

The Shalom

MINISTRIES CHAMPION



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Your source for all the latest in Shalom Ministries News **Cham-pi-on** n. an ardent defender or supporter of a cause.

Down the Road from San Jose...

by Jeff Wright, President/COO

Just what is the value of a denominational assembly? Is it the work of the congregational and conference delegates? Well, while the delegates of Mennonite Church USA, who met in San Jose, July 2-7, made some decisions about joining Christian Churches Together, and studying the need for pastors to have health insurance, delegates really don't do that much at MCUSA gatherings.

Is the value of the denominational assembly in the seminars and meetings that take place? Again, these are good, but likely not the central purpose of a denominational gathering.

Perhaps the important thing about a denominational assembly is the networking and relationship building that takes place. To be sure, this networking is important and provides continuity for the denomination over the next two years, but it too is not the central purpose.

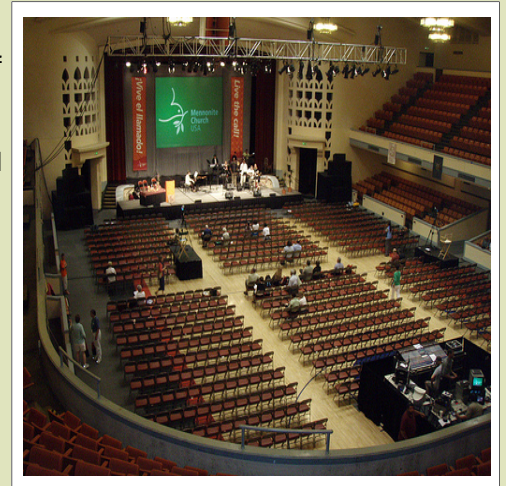
The best reason to attend a Mennonite Church USA assembly is to worship God with several thousand friends who are on the same faith journey. As Jesus centered people, committed to following Christ daily in life, creating communities of grace, joy, and peace, and inviting the world to consider God's mission of transforming all creation, it is vital that we come together regularly to praise the God who calls us to mission, and together submit ourselves afresh to God's reign.

The worship at San Jose was amazing. The fresh breath of God's grace blew across the audiences gathered in youth and adult conventions. We sang, and prayed, and heard the scriptures proclaimed, and wept with confession and joy.

In order to "live the call" (the San Jose theme), we must know the One who calls us. We best discover the One who calls us in the midst of worship. This summer, Mennonite Church USA was invited to meet the One who calls us to life. And for many of us, we heard great good news again that revived our flagging spirits, and warmed our cold hearts.

So, to those from the Mennonite Churches of the Pacific Southwest who made a difference at San Jose: from Makinto at the piano and flute, to Joel Shenk in committees and ushering on the floor; to Dr. Juan Martinez, and Pastors Chuwang Pam, Jennifer Davis Sensenig, Jason Evans, and Shane Hipps; to the Los Angeles Faith Chapel worship team, and musicians from JKI Maranatha and Riverside Brethren in Christ Church, plus literally dozens of others who served in the worship life of Mennonite Church USA gathered that week: thank you. Thank you for drawing me and thousands of others into a deeper, richer, more fulfilling walk with Jesus Christ our Lord. The way to live the call is discovered in heart of worship, and I rediscovered that in San Jose...

Shalom.



Apocalyptic Reflection and Praise

by Bert Newton, Ministry Associate for Peace Center

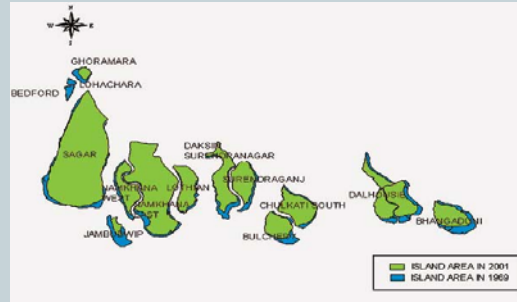


Image courtesy www.telegraphindia.com and science.slashdot.org

This past December, the last bit of the island of Lohachara sank beneath waters of the Bay of Bengal. The first inhabited land mass to succumb to the rising sea levels caused by global warming, its 10,000 inhabitants have been gradually evacuating to neighboring islands over the past 20 years. The islands that these environmental refugees now inhabit are also predicted to succumb to the rising sea levels over the next 14 years. This remote island tragedy unfolds far, far away from the urban U.S. mainland where I live.

Where I live, I bike or walk to work most days. When I walk, I am able to take the time to notice the city around me, both its beauty and its tragedy. Starting from my house, I walk down a beautiful tree-lined street. A few years ago, our neighborhood played unwitting host to a local street gang, several drug dealers, and many homeless people. Gentrification has eliminated much of that. Thanks to the economic prosperity of our city, I walk through a neighborhood that is now safer, quieter and less affordable to many low income families who have been forced to move away. These economic refugees have moved to other neighborhoods that may also one day be gentrified.

As I reach the end of my block, I pass day laborers, economic refugees from countries to the south. I cross a parking lot where some remaining homeless people spend their days. I cross over a major freeway, its traffic roaring with the sound of economic activity and the emissions of smog and global warming. I then pass through the center of the city with its building boom of luxury apartments and condos. I reflect on how the economic engine that brings prosperity to many also causes global warming and creates refugees all over the world. I reflect, and I pray for a New Day.

Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth!

Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the islands and their inhabitants. (Isaiah 42:10)

For I am about to create a new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered.

I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy and its people as a delight . . .

No more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it or the cry of distress . . .

They shall build houses and inhabit them, they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit . . .

They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity . . .

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together . . .

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord. (Isaiah 65: 17-25)

Is it possible to worship God in Spirit and in Truth?

by Brother Makinto, Coordinator for Amahoro International

The Makinto family drove to San Jose in their new minivan to attend a pre-convention worship retreat. We were joined by Tom Harder and his family from Wichita Kansas, the singers from Reba praise with Helen Hudgens, Johan Sendjaja (piano) and Harry Manuhutu (bass), from the Indonesian Christian Fellowship- Maranatha Harvest, Reseda, Brian Bothwell (drums) from Riverside Brethren in Christ congregation. We gathered as a worship team under the leadership of Kevin Clark. For a day and a half we prayed for harmony and peace to fulfill our complicated task of leading diverse and meaningful worship during the convention.

Scriptures invite us to worship God in Spirit and in Truth. The first worship session began with a drum procession. A handful of percussionists walked through the expecting crowd of freshly arrived Mennonites in San Jose. The familiar hymn "I love to tell the story" was sung with a thriving African beat. This symbolized a uniting of two different styles often thought irreconcilable. It is important to recognize that we are a diverse church – a church that consists of Africans, Indonesians, Latinos, African American, Native Americans and ethnic Mennonites from the American continent. Yes, we praised God in Gospel, Hymns, Contemporary worship, Spanish, with drums and a cappella, and worshipped God in Spirit and in Truth.

As a worship team we intended to be a team, not one person leading music throughout the whole week. Helen, Tom and I spent more than a year rubbing heads, praying together and submitting ourselves to one another. Each of us fulfilled the exact role God gave us for this convention. Helen led the choir, the vocal group and wrote specific arrangements. Tom led the congregation in the hymns providing a balance to the different worship expressions. I offered general leadership, coordinated the band, wrote specific songs for the convention and also led in song. The harmony that emanated from our team effort translated into intense worship. We offer it as an example for collaboration as the wider church seeks to embrace diversity and oneness.

Ken Medema's amazing gift of prophesying in song straight from the message touched me. I found a match in a musical sense, someone who artistically inspired me. His prophetic voice called and continues to call me to seek God in a deeper and more uncompromising way. Life is short! Live the call!

On our drive back to Los Angeles, we sang "Te alabare", "Live the Call" and "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." We recognized God's presence with us. We were in awe of God's love, mercy and grace. At the convention we glimpsed Ephesians 4: 4-5one body, one Spirit, one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God. We acknowledge that Spirit filled worship at a Mennonite church (USA) convention is possible.



School for Urban Mission 2007 course offering

Methods of Biblical Interpretation is an introductory survey of approaches to reading and interpreting the Bible within urban communities. To enhance the ministerial practices of preaching, teaching, leadership, vision-casting, ethical discernment and theological reflection, students will explore an array of interpretive methodologies and tools, and consider the context and relationship between gathered worship and the Word proclaimed. Encountering the historical development of the biblical text and interpretive traditions provides students opportunities to test their own assumptions.

Instructor Tom Longenecker elders, pastors, counsels, and tends to his garden and his girls in Santa Clarita. He is a doctoral candidate in Religion at the Claremont Graduate University

Class will meet

September 8, 2007
September 29, 2007
October 13, 2007
October 20, 2007
November 3, 2007

Course Sessions will take place from 9 am to 5 pm on the campus of William Carey International University located at 1539 East Howard Street, Pasadena CA 91104. To register for this course please contact our office at (626)727-8100 or send an email to urban_anabaptist@yahoo.com

Peace Out: The Shalom Ministries Champion Signs Off

The Shalom Ministries Champion is a monthly venue for sharing the good news about Shalom Ministries. You are invited to submit articles for consideration to Jeff Wright. Articles should be sent no later than the 10th of the month for possible publication in the next month's newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you and yours peace. Send your submissions via email to wrightstuff@pacificsouthwest.org.

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