



2020 IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

We began 2020 with 2 Peter 1:4, recognizing that we are **"part of the divine nature."** As the year progressed and the pandemic spread, all planned activities, events, and visits were canceled and regular travel was halted, and we noticed how vulnerable we and all our plans are. This tiny virus put a halt to much of our plans and we were helpless to stop it. Through it all, we were reminded there is an Almighty God, through whose divine nature we can endure all challenges. Our plans may have been thwarted, but not God's plans, purposes, love or care.

As an ICOMB Global Family we have been active during this time: living our vision, gathering online to celebrate and share, and taking important steps forward on the path to growth.

ICOMB member conferences have had both shared and unique experiences during this challenging year. Andreas Isaak from Bavaria, Germany writes: "I send devotions via text messages a few times week to more than a hundred people. They sometimes forward them to others with the help of social media. I have heard that people came to know Jesus in other parts of the country through these devotion messages." Other conference leaders have reported similar blessings from this new way of connecting and ministering.

However, there is a great deal of pain in many of our conferences. From Malawi we read: "Some of our members are infected and have to stay in isolation but have no food. Most of our members cannot afford face masks and soap." The Panamanian conference lost long-time and respected leaders this year due to the virus.

Most of the conferences in ICOMB live in this space of tension between opportunity and sorrow. As ICOMB leadership we pray for wisdom to navigate these waters together with member conferences.

SUMMIT ONLINE

Unfortunately the annual Summit planned in Brazil for June was not possible, but we were able to improvise and meet online. Some members were unfamiliar with the new technology or limited by their internet capacity but we were able to provide technical support to ensure everyone could join. Through meeting online, we have been able to meet with emerging conference leaders and young leaders that would normally not be able to afford to travel to Summit. However, due to a wide range of time zones, online meetings must be brief, and cannot replace the connections formed in person. 2020 has given us a breadth of connections with new leaders, but we have not been able to connect in depth.



We don't know when we will be able to meet face to face, or how the pandemic will impact us long term, but we have been moving forward regardless, looking into the future, setting goals, and creating ways to live out ICOMB's vision.

FACING THE FUTURE

ICOMB leadership has been preparing a way for conferences to work together in this season of ministry, which we will present to the delegates at the end of March for processing. In June, we plan to have our Summit, either in Paraguay, online, or a combination of the two, depending on travel restrictions. Regardless of how we meet, we will make decisions for the future together and set our sail to the wind of the Holy Spirit. We trust that God will give us the needed wisdom and strength to navigate purposefully in this unique time.

ICOMB IN CANADA

We are pleased to report that ICOMB Society (Canada) is a new charity registered as of June 2020. We received official notice from CRA in mid-November. We are in the process of disengaging officially from CCMBC. Elton DaSilva is the new charity's treasurer along with 2 other directors.

This entity is the first legal identity in all of ICOMB, and thus represents the beginning of "visibility" and a new level of responsibility. We expect to be able to raise funds more easily; CCMBC and Canadian churches will now have a smoother path to support this level of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

ICOMB thanks CCMBC for its generous support over the years. We expect to maintain a close relationship going forward.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

In 2020 we saw a significant drop in conference contributions and in funds raised from individuals and churches, due to economic difficulties in many parts of the world. Thankfully, we were able to cut expenses due to cancelled travel and Summit meetings. We are grateful to God and to the donors that have made it possible balance our budget this year. Looking toward the future, we are aware that many member conferences will continue to be hard hit economically and it will affect their budgets and contributions to ICOMB. We continue to rely on donations from individuals and churches toward the global family.

ICOMB is thankful for the support of CCMBC and of Canadian churches and individuals. Canadian members have supported through finances, encouragement, prayers, suggestions, and much more, and we deeply appreciate this sign of love and support for the global family.

The global family and ICOMB leadership continue to pray for the Canadian conference: for a strong trust, closeness and common purpose between all Mennonite Brethren churches in Canada.

PLEASE PRAY

- For wisdom to navigate this challenging time.
- For discernment on how to support the member conferences.
- For a clear vision of how God wants ICOMB to move ahead.
- For the financial resources to support education, training, strengthening, connecting and expanding the Global Family.

ICOMB exists to connect, strengthen, and expand conferences for Christ-centered mission.



Love your global MB family: Support ICOMB through your prayers and financial gifts.