

INTERNATIONAL BRETHREN CONFERENCE ON MISSION 5

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT FORMS

This note summarises the assessment forms which were received following the conference. The first part gives the statistical information. The second part gives salient extracts from the discursive comments of the participants; this is necessarily selective, including only the more pithy and clear comments made by participants. The last section groups together some of the more practical suggestions which may be relevant to the practical planning of future IBCM conferences.

QUANTITATIVE INFORMATION

Participants were asked to score various aspects of the conference according to the following grid:

How do you rate the conference (circle the number: 1 = Poor and 5 = Excellent):

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Main sessions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Workshops you attended | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Evening sessions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Informal contacts with participants | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Accommodation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(Which accommodation were you assigned to _____)

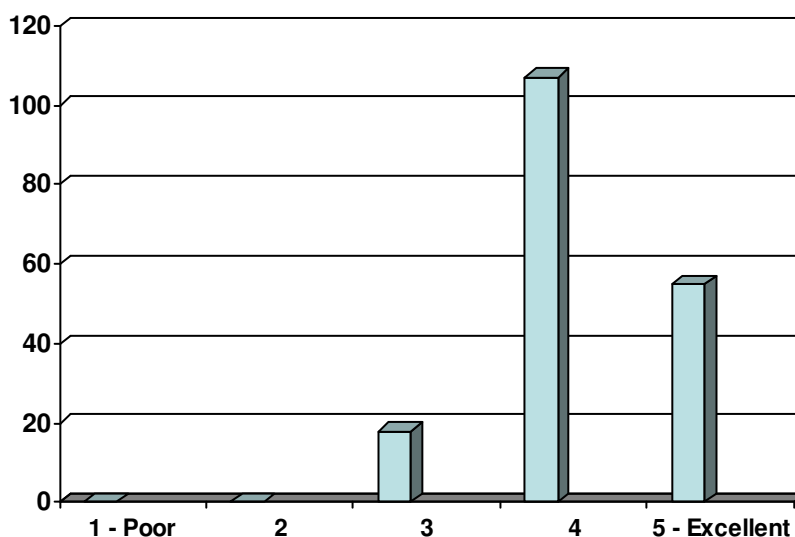
| | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Meals | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Conference preparation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Some participants did not complete all lines, and there seems to have been particular difficulty in understanding that those completing the form were being asked to indicate which accommodation they had been assigned to, with the result that many scores for accommodation cannot be related to particular locations.

In total, 184 forms were received from the 460+ participants.

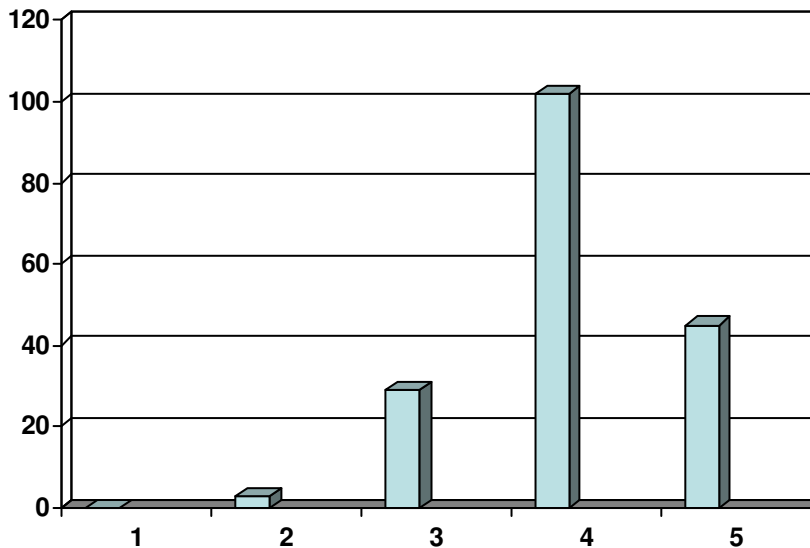
The detailed scores were as follows:

Overall rating of the conference (Number responding 180)



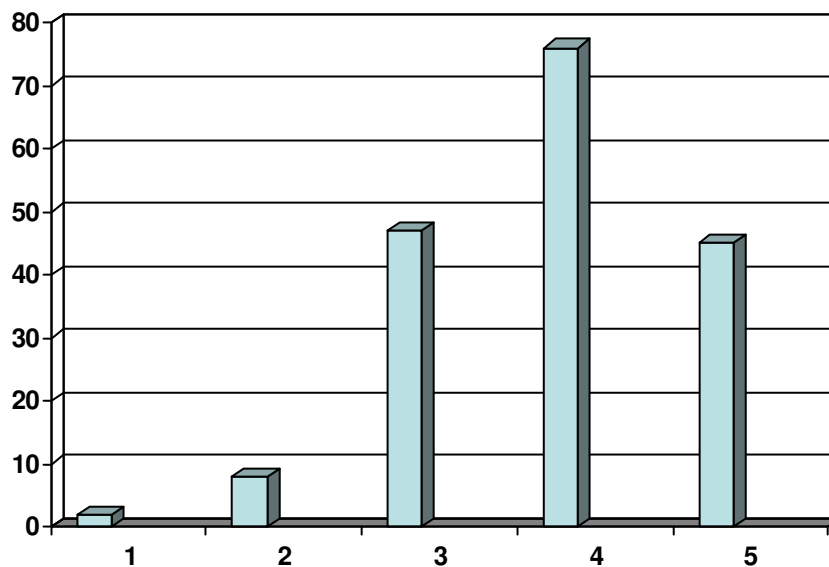
162 (90%) of the respondents therefore rated the conference as overall 'Excellent' or 'Very good'. This result needs to be seen in the light of the fact that many responding to a scale of this kind are disinclined to score at the maximum on the scale.

Main sessions (number responding 179)



147 (82%) of the respondents rated the main sessions as 'Excellent' or 'Very good'.

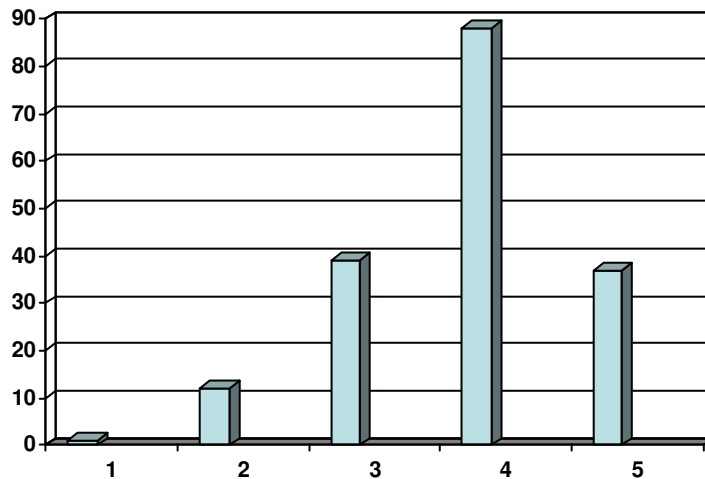
Workshops you attended (number responding 178)



The quality of the workshops was therefore perceived as more variable than the main sessions. But even so 121 (68%) rated them as 'Excellent' or 'Very good'.

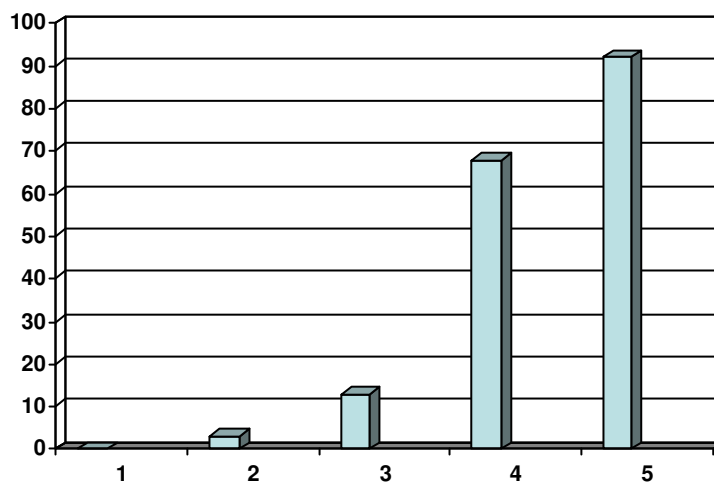
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Evening sessions (number responding 177)



There was concern about the management, approach and content of the evening sessions (see below). Even so, 125 out of 177 (71%) of those submitting assessment forms found them 'Excellent' or 'Very good', and even those with concerns were often positive about many of the contributions.

Informal contact with participants (number responding 176)

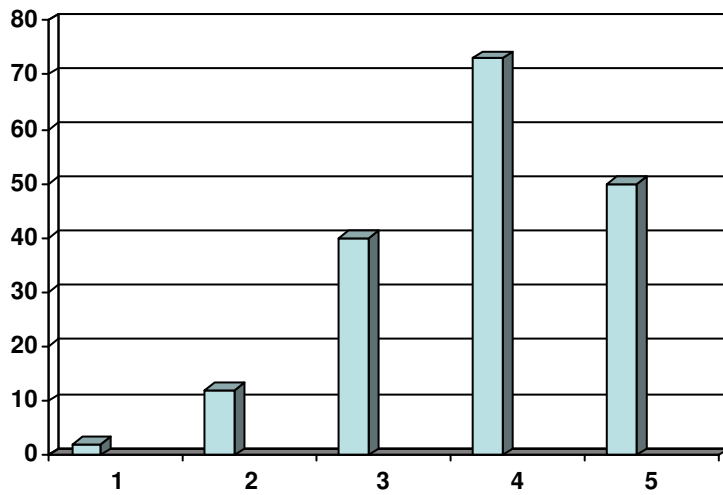


92 (52%) of the 176 responding gave the conference the top score on this point, and 90% found it 'Excellent' or 'Very good' in this respect.

Meals (number responding 177)

The form did not differentiate between meals at l'EPIS and Flunch and most respondents did not do so either. The following chart gathers the responses together irrespective of the site.

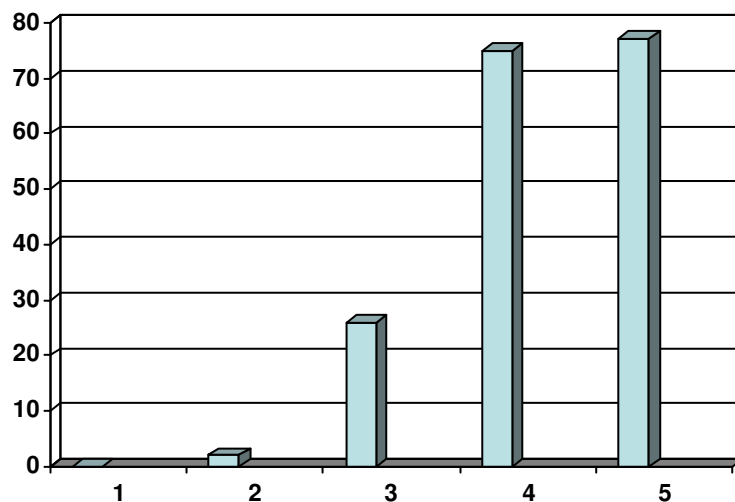
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70% of the respondents were therefore very satisfied with the meals, though a small minority was not (some found the quantities excessive, while being satisfied with the quality).

Conference preparation (number responding 180)

In responding to this question, participants were probably thinking not only of what was done before the conference, but also of administration in all aspects in the course of the conference – many specific comments were on aspects of the latter.

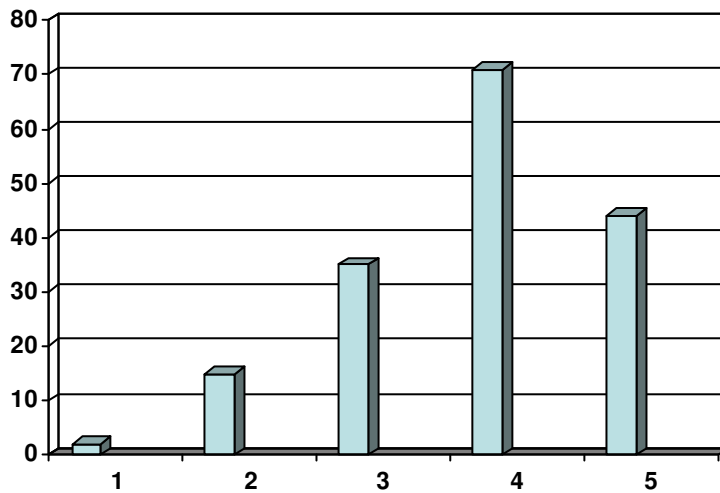


There was therefore general satisfaction with the quality of conference preparation and administration, 84% of respondents scoring it 4 or 5.

Accommodation

As already indicated, some respondents did not indicate which accommodation they had stayed at. The chart below therefore lumps all the responses together. Figures for CIARUS were: 2 = 10; 3 = 20; 4 = 34; and 5 = 6; and for St Thomas: 1 = 1; 2 = 1; 3 = 6; 4 = 10; and 5 = 8 (broadly the same pattern for each).

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This indicates that the great majority of respondents were well satisfied with their accommodation, even those at CIARUS, where there were some concerns about lack of space and super-imposed beds. 115 out of 167 (69%) scored the accommodation 4 or 5.

QUALITATIVE INFORMATION

(a) Response forms

Selected comments from the response forms are given below. There were however multiple comments about a number of subjects. The main points can be summarised as follows:

- The overwhelming majority of comments about the conference were positive. Inevitably, there were a very few which were negative at least in some respects. There was much constructive comment and suggestion.
- The value of the conference in terms of networking, fellowship and encouraging contact within the Brethren movement.
- One or two were critical of the conference as emphasising Brethren denominationalism.
- There were contrasting reactions to the variety, and therefore variability, of the speakers: many were perfectly content or welcomed it; some others do not appreciate the variety of speakers, and look for a uniformly high standard to be provided by inviting fewer speakers (the latter clearly do not look at this question in the light of the fact that it is in *international* conference).
- Many thought the bible studies were of a high standard; some thought them of varying quality.
- There was concern about what was seen as an effort to pack too much into the evenings, the failure to exercise quality control, the varying lengths of time allowed to evening contributors (which was seen as unfair) (and the indiscipline of the contributors), the lack of coherence of these contributions, and the technical problems which were experienced. But many nevertheless found the evening sessions interesting and inspiring.
- Those from less developed countries were concerned that there was no help to get them from the arrival airport to Strasbourg, and from the station to Ciarus or l'EPIS, as the case might be.
- There were comments about the need for transport between the accommodation and the conference venue. While many found it efficiently organised, and even enjoyable to travel with other participants, some found it tiring, particularly in the case of St Thomas, which required a longer journey. A number expressed a strong preference for co-location of the conference facilities and the accommodation for future conferences.
- There was general appreciation of the organisation and understanding that the task was difficult. A minority considered the conference less well, even poorly, organised.
- There was a little concern about the dominance of English and the lack of translation facilities, particularly in the workshops.

- Some felt that the francophone world and the Caribbean had been neglected in the programme and speakers.
- The workshops were appreciated more highly than I expected.
- Quite a few suggested that we should be bolder in using women speakers and chairpersons.

The following material comprises selected quotations from the assessment forms, assembled according to the questions asked (though inevitably there was overlap between the answers given to different questions). Inevitably with nearly 200 responses, many interesting comments are omitted. Practical suggestions for future conferences are brought together in a final section.

What particularly would you want to highlight from the conference?

- *'Well worth the cost!'*
- *I appreciate the conference very much.*
- *People from all over the world*
- *The overall organisation of the conference [more than once].*
- *What a blessing to hear reports from so many nations and people*
- *The impromptu testimony time on Thursday was refreshing and inspiring*
- *The evening meetings where different brothers shared about the work they were doing*
- *Networking [many times]*
- *Encouragement to belong to an international group with a distinct history*
- *All are good*
- *Fellowship with brothers and sisters from the whole world*
- *The size and diversity of the group.*
- *The great fellowship and contact with people; the main messages and some of the workshops.*
- *The worship team encouraged worship and didn't just put on a performance – I was truly uplifted and encouraged in worship*
- *French are very nice people*
- *The vast amount of work done to 'bring it to birth'.*
- *Variety of people from so many countries.*
- *It was eye-opening to see and realise the extent of Brethren work.*
- *Many speeches lost a lot of quality because of the poor English level of speakers (especially preachers).*
- *...the conference was excellent, and of great benefit.*
- *God be thanked: I want to leave the conference with a greater zeal to serve the Lord than before.*
- *Compared to the last [conference] the host nation seems fairly poor in reception and information [particularly on transport from airports].*
- *All was very good – the challenge of the teaching sessions, the wide range of information in the report sessions (excellent music group too), the fellowship, the mealtime chats etc.*
- *Wonderful networking opportunity and platform for meeting counterparts from around the world such as Emmaus, CEF, etc. So much expertise – biblical and otherwise – in the movement; what an incredible resource to tap into.*
- *French speaking countries were ignored in the sharing of reports, despite the fact that the conference was in a French speaking country. English dominated the whole conference in such a way that some people were frustrated.*
- *It was all good.*
- *Humility of the organisers was commendable.*
- *Being encouraged that the Brethren movement still have men and women with vision.*
- *Understanding of the vastness of Brethren mission.*
- *The unstinting hard work of the Bonne Nouvelle church ladies in their provision of cakes, coffee and the other jobs they have undertaken.*
- *Fellowship was good. Workshops very beneficial.*
- *Variability of origins on attendants.*

- *The number that thronged from far distant places to attend the conference marvels me and I am yet to come to terms with what God is doing in the lives of his servants.*
- *Plenary sessions too long [more than once].*
- *The tremendous depth of preparation, sacrifice and commitment of person preparing this most helpful, uplifting and needed, timely conference.*
- *Quality of bible study.*
- *Session on Thursday morning about youth [frequently made].*

In what ways in particular have you benefitted from the conference?

- *Good teaching, fantastic networking, significantly encouraging; able to see the direction of the Brethren as a whole are taking – this is very useful.*
- *Connecting with people – particularly from [certain countries].*
- *Greatly encouraged to see that the Brethren church is still a move of God on the earth.*
- *It encouraged me to see that God is really working amongst us.*
- *It was eye-opening to hear first-hand the work the Lord is doing around the world.*
- *Meeting people who have suffered for their faith.*
- *God spoke to me personally.*
- *Informal discussion.*
- *Gaining an international perspective on the Brethren movement.*
- *Encouragement, exposure, insights, fellowship, networking.*
- *Theme on Atheism was an eye-opener.*
- *I honestly did not know the Brethren movement was so widespread.*
- *It has been so good to meet representatives of the international Brethren community, to worship together, to experience fellowship at a deeper(?) level and to hear quality teaching and challenge personal paradigms.*
- *Global vision – contacts with other participants highly profitable.*
- *Ideas for conferences in homeland.*
- *New ideas for ministry in my local church.*
- *The paradigm shift from exclusivism.*
- *Many contacts. New ideas. Good worship. Some good workshops. Much anecdotal evidence of God's work across the world.*
- *I re-dedicated my life for service in a new dimension.*
- *Encouraged to see a bigger picture of our church family worldwide. We are not alone in our little church or in our country, our family is much bigger.*
- *The inspiration of those suffering nations for the Lord and the deep joy they possess and express.*
- *Challenged as a young person to undertake bible training.*
- *Encouraged by what God is doing in Brethren churches and organisations in so many countries.*

What general comments would you like to make on the conference?

- *The location and the transport functioned extremely well...it 'enhanced' the conference.*
- *IBCM has been a great blessing to me as an individual and I will never be the same in my ministry.*
- *Spiritual impact – especially on Thursday and Friday morning.*
- *It was well planned and executed. It would have a lasting impression. Very informative and instructive.*
- *Everything was very edifying. The music was terrific and uplifting, the speakers challenging, the networking opportunities immense.*
- *The workshops were too short as they did not give enough time to explore the issues.*
- *Excellent conference. Just please press on and not give up. Much good is yet to come. Great links have been established!*
- *It was a great experience for me to be there.*
- *Free time to be shortened and more time give to sessions.*

- *There was a need for a more direct challenge to the audience for a greater commitment to the Lord and his service. Workshops need to be more simple, practical and Bible based, instead of present scientific approach taken by some.*
- *It was disappointing that the Caribbean was left out.*
- *Many thanks for all your important work. Please continue.*
- *Good to have a leading band for worship with new contemporary songs...even to be more bold to play louder.*
- *Thanks for all the hard work – especially Annette...*
- *Thank you for all your labours of love.*
- *Praise the Lord! How great is our God.*
- *Very good [but] what a shame you did not manage to find a place where conference and accommodation would be in the same place.*
- *I indeed appreciate the IBCM committee members for their hard work and enablement.*
- *Very worthwhile and a great blessing and encouragement. I enjoyed it thoroughly.*
- *Excellent opportunity to get to know more people, ministries and to be challenged. Really enjoyed unity and diversity aspect.*
- *Good organisation; good atmosphere with all participants.*
- *Very well organised conference with plenty of time to meet different people.*
- *I would use the BEST teachers we have rather than the attitude of giving everyone a chance.*
- *Arrangements for the conference very disorganised. Food poor – France has a reputation for excellence of cuisine – charge a bit more.*
- *Generally a profitable experience – keep it going!*
- *Preaching disjointed through many people having a turn. A couple of higher profile and even non-Brethren preachers would have added some depth.*
- *It was really good, stimulating and edifying.*
- *Good organisation for hotel, transport and conference room.*
- *The conference must be kept on.*
- *The eclectic mixture of reports made it difficult to see the wood for the trees. Strategy is not the same as examples of ministry.*
- *The conference was good – a place of fellowship and brotherliness, of exchange and sharing. Nevertheless, I had hoped to have at the end resolutions and a line of conduct for the whole world.*
- *Very enriching and motivating.*
- *A bit monotonous. The agenda was the same every day.*
- *Opened opportunity for partnerships and working together so that we do not re-invent the wheel.*
- *Evening sessions were great and inspiring but were at times cut down.*
- *A piece of heaven on earth.*
- *Speakers in main sessions were not very inspiring or challenging except [four of them].*
- *If possible, careful screening of public participants, but gratitude to organisers for the huge time that they must have given to make it a success – thank you.*
- *Such a varied group of various presentations – hard to criticise anything!*
- *It has been great to be here.*
- *Overall I rate the conference an outstanding success. Representatives from 90 countries makes the conference somewhat unique.*
- *We aren't Brethren...we should not be a denomination. Discontinue [the conference]. International is not worth it. Let local, national and continents do conferences. We can interact and get good messages online now. Sorry, but overall I was positive, though don't see the zeal or fruit. Translation was difficult for all.*
- *It was great!*
- *Good but should have been better prepared – better material available to everybody in conference pack, for use by national movements.*
- *Sessions were too long. All in all, it was good and I have been blessed.*
- *Very good but diversity of speaker and variance of quality not helpful – should have carefully selected speakers.*
- *Enjoyed it very much. Venue and transport worked extremely well. Now see the Brethren in a different light.*

- *Can we do something to attract more young people and excite them about mission?*
- *In an age of post-denominationalism, it is a big question why we should promote Brethren denominationalism. Let's go back to the Open Brethren not promoting denominationalism, instead seeking fellowship with all with all saints and reaching out to a dying world.*
- *FANTASTIC, but soooooo much to take in.*
- *Very good conference. Excellent job by organisers.*
- *Praise God for the organisers. It was a tremendous effort and I was truly blessed.*
- *Very worthwhile. Wonderful people!*
- *Do it again!*
- *The conference clearly takes many resources to organise but it is well worth the effort.*
- *Wide range of speakers was appreciated.*
- *Reflections on the IBCM series of conferences: useful, necessary, every four years is a good frequency, heavy or organise but a chance for fellowship.*
- *...again it was a remarkable effort to bring together people from so many countries, especially ones that are economically struggling.*
- *Well organised – impressive.*
- *Simply, thanks for all the hard work that goes into organising and planning IBCM. Please keep up the good work!*
- *Very exciting and fruitful.*

What suggestions have you for future IBCM conferences?

- *Fewer speakers in evenings for 5 – 10 minute reports.*
- *...a bit more classic hymns like 'How great thou art'*
- *An intentional selection of people asked to give addresses*
- *Include a visit or tour to an interesting part of the country*
- *There needs to be better organisation of the evening sessions*
- *Why not start a youth IBCM conference – or a conference (on the international level) for youth leaders?*
- *Better technical support for the evenings*
- *The organisers must send invitation letters to the delegates in time so that they may have enough time to apply for visas.*
- *Some assistance for arriving guests, someone at airport/train station to assist [a number of times]. Giving clear instructions/help to find a church for Sunday service.*
- *Please involve the Caribbean in a more meaningful way, who appear to be just spectators who have come to you at great price. [The lack of a platform speaker from the Caribbean was a point made by others.]*
- *Greater diversity or variety in musical worship to match diversity of participants.*
- *More time to attend different seminars – possibly 2/day.*
- *Further efforts necessary to select and orient reports so that they be of international interest, and to keep them short.*
- *It would be good to think of IBCM gathering for young people or that young (under 30) would be brought by elder or missionary [a number of times].*
- *Emphasize the importance of speakers covering...their subjects. One of the main speakers did not.*
- *Just continue to work hard in preparing the next conference.*
- *A message on the love of the people of Israel and about the parousia.*
- *The team should organise an outreach meeting.*
- *Regional meetings for the regions which did not have meetings at this conference.*
- *Each country to be represented on the organising committee.*
- *Ensure that there is airport pick-up.*
- *Will there be another European conference (in 2013)?*
- *We should continue because it is very important; the next conference should be in Africa.*
- *Have the next conference in the global south, Asia, Africa, South America in 2 years' time.*
- *Better a rural setting, eg, Wiedenest, Germany.*

- *Support young people to come here [repeated].*
- *Include women in leadership and running the conference. There was no woman presenter. Gender issues are overlooked among Brethren assemblies.*
- *Invite all Brethren local assemblies around the world to be part of this. IBCM can change our churches and impact our work worldwide.*
- *Keep doing what you are doing.*
- *Women speakers.*
- *Keep them going.*
- *Speakers should have good English or be translated to aid understanding.*
- *More interactive and lively, with true discussion.*
- *Let IBCM become the very centre for Brethren networking and international mission training and global support for mission.*
- *Maybe a workshop on TESL – Teaching English as a Second Language.*
- *Limit numbers from certain countries. Only allow delegates to come if they bring 2x persons under 30.*
- *Workshops for women – including on how to communicate with non-believing women on women's liberation and how women are viewed in the Bible.*
- *Produce a route map on ethical questions for pastors.*
- *More non-English speakers, with translation.*
- *As conference grows, organisation needs to expand [with] much more visible delegation of responsibility.*
- *15-minute question time after main presentations.*
- *More workshop times so as to have the opportunity to go to more workshops.*
- *Give a bit more time for the workshops and develop modules that might be used in training others.*
- *More workshops on strategies and solutions.*
- *Conference should probably have another full day so more time will be available for reports, sessions, etc.*
- *A bit more room for the sisters?!*
- *Equal time for those making reports [repeated by a number]*
- *Interpretation in workshops, workshop documents in three languages, and workshops conclusions.*
- *Organise IBCM6 on the American continent.*
- *More female involvement – great to see more women here!*
- *Can we do the conference in other countries, not always in Europe?*
- *More forethought and preparation to cope with 500 people.*

Practical suggestions

- *Include cheap luggage labels in bags so that they can easily be identified.*
- *None. Excellent. God help you to continue.*
- *Names on name tags to be larger. As much as possible have everyone eat in the same place.*
- *Place list of attendees on IBCM website prior to the conference.*
- *Have a track and/or consultation for those involved in publishing/distribution of literature.*
- *Have evening participants on stage or in front row.*
- *Have a day for wearing national clothes.*
- *Put preparatory information on website. Have a more dynamic opening session.*
- *Have translation in the workshops.*
- *Use a conference centre to minimise daily travel.*
- *Multilingual workshops.*
- *Shorter evening sessions or starting at 7.00 pm.*
- *No lunch dessert if cakes are provided for morning tea.*
- *Need to ensure that speaker has radio mike.*
- *Improved website and forms – very complicated; improved AV equipment and software*
- *Some consideration for disabled/handicapped ahead of time.*
- *Free internet or wireless so people can access emails and inform their families they are safe.*

- *More assemblies should be encouraged to sponsor more young adults to participate in the conference.*
- *Don't ask two big people to share a room; no bunk beds.*
- *Double-sided name tags with larger print and smaller logo.*
- *How about an IBCM5 Facebook page so we can keep in touch if we wish?*
- *Choice at meals to avoid waste.*
- *[Visa?] invitations to be sent at least 10 months in advance.*

(b) Comments in emails and letters

1. I imagine that there were more hurdles to jump than for IBCM4...but the overall organisation was impressive. The congress was a great uplift to ourselves and I am sure to everyone else.
 2. It was so good to see the brethren around the world and to know what is happening in different parts of the world in relation with the Brethren Assemblies. What an encouraging fact to know that there are thousands of Brethren Assemblies around the world.
 3. I was truly blessed beyond my imagination during my times with IBCM5. So my thanks again for your leadership over this world movement to network the assemblies.
 4. I am writing to say a very big thank you for the IBCM5. It was another great event and time. I do really want to thank the organising committees and helpers like Annette and the many others, they have done an amazing job. Incredibly challenging and complex. WELL DONE EVERY ONE OF YOU. Now that I am back home and able to reflect. I am so happy to have had the opportunity to attend 4 of the Conferences since 1996. These events have undoubtedly been the main reason for my staying in the movement. However more importantly these experiences have also enabled me to enthuse others around me.
 5. This is just a short note to thank you and the other members of the International Planning Group for the IBCM5 for doing such a marvellous work in organizing the recent conference in Strasbourg. It was a very strategic time and we feel very privileged to have been there.
 6. I want to say big thank you to you & all your team members for every thing that you have done for us during IBCM 5 in Strasbourg. You all have done wonderful job for the glory of Him Who brought us altogether. Personally I appreciate all your efforts, services, in the Lord.
 7. Indeed we have returned home with not only good memories but good contacts and prospects for the global involvement of our Argentinian assemblies. Pls. pray as this is still news for many: some of the Argentinian brothers present in the Conference where hearing about this global involvement of our assemblies for the first time! It involves a change on our self-perception, from a "receiving" to a "sending" field - an overall maturing of the Argentinian church!
 8. It was a great conference with much benefit!
 9. [We] greatly appreciated and enjoyed the conference. It was so well run and contained so many good things: great worship; stimulating and transforming talks; superb networking opportunities...; free use of the trams; wide workshop choices (the including of the Medical was much appreciated) opportunities to renew contact...; very comfortable accommodation at St Thomas'; easy parking at St Thomas' etc etc. I thought the conference members generally seemed open and forward looking and most encouraging.
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10. Just a short note...to let you know what a special time we had at the IBCM 5 conference. Thanks so much for allowing us to come, as it was a great encouragement. It was also a time to really tank up on learning about what the Lord is doing in other places and to have fellowship with 'like-minded' people. We have brought home all leaflets etc and have been organizing them from prayer in the different fields and needs. It is such a privilege to be able to be part of the wider work in this way. We appreciated the Bible readings too very much as they were uplifting and helpful. ...meeting with others is really the best part and like a little foretaste of heaven, but we have much to be thankful for in the whole conference. I think we were very impressed at the amount of hard work and prayer went into all the organizing and we thank both you...and all the others for making everything run smoothly!! We did enjoy every part of it, even the leaving,(but not the goodbyes), as it all encouraged and refreshed us so much we could not wait to get back into the harness. We will 'chew' and discuss over many things for a good while to come!!
 11. As far as the assemblies in Kenya and The Kenya brethren mission fund are concerned ,there is hope, for the conference gave us more confidence and empowerment to do more in unity. It was more than worth, the worship, the testimonies the brethren, revealed that the Lord's presence was real. I know we shall be meeting soon to express more. Thanks again.
 12. My wife and I are praising God for the conference. We learned a lot and are being built by the studies and reports. We want to thank all the great commitment by the organization in carrying out this important work.
 13. We all indeed enjoyed the Conference and the warm fellowship we had with brothers and sisters from around the world during the conference. It was also a wonderful experience and encouragement to see the capable leaders of IBCM Planning Group and all believers from assemblies. We are praying for the IBCM planning group and for the IBCM-6.
 14. It was with immense pleasure and happiness that I attended the much awaited conference in France. It was really an amazing and memorable experience for me to participate in the conference fellowship. My happiness was out of bounds to meet believers from all over the world under one roof. I thank God for He has blessed and provided me this great opportunity.
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