

IMAgEs

[the newsletter of the International Missions Association]



The participants of the 2015 IMA conference, held at Rosedale International Center in Columbus, Ohio, from July 28 to August 2.

International Missions Association (IMA) networks to spread transformation

COLUMBUS, Ohio – “The IMA is a place where we hear God speak in transforming ways,” said Yesaya Abdi, IMA president and Indonesian mission leader. “We’re a small group, but one that God has been using to inspire change and mission vision around the world.”

Hosted by Rosedale Mennonite Missions (RMM) at their Rosedale International Center (RIC) in Columbus, Ohio, the IMA met July 28 – August 2, 2015, for its annual assembly, a practice which was birthed at the 1997 Mennonite World Conference (MWC) in Calcutta, India.

Following on the heels of MWC in Pennsylvania the previous week, the more than 50 mission leaders – some of whom had attended the earlier global gathering – loved the opportunity to connect more personally as they heard reports, challenges, testimonies, and prayer requests from many of the 22 IMA member groups.

“We’re an association, not an organization,” said IMA Vice President Henry Mulandi, a bishop and mission leader from Christian Church International in Thika, Kenya. “As an association we are always asking God how he wants to work now. The IMA has really boosted me – helped me learn and grow in openness to the Holy Spirit.”

In the opening plenary of the Holy Spirit in Mission conference, Mulandi spoke powerfully from Romans 12. “Our minds will be transformed by the Holy Spirit as we ask him how he wants to work now.” Citing powerful

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

President's corner

We give thanks to the Lord for His rich blessings upon this HSIM Conference & IMA Annual Meeting 2015. Our passion for the unfinished task of the great commission has been deepened and our love and commitment to the Lord renewed.

There are so many things we received that should not be forgotten. I was very touched by the concern and desire of our Brother Ochieng from Kenya when he was delivering the message at the end the conference. He said: "We are gathering here in America, on the soil where the great revivals had taken place in the past. We heard many great names of men and women of God, such as George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Billy Sunday, DL Moody, Billy Graham. Where is that spirit of awakening now? I really long for that spirit of revival filling my heart." Then he asked all the participants of the conference to lay hands on him and pray for him.

The HSIM & IMA 2015 has been part of our history, but let each one of us keep carrying on the spirit of revival burning in our heart (Jer. 20:9).

– Yesaya Abdi
IMA President



revivals among the youth of Kenya in the 1970s, Mulandi said that many of Kenya's current church leaders came to Christ during those revivals. But times have changed. Crusade evangelism doesn't work in the same way it used to.

While attending the 2012 IMA meeting in Ethiopia, Mulandi said he realized his home church had not planted a new church in eight years. They'd become a comfortable megachurch focusing on their nice cathedral with its stained glass windows. God stirred him up, transformed his mind.

"If people come to my church," Mulandi said, "I'll send them out." He was happy to report that in the past three years they've planted five new churches. And they've begun moving out into the Kenyan high schools in youth ministry.

At the beginning of the second IMA day – one devoted to prayer and fasting – Amos Stoltzfus, partnership coach for EMM, spoke on "appropriate sacrifice." Looking back at the sacrificial lives of early missionaries, he asked, "Do we have more emphasis on member care today than on church extension? Are we willing to serve in hard places? God didn't say just go into the safe places. He said go 'everywhere.'"

Yesaya Abdi reported on a recent visit he had



IMA participants praying for staff of Rosedale Mennonite Missions, their host.

Coordinator's corner

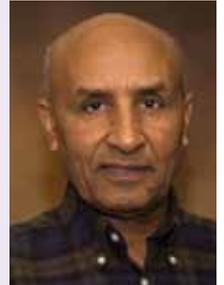
Transformation

The theme of IMA 2015 was “Transformation and Mission,” based on what Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, tying together these two concepts inextricably.

Transformation connotes a complete change both inside and out as an ugly-looking, slimy caterpillar would change into a beautiful multi-colored butterfly. The looks change, the abilities alter, and so does the character. Once it morphs into a butterfly, it no longer crawls or hangs from a limb of a tree but rather soars into the air with a whole new vista and possibilities opening to it.

Yes, IMA 2015 was about the necessity of transformation as a precondition for a successful mission of taking the message of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Only then would our message be potent both in word and deed and impact the lives of people being reached. Transformation, of course, is the work of the Holy Spirit. As we all know, that was why Jesus gave strict instructions to his disciples: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised...” (Acts 1:4). They followed his instruction and did stay in Jerusalem, and it was there that they received the power of the Holy Spirit and got transformed in an instant. Then without any prompting from anybody and with no fear, a powerful mission followed. The lesson that could be distilled from that experience is that when transformation happens with the help of the Holy Spirit, mission follows naturally. This has been repeated through the ages in various parts of the globe, is also true today and will continue into the future because the author is none other than Jesus Christ, the eternal Lord of the Universe.

– Tilahun Beyene Kidane
IMA Coordinator



made to “healthy” churches in South Korea. During the 19-day trip Abdi and his traveling companion, a friend, talked with pastors and pondered the secrets of the Korean churches’ growth and outreach. They noticed “seven secrets of health” – prayer, worship, Bible study, evangelism, giving, missions, and pastors/leaders.

With a population of 40 million, Korea is now 30% Christian and sends out 30,000 missionaries, second only to the U.S. in mission sending.

During the afternoon, the group gathered for five regional prayer clusters that focused on Africa, Asia/Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America then shifted to the campus of Rosedale Bible College (RBC) west of Columbus for a tour of the college and the adjoining headquarters of the Conservative Mennonite Conference.

Two of the Kenyan IMA members, Henry Mulandi and Joseph Kamau, spoke of how RBC had been their “burning bush.” As part of the youth revival that was sweeping Kenya at the time, they spurned



Top: Joe Showalter, moderator of the session, praying for Amos Stoltzfus as he prepared to speak.

Bottom: David Shenk and Bishop Philip Okeyo, Moderator of Kenya Mennonite Church

Right: Participants in session





Participants greeting each other.

“seminaries,” calling them “cemeteries.” While they longed to know the Bible more deeply they feared higher education would make them “lose their fire.”

At RBC they found teachers who were deeply committed to Christ and the Bible. At first their loud Kenyan prayers jolted the quiet Mennonite campus, but the youths found a sanctuary in the surrounding cornfields where they could happily pray at the top of their lungs as was their custom.

“They weren’t charismatic like we were,” said Mulandi, “But they were ‘flat out’ for God.”

“The impartation I had from Rosedale has formed me,” said Kamau. “The investment they had in us has impacted the world. May Rosedale continue to be an international center that impacts the world. May it be a place that teaches the truth, and is a base for training church and mission leaders.”

Following the prayer, David Shenk, a global consultant with EMM and leader of their Christian/Muslim Relations Team, encouraged the group to be an open channel for the work of the Holy Spirit in all seasons. “Wherever the gospel is at work, new life will flow. We can’t control the Holy Spirit, but we can say ‘yes.’ Don’t run away from deserts. If you’re there new life will flow.”

In a response time that followed the sermon, a Honduran mission leader said that he had been only seven years old when his father was brutally murdered in their home. It was very hard for his mother and her five children. Their lives were filled with hatred and pain.

“But my mom always called us to forgive,” he said. “She knew Jesus. Later we found the person who killed my dad. My mom hugged him, and said

she forgave him. We children did, too. My mom’s faithfulness was key to our healing. We as a church must give love and forgiveness.”

During his Thursday morning input Joe Showalter, president of RMM and host of the IMA gathering, challenged the mission leaders to look at how people learn. Practitioners and teachers learn far more than those who passively listen or read.

“I believe we have elevated the sermon in our churches to a place that it does not belong. Have we made sermons/lectures too important?” Showalter asked. “A lot of what Jesus did was on the road, showing people things along the way. A pastor is called ‘to equip the saints for the work of ministry.’ Our job as leaders is to help others become all they can be.”

Workshops, reports, and testimonies from a wide variety of individuals and mission groups punctuated the teaching times.

Joe Showalter reported on the recent move of RMM headquarters to the RIC in north Columbus. “We had some of our staff working in Columbus,” he said. “We now enjoy all being together. It has helped us connect with an urbanizing world.”

Rich Mendola, a leader of International Friendships (IFI), highlighted the strategic importance of working with international students in the U.S. One of the IMA participants had also served as a staff member with IFI before returning to minister among the three million internally displaced persons in his homeland, Sudan.

“The many diasporas in our world provide unusual opportunities for ministry,” Mendola said. “For example, during the Vietnam War more



Worship team opening the sessions with music.

Vietnamese came to Christ in the refugee camps than in Vietnam before that time. God used it for good – even though it was very hard.”

Jaganath Banerjee, a mission leader from west Bengal, shared the story of how God transformed him from a childhood of begging and hawking on the trains of India to a mission leader. He now leads Kristalaya Mercy Mission that is sending pioneer church planters into each of Bengal’s 19 districts.

“We Bengalis are the largest unreached people group in the world today,” he said. “We have 97 million people with very few Christians. We are the number one child trafficking region of the world with many children trafficked by their own desperate parents. Please pray for us.”

Yemiru Tilahun, a mission leader from Ethiopia, introduced a new initiative he’s leading – African Christian Mission Mobilization Partnership (ACMMP). He explained that ACMMP focuses on equipping African Christians in Muslim evangelism. Many leaders in Africa don’t understand Islam. ACMMP holds trainings in Ethiopia and South Africa. The program will also include site visits, learning from the settings in Ethiopia where many Muslims are coming to Christ. So far the trainings have included leaders from 12 African nations.

David Shenk and Andres Prins from the EMM



Christian/Muslim Relations Team shared about their international teaching and dialog ministry – offering books and other resources to the IMA group.

An Indian leader who is a member of IMA reported that the government of India has said that India will be a Hindu nation by 2020. There are actions to restrict the activities of Christians. Churches are being burned almost every day somewhere in the country.

But rather than being cowed by what they're seeing in government policies, the leader said, "We as an interdenominational Christian body made a declaration that by 2025 all India will hear the gospel. All of us are working together toward that end. There are 63 cities that have over 1 million [people]. We'd like to see a church in each of these cities. We have a 40 day prayer drive that's going on right now. We believe this will be a turning point for India."

For much of Richard Showalter's evening plenary session on "Sincere Love, the Mark of a Follower of Jesus," he told and elicited "love stories" from the group. "How have we seen the love of God shown abroad?" he asked.

"Love stories" spilled out as participants told of feeling orphaned and abandoned – then taken in by a loving family, of unexpected hospitality that pointed the way from Islam to Christianity, the gift of college

tuition when funds had run out.

As he wrapped up the Holy Spirit in Mission conference, IMA president Abdi summarized the common task as we are thrust out into our different worlds: we bless, build relationships, minister by responding to people's felt needs, proclaim the kingdom of God. "Don't stop before you've completed all four steps," he said. "The gospel is the power of God! Jesus came, died, and now lives. People need to hear that God loves them."

Abdi told the story of one of their Indonesian church planters who had done the first three steps. As he was waiting for an opportunity to "proclaim the kingdom of God," he had a dream about a certain house in the village. He went to the house where he met a shaman. He told the man he had something very important to tell him, but that he'd share only on the condition that he promises to believe and accept what he hears. When the shaman gave his word, the church planter shared the gospel story of Jesus knocking on the door of the heart and the shaman readily said, "Come in!"

During a closing time of communion participants freely wept and prayed together.

Adalid Romero, president of the Honduran Mennonite Church (HMC), broke into deep, gut-wrenching sobs. "We've been around for 65 years," he



Participants in worship.

said. “Recently I toured the six regions of HMC and we talked about new outreach. But the brothers said, ‘Why should we start new work when we don’t have any money?’ But here at the IMA God has touched me very deeply. Please pray that I’ll be able to share this vision with our church.”

Following the HSIM Conference, the IMA member group met for its annual business meeting and member reports on July 31-August 1. In his meditation to the members Samuel Lopez, a bishop of the Spanish Council of Lancaster Mennonite Conference and its mission director, led a reenactment of the Spanish conquistadors conquest of Latin America.

When Pizarro’s troops came stealing gold and violating women, they captured the Inca leader Atahualpa, threatening to kill him if he didn’t repent. After the Inca leader learned that repentance meant sharing heaven with the greedy, murderous Spanish, he replied, “Okay, kill me. I don’t want to be in heaven with you.”

“That was the evangelism that was first done in Latin America,” Lopez said. “We must be careful not to kill those we wish to save! The love of God is offered freely. It’s an invitation, but we have to do it without coercion. Violence is unacceptable. We must walk in integrity – without double standards. The message and the messenger are one.”

Sunday, August 2, international teams of IMA members visited and ministered in ten Mennonite churches in Ohio, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

Abdi commented in closing, “The success of IMA is not a smooth running program and good food, but ‘Is there a big impact in the places where we go? Will our IMA gathering give impact in our own lives and ministries? Will we be transformed? And will we bring transformation where we’re going?’”

One first time attendee said, “These meetings were a most interesting blend of testimony and teaching. I’ve never heard so many encouraging testimonies – and ones I could learn things from.”

IMA Coordinator Tilahun Beyene announced that Germany will be the location of the 2016 IMA meetings, which are planned for the fall. ■

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 by 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. 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. Overcoming Faith Church - Kenya
19. PIPKA - Indonesia
20. Pocket Testament League - India
21. Rosedale Mennonite Missions - USA
22. Spanish Mennonite Council - USA
23. Word of Grace Network - USA

President – Yesaya Abdi

Vice president – Henry Mulandi

Secretary – P. C. Alexander

Coordinator – Tilahun Beyene Kidane



**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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Participants in prayer in the prayer room.

1122015.001150

The next IMA Gathering will be held in Bonn, Germany, from November 7 to 17, 2016. All are welcome. Please register at www.emm.org/ima by July 30, 2016.

MORE ON THE WEB >>

Newsletters available to download at emm.org/ima.