

ICOMB REPORT 2020



**IN THEIR HEARTS HUMANS PLAN THEIR COURSE,
BUT THE LORD ESTABLISHES THEIR STEPS.
(PROVERBS 16:9)**

Dear member of the global family and friend of ICOMB,

I invite you to join us in looking back and taking steps forward in our call to be the church of Jesus Christ in the time God has placed us.

In this report we will share our experiences over the past year, and introduce the ICOMB Executive and the ICOMB delegates.

We will share about the relationships between the global community and member conferences and about the emerging conferences around the world. You will read about the Global Scholarship Fund (GSF) and ICOMB's financial situation. You will read about how ICOMB is being shaped as a global organization, and about what steps we will take in the future.

United,

Rudi Plett, ICOMB Director



CONTENTS

04 REARVIEW MIRROR:
DIRECTOR'S
REFLECTIONS

08 FACES OF ICOMB

14 MEMBER IN CRISIS:
INDIA

16 ICOMB EXPANDS:
EMERGING GROUPS

18 EDUCATION AND
TRAINING: GSF

20 SHAPING ICOMB
FOR THE FUTURE

22 ROAD AHEAD: VIEW
THROUGH THE
WINDSHIELD

05 EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE

13 CONNECTING THE
GLOBAL FAMILY

15 ICOMB EXPANDS:
MALAWI

17 EDUCATION AND
TRAINING: MLT

19 EDUCATION AND
TRAINING: ELEAZAR

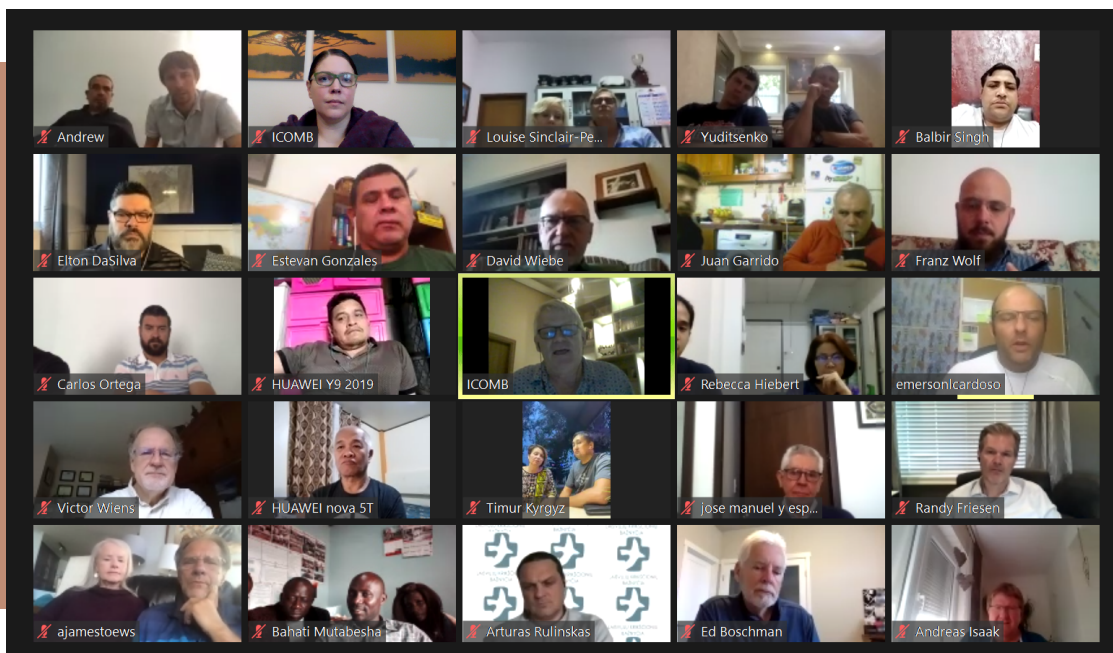
21 FINANCIAL UPDATE

LOOKING IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

In a car, there are 3 rearview mirrors, but they are much smaller than the windshield in the front. The main view is to the front and not to the rear, but, we need the rear mirrors with their 3 different perspectives. If we do not use our mirrors and look to the rear, we risk serious accidents.

In ICOMB we need a wide open windshield to the front for the broadest possible view, but we also need to see where we landed in 2020 so as to decide where to step forward.

As I look back on 2020, I think we all better understood this well-known proverb: "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps" (Prov 16:9). We made many plans, but, in a matter of weeks, everything changed. We have been reminded that God needs to establish our steps. Our God, who created heaven and earth out of nothing, can establish our steps like no one else. I hope we all learn to depend more on God, by looking back and by looking forward.



ICOMB EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND STAFF



ICOMB Chair
Emerson Cardoso

Emerson is the conference representative for the Brazilian conference: **Convenção Brasileira das Igrejas Evangélicas Irmãos Menonitas (COBIM)**



Executive Director
Rudi Plett

Rudi is from Asuncion, Paraguay and was appointed as Executive Director in 2018. Previously Rudi served as an associate director of ICOMB and chair of the Executive Committee of ICOMB.



Vice-Chair
Darío Ramírez

Darío is the conference president of the Paraguayan conference: **Convención Evangélica de Iglesias Paraguayas Hermanos Menonitas (CEIPHM)**



Treasurer
Ed Boschman

Ed is the conference representative for the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (USMB) and ICOMB's representative to the Multiply board. He is a USMB life coach.



Secretary
Andreas Isaak

Andreas is the representative for the German conference in Bavaria: **Verband Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Bayern (VMBB)**.



Equipping Coordinator
Victor Wiens

Victor is from Canada and is an ICOMB staff member seconded from Multiply half time to coach emerging conferences, support them on the path to ICOMB membership, and help build an education/training grid for all members.

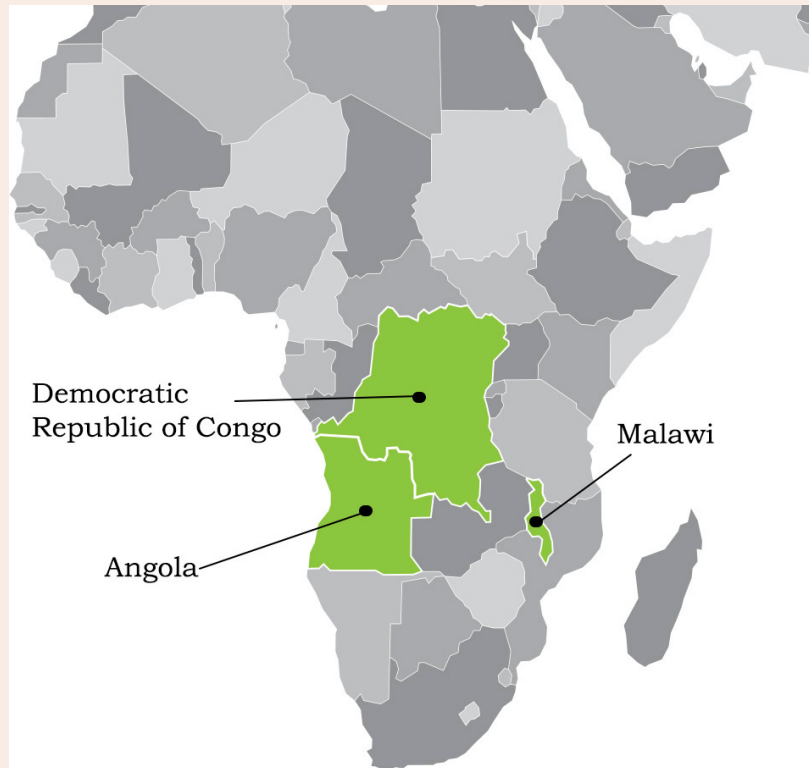


Executive Assistant
Rebekah Doerksen

Rebekah is from Canada and provides administrative support to Rudi and the Executive Committee. Rebekah's role includes communications and Summit planning.

FACES OF ICOMB

AFRICA



ANGOLA

Jean-Claude Ambeke

Igreja Evangélica dos Irmãos
Menonitas en Angola



DR CONGO

Antoine Kimbila

Communauté des Églises des
Frères Mennonites au Congo



MALAWI

Safari Bahati Mutabesha

Mennonite Brethren Church
of Malawi



FACES OF ICOMB

ASIA



INDIA

Conference of the
Mennonite Brethren Church
in India



JAPAN

Takao Sugi

Nihon Menonaito Burezaren
Kyodan



SOUTH EAST ASIA

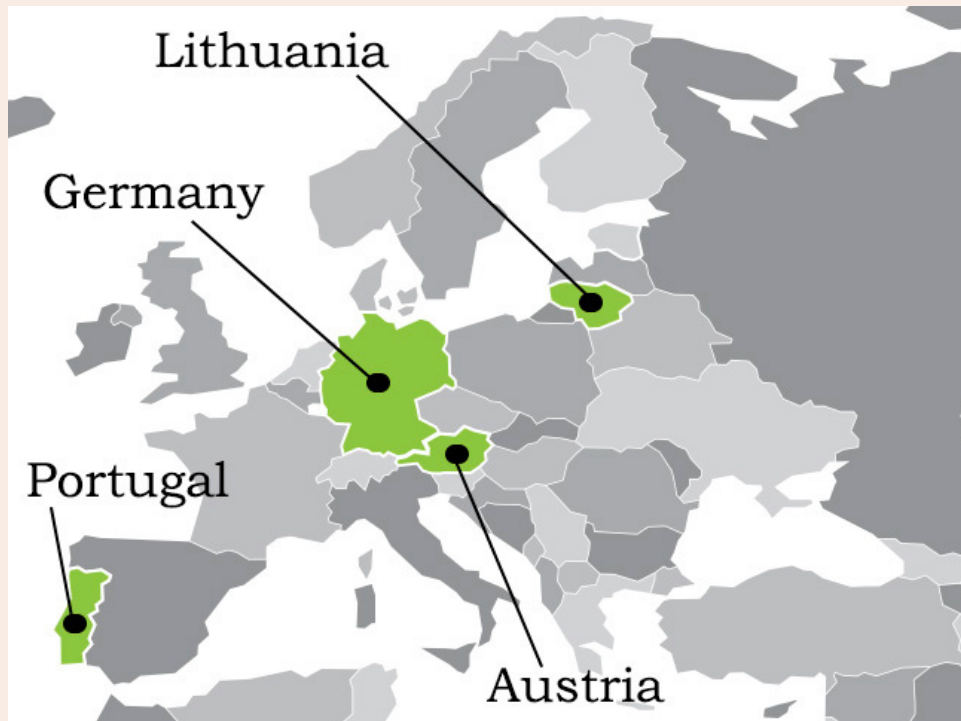
Phonekeo

Khmu Mission



FACES OF ICOMB

EUROPE



AUSTRIA

Reinhard Kummer

Mennonitische Freikirche
Oesterreich



GERMANY

Walter Jakobeit

Arbeitsgemeinschaft
Mennonitischer Brudergemeinden
in Deutschland



GERMANY

Heinrich Klassen

Bund evangelischer
Freikirchen (Taufgesinnte
Gemeinden)



FACES OF ICOMB

EUROPE

GERMANY

Andreas Isaak

Vereinigung der Menoniten
Brudergemein von Bavaria



LITHUANIA

Artūras Rulinskas

Laisvųjų Krikščionių Bažnyčia



PORTUGAL

Marques Mente

Igreja dos Irmãos
Menonitas de Portugal



FACES OF ICOMB

LATIN AMERICA



BRAZIL

Emerson Cardoso

Convenção Brasileira das Igrejas Evangélicas Irmãos Menonitas



COLOMBIA

Jorge Morales

Asociación de Iglesias Hermanos Menonitas de Colombia



MEXICO

Carlos Ortega

Iglesia Cristiana de Paz en México



FACES OF ICOMB

LATIN AMERICA

PANAMA

Jacobo Piraza

Iglesia Evangélica Unida -
Hermanos Menonitas



PARAGUAY

Darío Ramírez

Convención Evangélica de Iglesias
Paraguayas Hermanos Menonitas



PARAGUAY

Eldon August

Asociación Hermanos
Menonitas



PERU

Mario Atarama

Conferencia Peruana
Hermanos Menonitas



URUGUAY

Álvaro Nalerio

Consejo de las Congregaciones
de los Hermanos
Menonitas en Uruguay



FACES OF ICOMB

NORTH AMERICA



CANADA

Elton DaSilva

Canadian Conference of
Mennonite Brethren
Churches



USA

Ed Boschman

U.S. Conference of
Mennonite Brethren
Churches



CONNECTING THE GLOBAL FAMILY

ICOMB exists to **Connect, Strengthen, and Expand** conferences for Christ-centered mission. Connecting is a priority if we want to become a Global Family that shares an identity and cares for each other. Here's how ICOMB **connects**.

ICOMB connects monthly via email with the Update: a devotional, stories from the Global Family, prayer items, and an Equip feature based on the Missional Leadership Training curriculum. The Update is sent out in 4 languages: English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

ICOMB connects annually at our Summit meetings. We deepen our family connections when we take the time to make decisions together and meet in person. At Summit, we pray for each other, we bless each other, we learn together, and we set our sail to how God is guiding the Global Family. In 2020, we were limited to online meetings. We were thankful to be able to share, pray, and discuss even with this more limited capacity. We met first with delegates and then with guests and leaders of emerging conference groups. We also took the time to meet regionally in smaller groups. Because we could not have an intensive in-person time together, we met a few more times during the year to connect and help steer ICOMB's path for the future. Apart from Summit and the regional meetings, ICOMB leaders met together more often during the pandemic - in small groups and one on one. We value each of these connection points.

ICOMB connects online via Facebook and through the video devotionals Rudi records. We connect by worshipping together with an online service called Global Family Sunday on Pentecost, May 31.



A MEMBER IN CRISIS: INDIA UPDATE

The Mennonite Brethren Church in India (MBCI) is one of the oldest MB conferences, with over 100 years of history. It is also one of the largest conferences at over 230,000 members in approximately 1,000 churches. It is a mission-focused group of churches. Churches sponsor mission outreach, church planting efforts, and are concerned with reaching nearby villages and even people in other areas and from other language groups.

However, significant conflict and challenges have affected the potential of the conference for a number of years. A number of leaders have not been good shepherds of the flock in India. When Rudi and Emerson Cardoso (ICOMB Chair) visited in February of 2020, the churches pleaded with ICOMB leadership to help them resolve conflicts with key leaders and find a way to rebuild trust and good stewardship of the conference. The issues are complex, the wounds are deep, and ICOMB leadership has been discerning how best to support MBCI through these critical times.

August 2020, the ICOMB Executive, with full ICOMB delegate support, sent a letter to the governing council and the president of MBCI, urging them to step aside from leadership, and allow a new leadership selection to take place, in accordance with the MBCI constitution. After allowing time for a response, ICOMB released the letter to all MBCI churches and leaders. ICOMB then put a call out for 15 Days of Prayer for India, concluding in a Global Prayer Service on October 2, 2020 via Zoom.

Since then, ICOMB leaders, with the help of an Advisory Committee, have been in close contact with leaders in India. From a global church perspective we are looking for ways to support developments that point toward renewed leadership and new unity in the conference. We pray that God will speak into the hearts of leaders, pastors, and members. "...the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires." Hebrews 4:12 NLT



ICOMB EXPANDS: WELCOME MALAWI

One of the highlights of 2020 was the reception of a new full member conference: Mennonite Brethren Church in Malawi (MBCM). MBCM was received into membership at the ICOMB global online Summit (May 12-15). Present on the call from Malawi was Bishop Safari, together with MBCM staff. The ICOMB delegates approved their acceptance on May 12, and the following day dozens of MB leaders from around the world offered words of welcome, prayers, and blessings. It was a joyful celebration moment, complete with a Certificate of Membership. We look forward to the date we can celebrate with Malawi in person.

The story of MBCM is a testimony of God's amazing grace. It begins with a young man, Bahati (Safari) Mutabasha, fleeing for his life after seeing his family killed in Eastern DR Congo due to ethnic conflict. He ended up in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp, near Dowa, Malawi. However, there too he found ethnic conflict and a near hopeless situation. He remembered his discipling in an MB Church, and his gifting to be an evangelist. And so he began sharing the Gospel of Peace and pointing conflicted refugees to the Prince of Peace. A church was planted in the refugee camp in 2009.

With God's blessing upon them, Bishop Safari and fellow workers began planting churches outside the refugee camp among nearby Malawian towns and villages. In 2015, in search of partnerships for their growing movement, the MBCM contacted MB Mission (now MultiPLY) through their website. This partnership grew rapidly and has resulted in further growth in training, community development, and church planting. Today the MBCM counts 37 churches and 14,000 members. With full endorsement from MultiPLY and the global MB community, ICOMB welcomes the MB Church in Malawi as a partner in the Gospel.



ICOMB EXPANDS: EMERGING GROUPS

A highlight of the year was to receive the MB Church in Malawi into full membership of ICOMB. At the same time, intentional coaching is underway, together with Multiply workers, to help other emerging conferences develop maturity in their identity, community life, and mission.

Some conferences have requested membership, and are in the final stages along the pathway to full membership. Among these are Philippines, Ukraine, Thailand, Uganda and Turkey. Others, such as Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan and Bolivia, have also expressed an intention to join the ICOMB family in time. Then there are at least a dozen that are networks of churches, yet eager to belong and interested in this global Mennonite Brethren family called ICOMB.

UGANDA

Robert & Esther
Mponye

Lifeshouse Community
Church



THAILAND

Pastor Naat

Thailand MB Conference



UKRAINE

Roman Rakhuba

Association of Mennonite
Brethren Churches in
Ukraine



PHILIPPINES

Sam Arcano

Kapatirang
Menonita ng Pilipinas,



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

MISSION LEADERSHIP TRAINING (MLT)

Development:

The MLT Design Team (Doug Heidebrecht, Vic Wiens, and Doug Berg) has continued to meet regularly over this past year, revising the initial modules, completing Module 4, and creating a new MLT logo, which reflects a clear connection with ICOMB. They are currently dividing the training into three Certificates (six modules each) – Discipleship Foundations, Ministry Equipping and Leadership Development. This will provide different points of completion. The last six modules are being completely re-envisioned to focus on training leaders.

Training:

During this COVID season, the MLT delivery approach shifted from sending instructors to providing online coaching of local trainers who will then train leaders in their areas. Coaching for Module 1 was provided for trainers in Mexico, Myanmar and Thailand. In Malawi (pictured below), seven local trainers were coached in Module 4, who then trained over 100 leaders in seven locations.

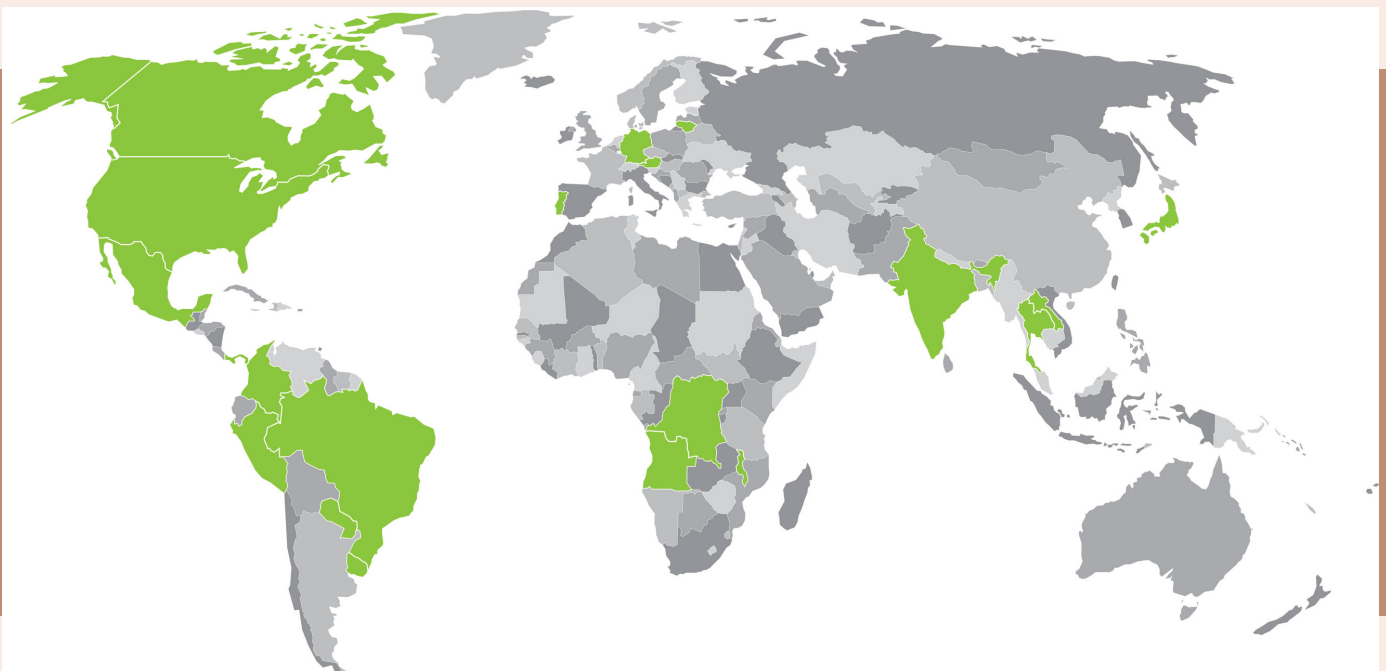


EDUCATION AND TRAINING

GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The Global Scholarship Fund (GSF) program over the last 10 years has assisted 48 individuals to complete advanced degrees (Bachelor, Master, Doctor). This Fund has also provided collective scholarships to MB schools (Bible Institutes and Bible Colleges) and to groups of MB medical students in the DR Congo. These collective scholarships have assisted about 130 students per year. Altogether, students in 13 ICOMB conferences have received scholarships.

Average disbursements per year are around \$30,000 USD. Almost every year we must reduce intended amounts due to a lack of funds, and in some years we have had to deny worthy applicants. Our goal is to increase annual funding to \$50,000 in three years, and to \$100,000 per year in ten years.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND: STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Eleazar + ICOMB

During his life, Eleazar has struggled to overcome many difficulties, and suffered great grief and depression from seeing his pastor and mentor fall into sin, his local church divided, brokenness in his family and loved ones, and then the complete downfall of his church in Mexico. Along with these blows came many emotional struggles and health issues.

Eleazar knew that God had called him into ministry, but it was not financially possible for him to attend seminary. It was a scholarship from ICOMB that made it possible for him to pursue his dream of being equipped for ministry. Even though he had many hardships while in Paraguay, it brought significant change into his life.

“When I was told that I was being offered a scholarship from ICOMB I had no idea how much benefit this would bring to my life,” said Eleazar.

“Through my studies in Paraguay, I learned so much. It was such a growing experience: growing in my faith, in my sense of being part of God’s family, in my trust and knowledge of God, and in seeing how he cared for me and supplied my every need. This included giving me deep friendships, and even a wife! It was in seminary that I met Shaila, a wonderful partner who shared my vision to come back to minister in Mexico.”

Shaila and I are now in Mexico serving at the Matthew Training Center and in the local churches, happy to minister in my country while knowing that we are part of a supportive international community.



SHAPING ICOMB FOR THE FUTURE

ICOMB began as a way to build relationships between national MB conferences at a global level. As the name expresses, it is a community. Our growing understanding of what community means has encouraged us to take steps towards more responsibility to each other. We consider ICOMB a global church and as such we are one body with many members, united in purpose and care for each other so that all will grow in health. We have begun a regional approach that promises to enhance service to all conferences.

In the global community, the initiative to request or offer help can come at a conference level, the regional level, or the global level. We have identified 4 areas to concentrate on:

- Organizational health
- Spiritual health and theology
- Leadership development and care for leaders
- Mission (church growth, church planting, cross-cultural mission)

We plan to engage in more meaningful relationships, forge more opportunities, and create more tools to serve each other in all these areas. Our goal is to build upon what is present and add new avenues of service and fellowship. To do this, we will need to expand our current human and financial resources and build efficient structures.

We also want to walk alongside emerging groups, helping them grow in their relationships with the global family. We will need to mobilize strategically to focus on these areas and the emerging groups.

ICOMB-Canada

In the Spring of 2019 ICOMB took initial steps to create a legal society in Canada, and to eventually receive charitable status with the Canada Revenue Agency. This was to create a distinct legal and financial identity apart from the Canada MB Conference and Multiply. Having charitable status will facilitate opportunities for a growing number of individual and church donors. To assist with legal fees in this process, ICOMB received a generous donation from Willingdon Church in Burnaby, BC. After a long journey, the ICOMB Society of Canada received its tax-exempt registered charity status on November 13, 2020.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Our ministry goals are to serve our member country conferences by helping them to Connect in meaningful relationships to the global family, to provide opportunities to Strengthen one another through mutual resourcing, and to encourage conferences to Expand in faithful response to the mission assignment given to us by Jesus, by making reproducing disciples.

In order to have the necessary funds to be faithful to those goals we ask our member Conferences to contribute 2% of their annual budget. Some have been faithful and even more generous to meet the request. Others have done what they are able, and yet others have not contributed at all. While we are grateful for every financial gift we have received, this reality necessitates additional fund raising which has been spearheaded by the Executive Director and the Executive team. Churches and individuals, primarily from North America, have made generous contributions, and we are thankful for those gifts.

Because of reduced travel costs due to Covid-19, and the cancellation of two annual Summits, (replaced by Virtual Gatherings) our annual expenses have been significantly reduced, and we have been able to meet our expenses with minimal utilization of our meagre reserves in the last two years.

Still, we have significant needs as we anticipate some new initiatives to strengthen our global ministry impact. We have identified several priority projects for this year:

- Build an online base for communication and strategic work.
- Help conferences create a program to care for leaders.
- Expand scholarship opportunities for future and current leaders.
- Explore and build avenues to enhance regional relationships and strategic help.

ROAD AHEAD: VIEW THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

We do not know the future impacts of the pandemic. But what we do know is that God's might, faithfulness, love, and call to be his witness in this world, remain the same. We will need to encourage each other to respond to God's call. We will need to be willing to adapt.

ICOMB's focus will be to become more present in the conferences, despite restrictions of distance and access. We will need to make greater use of the opportunities that online communications offer. International regulations and financial resources permitting, we will prioritize in-person visits and gathering.

We are confident that God will guide and give us what we need to be a growing global church, witnessing and honoring Jesus our Lord.

