliff said that what gives him the most optimism is the quality of the young adults who will be the upcoming church leaders.

Everyone was invited to put their fingerprint on this sculpture in the Global Church Village. It is a three-dimensional wooden image of the MWC logo. By the end of the week it was covered in fingerprints.



Each person who registered for Mennonite World Conference assembly received a bag with a necktie used as the shoulder strap. Volunteers made thousands of these. Anyone not wishing to keep their bag was invited to leave and they would be recycled for school or health kit bags.



The Global Church Village was always a hub of activity with storytelling, music groups, displays of culture and church life in different continents—and in this photo—a giant Dutch Blitz game.

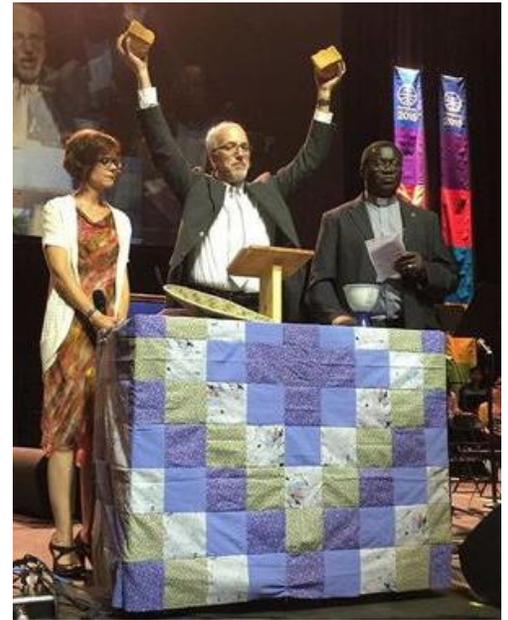
Photos by Florence Jantzi and Shirley Redekop

Impressions of MWC Assembly

By Rick Martin

- The Mennonite Church needs the energy and vitality of Africa, Asia, and South America.
- The stories that we bring from North America and Europe seem to be less exciting in comparison to those from other parts of the world.
- The Assembly featured “Young Anabaptist” speakers each day. They were the highlight of the Assembly. They have lots of questions and doubts along with incredible passion and vision. We need to listen to the next generation.

- The organizers did a wonderful job in celebrating diversity. Music and speakers from every part of the world was featured.
- Music is a powerful form of worship and communication for the worldwide church. It brings us together and bridges potential gaps.
- The logistics of housing, feeding, and transporting more than 6,000 people was handled very well.
- When we welcome people from around the world, it’s not just to help them; we learn from them as we hear their stories.



Janet Plenert, Nelson Kraybill and Danisa Ndlovu serving communion. Nelson Kraybill is the in-coming president of Mennonite World Conference while Janet Plenert (from Canada) and Danisa Ndlovu have served as vice-president and president for the past six years.



Quilters were invited to participate in MCC’s quilt-making workshop which was offered each day during the workshop time slot. Participants could quilt or cut, sew, bind or knot comforters.



Mennonite World Conference Assembly

By Fred Redekop

World Conference was a very exhausting time for me. There was too much to take in over the course of five days. The worship was great, but it had a kind of intensity that was tiring as well.

The leaders were excellent and the musicians were superb, and I really enjoyed the variety of styles and languages that were part of worship. In worship, the speakers were thoughtful and provocative. They came from very different situations than mine.

The meetings with friends were also stressful. We needed to catch up with each other's lives in fifteen minutes, before worship or two minutes in the hallways of the convention centre. We also met new people and had to get know them in fifteen minutes. On Friday I finally crashed, and needed two hours to myself. That really helped.

I went to a variety of workshops that stand out. The first one was by a historian, Ben Waltner Goossen, from the United States. He told of Mennonites who lived in Germany during the time of the Nazis. Mennonites benefitted from being more "Aryan" than many Germans. Some Mennonite sold their land for concentration camps, and some even worked at the camps. What does this say about our commitment to peace and justice? It was a very disturbing seminar. Whose job is it to tell this story to the rest of the Mennonite world?

A second was a talk led by Dutch Mennonites from Amster-

dam. They talked about how people become members at their church. The only requirement is to write their personal confession. People meet with the pastor and meet together in a class. They have a confession of essentials that the church adheres to, but the confession is a very personal journey of each individual person. The church accepts the confession and the person is baptized, if they have not been baptized by another denomination.

Here at Floradale we ask baptism candidates for a confession. The Amsterdam confessions are very theological and people are usually in their 30's or older. The Dutch church is very liberal, but they require this confession of everyone who wants to become a member. The church has them on file since the 1700's.

Even though it was exhausting, it was good to be with that many Mennonites from all over the world. The next gathering will be in Indonesia in 2021. We hope to go. Please pray for Cesar Garcia, the executive secretary, as he leads us to be a faithful people of God in this world.



Shirley and Fred met old friends and made new friends.



Entertainers in the Global Church Village

From Fred's *Independent* article

By Fred Redekop

The Mennonite world gets together every six years to worship, to fellowship, to eat and to tell of their faith journeys in countries from all over the world. We attended one other Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay in 2009.

For Shirley and I, it has been a time of renewing old friendships. We saw many people that we met at other times in our lives, and it seems strange to see them in a different place. These people are at different stages of their own lives, but we are able to pick up the friendships quickly. Then the encounter is over, and we go on to the next meeting of friends.

Every day we worship in the style of areas of the world where Mennonites live. On the day of experiencing the faith and worship style of people from Africa, there was a lot of dancing and "clicking of the tongue" to experience worship and the love of God.

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The most Mennonites in the world live in Africa. If you only know of Mennonites in Waterloo Region, African Mennonites look very different, and worship in a style that is lively and loud. And that is a good thing.

We heard a variety of sermons and teachings, and the most powerful, for me, were two young adults from Ethiopia and the Philippines. Both women spoke about pain and doubt, and having a variety of questions for their own faith journey. Other adults seem “preachy” and use code words about faith. These two young women from the third world spoke from their personal experiences with God, and their questions going forward. They both spoke from a deep personal conviction of making sense of their world in terms of their faith.

I am a very wealthy person from the First World. What do I have to say to a Mennonite from Zimbabwe? When he or she returns home, he or she will have to continue to fight each day to have enough food for their family. We do not ask the same questions of our faith, nor our

lives. Our experiences do not even come close to being in the same universe. But God is speaking to all of us, as we come together to worship in the spirit of peace and justice. It is leaving me with haunting questions of how I am being faithful to my calling, as a Christian.

Mennonites are a diverse group of people who worship in hundreds of languages. We walk in different ways in following the ways of Jesus of Nazareth, depending on where we live in the world. The challenge is to work to-



ward being in right relationship with each other, even when we may not agree on the ways that we believe.



A highlight for us was meeting friends from Ethiopia—Darrell Jantzi, Kelbesse Muleta, Krios Teka, Carl Hansen. (Photo by Florence Jantzi)



This choir from Africa had only five singers; the rest of the 30 choir members were unable to get visas for the U.S.



In spite of an enormous crowd, Shirley Redekop managed to find the youth from Floradale and snap a photo.

This is a special edition of *Focus on Floradale* to share the news about Mennonite World Conference Assembly.

Editor:
Barb Draper

A Bittersweet experience

By Leon Kehl

During World Conference we were assigned to friendship groups and would meet each day for almost an hour. Our group had Canadians, Germans, a couple from Taiwan and a pastor from India. On the final day, the gentleman from Taiwan was eagerly showing the pastor from India maps with different hospitals started by Mennonites in India. I think the Taiwanese Mennonite churches had connections with these hospitals and he was asking the pastor if he knew any of them.

The pastor from India teared up, looking at the first map, saying this was the hospital he was born in 60 years ago and he had not been back since. He was part of the Dalit (untouchable) caste and his father had been an orphan of 12, living on the streets when a Mennonite missionary asked him if he wanted to learn to cook for the Americans and offered him a job. He ended up doing that job for the rest of his working life. The pay was low and he needed other jobs to support a family, but that offer of assistance led to this man being able to sit beside me at World Conference.

He shared how he was trying to minister to Hindus and faced government resistance and persecution, and that he and his family at times feared for their

lives from Hindu extremists. I asked him how he felt about the conference. He said it had made him sad, and he hadn't been prepared for that. He was able to come and all the people around him were excited and happy and he felt alone, knowing that when conference ended he was going to return to his church feeling very isolated. I said I would pray for him, but felt helpless as I listened to his story.

He had to leave early and as we parted he thanked me for listening to him and for my prayers. I wonder what he is doing today.



Our friendship group included a pastor from India (on the left) and a man from Taiwan.

We were asked to share our highlights of the conference with our group and I said it was bittersweet. It was sweet because there was this wonderful feeling and excitement of coming together and worshipping with brothers and sisters from around the world in different languages.

It was bitter because I heard other stories like this pastor, stories of brothers and sisters who faced extreme hardship and sometimes persecution.

There was also a huge gulf in terms of economic opportunities between many of us. The church in Zimbabwe exists in the third poorest country in the world in terms of GDP per capita.

A lady from Zimbabwe shared with us how when World Conference was held there twelve years ago, food needed to be imported. Because of the economic collapse, local food was just not available. Locals people attended and were able to fill their bellies for the first time in months and weren't hungry for the following

week, because they had been able to put fruit and vegetables in their pockets during conference.

I had heard about that conference from North Americans who talked about how on the first night they didn't get anything to eat because they got to supper late. I suddenly understood why. For the following meals in Bulawayo the visitors always went first, but I suspect there wasn't any food left after any of the meals.

Bittersweet sums up World Conference assembly for me. There was joy in being part of a wonderful celebration, but also I had the opportunity to step out of my comfortable life so that I could feel a sense of connection, no matter how painful and brief with sisters and brothers in Christ.

A feeling of unity amid many languages and colours

Story and photos by Alina Kehl

I attend a school in Kitchener that has around three thousand students. Among those three thousand, to the best of my knowledge, there are very few Mennonites. The school has a Christians In Action club, which I joined only to find that I was the only Mennonite while almost everyone else came from the same denomination. I often found myself feeling a little out of place in that club because I didn't always share the same views as others.

So my favourite part about World Conference was that for really the first time ever it felt like I wasn't the only one that was Mennonite. I saw that there are many more Mennonites than just the ones at our church and a few others here and there.

It was amazing to me to have six thousands Mennonites in an arena all singing songs like "606," "Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow." Or

to have songs being sung in so many different languages because Mennonites can come from so many different places or come in so many colours. It was eye-opening to see how many Mennonite brothers and sisters I actually have. I felt privileged to be a part of something so great. I will never forget the feeling of unity, and the next time I feel a hint of loneliness at school I'll remember the family I have all across the world.



The five of us here did a lot together at World Conference and shared many laughs together. The girl on the left is my second cousin Rachel Kehl who goes to First Mennonite, and then Danielle Kehl. The girl in the middle is Rachel Frey also from First Mennonite; we became friends when I used to go to First Mennonite in Kitchener. Then it's me (Alina Kehl), and Kayla Buckley on the right.



Some days it got pretty tiring because we would have to wake up at 6:15 and then played games till 11 p.m.! This is a photo of our group (Elmira Mennonite Youth and our three Floradale youth) taking a nap outside after getting off the buses before the morning service. I guess we were too tired to walk over to the patch of grass nearby so settled for concrete instead.



This is a photo of the opening ceremony on the first day.



An international music ensemble led us in singing at each worship service, led by Marcy Hostetler from Lancaster, Pa. Everyone on stage was projected on the screen above to help



Mary Brubaker-Zehr and her son check out the t-shirts and Dutch Blitz games.



To see videos of the worship services etc., go to the Mennonite World Conference website:
<http://pa2015.mwc-cmm.org/share-with-your-congregation>.