

IMAges

[the newsletter of the International Missions Association]



IMA members and local mission leaders gathered in a worship tent pitched on the campus of African Christian Missions International in Thika, Kenya. Photo by Javier Soler.

Kenyan churches host the International Missions Association (IMA) and Holy Spirit in Mission (HSM) Conference

THIKA, Kenya – “We all have our plans and programs, but have we left room for the Holy Spirit?” Bishop Henry Mulandi asked as he welcomed mission leaders from 16 nations to Thika, Kenya, for the 12th meeting of the International Missions Association (IMA),* August 12 – 20.

The 50-some international participants gathered with dozens of Kenyan guests under a festive circular tent that flew the red-green-black Kenyan flag at the apex. Other national flags festooned the sides of the tent and decorated the platform.

Mulandi, who heads up African Christian Mission International (ACMI) the mission arm of Christian Church International (CCI), an Anabaptist group with fraternal ties to the Conservative Mennonite Conference, urged guests “to walk in step with the Spirit” – the theme of the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference that preceded the IMA meetings.

IMA members and co-hosts Philip Okeyo of the Kenya Mennonite Church (KMC) and Kennedy Mbatia, of Deliverance Outreach Ministries (DOM) joined Mulandi in kicking off the conference.

Using the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch from Acts 6, Mulandi noted that Philip left Samaria and headed to the desert – at the urging of an angel. “Let’s not forget that there’s a place for mission boards – but there’s also a place for unexpected moves of the Holy Spirit – and angels,” he said.

He told the story of one of the ACMI workers who had gone from Kenya to the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. The local residents seized the

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

missionary, threatening to kill him. The missionary asked to pray for a crippled woman in the crowd – before they killed him. After prayer, the woman, who happened to be the mother of one of his captors, was raised up from her wheel chair.

“Because of this miracle, there are many disciples of Jesus in the Nuba Mountains today,” Mulandi said. “God is at work. Are we in step with him? We need to differentiate between the voice of God and other voices. We get carried away by our traditions, our titles, our programs. The walls of the church bind us. What is God telling us today?”

The second day Antonio Ulloa, a Honduran American missions leader from Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), warned the group of getting stuck at certain thresholds. “Just because we were once in step with the Spirit, doesn’t mean we are now. Examine your hearts. We must decide each day to walk in the Spirit. Fears and anxieties come from the flesh, but direction comes from God.”

In his message on “Making Disciples of all Nations,” Yemiru Tilahun, director of missions and evangelism for MKC, reminded his listeners that although we live in the “information age” Jesus builds his church on revelation. “We will only be able to disciple nations as we transfer the power of God to others. We can only do this under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

In a powerful message and ministry time on “Healing and Forgiveness” Penn Clark, a leader of Word of Grace Network in the U.S. said, “turning the other cheek is putting ourselves in a position where we can be hurt again. Is this what God uses to help us plumb the depths of forgiveness – learning to forgive at a deeper heart level?”

The next night Carlos Marin Montoya, a pastor with Amor Viviente in Honduras, invited the group to, “hope for what God wants – not what you want.”

Presidents’ corner

Outgoing President

It gives me great satisfaction to participate in the transfer of IMA leadership to Pak Yesaya Abdi of PIPKA and the members of its Executive Committee. From the very beginning of IMA in 1997 I have eagerly anticipated the day when the newer churches and mission groups of Africa, Asia, and Latin America would assume its leadership. Now that time has arrived, and I thank God.



The IMA is blazing new trails into the future. With members from every continent except Europe and Australia, we have the opportunity to help lead the way into the third millennium of Christian mission. By the grace of God, this is not a fellowship dominated by Western mission groups, though we are happy to include them, too. Rather, we are a global fellowship, committed to central leadership and engagement from the dynamic churches of the Global South.

This, then, is a time to celebrate and give thanks to God. Welcome, Pak Abdi! Welcome, all IMA members, to a new chapter of IMA fellowship in mission to those peoples and places where people have not yet had the opportunity to meet Jesus.

– Richard Showalter
Outgoing IMA President

Incoming President

While I sat under a tent in Thika, Kenya, listening to progress reports on God’s work in various countries, my heart was deeply praising the Lord. I understood the true makeup of the IMA: a fellowship of people and mission agencies that are sharing and celebrating the work of the Holy Spirit. Together we are inspiring, equipping, and mobilizing all of the IMA members to fulfil the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19).



It is a great honor for me to receive the estafet rod from Dr. Richard Showalter and to be elected as the new president of the IMA for the next three years. We acknowledge Richard Showalter as a man of God with many gifts; the gift of apostleship like Paul possessed (Act. 26:19), leadership like Moses (Ex. 33:13; Num. 12:3), a passion for the lost as demonstrated by Jeremiah (Jer. 20:9), and the discernment and encouragement of Barnabas (Acts 12:25). The growth of IMA is the result of Richard’s successful leadership.

But now what must I do? What must we all do? I believe the answer is implementing the theme “In Step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). We must be sensitive to listen to, and obey, God’s will as Philip did in Acts 8.

Nehemiah rebuilt the collapsed walls of Jerusalem in 52 days. He began with curiosity; he wanted to know the condition of the city (Neh. 1:2). We need to have that kind of curiosity as well as a willingness to share information so we can pray for one another, as we agreed in Thika. By practicing what “In Step with The Spirit” means and by praying for one another, we can expect God will enable us to do many great things (Eph. 3:20) which we will share at our next gathering in Indonesia.

– Yesaya Abdi
Incoming IMA President



Sunday morning the IMA group joined the Christian Church International of Thika (CCIT) in their new, almost-finished cathedral to celebrate 30 years since they got their start as a handful of students in a rented classroom.

Today CCIT is the mother church of 400-some congregations that are scattered across Kenya. In partnership with ACMI, the mission arm of CCI, they also send and support missionaries in Uganda, Sudan, Mozambique, Jamaica, Congo, Burundi, Jamaica, Sudan, Asia, Europe, and North America.

As they sang from a festive stage festooned with swatches of purple fabric, singers Solomon and Rachel Kyengo belted out, “We are the people God is counting on! I counted on Europe, I counted on America, I counted on China!” Then 1,000 plus voices took up the song – “But we are the people God is counting on!”

Ministry outreaches

After the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference, local hosts divided the international guests into four clusters which joined Kenyan partners for outreach and ministry events for the next several days.

Reporting back after their outreaches, visitors from India, Nepal, and Indonesia were especially surprised by the freedom of worship and outreach in Kenya.

“We praise God for the freedom they have to preach the gospel in Kenya,” said P.C. Thomas, a missions leader from India, “The Kenyan brothers and sisters are so lovely and friendly. It seems like heaven. People are dancing all the time.”

“I’ve learned so much from their passion and zeal,” a mission leader from the Himalayas added.

He also wondered how long the freedom will last. Islam is growing rapidly in the region, He then shared a prophetic word, “I sense that after some years Kenyans will have to face problems and persecution – to lay down their lives for the Lord.”

Blessan Abraham, an Indian mission leader said, “For three days we walked, hopped, and jumped through the slums of Nairobi. I had never



International participants in the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference and IMA meetings joined Kenyan ministry teams in school, village and urban outreaches. Photos by Javier Soler.

gone to a slum in India, and I'd often wondered what foreigners coming to India meant by the term 'culture shock.'

“Now I understood. I was so disturbed and touched by what I saw that I couldn't sleep for two nights. I felt tired and burned out. While others evangelized in the homes I gathered the children and taught them songs. A holistic gospel is needed – one that addresses people's physical needs as well as their spiritual needs.”

New IMA president installed

Following the times of outreach, IMA members gathered back in Thika for two days of concluding business meetings in which they received two new member organizations, installed a new president, shared reports of mission activities, prayed, and brainstormed about continued synergy in global missions.

The 21-member organization elected Yesaya Abdi, the chairman of PIPKA, the mission arm of GKMI in Indonesia, to serve as president along with vice-president Henry Mulandi from ACMI in Kenya, and P.C. Alexander of the Fellowship of Christian Assemblies in India. Abdi replaces Richard Showalter who served as president of the IMA for the past 13 years.



Richard Showalter hands responsibilities off to Yesaya Abdi who was installed as the new president of the IMA. Photo by Javier Soler.



Guests enjoyed meals together outside. Photo by Javier Soler.

Report highlights

The rich week of worship, testimonies, teachings, workshops, and reports, included stories of the passion and creativity from the churches and mission groups of the Global South.

- A group from the Himalayas has just sent their first cross-cultural worker to a related people group in another nation. He is supporting himself in the tourist industry.
- An East African group has helped purchase a car for a worker in the Middle East where he supports himself by driving taxi. They also give



The HSM Conference and IMA meetings were hosted on the grounds of the African Christian Mission International headquarters in festive tents. Photos by Karl Landis.



mission training to maids who serve in wealthy homes in the region. They have other workers who support themselves by running beauty salons or restaurants – using these spaces to evangelize and disciple people.

- A school in Central America has been training its elementary and high school students in English, French – and missions, for the past 10 years. They are now poised to send the first of their high school graduates to colleges in North Africa and are working to negotiate cultural exchanges between Central American and North African schools.
- A leader in the Himalayas has established three mobile training programs that focus on training grassroots leaders in oral communication. “This empowers illiterate people,” he said. “Oral communicators prefer to learn through drama, music, poetry, and storytelling. It’s our responsibility to give the oral Bible to oral learners. The Bible is full of stories. No one can stop us from telling what’s in our hearts. We go places we can’t carry printed materials.”
- The Integrated Mennonite Churches of the Philippines used their recent experience of being inundated by five typhoons – and the church’s ministries of compassion – to plant a new congregation in one of the affected areas.
- A church planter from India told of the time he’d been beaten up with a cricket bat, but was still committed to “reaching the unreached at any cost.” When he moved into a new town in north India there was fierce opposition from Hindus who see Christians as “enemies of the state.” No one wanted to rent to his family, so they bought land and built a place of their own place. Now a small congregation has formed, and God has confirmed his word with miracles of healing and deliverance.
- An Indonesian group is sending workers who are supporting themselves in a neighboring country through cooking and carpentry work.

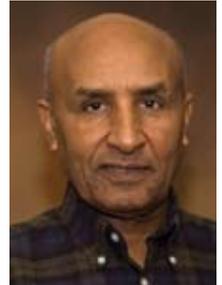


Yesaya Abdi, Lois Boyer, Samuel Lopez, and P. C. Alexander participate in a public prayer time at the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference. Photo by Javier Soler.

Coordinator’s corner

Whither IMA?

IMA celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2007 in Germany. This anniversary was a major landmark for an association that started in a small and rather obscure way on the fringes of a global conference. For organizations, ten years might be considered an infancy period. However, first decades can also be significant, just as a human infant matures drastically in ten years. The child has not yet attained adulthood, of course, but continues toward individuality and independence.



Chronologically, IMA is now 13 and will soon be celebrating its 14th year of establishment. We continue to be an association of mission agencies and churches brought into existence by the Lord for the purpose of catalyzing missions from everywhere to everywhere. Age is not really a critical factor – but our trajectory, the course we take, is very important. How should IMA conduct itself in the coming years?

As we met in Thika this past August, IMA registered a significant milestone: there was a “change of guard” as the founding President Richard Showalter passed the baton to the newly-elected President Yesaya Abdi. The ceremony represented a coming of age. The “parent figure” released and empowered the “young adult” with the full confidence of success, while staying in the wings to provide support and counsel as needed.

Although IMA is a fairly stable association, it is reasonable to assume that there could be an initial bout of uncertainty until IMA gets its bearing under the new leadership. But the main question should focus on where IMA is headed. Is it necessary to develop detailed plans and strategies for the next decade or more? What methods and strategies did IMA employ to get to where it is today? Was it because of leaders’ and members’ plans that IMA developed as it did during the past decade?

It is true that plans and programs are fine tools and they did help. But the main thrust came from the Holy Spirit who guided IMA to where it is today. And by the same token its growth and success in the coming decade very much depends on obedience to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, IMA must concentrate on walking “in step with the Spirit” – the theme of the gathering in Thika, Kenya, which also symbolized the commitment of all who were gathered there.

– Tilahun Beyene Kidane
IMA Coordinator

New developments

In an effort to strengthen relationships, IMA Coordinator Tilahun Beyene Kidane, an EMM staff member, volunteered to facilitate an expanded prayer and information network for members. The group also selected the first Friday of every month for prayer and fasting together for the IMA.

All the groups also expressed interest in stepping up missions training for their members. Intensive mission courses like the World Missions Institute (WMI) organized by EMM in partnership with local IMA members have been held in Kenya, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, India, and China.

“Of the five we sent to the IMA in India two years ago, two are already on the mission field,” a mission leader from the Himalayas said. “And one more is hoping to go this year.”

Amor Viviente has started a two-year mission training program in Honduras and welcomed other Spanish-speaking persons to come for training.

“The plans God has for us are big. Let’s not let little prejudices keep us apart,” said Carlos Marin Montoya, a leader with Amor Viviente in Honduras.

– Jewel Showalter



Top: The HSM Conference joined the Christian Church International (CCI) of Thika for their 30th anniversary celebrations on Sunday morning August 15, 2010.

Middle: CCI founding pastor and ACMI president Henry Mulandi (with mike) introduces the international visitors to CCI of Thika.

Right: Fellowship over food on the ACMI grounds built new mission synergies.

Photos by Javier Soler.



The next Holy Spirit in Mission Conference will be held in Medan, Indonesia (capital of the North Sumatra province located on the northern coast) October 4–7, 2011, followed by ministry trips to various locations from the afternoon of October 7 through October 9. These ministry trips will be followed by the IMA Annual Meeting in Toba Lake October 10–13.



Left: MNAP Anchors from 12 churches in 10 countries met to share their findings. Photo by Javier Soler.

Right: While the anchors met, church leaders from the profiled churches met to forge stronger church with church relationships. Photo by Jewel Showalter.

Multi-Nation Anabaptist Profile creates rare global snapshot of 12 church groups

THIKA, Kenya – “Nothing quite like this has ever been done before,” said Richard Showalter, president of EMM and president emeritus of the IMA, as he welcomed guests to a Consultation of Multi-Nation Anabaptist (MNA) Profile I anchors and church leaders at the SACDEP (Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programme) Center in Thika, Kenya, August 22-26, 2010, following the IMA meetings.

The idea for a multi-national profile of Anabaptists was sparked in Conrad Kanagy’s mind seven years earlier when he attended a gathering of the IMA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2003.

A sociology professor at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College and pastor of Elizabethtown Mennonite Church at the time, Kanagy was impressed by the vibrant, passionate faith of mission leaders from the Global South, and was eager to learn more about the communities that shaped them.

When Kanagy shared his idea with Showalter, there was immediate interest and enthusiasm. They agreed upon a sampling of churches from Asia, Africa, and Latin America that had their historic origins in EMM or have developed important contemporary relationships with the agency. Most of the churches surveyed were also members of the IMA.

Twelve Anabaptist churches in 10 different countries participated: Tanzania (Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania), Ethiopia (Meserete Kristos Church), Honduras (Organizacion Cristiana Amor Viviente and Iglesia Evangelica Menonita Hondurena), Kenya (Kenya Mennonite Church and Happy Church Ministries International), Guatemala (Iglesia Nacional Evangelica Menonita Guatemalteca), Vietnam (Hoi Thanh Mennonite Viet Nam), United States (Lancaster

Mennonite Conference), Indonesia (Persatuan Gereja-Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia), India (Fellowship of Christian Assemblies), Philippines (The Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines).

Showalter and Kanagy officially launched the MNA Profile I on the heels of another IMA meeting, this time in Delhi, India in 2008. The country anchors which had been selected from the 12 groups met for orientation and training.

Now two years later in Thika, as Kanagy opened the consultation he reminded the 12 anchors and the church leaders who sat across the table from them, that they were called – like the Prophet Isaiah – to bring new levels of seeing, hearing, and understanding to their faith communities.

“These snapshots point to realities that are part of our churches,” he said. “Can we see where we are in God’s story? God is the one who calls and sends.”

The last data had come in just two weeks before the consultation so Kanagy with help from research assistants scrambled to compile the analysis and worked with designers at EMM to graph the findings. They prepared initial reports drawn from 18,201 completed questionnaires from 281 congregations.

Kanagy said that some of his objectives – besides creating a baseline for measuring growth and change – were to stimulate south-to-south and north-to-south conversations, to give a voice to southern hemisphere churches, and to strengthen God’s mission globally.

These were noble objectives to be sure, but few besides Kanagy, realized how very daunting and unusual the task before them would be – especially for several anchors drafted after the Delhi orientation.

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Multi-Nation Anabaptist Profile Anchors and their respective church leaders met together in Thika, Kenya, to share their findings and consult with one another. Photo by Javier Soler.

Multi-Nation Anabaptist Profile continued from page 7

“I felt like Simon of Cyrene who was pressed into carrying the cross,” said Yemiru Tilahun, director of missions and evangelism for MKC in Ethiopia. The huge responsibility for the largest and most far-flung of the groups fell on his shoulders. Collecting data was difficult because many of those profiled were illiterate. Just getting the questionnaires to the office was a huge challenge. In one remote community Yemiru said they had to use donkeys to haul data out, and the bundles of paper arrived covered with mud.

“As far as we know, no other denominational group in the world has attempted to do this type of research,” Showalter said, “So it’s not surprising that we’ve experienced so many challenges.”

During the three and half intense days of the consultation, anchors and church leaders tag teamed to share the history and context of their churches along with explanations of how they implemented the MNA. The anchors reported the findings using the prepared graphs and percentages, highlighting surprises and sharing thoughts about the implications for their groups.

Presentations were often followed by lively discussions with provocative questions and observations. Global South members wanted to understand, for instance, why western churches are not growing. Kanagy’s study documented that all the groups, except LMC, show amazing growth in the last two decades.

– Jewel Showalter