

Courier Correo Courier

April 2019
Volume 34, Number 1



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

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

**Conférence
Mennonite Mondiale**
Une Communauté
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Cover Photo:

Abednego Tetteh Koran drew his favourite thing to do at church. He attends Ghana Mennonite Church, Somanya branch.

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A word from the editor



“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Mathew 19:14). The Gospels record Jesus saying these words to those who want to remove the children from his presence.

Jesus is saying something we know to be true today: children have their own ways to participate in churches, differently from adults, but with attention to their special capacity to learn and share.

Churches must be sensitive to the need to protect children. National churches and partner agencies may have a well developed set of policies or templates that are locally adaptable. On a local level,

churches can develop policies and train those who work with children to keep them safe from those who would exploit their vulnerability.

In this issue, we have examples of how members of the Anabaptist Mennonite family are making a place for children in their local churches around the world.

Gerda Landes of Mennonitengemeinden e.V., Karlsruhe-Thomashof in Germany explains how safe church policies strengthen healthy interaction. They not only teach volunteers to avoid abuse, they raise conversations about positive behaviour for an environment that nurtures and empowers children.

Elsie Rempel of Mennonite Church Canada offers a sample children’s story that teaches solid biblical content in an interactive way appropriate to the learning level of children.

Jessica Mondal from a Bharatiya Jukta Christa Prachar Mandali church in India writes how her congregation is attentive to training their teachers. In a rapidly changing world, they recognize the need to constantly adapt to the needs of the children they are serving.

But children are ready to receive and act on the gospel message as well. Juan Carlos Moreno tells how children’s ministry leaders in Peru learned that the children were not only receiving the gospel message, but sharing it with others.

In Zimbabwe, Peace Clubs combine Christian education with training children in peace skills and creation care.

At a global level, MWC was a one of 13 co-organizers of Faith Action on Children on the Move: A Global Partners Forum 16–19 October 2018 in Rome, Italy. The purpose of the forum was to learn, exchange, inform and plan. People of faith are a powerful force in the world who can catalyze shifts in both attitudes and behaviour. The organizers are continuing to draft an action plan.

In this issue, you will also find the MWC world map, which can be pulled out and posted on your wall. Also, follow the included link to find more maps and demographic information.

You’ll find the Assembly News included here, with the first information about the upcoming gathering in Indonesia in 2021.

And MWC events continue in between: a gathering for Renewal 2027 in Costa Rica, and the “scattered” events of World Fellowship Sunday, Peace Sunday, and YABs Fellowship Week: times to celebrate the global Anabaptist family in our local congregations.

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

Germany

Protecting children

by Gerda Landes

“Is it actually necessary to think about those topics (abuse, neglect)? I mean, we are part of a Christian church!” This is a common reaction I get while educating people about the topic of “Safe Church.”*

Sadly, though, it is a fact that churches are not safe just because they are churches. A safe atmosphere does not create itself. It has to be worked for and actively developed.

Safety and security are basic human needs. Insecurity starts when personal boundaries are violated. Often this does not happen on purpose. The problem starts when those boundaries are not respected because of not taking each others’ boundaries seriously or even purposely violating them.

Over the course of the last year, we specifically addressed the topic of prevention and protection. We asked ourselves what we can do to prevent boundary crossing, shaming or violent behaviour.

Who are we and what do we do?

As the “Jugendwerk” (youth ministry) of the southern Mennonite churches, we offer regional camps for children, teenagers and young adults. We want to create the opportunity to meet and get to know God, experience God’s love and think about being a Christian in our daily lives. It is important for us to have a safe atmosphere at our camps, so everybody is feeling comfortable at our camps.

Who are the participants at our camps?

Participants are from different southern German Mennonite churches. We

encourage them to invite their friends from school and their neighbourhoods. Some of them have known God for a long time, others do not know too much about God.

Within our programs, we do not only want to strengthen participants’ faith. We also want to strengthen their self-esteem and self-reliance. They are encouraged to learn to say “yes” or “no” appropriate to the situation they are in. It is important for us to get them to perceive their feelings and take them seriously. We want to make the youths aware of their own boundaries, to define and actively speak out about them.

Who are our camp leaders?

Camp leaders are mostly young adults who have been participants and are now slowly growing into leadership. Having an active relationship with God and Jesus to talk about his love for us is a very important part for us. As leaders, they allow transparency and provide security.

What is important to us?

For us it is very important to provide our camp leaders with education so that they are respectful, loving and mindful toward our camp participants.

We offer weekend seminars for our camp leaders, some of which are mandatory to attend to become a leader.

We expect leaders to establish a good relationship with the entrusted children, teenagers and young adults. This is the reason why we have a code of conduct. By signing it, every camp leader is obligated to act this way toward our camp participants.

The following are examples from our code of conduct:

- I want to protect the children and youths who are entrusted to me from all harm and dangers, abuse and violence.

Safety and security are basic human needs. Insecurity starts when personal boundaries are violated.

- I acknowledge the individual boundaries and take them seriously.
- I actively act out against sexist, racist, discriminating and violent verbal and nonverbal behaviour.
- I renounce derogatory behaviour and try to ensure everybody else acts that way.

I think our Bible quote for the year is quite fitting. “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14).



Gerda Landes is a children and youth ministry worker in South Germany for Mennonitengemeinden e.V., Karlsruhe-Thomashof.

*Safe church is a system of policies and training to prevent abuse of minors, to respond appropriately to signs a child or youth may have been abused, and to strengthen awareness of healthy interaction to build up rather than harm vulnerable persons.

Children's ministry resource

This story illustrates a way of worshiping with children. The author believes it is very important to both acknowledge the children's connection with God and the sacredness of learning from Scripture at the beginning of story time. Her wondering questions do not require spoken answers. They open the child's theological thinking process. Sometimes wonderful conversations do occur, but it is fine to trust that these questions can kindle the silent working of the Holy Spirit in the child's heart and mind.

Making Up

Author: Elsie Rempel

Church: Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Theme: Jesus wants us to settle our differences quickly

Text: Matthew 5:22–25a

Gathering activity

Welcome the children as they arrive and let them know that it encourages you to be together with them for this *Children's Time*. Settle down together to become aware of that place inside where we know God is near.

After a pause, ask them if any of them got into any fights this last week. Did any of them say sorry and make up so they could play together again? Wonder together why it can be so hard and so important to settle differences.

Explain that today's Gospel reading is from Matthew 5. It talks about making up, or settling your differences. Read verses 22 to 25a to them. Let the words of Scripture settle a bit before beginning the story.

Story

Michael was a boy who had a hard time living by the rules. He wanted to cooperate with his teachers and playmates, but before he knew it, things happened that made him angry. When he got angry, he forgot about the rules and lashed out. Before he knew it, he was in trouble and the teacher or the principal was asking him to explain what he did and what he would do better next time that happened. Sometimes they asked his parents to talk over the problem with him at home.

Michael did not like being in trouble. He did not like it at all. He wondered why there were so many rules. Sometimes he wondered why he got so angry while other people in his class just kept on playing. Today one of those girls who never got

caught being nasty had teased him about being a trouble-maker at recess. Before he knew it, he had punched her in the nose, and you guessed it, she told on him, and he was in trouble again.

That evening after supper, his dad took Michael out for a walk and asked him how he felt about getting in trouble. Michael told his dad how much he hated it and how he got teased about being a trouble-maker. They walked in silence for quite a while. Then they started to wonder if Michael could develop some tricks that would make it easier for him to live by the rules. His dad remembered some tricks that had helped him when he was in school.

They decided to make a peace trick bracelet that Michael could wear. It was



made out of rope. For every trick they thought of they put a knot into the bracelet. They thought of quite a few.

It made Michael happy to know there were so many good tricks for not getting into trouble. They even added one for making up quickly by saying, "I'm sorry. I didn't want to hurt you." In case he did hurt someone, that trick could help him settle the trouble before any teachers got involved.

What he liked best about making this bracelet is that it helped him know that his dad loved him and understood his problem. He knew his dad would be praying for him while he tried out his new set of tricks at school.

The next morning, Michael wore the bracelet to school and his dad prayed.

Michael felt like he had a powerful protector on his wrist. The girl who never got caught came to tease him again, but instead of bringing his fists up to punch her, he fingered the bracelet on his wrist and remembered the tricks he and his dad had talked about. He smiled at her and walked away.

Wondering questions

- I wonder what tricks they had for not getting into trouble?
- I wonder why some people have a hard time living by the rules while others find it easy?
- I wonder how we can settle differences quickly instead of getting into trouble?

Prayer

Jesus, we thank you for people, like Michael and his dad, who learn tricks that help them get along with others. Thank you for teaching us about settling our differences quickly. Please help us think of good tricks for getting along with others, too. Amen.

Elsie Rempel, who has a Master of theology, worked in Christian formation for Mennonite Church Canada (2012–2015) and has worshiped with children for decades. Her current focus is with preschool children. This children's story is part of a larger Mennonite Church Canada story archive available as a downloadable resource to teachers and ministers. Click here to read more in English: www.commonword.ca/Browse/833

Illustration by Yosephine Sulistyorini

Perspectives

In this issue, we have examples of how members of the Anabaptist Mennonite family are making a place for children in their local churches around the world.

India Teaching children

by Mrs. Jessica Mondal

“Impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

This was a direct command to the Israelites from God to teach children God’s Word thousands of years ago, because children are important to God. God created children, loves them and, most importantly, does not want them to perish. This command to teach applies to us even today in the 21st-century.

Many churches realize this and involve children in different ways. Some have Sunday school for the children. Others involve children in their regular Sunday services through giving them responsibility: take up the offering, read Scripture, help in leading worship, play a musical instrument, distribute and pick up song books.

Sunday school teachers’ training

One of the important aspects of conducting Sunday school is training teachers.

Often, individuals begin teaching Sunday school because of their love for children, even though they may not be particularly trained for it. Also, after many years, there is a need to upgrade oneself as the world is changing.

Children are becoming more advanced than they were earlier. Technology has taken up almost every aspect of our lives. So, churches organize trainings/capacity building workshops for them, or send them for trainings/workshops elsewhere. It is a blessing to learn new, creative teaching innovations and uses of technology to reach out to children.

Our Mennonite church conference has realized the importance of this and has begun organizing Sunday School teacher trainings in different areas. Two trainings in two areas were conducted this fiscal year with external resource persons, and two more will be conducted in the following year.

Challenges in Sunday school

One of the challenges in conducting/organizing Sunday school is the lack of individuals to take up the responsibility. Reasons include not feeling equipped, not being confident enough to handle children, or not having the time to prepare and deliver lessons.

When there are not enough teachers, children cannot be divided according to age groups. Thus, the Sunday school is not able to cater to the needs of each age. One or the other group invariably gets neglected.

Additional activities for children

In 2015, our church joined with two other churches to have a combined Vacation Bible School, where the theme was “Jesus is our Friend”. It was a great opportunity for the children to interact and get to know each other. We taught stories from the Bible that emphasized this theme, and encouraged the children to forge new friendships. On the last day, children made friendship bracelets for each other.

Here are some other ways children can participate in church community life:

- Christmas program where children perform songs, skits, choreography, recite Scripture portions while parents watch,
- children’s day celebration or a picnic,
- visit to a children’s home or an old age home,
- distribute gifts to parents on Mother’s and Father’s Day.

Child protection

An area where we are lacking in is protecting children in case of abuse or neglect. It is still a hushed topic in many parts of India and churches need to work on this aspect. Some of our Mennonite churches have a partnership with organizations who have strict measures of child protection. Every individual working with children had to sign a Child Protection Pledge and follow a strict policy. We are instructed to help children who are abused to make a complaint to the police and follow up.

This is a national issue that has to be taken seriously by the churches.

Future

Overall, most churches understand the importance of children in the church. Children need to be given opportunities to grow and develop to take up leadership in different spheres and activities in the church. In this way, second-line leadership will be developed.

While a lot is being done, there is a need for much more to reach out to them adequately.

My prayer is for ministry with and toward children to increase and that more people be willing to take up the responsibility of ministry among children in their respective churches.

Submitted by Mrs. Jessica Mondal, a church leader from Emmanuel Chapel, Calcutta, India. The congregation is part of Mennonite World Conference national member church Bharatiya Jukta Christa Prachar Mandali.

Zimbabwe

Nurturing peace in children

by Sibonokuhle Ncube

The Peace, Integrity and Lifeskills Clubs (PILLS) are values education-based clubs for the Brethren in Christ Church that help learners in 13 pilot junior and high schools with developing mindfulness. They have taken root and developed as an extracurricular, non-formal activity (ENA) in three provinces of Zimbabwe including Bulawayo, Matabeleland South and Matabeleland North.

The Peace, Integrity and Lifeskills program objective is to create a peaceful school climate by addressing teachers, school management and a pilot group of learners.

The opportunity of learner's time spent at school and the relevance of values education have continued to be mutually leveraged to benefit both curricular and extra-curricular life through moral, cultural, social and spirit-developing education.

In Brethren In Christ Church schools, the 10 core values of the Brethren In Christ Church form the entry-level module.

The most common outcome of peace education has been a reduction in overt bullying. The second outcome is that of increased cooperation and the desire to work together.

The most popular product of this cooperation is a peace club garden.

At a Peace Tree-a-thon for Zimbabwe's National Tree Planting Day, PILLS practiced creation care, children's education and peace work together.

This year, the International Day of Peace commemoration was merged with Zimbabwe's National Tree Planting Day through a Peace Tree-a-thon planting under the sub-theme "Feed your tree, feed your peace."

This tag line was crafted to encourage the schools to make it everyone's concern to see that all trees thrive as their commitment to peace with one another.

The Forestry Commission of Zimbabwe declares national trees for each year. This year, jackalberry tree, also known as the African ebony tree, was chosen. Jackalberry trees provide an important source of food for people, wildlife and birds, while also offering a beautiful wood used for household goods and medicine.

Tree planting is set to be a BIC church-wide phenomenon as part of elevating creation care driven by the compassionate ministry's strategy for 2019–2023.

The BICC in Zimbabwe has an estimate of 50 000 members. The annual planting of a tree per capita will be significant in time as some communities will need to do more due to deforestation.

Submitted by Sibonokuhle Ncube, national coordinator, Brethren In Christ Compassionate & Development Services, Zimbabwe.

**"Feed your tree,
feed your peace."**

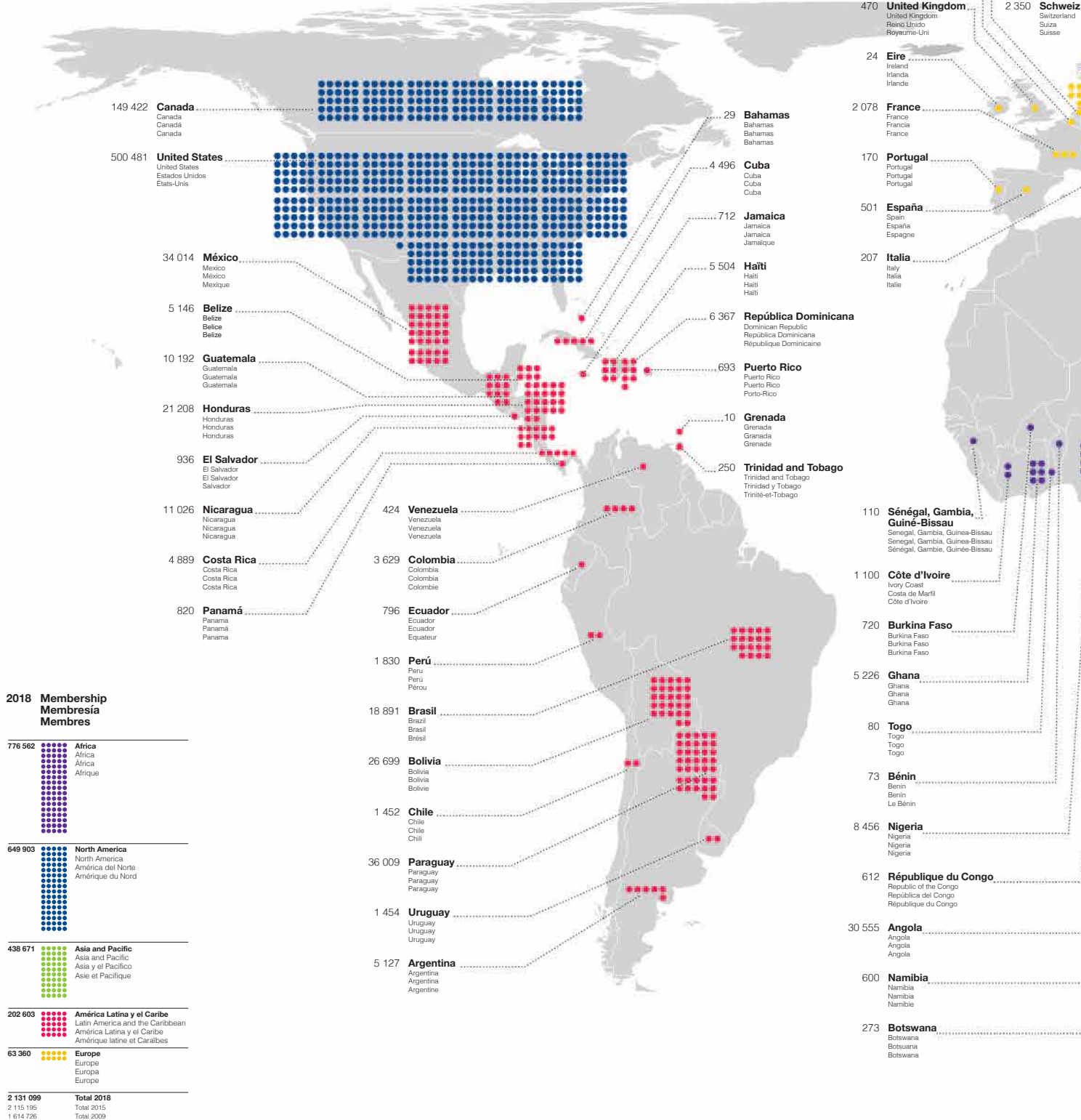
Anabaptists around the world

Anabautistas de todo el mundo

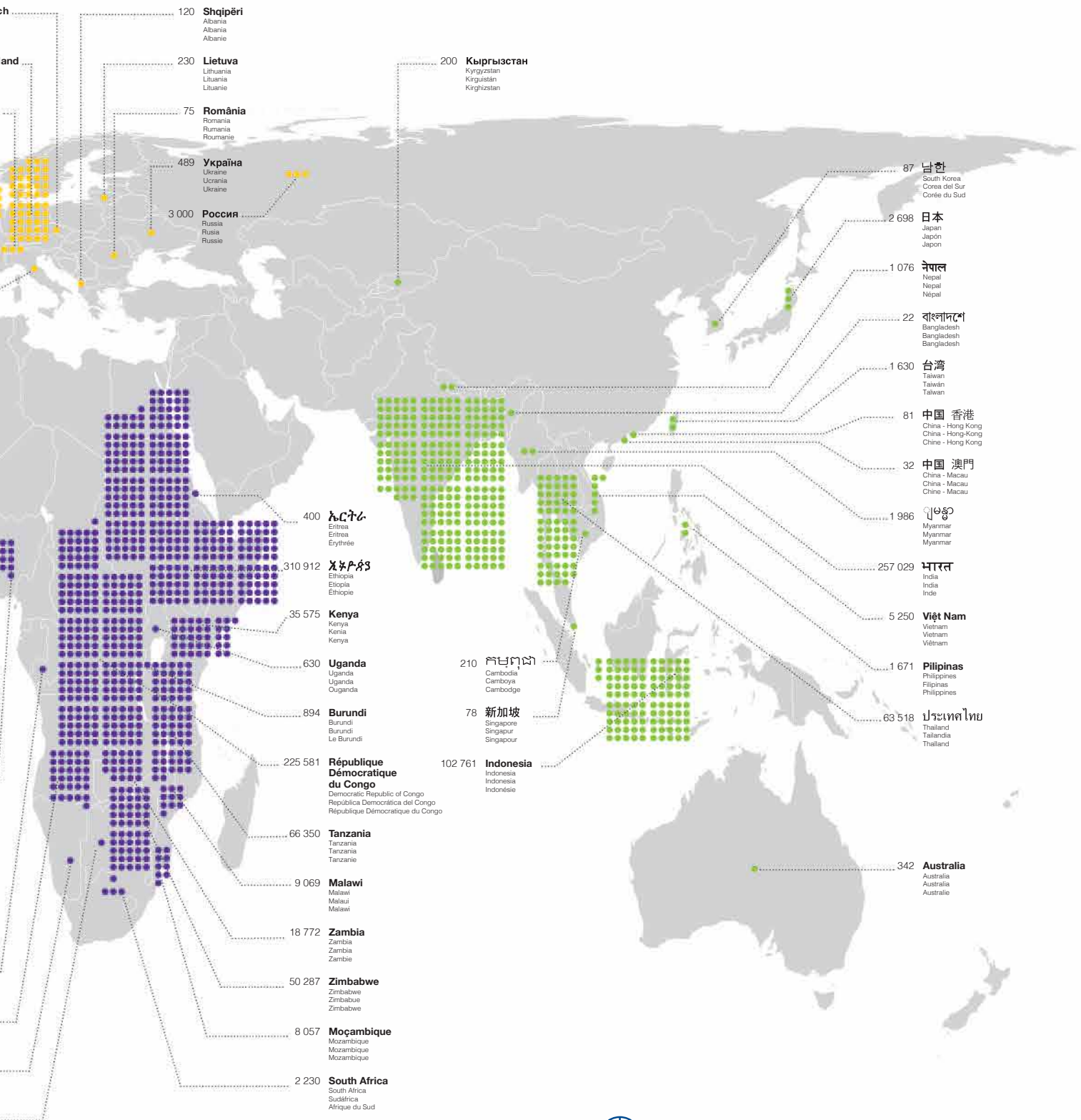
Anabaptistes du monde entier

Anabaptist Churches: Mennonite, Brethren in Christ
 Iglesias anabautistas: Menonita, Hermanos en Cristo
 Églises anabaptistes : Mennonite, Frères en Christ

MWC has information about church membership in each region.
 Visit mwc-cmm.org/map/ for more visual representation
 of Mennonite populations around the world.



Membership statistics indicate baptized members. Statistics include estimates. Listing on this map does not denote membership or participation in Mennonite World Conference. Les estadísticas de la membresía indican miembros bautizados, e incluyen cifras estimativas que no reflejan la pertenencia o participación en el Congreso Mundial Mennonita. Statistiques de membres baptisés, dont certaines sont approximatives et ne reflètent pas l'appartenance ou la participation à la Conférence Mennonite Mondiale.



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Peru

Discipling girls and boys

by Juan Carlos Moreno

We are Iglesia Cristiana Menonita el Perú (Mennonite church of Peru). We are a faith community located in Iquitos, a mid-sized city in the middle of the Peruvian jungle, along the banks of the Amazon River. There, in the midst of the tropical heat and humidity, we have worked for the past 10 years with boys and girls living in poverty and neglect.

It all began in the hearts of David and Cecy Moreno, missionaries from Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia (Mennonite church of Colombia). They began a children's ministry with girls and boys on the street. Meetings were held on Saturdays to share the Word of God and something to eat. The children began to invite their friends, and soon there were also teenagers and youth attending.

Through Bible study and discipleship, God's love began to work in their hearts to such an extent that they began to change their bad habits and become a testimony to their families. Some adults drew near as a result, looking for counselling, and this was how we began family groups in small houses. The children's families viewed David and Cecy as their pastors.

Later, we began to meet together in one place and our faith community was established in February 2012 with the accompaniment of the Mennonite church of Colombia.

As churches, we often forget the important role that boys and girls play in evangelism in our communities. We believe that all we have to do is meet on Sundays and entertain them with some activity.

However, in spite of all the difficult circumstances that they are going through, children have the ability to understand Christ's message without prejudice and with a pure heart. They are agents of forgiveness and reconciliation in the midst of violence in their homes. This is a transforming act that reveals the love of God. "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

Our work at Iquitos Mennonite church is strongly focused on the boys and girls. Our faith community has come to understand that it is not just the pastor's responsibility, but something in which we are all involved.

Our Lord Jesus has called us to make disciples, and what better than to do that among those who have their whole life ahead of them? Some of the members of our church take an active role as teachers and leaders while others help with the food so that 350 children can continue to receive lunch each week.

As the youth grow up, we teach them and start integrating them into the leadership team. They lead worship, songs and sacred dance. Some participate in music classes, others help serve the food, and still others have started to teach the smaller children. Their own testimonies are of great help to the younger boys and girls who can relate

to them and feel encouraged through them.

From our experience, we have come to understand that adolescents are very important in the ministry of the church. They are at a difficult age because they no longer identify with children, but they are not yet youth either. They often stray from God for this reason.

It is important that the church provide spaces in which teenagers can serve. They are going to make mistakes. Some days they behave like children, and they constantly struggle against laziness. Even so, we should accompany them and have faith that God has a purpose for them right now, in spite of their inexperience. That will build their faith and allow them to grow "like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper" (Psalm 1:3).

The boys and girls are the future of our churches, but they are the present too.

Just like adults, they need quality time in which we listen to them, encourage them, worship the Lord together, teach them to pray and give them the significance that they deserve as citizens of the kingdom of God.

"Children are like wet cement, whatever falls on them makes an impression," Haim Ginott (clinical psychologist and parent educator).

Submitted by Juan Carlos Moreno, youth pastor at Iglesia Cristiana Menonita del Perú.

Prayers for children

The children are truly well catered for during these BICC Zimbabwe General Conferences. Though the ministry may face insufficient resources, children's programs and performance during these conferences are always events to remember.

A word to parents: As much as secular education is important, so is Christian education to our children. One world musician once said there is no other firm foundation of life a child needs than that one can gain from being groomed at church.

To children: Jesus Christ is our life-long friend. Be a friend of Jesus and you will add very good valuable friends in your life. Jesus loves you.



Mqhele Jubane "Jubs" with children after church service at BICC Queenspark, Bulawayo district, Zimbabwe.



This team from Brethren in Christ Church Lobengula in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, received a certificate and trophy for coming in second place in a Bible quizzing competition in 2018.

A short prayer:

Dear Lord

For these three things I pray:

To seek you more sincerely

To love you more dearly

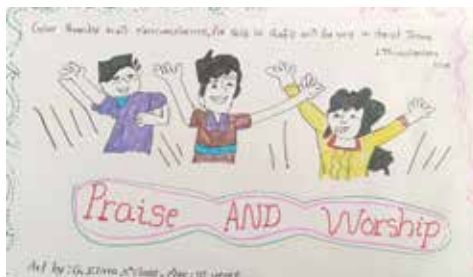
To follow you more nearly

Every day.

AMEN

(From "Day by Day," attributed to Richard of Chichester)

Submitted by Mqhele Jubane ("Jubs" to the children). He has been involved in children's ministry since 1999 at Mtshabezi Mission, running children's programs in the local mission church and in the seven preaching points around the mission.



A sample prayer for thanking God:

Father God, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for the day. Thank you for all that we see around us, the animals and birds, our sources of water and the sun. All these show us who you are.

Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Jesus our Saviour, that you died for us so that we can go to heaven. Jesus, my Saviour, I believe in you.

Thank you, in Jesus' name.

Amen

Submitted by Simangaliso Ncube, children's pastor at Brethren in Christ Church Lobengula Zimbabwe for the past 9 years.



Raisey Flora, Nicey Serena, Elina, Shalem Raj and Victor from Emmanuel Mennonite Brethren Church, Jagaboin Pally, Telangana, India, drew pictures of their favourite Bible stories.

A gentle peace witness

The Mennonite church in the Philippines



Lacao Mennonite Bible Church celebrates World Fellowship Sunday 2019.

PHOTO: Regina Mondez-Sumatra

By Regina Lyn Mondez-Sumatra

Since 2016, the Philippines has been led by a president who is controversial for his anti-drug campaign. There has been an increase in extra-judicial killings where policemen are said to execute drug pushers and anyone who fights back. There is a massive support for the charismatic president, yet there are also controversies around his character and his violent approach to the drug problem and poverty in the country.

In the town of Lumban in the province of Laguna, Rev. Eladio Mondez leads the congregation of Lacao Mennonite Bible

Church. On Sunday mornings, they gather some 50 men and women, both young and old, to hear the Word of God. In the afternoon, some 40–50 children from around the neighbourhood come to learn Bible stories, to sing and dance, and to eat a healthy meal volunteers from the congregation have prepared for each child.

During the week, Rev. Eladio Mondez performs tasks as the chairperson for Lumban Evangelical Alliance of Pastors (LEAP). LEAP is the ministerial association in the town, uniting 12 evangelical churches to make an impact in their municipality. These pastors are committed to assisting the local government in the national anti-drug campaign by becoming facilitators

in rehabilitation classes for drug users and pushers who surrender to the police so they could start changing their lives.

Every year in January, Lacao Mennonite Bible Church celebrates National Bible Month and Mennonite World Conference's World Fellowship Sunday.

A growing body

Mennonites first came to the Philippines in the 1970s through relief efforts by Mennonite Central Committee. Later, Eastern Mennonite Missions (formerly Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities [EMBM]) came to the Philippines and established Mennonite churches.

Most of the local Mennonite church



IMC youth camp is a venue for young people to come together to not only deepen their relationship with Jesus, but also to develop friendships and bond with each other.

PHOTO: Ebenezer Mondez

leaders are pastors from a different denomination who converted to a Mennonite practice of faith, which is why in 1991 they were formally established as the Integrated Mennonite Churches, Inc. (IMC).

IMC continues to grow, approaching an estimated 1 500 baptized members today. Local churches with IMC consist of congregations that are in the hard-to-reach mountains in the country, where most members are farmers who rely on agricultural crops for a living. Some churches are located in the city, where the next generation serves as young professionals such as teachers, nurses, and development workers.

Christianity is widespread in the Philippines with predominantly Roman Catholic churches. In the last decade, however, there has been an increase in the number of evangelical churches. This may be due to the entrance of foreign missions, and a product of churches splitting. The IMC also experienced a split more than a decade ago.

In the local communities, IMC churches actively engage the needs of their immediate surroundings. Some churches have



A typical house of IMC members who are in the rural areas.

PHOTO: Ebenezer Mondez

feeding programs for children who have few resources. They also provide school supplies before the start of the school year in order to encourage the children whose parents cannot afford school supplies. In some other areas, they conduct Bible studies and Sunday school which becomes a venue for children to have fun, listen to stories about Jesus and to be with other believers who love and care for them.

A fellowshiping family

IMC conducts an annual general conference where all the leaders and members can come together to fellowship and learn

The Philippines

MWC member:

Integrated Mennonite Churches, Inc.

Baptized members	1 000
Congregations	23
Presiding officer	Ambrocio Porcincula

Non-member churches:

Church of God in Christ, Mennonite

Baptized members	169
Congregations	19

Kalipunan ng Kapatirang Mennonita ng Pilipinas Inc. (Mennonite Brethren conference of the Philippines)

Baptized members	400
Congregations	7

Nationwide Fellowship of Churches

Baptized members	102
Congregations	6

Source: Global Statistics – 2018 Directory

more about peace theology, Anabaptism and how to deal with challenges at the local and national level. Due to geographical and financial challenges, however, around 20 percent of the total membership are able to attend the annual conference. Only those who are in close proximity to the venue of the gathering can usually come because of the cost of travelling; those coming from a distance have to travel for 5 to 16 hours.

The IMC youth gather every year for a youth camp, where young leaders encourage and strengthen each other. It is also an avenue to invite young people to come to know Jesus and have a relationship with him. Youth camps usually re-energize young people to serve in their local churches and be active in fellowship and witnessing.

IMC congregations are also active in engaging other churches in their areas. They become members of ministerial associations in their municipality or province. These organizations encourage fellowship



Youth camps encourage creativity in the activities that foster relationship-building and fellowship.

PHOTO: Ebenezer Mondez

among the believers of Jesus. Even though there are some differences, they highlight the unity of the believers of Christ. The Mennonite churches offer peace theology that inspires them to organize peaceful covenants among candidates during local election periods.

Other Anabaptist groups

Aside from the IMC, there are other Mennonite denominations present in the Philippines, such as the Conservative groups from the Nationwide Fellowship of Churches, which the IMC has no communication with. There is a Mennonite Brethren mission in the north, but there are no contact with the IMC yet. There is also a church network (Peace Church Network) planted by MC Canada, which was established in Metro Manila, the capital of the country. Peace Church and IMC have met

in several occasions for fellowship and learning together.

As in other countries, the Mennonites in the Philippines face challenges in discipleship and evangelism. There is an overwhelming amount of evangelical presence in the country and almost every person has heard the gospel, but chooses to ignore it or run away from it. The challenge is how to witness to the uniqueness of the Anabaptist tradition in highlighting peace, nonviolence and nonresistance.

There is opportunity to live out our principles of peace and nonviolence in a tangible way. Armed groups desiring a Communist rebellion dwell in remote mountainous regions. Some IMC churches located in areas where rebel groups reside become witnesses by offering snacks and being friendly with the rebels.

Anabaptism has also had influence over



In most gatherings, IMC churches highlight the traditional attires of their tribe or origin when they perform.

PHOTO: Ebenezer Mondez

the peace processes in the country, where peace building leaders look up to the Anabaptist peace theology as a model in approaching Muslim separatist groups, as well as Communist rebels.

As the Mennonite presence in the Philippines approaches the 50-year mark, our churches – found in several different denominational expressions – continue to follow Jesus in the way of peace, witnessing to our neighbours with the love and justice Jesus demonstrated in his interactions with people on earth.

Regina Lyn Mondez-Sumatra is the National Coordinator of the IMC since 2011. She grew up in Lumban Mennonite Bible Church and is currently a full-time research officer for a small peacebuilding NGO in Metro Manila, advocating for the peace process between the Philippines government and the Communist party.



Indonesia 2021

06-11
07 2021

bersama-sama mengikuti Yesus melintas batas
sesarengan ngetut wuri Gusti Yesus nratas wewates
following Jesus together across barriers
seguir a Jesús juntos, superando las barreras
suivre Jésus ensemble à travers les frontières

More than just gathering: Taste & see the LORD is good



Photo: Liesa Unger

MWC Assemblies are reunions of the Anabaptist-Mennonite family worldwide that take place every six years. They began in 1925, when a small group of Mennonite pastors from seven countries gathered in Basel, Switzerland, for several days of worship and conversation. Praise the Lord, after almost a century we continue to gather at Assemblies: a time to share in fellowship, worship, service and witness.

The forthcoming Assembly will be held in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. This will be the second Assembly held in Asia (after Calcutta, India, in January 1997), and the first in South-East Asia.

Indonesia is a country with rich cultural and historical background. Each city in this tropical country is worth visiting for its unique historical and cultural background.

Come to Indonesia, to Semarang City, where all attendees will taste and see how good the Lord is. Save the date, pray, come, experience the Lord's goodness!



Indonesia
2021

Mennonite Churches in Indonesia

There are three Mennonite national churches, called synods, in Indonesia.

Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa (GITJ)

– Evangelical Church of Java is one of three Mennonite-related synods in Indonesia. The predominately Javanese Mennonite conference of the north-central part of the island of Java, Indonesia, was formed on 30 May 1940, 81 years after the beginning of Dutch Mennonite mission work in the area around the Muria. Currently, GITJ has 116 local churches with more than 65,000 congregation members. These congregations are concentrated along the north coast of Central Java, but are also found in cities like Semarang, Salatiga and Yogyakarta and the provinces of Lampung and South Sumatra.

Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI)

– Muria Christian Church in Indonesia is an indigenous Christian movement begun in the city of Kudus in north Central Java by a Chinese Indonesian couple named Tee Siem Tat and Sie Djoen Nio. The group identified with the Mennonite family of churches when the first believers sought baptism from Russian Mennonite missionaries working under the Dutch Mennonite Mission in the Muria area in December 1920. Since 1960, the synod has spread beyond the Muria area and into other ethnic groups on the four main islands of western Indonesia.

Today GKMI has 61 local churches with more than 16,000 members living in Java, Bali, Sumatra, Batam, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Nusa Tenggara Timur.

Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (JKI) –

Indonesia Christian Congregations was formed in 1977 to provide an ecclesiastical structure for the Christian services carried out by the Sangkakala Foundation since 1977 in Semarang. The scope of ministry is in the form of evangelism, distribution of sermon recordings, vocal groups, bands, social services and on several occasions conducting Bible courses. Currently there are 223 local churches under the JKI synod and more than 40,000 members spread into 19 provinces in Indonesia, with a few congregations in the USA, Australia and the Netherlands.



Indo-Menno group with
MWC visitors in February 2016.
Photo: Liesa Unger

The **National Advisory Council (NAC)** for the MWC Assembly, Indonesia 2021 consists of church leaders of all three Mennonite synods in Indonesia. The NAC started its planning meetings in 2016 and meets several times per year to prepare for the visiting brothers and sisters from around the world.



**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

The Assembly team in Indonesia has started its work



Liesa with scooter.
Photo: Dale D. Gehman

International Event Coordinator

Those who have attended the last Assembly in Pennsylvania in 2015 might remember Liesa Unger scooting through the Farm Show Complex and giving announcements on stage. Liesa continues working as event coordinator for the next Assembly, Indonesia 2021.



Photo: Sarah Yetty

National Co-Coordinator

World traveller and coffee lover. **Sarah Yetty** is the event organizer for JKI Injil Kerajaan Semarang ("Holy Stadium," MWC Assembly host for 2021) and for other Christian events in Semarang. She also operates Olea Tour, a travel agency specializing in pilgrimages to the Holy Land. She has been married to Simon Setiawan for 13 years.



Photo: Agus Setianto

National Co-Coordinator

Singer and table tennis aficionado. **Agus Setianto** is a business person with a passion for marriage and family ministry. He is an elder and church member of Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI Mennonite church) in Semarang, Indonesia, and has served MWC as General Council representative (2009–2015) and Asia representative on the Executive Committee (2015–2018). Agus and his wife Jovita have three adult children.



Photo: Daniel K Trihandoyo

Communications and Marketing Coordinator

Guitarist and traveller **Daniel K Trihandoyo** has a background in business and marketing in pharmaceutical and consulting. He has served as vice general secretary for GKMI and as chairman in his local congregation. He is a member of the Communication and Partnership Development Committee of the Indonesian Bible Society. Daniel is married to Yohana; they have two young adult daughters.



Photo: Ary Rusdianto

Indonesian Language Coordinator

Sea fisher and nature hiker. **Ary Rusdianto** is an educator who is involved in his local GKMI church in Depok, West Java. He is married to Sri Haryani; they have two young adult daughters.



Photo: Agus Mayanto

The Assembly team is happy to have the support of the MWC regional representative of Southeast Asia and motorcycle enthusiast, **Agus Mayanto** of Indonesia. He is a pastor of Cempaka Putih Jakarta, a GKMI congregation, chair of PIPKA (GKMI's mission organization) and has previously served MWC on the Mission Commission and as chair of the Global Mission Fellowship. Agus and his wife Rosmaida Simanjuntak have one teenaged daughter.



Photo: Liesa Unger

Contact
Indonesia2021@mw-cmm.org



World Fellowship Sunday 2019

Leviticus 19:33–34

Luke 4:18–21

1 Peter 2:11–12

Each year, we encourage Anabaptist-related churches across the globe to use a common theme in a worship service, in order to connect with our global Anabaptist family.

World Fellowship Sunday is an opportunity to remind our communities of faith that we are all part of one body made up of many tribes, languages and nations (Revelation 7:9). On this day, we celebrate that, in Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the cultural and national boundaries

that separate us have been overcome by the cross.

In 2019, the theme was “Justice on the Journey: Migration and the Anabaptist-Mennonite Story,” prepared by the Latin American churches, connecting with the MWC Renewal 2027 theme for 2019, and with the MWC Peace Sunday 2018 theme.

Anabaptist Christians today are called to follow Jesus in his ministry of justice-making. This includes welcoming migrants.



Iglesia Menonita Barrio El Paraiso (a Mennonite Mission Network congregation) in Caracas, Venezuela, celebrated World Fellowship Sunday.

PHOTO: courtesy Iglesia Menonita Barrio El Paraiso



At Doopsgezinde Gemeente Haren (a Mennonite congregation in Groningen, Netherlands), the church watched a video testimony of a twelve-year-old from Syria who says, “Being a refugee doesn’t mean that I’m different.”

“Stories like Loujein’s helps us to realize the need to become more inclusive societies, and even to become more inclusive churches,” says pastor Jacob Kikkert.

PHOTO: Jacob H. Kikkert



Iglesia Menonita José María Caro (Mennonite church belonging to Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Chile –IEMCH) celebrated World Fellowship Sunday by holding a beautiful feast of offering of thanks in which sisters and brothers in the faith, children and youth, could reflect and pray for a moment in fellowship.

PHOTO: courtesy Iglesia Menonita José Caro

Conferencia Evangélica Menonita, Inc. in the Dominican Republic encouraged local congregations to hold a baptism on World Fellowship Sunday. Mennonite churches reported a total of 138 people baptized on 21 January 2019.

YABs Fellowship Week



Young people at GITJ Semarang Elzar Anung Anindito, a Mennonite church in Indonesia, used the worship resource package to celebrate YABs Fellowship Week in 2018.

PHOTO: courtesy of GITJ Semarang Elzar Anung Anindito

Salt & Light

16-23 June 2019

As the YABs committee, we are excited to see YABs Fellowship Week gain momentum each year as young Anabaptists around the world celebrate being a part of our global family.

Our 4th annual YABs Fellowship Week is on the theme of “Salt & Light: Exploring our identity then and now”, based on Matthew 5:13–16. Materials on MWC’s website (mwc-cmm.org/yabs) will provide ideas and content to young adults groups around the world as they plan their time of celebration.

This year, with the focus on Salt & Light, we want to explore how our Anabaptist identity has changed over the years and how it has not.

- How do we live as salt and light in a dark and sinful world?
- As Anabaptist Christians, both in our history and in the present, how have we lived this out?
- What role does peacemaking play?
- And how can we encourage each other as a global family in this identity?

Join young Anabaptists around the world in discussing these topics and more during YABs Fellowship Week, 16-23 June 2019. We look forward to hearing your perspectives and sharing in worship, reflection, stories and prayer this coming June.

Get creative! Through our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/younganabaptists/) or email (yabs@mwc-cmm.org), send us pictures of your YABs Fellowship Week celebration to let us know what you enjoyed and learned!

Larissa Swartz, Young Anabaptists (YABs) representative for North America

Meet your Deacons Commission



Top row: Siaka Traore, chair (Burkina Faso), Henk Stenvers, secretary (Netherlands), Jürg Bräker (Switzerland), Angela Opimi (Bolivia), Bottom row: Ephraim Baint Disi Mbewe (Malawi), Doug Sider (Canada), Vikal Pravin Rao (India), Hanna Soren (Nepal)

PHOTOS: Paul Brubacher, supplied

The Deacons Commission focuses on the welfare of the churches within the MWC communion, particularly in times of duress, but also in times of joy, and offers listening, prayer, encouragement and support to churches feeling the need for brothers and sisters to “walk with them” in their particular situation. The commission promotes the attitude and practice of service among member churches by means of visits, teaching and materials.

The activities of the Deacons Commission include

1. Global Church Sharing Fund: financial support to advance the life and mission of member churches
 - 2017: 3 projects supported
 - 2018: 10 projects supported
2. Prayer Network: bimonthly email (www.mwc-cmm.org/prayernetwork)
3. Deacon delegation visits: Upon request, a delegation from the Mennonite World Conference Deacons Commission will visit a member church in a time of difficulty to walk with them, listen to stories, pray and show that the global church family’s concern and solidarity.
 - 2017: Democratic Republic of Congo (See website story “Generous love amid war in Democratic Republic of Congo”)



Deacons Commission secretary Henk Stenvers on a church visit in India.

PHOTO: courtesy Henk Stenvers

- 2017: Peru (See website story “MWC Deacons communicate the church’s care”)
 - 2017: ConoSur meeting and Ecuador (See website story “MWC provides care after the storm”)
 - 2017: Church building dedication in Surungu, Nepal (See website story “Nepal church celebrates growth”)
 - 2018: Church building dedication in Kodopali, India
4. Teaching Resource: “An Anabaptist Theology of Service” by Arnold Snyder (www.mwc-cmm.org/AnabaptistTheologyService)

Deacons Commission members

Siaka Traore, chair (Burkina Faso), Henk Stenvers, secretary (Netherlands), Jürg Bräker (Switzerland), Angela Opimi (Bolivia), Ephraim Baint Disi Mbewe (Malawi), Doug Sider (Canada), Vikal Pravin Rao (India), Hanna Soren (Nepal)

2019 Peace Sunday

Theme: A peace that surpasses all understanding

Text: Philippians 4:6–7

Date: 22 September 2019

Nelson Mandela is credited with saying that something “always seems impossible until it’s done.” Sometimes our pursuit toward peace seems unrealistic. Sometimes we cannot imagine how it might be achieved. And yet, we are called to pursue peace even if and when it does not make sense. And sometimes amazing and wondrous things happen when our conduct is worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27).

This year’s Peace Sunday resources will focus on those times when the peace of Christ surpasses what we may perceive as impossible – in short, a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Peace Commission

Give a gift to MWC

Your prayers and financial gifts are deeply appreciated. Your contributions are important. They will:

- Enable and expand communication strategies to nurture a worldwide family of faith,
- Strengthen our communion’s identity and witness as Anabaptist Christians in our diverse contexts,
- Build up community through networks and gatherings so we can learn from and support each other.

Go to www.mwc-cmm.org and click the “Get involved” tab for prayer requests and on the “Donate” table for multiple ways to give online. Or mail your gift to Mennonite World Conference at one of the following addresses

- 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 CANADA
- Calle 28A No. 16–41 Piso 2, Bogotá, COLOMBIA

President's column

Giving is contagious



Women give offerings at Ngaba Mennonite Church in Kinshasa, DRC.

PHOTO: J. Nelson Kraybill

From my platform seat at Mopulu Mennonite Church in Ngaba, Democratic Republic of Congo, I can see everyone in the congregation during worship. Children near the front are captivated as a series of choirs come forward to praise God: women's choir, men's choir, young women's choir...and children's choir. Even the youngest know they are valued and needed.

As happens in many churches in Africa, the offering is a celebration. With the congregation singing joyfully and musicians giving their best, age and gender groupings process one at a time to a table holding five offering baskets.

In sequence, adult women, adult men, young women, young men, children dance forward with their gifts. Some give to every basket, others to one or two.

MWC Regional Representative Francisca Ibanda explains to me that the various baskets are for "the normal offering, the social help offering, the offering for construction, the offering for the preacher and the offering for whatever special day is being celebrated."

The joy and generosity of givers reminds me of Israelites bringing offerings to build the tabernacle. "The people are bringing much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us," Moses exclaimed as abundance poured in for building the tent of worship (Exodus 36:5).

What lessons the children at Ngaba are learning!

With five baskets, they learn budget allocation: some resources for people in need, some to support church leaders, some for facilities, some for program.

Giving is part of obedience to God; giving is a joy.

I have helped with fundraising for Mennonite World Conference and other church entities. People who "give until it hurts" paradoxically are happy. Christians in the West could learn from African sisters and brothers that bringing tithes and offerings in a visible, joyous way can be an act of worship. The next generation is watching and learning.

J. Nelson Kraybill, MWC president (2015–2021), lives in Indiana, USA.

En Pos de la Justicia:
Migración en la Historia
Anabautista-Mennonita

Justice on the Journey:
Migration and the
Anabaptist-Mennonite Story

Justice sur le Chemin:
Migration et Histoire
Anabaptiste-Mennonite



Renewal
Renovación
Renouveau



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Congreso
Mundial Mennonita
Una Comunidad de
Iglesias Anabautistas

Conférence
Mennonite Mondiale
Une Communauté
d'Églises Anabaptistes

6 de Abril de 2019
Heredia, Costa Rica

Renewal 2027 is a 10-year series of events commemorating the 500th anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement.



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 twice a year (April and October)

- English
- Spanish
- French
- Electronic Version (pdf)
- Print Version
- Mailing delays? Consider the benefits of electronic subscription. Check this box to receive your *Courier/Correo/Courrier* subscription via email only.

Name

Address

Email

Phone

Complete this form and send to:

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



PHOTO: Tony Schellenberg

Little guests

As I was getting ready to move to another country, I found this letter that my youngest daughter wrote to me when she was seven years old. Now, she is 23. What wonderful memories of her childhood!

This letter brought back other memorable moments, like when she was four and said to me, "Jesus is really stretched, isn't he? He streeeeetches and streeeeetches himself." This was her first profession of faith! When I asked her why Jesus was stretched, she told me that this is so because he is everywhere.

This was her way of understanding the idea of God's presence in all of creation.

Girls and boys are a beautiful gift from God. They bring joy, strength, hope – and also big challenges (like how to explain the idea of Jesus always being in our midst to a little girl).

Infants come into our lives like guests that require our attention, care and affection. Like guests, they also leave us and continue on their journey after visiting us in our home.

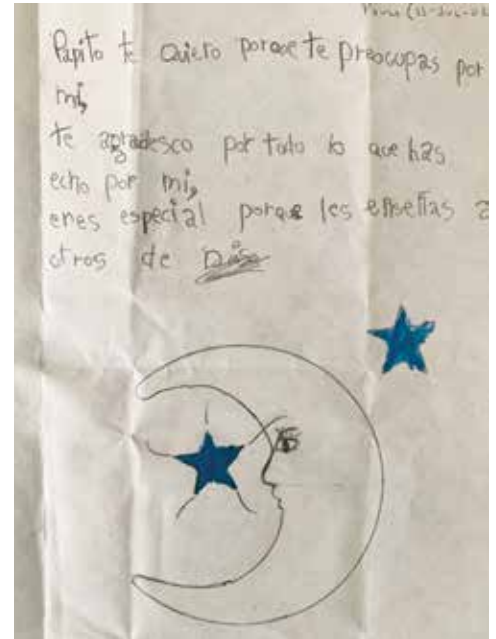
My daughters no longer live with us, but we continue to talk about faith issues even now that they have gone.

Sometimes, I ask myself whether we would be able to continue these conversations about God now without having had the foundation of these great conversations during their childhood. What would our relationship be like today if they had not felt welcome and safe in our home?

The way that we treat those guests that we call descendants will, in good measure, determine what our relationship will be like with them when they go their own way.

The same thing happens at church. Children's ministry at each congregation is an important way in which we welcome and bless the girls and boys that come as guests to our communities. The way in which we treat them can have a great effect on how they will relate to the church once they have grown and continue on their journey as adults.

Unfortunately, there are many people who have fallen victim to indifference, rejection



and even physical and emotional abuse in church contexts.

Children's ministry has been the focus of this edition of the *Courier* in the interest of ensuring that through the local congregations our global church continues to be a place of refuge and hospitality for the girls and boys of society. Careful preparation of leaders and teachers, environments free of abuse, and the active participation of children in the life of the church are some of the aspects that this *Courier* invites us to take into account as we perform this important ministry.

It is my prayer that our congregations continue to be places that bring pleasant recollections to our girls and boys the world over, that they are places where the presence of Jesus is palpable to each guest that we receive.

César García, MWC general secretary, works out of the general secretariat office in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.