

IMAgEs

[the newsletter of the International Missions Association]



Participants of the HSIM conference wearing cultural scarves of the Southern Region of Ethiopia.

Heaven Came Down in Awassa

AWASSA, Ethiopia – The sixteenth annual meeting of the International Missions Association (IMA) was held in Awassa, Ethiopia, September 18–26, 2012, on the beautiful shores of Lake Awassa. Hosted this year by member group Meserete Kristos Church (MKC), the IMA consists of 22 Anabaptist member groups dedicated to fellowship, prayer and fasting, information sharing, resourcing, and partnership for global mission, especially in places where the church is weak or nonexistent.

Special features of the IMA annual meetings are the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference, short-term ministry trips to mission locations in the hosting country, and strategic conversations for partnership and best practice in mission. MKC chose Awassa for the 2012 meetings because it is a large regional center on its growing edge. MKC is the largest Anabaptist communion in the world with 225,000 baptized members in 726 local churches and 846 new church plants.

President Yesaya Abdi of the Indonesian Mennonite mission board (PIPKA) opened the meetings with a meditation on Ezekiel 47:1-5, “Moving by the Spirit.”

“Entering into Jesus’ ministry is not about what we do for him but allowing him to do what he wants through us,” said Abdi in his opening talk. He distributed a prayer booklet containing significant facts about each

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– Unless otherwise indicated, all text written by Richard and Jewel Showalter, and all photos by Javier Soler.

IMA members

The International Missions Association (IMA) is an association of Anabaptist mission bodies established for prayer, mutual support, and partnering in carrying out the Great Commission. It was begun in 1997 by four members (PIPKA of Indonesia, MKC of Ethiopia, Amor Viviente of Honduras, and EMM of the U.S.), and presently includes the following 22 members:

1. African Christian Mission International - Kenya
2. Agencia Misionera de las Iglesias de la Convencion Menonita de Costa Rica
3. Amor Viviente - Honduras
4. Asia Pacific Mission - Singapore
5. Binay Fellowship of Churches - Nepal
6. Deliverance Outreach Ministries - Kenya
7. Eastern Mennonite Missions - USA
8. GITJ - Indonesia
9. Happy Church - Kenya
10. Honduran Evangelical Mennonite Church
11. Hope Celebration Christian Church - Kenya
12. Integrated Mennonite Church - Philippines
13. Junta Misionera Convencion Menonita de Nicaragua
14. Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania
15. Kenya Mennonite Church
16. Koinonia Fellowship of Churches - USA
17. Meserete Kristos Church - Ethiopia
18. PIPKA - Indonesia
19. Pocket Testament League - India
20. Rosedale Mennonite Missions - USA
21. Spanish Mennonite Council - USA
22. Word of Grace Network - USA

President – Yesaya Abdi

Vice president – Henry Mulandi

Secretary – P. C. Alexander

Coordinator – Tilahun Beyene Kidane

President's corner

Stepping into the deeper level

Our gathering at the Lewi Hotel in Awassa, Ethiopia, is still fresh in my memory: that's where we had the 2012 Holy Spirit in Mission (HSIM) and International Missions Association (IMA) conferences. The sermon at the opening service was taken from Ezekiel 47, about the prophet of Ezekiel. The angel led Ezekiel to step into the water that



flowed out from under the table in the tabernacle. The water had four different depths – ankle deep, knee deep, waist deep, and then very deep, above the shoulder. The sermon encouraged us to also be involved in God's ministry, prayer ministry, financial ministry, and then in total commitment to the Lord.

God's favor on that gathering was awesome, and all the messages shared by the many speakers were powerful. Participants then scattered into their respective countries and field ministries full of great joy and enthusiasm. But – what shall we do now? We must continue to move forward (Acts 26:19) by practicing all of the good things we have learned. Otherwise we will forget them, sooner or later.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, responded to the angel as someone willing to step into the deeper level of commitment. She was willing to accept all the risks by conceiving a baby named Jesus. Because of that, God's plans were fulfilled – blessing Mary, and showing his love to the world through his only begotten Son. Her life then testified that she was a faithful disciple of Jesus and followed Jesus to Golgotha. She became the eyewitness of his suffering and death, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the church.

HSIM & IMA 2013 in Singapore will be coming soon. Let us make those meetings platforms for sharing our commitments and God's faithfulness in and through us (2 Cor. 3:5). Let us step into the deeper level!

– Yesaya Abdi
IMA President

The 2013 Holy Spirit in Mission Conference and the IMA Annual Meeting will be held in Singapore from August 27 to September 3. Asia Pacific Mission (APM) and Bethany International University (BIU) will be hosting the gathering. All are welcome. Please register by July 31 at www.emm.org/ima.

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of the 54 countries of Africa and challenged the 48 international participants to pray for Africa throughout the meetings.

Amos Stoltzfus, partnership coach of member group Eastern Mennonite Missions, described a North Indian prayer group which has met four hours a day, five days a week, for 17 years, undergirding the outreach of the Fellowship of Christian Assemblies (FCA). FCA, another member group, is a rapidly-growing Anabaptist circle of churches associated with the Pocket Testament League (PTL) of India.

Yemiru Tilahun, director of missions for MKC, gave a stirring challenge to be compelled by the Holy Spirit rather than by our cultures, past experiences, busy schedules, the people around us, finances, or the contexts in which we find ourselves. "Culture is often more powerful than Jesus," he said. "That's why many of you are hesitating to eat injera [Ethiopian bread]! But the Holy Spirit is always compelling us to be free from our culture."

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Top: Discussion and prayer by region – Africa.

Above: Choir of the MKC Addis Ababa Region singing at the conference.

Coordinator's corner

Giving and Mission

In writing about spiritual gifts, Paul says in Romans 12:8, “if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously,” putting the ministry of giving on par with all other ministries. Mission around the world happens because people give, not from their surplus mostly, but by disregarding their own needs. It was the dedication and faithful giving of a young girl that triggered the mission vision to Africa for EMM. Today that vision has helped to make thousands disciples of Jesus in Eastern Africa and beyond.

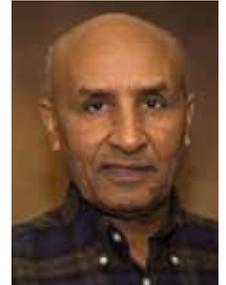
Missions continues today because people continue to give and give generously – people of all ages and social standings, from farmers to professionals, business people to those in retirement homes. Yes, they continue to give even in lean and difficult times because their hearts are in mission.

The IMA gathering in Awassa put the spotlight on generous giving. The Indonesian brothers who gave seven brand new laptops to African mission and church leaders, do themselves need those computers. But they put the needs of their brothers ahead of their own. Considering the subject of generous giving, the gifts of the laptops were generous on their own to the people who received them and even those who were just witnessing the presentations. But our Indonesian brothers and sisters did not stop there. They also donated a vehicle, once again disregarding their own need. Now that is generous giving indeed, fulfilling what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:4: “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

IMA is about doing missions together, sharing resources, praying for each other and supporting one another. We have been doing these for many years. But now the Lord is clearly moving us on to a higher ground. Not just giving, but generous giving, “pressed down, shaken together, and running over.” Generous giving is a result of a deepening relationship of love, concern, and confidence. It is this relationship that energizes us as we link arms in missions and move forward. In this connection David says, “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity . . . for there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life evermore” (Psalm 133:1,3b).

Where there is love and unity, generous giving becomes natural and mission continuous to flow out of that.

– Tilahun Beyene Kidane
IMA Coordinator



There was a noticeable rise in the consumption of injera! Henry Mulandi, director of African Christian Mission International (ACMI) of Kenya, spoke in the first evening rally and noted that “injera” sounds like “the way” in Swahili. His text was John 14:6, Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life. “Let’s feast on ‘the way!’” he said.

Local MKC leaders had planned a series of seven public evangelistic rallies as part of the international IMA event. The mayor of Awassa had given permission to hold the rallies in the large central sports arena, and at the final meeting it was estimated that more than 4,000 people were in attendance. One hundred forty people came to faith in Jesus during the rallies, and local leaders were already excitedly envisioning continuing them in the future.

“This is not a flash in the pan,” said Tilahun Beyene, coordinator of the IMA and former MKC church leader. “IMA energizes the church for mission wherever we meet, and Awassa is no exception.”

In the final rally, hundreds of people danced with abandon in praise to God. The meeting could hardly be stopped as the fervent praise went on and on. Choir B, an MKC choir from Addis Ababa which has served the church since 1973, led the worship.

The Awassa meetings gave birth to stimulating reflection as well as passionate devotion. Nelson Okanya, EMM president with roots in Kenya, called the group to reflect on the relationship between mission and church. “As a mission entity, how do you relate with the local church? The North American church is trying to re-discover its missional soul. Is there a way for a mission agency to help with that re-discovery?”

Okanya’s questions led to vigorous discussion about the mission structures of the churches served by IMA. In some, there is almost no difference between church and mission. Javier Soler, mission leader in Amor

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Business meeting of IMA members.

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Open air gospel rally at the Awassa public arena.

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Viviente (AV) Honduras noted, “From the beginning, mission was part of the DNA of Amor Viviente. For us, mission and church are the same. We don’t distinguish them organizationally. But now we need to insure that we don’t lose that initial missionary DNA.”

In another pattern, some churches have developed departments of missions. MKC is one such. “Our department gets a lot of our funds from donors,” said Yemiru Tilahun, director. “To be frank, it’s not perfect. Administration is not always smooth. The budgeting and activity have to go parallel with other activities of the denomination. Should we create a more separate agency for greater effectiveness and efficiency?” However, the church is now promoting church-wide giving for missions at the rate of one birr [unit of Ethiopian currency] per member per month, and this looks promising.

A third major pattern for some IMA members is that of a mission agency which functions under the authority of a board established by the church. This tends to create greater separation between “mission” and “church” than do the other two. EMM North America, PIPKA Indonesia, and ACMI Kenya fall into this category. This mission agency/church distinction not infrequently creates tension between mission structures and other church structures.

Okanya noted, “In the west, the evangelical church has seen the mission task as primarily a sending activity. We have set up specialist structures to guide our sending activities. Local churches have had very little to do with the mission task beyond releasing workers and finances so the specialist structures could do their specialized

work. But now the local church is re-claiming its mission.”

Is one pattern better than the others? In discussion, IMA members returned frequently to IMA’s historic stance. “We affirm diversity in mission structures,” said Richard Showalter, IMA president emeritus and Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Mission Commission chair. “Mission is an integral expression of every faithful church just as church is an integral expression of every faithful mission. But God is infinitely creative in the choices of structures for mission.”

As always at IMA gatherings, stories and testimony dominated both the formal and informal conversations. Pastor Tetty Sinulingga of Indonesia said, “I was a government worker, and I loved my job. It was a good one. But after 15 years God spoke to me to leave it. This meant giving up my future. God spoke to me through Numbers 20, “Speak to the rock, and water will come out.” That gave me courage to resign from my job and work for God fulltime.” Since then Sinulingga has planted many churches.

Henry Mulandi of Kenya described Benson, sometimes referred to as the desert boy. “He was trained in one of our schools related to ACMI. He started planting churches among the Turkana, and he now has hundreds of churches under the trees, 550 of them. Unforgettable—I’ve never seen such a church, such joy.” These Turkana churches are now sending missionaries.

At the end of the IMA meetings, Paul Kimani, an ACMI missionary from Kenya to South Sudan, told how his ministry team went to a village about 50 miles outside

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The Joy of Sacrificial Giving

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Special features of the IMA annual meetings are the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference, short-term ministry trips to mission locations in the hosting country, and strategic conversations for partnership and best practice in mission. MKC chose Awassa for the 2012 meetings because it is a large regional center on its growing edge. MKC is the largest Anabaptist communion in the world with 225,000 baptized members in 726 local churches and 846 new church plants.

President Yesaya Abdi of the Indonesian Mennonite mission board (PIPKA) opened the Holy Spirit in Mission conference with a meditation on Ezekiel 47:1-5, "Moving by the Spirit," reflecting on the river of God flowing from beneath the temple.

"Entering into Jesus' ministry is not about what we do for him but allowing him to do what he wants through us," said Abdi as he spoke about being ankle deep in the river of God. Moments later, he spoke of being knee deep in the river and simultaneously distributed a prayer booklet containing significant facts about each of the 54 countries of Africa and challenged the 48 international participants to pray for Africa throughout the meetings.

But he didn't stop there. As he moved on to being waist deep in the river, he told the story of someone who was being discouraged from giving too sacrificially. In response the person pleaded, "Please give me the chance to feel the hurt of giving!" He reported that this year Indonesia brought a computer to donate to the Tanzanian Mennonite Church whose offices had been burglarized.

A few days later in the annual IMA members' assembly the theme of giving continued. IMA Coordinator Tilahun Beyene recognized member Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) for its generous support of IMA. "Even during the hard times from 2008-2011, EMM did not restrict the support it gave to IMA. Every year EMM budgets \$15,000. Not only that, but as our nesting agency EMM's services are used freely. They also give quarter-time support for me as coordinator."

Beyene went on to highlight the support which comes regularly from other IMA members such as PIPKA

Indonesia and Amor Viviente Honduras. Referring to PIPKA, he noted that this year they brought not one but seven brand new laptops to Ethiopia and shared them where they are needed.

A few minutes later President Abdi rose in the meeting with a confession. "The computers," he said, "are not really from PIPKA as an organization. I shared the need with my congregation, Anugerah Mennonite Church of Jakarta, and they were very generous. They are the ones who gave seven computers.

"Furthermore, I told the church about a need God had placed on my heart for a vehicle for the mission department of the Meserete Kristos Church of Ethiopia. So before coming to Ethiopia we also raised money to buy a van for them. God provided it through the church!

"And now a whole group has come with me from Indonesia to experience the Ethiopian church. If we allow Jesus to put something in our heart, he will. Let's invite him to speak to us."

It was a holy moment.

Weeks before Yemiru Tilahun, mission director of MKC Ethiopia, had written to a western friend in IMA to share the desperate need for a vehicle for the mission department. "I administer 140 missionaries on behalf of the churches," he said, "but I am reduced to being a pedestrian. Please pray with me. We need a car."

Richard Showalter, president emeritus of IMA, remarked, "From its beginning IMA was formed to be a group of peers in mission—north, south, east, and west coming together to pray, consult, and partner until the whole world has the opportunity to know Jesus. We are seeing that happen before our eyes.

"We might have expected funds for a vehicle to come from Europe or the United States," he said. "But God provided from the south!"

IMA 2012 in Awassa was full of blessing on many counts. Members and guests wrestled with questions of mission organization. There were powerful sermons. A series of six evangelistic meetings was held in the city stadium in which 140 people committed their lives to Christ. Preachers were both international and Ethiopian. On the evening of the last rally, heaven came down in Awassa as hundreds of people danced with joy under the ministry of an anointed thirty-five-year-old MKC choir in a meeting of thousands.

But for many IMA members, Awassa will be remembered as the time we were awed by God with the gift of a van from Indonesia to Ethiopia. ■

Missions: African and Anabaptist

MWANZA, Tanzania – Bishops from Kenya Mennonite Church (KMC) and Tanzania Mennonite Church (KMT) met in the first annual workshop of the new International Mennonite Mission of East Africa (IMMEA) in Mwanza, Tanzania, January 28-31, 2013, with the theme “Missions in the 21st Century.”

The workshop was called and coordinated by Philip Okeyo of Kenya, chair of IMMEA, and Christopher Ndege of Tanzania, secretary of IMMEA. Anticipation of a new era in African Mennonite missions ran high throughout the event. The acronym IMMEA is also the Swahili word

for “it is growing.” The growing Mennonite churches of Tanzania and Kenya, with a combined membership of more than 60,000, are mute testimony to an appropriate name for the newest African Mennonite mission agency established in 2012.

“We are not looking to the west for our mission models,” said Albert Randa, bishop of the Mwanza diocese of KMT. “We know that something authentically African is needed. For us, the use of a western model would be ‘Saul’s armor.’”

“However,” noted John Nyagwegwe, bishop of the Lake diocese, with a smile, “not everything from the west is bad. So we are ready to learn from the many expressions of the global church.”

The group worked in a careful process of prayer and discussion to identify the biggest questions which face IMMEA. In small groups, participants raised fourteen questions. From this list, the larger group agreed on the four most significant questions which IMMEA must answer.

1. How can we reach unreached people despite religious threats?
2. How shall we mobilize resources?
3. What are the organizational models we need, including training?
4. How shall we recruit workers?

Not content to ask questions, the bishops began answering them. “We must strengthen the discipleship programs of local congregations,” a small group reported in response to the first question. The need for discipleship training was echoed repeatedly by others as well.

“We need organizational models which are African and Holy Spirit initiated and led,” said another.

“Recruiting and sending must take place within local congregations.”



Philip Okeyo, Kenyan Bishop and chair of IMMEA, and Stephen Mang'ana, Tanzanian Bishop of the Dar es Salaam diocese, confer at the retreat. Photo by Richard Showalter.

Other important questions were how to establish broad local ownership of a new venture and how to create a self-sustaining organization. “And of course, we’re interested in mission partnerships, too,” said Nyagwegwe, “whether African or international.” The group affirmed the continuation of historic partnership with Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM). EMM regional representative Aram DiGennaro and workers Joe and Gloria Bontrager participated in the workshop.

Reuben Ezemadu, a Nigerian trainer representing African mission initiatives continent-wide, inspired the group with Biblical and practical mission training for the African context. Richard Showalter represented the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Mission Commission and the International Missions Association (IMA) in exploring God’s mission in its focused, many-faceted dimensions from the Bible, Anabaptism, and other Christian history.

In the final session, the bishops shared the practical steps of action they plan to take both in their personal lives and as church leaders. “I will gather my pastors and share this vision and the importance of our next steps of practical obedience,” said Stephen Mang’ana of Dar es Salaam. “I will pray, and invite others to join me,” said Okeyo. All agreed to work side by side to promote widespread missional vision and action.

The leaders Okeyo and Ndege then reminded the group of their corporate commitment to be faithful to the Bible, partnering with larger missional expressions such as the MWC and the IMA, and carrying the Anabaptist vision for whole life and the whole church in mission. “What we have talked about is not theory, but lies at the very heart of discipleship.”

In his concluding remarks, Bishop Dominic Opondo from Kenya thanked Showalter for opening the meeting with a story of effective missionary outreach by the Tanzanian church in the village of Busami near Mwanza. “You inspired us with the fact that as Africans we are indeed equipped and able to do missions,” he said.■



Albert Randa, bishop of the Mwanza diocese of KMT, and Richard Showalter, IMA coach and retreat speaker. Photo provided by Richard Showalter.

IMA news service established

IMA is pleased to announce that it has established its own news service. This news service will distribute news and feature articles of special interest to IMA members, reflecting what God is doing in different places around the globe. Jewel and Richard Showalter are serving as staff for the news service, and they welcome suggestions for news or feature articles. Send suggestions or correspondence to jslandisville@gmail.com with a copy to tilahunb@emm.org. IMA News Service articles will be sent to all IMA members, who may edit and reprint them as they wish for their context. ■



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Group picture at the 2012 Holy Spirit in Missions Conference – Lewi Resort, Awassa, Ethiopia.

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of Awassa for their short-term mission during IMA. “Saturday morning, something happened exactly like with the Ethiopian eunuch,” he said. “A man followed us from the town center to the church. He sat in the back. At the altar call, he came and said, ‘I want to give my life to Jesus.’

“Who are you? Do these people know you?” I asked.

He said, “No. My village is six kilometers away. Just now I’m coming from prison in Awassa. I was in prison because I killed two people and two horses. I was

returning from prison for revenge. I was going to kill all the members of my family because they didn’t visit me in prison.

“But now, something has changed in my heart. I have never before knelt for anyone, this was the first time. I’m going back home now. I’m going to tell my family, ‘If you kill me, okay, but I am a changed person.’”

In the IMA Assembly, members decided to say yes to an invitation from the Mennonite churches of Singapore to hold their annual meeting there in 2013. ■