

Asia





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Mennonite Brethren Missions in Asia

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Asia contains eighty percent of the world's least reached peoples, and over sixty percent of the world's population. God's missionary call to us as a denomination and its diverse mission instruments have led us to many fields within Asia.



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India¹

During the 150-year MB Church anniversary celebrations held on January 17th, 2010 in Jadcherla, India, in front of a huge gathering of over 3000 people, Rev. Dr. P.B. Arnold, the President of the MB Church of India, said:

These celebrations are a celebration of MB Missionary services in India and worldwide. But it is also a celebration of faith journey of our great-grandparents, grandparents, our parents and us. This celebration is extremely significant for us here in India. Today we are not the people just saved by the blood of Jesus Christ but we are also the people evolved to a higher status in faith, in Biblical knowledge, in interpretation of the scriptures, in culture, in social status, in economic status, and in political status. Once our ancestors were blind, now we see. Once we were objects of mission and now we are sufficiently evolved and empowered to be the agents of mission.²

The foreign mission of the MBs began with MB missionaries from Ukraine, Russia. India was the very first mission field to receive the attention of MB missionaries in 1889. In these 120 years, the Conference of the MB Church of India has developed into one of the largest denominations in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh and also became one of the largest members in the Mennonite World Conference.

What attracted the young MB Church in Ukraine to come to the Telugu-speaking people in South India? How was the ground prepared for Dalits which resulted in mass conversions to Christianity upon the arrival of missionaries in the nineteenth century in Andhra Pradesh? How did the MB mission continue and achieve success in the midst of various missions in India? How has the India MB Church enjoyed substantial growth in the post-missionary era?

Historical Background

Andhra Pradesh, the state that attracted the Russian and American MBs at the close of nineteenth century, is historically called “the Rice Bowl of India.” It is the third largest state in the Indian union and the biggest state among the South India states both in area and population. Telugu is the predominant language of the state and it is the second most spoken language in India after Hindi which is our national language.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the coming of the Christian missions of various denominations, witnessed substantial Dalit³ conversions to Protestant Christianity in Andhra Pradesh. Studies have shown that the present state of Andhra Pradesh has witnessed the highest percentage of group conversions (mass

movements) to Christianity in India.⁴ The Indian caste system and “untouchability” are perhaps the most important features that must be understood in relation to the conversions of Dalits in India. Dalits constitute seventy to seventy-five percent of the Indian Christian population and approximately ninety percent of the Christian population in the state of Andhra Pradesh comes from this background.

Messianic Movements and Dalit Conversions

Dalits cannot change the stigma of their social situation through economic or other mobility. Groups of Dalits over the years have converted to religions such as Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity in attempts to escape the humiliation, social disgrace, and indignity they experienced at the bottom of the caste hierarchy and to gain a new religious identity. With the coming of the Protestant missionaries and their teachings about the equality of all human beings and educational opportunities for all, new doors opened for Dalits. The good news of a loving God embodied in Jesus Christ offered Dalits something unique that governments or other religious faiths could not provide. Conversion to Christianity gave Dalits an opportunity to be an integral part of the worship and fellowship of the faith they professed. It also gave them a sense of human dignity, a clear religious identity and, of course, the promise of salvation.

Dalit Mass Movements of Ongole attracted Russian MBs to India

The era of MB mission in India began with the coming of Abraham and Maria Friesen from Russia in 1889. By 1889, although the Russian MB Church had a membership of only 1800 members, in less than three decades after its founding it had sent their first missionaries to Hyderabad, India. They arrived at Secunderabad on October 2nd 1889. In fact American Baptist missionary John Everett Clough’s success at Ongole had attracted young Friesen to opt for India and the Telugu region.⁵ Therefore, unlike many Protestant missionaries who first looked for the high caste people, and when they failed to convert them, they began to concentrate on the Dalits; the MB missionaries concentrated on Dalits as soon as they arrived.

However the young Russian MB Church was not in a position to start their own field due to a lack of resources. Therefore, Friesen began his work with the collaboration of American Baptists. In May 1890, Friesen with five native missionaries from



**Abraham & Maria
Friesen⁶**

Ongole Baptist Mission moved to Nalgonda to take over an outstation started in 1885. Friesen and his native preachers established the first congregation with 120 converts, and it was reported that a total of 325 baptisms were given by the end of that year.⁷ Abraham Friesen, after baptizing the first converts, attributed the success to the dedicated preachers and the Bible women.⁸ The MB Church in Russia sent around half a dozen missionary couples to meet the growing needs of the mission work in India. They established stations at Suryapet, Bohnigir and Janagam.⁹

By 1910, these stations had about 3000 members.¹⁰ They carried their mission until the First World War and the Russian Revolution. After that, it became difficult to receive funds from Russia; the American Baptist Mission in Boston took over these three mission stations. By then they had an estimated membership of between 7000-8000 people. The American MB Mission, which began their mission work in the same area, did not show any interest in adopting these stations, due to their own interests and reasons.¹¹ However, the important contribution of the Friesens was to motivate the American MBs (AMB) to come to India.

The American MB Mission and their Relationships with other Denominations

Abraham Friesen during 1897-99 went to America, where he played an important role in encouraging the American MB Church to start the mission work among Telugus. In fact there seemed to be a considerable interest among the MB churches in America for foreign mission work as early as 1883. Moreover, for several years their members had contributed privately and through the conference to various missionaries in India and Africa.¹² The American MB Church therefore was in search of starting an overseas work independently. Subsequently, the American MB Church due to the motivation of Friesen decided to start its own mission. The conference had no hesitation in choosing India and the Hyderabad area as their destination. Choosing India was made easy by the example of Friesen's successful work at Nalgonda and moreover the Americans had heard of the Dalit (Madigas) conversions under Clough at Ongole during the previous decades.¹³

As a result, the AMB Mission sent their first missionaries, N. N. and Susie Hiebert, to India in 1899. The Hieberts chose Hughestown in the city of Hyderabad to begin their work. But Hiebert, who had an important role to play in bringing the AMB Mission into a meaningful association with the Russian MB Church and the American Baptist Union, had to return to North America within eighteen months of arrival in India due to illness. Though the return of the Hieberts disappointed the American MBs, it did not destroy their resolution to continue the mission they had started in India. Later the Hieberts' son, J.N.C. Hiebert, and then their grandson, Paul Hiebert, continued the Hiebert legacy as missionaries in India.

In 1902 J. H. and Maria Pankratz, and in 1904 D. F. and Katharina Bergthold, arrived in India. At first Bergtholds stayed with Pankratzes at Malakpet, Hyderabad. According to the agreement of “Comity,” in and around Mahabubnager District area the mission field belonged to the American Baptists. Albert Chute, a pioneer Baptist missionary in Mahabubnagar District, shared Clough’s ideology and policies in his mission strategy. So, Chute of the American Baptist Mission established the first station in the district in 1885 at Mahabubnagar town. In 1904 their second station was opened at Gadwal. Since this was a large area for Chute to handle he invited American MBs who arrived in Hyderabad in 1899 and were looking for an appropriate field to advance their work. As a result, in 1906 American MB pioneer missionary to the Mahabubnager District Daniel Bergthold entered this district. He began his mission by opening a mission station at Nagarkurnool. American Baptists and American MBs simultaneously carried out their activities until 1937.¹⁴ The American MBs in general adopted the strategies of the American Baptists who had preceded them in work among the Telugus.¹⁵

In 1937 the two large Baptist Mission stations, Mahabubnagar and Gadwal, were added to the American MB Mission. This purchase of Mahabubnagar and Gadwal mission stations also included sixty-five acres of land at Jadcherla. The oldest church at Jadcherla had been started by the SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel). After organizing the church they handed it over to Chute of the Baptist Mission.¹⁶ The Baptist Mission had used the land in Jadcherla for industrial training. The policy of the MB Mission was not to enter into industrial training. Therefore, in 1952 they started medical work there, which still has a famous hospital in that district. Their next mission station was added in 1954. This was the Telugu Village Mission at Makthal and Narayanpet. Within a period of fifteen years of their mission, this station had substantial conversions.¹⁷ With the addition of this Telugu Village Mission to the MB Mission, the whole district had come into their account. Later South India Missionary churches in Adoni area also joined in the MB Mission.

Thus, the present MB Church is the culmination of the work of American Baptists, SPG, Telugu Village Mission, and the South Indian Missionary Church. Though the MB Mission was late to reach the district, today it enjoys the role of a major denomination in the Mahabubnagar District.

Contribution of MB Nationals

I am one of the products of missionary work here in India... if no missionaries had come to India over one hundred years ago, I would not have been what I am now. To put it briefly, I became a Christian because I believed; I believed because I heard. I heard because someone preached;

someone preached because they decided to come to India with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was the strong convictions of the missionary workers that led me to become a full-time minister. And likewise today there are many people whose duty it is to carry on the task.¹⁸

Karuna Shri Joel and several others credit the work of missionaries for the MB Church in India, but it is equally important to study the contributions and the sacrifices of the national missionaries whose work is no less important.

Here is an example of a national evangelists by name N.M. Mark. Mark, who was from Wanaparthy field, did his theological training at the MB Bible School, Nagarkurnool in 1920s. He was an influential touring evangelist. Once in one of the villages while he was preaching the gospel, the village elders asked him to stop preaching and apologize for preaching the gospel in the village, but Mark refused to do so. As a result, these villagers got angry and wanted to kill him by putting him in boiling oil. While they were heating the oil he was given chance to say his last wish. Pastor Mark expressed his desire to pray one last time. While he was praying, it began to rain heavily, which destroyed their plan. Pastor Mark took it as an opportunity to share the power of God. Some immediately accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. There was a similar kind of experience in A. K. John's life of Gadwal field.¹⁹

The role and contribution of the nationals from the beginning and throughout the years of American Baptist Mission and American MB Mission was significant. Their commitment and conviction for the growth of the church was remarkable. Bergthold had depended much on the local preachers from the beginning. He writes in connection to their wages that "...we pushed them [Preachers from Madiga background] into evangelism among their own people and paid them to do so."²⁰ Particularly the evangelists, Bible women, and village pastors were effective witnesses of Christ in and around villages. As a result the MB Church in India was begun and firmly established.

The MB Church in India started a "home mission" in the Avurpally village of Kalwakurthy field back in 1924 with R. Rathnam as their first native missionary. Rathnam and his wife labored for many years with good results. K. C. Krupiah of Akuthotapally, product of the Kalwakurthy Home Mission, subsequently served faithfully in the same area until his death. Over the years the Kalwakurthy Home Mission carried out its mission program in thirty-four villages and sent additional missionaries into the field and selected students for studies at the conference's Bible institute. The native Telugu Convention supported the Kalwakurthy Home Mission until 1959, at which time it was merged into Kalwakurthy Field.

P. B. Arnold, President of MB Church in India, in his inaugural address at the 100-Year celebration of the birth of the MB Church in India in 1989, gave full recognition to national workers, stating that “the sacrifice and selfless service of the nationals was in no way less important. The missionaries gave the support, leadership and guidance, and the nationals worked in the field facing many tribulations. Together they accomplished far beyond their capacity.”²¹

Local preachers could make a great impact because they had easy access to their own communities. Like most of their listeners, they were Dalits who had no education or social status and were even forbidden to enter temples. Such “social lepers,” now transformed, came to their own people with the power of the gospel, the message of equality, the message that the God they had found would love them all equally. This made a remarkable impact on fellow Dalits as it was not just a verbal message with which they came, but also a message based on personal experience and real change—in clothing (previously denied), in Bible reading (education), in association with missionaries (status) and in reference to a message of equality and love.

The MB missions and churches in the region have resulted in transformation and empowerment. The gospel has brought changes in the religious and socio-economic lives of converts, and has given a sense of meaning, security, status, dignity, hope, and purpose to the believers in the area. Today children and grandchildren of the former preacher say that in the midst of rigid caste system, superstitions, wild animals and evil spirits, their staunch faith in the Lord helped them to be firm in persecutions and sufferings, and it was the power of Holy Spirit that enabled their parents and grandparents to serve the Lord faithfully and thus they become the “great heroes of faith.”

Transition from Mission to Church and Rapid Growth

The transition from mission to church took place in 1958 when the AMB Mission transferred administrative power to the “Conference of the MB Church of India.” In 1976, the properties of AMB Mission were transferred to MB Property Association of India (P) Ltd.

The official membership of the India MB (IMB) Church in 1949 was 12,443.²² D. J. Arthur, then Chairman of the IMB Church, reported to the 1966 General Conference of the IMB Church that there were some twenty thousand members in nine fields and eighty-one congregations. During same period the IMB Church was able to send two of their members, R.S. Lemuel and M.B. Devadas, into foreign missionary service to Bangladesh and Vietnam respectively with the support of Mennonite Central Committee and the Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India.

In the last two decades, because of increasing emphasis on evangelism and church planting through Church Extension Workers, Inter-Faith Ministries, and Disciple-Making International teams, the church is growing fast and receiving converts from other castes, creeds and religions. The IMB Church has grown strongly in the five districts of Andhra Pradesh—namely Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, and Kurnool—in which it is centered, as well as in Gangavathy District of Karnataka state and in the city of Mumbai, in Maharashtra. The IMB currently is also extending its services into the Sholapur area and into North India, particularly in Delhi and Punjab. The growth of the church took momentum with the starting of Lay Ministry in the year 1981 with a goal to invite and involve every lay person in the ministries of the Conference. Lay ministers were able to establish a number of churches in the Conference.

Today's approximate estimation of the IMB membership is as high as 200,000 members attending 962 churches in thirty-eight MB Field Associations. While some of the church's ministries have been downgraded or diminished, the following ministries continue to function effectively: the Bible College in Shamshabad; the Medical Hospital in Jadcherla; MB High Schools in eight of the former mission fields; a Junior College in Mahabubnagar; a Historical Commission; a Center for Peace Education; the MB Development Organization (MBDO); the MB Women's Conference; Future MB Church of India (youth), and the Board of Evangelism and Church Ministries. The Board of Evangelism and Church Ministries coordinates a number of ministries, including ministries in evangelism (Church Extension Workers), urban and interfaith ministries (reaching out to Muslims and others), literature (*Suvarthamani*, the Conference's Telugu language magazine), the Partnership in Discipleship-Making International ministry and the Partnership in Global Youth Ministry. Numerous other ministries or departments have diminished in importance or have been discontinued over the years, including radio programs, Kraistava Mahila Vikas (a women's organization), a film ministry, and youth hostels.

As noted above, for the Indian MB Church, mission and evangelism are the foremost important tasks. Apart from the Conference Church Extension Workers (CEWs) who are our native missionaries involved in evangelism with the support of North American MB Mission, many local churches and lay persons are engaged in evangelism in their nearby villages. Many congregations in the Conference have a vibrant missionary activity and are carrying it forward independently. Evangelistic impulses are strong in the IMB Church and have led to tremendous church growth in the area. Some bigger churches are spending at least twenty percent of their income on supporting evangelists, pastors and undertaking missionary activity. MBC Bible

College (MBCBC) in Shamshabad is an important organ of our Conference involved in preparing Bible-centered and missionary-oriented pastors.

China

Following India, China was the second field entered early in the twentieth century. Henry and Nellie Bartel heard God's call and ventured out as independent Krimmer MB missionaries in 1901. Over five decades of missionary service in China, they established clusters of churches in two provinces in northern and western China. A decade later, in 1911, Frank and Agnes Wiens also ventured out by faith, collecting support as they traveled through Russia. They also established a fruitful cluster of churches in southern China. The North American MB Conference adopted this field already in 1919, and the Bartels' field in western China in 1945. Organized activities in all three clusters ceased in the 1930s and 1940s when the missionaries were forced to leave and the Chinese nationals prohibited them from exercising what was considered a foreign religion. Political unrest, civil war, and the onslaught of communism were oppressive forces during these years.²³

However, as in so many other countries, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church. Following decades of silence, visits in the eighties and nineties revealed that the churches had not only survived, but thrived. A contact with the southern Fukien cluster in 1987 brought information about some 20,000 believers gathering in 40 churches. Another visit to the northern Shandong province in 1999 revealed that during the previous year 1000 new believers had been baptized. The elders of this latter group sent a message to those who had sent the Bartels: "Please thank the churches for sending the Bartels. They brought us the gospel."²⁴

In the last decade MBs have once again entered China. Missionaries are serving in different regions of China in Scripture translation, in evangelism and church planting among least reached people groups, in leadership and community development among urban migrants, and in mission capacity-building.²⁵

Japan

The gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings salvation and reconciliation, and about which most Japanese do not know, was proclaimed by the North American Mennonite Brethren (MB) missionaries to Japan beginning around 1950. These missionaries began their mission work in the Osaka area, Japan's second largest city. Today the Japanese MB Conference (JMBC) has 1,500 active members (1,800 members in all) with twenty-six full-time pastors in twenty-nine congregations and evangelistic

stations. Their mission work is centered around the Osaka area and extends into the Nagoya area, the Hiroshima area, and near Tokyo, Japan's capital. In addition to the church planting ministry they have established a seminary and a Christian camp.

The Birth of the Japanese MB Church

In 1949, four years after the defeat of the Japanese at the end of World War II, Henry and Lydia Thielman were sent by the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to provide relief work in the Konohana Ward in Osaka where American bombers had inflicted the most devastating damage. A year later, in August 1950, Ruth Wiens was sent to Japan by the Board of Foreign Missions of the MB Church of North America. In March 1951 Harry and Mildred Friesen together with Harold and Marianna Gaede arrived in Japan. On May 13, they conducted a Lord's Day worship service at a club house in Ishibashi.

The Early Development

In 1955 a conference of MB missionaries was held and they decided to select the greater Osaka area as their mission field. By 1956 evangelistic activity was in full swing, with meetings in Amagasaki, Nagase, Minato, Tsurugaoka, Ishibashi, and Kasugade, all in the greater Osaka area. Many people came to faith, congregations became active, and men and women dedicated themselves to serve the church. In September 1956 a conference was convened with representatives from the congregations that had been established in the Osaka area. The delegation decided that a church conference organization should be established. The Japan MB Conference was thus formed in 1958. New MB congregations continued to be added to the conference in key cities in the Osaka area and in the neighboring Hyogo Prefecture.

Gospel Radio Ministry

Beginning in 1954 MB missionaries supported a gospel radio ministry in the area around Osaka. The program was called "The Light of the World." It was produced by a radio evangelist, Akira Hatori, and aired as a fifteen-minute broadcast on Sunday mornings. After 1961, the MBs produced their own radio program which aired every morning, was called "The Light of the Morning," and offered a five-minute gospel message. Follow-up meetings for listeners were held in Osaka City. After 1963 evangelist Akira Hatori was the featured speaker at monthly meetings called "Evening of Praise and Message," which were held in the large Nakanoshima Civic Auditorium located in a central part of Osaka City. These meetings were very well attended. Those who came to the evening meetings were encouraged to attend an MB church near

their places of residence. In 1971, however, the MB outreach policy changed and support for this radio program stopped.

Seminary Education

In 1957 the MB Biblical Institute was founded in a prefabricated house in Kasugade of Konohana Ward, Osaka City. The purpose of the school was to train leaders. In 1961 the MBs joined hands with two Baptist mission boards and formed the Osaka Biblical Seminary. However, disagreements surfaced between the JMBC and the Baptist groups regarding biblical interpretation and educational policies. In order to maintain unity in faith and practice within the conference, the JMBC dissolved the partnership with the other two missions in 1971 and began to offer its own MB theological training in a school that became known as the Evangelical Biblical Seminary. Harry Friesen became the first president of the Evangelical Biblical Seminary. He taught systematic theology for many years and thereby laid a dispensational foundation within the JMBC. In 1991 Takashi Manabe, pastor of the Ishibashi Church, was appointed as the second president of the seminary. At present the seminary does not have any full-time staff. MB pastors teach Bible, theology, and ministry skills. Gifted church members teach subjects such as music and biblical languages.

Even though the JMBC is a small denomination, it has trained its own leaders in its own seminary. This has enabled the conference to maintain its own identity and to maintain a sense of unity.

Theological Challenges in Relation to Anabaptism

The sixteenth-century Anabaptist/Mennonite movement took the words in the Bible seriously and expected Christians to live according to Jesus' teaching. This meant, for example, that Christians were to be peacemakers and should not hate or kill their enemies. The JMBC continues to identify with this tradition and therefore chose to highlight three themes as part of its fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 2000. The three themes included Biblicism, evangelism, and peace.

Biblicism—Dispensationalism

Several specific emphases have emerged within the JMBC in the name of Biblicism, including dispensationalism and Christian education. Because of the exposure to dispensational teaching, Japanese MBs have long believed that God had one program for the church and another for Israel. The JMBC made this teaching a touchstone that became a test for determining whether or not an individual interpreted the Bible

properly. The JMBC often felt that it was more important to hold to a common theological understanding of end times than to insist on agreement in other matters.

Biblicism—Christian Education

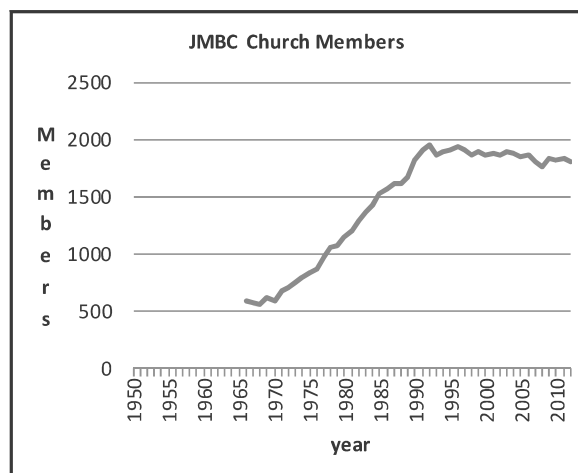
Christian education is a fundamental method by which Christians are led to experience the truth of the Bible and have these truths applied to daily life. Missionary Ruth Wiens had a special interest in Christian education, and was a strong advocate for using Sunday school materials appropriate for various age groups. Shortly after the first MB congregations were formed she developed Sunday school textbooks with the help of a few pastors and seminary students. When the textbooks were published they were used by all of the congregations in the JMBC. In 1980 she organized the Church Education Ministries with the support of MB pastors as well as those from other denominations who agreed with her approach. Ongoing efforts are required to recognize the need to depend on the Holy Spirit, to develop an eagerness to learn the Bible, and to apply its teaching.

Evangelism—Church Planting

From the beginning it was the policy of the JMBC to plant congregations in urban and suburban areas where congregations might become financially independent in a relatively short period of time. After having planted congregations mostly along private railroad lines in the greater Osaka area, in 1968 MB missionaries started the Fujigaoka church, the second church in the greater Nagoya area.

Currently, the JMBC has twenty-six congregations and three evangelistic stations (or church plants). Twenty-three of these were started by MB missionaries and were handed over to Japanese pastors within a few years. The JMBC owes its current stage of development primarily to the efforts and gifts of evangelism by the missionaries.

Ten-year evangelism plans. Since 1974 the JMBC has developed three ten-year plans for evangelistic outreach. The first ten-year evangelism project, from



1974-1983, achieved a remarkable increase in converts. The membership of the JMBC doubled from 600 to 1,200. The second ten-year evangelism project, in 1985-94, saw an increase of 360 active members, the result of new church planting efforts. The established congregations did not grow in numbers during the second and the third ten-year projects. In fact, during the third ten-year project, in 1995-2004, the number of active members as well as church membership not only failed to increase, but even decreased slightly.

External factors. Each plan emphasized planting new congregations as the center of its philosophy of church growth. A range of both external and internal factors offer an explanation for the recent lack of growth. First, the heartbreaking incident of the sarin gas attack by the Aum group which took place in a Tokyo subway in 1995 increased the negative feelings of many citizens of Japan toward all foreign religions. Second, the recent Iraq war begun by the USA, as well as terrorist attacks by Islamic fundamentalists, has increased uneasy feelings toward religion, and monotheistic religions in particular. Third, it seems that life for most Japanese people has reached the limits of busyness and stress. Church members are also becoming increasingly affluent, which appears to result in a lack of concern for spiritual matters. During the last several decades almost all evangelical Protestant churches in Japan have experienced a plateau in numbers. A few congregations have grown substantially, but conditions in most congregations are generally very difficult.

Internal factors. Several internal factors within the JMBC also contributed to the lack of numerical growth. First, despite the ineffectiveness of the second ten-year plan, the Japanese MB congregations did not seriously investigate the causes of the problem in order to come up with an effective alternative plan. The prevailing assumption was that if new congregations were planted, and if they received adequate financial support, then membership in the conference would grow. Second, it seemed that pastors were too busy taking care of problems in their own congregations as well as within the JMBC, and could not find the time and energy to develop more effective approaches to evangelism. Leaders seemed to be content with saying, "evangelism is very difficult in Japan." Third, church members are very busy with their jobs. Many lay people cannot do more than come to church on Sunday mornings. Members have a tendency to think that all they can do is to give their tithes faithfully and that those who have the gift of evangelism should do the outreach work. Fourth, the JMBC has not been able to develop a healthy spiritual leadership. Many leaders have had a strong tendency toward legalism. Others have tried to manage and control their church affairs by employing secular management techniques.

Evangelism – Overseas Missions

The JMBC has formed support systems for those whom God has called into missions. Several missionaries serving in cross-cultural settings have been supported by the Conference. These include Takashi and Kazue Manabe, who served with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Papua New Guinea from 1978 to 1989. In 1988, Keiko Hamano was sent by MBMSI as a missionary to Pakistan. Hiromi Takeda was sent by MBMSI as a missionary to the Khmu tribe in Thailand from 1997 to 2003. Currently, JMBC sends Motohiro and Mariya Hamana, and Junji and Hitomi Nukaga to Thailand to work with MB Mission.

Local congregations have discerned and sent missionaries who have received God's call and have taken responsibility for supporting them. So far at least three individual MB congregations have sent missionaries. Takao Nakamura, a former pastor of the MB church in Neyagawa, and his wife Kayoko, serve in San Diego, California as missionaries to Japanese immigrants living in that area. Shigeyuki and Sachiko Yokoi are serving in Raleigh, North Carolina, as missionaries to Japanese people in that region. Hajimu and Kayoko Fujii, from the Tsuchiyama church, are serving as missionaries to Japanese people living in Fresno and Sacramento, California. Komaki Hope Chapel sends Kiyoko Tsubouchi to Mongolia for deaf and blind people mission.

Peace

European and North American Mennonites have a strong peace tradition that has included not only the rejection of military service, but also a much broader range of issues. The situation in Japan has been quite different. After World War II Japan renounced war (Article 9 of the Constitution). There is no military draft in Japan. Therefore a link between peacemaking and the rejection of military service did not appear to be necessary. In addition, MB missionaries did not emphasize peacemaking in their teaching. Although the JMBC has proclaimed a commitment to pacifism, it has essentially been theoretical. In 2003 Dalton Reimer, a professor at Fresno Pacific University, lectured at the Evangelical Biblical Seminary in Ishibashi and helped Japanese MBs become more aware of the broader meaning of peacemaking. MBs and other believers in Japan need to learn much more about what it means to be peacemakers in society, in the church, and in the home.

Gifts from North American MB Conferences

The JMBC is grateful for the numerous blessings it has received from the mission programs of the North American MB conferences. A total of fourteen missionary

couples and four long-term single women missionaries from North America have labored in Japan to the present.

Nosegawa Bible Camp

In 1953 the Board of Foreign Missions purchased a piece of property with an old slaughterhouse that was remodeled for use as a Bible camp. The Nosegawa Bible Camp is located near Osaka, in a narrow valley along the Nosegawa River. Every summer campers ranging from elementary school children to young adults come to camp. Many members within MB congregations made their decision to follow Christ when they were young at this camp. In 1973 ownership of the campground was transferred to the JMBC. Seminars, outdoor concerts, and conference meetings are often held at the camp.

ESL Teachers

In 2006, six individuals from North American MB churches were serving within the JMBC as short-term conversational English teachers. This outreach program was made possible through the generosity of North American churches.

The Japanese people are generally receptive to Western culture and many are eager to learn conversational English. Therefore, the conversational English ministry is an effective way to invite unchurched people into a church building. Here they are introduced to the gospel during chapel times at the end of each class, but Japanese people rarely make a commitment to Christ in a short period of time.

Renewal Movements

At the outset, the Japanese MB congregations were quite dependent on missionaries from North America for most of their understanding of the church. The missionaries taught to the best of their ability, but their teaching was inevitably shaped and influenced by their own culture. Japanese believers generally accepted what the missionaries taught and tried to maintain it without change. As circumstances changed in North America, church life in North America also changed. Japanese MB congregations were generally not as flexible and were reluctant to accept changes. Japanese MBs sometimes thought that they were superior to other churches in Japan because of their dispensational theology and because of their educational programs. But they were not very good at evaluating their own church lives by biblical standards. They tried to learn church growth principles by watching growing churches. They often tried to imitate such churches without examining and applying biblical principles creatively to their own situation.

A Time to Reconsider

In 1998 the JMBC invited Vern Heidebrecht, a pastor from Canada, to be guest speaker at a retreat. Many Japanese were shocked to learn about how open Northview Community Church (Abbotsford, British Columbia) was while still being biblical in its life and ministry. After this conference the MB congregations began to search the Bible to see what it means to be a biblical church. Many felt that they had to discern more carefully which traditions had to be changed and which ones should be kept.

Recommendations for Renewal

A Renewal Committee was formed during the JMBC convention in March 2003, using “Freedom and Unity in the Lord” as a motto. Over a two-year period the committee tried to identify church practices and attitudes hindering the healthy development of church life. In 2005 the committee submitted a report of their findings to a JMBC convention. It suggested several basic changes in the organizational structure and management of the JMBC to find a truly biblical MB identity.

The report of the Renewal Committee discussed four areas, beginning with the relationship between local congregations and the Conference. In the past, when serious problems occurred in a local church, the Conference took the initiative to solve it. This system worked well when the young congregations needed strong leadership from the Conference to ensure unity and to guide expansion. Many Japanese MBs now believe that local congregations should be more responsible for their own church affairs, taking their own initiative to solve problems and to develop programs. Churches need to accept diversity among local congregations. Pastors, leaders, and members all have their own personalities and responsibilities. At the same time they are fellow workers for the same faith.

Second, Japanese MB congregations need a new Confession of Faith. While the Confession should be based on the ICOMB Confession of Faith, it should also reflect the unique emphases of the Japanese conference. The Conference needs a more holistic understanding of the biblical concept of peace that will enable members to be true peacemakers.

Third, in earlier years the JMBC Reference and Counsel Committee assumed the power to hire, dismiss, and transfer pastors. Now practices have changed. Each local church has the freedom to select its own pastor and to determine the nature of an appointment, whether full-time or part-time. The Conference role is to support the decisions of the local congregations. The Committee, however, remains responsible for policies related to licensing and ordination of pastors.

Fourth, Japanese MB women may serve as members of committees in local congregations and are invited to serve as representatives in meetings of the JMBC. Future discussions will address the possibility of a woman serving as pastor in accordance with her gifts.

Challenges for the Future

JMBC leaders anticipate that the next stage of development in the life of the Conference will involve a number of theological questions. First, what does it mean to be “biblical”? How should believers in Christ best live out a biblical model in their everyday lives? Japanese Christians need to strive for a holistic Christian way of life that is filled with the Holy Spirit. They must establish a biblical lifestyle in everyday life, not only a theology that is biblical.

Second, what does it mean to be “evangelistic”? A review of the average rate of church growth of the established congregations during the last twenty years reveals that there has been no growth. Many congregations have few teenagers attending worship services. Pastors have discussed the problem and determined that a growing, radical spiritual reform in our established congregations is the key for our Conference’s future outreach.

Third, what does it mean to be “peaceful”? The Christ who establishes true peace on earth must live within people if real peace is to be realized. This peace must be expressed within each member’s home, within each congregation, at each member’s work place, and at each of the other institutions in society in which our members participate. This is the picture of the ministry of reconciliation that the people of God are called to accomplish.

Expanding Horizons²⁶

The ongoing story of the global Mennonite Brethren family is one of faithful servants, from many different ethnic groups, carrying the treasure of the Kingdom wherever they have gone. Sometimes the story of geographical relocation has been driven by war and persecution, sometimes by migration and new world opportunities, and at other times by missionary vision and passion. By God’s grace, the Mennonite Brethren have been involved in telling the gospel narrative to people groups who have either never heard of God’s love for them or have not been privileged to hear the message in a way that was comprehensible to them. The following offers a short summary of the most recent developments.

Mongolia

Just north of China lies the remote nation of Mongolia. Mennonite Brethren mission work began in Mongolia in 2001 through the ministry of Robert and Marlene Baerg. Their community outreach work through children's and youth clubs has expanded to a broader discipleship ministry within the capital of Ulan Bator. They are currently developing a new horticulture farm and ministry outside the capital to facilitate their growing discipleship ministry.

Laos

Mennonite Brethren mission work in Laos began with MB Mission support for a Khmu pastor Phone Keo²⁷ in his church planting work amongst southeast Asian immigrants in the Fresno, CA area during the early 1990s. The Khmu are one of the larger tribal groups in Laos, numbering some 400,000 people with another 30,000 in Thailand. They are also found in China and Myanmar (Burma).

Since 1996, Phone Keo has been sent by MB Mission to his home region to preach the gospel and to disciple leaders. The resulting network of churches has grown from several hundred believers to over 40,000. This church planting movement meets in 200 church buildings and another 200 house churches. They identify with the Mennonite Brethren and have adopted its Confession of Faith. Many pastors have been imprisoned and tortured by the communist government. Their stories are reminiscent of the early Anabaptists who gave their lives for the sake of the gospel.

MB Mission workers are involved in training and equipping church leaders, as well as assisting churches with development projects to improve their communities and increase sustainability. Much of this takes place at the Changed Life Center in northern Thailand. The outreach in recent years has spread beyond the Khmu people group to include the Hmong. The conference (Khmu Mission) has its center in Thailand and joined ICOMB in 2012.

Philippines

Disciple-Making International (DMI), a short-term evangelism ministry of MB Mission, sent its first team to the Philippines in April 1996. As a result of his DMI evangelism experiences and the excitement of helping plant churches for new Filipino believers, Arthur Loewen presented a church planting vision to MB Mission in 2002.

By March 2004 Arthur had found a church planter, Samuel Arcano, through his key contact and friend in the Philippines, Nathan Costas. Arcano had a vision to plant a church among university students in Baguio. Forty young people were soon attending the Baguio Youth Center.

In 2006 Arcano was encouraged to consider starting a second church in the region of Ambiong, adjacent to Baguio City. The church planting work was initiated by two trained disciples from the Youth Center. A small Bible study group grew quickly. In May 2007 they held the first church service at Redeemed in Christ (MB) Church. In recent years more churches have been planted in Baguio, as well as Bayombong (Luzon) and Palawan Island.

In 2014 the Kalipunan ng Kapatirang Mennonita ng Pilipas Inc. (Conference of Mennonite Brethren of Philippines) was registered. At present there are eight churches and a growing number of mission outreaches.

Thailand

Mennonite Brethren mission work in Thailand had its beginning in 1992 when MB Mission missionaries, Russ and Liz Schmidt, arrived in north Thailand to plant churches with the Khmu people in the rural province of Nan. In 1995, MB Mission sent Fritz and Susie Peters to Chiang Mai as church planters. Fritz travelled to the Khmu villages five hours away to minister to the Khmu people group, and Susie taught at a Christian Thai school. The couple served in Thailand until 2004.

TEAM 2000, consisting of three couples (Ricky and Karen Sanchez, Dave and Louise Sinclair-Peters, Andy and Carmen Owen) and their families, was mobilized in 2000. The team arrived in Thailand in January 2001 for language school. A year later the team moved to Chonburi in central Thailand to plant churches.

TEAM 2000 was actively involved in four church-plants including The Life Center, The Promise Church, The Bethel Church, and the Ang Sila Friendship Center. They have since spread out from Chonburi to Chachoengsao and Chiang Mai where they continue to evangelize, disciple, and train Thai believers, as well as provide leadership for social ministries. New churches are being planted in these locations, and new ministries are emerging to reach out to Burmese and Cambodians.

In the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, TEAM 2000 and the MB Mission office mobilized a relief response involving many volunteers from North America. Twenty-five homes were constructed for widows. Following the relief efforts, a new team called Operation 2nd Wave (O2W) was sent to Phuket, south Thailand in 2006.

The Abundant Life Home, an orphanage for HIV-positive children, was opened by TEAM 2000 in April 2006. In March 2008 the Abundant Life Foundation was formed to give TEAM 2000 permission to do social work projects in Thailand. The

Thai Mennonite Brethren Conference was formed in June 2008 to give Abundant Life Home legal status as a religious foundation.

Other Countries²⁸

The suffering people of Afghanistan have touched the hearts of God's people long before September 11, 2001. Already in 1969 Dr. Herb and Ruth Friesen, MB medical missionaries, were residing and serving in the capital of Kabul. MB Mission began in 1971 to partner with International Assistance Mission, offering services of compassion and medical care. While no attempt was made to plant churches, MB and other workers were able to share their faith and encourage the fledgling underground church in that Islamic state. Even after his retirement, Dr. Friesen made repeated visits to Afghanistan to treat patients with eye afflictions, to train Afghan doctors, and to encourage the believers.²⁹ Hospital administrator Richard Penner, no longer able to live in Afghanistan following 9/11, died in a plane crash returning to his home in Uzbekistan from Afghanistan (2003). The sacrificial services of people like Herb and Ruth Friesen, Richard and Ann Penner, and many others, were undoubtedly motivated by a deep love for God and the forgotten people of Afghanistan.

In Indonesia, a partnership was formed with the Chinese Mennonite Church known as Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI). Beginning in 1975, MB Mission missionaries were sent to train and mentor Indonesian evangelists as they were sent by the GKMI mission agency to the unevangelized peoples throughout Indonesia. Dale and Joyce Warkentin and Dan and Helen Nickel served in this capacity-building ministry for the duration of the ten-year partnership commitment. Additional financial partnerships were carried on through 2001. Many GKMI village churches were planted through these partnerships.

Like Afghanistan and Indonesia, Pakistan is also a Muslim-majority country. MB Mission began ministries in Pakistan in 1981. The initial ministry was medical outreach to Afghan refugees fleeing the Soviet War. A doctor and nurse began serving in Taxila. In 1983, with Dr. Friesen having to leave Afghanistan to resettle in Pakistan, also due to the Soviet War, MB Mission shifted its focus to the eye hospital in Peshawar. In the ensuing years, prayer and discernment led to the decision to begin church planting in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, with a focus on the Baluchi people. The pioneer missionaries in this venture were Gordon and Gwen Nickel, Keiko Hamano of the Japanese MB Conference, and Tim and Janine Bergdahl. Outreach in this strongly Muslim country was difficult. Friendship, literacy classes and short-wave radio were some of many methods used. A small number of Baluchi became followers of Jesus, and eventually there were reports of groups of believers

gathering in small house churches. By 2002, security concerns led to the removal of the remaining missionaries. Formal contact was eventually discontinued with the radio ministry and Baluchi ministry.

Over the decades, through a variety of prayerful initiatives and circumstances undoubtedly orchestrated by a missionary God, many examples could be cited of MB mission work in Asia. In the seventies and eighties, MB Mission and the Indian MB conference worked with MCC in offering medical and spiritual service in Bangladesh. Kazakhstan was mentioned earlier as a Soviet republic where MBs had been forced to relocate from Ukraine. A thriving and missionary church developed in the city of Karaganda. A MB Mission bi-vocational missionary served in Alma Ata beginning in 1997 reaching out to the professional class. Short-term youth and DMI teams have also served in Alma Ata. In Bishkek, Kyrgystan, MB-Baptist believers began the Ray of Hope mission agency, which also received some human and financial resourcing for a time from MB Mission. Mentioned above, the Penners served in social ministries in Uzbekistan for a term until Richard's accidental death in 2003. Former Krimmer Mennonite Brethren missionaries Dr. Maynard and Dorothy Seaman served under MB Mission in medical and spiritual ministries in both Nepal and Sri Lanka until 1994. A ministry to English-speaking expatriates, and another to Pakistanis using radio were conducted by MB missionaries in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, beginning in the late nineties.

Some Missiological Reflections

Asia not only contains over sixty per cent of the world's population, but may also soon represent over sixty percent of the global MB family. It was the first continent to receive MB missionaries and, for decades, India and China were the recipients of MB Mission's most significant global mission investment. This more than a century-long journey provides an exciting, intriguing and varied story for missiological reflection.

The Gospel: Rich and Relevant

The history of MB Mission activity in Asia and interaction with Asian church leaders reveal the richness and relevance of the gospel of Jesus Christ for all peoples. Jesus reconciles men and women with their Creator. He is their peace. Jesus offers forgiveness to those who suffer from guilt, freedom and courage to those who live in fear, a new identity for those who suffer under shame, healing for the brokenhearted, meaning and purpose for those who live in despair.

In Asia, over the past century, those who have lived on the margins, excluded from social groupings "worthy" of honor—disgraced because of ethnicity (e.g.,

Khmu, Baluch), caste (e.g., Dalits), economic status (e.g., Burmese), physical illness (e.g., HIV positive orphans in Thailand) or gender (e.g., women of India, China, Southeast Asia)—these have been welcomed into the family of God as full-heirs of the kingdom, receiving a new identity and hope in Christ. These Asians have experienced the overwhelming love of Jesus which banishes shame.

For other Asians, the gospel of peace in Jesus Christ has transformed their lives. For the Japanese, *shalom* in Jesus meets their deepest longings and they yearn for more. In China, active peacemaking has turned seasons of civil war into *kairos* moments of kingdom expansion. In India, the gospel of peace has called church leaders to reconciliation and empowered Indian leaders to proclaim this message of peace to other segments of society. For the Khmu, it has inspired them to forgive and share Jesus' message of love with former tribal enemies.

Holistic Witness: Word and Deed

Throughout Asia, the verbal proclamation of the Good News of Jesus has been accompanied by acts of compassionate service. Missionaries and national leaders have expressed God's concern for the whole person through healing prayer, educational programs, medical work, orphanages and agricultural projects. These initiatives have not only improved the socioeconomic status of impoverished, marginalized people groups, but also affirmed concretely their value to God and his people around the world. The gospel of the kingdom encompasses all of life.

National Leaders: Equipped and Empowered

National leadership training is critical for the maturation of young, emerging churches and essential for the long term health of indigenous church networks (conferences). Across Asia, from the outset, MB missionaries invested in leadership training through formal (Bible institutes), non-formal (local church seminars) and informal (coaching, mentoring) training. This intentional investment enabled the newly-born churches of India, China, Japan and Southeast Asia to effectively evangelize, teach and shepherd their own people. MB missionaries were mindful of the confessional, organizational, institutional and material foundations being laid as they served.

The Japan MB Conference has sent missionaries to other people groups in Asia. The India MB Conference has reached out to new regions and other castes of its complex and diverse national milieu. The Khmu are sharing the Good News with other tribal groups in Laos. Could the Asian MB church have received more intentional equipping to be a missionary church in Asia and beyond? Could this

Asian MB church become the major missionary force of the twenty-first century, not only because of its size, but also because of its maturation in Christ and proximity to eighty percent of the remaining least-reached people groups?

Missionary Roles: Strategic and Changing

MB missionaries in Asia have strategically proclaimed the gospel to the least reached, disciplined new believers, pastored emerging congregations, trained Asian leaders, established schools and hospitals and served as catalysts for innumerable new initiatives. As they have walked alongside the Asian MB church, their roles have changed from evangelists to shepherds to trainers to mentors.

The history of the Asian MB church highlights the need to follow the development of emerging churches and their leaders, transitioning well from missionary-initiated ministries to national leadership, walking together toward an interdependent relationship between churches within conferences and between conferences globally. MB Mission workers continue to assist the Asian churches in the areas of mission sending and leadership training.

The Church: Vibrant and Growing

Overall, although struggling in some regions, the Asian MB Church continues to grow numerically, expand geographically and mature spiritually. Asians lead the church. They envision the evangelization of the continent. By God's grace, through the Holy Spirit, they have been granted "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3). MB missionaries continue to walk alongside the church, often in a supportive, coaching role to young Asian leaders, but also learning from their passion for Christ and his kingdom and mindful of the truth that God is more than able to complete his work among and through them. Today, the Asian MB church reflects Christ's likeness to its surrounding communities and, in a uniquely Asian way, to the global MB family.

Notes

¹This portion of the chapter has been revised with permission from I.P. Asheervadam, "Die Anfänge der Mennonitenbrüder-Auslandmission: 120 Jahre Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde in Indien" in *In Gott leben wir, bestehen wir und sind wir!: 150 Jahre Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinden*, edited by John N. Klassen and Johann Matthies (Lage: Bund Taufgesinnter Gemeinden; Lichtzeiten Verlag, 2012), 223-243.

- ² P. B. Arnold, “Objects of Mission to Agents of Mission” (inaugural address presented during the 150th Birth Anniversary of MB Church, January 17, 2010), 1.
- ³ The word *Dalit* means “oppressed” or “broken.” *Dalit* has come to be the new identity of the marginalized communities, viz: those who were till recently dehumanized and marginalized by the caste system. The term *Dalit* also affirms and asserts the fact of their distinct identity as a positive notion. See Prakash Louis in preface to *Pain and Awakening: The Dynamics of Dalit Identity in Bihar, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh*, ed. Franco, Fernando (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 2002), xv.
- ⁴ See J. W. Pickett, *Christian Mass Movement* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1933). John E. Clough, *Social Christianity in the Orient* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914), 96-97.
- ⁵ Peter Penner, *Russians, North Americans and Telugus: The MB Mission in India, 1885-1975* (Hillsboro: Kindred Productions, 1997), 4.
- ⁶ Source: <http://archives.mhsc.ca/abraham-and-maria-friesen-photograph-collection>.
- ⁷ Friesen’s report, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. LXXII (March, 1892), 84.
- ⁸ Peter Penner, *Mission in India*, 3.
- ⁹ Ravela Joseph, *Samveam of Telugu Baptist Churches: A Brief History and Baptist Doctrinal Distinctives* (no publisher), 33-34; Paul Toews ed., *Mennonites and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1993), 133-140; Paul Wiebe, *Christians in Andhra Pradesh the Mennonites of Mahbubnagar* (Madras: CLS, 1988), 67.
- ¹⁰ B. A. George, *The History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (India: Governing Council of the Conference of the M.B. Church, 1990), 16.
- ¹¹ See Peter Penner, “Baptist in All But Name: Molotschna Mennonite Brethren in India,” *Mennonite Life* (March 1991), 17-24.
- ¹² H. W. Lohrenz, *Our Mission Among the Telugus* (Hillsboro: Board of Foreign Mission of the MB Church in North America, 1939), 3.
- ¹³ Peter Penner, *Mission in India*, 4.
- ¹⁴ During this time American MBs established four stations in Mahabubnager district. They were at Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Kalvakurthy and Janampet whereas Baptists had two stations at Mahabubnagar and Gadwal.
- ¹⁵ As quoted by Peter Penner in *Mission in India*, 141.
- ¹⁶ See Profile of Late Rev. Jonnalagadda John, India MB Historical Commission, and George, *History*, 109.

- ¹⁷ A.R. Jaipal, "Telugu Village Mission", *El-Shaddai* (no date), 7.
- ¹⁸ "Karuna Shri Joel preaching extract," in *Witness: Transforming Lives in Mission*, ed. Randy Friesen (Spring, 2010), 4.
- ¹⁹ See India MB Historical Commission's Profile collection on A.K. John.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.
- ²¹ P. B. Arnold, *A Festival of 100 years, Souvenir* (no publisher, 1990), 4.
- ²² A.E. Janzen, ed., *The Andhra Mennonite Brethren Church in India, 1904-1954* (Hillsboro: Board of Foreign Missions, 1955), 12.
- ²³ For a detailed account of the earlier stories of MB missions in China, see Abe J. Dueck, "The Mennonite Brethren Church in China" in *The Mennonite Brethren Church Around the World: Celebrating 150 Years*, ed. Abe J. Dueck (Kitchener and Winnipeg: Pandora Press and Kindred Productions, 2010), 119-127.
- ²⁴ Harold Ens, *Mennonite Brethren in Global Mission: Observations and Reflections, 1966-2006* (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2010), 102.
- ²⁵ Due to the restricted access nature of China and security concerns for these missionaries, further details are not available for publication.
- ²⁶ This entire section is slightly modified and re-printed, with permission, from Ray Harms Wiebe, "Expanding Horizons" in *The Mennonite Brethren Church Around the World: Celebrating 150 Years*, ed. Abe J. Dueck (Kitchener and Winnipeg: Pandora Press and Kindred Productions, 2010), 349-352.
- ²⁷ For more of Phone Keo's story, see Ens, *Mennonite Brethren in Global Mission*, 120.
- ²⁸ Most of the information for this section is taken from Ens, *Mennonite Brethren in Global Mission*, 99-119.
- ²⁹ Herb Friesen, *A Reluctant Surgeon: Reflections of a Farm Boy Turned Ophthalmologist* (Islamabad: Self-published, 1996).

Recommended Reading

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Study Questions

1. The Indian MB Church has enormous potential to reach cross-culturally into the many unreached people groups in northern and central India. What are some ingredients that will contribute toward realizing that potential?
2. The churches begun in China by the Mennonite Brethren are no longer MB in their identity, but have become part of the government-controlled Three-Self Church or have gone underground. What should be our response to this? How should denominational mission agencies operate in countries, like China, where denominations are illegal?
3. On the whole, evangelicals in Japan are either declining or maintaining their present membership levels. Why is this? Compare the outstanding growth in Korea and China to the challenges that the Japanese church faces.
4. Much of the story of mission in southeast Asia has to do with migration. Identify how God has used the movement of peoples to bring the Gospel to countries like Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia. What lessons can be learned for your region?