

Date:

Address:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

We from the editorial committee of the history of the Mennonite Brethren Churches around the world welcome you as a contributor to the project. We deeply appreciate your willingness to participate in this global report which is to be released *in time for the* 2010 A.D. celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the MB church in 1860. In these years God has raised the Mennonite Brethren from a small seed to a global tree.

In this book we would like to show what God is doing in raising up and using Mennonite Brethren churches around the world. It is to help us as Mennonite Brethren celebrate what God has done and is doing through our churches, and to help us gain a global vision of what God has for us in the future in ministries in our own countries, and in mission outreach to the world.

In trying to bring reports from around the world and to integrate them into a single volume, we need to have some guidelines for the paper. Following are some of these.

1. Perspective: The central focus of your article should be on the current state of the Mennonite Brethren churches in your country. You can include a brief introduction on how the Gospel came to your land, noting particularly the early national leaders who played key roles in establishing the M. B. Churches. The major focus of the paper should be on what the Mennonite Brethren churches in your *country* are doing, what major social, cultural and political issues they face, how they are responding to these, and what their vision is for the future.

2. Audience: Our audience is Mennonite Brethren adults around the world. Hopefully parts or all of the book will be translated into various languages for use in schools, classes and church gatherings. The drafts should be in English, although in a few cases translations will be made from other languages. Keep the outline logical, the thoughts clear and the language simple. Do not use footnotes in an academic style. Rather, use them sparingly to add relevant information to the text.

3. Length: The paper should be about 15 pages long. In reports on larger church bodies, this may be extended to 20 pages. **On the other hand, some will be somewhat shorter.**

4. Content: Some suggested contents of the paper are the following. Not all need to be covered if they are not relevant to the central thrust of your paper.

- Describe briefly the origins of your national conference and some of the early national leaders.
- Describe briefly some of the highlights in the development of your national church body that are particularly worthy of celebration. **What** are there stories that are particularly important to tell? How are decisions made, differences resolved, resources

shared? What have been the most prominent priorities in the historical development of your national church today?

- What are some of the distinctive issues and challenges that your national body has had to face in its cultural context?
- Describe the central theological affirmations and emphases in your national body. What have been the most significant theological challenges or encounters facing your national church (for example, social response to the caste system, nationalism, polygamy, religious pluralism, etc.). How has or does the Anabaptist/Mennonite identity of the Mennonite Brethren church influence your response to these challenges and discussions.
- Describe some of the ways your church is seeking to reach out in mission both in and outside your country.
- What resources does your national church have, or what experience has it gained. What might it share as a gift to the global Mennonite Brethren church community?
- Describe the historical and current relationships with other Mennonite Brethren conferences. How significant have these relationships been in the past, and continue to be?
- What are some of the current priorities of your national body, and what do you see as some of the most significant future challenges?

4. Bibliography: Add a short bibliography of key books and articles that help readers pursue the subject further, rather than to document what you write in the text.

5. Authorship: We are suggesting that each paper *involve* two leaders in the national church. One may be the lead author, and collaborate *or consult* with the second before submitting a copy. Both may be involved in writing the paper together.

6. Editing: In order to weave the papers into a uniform whole in terms both of content and style, it will be necessary to do some heavy editing of the original drafts. The edited papers will be returned to you for your final approval.

7. Deadlines: We would appreciate it greatly if you could complete the first draft of the paper by the end of February, 2006. We need time to compile and edit the papers, and to prepare related materials such as study guides and other supplementary materials for the use of the book at the conference and in churches and schools.

Please feel **free** to contact us if you have further questions. We will be happy to give suggestions on issues you may face in this writing project.

With warm Christian regards,

***Editorial Committee***

***Global*** Mennonite Brethren Historical Project

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With warm Christian regards,

Mennonite Brethren Historical Project

**ICOMB History Project Report  
To 2005 Meeting, Japan (April 27-28/05)  
From David Wiebe, Secretary**

The Historical Commission has formally appointed Paul Hiebert to head up the History Project. Paul is a missiologist, teaching in The Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) of Chicago and Fuller Theological Seminary. He is well known to North American Mennonite Brethren.

The following is their understanding of the project.

1. Purpose and Focus:

- to remind ourselves of what God has done through the Mennonite Brethren in the global witness to the Gospel and planting of churches, and to see the spiritual dynamics that gave rise to missions as the central integrating activity of the early Mennonite Brethren churches.
- to motivate us to a new mission vision and thrust in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- It was suggested that this is the beginning of a new way of working globally with our churches. We are setting a new process in place as a precedent.
- Their working title: Mennonite Brethren Global Missions: What God Has Done

2. Audience:

The audience is lay adults. The outcomes should capture the attention and motivate our churches. It should be in a format that allows it to be used in Bible study groups and Sunday School classes

3. Scope:

- the project should examine both historical and geographical dimensions of global M. B. missions.
- the first section should very briefly trace the origins of M.B. missions in Russia, M.B. migrations to North America, and the origins of missions in North America. [about 20-40 pages]
- subsequent sections should trace the birth, growth and mission outreach of the major global M.B. churches [about 20-30 pages each]. These should include:
  - \* Asia: India, Japan, China
  - \* Africa: Congo, Angola, Namibia
  - \* Latin America: Brazil, Colombia, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru etc
  - \* Canada: (current missional church movement)
  - \* U.S.: (current missional church movement)
  - \* Europe and Russia: [?]
- a concluding section that gives an overview of the current state and mission visions of the M.B. churches around the world [about 30 pages]. This needs to integrate the different regional presentations into a big picture and point the way ahead in partnerships, and new ways of doing missions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### 4. Outcomes:

- a book of about 200 - 300 pages, presented in a modern format with pictures, sidebars, website information, and other ways of presenting a vision
  - \* one possibility is to write the book in sections so that each can be published separately as well as in a single book form. For example, different country reports might be issued in small pamphlet forms of about 10-15 pages each.
- possibly a study guide that can be used in Sunday School classes and study groups
- possibly a video presentation.
  - \* showing M. B. congregations worshipping in different parts of the world to create a sense of our diversity and our unity
  - \* brief interviews with key M. B. leaders from around the world.
  - \* brief vignettes of ordinary M. B. people in different countries
  - \* showing some of the M. B. mission outreach programs in different countries
- probably a web site that gives additional materials and sources for further information.
  - \* references to previous publications on M.B. missions, and some original documents
  - \* a section for local churches to share what they are doing and learning in mission outreach

#### 5. Writers and Editors:

- a general editorial team of about four to six who would take responsibility to supervise the overview, content, writers and editing of the final products. They are co-editors, not an editor with sub-editors.
  - two co-editors who take primary responsibility for gathering and organizing the material for final production
  - the regional chapters should be written by leaders in the regions. We need urgently to begin gathering lists of possible writers for each region. ICOMB members will be asked to submit suggestions for contributors.
- Possible structure:
  - Executive or managing Editor
  - Editorial Committee
  - Regional authors
- office support in typing and revising manuscripts should be done at some central office

#### 6. Processing the task:

- the editorial committee and co-editors should be appointed by 2006
- these should finalize the general guidelines and time-tables by 2006
- working drafts should be in by January 2008
- the committee and editors must keep in constant touch with ICOMB to organize and coordinate the project. While ICOMB does not have control over the project, input from ICOMB must be taken very seriously.
- decisions need to be made on the press, and the production time-table (Historical Commission will make this decision – ICOMB has already set the date)

#### 7. Publicity:

- to be worked out
  - ICOMB should be involved deeply in all releases and publicity projects.

#### Observations/Recommendations (David Wiebe)

- We should approve the selection of Paul Hiebert as project editor/manager.
  - o We can then announce his appointment together with the Historical Commission in the various global publications that we have.
  - o I will need information about the different conference publications and contact information for news releases.
- We need to help them broaden perspective to the theological, educational, relief and other dimensions of ICOMB, not just the missions story.
  - o In other words, make sure they keep the Mennonite Brethren global 'family' as a totality in mind
- Costs: We need to set the total cost limit. Historical commission will work with what we tell them. They seem to think \$100,000 mentioned earlier is workable
  - o We need to keep in dialogue about the costs of the project.
  - o Deadline for budget: 2006
- I recommend we invite Paul Hiebert to the ICOMB 2006 meeting as an observer for him to see our interaction, to process any questions, and to get a stronger perspective outside North America.
  - o Costs would be part of the history project.
- We need to appoint a liaison person to work between ICOMB and the Historical Commission/Paul Hiebert to ensure good information flow on the project.

**Minutes of ICOMB Meeting 2005**  
**Evangelical Theological Seminary**  
**Mennonite Brethren Conference**  
**Osaka, Japan**  
**April 27-28, 2005**

1. Opening: Greetings, Devotion and Prayer
  - a. Takashi Manabe led in singing and shared from John 4:21-26. Our head is Jesus Christ and he is our only Savior and he brings us together. We worship as true worshipers because we have the Holy Spirit in our heart.
2. Self-introductions
  - a. Segueiro Luzembo (Angola); Jose Arrais (Portugal); Victor Wall (German Paraguay); Francisco del Puerta (Spanish Paraguay); Randy Friesen (MBMSI); Ernesto Wiens (Brazil); Takashi Manabe (Japan); Heinrich Klassen (BTG); Cesar Garcia (Colombia); Charles Buller (USA); David Wiebe (Canada); Alexander Neufeld (AMBD, Austria).
3. Agenda clarification
4. Minutes from the meetings 2004 in Asunción (David Wiebe)
  - a. **Moved/seconded to receive the minutes as corrected. Carried.** David will send out a corrected copy of the 2004 minutes because of changes concerning the Mexico work.
5. Appointment of an ICOMB Executive Secretary (Alexander Neufeld)
  - a. The executive committee recommended Victor Wall of Paraguay to ICOMB for the position of Executive Secretary for a term of 3 years, starting approximately in June 2005, starting at 20% for this first year, and half time (50%) until the end of the first term.
    - i. Job description as presented:
      1. Develop the agenda of ICOMB meetings with the Executive committee
      2. Assist in logistics for people to attend.
      3. Facilitate communication between conferences
      4. Facilitate task forces and commissions and serve them where possible.
      5. Dialogue with potential ICOMB conferences
      6. Facilitate educator exchange
      7. Work with ICOMB treasurer to provide accountability for ICOMB funds
      8. Coordinate task force responses to disasters according to our relief fund
      9. Participate in the work of the Global Mission Alliance as it develops
      10. Coordinate the 2010 assembly of the MB Conference.
  - b. Relationship to ICOMB and Executive Committee
    - i. The Secretary must work in cooperation with the Executive Committee.
    - ii. The Secretary is not "under" the Executive Committee but reports to it.
    - iii. The Executive Committee is the employer of the Secretary on behalf of ICOMB.
    - iv. The Executive Committee will provide guidance to the Secretary.
      1. The Secretary is a bridge between ICOMB as a whole and the Committee.
      2. Both Secretary and Committee answer to the entire ICOMB.
    - v. The Secretary is Non-voting.
    - vi. If the Secretary is a representative of a conference to ICOMB, we would ask the conference to appoint someone else to be the representative.
      1. In Victor's case, he will not be the representative after December 2005.
    - vii. Evaluation/assessing ministry priorities and effectiveness
      1. ICOMB sets goals for the Secretary. The Committee will fine tune goals.
      2. Process: Committee facilitates goal setting with Secretary, bring them to ICOMB and have ICOMB own the goals.
      3. ICOMB evaluates goals annually. The Committee will facilitate the evaluation process.
      4. Because the list of job description points is long, we need to hear from the Secretary if the load is too heavy, as assignment is 20% at the beginning.

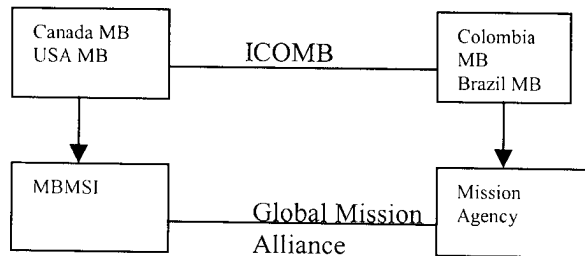


- c. Personal reflection by Victor on this position. He has always valued ICOMB. The idea of serving ICOMB is very attractive to him. In the next year or so Victor is considering a time of study in Germany. He believes it is possible to serve ICOMB from there. Victor has discussed this possibility with his own conference, and they have blessed him for this. The brothers in Paraguay-German Conference appreciate ICOMB and believe this is an important vehicle for identity into the future. Victor believes this is a working of the Lord – it is something not expected, especially from the younger brothers in the conference.
  - d. Group discussion. Very strong general approval of Victor was expressed.
    - i. Secretary should be an ambassador to member conferences, especially those that have difficulty attending.
    - ii. Administrative support. Go cautiously. For the first year, Victor would work out of his office. Randy offered some secretarial support as a ‘donation in kind.’
    - iii. Financial implications: Takashi suggested that we make our conference contributions as concrete as possible; the MBMSI contribution is welcome, but the basis should be from the ICOMB conferences.
  - e. Money for equipment, office, and other technical aspects as covered as long as Victor is working in Paraguay. If he relocates to Europe, this will be addressed.
    - i. The Executive Committee was commissioned to work with Victor and present a report to ICOMB on Day 2 re compensation, travel, etc.
6. Financial report and budget issues (Chuck Buller)
- a. We spent about \$2500 or so more than income for 2004.
    - i. It was our goal to raise \$21,000, and we raised \$22,000.
    - ii. Balance of \$74,000 USD (last year was \$77,000 USD).
      - 1. The missions consultation in January was an extra meeting.
  - b. Conference contributions are not consistent or predictable. Our goal to give 2% per year is not what actually happens.
    - i. As of March 31 about 6 of the 19 conferences made a contribution. Last year only 2 made contributions at that time.
    - ii. Now that we are hiring staff and putting structure into place, we have more concrete reason for giving to ICOMB.
    - iii. A reminder letter will be sent once a year to the ICOMB representative asking for the contribution.
    - iv. When we are faithful to make the contribution we can feel confident and that we have the right to vote on ICOMB issues.
    - v. Charles said that not every conference would be able to reach 2%, but that we should employ a principle of equal sacrifice.
  - c. We have enough cash on hand to cover the expenses of an Executive Secretary right now, so this should give us confidence to move into the future.
  - d. Victor suggested that we draw up some policies for finances regarding how we share information, and how to make finances part of our mutual responsibilities.
    - i. All members were asked to make suggestions to Charles about this. He will come back to us later in the meeting with some policy suggestions.
7. Membership in ICOMB, Amendment of the By-Laws (David Wiebe)
- a. The amendment of Section V was presented and discussed.
    - i. An emerging conference created by MBMSI will be sponsored by MBMSI.
    - ii. Self-emerging conferences, like Namibia, should be approached by ICOMB.
  - b. ICOMB should take initiative and invite emerging churches to attend. This is important to begin the association.
  - c. We need a bylaw to address when conferences do not attend more than two or three times.
  - d. **Moved/seconded that we add Section V to the Bylaws, entitled Membership in ICOMB. Carried.**
  - e. **Moved/seconded that we change the percentage of giving to ICOMB to 2% and incorporate this change into the Bylaws. Carried.**
8. Recommendations of the ICOMB Mission Task Force (Randy Friesen)

- a. The resolutions concerning a Mennonite Brethren global missions alliance were presented from the task force meeting held in January 2005. (Document distributed)
  - i. The primary focus of this alliance will be to develop ways to reach new parts of the world together.
  - ii. Regional caucuses should be a normal component of the alliance

Discussion

- b. Should the mission alliance become the central reason for the existence of ICOMB?
- c. Missions was at the heart of Jesus Christ. It will also be the future of ICOMB. Cooperation will help us unite to expand Mennonite Brethren around the world. This is an important element of fellowship and the encouragement we need.
- d. How to describe the relationship between MBMSI and ICOMB. The old model could be described as follows:



- e. The new model could be described as follows: ICOMB is the 'hub' at the centre of the entire global family. Each conference connects to each other through ICOMB, and to each other with global telecommunications.
- f. Further initiatives and concerns also connect through ICOMB. For example, the global teacher exchange currently exists with the help of MBMSI. This should be shifted to be a function of ICOMB.
- g. Church health is also very important. We must attend to theological education, and other matters. We still need MBMSI because it has the best structure to relate to conferences right now.
- h. This could be a strong reason to position Global Mission Alliance meetings together with ICOMB meetings.
- i. Is it possible to connect domestic (eg Canada or US conferences) church planting ministry with the global ministry? There are some local churches (eg in Canada) who are planting churches in other parts of the world that may not be connected to the Mennonite Brethren conference globally in any way (they don't know they are MB). This is a good thing but it's sad when these new churches don't know who their family/identity is.
  - i. If the GMA connects with unreached people, our conferences would be interested in participating. Local churches are mission driven, and want to know their association provides a valuable assistance in mission.
- j. What happens if a regional conference in Canada decides to link with a conference in South America? How can ICOMB come alongside to bless, enrich, expand and foster new variations of global alliance? We want an open, inclusive posture that encourages initiative from many different places. The vision is to become a missional movement that has energy from many different directions.
- k. What happens if MBMSI decides to allocate all its money and energy to the 10:40 window, but a group in Latin America decides it wants to do missions in another area of the world?
  - i. It would be appropriate for them to call the Executive Secretary of ICOMB, and the GMA to foster this initiative if MBMSI isn't interested. But this is a vision of the future, because we are still very dependent on MBMSI infrastructure to do things.
- l. We cannot point people to the GMA just yet. Of course, MBMSI won't narrow its vision to just one location; it must reflect the mission vision of the churches of North America, so it

won't be exclusive. GMA can't create programs right now; it can facilitate connections and motivate further action. The annual meeting will help build the networks needed. This will be a slow and steady process.

- i. An example for now: Colombia has 3 missionaries in other countries. They may be able to start their own mission-sending structure. So the next GMA meeting will be in Colombia, involving their missionaries. This will allow the discussion to have a practical example within the agenda.
  - m. **Moved/seconded that we accept the resolutions of the mission consultation and agree with and bless the proposed direction regarding the Global Mission Alliance. Carried.**
  - n. Comments to specifics of the Resolution document
    - i. Conferences should have a mission vision, not necessarily a structure.
    - ii. Even though regions and districts of Canada and US conferences have church planting, they should not be invited to the GMA, except possibly as observers.
  - o. Relation to the Global Mission Fellowship (Mennonite World Conference).
    - i. The GMF a cooperative effort of the MWC. It is divided into the continental regions of the world and incorporates the different missiological viewpoints in MWC.
    - ii. We value our association with the GMF. However, the ICOMB agency of GMA effort is specifically aimed at church planting of Mennonite Brethren churches. We are the only group that will do that.
    - iii. We will maintain our connection to the GMF through the MBMSI General Director.
9. Joint Response to the Tsunami Disaster proposal (MBMSI)
- a. Several conferences have contributed to this disaster fund. Our people on an island near Phuket have established a church in Thailand as a result of the relief effort. Holistic church planting orientation is given to all workers who go to Thailand on Operation Building Lives.
  - b. This is not something that impacts our Relief Fund at this time.
10. Reports:
- a. Angola: Segueira Luzembo. Prayer requests: That Silas eSilva family will return from Brazil; for Masolo Manunga who lost his wife to illness and is now back in Angola; the Marburg virus is taking many lives; pray for peace in 2006 elections.
  - b. Brazil: Ernesto Wiens. Prayer requests: New vision, mission and goals; exploring cell church model; 3 missionaries wanting to go out; social ministries – street kids, addicts; new shepherding of pastors. 42 churches, 5600 members, 15 emerging churches.
  - c. Canada: David Wiebe. Pray for our government, which wants to pass legislation permitting homosexual marriage, but is also in crisis due to scandal; for the church to find a way to bring holistic gospel to Canadians.
  - d. Colombia: Cesar Garcia. In addition to the emailed report on Colombia: Identity issues face the conference there. Pray that the conference might be able to stabilize its own theology. Pastors have been trained outside the conference – and they now need to establish training in Anabaptist theology for themselves. Otherwise leaders will be lost again to other confessions. The roots are very important – especially pacifist convictions – in face of guerrilla action in some areas. Looking for fast, concrete answers! Help has come from other Mennonite groups; they are looking for help from Mennonite Brethren. Scholarships to send students to Anabaptist schools (Fresno, etc) and for professors who would come to Colombia to teach. Ernesto mentioned an unused scholarship fund in COBIM that might apply.

#### **Thursday, April 28, 2005**

Jose Arrais led in a devotional based on Luke 10:38-42. He referred to the train crash in Tokyo, which was caused by a young driver who seemed to be under great stress. Martha seemed to be under a lot of stress as well. Jesus called her, and calls us to take time to be away from the work to refresh our spirit and focus on him as a way to keep our strength.

#### 11. Reports

- a. Germany – BTG: Heinrich Klassen: attached.

- b. Germany – AMBD, VMBB: Alexander Neufeld: There are about 20,000 Mennonite Brethren, but only about ¼ are represented at ICOMB. BTG, AMBD and VMBB (and Austrian) have immigrants from Russia as part of their groups. The other ¾ of Mennonite Brethren are in independent groups of churches.
    - i. Evangelism is going well, using Alpha program, 40 Days of Purpose, and other tools. Cross cultural missions: 35 missionaries are involved from AMBD; about 6 each from VMBB and MFO.
    - ii. Issues include: facilities too small for several churches; identity – charismatic movement, relationship to other churches (including Catholic and Lutheran); relationship to Israel; economics in Germany; openness to religion (top bestsellers are books by the Pope and a TV evangelical preacher). [Luzembo asked about the charismatic question, noting their struggle is against the prosperity gospel approach. This seems characteristic of situations in crisis.]
    - iii. Bavaria: 5 churches; Munich church closed. Conflicts in 2 churches. 2 churches are prevailing.
  - c. Austria – MFO: Alexander Neufeld: 6 churches; 420 members. Received legal recognition as a religious confessional community just recently – now trying to get general recognition by appealing to a formal recognition act from 200 years ago. Churches are led by lay leaders, and they don't have time for conference work.
  - d. Japan – Takash Manabe: attached. The Japanese evangelical church is struggling to grow. In part there is a negative reaction to fundamentalist Islam fighting against fundamentalist Christianity, especially evidenced by the Christian support of the invasion of Iraq under the Bush administration.
12. Mission Advisory Forums: Structure of the global program of the MBMSI: (Randy Friesen)
- a. Randy is testing the idea with ICOMB. The philosophy is that this involves the community of believers more than before.
    - i. MAF would be accountable to the Church Relations and Program Director for any recommendations and direction.
    - ii. How does any given country join into this format? (For example Angola). Randy said MBMSI will start with 2 countries, and then grow capacity.
    - iii. Regional directors are not continuing. An overall Program Director – Viktor Hamm – is in charge of this area. He and his assistants will relate directly to our national conferences. The objective will be to ask, “How can we partner with you to plant churches in other places?”
    - iv. Q: for example, what would BTG do if they want to start a work in Congo (perhaps not knowing about any history in Congo)? BTG would correspond with MBMSI or Congo, and would be informed of the MAF for Congo for any established project, or be connected to MBMSI for a church planting work.
    - v. Q: what if this initiative came from a local church? The same idea would take place. If a church has an independent mission structure already, this could be a moderating structure, but still flexible and intelligent to help them do well. If a church doesn't, MBMSI and the MAF would help them work it out.
    - vi. This proposal will require ICOMB to be quite honest with each other as we process which countries receive priority in the MAF structure. Heinrich and Takashi expressed affirmations about broadening the discernment process for ministries happening in established conferences.
    - vii. Conclusion: This was presented to ICOMB for testing at this meeting. We will receive a progress update next year, with a chance to discuss changes and improvements.
13. Report
- a. MBMSI – Randy Friesen: verbal report:
    - i. Restructuring: As a result of the work of a restructuring task force MBMSI changed how it funds mission work. Immediately following this, another task force was struck to change the fundamental nature of MBMSI. Harold Ens retired and the board hired

Randy. The office changed from Fresno to Abbotsford. The leadership team changed: Viktor Hamm is Program Director; Ray Herms Wiebe leads Training and Team Health; Church Relations has become Mobilization and Media, led by Carlin Weinbauer; Administration led by Selwyn Uittenbosch. The Fresno office will also incorporate the US Conference offices (Charles will move there). MBMSI is owned by the American and Canadian conferences. There are offices in Wichita, Kansas, Winnipeg and Waterloo.

- ii. Refocusing: the work is being targeted more toward church planting and reaching new people who haven't received the gospel. "Holistic church planting that transforms communities among the least reached." "Least Reached" includes places like Portugal, areas of Latin America, but more and more Asia where less than 2% are Christian and there isn't a strong church planting track record. A new team will go into north India combining North Americans and Indian families. Thailand is also a new focus area. Japan will be as well, since there is a great need in this country. Also a new church plant in the Persian Gulf with a former worker in Kuwait, either in Kuwait, Qatar or Amman. Also MBMSI is working with Family Life Network to build off their contacts in different parts of the world through their radio broadcasts.
  1. Is there a connection to MCC to capitalize on their relief work? Not as much. MCC has related to the Orthodox community and Muslims. MBMSI is related to underground Muslim converts.
- iii. In the past we have targeted the poor and marginalized, but that often leaves a leadership deficit. We are aiming more work with middle class churches in urban contexts where people have a more global awareness.
- iv. Targeting unreached: Don't forget Spain – there are Paraguayans in Malaga, Spain right now. With a little assistance we could get a church going without a lot of effort and cost. Follow natural population migrations as people travel around the world for work. There are also people from BTG in Spain.

14. Financial Policy Proposal from Charles Buller, ICOMB Treasurer: A working document until 2006 meeting

- a. ICOMB agreed in 2004 that member conferences would contribute 2% of their revenue budgets. This will be requested on a quarterly basis. The treasurer will send a letter out to remind conference leaders about their commitments.
- b. National conferences and MBMSI may offer gifts in kind but not exceeding 50% of its budgeted financial commitment. Starting June 1, 2005, ICOMB will need actual cash income so that it can be recorded to meet with US government regulations.
  - i. Travel: we need to pay for travel in real dollars, and conferences need to send their money into ICOMB.
- c. Conferences that cannot contribute 2% of their annual income will dialogue with the Executive Secretary on an annual basis to determine how much they contribute.
- d. Conferences that continually do not contribute will be invited as a non-voting delegate to attend at their own expense.

15. Selection of the Executive Secretary

- a. **The group affirmed Victor Wall in a unanimous vote as our first Executive Secretary.** Praise to God for his leading and direction. The group gathered around Victor and prayed for him and the future direction.
- b. Victor commented that his experience in working in different language and cultural contexts has led him up to this point. All areas of service, even his service on the Paraguayan National Educational Council, has been a matter of community discernment. He will rely on the ICOMB body for discernment now and on into the future.

16. Elections

- a. Vice – chairperson: Francisco is not going to continue as representative of the Spanish Paraguayan conference. **Ernesto Wiens was elected unanimously.**
- b. Treasurer: **Charles Buller was elected unanimously.**

17. MB Church 150th Anniversary in 2010 and the history-writing project

- a. Celebration event: Alexander reported that BTG was not able to host a celebration event alone. BTG would be able to host a consultation event and the ICOMB meeting. AMBD could host the celebration event. Logos and MBMSI could organize mission trips to Ukraine.
    - i. Conferences in Austria and Bavaria request not to do so much historical and geographical interest, but in the idea of renewal and mission.
    - ii. The centre of the event would be the MB movement in mission, with consultation on mission, education, relief and development efforts, theology, etc. The majority of time would focus on workshops and studies that help us create new vision and ideas for the future of the Mennonite Brethren movement. Story telling is very important.
    - iii. Some people still value a chance to visit historical sites. Some might value both Ukraine and Germany/Netherlands tours. However, Ukraine group must be in a structured group. Visits in Germany, etc. would be more possible for personal setup.
    - iv. Tours could be divided into: history, mission, and education/theology themes.
    - v. Time Line: Decide on location at 2006 meeting.
    - vi. Costs: ICOMB should build up a travel fund to assist attending the MB Celebration. Randy will calculate a fair share fund and bring it to ICOMB meeting next year for this purpose. This will allow a 3-year buildup to the event.
  - b. History Project
    - i. Maintain mission focus as reported by the Historical Commission. When we tell the mission stories from each region, the other aspects of education, relief and development and other stories become integrated into the overall direction of mission witness and growth as a movement. These components would be more holistically presented, rather than having a few pages on mission, a few pages on education, other pages on relief, etc. which would be too choppy.
    - ii. Tell the story of what it means to be the church in these different countries. Mission is a natural dynamic of being the true church. This was the primary concern of the Anabaptists and the MBs.
    - iii. Concern that this not be theologically driven – ie, ‘let’s prove that we’re an Anabaptist church.’ When the MB movement was born, they weren’t as concerned about being Anabaptist, they wanted to be true to God, driven by pietism and renewal. How do we communicate the life of the body – as it is still happening around the world?
    - iv. Capture the stories.
    - v. Costs: Dave will meet with Charles Buller and Abe Dueck, Historical Commission, to create the budget. We will charge the Commission to help raise the money. Sell the books ahead of time.
      - 1. Include marketers in the planning to keep it written in a popular style.
    - vi. Paul Hiebert will be invited to attend the next ICOMB meeting.
18. Problems of getting visas and tickets for ICOMB meetings
- a. The invitation letter is too general: it must name each recipient on the letter, and the name of the conference they represent. The Executive Secretary must sign it.
    - i. How do we prove anyone is a member of ICOMB? What saved Luzembo was a membership card indicating Luzembo was a member of the Angola MB church.
    - ii. Create a letter that is more official – with logo and letterhead.
    - iii. Plan on the host providing an invitation as well.
    - iv. Include the passport numbers.
  - b. Namibia church is very alive and ready to receive ICOMB at a meeting some time in the future. Luzembo will make an effort to get back to Namibia to get them organized to write a letter to request membership in ICOMB. 4 churches at this time.
  - c. Timing: Invitations have to go out 6 months in advance.
  - d. Visa resistance: We need to count on this. Every year, the MBMSI administrative assistant would take weeks to clear documentation for ICOMB meetings.
19. Confession of Faith questions (Heinrich Klassen)

- a. Heinrich made sure that the Confession is getting into the different conferences and languages.
20. Reports
- a. US Conference. Over half of the churches are now 'non-Caucasian' and the diversity is very good. However, the newcomer groups aren't very interested in the existing organization. Theologically, younger pastors are very renewal oriented – ministry of prayer and the Holy Spirit – and this is a strong influence in the Conference.
    - i. Q: To what point are we pacifist? A: we are called to be peacemakers. The ICOMB Confession of Faith allows us to make more positive strides than debating the war in Iraq.
    - ii. Comment (Cesar): We need transcultural theological dialogues to listen to and give counsel to each other and help each other find our way.
    - iii. When Paul Hiebert comes next year, get him to speak on theology and mission. Add a day of theological discussions to the ICOMB meeting.
  - b. Paraguay – Spanish: attached. Francisco distributed a sample of copies of a history project of the Spanish conference published at their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
  - c. Paraguay – German: attached.
  - d. Portugal – Jose Arrais: attached.
21. Directory Update (Secretary): Delegates were asked to update details.
22. Planning of ICOMB- meetings and activities
- a. **NEXT YEAR'S MEETING: Colombia = 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. July 9/06 is official celebration. ICOMB meeting will be July 10-11, 2006**
  - b. India will be asked for 2007
  - c. Peru may be 2008
  - d. Paraguay in 2009 in connection with the Mennonite World Conference assembly
  - e. Germany/Ukraine in 2010
23. Unfinished business from this meeting:
- a. The updated version of the Bylaws from this meeting was handed out.
  - b. Scholarships for Colombian students. Cesar had asked on Wednesday about the possibility of scholarships for people to attend theological education opportunities. Ernesto indicated they have a scholarship of about \$1200 from Brazil COBIM, and hoped that other conferences in ICOMB would join in and develop a scholarship fund.
    - i. MBMSI also provides scholarships for studies. They are fully committed for all their money at this time. They are looking at how to build relationships with scholarship student from another part of the world.
    - ii. Any missionary that intends to go into a Latin American country should take their theological studies in Paraguay. It would provide a framework for understanding their assignment.
    - iii. Luzembo informed us about scholarship possibilities for the Bible School students in Angola. Portugal is working at setting up short term workshops as a support.
    - iv. ICOMB is requested to look at post-graduate scholarship initiatives, since this level is more expensive.
    - v. This is a future project for ICOMB. Set up a commission to develop this as a feature of our work.
    - vi. Chuck is commissioned to work with Randy to build this issue into their gathering of US institutional leaders in May to begin a conversation on this topic.
  - c. Gift sharing – Francisco raised this as a ministry to the poorer segments of our fellowship.
24. Closing Prayers for the conferences from Paraguay, Portugal and USA.
25. Meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm, after 16.5 hours of meeting time.

## History & Plan for ICOMB Meetings

1988	Curitiba, Br	First assembly
1990	Winnipeg, Canada	Mennonite World Conference Assembly
1992	Asuncion, Paraguay	
1993	Winnipeg	
1994	Bielefeld, Germany	
1995	Osaka, Japan	
1996	Bogota, CO	
1997	Calcutta	MWC Assembly
1998	Zaire	ICOMB
1999	USA (Kansas)	General Conference of N. America Convention
2000	Guatemala	MWC General Council Meeting
2001	Curitiba, Brazil	Regional Consultation in South America
2002	Abbotsford, Canada	General Conference of N. America Convention * (Originally planned for Austria)
2003	Bulawayo, Zimbabwe	MWC Assembly * (Originally planned for Colombia)
2004	Paraguay	50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Paraguay Spanish Conference
2005	Japan	55 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary JMBC
2006	Colombia	60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary
2007	India?	Will be asked
2008	Peru?	*If Europe in 2006
2009	Paraguay	MWC Assembly
2010	Germany	150 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mennonite Brethren

### Parameters

- Cycle through the continents somewhat evenly
- Connect to Mennonite World Conference Assemblies/General Councils
- Connect to Regional consultations
- Connect to Anniversaries of Conferences