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**Mennonite
World Conference**
A Community of Anabaptist
related Churches

**Congreso
Mundial Menonita**
Una Comunidad de
Iglesias Anabautistas

**Conférence
Mennonite Mondiale**
Une Communauté
d'Églises Anabaptistes

3

Inspiration and reflection

**Gospelling with
creation care at
heart**

5

Perspectives

**Creation care in
action**

14

Country Profile

France

17

Resources

- Prayer for a frugal life
- Online prayer Hour
- Peace Sunday
- YABs Fellowship Week
- Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday



Cover Photo:

“Thank you, God, for your incredible creativity in nature. One can only marvel!”

Photo: Hannah Krahn, Mennoniten Gemeinde Asunción, Paraguay

Word from the editor



In crisis, a community of hope

More with Less is the title of a Mennonite-famous cookbook. Home economist and former MCC service worker Doris Longacre Janzen crafted this countercultural cookbook in the 1970s. It exemplifies Mennonite ideals of simplicity and takes inspiration from ways of being in parts of the world where time and treasure are valued differently.

“More with less” may seem like a promise destined to be broken. It may seem like a burden: asking for greater effort with reduced output.

Yet is not “more with less” what Jesus urges toward as he calls us to consider the lilies of the field (Luke 12:27)?

When Jesus urges us to love God above all and our neighbours as ourselves (Luke 10:26-28), is that not a call to find *more* community with less things? And might our neighbours include all living things?

After years of warnings, people in all parts of the world are beginning to see the fruition of climate change. We move from one record breaking season to another.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres says: “our world needs action in all fronts – everything, everywhere, all at once.”

This issue of *Courier* shares some stories of how our “more with less” communities are acting.

We read about a congregation in Colombia calling members to examine their daily habits and choose ways of less waste. We see their efforts to motivate a community.

We read how creativity and beauty can be a motivator for young people in France to choose a simple life of following Jesus.

We read of communities affected by weather events in Indonesia and Zimbabwe – where people pull together to support each other.

We read how creation care, dignity and hope can be intertwined in Africa for flourishing communities where the gospel is shared in words and actions.

In Jesus, we have a model for “more with less.” We also have a framework for both individual and community action. God calls each of us to repentance and change of life – and equips us with the Holy Spirit and with a community of faith to journey together.

As we turn away from consuming, the church community can offer accountability in our choices. Together we can seek to find joy in actions that protect God’s creation – human, vegetable, animal and mineral – both near to us and around the world.

In our faith, we can find also the language of confession and repentance for this challenge to personal change and systemic revolution. As our faith communities, we can raise a collective voice to transform the systems of greed and consumption that make the better choices so hard.

The climate crisis is for many a cause for despair. Living more with less, Jesus Christ shows us a path to walk together with hope and Spirit.

Karla Braun is editor of *Courier* and writer for Mennonite World Conference. She lives in Winnipeg, Canada.

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Courier/Correo/Courrier



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In the United States using renewable energy is not likely to change church members' standard of living or affect their opportunities for jobs and education. In Zimbabwe, access to renewable energy can transform people's lives and heal the land.

Gospelling with creation care at heart

How solar energy in the Global South improves lives

This article grew from a conversation within MWC's Creation Care Task Force regarding whether [a solar how-to guide for churches](#) that Mennonite Creation Care Network had produced for a US context would be appropriate for a global audience.

Climate anxiety may be a new term coined in the Global North, but it is not a new experience for communities that depend on rain-fed subsistence farming. I first joined the adults in my family in worrying about the weather when I was 8 years old. In farming communities, talking about the weather is not small talk – it is everything. The weather is a major determinant for quality of life: it affects water, food and energy security. When a planting season comes late, there is anxiety. In my childhood, each day after 25 November was a harbinger of doom: the potential harvest for corn reduces significantly each day. In my early years, I was drawn into the complexities of drought and implications for the well being and survival of my relatives and their communities in rural Matabeleland. Other fears haunted my childhood as well. I feared the spread of genocidal killings and the traumatic speech from urban communities toward climate migrants. Waves of my relatives were displaced by both drought and death. All these things were inextricably intertwined. As a small child, I wanted to be powerful enough to be part of the solution to the

complex problems I saw. Therefore, I studied rural and urban planning and have worked and done research in rural and urban development since 1996. I've thought a lot about what authentic sustainability and resilience would look like in my context. I believe these principles can be adapted to other regions as well.

My vision for Southern Africa has three interrelated elements: general access to off-the grid solutions like solar power; empowerment of women and girls as dignified agents in local peace and development spaces; and re-tooling and re-agrarianizing to mitigate negative impacts of out-migration from rural communities.

In this article, I would like to show how these three issues are interrelated and what it would mean for rural communities in Zimbabwe if they could access solar panels and the skills to maintain these systems.

In the United States, a middle-class church that goes solar has the satisfaction of knowing that they are keeping carbon out of the atmosphere. Once the panels are paid off, they may have more money for their ministries; but using renewable energy is not likely to change members' standard of living or affect their opportunities for jobs and education.

In Zimbabwe, nearly half the population does not have access to electricity.¹ Yet with more than 320 days of sunshine annually, it is one obvious off-grid solution. Access to renewable energy can empower women, transform people's lives, enable education, jump-start development and heal the land.

Solar power can help rural communities protect their local ecologies and watersheds. Solar panels are not perfect, but at this point, they are the cleanest, least destructive form of energy we know. A church powered by solar is a witness to God's desire for shalom for all people. Lives are enriched by energy, produced at a lower environmental cost, on a scale that invites living within the limits of God's free gifts.

Solar is a women's issue

In Southern Africa during the colonial period, workers, mostly men, were pulled in as labour for mining and paid urban work. The bush war and later, a tribal cleansing affecting the Midlands and western region of the country forced more men to flee for refuge in neighbouring countries. According to patriarchal cultural norms, women remained at home to hold that space and take care of its demands.

¹ Figures from 2019, www.macrotrends.net/countries/ZWE/zimbabwe/electricity-access-statistics

In Zimbabwe, almost 70% of the population is rural and most of that population comprises women and girls. It then falls upon them to do the bulk of the work of food production, finding firewood, hauling water and foraging. All these tasks can take hours and require covering large distances.

This makes energy transformation a women's issue that requires women's involvement.

Solar paves the way for education and development

When women and girls in rural communities can access energy, it frees up time for other tasks. With a pump and a borehole in place for clean, potable drinking water, other kinds of infrastructure development like irrigation become easier, too.

What might women and girls do with the additional time? It can be re-appropriated. Electric lighting can mean more time for study after the chores are done. Women and girls will also experience better health outcomes when smoky cookfires are replaced with clean energy. Access to energy can also attract teachers to rural schools that lacked energy and water. Access to energy also means improved functionality of healthcare centres.

Solar reduces deforestation and carbon emissions

Women are part of deforestation for want of firewood for cooking. They need assistance to disconnect from unsustainable fuel sources.

Rural electrification has been an ongoing strategic program of the Government of Zimbabwe since 2002; however it has not gone as fast as planned. Rampant deforestation looms large in both rural and urban areas. Off-grid solutions such as solar projects are a faster option for closing the energy gap that continues through overdependence on firewood for domestic use.

Solar can heal the relationship between the land and its people

I believe we must accompany rural communities as they nurture their spaces, heal their soil, heal interpersonal and inter-group relationships and help people embrace one another and the land. I would love for our communities to keep thinking more about what we can do with locally available resources. The grass is not necessarily greener elsewhere; climate change is hitting the whole world. Off-grid

solutions can reorient production and offer a path to innovating with what we have.

Pathways to solar access

Women must be part of the solution

Churches owe a lot to women's participation. Government structures mostly have men at the helm and seem to marginalize women. However, grassroots programs depend a great deal on women's agency as the bulk of the resident population.

Giving women access to harnessing solar energy is a very direct way of rehumanizing and redignifying women and girls as equal, honoured partners in development. Power-with that has responsible access to means of production is likely to go a long way in connecting women to their local economy and its monetization.

This power-with could receive a boost through barrier-crossing leadership that supports roles, participation, and visions of women and girls. Girls in school and out of school need to hear that we need them to be powerful and supported as they take their place producers, nurturers and consumers in local communities and beyond.

Authentic, productive power should be available to women and girls as producers of market-worthy goods and services. I would love to see women and girls become solar engineers, creating tools, implements, and off-grid solutions. I want them to have the wherewithal to maintain a dam and waterworks; or to keep irrigation equipment running. They need to be equal partners in contributing to household livelihoods.

Churches and schools are part of the solution

Churches have had long staying power at the grassroots level. If the solarization of churches can begin, this would strengthen the work of women's clubs, saving and lending groups and other important communal efforts that meet in the safe spaces of church structures.

Other community facilities would make good partners as well. Local schools, including Bible schools and seminaries can function more sustainably by producing their own food. This would diversify income sources, reduce tuition and increase staff retention in the long run. Solarization can run concurrently with intense reforestation and other watershed healing interventions.

Networks for support

Vibrant networks that share information, share stories from their contexts, and strike partnerships that can help communities access resources for harnessing solar energy are an essential point of organizing for sustainability. Through regional representatives and global connections, MWC offers those bridges and conduits for support.

I am interested in birthing such a collaboration between Anabaptist agencies as part of the strategic means for sustaining holistic creation care across the African continent. Anabaptist churches, schools, agencies, and their adjacent communities are free to contact me at okuhlen@icloud.com for movement building toward improved gosselling with creation care at heart.



Sibonokuhle Ncube, from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, is a member of Mennonite World Conference's Creation Care Task Force and co-regional director of Mennonite Mission Network in Africa and Europe.

Resources on creation care

One encouraging piece of news about creation care is that there are an increasing number of good organizations and websites with excellent resources.

The **Creation Care Task Force of MWC** recommends the following as particularly good sites to start exploring resources:

The **Mennonite Creation Care Network** and the **Anabaptist Climate Collaborative** are based in North America, but have resources that are relevant for all locations of the world.

For broader creation care organizations from a faith perspective, see the **creation care network of The Lausanne Movement, A Rocha International, and Faith for Earth**.

Good sources for a variety of practical climate and sustainability solutions are the **Drawdown Project**, and **Project Regeneration**.



Scan here to find links to all

Canada Is this climate change?

by Anthony Siegrist

Early in January I took my kids to our local indoor ice rink to skate. The place was packed, and people were frustrated. All-too-soon we were shooed off the ice to make way for an afternoon hockey game. The one-hour public skate was clearly not enough to meet the community's need. It wasn't until we got home that we realized the rink was packed because nobody was able to skate outside.

In our part of the world, it's not uncommon for a park to have an outdoor ice sheet; for families to flood a part of their yard; or for frozen ponds to be a pressed into service as hockey rinks.

This year, none of that has worked. It simply hasn't been cold enough. Now we rely on refrigeration.

When a river floods that doesn't flood very often, when a forest burns hotter or more quickly than expected, when a storm brings more wind and rain than usual, when a drought doesn't seem to end, when ponds don't freeze, we ask, "Is this climate change?" And inevitably the meteorologists stumble and stammer and try to explain concepts that don't fit into sound bites.

The meteorologists know that people want a definitive answer, even though it's not possible to attribute individual weather events to climate change. People want an answer because they want to muster more support for their politics. The story of climate change in Anglophone North America is a story of disagreement and partisanship.

Katharine Hayhoe, a Canadian climate scientist living in Texas, often explains the impact of climate change on the weather by saying that it's like playing with unfair dice. In the board game of weather and life we're now more likely to roll harmful numbers.

The UK-based website Carbon Brief has a useful map that links severe weather events around the world with formal studies exploring the relationship of these events to

climate change. Zoom in on North America and you'll see references to the British Columbia floods of 2021, the rains from Tropical Storm Imelda in 2019, the Alberta wildfires of 2016, the many California wildfires in recent decades, the relatively recent reduction in the flow of the Colorado River, Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and many, many other devastating weather events.

Anabaptists join other Christians in believing that the creation story implies that the role of human creatures is to care for and to preserve God's creation.



It's not uncommon for frozen ponds to be pressed into service as hockey rinks.

Photo: Unsplash - Taylor Frieht

When you put it all together it's clear that the dice are not rolling like they once did. The weather in North America is more charged with extremes. We're losing more than traditions like outdoor skating.

A couple of years ago, I interviewed more than a dozen Christian leaders to find out what barriers were preventing their communities from doing more to care for

God's creation. A few said their community didn't see the connection between caring for people and caring for their natural home. A few said that, with declining church participation, they didn't have the energy or the resources to take on anything new. What almost all of them said, however, was that caring for creation was seen as a divisive political issue.

Climate change is impacting our world, but many leaders are hesitant to get engaged.

Part of the reason creation care, including responding to climate change, is so contentious is because many North Americans are still coming to terms with their history. A recent paper published in The Lancet Public Health posits that the Global North is responsible for 92% of the world's excess CO2 emissions. It's hard for us to know how to respond to such an indictment, and so we obfuscate, deny and fight back.

Yet it is here, in the face of injustice and complacency, that our Anabaptist theology and practices presses us to engage.

Anabaptists join other Christians in believing that the creation story implies that the role of human creatures is to care for and to preserve God's creation. Our Anabaptist theology prompts us to be moved to action by the suffering caused by our nation's wealth and runaway consumption.

We pray too for a movement of God's Spirit that will make plain the divisive tricks of the evil one and call our communities to repentance, to turn from harm-inducing greed to *shalom*-generating care.



Anthony Siegrist is a former Mennonite pastor who now works for A Rocha Canada, which is part of a global family of Christian environmental organizations.



Scan to view
Carbon Brief map

Colombia

Equipping our church to care for creation

Now Israel, what does the Lord your God desire from you? ... love him, serve him with all your heart and in all your life, and observe his commands...

You see, heaven – even the highest heavens – belongs to the LORD, along with the earth and all that is in it. (Deuteronomy 10:12-14, ISV)

What does it mean to worship God and to walk in his ways while keeping in mind that “the heavens and the earth and everything in it belong to God”? And what does this imply for us as a church in our present times?

Since 2016, a small group from our Teusaquillo Mennonite congregation in Bogotá, Colombia, began to meet to study creation care. We were concerned about the environmental crises that we see in the country and in the world (frequent droughts or floods) and the serious impact this has – especially on less privileged communities where our brothers and sisters are also present.

We began to share with each other what we knew about the climate crisis and its impact, and to study it in the light of the Bible.

We read together sections of books such as: *Salvation Means Creation Healed* by Howard A. Snyder, *Earth Trek: Celebrating and Sustaining God’s Creation* by Joanne Moyer, *Creation: The Apple of God’s Eye* by Justo Gonzalez, and the Call to Action of the Latin American Lausanne/WEA Creation Care Network. From this ad hoc study group, a “Creation Care Committee” emerged to promote this issue among the congregation.

From the beginning, it was clear to us that we wanted to bring this issue to the whole congregation, not only in theory, but to put it into practice in our own lives.

We were given the opportunity to lead a service: we chose songs, biblical texts and a teaching on the theme.

A second action was to hire a seamstress from our congregation to make cloth bags for church members to carry their

purchases. These bags carried the slogan: “Caring for creation, we follow Jesus Christ. Genesis 9:16: Re-evaluate, Reject, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.”

The bags have a double purpose: to educate and to be a practical alternative to disposable plastic bags when shopping. Some bags were given as thank you gifts to people who served during the year in different ministries of the church, and others were sold to members of the congregation who requested them.

The COVID-19 pandemic activated the YouTube broadcasting of our congregation’s Sunday services. It provided our creation care committee with a wonderful opportunity to continue offering information and practical suggestions to the congregation.

For months, we prepared short videos (2-3 minutes), and presented them before the closing of each virtual service. We included topics such as: conscious consumption, care for water, minimizing and managing waste in our homes, deforestation and mining.

We organized face-to-face workshops on healthy eating and on how to recycle. The latter workshop was done in collaboration with members of the congregation who make their living collecting recycling. We brought packaging, jars and wrappers and learned to distinguish which ones can be recycled and which ones cannot. While doing so, we also discovered how much unnecessary material we receive when shopping in supermarkets and stores.

We also learned from our brothers and sisters who earn their living by recycling how hard and poorly paid this work is. Many recyclers live in precarious situations, though they themselves provide a fundamental service.

So, we teach what congregation members

can do at home, but in addition, we examine our practices as a congregation.

For example, on Sundays at the end of the service, people have a coffee while they talk and greet each other. We asked ourselves: what cups should we use to serve the coffee? Styrofoam, paper or hard plastic? In the end, we opted for reusable hard plastic cups, acknowledging that this alternative does require the use of water and someone to wash them every time. We realize that there are no actions that are pure and free from environmental impact, and that there will always be pros and cons to choose from, but we try to make improvements each time.

We recently carried out, as a group, a methodical and guided self-evaluation of the impact of our church building and our practices on the environment, which led us to identify several areas for improvement. We changed the lighting to LED bulbs and included water saving devices in our toilet tanks, among other changes. All of this is helping us to achieve greater congregational coherence.

The Creation Care Committee has had its own challenges. Many times, work and family occupations make it difficult to maintain the consistency we would like, but this minimal structure has helped us sustain the theme in the congregation.

The recognition and support received from the pastor and the leadership group of the church has also been key.

Our emphasis has been largely on our personal and corporate practices to care for God’s heaven and earth. But we are also aware that much of the environmental damage and its solutions lie in policies and actions of companies and government, and social practices that go beyond the scope of our individual efforts.

How can we influence social and business policies and practices toward greater environmental responsibility?

How can we as a church show solidarity and help those who suffer most from resource scarcity or environmental deterioration?

We continue to ponder about this and seek ways to honour God and follow God’s ways.

Written by the Creation Care Group of Iglesia Mennonita de Teusaquillo, Bogotá, Colombia



Creation Care playlist of Teusaquillo Mennonite church's YouTube Channel (in Spanish)

France

Lessons enter through different doors

by Ephraïm Goldschmidt

After last summer, you can't deny it. It's here. It was the driest year in France and it's been like that for several years. So you can see people are becoming more aware of climate change. Now it is beginning to affect them.

And yet there is still so much more to talk about.

This should be a top of the list issue. It really affects every aspect of our lives and it's not just about creation; it's about *who live in this creation*. It's about our neighbours beside us and those who live around the world.



Public art in Asunción, Paraguay. An Indigenous man reads an English book entitled "Latin American History" – holding it upside down.

Photo: Gudrun Janz, Mennoniten Brüder Gemeinde Concordia, Asunción, Paraguay

Right now, we are making choices that have the potential to shift things one way or another.

In my work with LightclubberZ, an arts ministry of Joie et Vie, we don't just talk about climate change, we make art about it.

Association des Eglises Evangéliques Mennonite de France collaborates with other churches in France on this mission agency. My work is with young people – teenagers and young adults. Using dance, music, livepainting, theatre and stomp, we make art that shares the good news.

Joyful simplicity

Although our creations can be quite complex, I have recently become very influenced by the concept of simplicity. I encountered it through reading *La sobriété heureuse* (happy simplicity) by secular environmentalist Pierre Rabhi. But then, of course, I also found it as a central message from Jesus: do not accumulate wealth; look at the birds, look at nature; look how God provides; stay limited to what you need, not have more superficial things (Matthew 6:19-34). This is a big theme in the gospel and the Bible.

As a Mennonite, I connect a lot with that topic. Unfortunately, although it's rooted in the Bible and Anabaptist theology, we don't really have it as part of our daily practice.

So with the young people in LightclubberZ, we wrote a song together about simplicity.

French engineer Jean Marc Jancovici points out the technical problems of climate change are not the difficult part. It is the cultural aspects that are challenging: changing people's hearts and minds, or simply changing their habits.

Through songs, dances, and artwork, the young people in LightclubberZ are learning to change the way they see. One of the strengths of art is that it helps us to receive information through other doors. Instead of receiving through our minds, we learn through our bodies, our hearts, our feelings.

Shaping values in community

Following our Mennonite convictions, we bring people together in a small community where values can be shaped. Bringing people together to make art is a way to see God's kingdom come in our midst.

God doesn't need us but God invites us to participate in God's work in the world. When I do my work with LightclubberZ, I feel like I am helping participate in God's work at all levels.

We are social animals, we need the influence of others around us. We really see changes in people's lives when we have an experience of living together, not just we meet we do a show and go back home. Through our summer camps or our tours, when we live as a community for days or weeks together. After the confinement experiences with COVID, it was so obvious how much we need real relationships in order to be influenced in a right way. We need the church and real community of real people to move closer to what Jesus asks from us.

The Bible was really ahead of our time. Anabaptist theology interprets the whole story as one of seeking *shalom*. The gospel is not just at the level of individuals, not even just at the level of community but also at the level of all God's creation. That theme of *shalom* is there from the very beginning of creation – and it includes the natural world as well as humans.

That's a prophetic message we have to bring to a world where everything is about the individual.

Our motto at LightclubberZ is "*Faire du beau pour faire du bien*": make beauty, in order to do good. God set the example for us in creation and Jesus continued to show us how to live that out. Let us work at this together.



Ephraïm Goldschmidt is a member of the Mennonite church in Altkirch and director of LightclubberZ with Joie et Vie. He lives in Mulhouse, France.

Indonesia

Love in a time of climate change

by Basaria Sianturi

cannot forget the high tide flooding of 23-25 May 2022.

As pastor of GKMI Sidodadi in Semarang in Central Java province, Indonesia, I still recount the anxieties and panic of the community. Our church building is just 10 minutes' walk from Tanjung Mas Seaport from where the flood came.

Seawater ran down so fast, hitting the pier embankment and flooding the area. Our church and people's settlements were flooded. The water level was as high as an adult's hip. We were shocked, especially those who worked near the pier.

The workers panicked when they saw the seawater suddenly rushing into the factory. None of the workers came out of the factory with their clothes dry. Some even needed the help of heavy vehicles. It was very chaotic.

The breach of the water embankment (due to the great pressure and rising sea levels) inundated people's settlements for three days.

In the afternoon, the sea began to rise and inundate residents' settlements and the seawater began to recede again at midnight before dawn. This tidal flood took place for three days. Electricity had to be turned off. People could not work during the flood.

Not a few people were forced to move their place of residence temporarily for health and safety reasons.

Climate change culprit

According to the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG), the cause of the tidal flood was the natural phenomenon of *perigee*, in which the earth is at the closest distance to the moon.

In recent years, the height of the sea level increased and the embankment at the port could not hold the water. It is also believed that the increase of the sea level was due to global warming.

The people of the port area knew that the coastal areas of northern Semarang and the

neighbouring area of Sayung, Demak, are often hit hard by high tide floods.

Many houses in the coastal area must be abandoned by the owners because the area – which was once comfortable to live in – has been inundated by seawater.

This tidal flood disrupted the community's activities. Daily activities were turned into activities on how to save family members and property. Many houses and household appliances suffered permanent damage.

Today, we are grateful that the embankment was repaired so that the seawater cannot hit our homes. Community activities have returned to normal. The people, however, need to be vigilant because unexpected tidal floods can take place at any time. We are aware that the increasing volume and pressure of seawater amid global warming and climate change can destroy our neighbourhood again.

Bearing one another's burdens

During the high tide hit, 55 families of the GKMI congregation who live around the church suffered from the disaster. Some of them were forced to flee to another safe place.

On the first and second day of the flood, these families could not have sufficient food because their houses were inundated by seawater. On the third day, the condition improved because they began to receive assistance from different groups and other GKMI congregations.

Since my house was not inundated by seawater, I used it to cook food and distribute relief items to our congregation and surrounding communities affected by the disaster.

We received daily needs items such as rice, eggs, noodles, cleaning supplies, mattresses. Our members packed and distributed these items to the 55 families and to other survivors in our community.

It was heartwarming to see that our church members, although they experienced difficulties because of the flood, could help each other and the others across religious and ethnic boundaries.

I believe that God wants us to serve one another with love in times of trouble. The apostle Paul says that we must “bear one another's burdens” because in this way we shall “fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2-5). God's power was shown to our congregation during the tidal flood. We not only serve our members but also those in need.

As I contemplate the natural disaster, I can see that the ministry of love invites us to bring about justice toward others. But I also know that the breach of the embankment shows that nature and our environment are not doing well.

As God's people, we must remember that God gave humans the duty and responsibility to “work and care for” the earth and all that is in it.

No matter how solid the embankment is built, one day it will not be able to contain the strong waves and sea pressures of which volumes continue to increase as a result of global climate change.

Our earth is suffering. Human behaviour has caused ecological damage. In addition, our greed brings about exploitations on earth. As God's people, we must remember that God gave humans the duty and responsibility to “work and care for” the earth and all that is in it. We must not destroy the earth's riches. We must restore these. If nature is angry, humans will receive its consequences.



Basaria Dwi Febrina Sianturi serves at Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI) Sidodadi in northern Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia.

Zimbabwe

Cleanliness is next to godliness

by Nontokozy Moyo

Climate change has posed many risks to human beings and nature in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is highly affected by extreme high temperatures and high rainfall leading to droughts, veld fires (wildfires) and floods. The church in Zimbabwe is now beginning to play an active role in environment protection and is taking management steps to restore the environment and sustain economic and social actors in areas affected by climate change.



“We are not taking care of God’s creation properly. In Ethiopia there is no awareness about the harm of plastic.”

Photo: Hasset Shimeles, Debrezyt Mesrete Kristos church

The churches in Zimbabwe rise and not only preach the gospel of Jesus to the world but assist in adjusting to the negative impacts that come with climate change.

In Zimbabwe, most of the people are subsistence farmers. They survive by growing crops and keeping livestock (e.g., cattle, goats) to sell and tend for their families. Therefore, droughts are a major concern.

In the Midlands and Matabeleland South where there are Brethren in Christ congregations, there are areas which are affected by prolonged high temperatures and by little or no rainfall at all. Farmers lose their livestock and crops. The resulting loss of income results in poverty.

In the Matabeleland North and Bulawayo province, there are areas that experience 38-43°C. Heat waves pose dangers like people collapsing and even death.

Wildfires have also become a major problem because of the heat waves. In 2022, in Esigodini, Matabeleland South, 10 farm workers were reportedly to have died due to wildfires. And wildfires cause loss of life of the flora and fauna.

In regions such as the Eastern highlands and areas along the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border floods are a major threat. Floods destroy the environment by causing soil erosion, landslides and loss of plants, crops and animals. They play a pivotal role in the destruction of infrastructure (e.g., bridges, roads and buildings) that results in deaths of people and animals due to drowning and not getting help on time.

The winter season has also been affected by climate change now beginning in mid-April ending mid-September – which is not the normal range.

However, the churches in Zimbabwe have seen to it that they rise and not only preach the gospel of Jesus to the world but to assist in many ways in adjusting to the negative impacts that come with climate change.

Some churches now engage awareness campaigns that educate the community about climate change, its effects and how best to help in reducing its causing factors. The people in the church are educated on how best to adjust to the climate change

effects and also what to do during the climatic change events like floods, heat waves, droughts, veld fires (wildfires), etc.

Knowing that burning of fossil fuels like coal emits gases that pose danger to the environment and climate, the church and people are adopting new ways reducing CO₂-emitting fuels and substances. People are now advised to use more eco-friendly fuels. Instead of burning plastics that give off harmful gases, they now have clean up campaigns that engage the church and the community to pick up plastic containers and papers and take all the collected containers for recycling.

There is a saying that “cleanliness is next to Godliness”, therefore collecting all plastic containers not only is the church keeping its environment clean but also reducing global warming and climate change, hence achieving two goals with one effort.

The people in the church have started on agricultural projects such as irrigation schemes to areas affected by drought and also growing drought resistant crops like millet, sorghum.

The book of Proverbs talks about the woman of valour who stretches out her to the needy (Proverbs 31:20). Following her example, we see women in churches who keep chickens and rear pigs for resale. They donate the money to the people in affected areas especially for buying food, school stationery and clothes for vulnerable children.

These church women have also come up with a reach out campaign with the theme: “every tree a forest, every city a tree.” On the first Saturday of December, Zimbabweans plant a tree as a way to reduce deforestation.

Conclusively, it is believed that God has entrusted the earth and its resources to our care as church and world to our care, and we must act responsibly with them. It is everyone’s duty as an individual to be a good steward in reducing climatic factors and educating others about climate change.



Nontokozy S Moyo was the GYS (Global Youth Summit) delegate for Ibandla Labazalwane kuKristu eZimbabwe (Brethren in Christ Church).



YABs Fellowship Week 2023

Worship Resources

Prepared by
the YABs
Committee for
18-25 June 2023

1 Theme and texts

a. Theme:
The family I found in my salvation

b. Why this theme was chosen:
This year we want to look back in the story of how we came to know Christ. Every individual has different salvation story. Some came from a different religious tradition and experience a complete transformation after they meet Christ. Some came from a Christian family which means it's hard to pinpoint a specific turning point in life.

Our salvation comes with a community that shapes us, encourages us and makes us who we are. Let's talk about the family we built from our newfound faith.

c. Biblical texts:
Luke 15:4-7
"Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

2 Songs suggestions:

1. [Chukesso Wangwiye](#) (South Korea)
2. [You're Not Alone](#) (USA)
3. [Kwake Yesu](#) (Kenya - Swahili)

Please check your congregation's copyright protocols before using these songs in public gatherings.



3 Additional resources in this package

Testimonies:
Read testimonies of young Anabaptists around the world persevering in hope.

Prayer requests:
Young Anabaptists from around the world share concerns and joys for communal prayers.

Global Youth Summit (GYS), Salatiga, Indonesia, 1-4 July 2022





4

Discussion Questions

1. What does salvation look like for you? How did you come to accept Christ in your life?
2. How did your family in Christ impact your journey to salvation?
3. Who is your biggest influence in learning about Christ?
4. After hearing the Anabaptist stories (in this package), in what ways do you feel encouraged or challenged?
5. What does the message tell you to do in your life right now?



Sam Abhinav

5

Additional resources online

mwc-cmm.org/yabs

Follow our [Facebook \(@younganabaptists\)](#) and [Instagram \(@younganabaptists\)](#) for updates during YABs Fellowship Week!

Post your photos, videos and comments as you celebrate YABs Fellowship Week.



6

Share!

- 📷 Take pictures and share on Facebook and Instagram! #YABs #mwcmm
- ➡ Also send through Facebook messenger or email yabs@mwc-cmm.org.
- ✉ Help us prepare for future fellowship weeks and YABs projects by sending your suggestions to yabs@mwc-cmm.org.



The biblical texts, prayers, song suggestions, sermon ideas, testimonies and other resources in this package have been prepared by members of MWC out of their experience in their local context. The teaching does not necessarily represent an official MWC position.

Karla Braun



www.mwc-cmm.org

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Mennonite World Conference

A Community of Anabaptist related Churches

Mennonite World Conference

Annual report: 2022

The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. (1 John 4:21)

Thank you! ¡Gracias! Merci ! Terima kasih!

With your faithful support, we followed Jesus together as brothers and sisters across barriers of all kinds in 2022. You supported a successful global Assembly in Indonesia in July. And you supported the core work of the worldwide Anabaptist community of faith through MWC's commissions, networks, and young adults.

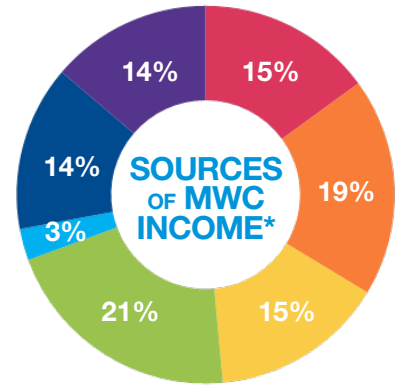
Thank you for nourishing the global Anabaptist family through investing in MWC's mission. Your partnership strengthens MWC as it carries out the mission of God in the world!



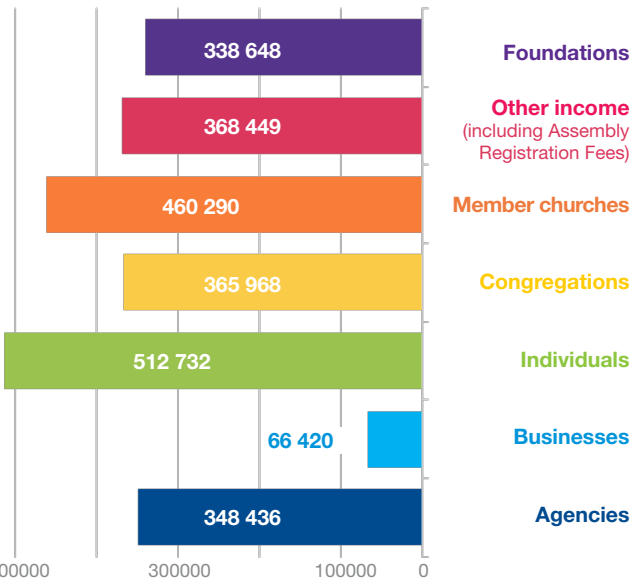
- Commissions
- Development
- Administration & operations
- Communications
- General Secretariat
- General Council & Executive Committee
- MWC Assembly: Indonesia 2022
- Global Networks
- Global Church Sharing Fund
- Interchurch relations
- Regional Representatives

Unrestricted revenue in 2022 was 13% higher than in 2021, but 2% below budget. Revenues and expenses for the 2022 Assembly in Indonesia were essentially break even.

*All amounts in US\$



TOTAL REVENUES
2 460 944



We believe prayer can make a difference

Amos Chin, leader of Bible Missionary Church (an MWC member church) in Myanmar, shared about the violence and persecution his churches are facing. Mennonite World Conference exhorted our global church family to pray for the churches in Myanmar. We have shared stories, prayer requests and pastoral letters. Despite a lower profile in national news, MWC has kept this urgent need in the forefront for the Anabaptist communion and has called us to intercede. "Pray for us," Amos urged us, "We believe prayer can make a difference."

MWC Executive Committee members Paul Phinehas (India, 2015-2022) and Amos Chin (Myanmar, 2022-2028) at MWC Assembly Indonesia 2022.



YOUR CONTRIBUTION

- resources Anabaptist leaders around the world
- encourages Anabaptist congregations and their witness worldwide
- nurtures a thriving global communion through MWC's commissions, networks and gatherings

Visit mwc-cmm.org to give now or send your contribution to:

Mennonite World Conference
PO Box 5364, Lancaster, PA
17606-5364, USA

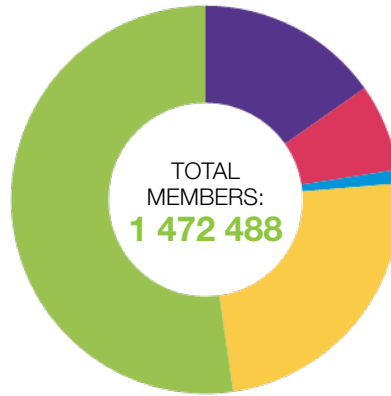
Mennonite World Conference
50 Kent Avenue, Suite 206,
Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1, Canada

Donate Online: mwc-cmm.org/donate





Barbara Nkala and Arli Klassen. Arli Klassen is the coordinator for 13 MWC regional representatives, part-time volunteers who strengthen relationships with MWC member churches and other partners.



Baptized members of Mennonite World Conference member churches

- **Africa**
769 670 (53%)
- **Asia**
354 428 (24%)
- **Europe**
16 786 (1%)
- **Latin America**
107 197 (7%)
- **North America**
224 407 (15%)

The Jesus Way

Barbara Nkala (Zimbabwe) is the outgoing Mennonite World Conference regional representative for Southern Africa. Through encounters with MWC leaders, Barbara’s perspective broadened and expanded.

“[MWC’s] efforts to bridge the global church differences have touched me greatly,” Barbara says. “Indeed, unity in diversity is possible if we all try.”

Working for consensus respects others’ perspectives and is evidence of love in action, Barbara adds. “It is the Jesus way.”

Strong, growing churches need effective leaders who mentor and learn from each other. As a worldwide community of faith and life, we transcend boundaries of nationality, race, class, gender and language. We believe that churches from the Global North and the Global South have much to learn from each other.



Young leaders

116 young leaders from 28 countries spent four days learning from each other at the Global Youth Summit during Assembly 2022 in Indonesia. More than a thousand local people joined them for the closing service.

These young adults are leaders today. The Young Anabaptists (YABs) Committee – with one representative from each continent – plans this event. YABs staff mentor (2015-2022) Tigist Tesfaye Gelagle (second from left), from Ethiopia, is now the secretary of the MWC Deacons Commission. The new YABs mentor (first on the right) Ebenezer Mondez (Philippines) gave an Assembly plenary address: “In times of trouble,” he said, “we are the extension of God’s hands.... We, as a communion of churches, will be each other’s help in times of need.”

Stronger together

Together, amid our diversity, we are united as the body of Christ. With your support, Mennonite World Conference connects your congregation and denomination to local and national churches around the world: a global expression of witness to Christ.

Vision

MWC is called to be a communion (Koinonia) of Anabaptist-related churches linked to one another in a worldwide community of faith for fellowship, worship, service, & witness.

Mission

MWC exists to

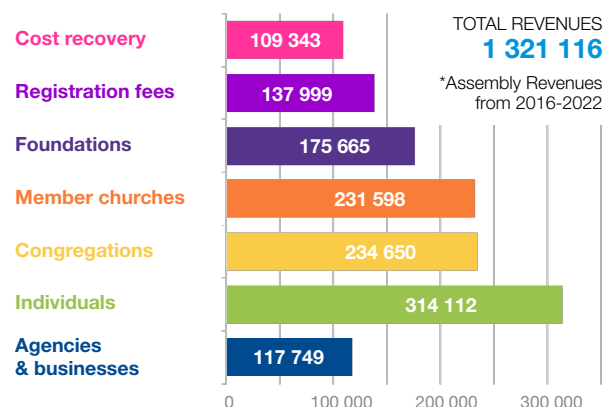
- be a global community of faith in the Anabaptist tradition,
- facilitate relationships between Anabaptist-related churches worldwide, and
- relate to other Christian world communions and organizations.

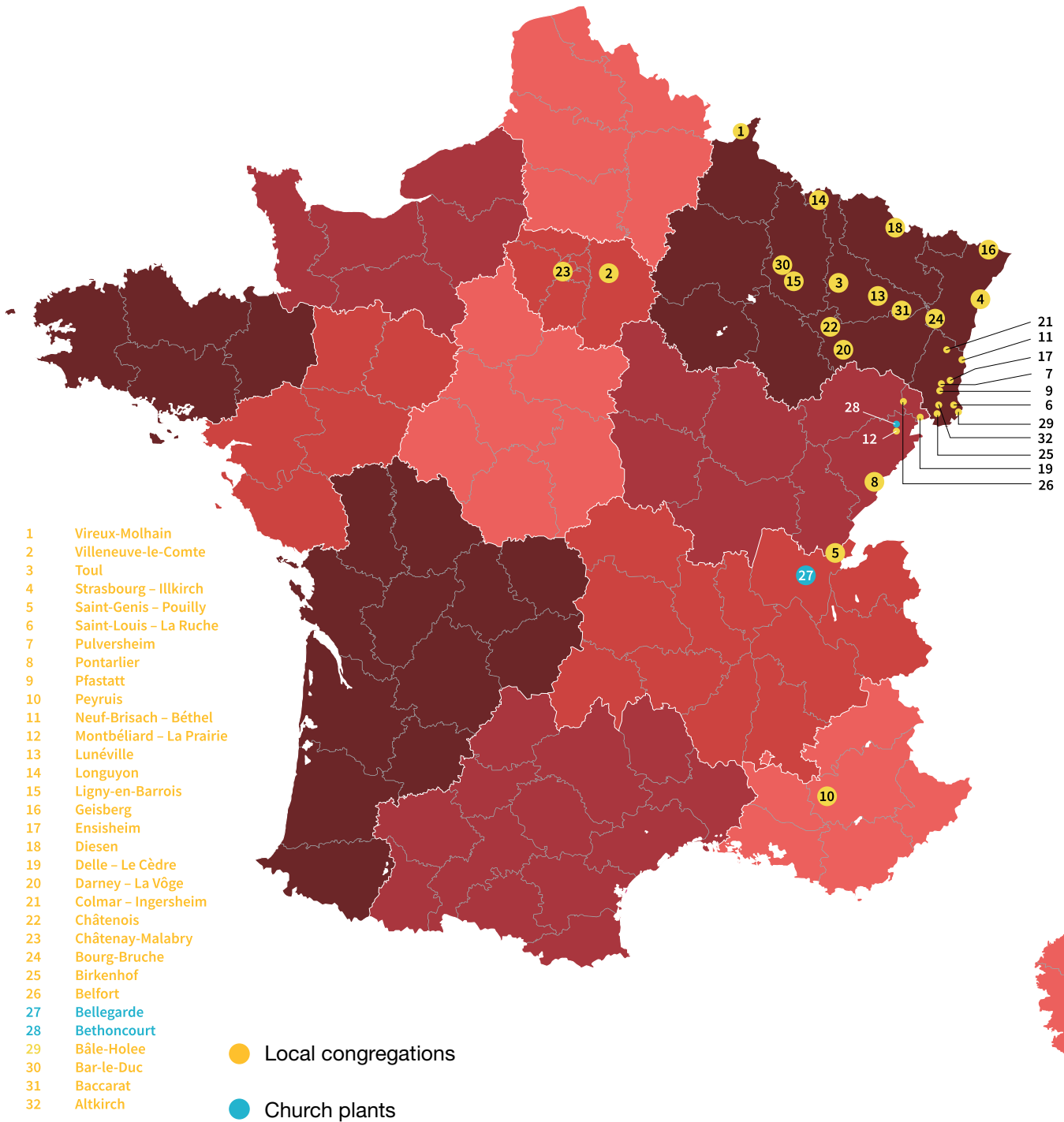


The Executive Committee includes president Henk Stenvers (Netherlands), Vice-President Lisa Carr-Pries (Canada), Treasurer Sunoko Lin (Indonesia and USA) and General Secretary César García (Colombia and Canada). “Now at the end of this great gathering,” said Henk Stenvers during Assembly Indonesia 2022, “We look ahead with energy and hope. We all will work hard to make Mennonite World Conference an even stronger communion of faithful followers of Christ.”

Financial snapshot for Indonesia 2022*

Thank you for supporting the global church as together we follow Jesus across barriers.





The Mennonite patchwork.

Map published in *Christ Seul*, January 2023. Used with permission.

France

Mennonite faith through history

France

MWC member church

Association des Églises Évangéliques Mennonites de France

Total baptized members	2 170
Total congregations	30

Source: MWC 2022

Association of Mennonite Evangelical Churches of France (AEEMF)

The history of Mennonites in France goes back to the beginnings of Anabaptist history. There were Anabaptists in Strasbourg by around 1526. They were quickly forced to operate clandestinely, but an Anabaptist presence would continue in Alsace throughout the 16th century.

In the 17th century – especially during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) – Anabaptists from Zurich and Berne settled in the area and contributed to the effort to restore the land to agricultural production. They lived in the Vosges mountains around Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines and later on in the region of Montbéliard (which was not yet French territory). Since they were rejected by the surrounding society, these Anabaptists lived on the margins, kept their German dialects, and formed “ethnic” communities. Nevertheless, there were ties with other European Mennonites in Switzerland, Germany and in the Netherlands.

In 1693, the “Amish schism” took place among the Anabaptists of France, Switzerland and the Palatine region. Was it necessary to maintain a strict line of separation from the world and practice a demanding form of church discipline? Or had the time come to open up a bit to the outside world? Most French Anabaptists followed the stricter Amish tendency and only adopted the Mennonite label many generations later.

Wars and shifting borders

Having been exempted from military service and the swearing of oaths by the nobles who welcomed them on their lands, these Anabaptists began to experience difficulties starting at the time of the French Revolution (1789). As French citizens, from that point on they were called to participate in Napoleon's wars. After a respite of a number of years, France forced them into military service.

Around 1850 there were some 5 000 Anabaptists in France and only 3 000 by the end of the same century, the majority of whom were still Alsatian. This majority became German once again in 1870, leaving very few strictly francophone Anabaptists. As a result, the number of Mennonites remaining in France was greatly diminished and toward 1900 some spiritual leaders began to foresee the possibility of extinction.

At the start of the 20th century, the situation of Mennonites in France was not easy. Sixteen congregations had disappeared during the previous

century. The remaining families were dispersed and several communities were only able to gather for worship once a month. In addition, there were no ties between the congregations.

Then came the First World War (1914-1918) where some battlefields crossed the regions inhabited by Mennonites. After the war, Alsace-Moselle became French once again, resulting in an increase in the number of Mennonites. In spite of the war, historian Jean Séguéy considers the years 1901-1939 a period of re-establishment and awakening, thanks to a return to Anabaptist history and new contacts with French evangelical (Protestant) churches.

This awakening was interrupted by the Second World War (1939-1945). The region of Alsace-Moselle was annexed by Hitler's Germany and Mennonite men were forced to enroll in the German army. It is important to note the extent to which French Mennonite history was marked by European wars, from the time of Napoleon to the time of Hitler.

Reconstruction and reconciliation

In 1945, Alsace-Moselle became French once again and two Mennonite groups (French-speaking and German-speaking) began to work together. The presence of Mennonite Central Committee in post-war reconstruction efforts had a very real impact in the lives of European Mennonites, including those in France.

A kind of new life was born, resulting in the start of collective reflection on the questions of nonviolence and conscientious objection; the establishment of social institutions; a new engagement in mission; and the creation of the Bienenberg Bible School. This school had its origins in the reconciliation of Mennonites separated by wars that were still fresh in their memory. Located near Basel in Switzerland close to the French and German borders, it is bilingual (French and German) and trilingual.

Until this time, Mennonite congregations in France (now including Alsace-Moselle) were in rural communities for the most part, often made up of farmers (with a very good reputation). Led collegially by elders, preachers and deacons, these congregations had ties between them and important decisions were often made in meetings of elders where all of the congregations were represented in principle. Since the 19th century, worship services in France took place in French, while in Alsace-Moselle the German language and Alsatian dialect had been predominant. From the mid-century on, French became the dominant language in worship and in meetings. Moreover, for more than 20 years, French Mennonites have participated in the Francophone Mennonite Network (Réseau Mennonite Francophone) that aims to create ties among French-speaking Mennonite churches in Europe, Africa and Quebec.

The Alsatian conference and the French language conference merged in 1979 to become the Association of Mennonite Evangelical Churches of France (AEEMF). From that time on there has been a single national structure. Twice a year, delegates from the congregations meet to make decisions on matters that concern the entire group of churches. The annual meeting of elders, preachers and deacons contributes to decision-making concerning theological matters. This structure is somewhere between a congregationalist structure (where each congregation maintains its autonomy) and a synod structure (where churches get together to make decisions for all of them). Within this structure are centers of activity and reflection dedicated to specific questions: youth, ministries, peace theology and ethics, mission in France, mutual aid and development aid and service. Other associated structures, independent of the AEEMF, deal with foreign mission, the publication of a monthly magazine (*Christ Seul*) and dossiers on thematic subjects (three times a year), hospital

chaplaincy, the organization of camps, holiday camps and trips for adults.

Following Jesus through study and service

Until recently in this long history, there was a certain mistrust with regard to the training given in theological schools. Led by a college of elders, Mennonite congregations did not have paid pastors. Certain elders had studied in evangelical Bible institutes in France and Switzerland. Starting in the years 1970-1980 some French Mennonites began to enroll in university theology faculties (departments) in France, or, in rare cases, in North America.

The make-up of congregations has also gone through important changes. Fewer and fewer Mennonites are farmers; many are employed in the majority of professions of the contemporary world. Little by little,



During a 6 November 2022 baptism service, members of the Mennonite church in Pfstatt form a fraternal arch for the newly baptized members during the song of benediction.

Photo: Elsa Weiss

the proportion of “ethnic” Mennonites is going down and the number of members of non-Mennonite origin is increasing in the congregations, including positions of leadership. Congregations are becoming less rural and more urban. The first urban congregation was founded in the region of Paris in 1958. Today there are churches in Strasbourg, Mulhouse, Colmar and close to Geneva on the French-Swiss border.

These changes have also resulted in the growing acceptance of trained and paid pastors. A ministries commission helps the churches reflect on the recruitment and hiring of pastors and the importance of maintaining a collegial way of functioning.

Mennonite congregations participate in missionary work outside of France as well as in France, where there are several new church plants in progress. The aid fund engages regularly in humanitarian work, often together with other European Mennonites and with MCC. The presence of the office of Mennonite World Conference in Strasbourg (1984-2011), as well as MCC’s office for Western Europe for a number of years has contributed to showing Mennonites in France the importance of belonging to something global, beyond France and Europe.

French Mennonites recently decided to enter a trial period with the Protestant Federation of France and the National Council of Evangelicals of France, with the hope of becoming a bridge between these two Protestant families.

The youth of Vietnam, many of whom know how to speak English, are ready to maximize on the internet connected world, in fellowship, learning and reaching out. “This has potential to turn missions up-side-down. This is an opportunity for youth around the globe,” say the Mennonite pastors.

Neal Blough retired in 2020 as director of the Paris Mennonite Centre. He is professor emeritus at Vaux sur Seine seminary (FLTE) and continues to teach at many theological schools. Didier Bellefleur is a leader in Eglise de Strasbourg-Illkirch and president of the Association des Eglises Evangéliques Mennonites de France (AEEMF).



Peace Sunday

24 September 2023

Family



Online Prayer Hour

God's Spirit knits us together as a family around the world. In our prayers, we support each other in joy and pain, whether gathered or scattered.

Visit mwc-cmm.org/online-prayer-hour-registration to register for the next online prayer meeting.



Next events

- Friday, 19 May 2023

Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival III

15-18 June 2023

"Coming Together: the Journey of Faith and Peace"

Eastern Mennonite University,
Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA

A prayer for frugal life

Holy One,
Our world is overtaken by our greed for more goods than we need.
We confess our rapacious consumption, obsession with winning, and our undercutting and isolating of the most vulnerable among us.

Renewing Spirit,
Help your church to be open, in fidelity to the gospel of Jesus, to all possibilities in the coming of the new kinship – the kin-dom of God – on earth. Help us to align our ways to sharing, social cohesion, and symbiotic co-living between humans and the rest of creation; to see creation as a cosmic web of living beings, in which all creatures live in mutual interdependence.

Help your church to abide in a harmonious bond between the Source of being and all things.

Loving God,
Help us to see you as the God-in-relation. Open our eyes to the ministry of Jesus, a ministry of care and compassion: To grieve with the poor earth our greed has devoured,

To be still, not distracted by a thousand useless things,
To see that earth, sea, sky and every creature in it have a spiritual capacity to bring us back to you and the harmony of the cosmic dance.

Living God,
Help us to live in a dynamic becoming, opening ourselves to this network of relationships and the future. Help us to see that we cannot live without receiving the gifts of others, and also sharing our gifts with them. As the Thai Buddhist activist Sulak Sivaraksa taught:
"I am, therefore you are; you are, therefore I am: we inter-are."
Help us to say "Yes" to your invitation, to accept our "among-ness" with the uncoerced exuberance of overflowing friendship: with you, with our own spirit, with our neighbours, and with the rest of creation. May it be so.

—Nindyo Sasongko is a founder of "Theovlogy". An ordained minister in the Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI) Conference in Indonesia, he is currently a teaching fellow at Fordham University, New York, USA. He is also theologian in residence at Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship, New York City, and a member of the MWC Creation Care Task Force.



Kedungu beach, Tabanan, Bali, Indonesia.

Photo: Novie Yohana, GKMI Ekklesia, Denpasar, Indonesia



Scan to donate

Photo:
Nico
Yonatan

Invest in the global Anabaptist family!

Join the MWC movement! Stand in solidarity with Anabaptist sisters-and-brothers from Argentina to Zimbabwe.

You can make a difference: **invest your financial gifts** in the worldwide mission of Mennonite World Conference. When we **work** together, we **learn** from each other while **blessing** the world.

When you contribute, you touch the world:

- Resource and strengthen Anabaptist leaders
- Encourage congregations to live out Anabaptist faith
- Nurture koinonia through MWC gatherings in person and online
- Equip MWC's commissions, networks, YABs (young adults) to serve

Like all families, we need each other to thrive.

Visit mwc-cmm.org/donate to give now or send your contribution to

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50 Kent Avenue, Suite 206
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1
Canada
- Mennonite World Conference
PO Box 5364
Lancaster, PA 17606-5364 USA

Together we build up the global family of faith. Thank you for sharing your gifts with MWC!

Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday

“It was as though they were celebrating with us”

“We know that we are part of a larger community, but sharing this Sunday leads us to live it concretely,” says Sylvain Lavoué, church board vice president at Église Protestante Mennonite, Villeneuve le Comte, France. The church celebrated Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday by using the testimonies and videos the worship resource provided by Mennonite World Conference.

“Listening to the Bible verses read by our brothers and sisters in Burkina was rich in emotions. It was as though they were attending the celebration with us,” Veronique Lavoué, Église Protestante Mennonite.



Église Protestante Mennonite braided fabric at their monthly Saturday Ecocreatif workshop. Congregants from age 6 to 62 formed the word “esperance” (hope) to decorate the church building. “The participants of the workshop felt more involved in the service through this work. That is always a challenge to involve children so that they feel part of the global church,” says Veronique Lavoué.

Photo: Véronique Lavoue

“We thank MWC to lead us in wonderful and blessed celebration of Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday. This has surely united and encouraged us to grow as a global Anabaptist family,” says Ashish Milap, pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church, Balodgahan India.

At Bethel Mennonite, Sunday worship celebrated the birthday of the Anabaptist-Mennonite church. Translated into Hindi, “How Mennonites came to be,” testimonies and prayers from the worship package were shared along with songs from Assembly.

Ashish Milap, part of the international choir in Indonesia, chose the simplest songs. “I thank my church choir that with hard work they learned songs in different language on Saturday to teach congregation on Sunday”: “Cantai ao Senhor” in Portuguese, “Siyahamba” om Xhosa; “Dalam Yesus Kita Bersaudara” in Indonesian and “Kwake Yesu nasimama” in Swahili. “Church members said they enjoyed learning and singing new songs in different language.”



Mennonite Church Singpur, India.

Photo: supplied



President of the national ordination commission Rev. Antônio Panzo (right) hands new ordinand Andre Mukanishi (left) his certificate.

Photo: Daniel Cangangela Nelson



MC USA worship director Rashard Allen led seminars for Mennonite congregations in rural areas of Uganda, including Kakirango.

Photo: Kakirago Mennonite Church

Some 3 000 people from six IEIMA congregations in Cafunfo in Angola gathered to celebrate Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday together. Nine pastors from around the province received their ordination at the service. “The Lord was gloried by the songs, testimonies and offerings,” says Daniel Canganguela, presiding officer of Igreja Evangélica dos Irmãos Mennonitas em Angola (IEIMA).

Celebrating AWFS is very important because it reconnects us from our grassroots as an Anabaptist-related church,” says Rev. Ndaba Nyathi pastor at BIC Bulawayo Central Church. “The church enjoyed the whole program of praying for



Congregations of Integrated Mennonite Churches in the Philippines celebrated Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday with a meal after the service.

Photo: Hesper Valenzuela

one another and encouraging each other on social and spiritual challenges. Our faith of being in a global family is being refreshed through the Word and prayer items.

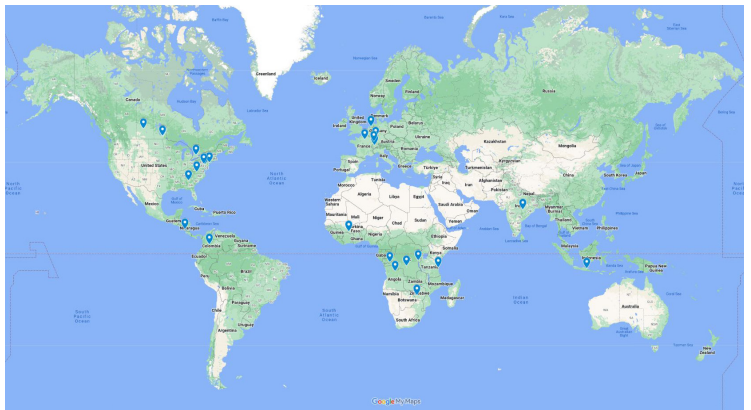
The meeting in 2003 is still remembered for brethren accepting each other even from different cultures and colour. It left the message of love and peace amongst the Brethren in Christ. The praying and worshipping together brought some revival.”

Pins on the map represent congregations celebrating AWFS. Is your church missing? Let us know: info@mwc-cmm.org.



Iglesia Del Dios Viviente Rama, part of Convención Menonita de Nicaragua, celebrated the 498th anniversary of the Anabaptism movement with the Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday worship materials.

Photo: Abel Mendoza





MWC Publications Request

I would like to receive:

MWC Info

A monthly email newsletter with links to articles on the MWC website.

- English
- Spanish
- French

Courier

Magazine published four times a year (print: April, October)

- English
- Spanish
- French
- Electronic version (PDF)* (February, July)
- Print Version



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50 Kent Avenue, Suite 206
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1 Canada



Photo: Karla Braun

Living More with Less

*Remove far from me falsehood and lying;
give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need,
or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, "Who is the Lord?"
or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.
(Pr 30:8-9, NRSV)*

As I began to write these words, Cyclone Freddy was wreaking havoc in Malawi and Mozambique. As I thought about our congregations there, I was reminded of the words I heard from a participant in our last Assembly: "Creation care is a topic of interest to the churches in the north. We are more interested in spiritual matters." With that phrase, a leader from one of our churches stated his disagreement with how Mennonite World Conference included creation care as an essential theme in the 2022 global Assembly.

Given the reality of climate change and the crises caused by it in recent years, such a statement surprised me. Climate issues have become another issue of political polarization in our societies. Amid fear and guilt, arguing about facts and fake news, is it possible to find hope and healing for a divided world? Can we speak of our call to care for creation as a profoundly spiritual issue that goes beyond the current climate crisis?



Flooding in Semarang, Indonesia, in May 2022.

Photo: Basaria Dwi Febrina Sianturi

Following the teachings of the Scripture, the spiritual disciplines of *simple living* and *contentment* have been a part of Anabaptist spirituality for many years. We can recall here the biblical ideas of living with what is necessary (cf. Luke 11:3), stopping work to rest (cf. Exodus 20:10), avoiding accumulation (cf. Luke 12:15-21), not stressing about economic needs (cf. Luke 12:22-31) and practicing generosity (cf. Luke 18:22-25). These biblical teachings and others have shaped the Christian disciplines of *simple living* and *contentment* for centuries. These disciplines go directly against the values of a society that wastes and consumes excessively, that encourages the search for happiness in material things, and that encourages the egocentric accumulation of wealth as a means to achieve security. The climate crisis that today threatens to destroy our planet is primarily the result of our voracious appetite that consumes without being satisfied and does not spare the consequences of a life that always needs more in its vain search for satisfaction, identity and affirmation.

In our Anabaptist tradition, how we live our everyday life is a profoundly spiritual issue. The decisions we make about our lifestyle are deeply spiritual. Talking about how they affect the environment, taking into account the divine invitation to care for and administrate creation (cf. Genesis 2:15) is not only spiritual; it is an urgent imperative in the face of the growing climatic calamities that affect the most vulnerable communities in the world, where, by the way, most of our local congregations are located today.

These are some reasons why Mennonite World Conference established a global, multicultural task force (Creation Care Task Force) to lead our Communion on this issue. That is why this issue of *Courier* discusses topics related to the care of creation from different cultural and theological perspectives. That is why we celebrate the creation of resources and initiatives such as those shown in the video [Transmission Latin America \(mwc-cmm.org/transmission21-la\)](https://www.mwc-cmm.org/transmission21-la), where churches from various places share how their faith impacts their relationship with nature.

I pray that our global community grows in creation care and that my life may develop more and more of the disciplines of *simple living* and *contentment* because, as Gandhi said, we need to "live simply so others may simply live."

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