

# IRCA Gathering

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*The IRCA meets every four years, starting in 1994 ...*

The International Rural Churches Association's (IRCA) 4<sup>th</sup> quad-annual Conference was held in Altenkirchen, Westerwald, Germany on September 20 - 26, 2010.

Fifty participants (farmers, ministry and lay) from rural areas represented five continents. The conference theme was "Hunger – A Global Challenge". Several presentations addressed the theme using a United Nations report that brings a revolutionary approach to agriculture. The 2010 Conference Resolution can be found at [www.irca.net.nz](http://www.irca.net.nz), which explains the UN report and IRCA's support of its findings.

We spent a lot of time networking by hearing stories of each others' struggles and joys. In those stories we found common bonds with one another. The conference was not all gloom. We found that we have an International Rural Church Community with signs of hope and new life that shares God's love and work in each of our lands.

IRCA's constitution was passed at this conference, which will help to pave the way to become more organized as a "recognized" International Charitable Organization – a prerequisite in today's financial world to even set up a bank account. IRCA considers itself "to be a voice for the voiceless". In today's global economy many voices have been silenced, but as we see at the World Trade Organization talks, those voices will not remain silent. Thanks be to God.

Five Canadians represented Canada and the Canadian Rural Church Network – all United Church: Peggy and Dan Bartlett from Nanticoke, Eric and Annette Skillings from Chatham - both from Southwestern Ontario, and Catherine Christie, who is now in South Korea as an Overseas Personnel for the United Church of Canada. Catherine brought experiences from Saskatchewan and her new experiences from South Korea.

The Executive was elected; Catherine Christie as Chairperson, Kevin Harper (Australia) as Treasurer and Garry Hardingham (Australia) as Secretary.

Thank you to our past Chair Lothar Schullerus, our past Treasurer David Ruesink, and Garry Hardingham as our Secretary.

Plans are already being made for the next Conference in 2014.

For the first time, we had one delegate from Africa – Malawi. Copeland had to go through major hoops to just obtain his visa. He made many sacrifices at home to join us. We are so thankful for Copeland's determination to be part of the wider church. Also we had the privilege to meet folks from ex-communist countries such as Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Romania. Of course, returnees from India, Australia, New Zealand, Great

Britain, Switzerland, United States, Germany and Canada were happy to see one another again.

Thank you to this year's planning committee. The conference was enlightening. The food and accommodations were fantastic. The sights, sounds and experiences were life changing. Thanks be to God.

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