

October 2003, *Equipping*



Dear Friends:

It was a great blessing for me, as it was for almost 7000 others, to join in the fourteenth assembly of the Mennonite World Conference in Zimbabwe this summer. You have read about it in *Canadian Mennonite*; perhaps you have heard about it from some who were there, seen their pictures, and heard their stories. For me, one of the important dimensions of this gathering was meeting and having conversations with sisters and brothers who are experiencing the hardship of life in Zimbabwe, various challenges in Ethiopia, threats in Indonesia, war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, insecurity and danger in Colombia.... Their testimonies and joy in the Lord continue to challenge me.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada joins other organizations in promoting an annual International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP). This year, the date for it is November 16. The notice invites us "to stand with our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world. Prayer for the persecuted is the least we can do – it is also the most we can do. ...This year's theme for IDOP Canada is "Pray for us..." from 2 Thessalonians 3:1-3. Today, thousands of Christians persecuted around the world join Paul in this simple request: 'pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly...and pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people.' In Nepal, Christians trying to share the gospel with neighbouring villages have been jailed because they were mistaken for terrorists fighting in Nepal's brutal civil war. In Iran, Christians who share the gospel with Muslims continue to face torture and death for their faith. IDOP Canada is asking Canadian churches to pray especially for the four focus countries of Iran, Ethiopia, China and Nepal. IDOP Canada is preparing a resource kit to assist congregations, groups or friends to pray effectively for the persecuted church."^{*}

Because of the people I met in Zimbabwe, because I am part of a global fellowship of Christians with sisters and brothers who are enduring persecution, I will be praying for them, especially on November 16. In addition to the four countries named, I will pray for Mennonite Church Vietnam, where persecution is also challenging the rapidly-growing church which is supported by our North American Vietnamese Mennonite congregations. I will pray using a prayer written by John Peters, member of the Waterloo North Mennonite Church:

God of justice. God of care. Your children are persecuted because of their identification with You. Some are bruised, tortured and imprisoned. Others cannot find opportunity for work. They suffer because they wish to bring justice, peace and truth to their communities. Do not remove yourself from their suffering. And, Lord, help us to carry the cross of the suffering of the worldwide church. Amen.

Sincerely,



Dan Nighswander, General Secretary

* For more information and to order IDOP 2003 kits, go to www.idop.ca. Resource kits include a short video, a PowerPoint presentation, suggested songs, a speaker list, a sermon outline, a 10--week Bible study on persecution in the book of Acts, children's materials and country prayer profiles. Kits are \$25, tax included.