

IMAgEs

[the newsletter of the International Missions Association]

“One Spirit, One Body, One Mission”

IMA leaders learn from and with the churches of Germany



Representatives from 20 different nations carry flags to initiate the 2016 IMA annual gathering.

BONN, Germany — Parading flags from 20 different nations, the International Missions Association (IMA) gathered in Bonn, Germany, Nov. 8–15, 2016, around the theme “One Spirit, One Body, One Mission.” A unique blend of inspirational messages, testimonies, workshops, and hours of fasting and prayer, the conference also included a weekend of outreach in the hosting country.

Tilahun Beyene, an IMA coordinator, pastor, and part-time staff member of Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), spoke during the opening ceremony. “We don’t have any IMA members from Europe,” he explained, “but in addition to sensing a burden for the churches of Europe, we wanted to learn from and support the work among the two million refugees from Africa and the Middle East that have flooded into Europe in the last two years.”

“We’re also keenly aware that it was German missionaries who first brought the gospel to our country,” said Henry Mulandi, a mission leader from Kenya and vice-president of the IMA. “We wanted to come and bless those who have blessed us.”

“It’s true that we represent many different organizations and denominations,” said Willi Federer, a German host and organizer from the

Alliance Mission. “But our coming together is at heart about real and lasting ‘organic unity.’ We have unity because of our common Head. We can complement, help, and enjoy each other. We also share in each other’s sufferings — and cling to our common hope.”

The Free Evangelical Church of Bonn, which hosted the conference, modeled gracious hospitality. The multicultural congregation shared about their Arab, Ethiopian, and Korean members and described how they were rising as one church to meet the current influx of refugees. As a side benefit, IMA attendees enjoyed a wide variety of international meals from Germany, Ethiopia, Korea, and the Middle East throughout the conference.

The week was filled with joyful epiphanies. When Jagannath Banerjee, a mission leader from Siliguri, India, came to pray over the map of Germany during the IMA day of fasting and prayer, he suddenly remembered writing letters from his Kolkata orphanage to a German sponsor 20 years earlier.

After making many phone calls, sending emails, and getting help from his host family, Banerjee was able to locate his sponsor, 99-year-old pastor Gerhard Gläser, and pay him a visit to express his gratitude. Gläser had been praying for Banerjee for 20 years, but never

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 began in 1997 with four members (PIPKA of Indonesia, MKC of Ethiopia, Amor Viviente of Honduras, and EMM of the U.S.), and presently includes the following 23 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. Binaya Mission Association (BMA) — Nepal
6. Global Outreach Ministries — Kenya
7. Eastern Mennonite Missions — U.S.
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 — U.S.
17. Meserete Kristos Church — Ethiopia
18. Overcoming Faith Church — Kenya
19. PIPKA — Indonesia
20. Pocket Testament League — India
21. Rosedale Mennonite Missions — U.S.
22. Spanish Mennonite Council — U.S.
23. Word of Grace Network — U.S.

President — Yesaya Abdi
Vice president — Henry Mulandi
Secretary — P. C. Alexander
Coordinator — Tilahun Beyene Kidane



IMA participants pray over a map of Germany.



IMA participants pray over a map of the world.



Prayer for Jane Kiguru, a mission leader from the United Kingdom.

The next IMA Gathering will be held in Salunga, Pa. U.S., September 19–26, 2017. Please register by July 31 at emm.org/ima.

dreamed that he'd meet him on earth.

Richard Rancap, a pastor and mission leader from the Philippines who also happens to be a marathoner, was in awe that he was assigned to a German sports ministry for his weekend outreach. "I was able to join a half marathon race of 21 km on Saturday," Rancap said. Although he nearly froze in Germany's chilly weather, he ran his best time ever. Those who assigned him to this particular outreach had no idea he was an athlete.

Sheryl Martin, a member of EMM's Christian Muslim Relations Team, attended the IMA meetings and helped to lead a workshop. Martin was pleased to learn that her host family was giving foster care to unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan," said Martin, "is very close to my heart. I had served there as a nurse for 16 years." She was able to speak Dari with the children and join a "Good News Club" led by her German hosts. She also enjoyed interacting with a bevy of Farsi-speaking Iranians who attended the conference — Farsi and Dari are both part of the Persian language family.

While attending an afternoon workshop on common Muslim objections to Christian faith, a German physical therapist commented that she was interacting with a Muslim imam from Morocco. Andres Prins, another member of the Christian Muslim Relations Team, noted that he had lived in North Africa and spoke Moroccan Arabic. Before the week was over, Prins met with the imam. The Muslim leader had lived in Germany for 20 years, but felt very isolated. He thanked Prins for the visit and said he looks forward to ongoing connections with the church.

During the day of fasting and prayer, participants also heard from Jane Kiguru, a mission leader from Kenya who has lived in England for the past 20 years. Kiguru first came to England for a youth missions conference in 1994 — and was eager to return to the vibrant young

Kenyan church that she called home. She was distressed to hear God's clear call for her to stay in England and lend support to "the little dying church" she had visited.

Through her behind-the-scenes prayer and outreach efforts, the church has grown from 50 to 1,600 members and serves English, Polish, Japanese, Filipino, and Chinese worshipers in seven different services. Kiguru's exemplary work with African immigrants even earned her an audience with the queen, and she serves members of parliament as a consultant on immigrant issues.

Citing Acts 16:25, Kiguru said believers must "pray until the foundations of the prison are shaken. To bring change you need to change the foundations, and foundations are not shaken if we just do 'business as usual.'"

For three evenings, German and international guests addressed public rallies for the community. "I can't believe how many people came up for prayer after the service," Mulandi commented after speaking Thursday evening. "There's really a hunger for more of God. Is it because of the pressure of the refugees? Who knows?"

Yesaya Abdi, Indonesian mission leader and IMA president, wept as he shared about the tug and pull of God's work in each of our lives. Three weeks ago, Abdi's beloved sister lay on her death bed. He wanted to stay with her, but he had a church commitment. Abdi tore himself from her side to do the work to which God had called him and, by the mercy of God, arrived back at the hospital just in time to pray with his sister one final time before she slipped away.

"I want us in the IMA to feel as close to each other as I did to my sister," Abdi said. "God has a special mission for each of us. That needs to be our highest priority. It's very hard to leave those we love, but because of God's mission we go."

Over the Nov. 12–13 weekend, IMA



IMA participants gather for a meal at the Free Evangelical Church of Bonn in Germany.



Group photo of the 2016 IMA Gathering participants.

participants scattered to visit and serve in a wide variety of settings — everything from traditional Mennonite churches, to youth and sports ministries, to immigrant churches serving Syrians, Iraqis, Turks, Africans, and Iranians.

In a closing session, participants gave reports about their weekend visits and their home countries. Glenn Kauffman, a pastor and mission leader from the U.S., said, “We do mission looking into the eyes of Jesus and seeing where they turn. It’s about obedience more than just need.”

Carlos Marin, a pastor and mission

leader from Honduras, described how God has used the IMA in the life of the Amor Viviente churches to build their mission vision. “Many of you have been examples to us,” he said.

Johannes Reimer, a German mission leader and newly appointed director of the Peace and Reconciliation Network of the World Evangelical Alliance, invited the IMA to become a member of the network. “The IMA is a network of mission-minded people,” he said. “We’re creating a global network of peace trainers and theologians who are truly Christ-centered.”

As the meetings concluded, Abdi said, “Our prayer is that this conference will be like the perfume of Mary who anointed the feet of Jesus. You have all come with spiritual ingredients to add to the perfume. May that fragrance fill this country — and spread around the world.”

At the invitation of EMM, the next annual IMA assembly will convene in Salunga, Pennsylvania, September 19–26, 2017, celebrating its 20th anniversary. ■

President’s corner



“One Spirit, One Body, One Mission” was the theme for the 2016 IMA Gathering, which took place in Bonn, Germany

in November. The theme urges us to ponder deeply about the important role of the Holy Spirit, who has created and lead IMA throughout the years.

“One spirit” reminds me of a past IMA Gathering: “In Step With The Spirit.” In it, we were reminded of Phillip, who obeyed the voice of the Holy Spirit to travel from Samaria, a big city with bustling people, to a desert where there was nobody but the Eunuch. Just like Phillip, IMA has to keep the connection with the Holy Spirit alive and be sensitive to his guidance. We also need to remember that we are all “One Body.” Every IMA member is related to one another both equally and

interdependently. We all need to work together towards “One Mission”: the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20, Act 1:8), which God has prepared for us to accomplish.

I thank God for allowing me to be part of the 2016 IMA Gathering and to integrate the theme “One Spirit, One Body, One Mission” into my life. About a month prior to the event, my beloved sister, Dr. Lydia, was lying in the hospital because of cancer. In the meantime, I had to lead two prayer retreats, finish my presentations for the IMA Gathering, and then go to Germany for two weeks. Would people not consider me an unreliable brother?

But thanks be to God, who put a great desire and peace in my heart to go to the conference. I was able to go to the retreat, finish my assignment, and at almost midnight, drove my car down to Jakarta, directly to the hospital. I got one last chance to see my sister, and

to pray with her before she left with her Father in heaven 15 minutes later. That struggle revealed the implementation of “One Spirit, One Body, One Mission.” Be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, care for our fellow IMA members, and put the mission as our priority.

We thank the Lord for the willingness and hard work of our hosts, the church members of Jesus Unites. Their wonderful hospitality and readiness to open their hands and hearts, not just for IMA participants, but to the immigrants who flooded into Germany, was truly impressive.

IMA 2016 has become a milestone on our journey. The mission field is not just somewhere far from us. It is also right in front of our door.

Let us keep moving! Let us put “One Spirit, One Body, One Mission” into our daily practice.

— Yesaya Abdi
IMA President

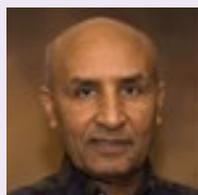


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Coordinator's corner



In the early part of November 2016, as members of the International Missions Association (IMA) and guest participants

descended on Bonn, Germany, there was an air of expectancy around the hosts as well as the guests. After all, this was the first time in the 19-year history of IMA that this yearly event was being hosted by churches outside the Anabaptist fold, and both hosts and guests were unknown quantities to each other. On a side note, the lead Church — the Free Evangelical Church of Bonn — and many others in the coalition of the “Jesus Unites” movement, are themselves, of course, outside the circle of state-sponsored churches within Germany. The only common bond that brought them together and keeps them connected is the love for the Lord and commitment to His mission.

However, that was not the first time that IMA met in Germany. In 2007, a group of Mennonite Churches in the Beilefeld and Bechterdissen area had sponsored the annual gathering, but the scope was by and large limited to the Mennonite-related community.

The goals of the 2016 IMA Gathering in Germany were to: a) widen the influence and operating field of IMA, b) pray for Germany and Europe on site in view of the post-modern, post-Christian culture,

c) walk with the churches in Germany at a time when they are dealing with effects of the refugee crisis from the Middle East and Africa, and d) fan the flames of the gospel in this season when the wind of the Spirit is beginning to blow within the Continent.

The theme of the gathering was: “One Spirit, One Body, One Mission,” a fitting theme for a group that came from some fourteen nations and various denominational backgrounds and cultural settings. The theme of unity played out loud and clear as speaker after speaker hammered on the importance of unity for the work of the kingdom. Prayer and fasting sharpened the focus of supporting each other as participants prayed and entered into deep intercession for Germany. Powerful testimonies presented real life evidences of God at work. Workshops equipped people for day-to-day, positive, and proactive encounters with Muslims, as well as the importance of prayer in missions and how to deal with ethnocentrism as we spread the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ across cultural, ethnic, and racial lines.

While the various scheduled programs were good, probably the most important impact came from the connections formed between participants and their hosts at home and during the weekend ministry trips. It was a time when the leading hand of God was clearly seen. Although teams were put together in a random fashion, what actually happened at each site was nothing short of a miracle.

Overall, IMA 2016 lasted eight days. During that time, new relationships were forged, people worshipped and prayed together, spiritual seeds were sown, individuals and churches were equipped with tools for mission, and various avenues were opened for future cooperation. As for us IMA members, we came, we saw, we bonded, and we came to truly believe that God is at work in Germany and, by extension, Europe as a whole. We took a prayer burden home to continue to be part of that kingdom expansion in Europe in general and Germany in particular.

— Tilahun Beyene Kidane
IMA Coordinator



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