

IMAges

[the newsletter of the International Missions Association]



Yesaya Abdi, a mission leader from Indonesia, parades in with the Indonesian flag. Photo by Jon Unger Brandt.

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 18 members:

African Christian Mission International - Kenya
 Agencia Misionera de las Iglesias de la Convencion Menonita de Costa Rica
 Amor Viviente - Honduras
 Deliverance Outreach Ministries - Kenya
 Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) - USA
 GITJ - Indonesia
 Honduran Evangelical Mennonite Church (IEMH)
 Integrated Mennonite Churches of the Philippines (IMC)
 Junta Misionera Convencion Menonita de Nicaragua
 Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania (KMT)
 Kenya Mennonite Church (KMC)
 Koinonia Fellowship of Churches - USA
 Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) - Ethiopia
 PIPKA - Indonesia
 Pocket Testament League (PTL) - India
 Rosedale Mennonite Missions USA
 Spanish Mennonite Council - USA
 Word-of-Grace Network - USA

President - Richard Showalter
 Vice president - Henry Mulandi
 Coordinator - Tilahun Beyene Kidane

Holy Spirit in Missions Conference fasts and prays for revival of churches and restoration of missions vision in Europe

BECHTERDISSEN, Germany – For a handful of North American guests, the fifth annual Holy Spirit in Missions Conference (HSMC) hosted by the Mennonitengemeinde Bechterdissen of north Germany, August 30-September 2, 2007, was a return to the roots and heartland of mission sending.

But for many of the 86 international guests representing 17 countries from the Global South, it was a time to say, “Thanks for bringing the gospel to us – and don’t let your love grow cold!”

Guests from six European countries also converged on Bechterdissen for the HSMC, the 10th annual meeting of the International Missions Association (IMA) and the inauguration of the European Missions Fellowship (EMF), a regional body of the Global Missions Fellowship of Mennonite World Conference.

The IMA is an association of Anabaptist mission bodies established for prayer, mutual support and partnering in carrying out the Great Commission. Held in conjunction with the annual IMA business meeting, the HSMC equips the international church with a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, to bring new vision, and release gifts of ministry to build up the mission of the church.

In his opening address Richard Showalter, president of the IMA, introduced the theme – “Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit...”

President's corner

It was a privilege to attend the "Holy Spirit in Missions Conference" in Bechterdissen, Germany on August 30 through September 2, 2007.



We had many wonderful moments in Bechterdissen but I will choose a few events to highlight. One such highlight would be the moving testimonies of Peter (an elder) and Deborah (a

young evangelist) representing the spiritual roots of the "Back to Jerusalem" movement of the unregistered churches of China.

Another highlight was a story from Nepal about how three witch doctors tried to "cast out Jesus" from a new Christian.

There was also a youth meeting in which many young people were touched deeply. One European mission leader told me how the Holy Spirit was poured out upon him in such a way that he will never be the same.

A special moment was when the international delegates knelt in gratitude to God for the martyrs and dynamic witnesses of Germany who were the seedbed of the modern evangelical missionary movement. This was symbolized by having the German members of the congregation stand.

Finally there were masterful theological presentations of the Holy Spirit in mission by Teowolde Yohannes, an Ethiopian physicist working in Germany, and Detmar Scheunemann, a veteran German missionary to Indonesia who was deeply involved in the great revivals in that land 40 years ago.

Only eternity will reveal the results of all that happened among and within us during these days. The joy in reunion and fellowship was almost palpable, and more international networking for missions is taking place than anyone can possibly track.

– Richard Showalter
IMA President



Brother Yun, a Chinese house church leader

Photo by Jon Unger Brandt

HSIM Conference

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"God is looking for human partners, ordinary people who are filled with the Spirit of God - like Haggai and Zechariah whom God used to rebuild the temple. Now is the time. This is the place. See what God is doing

and join him," Showalter said.

"We represent just 23 different nations, but we're part of a powerful movement of the Spirit in our time. When I was 15 years old, a quarter of the world's evangelical Christians hailed from Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Today, 45 years later, 75% of them hail from the Global South."

During the following day of prayer and fasting, 40 to 50 local youth and guests joined the international guests for times of testimony, teaching, and prayer.

After times in regional prayer clusters the groups reported back. From Europe someone shared the image of the prodigal son. "We've squandered our spiritual wealth and are now living in spiritual poverty. It's time to return to the Father."

From North America there was a call for new wineskins along with the realization that "the world has come to us."

Latin Americans agonized in prayer for the pervading corruption, poverty, and ignorance, and cried out for healing and an attitude of faith. "The stone alone didn't kill Goliath. It was David's attitude/faith that killed Goliath. In Jesus we, too, are "more than conquerors."

Both Africa and Asia highlighted on-going persecution of the church in their regions – Eritrea, Sudan, Laos, Vietnam, China - and called the group to pray for faithfulness in suffering and growth.

Then 67-year old Peter Xu, a leader of the Unity Movement among the house churches of China, spoke. Xu, who is sometimes called the "Billy Graham of China," shared the amazing story of the suffering church in China and its rapid growth.

From 1953 to 1971, Xu said China went through a very dark and difficult time of suffering. Christians suffered along with others as the Cultural Revolution stripped people of hope and confidence in their government. In the midst of their suffering, people noticed Christians who had supernatural hope, joy, and peace. This testimony caused a great hunger that the Spirit of God is filling.

The gospel has spread all over China, Xu said, particularly between 1971 to 1995. Today there are perhaps 100 million Christians. Even as he and other Christian leaders were hunted down and imprisoned numerous times, the church continued to grow. Prisons became seminaries, centers of growth. "We don't fear persecution," he said. "Prison has been a blessing for the Chinese church."

When Xu's associate, Brother Yun, another key house church leader whose story is told in *The Heavenly Man*, was brutally tortured and

suspended for four hours so he could barely breathe, he took comfort in remembering the sufferings of Jesus. Yun thought to himself, “they don’t know Jesus, that’s why they’re torturing me,” and was filled with a passionate desire to preach the gospel until his last breath.

Both Xu and Yun have been exiled from China and now live in the west; Xu in California, and Yun in Germany. Deborah*, a young associate of theirs, translated their talks into German and English. She was one of 15 young evangelists who were trained by Xu in the 1980s when she was only 14. Her gripping story gave a firsthand glimpse into how the church has spread so rapidly throughout China.

Other major speakers at the conference included Alejandro Colindres, a Hispanic church planter from New England; Tewolde Yohannes, an Ethiopian who lives in Germany working as a physicist and heading up a network for Ethiopian Christians; Detmar Sheunemann, a German missionary to Indonesia for 30 years; Andi Santoso, a youth pastor from Indonesia; Henry Mulandi, a missions leader from Kenya; and Tan Kok Beng, a mission educator from Singapore.

After the HSMC, the international guests split into 20 different ministry teams and fanned out for three days of visits to Switzerland, Holland, the Czech Republic and various churches and ministries in Germany. The events concluded with two additional days of IMA meetings for further interaction with one another and the Chinese Back To Jerusalem** (BTJ) leaders were involved in mission reporting and planning.

Yun said, “God has given China a clear vision for every nation between China and Jerusalem (hence the name Back to Jerusalem). We have a vision to send out 100,000 Chinese missionaries. Jesus is the only true God. May the sons of Isaac and Ishmael be united.”

Chinese mission leader Xu told the IMA, “We have many evangelists who want to extend the Kingdom of God in the unreached regions of the world. They would be self-supporting tentmakers who work to build up the local churches, but your assistance and letters of invitation can help set them free for ministry beyond the borders of China.”

The IMA, now ten years old, received four new members bringing the number of international partners to 18. IMA members also drafted a statement of intent to assist and partner with BTJ missionaries as feasible in their countries of service.

In addition to the IMA, the conference was also sponsored by the European Missions Fellowship, the United Mennonite Churches, and the Ethiopian Christians Association of Germany. IMA coordinator, Tilahun Beyene noted this is the first time the annual IMA meetings were not hosted by a member organization, but the number of international participants doubled.

“The IMA gives us a glimpse of heaven,” a participant from Nepal said. “We’re used to talking with mostly our own kind of people, but it’s unique to talk with so many who are different from us, but have the same heart. Last year Indonesians sent a gift to Nepal. We were so surprised and touched by these international brothers and sisters we’d met at the IMA.”

Countless other international friendships were forged as the 700-member Bechterdissen Mennonite Church graciously hosted 70 international guests, coordinated transportation to and from the airport, and served bountiful meals complete with grilled meat by “the champion grill cook of Germany” (a member of the church) and homemade fruit platz and kuchen for dessert and coffee breaks.

Coordinator’s corner

During the IMA team visit/ministry trip my group had the opportunity to visit the water-crossing point at Minden, Germany, where the canal crosses the river. The man-made waterway runs



from west to east and serves as an essential freight transit system for the nation; the river flows to the Baltic Sea. It represents an engineering feat, as the two water systems were configured to literally cross over each other. It is fascinating to watch as huge ships are taken down from the upper

waters of the canal to the river level.

The amazing part is that this unique engineering marvel was built back in 1913 using the technology of that era. Today Europe is still continuing to advance technologically at an amazing rate. Conversely, the continent in general is drifting away from God as man increasingly depends on his intellect and ingenuity. Society is building a technological “tower of Babel” to elevate itself above the clouds and is headed towards disaster if a spiritual course correction is not made in good time. Man has to humble himself and come down from the “canal” level to that of the “river”.

Many continental church and mission leaders realize this grave situation, and are praying and asking for prayer support. During the gathering in Germany, we prayed fervently for Europe as a whole and Germany in particular. The assembly joyfully volunteered to take home prayer burdens for the old continent that was at the forefront of missions just less than a century ago. One leader in fact went beyond this and officially gave what he called “the second Macedonian call” based on his conviction that Europe has indeed become a mission field and is ready for re-evangelization.

One of the leading reasons why we met in Europe was to pray for that post-Christian continent. We praise God for the fact that brothers and sisters from twenty three nations, including Europe, were able to do that, and promised to continue their prayer for the continent. “In repentance and rest is your salvation...” writes the prophet Isaiah.

Let us pray that the Lord would move Europe towards repentance and rest in Him – and not technology and civilization.

– *Tilahun Beyene Kidane*
IMA coordinator

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Participants from HSIM Conference. Photo by Jon Unger Brandt.

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“In the Bible we’re told we might sometime have the privilege of entertaining angels,” Bechterdissen’s pastor, Peter Huebert said. “Our German Bible story books always show angels with white faces and wings, but these angels had neither.”

In a church testimony meeting after most international guests had left, a German woman said, “Last Sunday was heaven! The moderator invited all the Germans to stand and all the international guests to kneel. When they thanked God for the faithfulness of German missionaries in bringing the gospel to the world and prayed for revival in Europe, we couldn’t stop crying.”

- Jewel Showalter

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