

New and Growing Churches

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Introduction

This seminar is an attempt to tell of some of the younger or developing Mennonite churches and communities of today's Europe.

We approached a few Mennonite churches and communities for a kind of interview—that's why the "new and growing churches" although not all of them show increasing membership. Fortunately one can grow in many ways. So, it is an attempt to discover what Mennonites in quite different places, situations, and contexts in European countries have in common, or how they differ in worship, theological emphasis, customs, origins, social context. Mennonites in London, in Paris, in Messkirch in Germany, Vallon de St-Imier in Switzerland, Barcelone and Burgos in Spain, Rottevalle, Almere and Ouddorp in the Netherlands kindly responded to a series of questions sent to them.

The term "Europe" refers in a very global contextual and geographic way to the continent, which extends from small islands in the Atlantic ocean, across the great plains to the Ural mountains in the east, and is in fact the world's second smallest continent. It claims over 600 million inhabitants, compared to 950 million in India. Europe is divided into 53 nations in which over 190 different languages are spoken and six different alphabets are used. It is this diversity that accounts for the complexity of European societies.

In the past ten years, changes on a massive—and in a way of saying—on a biblical scale have occurred throughout Europe. So-called mighty empires collapsed. We have seen very old animosities surfacing which have inflamed terrible violence, causing thousands and thousands of people to flee into exile. Many were killed. Millions in Europe witnessed how Christians stood up against Muslim neighbors, and how Muslims chased out their Roman Catholic fellow citizens. Europeans felt powerless to bring a change towards ways of reconciliation from those forces of division and destruction.

We have seen walls disappear; such as the fall of the Berlin wall almost a decade

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ago which was symbol of separation of ideologies as communism and capitalism, of east and west. But we have also seen new walls taking their place, such as the ethnic conflicts in the Balkan area, or those walls installed by European governments as they became concerned about the numerous refugees crossing the European frontiers.

In the recent past and today we have seen an increasing undermining of confidence in institutions and in establishment. In Belgium, for example, loss of confidence in police, in justice and in politics. In England loss of trust in Lloyds Insurance Company and the banks, even the monarchy failing to maintain its aura of mystification, or in loss of confidence in Germany's economic prosperity and progress.

We have seen a growth in the influence of Islam. Islam became bigger than Methodism in England, and there are more practicing Muslims than Protestants in France. Islam in Europe is claiming its rightful space in the nations previously regarded as "Christian." Civil governments are being forced to wrestle with complicated issues related to religious freedom and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, not only in France, but also in Germany and the United Kingdom on the one hand, and to oppose right wing extremism and fascism on the other. Today, as political boundaries change and have changed, as new nations have emerged out of violent conflicts, as populations have shifted, only physical boundaries—mountains and rivers and seas—remain constant.

Churches are deeply affected and concerned by those immense changes. It is to their credit that Christians, churches, and church-related organizations are playing a vigilant, conscious, yet creative and sometimes a prophetic role, particularly in relation to issues of social justice or in peace concerns. But in every country of Europe, Christians and their churches are tested: by secularism, by streams of refugees, by pollution, political embarrassments, ambiguous economical progress, painful changes due to cultural and religious pluralism. It means that being Christian, in that part of our globe that we call Europe, is in some ways exiting, in other ways a struggle, but definitely challenging.

Christianity has been in Europe since biblical times: The New Testament tells us that a European government—the Roman Empire—condemned God's Messiah. Soldiers of its occupation force tormented him, crucified him and stood guard at his tomb. Six books of the New Testament are addressed to emerging Christian churches. As the New Testament writings bear witness, European Christianity was the fruit of the earliest Christian missionaries when Paul was told in a vision at night to cross over to Macedonia. Since then Europe knows a long history of Christianity and Christendom, not always admirable. Twenty centuries later, European culture has been inexorably influenced by it and until very recently the overwhelming majority of Europeans called themselves Christian, at least nominally so.

Many of the churches in Europe are truly "mother churches" from which have sprung also many of the denominations in North America, Africa and Asia. It is obvious that as churches we share together in various ways a common past. It is also true that many African and Asian brothers and sisters who came and still come to

Europe brought their own rich gifts to European culture and society, bringing a lively pluralism.

Notwithstanding the benefits and the richness of this pluralism, I think it can be argued that the churches in all parts of Europe are facing the same basic challenge: the secularization of modern people is either actively corroding the church, or simply ignoring its existence. The churches themselves, though, can not deny either the pervasive nature of secularism, nor the dominant influence of secular structures on today's society and on the life of the church itself. To be brief: one can state that Europe is no longer "Christendom"; it is increasingly secular, increasingly capitalist, and increasingly materialist. Christian faith is no longer granted serious public status. The old style establishment has lost its roots. The exception in all of western Europe is Ireland, where for both Protestants and Catholics, it remains a country where it is normal to go to church.

We all know that there was a period when the church, when Christendom, dominated the culture of Europe, whether it was the world of Byzantium, or the Roman Catholic Church or the world of the Reformation. In today's Europe, however, Christian churches must contend with the growing appeal of secularism. This concern over growing secularism is, or should be I think, a major issue for today's churches in western Europe, as they rethink their form of witness and mission in society and are trying to discover and observe the characteristics of secularism. A dictionary definition of secularism is: "the belief that religion and ecclesiastical affairs should not enter into the functions of the State."

Although to a certain extent this might be true, it is, I think, also a very formal definition and not conclusive. There is an example that makes the phenomena of secularism more tangible: The location is the city of Almere, that emerged on the bottom of the old Zuiderzee, only 20 years ago. This new town on one of the polders (land gained on what once was the sea) now claims 160,000 inhabitants. It was built to solve the housing problem in and around Amsterdam. Almost nine years ago the Dutch Mennonite Mission Board initiated a mission project in this urban situation: They rented a house that became a Center of missionary presence as meeting place for the neighborhood (so far the context).

Secularization has deeply affected the Dutch society previously regarded as Christian. Gerrit Jan Romeijn and Jaap de Graaff, missionary workers at the Center, described in *Mission Focus* 1996/Vol. 4 how on a Monday morning, a group of local high school students visited the house, as part of a social science project—learning to know the social context of the school. They were guided around the Center and finally arrived at the little chapel in the house. At first they watched silently, but all of a sudden one of the students asked: "What kind of a book is that?" She pointed with her finger to the Bible. The host explained the great significance of the book for Christians. She listened, she had never heard of it.... Ignorance of the most basic information, such as the stories of Abraham and the story and meaning of Jesus' life is widespread. Such an incident indicates the impact of the changes that took place during the past three decades with regard to the position of Christian faith and the

church in today's society. This is largely true for the Netherlands.

I would like to develop the context of this situation a bit. In the sixties a period began in which people left the church. Although most of them had grown up within the church, for many reasons the church was finished for them. At the same time a whole new generation was emerging. A generation that did not grow up in the church, or with Christian convictions. Faith or religion was without any significance for these children. We wonder if we are back at the spot where the church began two thousand years ago. We could ask ourselves; "What happened?"

The events of the past three decades in the Netherlands and in many other countries in Europe, North America and elsewhere, are in fact the acceleration of a process that started several hundred years ago. In simple terms we can call this modernization: the developments in society characterized by the striving to solve problems from a perspective of rationality. Nature is comprehended by laws of nature, the social reality by well-defined social patterns, and human personality by psychological factors. To be brief: the world in all its aspects becomes more and more rationalized and the self-determined human being is valued above all. It is from this perspective that the church is regarded as an old-fashioned and authoritative structure. One should struggle out of its grasp. The church in general, in the Netherlands then, has moved from a central position in society, towards a marginal one. Christianity is marginalized. And the churches have severe problems to adapt.

One could state, that the decline of the churches means the disappearance of Christianity. This is often thought to be true, but on the other hand we see new models of being church emerging.

It helps to notice that other ideological systems are disintegrating as well. Left wing and right wing politics are moving ideologically towards the center. Communism has disappeared, the humanist movement is crumbling too and even environmental activist organizations such as Greenpeace has lost adherents. This shows that the crisis in convictions isn't restricted to the churches alone. Until the 1970s one could distinguish Roman Catholic, Calvinist, Socialist, Communist and Humanist ideological systems. These structures were evident also in sports clubs, labor unions, broadcasting companies, newspapers etc. But here, too, idealism is moving to the margins of society.

There is one remarkable exception. An evangelical broadcasting company has become one of the largest companies—this past year their growth was about 20,000 new members—and their identity is clearly present in their programs. Where Protestant churches are content to welcome a hundred persons at an activity, this evangelical broadcasting company fills a stadium with thirty thousand young people. Maybe this is an indication or even a sign that people are looking for something profounder than the superficiality of daily life. It means also that churches should address this. And it seems that the Mennonite church in Ouddorp is achieving this.

It seems to me, that among evangelicals, the experience of deliberately having chosen to opt out of what "everybody does" in the wider society is prevalent. Evangelical churches are lively and well attended, embody strong personal relationships

with God and within the group, are strong on the authority of the Bible, and on sharp definition of boundaries, whether in belief or behavior. These informal and non-denominational churches make a potent claim to be the model of New Testament Christianity.

In all of this we are not living in an age that sees itself as unspiritual. Only a few bookshops have an abundant section on Christian faith or theology; instead, one finds an abundance of manuals on meditation or reincarnation, or even on speaking to trees. These are to me signs of a quest for spirituality. We see literature full of religion, but few refer to Christianity or churches. Or yet another example: only two years ago a Gregorian chant was at the top of the pop music charts all over Europe. It is interesting to note that more than half of the general population declare themselves to be religious, but are not interested in becoming Christian nor curious about Christian convictions.

Here then in broad terms is the horizon of Christian churches in the Netherlands. One can identify two tendencies in the current reactions: one extreme is to act as if nothing has changed outside. The religious tradition within the church dominates, and the church isolates itself from the corrupt world—a form of escapism. The other extreme is that of fully adjusting to the demands of modern society. Everything that is believed in should be explainable. When convictions and beliefs cannot be explained, they should be dropped because it is traditional, antique and old fashioned.

Both reactions are basically unproductive, because they avoid dealing with the tension between the religious tradition, the heritage of Christian faith, and the present situation. Fortunately we see among us also churches where this tension is not avoided, but is used in a creative way, which can lead to renewal, to a rediscovery of the core of our faith. A major force in this process is the quest for a meaningful presence in society. Doing this demands courage, creativity, flexibility and perseverance.

When observing Mennonite tradition, one can see that Dutch Mennonites were influenced very early by modernity, and, Dutch Mennonites seem to have adapted quite well. During the last decade there was some change. Appeals to their Mennonite heritage, the search for Anabaptist identity and interest in the radical roots of sixteenth century Anabaptism, resulted in more reflection on how Mennonite congregations should relate to the “world”—a changing world—and witness to authentic renewal as the core of God’s message for this world. A number of congregations are trying to find models of relevant presence in society. It is their stories, together with those of churches elsewhere, that we want to tell you.

The churches below responded to a questionnaire asking them to describe briefly their origins, church life, and perspectives of hope. The objective was to obtain systematic responses on context, membership, worship attendance, involvement in social questions, conflict mediation.

Burgos

- l. a Origins in 1970; renewal movement among Roman Catholics with Pentecostal characteristics, rehabilitation of drug addicts
- b context: unemployment and drug abuse
- c denominational context: dominant Roman Catholic, small evangelical minority, good relationship with other evangelicals
- d secularization in not a menace; a bit a challenge, fairly indifferent
- e when Christian experience is alive in the Holy Spirit, secularization means little difficulty
- f renting a hall
- g renting the hall given a form of entrance towards the neighborhood, but does not determine being attractive nor mission
- h neighborhood evangelism

Almere

- l. a origins go back to 1983. Then a student in theology started bringing people (Mennonite and Remonstrant) together by visiting them. Out of this initiative evolved a discussion group which met monthly and was directed by a pastor/theologue. In 1991 the pastor of the neighbor Mennonite church took the initiative in bringing organizations together that could facilitate (financially) the founding of a new Mennonite congregation. Finances were brought together, a pastor started working and the Mission Board offered a space for meetings. Fall 1993 the congregation is formally existent.
- b The church members form a rather homogeneous group, intellectual at the same level.
- c the denominational context is that of a secular society. 30-40% of the Dutch population is related to a Church. In the context of Almere it's even less, only 10 percent.
- d secularization is a fairly large menace to the church and a bit of a challenge, indifference isn't mentioned
- e People turn their backs to the traditional churches. Although people are interested in religion/spirituality, but in a very personalized manner without any responsibilities or attachment
- f The congregation rents a space for worship services twice a month, and are using space offered by the Inloophuis de Ruimte (an urban mission project of the Doopgezinde Zending) that's deliberately in a "difficult" area (unemployment etc.)
- g Until now the congregation hasn't developed much interest in the neighbourhood, but this is changing.
- h Our first concern is bringing together people from a Mennonite background who are living in Almere.

Ouddorp

1. a Origins in app.1620. After WW II long period of vacancy (40 years). Small prayer group during a long period prayed for awakening. In 1987 a pastor came. After one year church attendance was growing. Church building became too small. A new church was built.
- b context: determined by geographical situation; island 40.000 inhabitants. The insulated geographical position resulted in tight and rather closed communities. The influence of the reformation, which emphasizes duty and the sinfulness of people, was strong. This was also reflected in the Mennonite congregation. Unemployment is low. Prosperity has risen in the past decades. Consequently the community has become more open, less traditional. This counts also for the local Mennonite congregation. She is rather homogeneous, but recently a group of refugees is attending church.
- c denominational context: strong interaction between social and denominational context in the past. The denomination can be described as Christian culture, although secularization rates app. 50 percent.
- d secularization is a bit a menace; fairly a challenge, none is indifferent
- e secularization obviously means to churches to know better what they do believe or what they should not believe. Need to speak in nowadays terms, without losing the depth, height, broadness of the gospel. Churches need to find out that people don't come to the church, but the church has to come to the people.
- f privileged to own a new and functional church building
- g no urbanized situation. The entire local community is neighborhood
- h make presence of the Mennonite congregation known, special edition of our church magazine, announcement of services and other activities in the local newspaper.

London

1. a origins: grew out of North American activities in the 50-70s. Mixture of North American and United Kingdom
- b social context: the church is largely made up of professional people who come together because of sharing views and experience
- c denominational context: only Mennonite church in the UK, contacts with evangelical churches
- d Secularization is fairly much a menace and a challenge, none is indifferent.
- e Secularization obviously means that "stories" of Christian tradition are less known, churches need to take this in account. Life choices are individualistic.
- f meet in a local community building in a working class area. A few members live in this area. Others live elsewhere. It's a deliberate choice to meet in this area.
- g presence is not too manifest, mostly in relating to other churches.
- h because church membership in widespread the focus is wider. Meeting in a community center is one way of making our presence known to our neighborhood

Messkirch

1. a origins: in 1989-90 the Mennonite congregation in Uberlingen decided to start a new congregation in the close area. This started with a small meeting group (eight persons: women) and training in communicating the gospel in 1992. In 1992 a pastor (50 percent) started working to begin a new Mennonite congregation. When in the summer of 1993 about 20 people were interested by forming a community, church services were started on Sunday morning, twice a month. In 1994 the Services became weekly and a Sunday school started. In 1996 the congregation became independent of the Mennonite congregation in Uberlingen and was formally recognized by authorities.
- b very diverse, professionals, teachers, umsiedler (former Russian Mennonite).
- c denominational context: the local Roman Catholic church and the evangelical church were in the beginning rather skeptical towards the founding of a new congregation. Now relations are friendly. 85 percent Roman Catholics, 13 percent Evangelical, small groups such as Jehovahs Witnesses, Old Catholics.
- d secularization is fairly much a menace and a challenge, none is indifferent.
- e many divorces, children left alone etc.
- f the congregation is renting recently a meeting place
- g
- h because of the church activities: women's breakfast group, men's group, youth group, and living evangelical faith, the church became well known.

Rottevalle

1. a origins of the congregation is in the 1620s
- b social context is mainly rural. In earlier days the church members were farmers and boatmen. Nowadays a variety of professions is present although a large number of the church members are retired
- c denominational context is one of cooperation with other Protestant churches in the local community. Our congregation is known for her anti-militaristic attitude
- d secularization is a bit of a menace, fairly much a challenge, none is indifferent
- e secularization obviously means that churches become marginalized, but has also positive aspects; church membership is motivated by a very conscious choice. The role of the church in society is a prophetic one (conscious of the society).
- f the church we own was built in 1838
- g the neighborhood influenced the choices we make as a congregation; for example dealing with poor-rich questions, or hosting refugees
- h the congregation is manifesting her presence by announcing activities in the local newspaper. The church bulletin is available in the local library. The congregation participates in local festivities and tries to be an "open community" towards local citizens.

Paris

- l. a origin: the Communauté Chrétienné was born out of mission efforts among African students living in the Paris region. French and North American Mennonites founded the Foyer Grebel in 1976 to become a center for African students that came to Europe. What is now known as the church grew out of meetings with the students. In 1981 a group began to have worship services on Sunday mornings. In the beginning the majority of participants were of African origin, nowadays the number of members of French, European, North American origin is about 50%. The Communauté kept its character of open community with a strong multi-cultural interest. Some church members have no or only partial employment, others are still studying, it's a mixture of Europeans and Africans, intellectuals and non-intellectuals.
- b social context is determined by the geographic location in the suburb area of Paris, although the church itself is located in a residential (bourgeois) area. Facing social matters as unemployment, housing difficulties,, (racism)
- c in a denominational context Protestant churches are a small minority as Roman Catholicism is predominant. Even adherents to the Islam are more numerous than Protestants in France. In the local community both, Roman Catholics and Protestants are represented, and the Communauté has ecumenical contacts.
- d secularization in not a menace but fairly much a challenge (no indifference)
- e secularization obviously means to churches that they have to learn to be "marginal" and without power, they need to learn to communicate and witness in new ways
- f the church's meeting place is in an upper middle class residential area. This was not a deliberate choice but motivated by what was available.
- g the church's role to the neighborhood in very small as the majority of the members live elsewhere:
- h the Communauté is manifesting her presence by participating in ecumenical ventures, choir concerts, personal contacts, inviting and meetings with neighborhood people

Valon St-Imier

- l. a origins go back to 1983 when the Mennonite congregation of Sonnenberg decided to start a church in the nearby Vallon. Families started meeting and founded the congregation. Particularity: French speaking.
- b the social context is predominantly rural, small fine-technique industries exist. The congregation in rather homogenous, few church members are farmers, most of the professionals.
- c denominational context is predominated by the Protestant Reformed Church, also some evangelical churches are around and also the Roman Catholic church is represented. There are ecumenical contacts.
- d secularization is not a menace, but a bit of a challenge and also one is a bit

indifferent

- e secularization in society isn't explicit as our Swiss (new) constitution does still refer to the Almighty God. By the way: Europe is for the Swiss considered more or less as fiction.
- f the church is located in a small village (500 inhabitants) and chosen because it's rather centrally located where the church members are coming from.
- g the influence that the church has on the neighborhood is little, although our church members individually are active there where they live.
- h the church didn't explicitly develop means for manifesting her presence, although there have been divers actions in witnessing and evangelizing

Barcelona

- l. a originated out of mission work since 1978 which on the one side focused on peace issues and on the other on social work. The first period the community aspect was emphasized, perhaps it was also marked by a too intellectual approach of Christian faith. Later youth activities became strongly developed even with an outreach to the neighborhood.
- b the social context of the church is marked by being in one of the largest cities in Spain: 2.5 million inhabitants, equipped with commercial centers, industries etc. Church is located in a working and middle class area. Church members are professionals, workers and students.
- c denominational context is by the manifest presence of the Roman Catholic Church. Until the Spanish Constitution in 1978, granting freedom of religion, the Roman Catholic Church was the only religion recognized by authorities, although evangelical churches existed too. Nowadays numerous Catholics are non-practicing. Young people are, or are saying that they aren't believers. Although often they still marry in church for their parent's sake.
- d secularization is a bit of a challenge, one is a bit indifferent, menace is not mentioned
- e secularization obviously means to churches that they have to think in a new way and change in a profound manner the way in which the church approaches individuals, and also it influences the way in which the Bible is being read.
- f since one year ago the church owns it's own meeting place for worship, it's in a district with sport parks which means that very few persons live nearby. Although the church building is between two residential areas, one populated mostly by immigrants from North Africa, South America, or other regions of Spain, the other is more like a middle class residential zone.
- g the outreach of the church towards the neighborhood isn't significant, but neighbors know the church because of the social activities. (older and mentally disturbed people)
- h no deliberate action in manifesting the church's presence

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

factors of increasing membership

Burgos	church membership	less than on year	1-5 years	6-10 years	more than 10 years
	men	7	7	8	10
	women	4	6	7	15
	children	5	12	12	2
	friends or other participants	5-10			
	number is increasing due to activities among drug addicts, prisoners, and AIDS infected people				
Almere	church membership	less than on year	1-5 years	6-10 years	more than 10 years
	men	10	8		
	women	14	10		
	children	18	15		
	friends or other participants	20	15		
Ouddorp	church membership	less than on year	1-5 years	6-10 years	more than 10 years
	men				
	women				
	children				
	friends or other participants				
	Growth is related to a strong sentiment of a new start, mark by appointing a pastor after a period of vacancy (40 years). Special welcome services once a month. Many people came out of curiosity, others because they felt a spiritual emptiness, which could not be filled by the duty-oriented theology of the reformatory church. People got interested in de Ouddorp congregation, even after years of not attending worship services: youngsters and adults. Members were stimulated to invite friends and family to the worship services. Because of human efforts and being blessed and guided by God, made the congregation grow.				

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

factors of increasing membership

London	church membership	less than on year	1-5 years	6-10 years	more than 10 years
	men		2	4	6
	women	2	1	6	5
	children	3	3		
	friends or other participants	3			
	The congregation have been steady at the number of 26-36 members for over 10 years. People come and people leave.				
Minneapolis	church membership	less than on year	1-5 years	6-10 years	more than 10 years
	men	8	5		2
	women	9	5		3
	children	2			
	friends or other participants				
	Mainly by personal contacts people came to know the church, let the be baptized and become member				
Rotterdam	church membership	less than on year	1-5 years	6-10 years	more than 10 years
	men	1	1	3	22
	women	1	5	1	27
	children	2	2	2	5
	friends or other participants	2	17	26	82
	The number is not increasing. Rotterdam notices that people hesitate to bind themselves to church or other (political parties for example). Confession and baptism (ritual) are for some an obstacle				
Paris	church membership	less than on year	1-5 years	6-10 years	more than 10 years
	men		3	5	1
	women		9	7	1
	children		14	10	2
	friends or other participants		15	3	
	The church didn't grow significantly the past five years; no more meeting space for more people.				
Vallon de St-Jovier	church membership	less than on year	1-5 years	6-10 years	more than 10 years
	men		3	6	11
	women		2	4	9
	children		12	14	a lot
	friends or other participants			13	
	The number of members is stable between those whom left, and those who came				
Barcelona	church membership	less than on year	1-5 years	6-10 years	more than 10 years
	men		5	2	4
	women	1	5	2	3
	children		4		5
	friends or other participants		5		
	Increase of members due to personal relationships, working among youngsters, others are coming from other congregations.				

BECOMING MEMBER OF THE CHURCH

baptism and/or confession

	is rebaptism required	on the church's confession of faith	on personal confession of faith	only testifying of one's faith	other/remarks
Burgos	no, adult baptism yes		yes	yes, if baptized as adult	
Almere	no	no	yes	yes	
Ouddorp	no	no	yes	yes	accept baptism of children as a way of bringing them into God's sphere of influence. If people do not value their infant baptism, will be baptized again. Baptism is a personal act, symbolized by the water washing of sin. Means losing the old life and rising again into a new life with Christ.
London	no	no	no	yes	becoming member or affirming the church's covenant
Meskirch	yes, as biblical baptism	yes	yes	yes, when baptized as child.	It's not possible to be member of two congregations.
Rottevalle	no, not required but desired		yes		
Paris	no	yes, confession of French Mennonite Conference	yes	yes, ^{if} coming from another church	
Vallon de St-Imier	no	no	no	no	no, participation to church activities
Barcelona	yes		yes	yes	It depends from person to person, in the way that persons walk with Christ

Confession of faith or other constituting documents

Burgos confession of Dordrecht, (1632)

Almere not yet

Ouddorp no confession of faith, but established confessions are used in worship services

London the church have a covenant which is the defining document of the church

Meskirch

Rottevalle no

Paris confession of faith of the French Mennonites, local church covenant, legal statutes

Vallon de St-Imier confession of faith of the French Mennonites, legal statutes

St-Imier

Barcelona statutes defining members engagement

ACTIVITIES IN THE CHURCH
 theme(s) treated this year

	Burgos	Almere	Guddorp	London	Messkirch	Rottlevalle	Paris	Valer Blithie	Sanctoria
Sunday school	yes	yes	yes; Sundays	yes; by prepared material	yes	yes; by prepared material	yes; peace and conflict	yes; texts and persons of the Old Testament	yes
Youth group	yes		yes; each Thursday		yes	yes; 2 groups; 12-18; 16-25	yes; diverse issues	yes	yes; Saturdays, bible study
Women's group	yes		yes; once a month		yes	yes; 20 participants			yes; bible study, sharing
Men's group			almost		yes	yes; 12 participants			
Bible study group		yes	yes; several small groups	called home-group; leadership is an item		yes; 8 persons	yes; book of James		4 groups
Discussion group	yes	yes; on the confession of faith	yes; biblical teaching and discussion	at times		yes; about New Age			yes
Prayer group	yes		yes; every Monday, important		yes	yes; ecumenical once a month	yes; sharing concerns	yes	yes
Choir	yes		yes 20 youngsters and adults			yes; ecumenical	yes		
Other	prison-rehabilitation drug addicts	children as group; worship preparation group	meet-in for teenagers; bible course; gospel-basics teaching; young couples; classes at schools; scouting	home-groups; members are encouraged to participate	yes; gospel-basics teaching	yes; 25+ group. This year strong focus on Menno's writings meaning for Mennonites today	house-groups, studying Scriptures		studying book of James, Abraham, gifts, spiritual growth

Pastors and other functions; defining leadership and sharing responsibilities

- Burgos** Two part-time pastors, church council and supervising elders. Trying to identify leadership skills; training and delegating responsibilities; youth and Sunday school leaders. Church members have sufficient influence on decision making.
- Almere** Pastor, church council is on its way to be defined. The pastor's responsibilities are visiting members, worship services and leading groups, Youth leader is active. The church's objective is to share as much as possible the different responsibilities. Church members have sufficient influence on decision making.
- Ouddorp** Many leadership positions in the church. Defined leadership among pastor and church council. Pay serious attention to potential leadership skills among members, and monitoring leadership yet defined. The congregation as a whole is involved in important decision making.
- London** A team of elders is leading the church, right now in the process of considering paying someone to call in skills needed for growing and prospering. The team of elders is overseeing (in a pastoral way) church life. A committee is involved in decision making. Every member has the opportunity to be involved. Members and attenders are encouraged to preach and lead Bible studies. Each home group is encouraged to be active in outreach
- Messkirch** Missionary and pastoral work is united in one person. A team is responsible for church activities. The church council in decision making. Attentive to leadership skills. Church members are involved on decision making.
- Rottevalle** Church council is responsible for the congregation in organization and administration. Pastor is adviser in the council. His responsibilities are: worship services, counseling, leadership of groups, youth work. A team of "visitors," looks after church members. Try to discern leadership skills. Church members have sufficient influence on decision making.
- Paris** A pastoral team is taking care for pastoral oversight and theological vision. The church council is responsible for administration, coordination and oversight of activities. Members are encouraged to be active and are involved in decision making
- Vallio de St-Imier** The church is responsible for the general direction of the church Sunday school teachers have an assignment for teaching (counseling) the children, there is an effort of discerning strong personalities amongst church members. Church members are involved in decision making.
- Barcelone** The pastor is overseeing the group activities, responsible for counseling and teaching, the church council has a supervising task towards the pastor, and administrative responsibilities. Youth leaders assume coordination of youth work. Paying attention to leadership skills but could be better, encouraging members to participate in assuming responsibilities. Church members are involved in decision making.

MEANINGFUL SUBJECTS OF BELIEF

	1: not important	2: a little important	3: of some importance	4: important	5: very important				
	Burgos	Almere	Ouddorp	London	Meeekirch	Rottevulle	Farle	Va on St-Imier	Barcelone
to be saved	5	1	5	5	5	2	4	5	4
to be called	5	3	4	5	5	4	4	5	4
to be sent	5	2	5	5	5	3	4	5	2
non-resistance	5	3	3	5	4	4	3	3	5
living sermon	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4
the mount ethics									
baptism or confession	5	1	4	4	3	4	4	5	4
personal confession	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	1	3
personal belief	3	4	4	4	2	5	not outside consensus	?	4
inspired towards social action	5	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3
			loving one another			search for community	racial harmony		difficult to answer in a general way

What issues are emphasized in mennonite tradition and theology

Burgos	following Jesus, discipleship, Holy Spirit, in accordance to the Scriptures
Almere	doing things together, being responsible for our deeds and words
Ouddorp	following Jesus today, witness of God and Jesus in word and deed, importance of local congregation
London	peace and justice are essential in understanding Scriptures as is community, leadership
Meeekirch	anti militarism, biblical baptizing, following Jesus (nachfolge) open honest lifestyle
Rottevulle	adult baptizing, responsible for word and deed,
Farle	peace issues, social involvement, mission, racial harmony, participation in church life
Va on St-Imier	not attached to typical mennonite traditions
Barcelone	being community, conflict resolution, emphasizing social dimension of the gospel

CALLING OF THE CHURCH

1: disagree 2: agree a little 3: agrees 4: strongly agrees

	Burgos	Almere	Ouddorp	London	Meeskirch	Ruttsville	Paris	Valer St- Imier	Barcelona
to confess the name of the Lord	4	3	4	4	4	2	4	4	3
to be a celebrating church	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3
to care for one another	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3
to serve one another	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
to be engaged in socio- political action	3	3	2	4	2	4	3		3
to work on peace	3	3	2	4	3	4	4	2	3
to be a missionary church	4	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	3
to meet and dialog with other religions	1	2	1	2	1	3		2	3

ITEMS ON BEING THE CHURCH

how it is: 1: no 2: a little 3: fairly much 4: very much how it should be: A: less B: the same C: more

	Burgos		Almere		Ouddorp		London		Messkirch		Rottweil		Paris		Val de l'Yonne		Barcelona	
strengthening the mutual life	4	B	2	C	3	C	3	B	3	B	3	C	3	C	3	C	3	C
building personal faith	4	B	3	C	3	C	3	B	3	C	2	C	2	C	4	A	2	C
developing one's capacities	3	C	3	C	4	B	3	B	3	C	3	B	3	C	4	B	2	C
order for worship	2	B	3	B	4	B	4	B	3	C	3	B	3	C	4	B	3	B
evangelism	2	C	2	B	3	C	2	C	2	C	3	B	2	C	2	C	2	C
youth activities	2	C	3	B	4	B	1	B	2	C	3	C	2	C	3	C	3	B
working on peace and justice	2	B	2	C	2	C	2	C	1	C	2	C	2	C	2	C	1	C
ecumenical contact	1	B	2	C	1	B	3	B	1	B	3	B	3	B	3	B	2	C

Church's motivation for social action

Burgos: Matthew's 25:31 w

Almere: our task is making Gods coming kingdom visible

Ouddorp: should be grounded in what we believe. So Christ is our motivation as He took care...

London: we are called by Scripture and church history to be involved in social action

Messkirch: faith is our motivation, witnessing and obeying Christ and his mission command

Rottweil: our task is making Gods coming kingdom visible in actions of justice and peace

Paris: flow out of convictions

Val de l'Yonne:

St-Jimier:

Barcelona: witnessing and obeying Christ and his mission command

SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE CHURCH

how it is:	1: no		2: a little		3: sufficient		4: a lot		how it should be: A: less B: the same C: more									
	Burgos		Almere		Ouddorp		London		Meeckiroh		Rottevalle		Paris		Valen de Imier		Barcelona	
unemployment	1	B	1	C	1	B	1	B	1	B	2	C	2	B*	1	-	1	C
racism	2	B	1	C	2	C	2	C	1	C	3	B	3	B*	1	-	1	C
women issues	1	B	2	C	1	B	4	B	1	B	2	C	3	B*	1	-	3	B
drugs addicts	4	B	1	B	1	C	1	B	1	C	2	C	1	B*	1	-	1	C
slide	4	B	1	B	1	B	1	B	1	C	1	C	1	B*	1	-	1	C
refugees	2	B	2	C	4	C	2	C	2	C	3	B	2	B*	4	-	1	C
aged people	1	B	1	B	3	B	2	C	3	C	2	C	1	B*	1	-	3	C
homeless	2	B	3	B	1	C	2	C	1	B	2	C	2	B*	1	-	1	C
loneliness	3	B	2	C	3	C	2	C	3	C	3	C	2	B*	1	-	1	C
environment	1	B	2	C	1	C	2	C	1	B	2	C	2	B*	1	-	1	B
2/3 world	1	B	2	C	2	C	3	C	2	C	2	C	3	B*	-	-	1	C

Church's worship service

Burgos	Sundays and mid-weeks; attendance 100%, everyone (children too) participates; collection of songs; a committee is preparing worship
Almere	Sundays in two weeks; attendance 60%, everyone (children too) participates; collection of songs and Liedboek voor Kerken; a committee is preparing worship
Ouddorp	Twice on Sundays; attendance 90% (400 pres.); children are present, go to their own meeting; handing out songs; using and Liedboek voor Kerken; the pastor is preparing worship
London	Sundays; attendance 70%, children's presence; a worship planning group is preparing worship; Mennonite Hymnal and collection of songs
Meeckiroh	Sundays; attendance ...%, children's presence, go to their own meeting; a worship committee is preparing worship; a Mennonite Hymnal and collection of songs
Rottevalle	Sundays; attendance 50%, (satisfying) children go to their own meeting; a worship committee is sometimes preparing worship, mostly the pastor; Liedboek voor Kerken and collection of songs
Paris	Sundays; attendance 85%, (satisfying) children participating; a worship leader and preacher are preparing worship; evangelical songbook and collection of songs
Valen de St-Imier	Sundays; attendance 80%, (satisfying) children participating then go to their own meeting; a worship leader and preacher are preparing worship; Youth with a Mission; and collection of songs
Barcelona	Sundays; attendance 95% (good) children participating then go to their own meeting; a worship group is preparing worship; collection of songs

LITURGICAL ASPECTS

Paying attention to: 1: yes 2: a little 3: no

	Burgos	Almere	Ouddorp	London	Messkirch	Rottevalle	Paris	Valo i St-Imier	Barcelone
eccles. Order of year	3	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	2
continue & lecture	3	-	3	-	3	1	3	2	3
uniform prayer	3	3	-	3	3	2	3	3	3
confessions	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3
Lords Supper	1	1	each 2 months	1	1	2	1	2 times a month	1
structural NT, OT and Epistles	1	1	1	2	3	1	2	3	3
decoration	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	3

PERCEPTION OF THE WORSHIP SERVICES

opinions of members agrees with: 1: no 2: a little 3: fairly much 4: very much

	Burgos	Almere	Ouddorp	London	Messkirch	Rottevalle	Paris	Valo i St-Imier	Barcelone
important for growth of faith	3	3	4	2	4	3	4	4	3
important for experiencing of faith	3	3	4	3	3	2	4	-	3
important for experiencing Gods presence	3	2	3	3	3	2	4	4	4
meeting place for renewing friendships	2	2	2	4	2	3	4	1	3
worship service strenghtens mutual tie	2	3	4	4	2	3	4	4	3