

IMAges

[the newsletter of the International Missions Association]



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 14 members:

African Christian Mission International - Kenya
 Amor Viviente - Honduras
 Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) - USA
 Costa Rican Mennonite Church
 Honduran Evangelical Mennonite Church (IEMH)
 Integrated Mennonite Churches (IMC, Philippines)
 Junta Misionera de la Convencion Menonita de Nicaragua
 Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania (KMT)
 Kenya Mennonite Church (KMC)
 Meserete Kristos Church (MKC, Ethiopia)
 Mision Red - Spanish Mennonite Council (USA)
 PIPKA - Indonesia
 Pocket Testament League (PTL India)
 Rosedale Mennonite Missions (USA)

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

Philippine Mennonite churches host Holy Spirit in Mission Conference & International Missions Association

LUMBAN, the Philippines – Wending two miles along the narrow stone streets of Lumban, 45 international guests from Mennonite churches in 16 countries waved country flags and colored balloons as they trekked from the mayor's office to the Lumban Mennonite Bible Church.

Filipino friends welcomed the group to the fourth annual Holy Spirit in Mission Conference, September 7-10, 2006, with orchid garlands and children's songs and dances as they entered the newly-completed four-story church building, which serves as a church conference center.

The Integrated Mennonite Churches of the Philippines (IMC) and the International Missions Association (IMA) served as hosts. 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. Held in conjunction with the annual IMA business meeting, the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference 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.

IMA President Richard Showalter introduced the conference theme: "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." He noted that the Greek word

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Traditional Filipino dance

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“testimony” is the same word from which English “martyr” comes – and is one of the most frequently used words of the New Testament. “It speaks of a powerful, external truth – and not just our own best ideas,” he said.

During the three day

missions conference, more than 40 Filipino leaders joined the international for times of prayer and fasting, testimonies, reports, teachings, workshops, and unstructured “Holy Spirit time” at the Pagsanjan Rapids Hotel.

On the first day, Erlinda Veluz, a Filipino woman, delivered an impassioned challenge to the group: “There are no restrictions. God is not calling only the educated. Enroll in the ‘University of the Holy Spirit’ for his teaching and empowerment!” This became a watchword for the conference, and numerous participants “registered” in the “University of the Holy Spirit” on a big whiteboard.

Testimonies from participants emphasized the importance of walking in the Spirit. Mulugeta Zewdie, general secretary of Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, had experienced revival as a high school youth. He noted, “Sometimes the Holy Spirit and our knowledge clash. Prayer brings the power of God to the nations.”

Dr. Tan Kok Beng, a leader of the Asia Pacific Mission, reported on the Mennonite church he has helped to plant in Singapore. Eighty-five percent of the 120 members are new believers, mostly from Buddhist-Taoist backgrounds. The church started three years ago with only six people. Last summer they also started another congregation which already has about 50 attending. The churches are growing as members pray and obey - even doing things that seem unreasonable.

On two consecutive evenings the conference group swelled to several hundred as they met downtown in a public stadium for open air meetings. Henry Mulandi, director of African Christian Mission International in Kenya, spoke the first evening. He issued a powerful call for salvation, outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and missions.

The second evening, Melvin Fernandez from the Honduran Mennonite Church and Ryan Showalter, director of Discipleship Ministries for EMM, led a special rally for children and youth. Again people flocked to the front, seeking a life-changing touch from God.

The conference concluded Sunday morning with a challenge from Lawrence Chiles, bishop of an Anabaptist circle of churches in eastern U.S. “As we empty ourselves, as Jesus did, God will ‘enlarge our tents, lengthen our cords,’” Chiles said. “It’s amazing to hear how the Ethiopians are reaching the Somalis, the Kenyans the Sudanese. No one country is the whole cord, but the IMA links cords together to take the gospel around the world.”

President’s corner

We are humbled and grateful! As we met in the Philippines, God began to shape us in a whole new way into a global mission network. No longer do we see ourselves

as disparate, independent bodies in mission. Rather, we are one body in mission, worldwide. What happens in North India is part of our story in North America, and vice versa. What

happens in Honduras is part of East Africa’s story, and vice versa. This is not about organizational merger, but about deep spiritual union which both underlies and transcends every organization of which we’re a part.

A global leadership prayer network was initiated in the Philippines to undergird this global mission network with strong intercessory prayer. That network is already active as prayer leaders connect regularly. A leadership team was initiated as a prototype for nurturing relationships and steps of action in mission among all of us.

Together enrolled in the “University of the Holy Spirit,” we are on the move as He leads.

– Richard Showalter
IMA President

IMA news and updates

September 14 and 15 the IMA conducted members' meetings to discuss structure and future events.

Tilahun Beyene Kidane, an EMM staff member and the IMA coordinator, noted that one of the most exciting things about the IMA is the way international relationships are forming – building capacity for mission sending in each partner as well as creating the kinds of relationships and trust that will enable long-term sending of international teams.

He highlighted a missions training planned by EMM and PIPKA to be held in Indonesia in the next year, and a Latin mission training planned by **Rosedale Mennonite Missions** and **Amor Viviente**, hosted by the Nicaraguan Mennonite Church later this year.

African Christian Mission International in Kenya reported on work its doing in the Sudan and offered to help with funding for an Ethiopian missionary from MKC to serve in the Sudan.

In their business meeting the IMA voted to receive mission representation from the **Costa Rican Mennonite Church** as a member, bringing the total number of member missions to 14. Two other groups have already applied for membership next year.

As the IMA continues to grow, members discussed the need for increased staff time. The executive committee is recommending that Tilahun, who has been giving 25 percent time to the IMA, be joined by part-time staff persons from Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Tanto Handoko, a leader from the **JKI Mennonite Church in Indonesia** said, "Our country is experiencing a shaking like I've not seen in all my 40 years. Jesus said he'd pour out his Spirit and multitudes would flock to him. It's beginning to happen, but we need to continue praying for breakthroughs in the Muslim and Buddhist worlds." IMA leaders moved to form a global prayer network to cover the work of IMA partners. Handoko will coordinate the network.

P.C. Alexander, an IMA member from Delhi, India, told of a pastor from south India who worked and prayed for 21 years before seeing a church of 150 now beginning to thrive in the north Punjab region. Eight Indian states have recently passed anti-conversion laws, but Christians continue to reach out – founding much-appreciated Christian schools in regions where church planting is too sensitive.

Adi Walujo, a leader in the **GITJ Mennonite Church in Indonesia**, praised God that their local church, which had been closed for eight months by Muslim leaders, was miraculously granted permission to worship again. "This kind of reversal is unheard of in Indonesia," he said, but a breakthrough came after special prayer at the IMA last year.

Tan Kok Beng, a Mennonite pastor and missions leader from Singapore, urged the group to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in their evangelistic efforts. He shared the story of three women who felt impressed to visit a certain home. They knocked for ten minutes, but no one came. They were so sure God wanted them there, that they prayed, and then persisted in knocking for 20 more minutes. Finally a distressed woman came to the door. Behind her they caught sight of a chair, and a noose dangling from the ceiling. "I can't even die in peace," she sobbed, and they ministered new life to her.

Tefera Bekere reported from Ethiopia that they are seeing unprecedented responses to the gospel in neighboring countries as they use a more contextualized approach to witness. Currently 262 missionaries are working in Ethiopia and beyond its borders.

Rubén Carrasco from Peru reported that last year he had come to the Holy Spirit in Mission conference frustrated and ready to resign from leadership of the **Peruvian Mennonite Church**. Instead he made some radical changes in organization through what he had learned at the meetings, and the church is now growing about 60 percent for the year. "Many of us have been working in our own strength," he said. "But when we hear from God, and obey, there is new life."

Coordinator's corner

It Pays to Obey

Despite our best efforts to plan the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference in the Philippines, one month before the start of the conference it seemed as if everything came crashing down, because the promises were not kept by



the would-be service providers (hotels). On another front it became apparent that two of the key speakers we had counted on would not be able to come for the gathering,

a situation that seemed like the last straw.

It seemed that it would have been best to cancel the whole thing because there was not enough time to activate plan B, if there ever was one! However, the Lord had other ideas. Quick decisions were made to change the venue and new arrangements were made for accommodation, meals, transportation and a conference hall. A door was suddenly opened for one of the speakers to come. He took the speaking assignment of the brother who could not be at the conference. The Lord used that brother in a mighty way as an opening speaker and set the tone of the gathering.

Until the conference started nobody was sure how it would go. However, once it started things moved smoothly, blessings began to flow and the presence of the Holy Spirit was very much evident. Lives were touched, fellowship was deepened, mission vision was enhanced, local churches and leadership encouraged and the IMA moved to a whole new level.

The main lesson learned at the previous gathering in Indonesia in 2005 was to pray, listen and obey. The Lord says in His word that it is not by might but by His Spirit, and we obeyed against all odds. It paid off, praise the Lord!

- Tilahun Beyene Kidane
IMA Coordinator



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New mercies

Each year that we have met as members of the IMA I think at the conclusion, “That that was the best meeting that we have ever had so far!” They are like the mercies of God – “new each morning”. Our meeting in the Philippines was no exception. Every meeting has new elements that cause us to grow at all levels.

As a result of these meetings in Amor Viviente we are developing a closer relationship to learn and teach with our brothers and sisters from Rosedale in Nicaragua, Thailand, and Ecuador, which we have already made plans for 2007. We also have a growing relationship with the Council of Hispanic Mennonite Churches; with EMM we continue to develop our shared project in Asia.

These actions are a result of what God is doing through the IMA in and through us when we meet. I am sure that the IMA is a fountain which God will continue using so that many around the world can give and receive of what He has given us. When all of us meet with others in different parts of the world and unite forces, we release fruit one hundred fold.

If He has not come yet, we will meet again in Europe in 2007, to enjoy and share what God has given to each one, so that we in turn can share that with the others.

Javier Soler
Mission Director, Amor Viviente

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