

MENNONITE - SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DIALOGUE

JOINT STATEMENT

June 28-July 1, 2011 - Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

Representatives of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the Mennonite World Conference held their first conversation June 28 to July 1, 2011 at the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland. For four days representatives of both communions exchanged ideas and perspectives centering on the theme of "Living the Christian Life in Today's World." After each group presented an overview of the history of their communion, papers were also presented by each group on the topics of peace, non-violence and military service; discipleship and non-conformity; health, healing and ecology; and the nature and mission of the church.

Participants in the conversation quickly realized that they share much in common. They come from diverse historical backgrounds—Mennonites from the Anabaptist branch of the Reformation in the sixteenth century and Adventists from the Second Great Awakening in the United States in the nineteenth century. They share a desire to recover the authenticity and passion of the New Testament church, a similar understanding of Christian history, and a strong commitment to be followers of Jesus in their personal lives and in their corporate witness to the world. Each communion brought to this conversation a deep experience of what it means to live the Christian faith often as a minority voice in the world and stressed the importance of discipleship and the practical living out of the Christian life. Together they understand that Christians live "in the world" but are not "of the world."

The discussion went beyond the exploration of perspectives held in common, to honest and candid sharing of challenges facing both churches in the areas of non-conformity with the world, peace-making and military service, health and healing and the respect for the environment. Each in its own way struggles with the realities of the world in which they are called to witness, where individualism and a declining awareness of the traditional teachings and practices of Christianity dominate the culture. Both communions thus face a challenge in maintaining the importance of historic practices and beliefs. Adventists and Mennonites left with an appreciation of the diversity of the gifts they each bring and contribute to the Body of Christ.

Another conversation is planned to explore further subjects, such as interpretation of Scripture, eschatology, Sabbath and worship, and areas of common witness and mission.

World Mennonite Conference

Robert Suderman (Canada)
Valerie Rempel (USA)
Henk Stenvers (Netherlands)
Patricia Urueña (Columbia)
Danisa Ndlovu (Zimbabwe)
Tom Yoder Neufeld (Canada).

Seventh-Day Adventist

William Johnsson (Australia)
John Graz (France)
Bert Beach (USA)
Denis Fortin (Canada)
Peter Landless (South Africa)
Teresa Reeve (Canada).

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