

# IMAgEs

[the newsletter of the International Missions Association]



Participants in the HSIM conference share in a parting communion service led by Yesaya Abdi, president of the IMA.

## Cross-cultural synergies spawned at International Missions Association (IMA) meetings

SUMATRA, Indonesia – Up in the mountains near an active volcano, one Indonesian Mennonite had an unusually productive harvest of chili peppers last year. He used the proceeds to buy his church a van for mission trips.

“But you need to build yourself a house,” the pastor objected.

The brother smiled back and said, “Missions is more important than a house for me.”

Amos Stoltzfus, partnership coach for EMM, said, “Witnessing the passion and priority of mission in the lives of international mission partners makes me want to go home and tell everyone how important these gatherings are.” He attended the IMA and related meetings in Indonesia, October 5-13, 2011.

Events began with the Holy Spirit in Mission (HSIM) conference, October 5-7, in North Sumatra, Indonesia, hosted by the Mennonite congregations in and around Medan.

More than 50 international participants from 22 church and mission groups in 15 nations streamed into Medan, a city of three million, to join Indonesian Mennonites from two Anabaptist conferences. Public assemblies each evening swelled the group to more than 300 as crowds of predominately young people joined the conference.

Fifty percent of Medan’s population is traditionally Christian, as a result

– continued on page 2

– Unless otherwise indicated, all text written by 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 21 members:

African Christian Mission International - Kenya  
 Agencia Misionera de las Iglesias de la Convencion Menonita de Costa Rica  
 Amor Viviente - Honduras  
 Asia Pacific Mission - Singapore  
 Binay Fellowship of Churches - Nepal  
 Deliverance Outreach Ministries - Kenya  
 Eastern Mennonite Missions - USA  
 GITJ - Indonesia  
 Happy Church - Kenya  
 Honduran Evangelical Mennonite Church  
 Integrated Mennonite Church - Philippines  
 Junta Misionera Convencion Menonita de Nicaragua  
 Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania  
 Kenya Mennonite Church  
 Koinonia Fellowship of Churches - USA  
 Meserete Kristos Church - Ethiopia  
 PIPKA - Indonesia  
 Pocket Testament League - India  
 Rosedale Mennonite Missions - USA  
 Spanish Mennonite Council - USA  
 Word of Grace Network - USA

President – Yesaya Abdi

Vice president – Henry Mulandi

Secretary – P. C. Alexander

Coordinator – Tilahun Beyene Kidane

## President's corner

### God is preparing greater things

It was by God's grace that IMA 2011 in Medan, north of Sumatra, Indonesia, was accomplished well. Listening to the many participants' testimonies, I found that the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference and IMA Annual Meeting were not merely meetings or conferences, but ways for God to speak to his people, for God to manifest his power and glory,



and for his disciples to minister to the people.

In February 2012, Brother Tilahun Beyene Kidane (IMA Coordinator) and I went to Ethiopia, to Addis Ababa and Awassa. The great enthusiasm of the MKC national leaders in Addis and regional leaders in Awassa impressed me deeply. In just that short visit, God allowed us to find the likely venue for IMA 2012, Lewi Resort, and to form

the local planning committee. This reminded me of the similar enthusiasm showed by the church leaders in Medan when we visited them one year prior. But somehow I do believe that for IMA 2012, God is preparing greater things.

According to the plan, there will be an open-air rally in the evening (expecting 20,000 to 30,000 people), along with the ministry trips by the IMA participants to many different towns and villages. There will be much time praying for many countries and nations of Africa, and for the mission fields to which God is commissioning us. Surely God will speak to all of us, we will see many people come to Christ, and the hearts of his church will be lifted up to see the world as the mission field.

God is leading IMA from grace to grace, from glory to glory (read: showing his glory for his glory). Let us prepare ourselves to be part of this coming IMA 2012 in our intensive prayers and presence.

See you in Awassa.

– Yesaya Abdi  
IMA President

*The next Holy Spirit in Mission Conference will be held in Awassa, Ethiopia, September 18-21 (noon). There will be ministry trips to various locations from the afternoon of September 21 through September 23. These ministry trips will be followed by the IMA Annual Meeting, September 24-27, 2012. The Meserete Kristos Church of Ethiopia will be hosting the meetings. Register by July 31 at [www.emm.org/ima](http://www.emm.org/ima).*

– continued from page 1

of a people movement to Jesus sparked by Lutheran missionaries two centuries ago.

One of the hosting congregations, GKMI Sempakata, has started a chain of restaurants dedicated to the support of missions. International guests enjoyed their first meal in one of these “missional restaurants.” Local Mennonite families also provided lodging for conference guests.

A palpable sense of joy in fellowship energized the gathering as youthful believers from Medan led in rousing worship and inspiring testimonies from around the world.

Stoltzfus facilitated a series of reports from several nations describing an international team sharing Christian witness in one of the most inaccessible and spiritually needy people groups of Asia.

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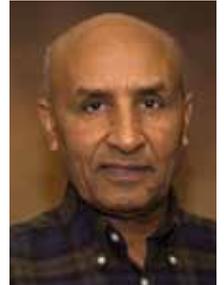
Top: Participants at the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference, at the welcome lunch in Medan.

Above: Yesaya Abdi (IMA president), Pastor Tetty (chair of the hosting committee), and Brother Hendry and his wife, Pastor Mariati Barus, who manage the church-owned restaurant.

## Coordinator's corner

### Faith is all it takes

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well,” reads Matthew 6:33. This seems so simple to the mind, but to translate it into action on a day-to-day basis is a huge task. It might appear as if you could wrap your mind around it, but you can't really – because it demands the surrender of your will and the spirit of independence. And even then, how could you be sure of the recurring results needed day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year until the Lord calls you home? Has such a thing happened in the past? Does it happen today? Will it happen in the future? Yes indeed, it has happened in the past, it is happening even now, and it will continue to happen in the future because Jesus said so. All it takes is faith – deep, unshakable faith, because we know that “faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1).



In Hebrews 11 we find a gallery of the heroes of faith who took God at his word. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Gideon . . . the list is long. We could also add to this list the Lord's faithful servants throughout the generations since biblical times. We praise the Lord that such heroes of faith do live in this generation as well. The Lord has even placed some of them among us to teach and encourage us to live by faith.

At the IMA gathering in North Sumatra we were immensely blessed by the testimony of our Brother Dr. Tan Kok Beng, who serves as the leader of the Asia Pacific Mission, Chairman of Bethany International University, and Pastor of the Mennonite Church in Singapore. He literally lives by faith and does not have a salary, or business, or any fixed source of income. Although he is advanced in years, he does not have a pension plan or investment. He has repeatedly refused to receive a salary from his board because he says God is a better employer. He and his family have lived like this for the last 52 years, and he firmly testifies that God does not disappoint you if you walk by faith. Faith is all it takes. Wow!

Let us press forward in building our faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God.

– Tilahun Beyene Kidane  
IMA Coordinator

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[emm.org/ima](http://emm.org/ima).

A Nepali believer on that team said, “The gospel has come to us; now it's time for us to take it on.” A North American on the team filled a PowerPoint screen with the photos of individuals and families from six nations who are part of the international team focusing on this difficult-to-reach people group, and a sense of awe swept over the room.

In another moving testimony, a leader from a nation where oppression of Christian believers is severe, reported, “This is the first time in six years I've been able to sit in a meeting like this. In our country it is illegal to meet in groups larger than five people. Many of our people are in prison; many are beaten severely for their faith. When we meet for fellowship, the location of the meeting is not known until just before the meeting. Yet new people are continually being attracted to Jesus.”

Jeremiah Choi, a Mennonite pastor from Hong Kong, talked about the hectic lifestyle in his city of seven million. “We are just a dot on the global map,” he said. “People live in apartment buildings of 20, 40, and 80 stories high. They work until 9 p.m.” But he rejoiced to report growth of 100% in his congregation during the past five years, ten times the average for evangelical churches in Hong Kong. “We're still small,” he said, “but we're encouraged by the new people God is bringing.”

Tanto Handoko told how a new church was formed in a center of prostitution after the healing of a paralytic. A pimp has come to faith in Christ. “I never underestimate the power of prayer,” Handoko, the IMA prayer coordinator, said. “Prayer creates unity.” He invited everyone to send requests and join the international prayer group by contacting him at [imaprayergroups@yahoo.com](mailto:imaprayergroups@yahoo.com).

Mariati Barus from Medan, one of the managers of

– continued on page 4



After the HSIM conference and ministry trips, IMA members ferried to the retreat center on Lake Toba for the IMA executive sessions.



(Left) A triple translation at the HSIM conference: Luis A. Lopez, president of the Honduran Mennonite Church, shares a testimony in Spanish; Samuel Lopez from the Spanish Mennonite Council in the U.S. translates into English; Kristina Setiawan translates into Indonesian for the evening service. (Right) HSIM conference participants pray for a member of the persecuted church who was able to attend open worship at the conference for the first time in six years. They prayed for the underground church in his country, which continues to be severely repressed.

– continued from page 3

the “missional restaurants,” described how on Easter morning men from her church dressed up and went to traffic intersections. They delivered gifts to all who passed by, wishing everyone, “Happy Easter!” When a passerby said, “But I’m a Muslim,” the Christian answered, “That doesn’t matter. Easter is for you, too!” The man broke out in a great smile, and received the gift gladly.

Along with all the testimonies, there was passionate preaching and teaching. The last day, after a beautiful communion service, Yesaya Abdi, president of the IMA, and the leaders of the Medan congregations, gave gifts of unity and shared mission to all the international participants.

From the HSIM conference, international teams led by Indonesian missionaries scattered for three-

day ministry trips across North Sumatra before reassembling October 10-13 on the shore of beautiful Samosir Island, in the center of Lake Toba in northern Sumatra. Toba is a huge crater lake, formed by the eruption of an ancient volcano.

IMA President Yesaya Abdi opened the assembly with a question, “What is IMA?” Then he answered his own question, “IMA is all of us.”

During the next two days IMA member updates and the recent ministry trip reports from North Sumatra came spilling out.

A Nepali-Kenyan team had travelled five hours by train to a remote location. The villagers had seldom had international visitors before. The times of eating, praying, and ministry together in the rural church were priceless. Nine people prayed with them to receive Jesus.

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## By faith

“Faith pleases God. Faith does the impossible, because it depends in the God who does the impossible. Faith is simply taking God at his word,” Tan Kok Beng, Mennonite pastor from Singapore and executive director of the Asia-Pacific Mission, told the participants at the Holy Spirit in Mission conference.

In story after story he illustrated how he saw God come through in supplying what he had promised. “When my son was 18 years,” he said, “he was found to be full of malignant cancer. But the Lord told me, ‘I will heal your son.’” One month later his son was completely healed.

“In 1995 I learned that, unexpectedly, I had a debt of one million dollars I had to pay to the bank for our ministry,” he said. “There was nothing I could do to raise that kind of money. So I turned to God and said, ‘This is your problem. I’m depending on you.’ Eight days before the payment was due, a man whom I scarcely knew brought a

gift of one million dollars. He had mortgaged his home at the Lord’s instructions to give the gift!”

In a second talk at Lake Toba, he spoke personally to the mission leaders about how to grow our faith. “Jesus compared faith to a mustard seed, because though the seed is tiny, it is alive. And anything that is alive can grow. But many of us do not grow in faith because we dare not trust God. So how can we grow our faith?” he asked.

Kok Beng suggested six steps: desire to know God, learn to know God more intimately, know what kind of God you have, saturate your life with God’s word, fix your eyes on Jesus, and walk in the Spirit. All of these he illustrated profusely with scripture, amplified with personal testimony. His teaching was grounded in intimate union with God and obedient, living faith. As he spoke, the participants knew they were on holy ground. ■



The IMA delegates pose after receiving unity gifts from their Indonesian hosts.

A Kenyan-North American team visited another area, seven hours away in the mountain jungles. The small group of about 30 believers met them with joy – marveling to receive these missionaries from Africa and America. And the missionaries also marveled, encouraged by the simple church they witnessed. They were sensitized to the complexities of cross-cultural communication and impressed by the genuine disciples they met. The Kenyan said he'd never travelled rougher roads.

An Ethiopian-Kenyan team found itself in another mountainous location – sharing first with church leaders and then with youth. At one point the youth challenged the missions leader from Ethiopia, “If you can’t answer our questions, we won’t be part of the church.” The leader said he prayed for wisdom and began fielding questions. The youth loved it, and the Ethiopian now has 50 Indonesian Facebook friends.

A Thai-North American team visited a children’s school and connected well even though communication sometimes required using four different languages in series.

As the group shared reports and experiences – encouraging, challenging, praying, laughing, and weeping with each other, many testified to fresh vision and focus.

Since their small beginnings 15 years ago when four groups banded together at the 1997 Mennonite World Conference in Calcutta, India, the IMA group has grown to 21 member groups, with many others being drawn in as guests, resource persons, and participants in an exciting fellowship of renewal and engagement in mission.

In their business session, the IMA decided to begin an exchange program among mission groups. In the program, young leaders would be sent from one country to another for short seasons of on-the-job training, each observing how mission leadership is taking place in a different setting.

## Isaan-style evangelism in Thailand

When Carol Tobin, EMM regional representative to Southeast Asia, Chanthron (Joy) Malee, and Khong Arsa from the Isaan churches of Thailand shared their report with IMA delegates, the group was captivated by the beauty of Isaan song and dance.

Carol described how the local Isaan musical rhythms helped pave the way for Isaan people to recognize their Savior. When they began to sing, others joined them, following Joy’s elegant lead.

The three women sang and danced to the original Isaan song, “Lift up the Lord” – “What is the purpose of our lives, brothers and sisters? To exalt the Name! The Lord loves everyone on the face of the earth. That’s why he came to redeem us from the punishment of sin. Our lives were almost unbearable, but that all changes when we put our trust in the Lord. So come, come together. Lift up our God so that he is high. May his glory be seen all over Isaan because he has extended grace to us! This world doesn’t belong to any of us. Heaven is our home. And if we believe, we become part of Abraham’s seed and lineage. Our hearts are full of deep joy and peace, so come – sing and dance – and lift up the Lord! If you have wronged a brother, admit it and ask to be forgiven. Get back in step, and make the relationship better than it was before! And if anyone has wronged you – don’t receive it – forgive! In living like this, we lift up the Lord!”

Not content to hear only one song, the group spontaneously cried “encore.” The three women continued with a second song entitled “Real Peace.” Carol translated, “Our hearts are full of wonderful peace... our hearts are clean and pure before the Lord. We worship and believe in Jesus, because that’s how we know we are saved and go to heaven. Because of the love of God, we are able to forgive each other. The Lord has healed us...”

Joy explained, “We’ve always had a high value for our culture. In Thailand, everyone is assumed to be Buddhist. We need to be careful to show that we love Thai culture, because Christianity is assumed to be Western. We know that religion doesn’t help anyone, it’s the Lord Jesus. So we started worshipping in small groups in houses.”

She went on to talk about evangelism. “We are all involved in sharing,” she said. “We all go out to witness. Sometimes in the past I thought maybe it’s just the leaders who should be doing this. Then I realized that these leaders weren’t doing this for money, they were just followers of Jesus like me, and so I got involved, too. Everyone arranges their schedules so they can go. On a team, one person teaches, another prays...” ■

## Manna project

Most international participants to the IMA conference traveled to Medan via Jakarta, Indonesia's vibrant national capital. In Jakarta they were hosted by the Anugerah (Grace) Mennonite congregation, pastored by Yesaya Abdi, chair of the Indonesian Mennonite Mission Board (PIPKA) and president of the International Missions Association (IMA).

In Jakarta the international guests visited "Bethlehem" (literally, House of Bread) where local Christians have pioneered a ministry of baking bread and communion wafers imprinted with Bible verses.

Known as the Manna Project, the tiny \$30 printers at "Bethlehem" are working constantly to prepare the "embreaded" Word to send to many nations in multiple local languages. Peter Kwee, the director of the Manna Project and a friend of Yesaya Abdi, began the ministry as a result of dreams he had while working in Germany. He sensed God speaking to him, "I will show you how to make a printer for bread. With this 'manna' you will change the world."

IMA participants left with samples of "manna" for their countries. ■



Above: Some IMA participants on a visit to the Manna Project facilities.

Two exchanges have already been planned, one between Amor Viviente in Honduras and PTL-India, and another between African Christian Missions in Kenya and PIPKA in Indonesia.

In other new ventures, the IMA invited David Shenk, EMM global consultant, to begin a group mentoring program for select young mission leaders in connection with each annual IMA meeting. They asked Richard Showalter, a former president of EMM and IMA president emeritus, to serve as an anchor for the development of a global faculty for mission training.

Yesaya Abdi, chairman of PIPKA of Indonesia, serves as IMA president. Working with him in leadership are Henry Mulandi of the African Christian Mission of Kenya, P.C. Alexander of PTL-India, and Tilahun Beyene of MKC Ethiopia (who lives in North America).

As the IMA member group prepared to depart from their retreat center on Lake Toba, Richard Showalter said, "God has met us here in a powerful way. Just as there was once a volcanic eruption from here which reached to the ends of the earth, God is flinging us out, sending us to the ends of the earth from this holy mountain of meeting. As we walk in the obedience of faith, he will once again touch and change the world through what he has done at Lake Toba. Let us go in that faith, in full dependence on the Lord who met us here."

"IMA crossed a threshold in 2011," said Tilahun Beyene, IMA coordinator, after the meeting. "No one quite knows where this faith walk will take us, but we're on the way." ■



Above right: Leadership Summit participants Yesaya Abdi, Richard Showalter, P.C. Alexander, David Shenk, Tilahun Beyene Kidane, Henry Mulandi, and Javier Soler.

Right: Yesaya Abdi breaks the communion bread.

Far Right: Pastor Anthony Tangan serves communion.



## Suffering with those who suffer

When Joshua\* went back to his home country where his brothers and sisters were experiencing much persecution for their faith, he was not prepared for their response. He expected to be welcomed home, but he received more than the usual greetings.

“So many of our leaders and people are leaving the country, but you have come to be with us in our suffering! Thank you, thank you for coming to be with us. This encourages us so much. We are happy that you have come to be a shepherd among us, but even more than that, we are grateful for your simple presence with us.”

Joshua described the suffering of many who spend time in prison, some of them for many years. But even for those who are not in prison, there is the constant suspense of wondering, “Will I be next?”

“Many times,” he said, “I prepared to be taken away. I gave my wife instructions for the next several months, and I set money aside for the needs of my family. But again and again the Lord saved me from prison.”

“Sometimes when we meet in groups of ten people for communion,” he said, “we feel like we are in a very

big group. Usually our meetings are two, three, four, or sometimes five people.”

“Yet in spite of this constant pressure, people keep coming to join us. The very opposition which we experience creates a desire in many to find a path of freedom in Christ.”

“One of our sisters was imprisoned for her faith and severely beaten as her interrogators attempted to get her to promise not to testify any longer. She didn’t want to do that, so, like David in the Old Testament, she feigned madness, and was sent to the prison hospital. When friends sent her something to eat in the hospital, she ate the paper it was wrapped in rather than the food!

“Sobered by the report, her husband went to visit her. He was convinced she had truly lost her mind. Then I, as her pastor, also went. I, too, was convinced she was mad. The authorities decided to release her.

“The very next day the woman came to tell me what had happened. She assured me that she was completely fine and in her right mind.” ■

*\*pseudonym*

Right: The African representatives to the HSIM conference sing just prior to the closing communion. They are, from left to right: Jospheh Kamau from the Happy Church in Kenya, Philip Okeyo from Kenya Mennonite Church, Janes O. Olum from Hope Celebration Christian Church in Thika, Kenya, Stephen Mangana from Tanzania Mennonite Church, a friend from East Africa, and Nicholas Kamali from Deliverance Ministries in Kenya.



On an international ministry trip to Kamp Antara in North Sumatra, a local believer, right, hosts from left, Edy Syahputra, from Indonesia, Luis Lopez and Walter Frano from Honduras, and Samuel Lopez from the U.S. The main meal was wild pig.



At the HSIM conference, international mission leaders gather for prayer and discussion. They are, clockwise from left: David Shenk from the U.S.; Yet Ye, Makes Lee, and Sokhom Yann from Cambodia, Richard Rancap and Ramon Bansen from the Philippines, Juniadi Purwowidodo from Indonesia, and a friend from Central Asia.



**International  
Missions  
Association**

53 W Brandt Blvd • PO Box 458  
Salunga, PA 17538-0458 • USA  
Tel 717 898-2251 • Fax 717 898-8092  
Web [emm.org/ima](http://emm.org/ima)

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The HSIM international delegates posed with Indonesian participants in Medan, Indonesia.

## Living stones

In 2005 Kennedy Mbatia from Thika, Kenya, accompanied Henry Mulandi from the African Christian Church to the IMA gathering in Indonesia. There he caught a vision for obedience in mission which transformed his ministry. He went back home, hearing a strong word from God, “Take the money you were saving for a new church building and instead use it for missions. Buy a bus, not a building. Gather living stones, not bricks.”

While engaging in local outreach, the congregation (Deliverance Church) raised money for a bus. In 2008 they bought it, and every year they use it for major trips to different parts of the country, preaching, teaching, and working with groups of local pastors to plant new churches. They go to strongholds of traditional religion and to adherents of other faiths. They’ve grown from one congregation to twenty.

“It took three years to buy the bus,” said Mbatia. “And now in the past three years God has given us a building! People are amazed and come from far and wide to see the

2,000-seat auditorium which was constructed in only three years. They don’t believe this is possible without some source of outside funding. But God led us to focus on ‘living stones,’ and now he has given us bricks and mortar as well.”

What about the next three years? Kennedy spoke with deep excitement as he looked ahead, “Now God has given us a base from which to reach out internationally as well as nationally. With IMA, we have brothers and sisters all over the world who can connect us with mission there. I’m telling our brothers and sisters to get their passports! We’re going to continue to go to our own neighborhood and to needy places in Kenya. But we’re also going to the nations.”

“We believe in the unity of the whole body of Christ,” said Kennedy. “We won’t fight with anyone, but as God leads us in reaching out, we obey – serving our brothers and sisters as we go. We are not planting ‘our’ church, but we are leading people to Jesus. As we walk together, the whole church is mobilized. God always provides for our needs as we go.” ■