



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Witness

600 Shaftesbury Blvd
Winnipeg MB R3P 0M4
Toll free 1-866-888-6785
P: 204-888-6781
F: 204-831-5675
E: office@mennonitechurch.ca
www.mennonitechurch.ca

March 2008, *Equipping* # 84

Celebration Story

We invite you to share with your congregation the following story from MC Canada Executive staff members Janet Plenert and Jack Suderman, following their visit to Chile. The story should take no more than 2 minutes to read aloud. You might also wish to include the story in your church newsletter.

Chile: Celebrating and Reclaiming Anabaptist Roots

In January Jack Suderman and Janet Plenert, Mennonite Church Canada staff, attended the anniversary of the Baptist church in Chile. This celebration was unique because it also marked the occasion of the Baptist church publicly committing to reclaim their Anabaptist roots. Their interest in becoming a peace church, having the community more involved in biblical interpretation, having less hierarchical leadership structures, and understanding the importance of social ministries are all factors they see affirmed in an Anabaptist heritage. The interest in Anabaptism is linked to political and historical realities in Chile but also to the work of



Witness worker, Omar Cortes. These are Baptists who are excited about embarking on a continuing journey of transforming the denomination in recovering its Anabaptist identity.

The celebration included a special lunch that lasted 4 hours. What a fest! They roasted 2 lambs on spits over coals, set a banquet table outdoors on a ranch out of town, put a canopy over the table making it look like a wedding fest, and served the guests for 4 hours with food and traditional music. During the lunch Janet sat next to the Rector of the Baptist Seminary. The seminary has taken the lead in this reclaiming of their Anabaptist roots. In 1997 they began to teach officially from an Anabaptist perspective. Janet asked, "How did you come to that decision?" The Rector went back to 30 years earlier when seeds were planted in him in Argentina when he was a student and the theological school there took an interest in the Radical Reformation. The Marxist regime in Chile led them to think about the church's role in social action, and then Omar Cortes returned to Chile as a Witness worker and began teaching at the seminary. Now the denomination is clearly moving in the same direction.

Mennonite Church Canada celebrates with the Baptist church in Chile as they embark on this journey and looks forward to a stronger relationship with church leadership in Chile. These types of relationships and partnerships make it possible for us to learn from each other in Christ and are certainly reasons to celebrate!

Compiled from excerpts by Jack Suderman and Janet Plenert

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11