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Vignettes from ministry: The church at work

Cuba:

“Don’t kid yourself: Anabaptist ferment will eventually lead to the formation of a Mennonite church. We’ve now come to that place.” *Raúl Suárez, Cuban church leader.*

“If you’re going to be true to your historical Anabaptist roots, you are very welcome in Cuba.” *Caridad Diego, Minister of Religious Affairs of the Cuban government.*

Chile:

“We have decided to return to our Anabaptist roots. You Mennonites got us into this. Now you have to help us move forward.” *Raquel Contreras, President of the Chilean Baptist Union, speaking to delegates at the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly.*

“I was invited by our government to go and bless its new warship. I said no. We are a peace church. I can’t bless weapons of war. Maybe a few months ago I would have gone, but not now.” *Raquel Contreras (see above).*

Mennonite Church Canada Assembly:

“I believe every decision made during our assembly was made with 100% consensus, which seems all the more remarkable given we have probably 500 people in the room from very different locations and cultures.” *A delegate.*

Philippines:

“The church is like a bag of rice. If you get rid of the rice, the bag can no longer stand up straight.” *A Mennonite pastor explaining why workshops of the kind I was leading are important for the church because they provide biblical content. Forty-five pastors from Mennonite churches participated.*

“War is easy. I can make a 15¢ cell phone call and start it in 10 minutes.” *General Ferrer of the Philippine army talking to us about possibly engaging the Moro Islamic Liberation Front that day.*

“In the Mennonite Peace Institute, I learned that hearing isn’t enough. I also need to listen.” *General Ferrer (see above), a graduate of the Mennonite Peace Institute*

“This is not just another coffee, this is *just* coffee.” *Slogan used by Coffee for Peace, a fair-trade initiative of the Peace-Builders Community in Mindanao, led by Witness workers Dann and Joji Pantoja.*

Vietnam:

“The registered Mennonite Church in Vietnam has 90 congregations with about 6,100 members, but we have only four separate church buildings. We’d like to show two of those to you.” *Pastor Trung, a Mennonite leader, inviting us to a day-long excursion to get to know their pastors and churches.*

—Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada