Cross-Cultural Journal: Free Travel in Africa

By Kevin Docherty
Foreign Correspondent

Free travel began on Oct. 26 in Durban, a city with beautiful beaches, nice restaurants and plenty of options for filling the nine open days on our schedule. With such a paradise at our fingertips, Eric Kendra Heatwole, Meredith Blauch, Rhoda Miller, and I decided to head 2000 kilometers north to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

We left Durban on the first bus on Sunday morning and by Tuesday afternoon we five weary pilgrims reached our Mecca looking forward to a few days of relaxation. That relaxation did not immediately happen upon us, though as there were money issues to deal with first.

She explained that we had three options. We could exchange money at a bank or a Bureau de Change at an exchange rate set by the Zimbabwean government (825 Zim to 1 U.S. dollar) and get ripped off. We could exchange money on the black market at a far better exchange rate (5500 Zim to 1 U.S. dollar) and run the risk of getting arrested. Or, she could call up a connection of hers who could give us an excellent exchange rate (5000 Zim to 1 U.S. dollar) in a manner that, she assured us, was okay with the police.

Stuck in somewhat of a predicament, wanting to make the most of our money and not wanting to see the inside of a jail in Zimbabwe, we took our host’s advice and asked her to make the call. She did, and five minutes later the connection showed up wearing dark sunglasses, a backpack, and carrying a small duffel bag which, we would soon find out, was full of cash. His name was Victor; he made the deal out in the open at the hostel’s restaurant.

In the end we never did figure out what made his little business different from the black market. But I suppose what is ultimately important is that both parties walked away happy. We, with 700,000 Zim dollars in a stack about a foot high, and he, with 1000 South African Rand in ten note 100 Rand bills.

Mennos Reveal Identity Over Coffee

By Elisabeth Clemmer
Staff Writer

Mennonites and Non-Mennonites students converged Wednesday night in the Common Grounds coffee shop to discuss religious differences.

After an opening welcome by Campus Ministry Pastor Julie Haushalter, a skit was performed depicting a stereotypical Mennonite student in dialogue with a stereotypical non-Mennonite student. The non-Mennonite was oblivious to the acronym MCC, MYF, YES, and indifferent to the numbers 606 and 118.

After explaining that there would be no singing of the national anthem at the men’s volleyball game, the Mennonite student successfully tried to strike up a conversation about Michael Sattler and Conrad Grebel with the non-Mennonite.

Following the skit, three students delivered speeches spotlighting their personal perspectives of Mennonite vs. Non at EMU.

As a Presbyterian, sophomore Erin Bailey came to EMU for the social work program. She recalled asking admissions counselor Tim Troyer, “If I come here will you try to make me Mennonite?” She noted that in coming here the differences that made the greatest impression on her were the groups of students who came knowing each other and the new concept of universal pacifism. Bailey met an overall perspective atmosphere in bringing students delivered speeches spot-lighting their personal perspectives of Mennonite vs. Non at EMU.

Pastoral Assistant Matthew Yoder spoke from the perspective of being immersed in a Mennonite culture since birth. He refuted the secular cliché that Mennonites do not know how to survive in the “real world,” arguing that they’ve been given valid lenses on which to base a worldview. Yoder noted that “anyone who truly takes Christ’s teaching seriously will have to believe in pacifism.” He also acknowledged appreciation for sacraments within the Catholic church and the reverence those acts exemplified.

Students were given the opportunity to ask questions of the panel and reflect on the viewpoints presented. The forum was an informal way to prompt conversation at a predominantly, but not entirely, Mennonite university.

While it was entitled "The Top Ten Things a Non-Mennonite Should Know About Attending a Mennonite University," there weren’t numbered items in a typical top ten fashion; the items on the list were subtle and centered around basic assumptions that Mennonites share and that they may assume everyone at EMU knows as well.

The forum pointed out that unless people talk about these differing assumptions, they will only make incorrect assumptions of each other.