

Courier Correo Courier

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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

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Cover Photo:

Mennonites join a walk in solidarity along the Migrant Trail, a path mirroring the journey of border crossing in the southern USA.

Read more:
www.mwc-cmm.org/migranttrail

Photo: Saulo Padilla

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César García Publisher
Kristina Toews Chief Communications Officer
Karla Braun Editor
Yosephine Sulistyorini Designer
Sylvie Gudin Koehn French Translator
Rick Derksen French Translator
Clementine Poupaert French Translator
Diana Cruz Spanish Translator
Beatriz Foth Spanish Translator
Marion Meyer English Translator
Louise Nussbaumer French Proofreader
Marisa Miller Spanish Proofreader
Eunice Miller Spanish Proofreader

Courier/Correo/Courier is available on request. Send all correspondence to:
Courier, 50 Kent Avenue, Suite 206, Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1 Canada.

Email: info@mwc-cmm.org
Website: www.mwc-cmm.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/MennoniteWorldConference
Twitter: @mwcmm
Instagram: @mwcmm

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Mennonite World Conference,
Ave. Calle 32#14-42, Piso 1, Bogota, Colombia
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A word from the editor



Will we take up the call?

As a Canadian, I'm generally pleased to identify with my country. I'm also aware that my family lines moved to this country from Ukraine 100–150 years ago. However, they weren't Ukrainian – they moved from Prussia, and before that from the Netherlands.

Migration is a part of my story.

As Anabaptists, we trace our history of migration across Europe, and into the rest of the world as settlers and missionaries. As Christians, we can trace the thread of migration back to the early church, spreading Christianity through the Roman empire as we scattered beyond Jerusalem. The Old Testament takes us further: the Babylonian exile, the years in Egypt, Abraham's journeys – even Adam and Eve leaving the garden of Eden is a sort of migration.

Migration is a part of the human story.

The definition of a migrant is simply a person who is moving across an international border, regardless of whether the stay is voluntary or involuntary, what motivated it, or how long the stay will be.

So, it is perhaps not surprising that the number of migrants today is the highest on record. In 2017, there were some 258 million people – nearly one in 30 – living outside their country of birth, for reasons ranging from sharing the gospel, to pursuing economic opportunity, to fleeing war or violence, to seeking more sustainable living given the effects of climate change, and many more.

Migrants are vulnerable regardless of their reasons for moving. The UN reports that they are often the first to lose their jobs in an economic downturn, they may be paid less than native born, and they are more likely to experience human rights abuses.

Aware of the many challenges migrants face in their own countries, Latin American church leaders developed “Justice on the journey: Migration and the Anabaptist story” as the theme for the Renewal 2027 event held in Costa Rica in 2019 ([page 17](#)). The contents of this issue derive from the presentations made there.

In the Old Testament, we read specific exhortations to treat the foreigner among us with justice, and in the New Testament, there are many calls to show hospitality and to love those who are on the margins of society.

Citing this biblical precedent, Adriana Belinda Rodriguez calls on readers to respond to the migrants around us with obedience and love to God's commands that we love the stranger ([pages 6–7](#)).

Also in the features, Jamie Prieto Valladares calls readers to dream of peace and follow Jesus into action that seeks justice for those who are displaced or on the edges of society ([pages 3–5](#)).

In our Perspectives articles in this issue ([pages 8–12](#)), you'll read stories about how our Anabaptist family is extending hospitality through the church to migrants in Kenya, India, Mexico, Germany and USA.

Migrants take many forms and have many motivations. Sometimes they are us, sometimes they are “other,” but always God's call is to love. How will Anabaptists in all corners of the globe take up the call?

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



Mennonites fellowship together at the Renewal 2027 gathering in Costa Rica in 2019.

Photo: Len Rempel



Peacemaking youth from many countries play football (soccer) together in the Anabaptist World Cup at Assembly 16 in Pennsylvania, USA.

Photo: Rhoda Shirk

Children dream in peace

by Jaime Adrián Prieto Valladares

Since beginning in Europe, the Anabaptist movement has had a migrant identity. The theological foundations that gave it life intersect with today's migrant reality, presenting challenges for the missional, pastoral and social justice work of our global Anabaptist family.

The Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade has left us a beautiful poem*, with which I would like to direct these reflections:

*"...I walk a path
that crosses many countries...
I prepare a song,
to awaken women and men
and make boys and girls dream in peace."*

Jesus, the perennial migrant

Carlos Drummond de Andrade calls to the four points of the universe, saying: "I walk a path (...)". His words harken to the Nahuatl poetry of Mesoamerica, where the poet sees the self walking, allowing the

light of the Being tending the white and red flowers to illuminate the way.

The first verse, "I walk a path", also brings to mind the poetry and life of Jesus with respect to the way. This is because Jesus is presented in the four Gospels as the "perennial migrant" whose message, life and mission always take place along a journey.

The Gospel of Matthew describes a common scene for many Central American migrants: Jesus, Mary and Joseph returning to Nazareth in fear, on tiptoes, from their exile in Egypt after the death of emperor Herod (Matthew 2:13-18).

*Based on a loose translation from the Portuguese to Spanish by Jaime Adrián Prieto Valladares.

The public life of Jesus evolved along the road as he traveled to cities and towns while preaching the kingdom Gospel and curing all manner of illness and pain (Matthew 9:35). He traversed the roads of Samaria, crossing paths with the Jewish, Syrophenician, Greek and Roman cultures, taking them bread, life and peace. Turning himself into the way, he revealed the way:

“I am the way, the truth and the life”
(John 14:6).

His death took place in Jerusalem, after confronting the Jewish political and religious authorities, and being judged by Pontius Pilate. After his passion and death, resurrected Jesus is found walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, comforting them and explaining the sacred Scriptures.

The rise of the migrant Anabaptist-Mennonite communities

The poetic phrase can also summarize the migrant experience that characterised the identity and rise of the Anabaptist-Mennonite communities of the 16th-century. These communities were modelled on Jesus Christ’s example of the way and the example of the followers of Jesus in Acts 9:2 who called themselves “the people of the Way.”

In the midst of the 16th-century corruption that hold hostage the body and spirit of peasants, weavers, and miners, the renewing Anabaptist testimony and radical reform was made concrete.

Followers and disciples of Christ were shaken by their experience of the Holy Spirit that enabled them to escape the fear caused by the forces of evil, the Roman power of Pontius Pilate, the power of religious leaders and the policies of the Pharisees that resulted in the death of their teacher Jesus.

This experience of the Holy Spirit gave birth to the first Anabaptist communities in the south of Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Tyrol and the Netherlands. Calvin, Luther, Melancthon and Zwingli’s reading of sacred Scripture highlighted the gospel of grace which greatly influenced the Anabaptists. But what most characterised the Anabaptists and Mennonites – what they made their own – was following Jesus



The migration of Anabaptist ideas around the world is visible in MWC Assemblies where believers from up to 86 countries, like these Indian Mennonites, gather for fellowship and worship.

Photo: MWC

by way of the comforting experience of the Holy Spirit.

The migrant nature of the Anabaptists grows out of their decision of imitate Christ. Historically speaking, the 16th-century Anabaptist-Mennonite communities made the poet’s words their own, migrating along innumerable paths, following the example of their teacher, announcing *shalom* (peace) and the gospel, and creating communities in solidarity with the poor, the peasants and the migrants.

Global migratory expansion of Anabaptism

The movement of Anabaptist-Mennonite families of European descent continued toward Latin America. Here we see movements of entire Mennonite families originating in Europe going to Mexico (1922–1926), Paraguay (1926–1958), Brazil (1930–1958) & Uruguay (1948–1959). Since 1953, Bolivia has become the destination of choice for Mennonite colonies with European origins.

We cannot speak of migrations of European ethnic Anabaptists to Asia and Africa, like those described for Latin America where the geographical space was conducive toward settlement in Mennonite colonies. However, we can affirm that the Anabaptist ideals, the message of Jesus Christ, the formation of the church and peacebuilding efforts that germinated in the context of European and North America colonial powers, also migrated to Asia, Africa and Latin America by way of the mission boards and organizations like Mennonite Central Committee.

Be it due to mass or medium movements of families of European ethnic origin, or due to the arrival of missionary couples, the Anabaptist communities, churches, families and movements expanded, following many routes and crossing boundaries the world over.

Songs of the migrant

And this brings us to the current reality of migrants across the world today. A

Will we be open to the anointing of the Holy Spirit to create and sing songs to migrant girls and boys that allow them to dream in peace?

total of 250 million people, or 3.4 percent of the global population is made up of migrants who cross their country's borders, fleeing injustice and violence, escaping death, searching for work to improve their economic situation and provide for their poor families, or in search of greater religious tolerance. All this with the goal of finding better social opportunities and hope far from their homeland.

We are talking about displacement from one country to another, as is the case with Venezuelans going to Brazil or Colombia because of the political and economic crisis playing out in their country. Or the dramatic case of thousands of Hondurans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans and Mexicans who try to cross the Mexican border, fleeing from violence in search of the "American Dream". Or the huge migrations of Africans overwhelmed by drought, violence and famine in their countries, crossing borders in search of refuge in Europe, the United States and other continents. In all of this human drama, families, women, girls and boys suffer incredible injustices and indignation.

This lived reality of millions of migrants in the world has turned them into the

constant objects of the national and international news. Poems and songs set to popular African, Latin America and Hispanic rhythms are waking up women and men to the migrant situation.

The final verse of Carlos Drummond de Andrade's poem places the emphasis on the utopian ideal of this migrant song that "makes boys and girls dream in peace". It also makes us think of the maternal face of God that the prophet, Isaiah, used to refer to the Jewish exile in Babylon. God appears as a woman in labor, saying:

"The Lord has forsaken me,
my Lord has forgotten me.
But, can a woman forget
her nursing child?
But, even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you"
(Isaiah 49:14-15).

The key questions are: how can we work through the church to provide a better future for migrants, their sons and daughters? Will it be possible to imitate and follow Christ in the way of the migrant? Will we be open to the anointing of the Holy Spirit to create and sing songs to migrant girls and boys that allow them to dream in peace?

Conclusions: pastoral recommendations

The teachings of Jesus, the migration experiences of our Anabaptist and Mennonite tradition, and the migrant songs should thus lead us to pastoral action.

As Anabaptist churches in Central America, Latin America, North America, Africa and Asia, as Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Central Committee, and all the Anabaptist education and social service institutions, we should pray, reflect and take concrete action with respect to the migration reality in our countries and regions where we live.

- Strengthen theological and pastoral reflection on the topic of migrations.
- Kindle reflection within our churches about the rights of migrants and the political, economic and social push factors for migration.
- Offer spaces of friendship, psycho-spiritual support, aid and fellowship to migrants who visit our churches.
- Hold offerings in our churches destined to finance projects with migrants.

- Place special emphasis on healthcare, nutrition, well-being and education for migrant girls and boys.
- Spiritually accompany migrants.
- Network with other international government and non-government organizations that are working on the issue of migration.
- Study, plan, develop and evaluate activities and projects with a migration focus, alongside entities and other like-minded church organizations involved in this pastoral work.
- Share our reflections and projects on the topic of migration with churches on other continents so that the international experience and pastoral work with migrants can be enriched.
- Have fun with migrant girls and boys through songs, stories, games and laughter.

The migration issue causes us to meditate on God as presented in the Torah and other Old Testament books, who appears as the God of the poor, the orphans, the widows and the strangers. The New Testament turns us to the judgement and promise of Jesus in Matthew 25:34-36: "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."



Jaime Adrián Prieto Valladares is a Mennonite historian and church leader in the Asociación Iglesias Cristianas de Costa Rica.

He spoke at Renewal 2027 – Justice on the journey: Migration and the Anabaptist-Mennonite story – in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica, 6 April 2019. This paper been adapted from his presentation.

A requirement to love and be obedient

Leviticus 19:33–34 | Matthew 25:35



by Adriana Belinda Rodríguez

Those of us who have seen migration up close know that is an issue that concerns the people of God.

Those who migrate – leaving their security and comfort behind – expose themselves to adversity and an uncertain future. Some who migrate do so voluntarily, but recent history reveals that current migration is usually forced. There are circumstances that oblige people to take the plunge and move in the hope that what happens in the future will be good for them and their family.

For the women who decide to embark on the journey with their under-age children with the purpose of protecting them from a desperate situation, the challenge is so much more difficult. Their effort must double or triple according to the number of children they take along.

The sad part is that on the other side of the wall, the barrier, the border – or whatever other name it has – the solution/ promise/idea is nowhere to be found.

In truth, some already know this before they leave, and their attitude evokes a negative response. In a way, doors are closed to them.

At Renewal 2027 in Costa Rica, Mennonites pray for migrants around the world.

Photo: Henk Stenvers

For the children of God, we know that God requires love and obedience of us. Through the Word, God calls us to act in a way that sensitizes us: with empathy.



Today's Costa Rican Mennonite church leaders recognized elders who had an important impact on the church's development in the country. Pictured: Martín Matamoros, Hugo Rodríguez (represented by daughter), Orlando Carvajal (represented by wife), Anabelle González (second from right); Sandra Campos (right). Also recognized: María Rodríguez (deceased); Isabel Soto de Guadalupe (deceased).

Photo: Henk Stenvers

The Context

According to a survey conducted by the Mennonite Social Action Commission (CASM)*, an average of 250 to 300 people emigrate daily from Honduras. Most people leave due to violence, lack of opportunities, and to be reunited with their families. Among these groups, there are youth who leave with a green code, which means that for various reasons they are destined to die. News articles in the media show that if their migration attempt fails, these youth face a death sentence when they return.

One such youth who was detained and was awaiting deportation back to his country said in an interview: "I know that I am on a hit list. I am here because of my mother and my siblings. It is true that I killed a gang member because he abused my mother and my two sisters. This is why my life is under threat and why we came. It doesn't matter if they kill me; what matters is that my family is safe."

Another reality is the drama that people who are deported have to go through.

They are not even granted the right to change their clothes when they go back. When they are imprisoned, the dirty clothes they are wearing are taken and replaced with a prison uniform, as if migrating were a crime and not a basic human right. When they are released after two or three months, their dirty clothes are returned. These are what they must do as they are immediately pushed out.

Women and children arrive crying. Mothers who only 20 days before gave birth come on a journey that involves 14 hours of travel from Mexico.

The Scriptures

This is the reality that we are faced with and that you and I can and should do something about.

The question is: what do we want to do? Well... each of us chooses how to respond to the situations in life based on our role as church leader, community leader, political leader, family, pastor, friend or citizen.

For the children of God, we know that God requires **love and obedience** of us.

"When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien" (Leviticus 19:33).

But I didn't oppress them; all I did was close my door. It is my right. I am only freeing myself from threats because they can attack me.

I don't know what could be a good and socially acceptable excuse, even in a church context.

The reality is that as Christians we don't do what we want to do, but rather what we should do. The Word of God is clear about this specific situation.

How should I behave in the face of the migration issue?

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35).

Through the Word, God calls us to act in a way that sensitizes us: with empathy.

Personally, I think that this is the best way to understand the lived reality of people who migrate. When I attempt to understand what a person could be feeling, I connect with the Word of God that says:

"For you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34a).

In other words, you also know what it feels like when you are not in your territory, away from the comfort of your house.

Conclusion

We need to provide love, in order to be in solidarity in the best possible way with people who have no other option but to migrate and are suffering the consequences. Even though we are not affected now, we may be one day. We must assume a position toward this social problem, and the best one would be to obey the Word of God by providing a place to stay, not oppressing people, and putting ourselves in their shoes.



Adriana Belinda Rodríguez is married and is a psychologist who is part of the Peace Commission. She is also a theology student at SEMILLA and a member of the Mennonite Church "Caminando con Dios" (Walking with God) in La Ceiba, Honduras, where she participates in the teaching. She directs the social service organization of the Honduran Evangelical Mennonite Church known as the Peace and Justice Project that promotes a culture of peace.

She presented this paper at Renewal 2027 held in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica on the 6th of April 2019. This article is an adaptation of her presentation titled, "In search of Justice: Migration in the Anabaptist-Mennonite History."

* La Comisión de Acción Social Menonita (CASM – Mennonite social action commission) is an ecumenical organization that works to strengthen democratic processes and regional and local development in Honduras.

Perspectives

Mass migration is a concern for many countries today: it is part of both the history and the present of Anabaptist-Mennonites. We have been both those who are migrating and those who are welcoming neighbours to a new home. At Justice on the Journey: Migration and the Anabaptist-Mennonite Story in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica, 6 April 2019, presenters from around the world gave testimonies of migration.

Columns in this section have been adapted from their presentations.

India

Our God is a restorer



Helena Dueck's needlework beautifies or restores.

Photo: Rhoda Shirk

by Paul Phinehas

“For the LORD is restoring the majesty of Jacob, as well as the majesty of Israel, though ravagers have ravaged them and ruined their branches” (Nahum 2:2).

Introduction

Relationship is a gift from God, and our God is the God of relationship. God gave us three ways to enjoy this beautiful gift

1. By sending his only begotten Son we can enjoy our relationship with God.
2. Through the body of Christ, the church.
3. Through the human family.

At this juncture I want to focus on family relationships. The family is ordained by God. God has many plans and purposes for each one of us through family.

Unfortunately, the enemy has destroyed and broken families through various strategies like selfishness, lust, materialism and political systems and wars, famine and migration.

No matter what are the ways of the

enemy, let us not forget that *our God is the God of restoration.*

Cooperating with God

We are the people of God. As a church, we are the family of God. It is mandatory to cooperate along with God in the process of restoration.

One good example I can think of is Joseph. His father Jacob was a blessed man of God. Throughout his life, God's hand was upon him in spite of his faults. God blessed him with 12 sons, and Joseph was the favourite.

We see God's leading and plans for Joseph at the very early stage of his life to show that God is the God of restoration.

Joseph had to go through a “pit” experience before God lifted him to restore his own family and, through his family, the generation.

In the entire process, we see how wonderfully God used different situations in Joseph's life to and restore and unite the family.

From the life of Joseph, we learn that caring for strangers and foreigners is a mandatory ministry of every child of God.

Obedying the commandment

It is also the commandment of Jesus in the New Testament. Every church and child of God should obey the same.

The role of the local church is to love and welcome the foreigners in our communities (see Deuteronomy 19:34 and Matthew 25:34–36). Refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people are among the world's most vulnerable people. God calls us to seek their protection and welfare.

A testimony of family

Here is a story of a refugee who came back to her family through the love and affection of the church.

During the civil war in Sri Lanka between Tamils and Sinhalese, 12-year-old Mala was separated from her family.

She was deported to India along with other refugees from Sri Lanka and placed into a refugee camp in Pollachi.

During her stay in the camp, a pastor from nearby church visited this camp to share the gospel. He met Mala who received the gospel. She attended the local church.

In the course of time, the pastor found out that Mala got separated for her family and didn't know anything about their whereabouts.

She grew under the care of the pastor and church for more than 19 years. She got married and has a child.

As she was staying in the church, one of the associate pastors who visited Sri Lanka fortunately met her parents. She was reunited with her family after 19 long years of separation.

Now she is staying with her parents along with her husband and child.

It all happened because of the work of the church. So, it's the responsibility of the church to show love and affection to displaced people. The church can help to rescue and support many people with stories like Mala's.

It's clear that the local churches and leaders have more responsibilities towards this vulnerable community to bring them to the mainstream of society.



Paul Phinehas is an Asia representative on the Executive Committee of Mennonite World Conference. He is president of Gilgal Mission Trust, an Anabaptist member church in southern India.

He spoke at Renewal 2027 – Justice on the journey: Migration and the Anabaptist story – in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica, 6 April 2019. This paper been adapted from his presentation.

Mexico

Opening our arms and hearts to migrants

by **Carlos Martínez García**

A caravan of thousands of Central American migrants arrived in Mexico at the end of 2018. For many years now, the country has been a through-route of people migrating from Central America in the hope of reaching the United States (USA). However, this is the first time that organized groups have demanded that the Mexican border be opened and that they be granted safe passage.

While some sectors thought and acted hostilely toward the caravans of migrants arriving in Mexico at the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, the overall feeling was one of solidarity made real through humanitarian campaigns to provide migrants with clothes, food, medicines, medical attention and accompaniment en route to the North.

Paths of righteousness

In Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas Anabautistas Menonitas de México (CIEAMM – the Evangelical Anabaptist and Mennonite Conference of Mexico), calls were made through Sendas de Justicia (paths of righteousness ministry) to coordinate with organizations and churches that wanted to respond to the needs expressed by the migrants.

This is an important point: it is necessary to listen to those one wants to serve so that acts of solidarity are relevant and focused on the shortages that migrants face, and not on the good will of those who want to help, but are lacking nothing. Once the kind of help needed by the temporary refugees in Mexico was identified, this information and the addresses of the collection points was shared so that packages could be sent there.

Fernando Sandoval, the CIEAMM Sendas de Justicia coordinator, invited and urged the community to collect funds so that the things migrants needed could be bought. In order to discover these needs, he visited the shelter that the Mexico City government opened to house the thousands of displaced Central American

migrants that had come mainly from Honduras and El Salvador.

Fernando Sandoval talked with men and women of varying ages. He requested their permission to record their stories on his cell phone so that he could share these with the churches. What our community heard and saw was very moving. Each story told was one of tragic suffering that allowed us to understand why people decide to abandon their homes and try to cross into the USA. In addition to poverty, other reasons for migrating include violence and fear of becoming a victim of all kinds of abuse that violate human dignity.

We firmly believe that in Christian stewardship it is essential to use well the resources that are entrusted by brothers and sisters in faith, and report on that.

A beautiful partnership

The people provided support that Sendas de Justicia took to the migrants. It was surprising to see the response of the community that decided to open their arms and hearts to vulnerable people passing through Mexico.

We took Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25:35–36 seriously, inviting us to express love in solidarity by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving water to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, taking care of the sick and visiting the prisoners. We practiced compassion by putting ourselves in the place of migrants in need and acted to provide accompaniment and consolation.

A beautiful partnership arose between Sendas de Justicia and a group of professors and students from the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

in Elkhart, Indiana, USA, as we worked to assist the migrants. Through this they realized what the CIEAMM and Iglesia Fraternidad Cristiana/Vida Nueva (New Life Church) were doing to serve migrants. They shared this information and collected an offering that was sent to Sendas de Justicia to use as they saw fit. Sendas de Justicia bought implements that were given to the migrants and then they reported to the donors on how the money was used. We firmly believe that in Christian stewardship it is essential to use well the resources that are entrusted by brothers and sisters in faith, and report on that.

There is a history of solidarity with migrants in Iglesia Fraternidad Cristiana/Vida Nueva. For many years, the community has made donations in-kind (food, personal hygiene items) to the Tochán House. This is a refuge for migrants where they can seek legal defense while they are in Mexico and hope to enter the United States. The brothers and sisters take different products to Tochán House. This is how we show our understanding that we are followers of another migrant who was born under similar circumstances to the families that begin their exodus due to the hard hearts of those in power. This migrant is Jesus.

To open our arms and hearts to migrants is to be a Christian disciple. Among the people that travel, there are people like the Syrophenician woman who help us to uncover dimensions of faith that are only visible when we are fragile and marginalized. Jesus said of this woman that she had great faith and he held her up as an example of trust in God (Matt 15:28). And we have found this same faith in the migrants.



Carlos Martínez García, pastor and journalist in Mexico, is the moderator of Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas Anabautistas Menonitas de México (CIEAMM – the Evangelical Anabaptist and Mennonite Conference of Mexico).

He spoke at Renewal 2027 – Justice on the journey: Migration and the Anabaptist story – in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica, 6 April 2019. This paper been adapted from his presentation.

Kenya

Responding to displaced people

by Samson Omondi Ongode

The role of the church is to love and welcome the foreigners in our communities as Leviticus 19:34 and Mathew 25:34–36.

Refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people are among the world's most vulnerable people. God calls us to seek their protection and welfare.

Creating awareness of refugee realities

Our local church leaders are educating their congregations concerning forced displacement in the world today to become better informed themselves. Although news headlines often do not draw attention to the global refugee crisis, there are useful resources available through which we can all be better informed.

Therefore, it is our obligation to adequately inform the congregation as well.

Get informed in the biblical perspective

Leaders educate their faith community concerning the context of forced displacement in the texts from which they teach and preach. It is indeed powerful when such a passage is connected to refugee realities in the world today. It is important for Christ followers to see the pattern of God at work in the midst of forced displacement in Scripture so that they anticipate God at work in today's refugees.

The biblical narrative is filled with stories of forced displacement. (For example, John's exile on the island of Patmos.)

Pray for forcibly displaced people

Local church leaders encourage their faith communities to pray on behalf of the world's refugees. It is most natural to encourage the church to pray for refugees and asylum seekers in our own city.

When breaking news includes mention of forcibly displaced people, we should include them in our prayers.

Pray for opportunities to love refugees, immigrants and migrants in your community.

Do not be surprised when God puts such opportunities in your path.

Pray for opportunities

We should not be surprised to find forcibly displaced people in our daily life. So be intentional and keep your eyes open for refugees, immigrants and migrants during your daily routine. Look for them while at work, school and church. Look for them in your community. Pray for opportunities to love refugees, immigrants and migrants in your community.

Do not be surprised when God puts such opportunities in your path.

Help overcome challenges that refugees face in a new country

Newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees need help with basic human needs like

1. temporary shelter
2. basic food
3. clothing
4. health care services
5. education

Local churches can assist refugees and asylum seekers in whatever small way which is manageable, then refer to government and other partners who have adequate capacity to handle the group better.

The needs are again pointed out in the Scripture by Jesus Christ, in Matthew 25:35–36.

A brief story from Kenya

In view of the aforementioned small interventions, Kenya Mennonite Church has Eastleigh Fellowship Centre (EFC) located in a Somali-majority, refugee-dense neighborhood in Nairobi, Kenya. The centre promotes the peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians.

The main program brings together both Muslim and Christian youths, thereby building strong relationships across ethnic and religious divides.

Notably basketball is very popular among the boys and girls. Tournaments are done every two months. Recently, there is an expansion of the sports program to soccer. The soccer has now brought more users. The issue here is to bring friendliness among the immigrants and the Kenyans. This is meant to bring peace among the youths.

Time is created amid the sporting activities to provide an opportunity to discuss peace and its values. Religious leaders turn up to teach the youths about peace from their traditional point of view.

Christian-Muslim dialogue is another aspect that EFC does to promote peace and missions. This is done once every two months. This is to bring together Muslims (usually immigrants from Somali) and Christians to discuss issues of faith. They discuss topics like "is Jesus God?" The purpose is to find some people who will later ask more questions concerning the Christian basis on the dialogue topics. We know the Holy Spirit has been working on these people and they are ripe to follow.

We take these opportunities to build relationships that later allow for sharing Christ and more peace building work.



Samson Omondi Ongode is an Africa representative on the Executive Committee of Mennonite World Conference. He is general secretary of Kenya Mennonite Church.

MWC vice president Rebecca Osiro presented this testimony on behalf of Samson Omondi Ongode at Renewal 2027 in Costa Rica.

Germany

Grey does not have to stay grey*

by Liesa Unger

“When an alien resides with you in your land, [they] shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:33–34).

The text used in the World Fellowship Sunday material 2019 speaks of treating strangers the same as native born. It also reminds us to not forget the times we were strangers in another country.

To be a foreigner and to welcome foreigners into my world seem like two sides of the same coin.

Sometimes we are on one side, sometimes on the other.

My own life story shows both these aspects.

Grey

I came to Germany as a foreigner. I was still a child, but I have never forgotten how it felt to enter a new world.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we read, “For I was a stranger and you invited me in” (vs. 25–35). This passage became reality in my life.

When I was 10 years old, my family emigrated from Russia to Germany. My parents, who had been German refugees of war in Russia, spoke German with each other. But for me, German was a foreign language.

I remember well my first day of school in Germany. My classmates tried to communicate with me using their hands and feet.

We were about to attend a religious education class. In Germany, children have the choice of attending either Catholic or Lutheran lessons.

My classmates asked me: *Are you Catholic or Lutheran?* I did not know how to answer; I was Mennonite!

We needed a solution to the problem, so they asked me: *How do you pray at home – like this or like this?*

I showed them how we pray, and they decided that I was to go to the Lutheran class.

In Sunday school, I became friends with a German girl. She came to visit; she invited me over. I felt strange in the new surroundings, but she did not shy away in spite of my reservations. Our relationship grew and we remain friends, even today.

Many years later, one winter day, one of my classmates said: *This is such a cold day – it is as cold as Siberia.* I replied, “I think Siberia is a bit colder.” *As if you would know.* “I do! I was born there.” *No way.*

I had to show her my passport as proof.

On that day, I realized that I was a stranger only in my own head. I had stopped being a stranger to the others a long time ago. This realization changed my life.

I learned that to belong is a two-way street. Whether I belong or not does not only depend on the others who need to accept me, it also depends on me – whether I accept the invitation.

I was a stranger – but you have welcomed me.

Colourful

Three years ago, on a cold and grey January weekend, a workshop brought excitement to people of our church. We learned how to make beautiful new blankets – comforters – from old pieces of fabric.

This excitement is still running high. Four times a month, a group of women – church members, neighbours and refugees – meets in our church to cut, create patterns, sew, knot and make comforters.

The blankets bring colour into our life. It is fun to be creative and experience community at the same time.

It is work that makes sense, because we can help others with our work. MCC and the European relief organisations distribute the blankets to refugee camps in Syria and Greece to people who receive warmth, colour and love.

Yes, love. It might be easier and cheaper to buy blankets, but those blankets would not include love.

When we reach out to each other in all our diversity and love and persist in building relationships, we will experience change in ourselves and in others.

There is love in every square of our work. When we cut the fabric, create patterns and knot, we think about the people who will receive the blankets. We are interested in their lives; we follow their stories. And this love is included when the blankets are distributed.

The blankets bring colour into refugee camps. And they also bring colour into lives of refugees in Germany who have joined our group. They can do something for their friends who are still looking for a place of refuge. At the same time, they make new friends in their new home country, practise the language and share their own stories.

When we reach out to each other in all our diversity and love and persist in building relationships, we will experience change in ourselves and in others. Strangers will become friends.

On both sides, we need courage to overcome the grey of the unknown and learn to know the colours of the other. We can give and receive a colourful life.

And I am certain that in the same way God is inviting us to enter in a relationship and get to know God’s colourful life!



Liesa Unger is Chief International Events Officer for Mennonite World Conference and pastor of Mennonitengemeinde Regensburg in Germany.

She spoke at Renewal 2027 – Justice on the journey: Migration and the Anabaptist story – in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica, 6 April 2019. This paper been adapted from her presentation.

**Title comes from a poem by Ingrid Ellerbrock, “Grau muss nicht grau bleiben”*

United States

Foreigners on a pilgrimage

by Larissa Swartz

The story of the United States of America is a history of immigration. Of people seeking a better life. Of people seeking religious freedom.

For many long-settled Mennonites like me, the immigration part of our history is removed from our everyday life and experiences. For other Mennonites, the history of fleeing countries like Myanmar and finding a new home in a place like Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is more recent.

In the past few years, the topic of immigration has been a politically sensitive one in my country, even among fellow believers.

It's a muddy topic with no clear political answers, but long-standing biblical answers ever since the Law of Moses directed the people to love the foreigner with the reminder that they were once slaves in Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34).

American perspectives

As a Spanish major in college, I took classes on Spanish and Latin American history and culture. My favorite professor was an amazing woman from Panamá who taught me so much about Latin American perspectives, especially in relation to the USA.

It was from her I learned it's better to call myself *estadounidense* instead of *americana* because technically, everyone in North, Central, and South America is "American" and for the USA to claim sole title to the word is offensive.

From her, I learned the history of migration to the USA in the 20th century is tied more closely to Latin America than to any other continent – and it's not a pretty one. Because of that, I want to apologize on behalf of my country. Not just because there's wall construction underway, but because my country has unnecessarily meddled in the politics of Latin America, not for the benefit of its people, but for



A yard sign to welcome neighbours.

Photo: www.welcomemyourneighbors.org

its own gain, adding to the cycles of corruption and inequality that contribute to need for families to immigrate north.

Anabaptist actions

When I look specifically at how our Anabaptist-Mennonite family has responded to immigrants in the USA and Canada, I'm encouraged because I see people responding out of love and not fear, which is what our Lord Jesus calls us to do.

If you visit different cities in the USA, you might see a sign on a lawn. When I first saw it, I thought it was a beautiful and simple way to communicate welcome. I was surprised to learn from the *Mennonite World Review* that the idea for the sign was born in a Mennonite church in Virginia. They wanted to communicate welcome to their neighbours who spoke Spanish and Arabic.

In my home state of Ohio, I have friends from Rosedale Bible College who have moved into a Muslim immigrant neighbourhood next to a local mosque in order to intentionally love the people there and build relationships with them. This group of young people has integrated into the international community of immigrants by helping look after the children, teach English, give driving lessons, etc.

Two summers ago, when there was a hate protest by Christians at the mosque in their neighbourhood, they stood outside the mosque to promote peace and demonstrate solidarity and love for their Muslim neighbours.

Another Mennonite church in Columbus, Ohio, has gone to great lengths to provide sanctuary for an undocumented immigrant, Edith Espinal, for more than a year. As long as she lives in the church, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will refrain from deporting her because of its policy of avoiding "sensitive locations" like churches. At press time, she continues to wait to be granted asylum.

Kingdom identity

These are just a few short examples of how I've personally seen brothers and sisters in faith extend love and hospitality to immigrants and refugees in North America. I know there are many more, but I also know that our heavenly Father sees each action of his children. "And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25:40).

Ultimately, the story of migration one that we all share as brothers and sisters in an eternal kingdom. Our spiritual identity is that of foreigners in a foreign land on a pilgrimage to reach our true home. May we continue to support each other on the journey in faith, hope and love.



Larissa Swartz is the North America representative for the YABs Committee (Young AnaBaptists). She lives in Ohio where she works with university international students and is a member of London Christian Fellowship.

She spoke at Renewal 2027 – Justice on the journey: Migration and the Anabaptist story – in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica, 6 April 2019. This paper been adapted from her presentation.

United by grace for 40 years

Église Évangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso
(evangelical Mennonite church of Burkina Faso)



The Orodara congregation of Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso prays for peace.

Photo: Lynda Hollinger-Janzen, MMN

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness.”
Psalm 115:1.

In the spirit of this psalm, we exalt God for his work in Burkina Faso during the past 40 years. To God alone be all the glory!

However, before speaking of an anniversary, we must give thanks to God for those that he sent a long time ago to this same region, that is, the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) in 1937. It was the CMA that did the groundwork and sowed the first seeds of the gospel. Unable to continue its work in the region, in 1976 the CMA invited Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM) to establish itself in the region of Kéné Dougou. Thanks be to God for these pioneers and their sacrifices.

The mission and the church today

From 1978 to 2018, approximately 50 missionaries gave of their lives, their time and their gifts to bring the gospel of

salvation to the people of Kéné Dougou. The mission reached the peoples of Tagba and Dzun, who appropriated the Word of God for themselves as the first beneficiaries.

We want to express our gratitude to them for obeying the commandment of the Lord in bringing his message of peace to our country.

The church also planted a number of local congregations, using the Jula language. Each one worked to establish the Kingdom of God among various ethnic groups, using methods that were appropriate for them.

From the early days, the mission invested itself in translating the Word of God into the major languages of the province: Siamou, Sicité, Dzuungoo, Naneregué. Alongside the translation, we did literacy work in three of these languages.

Today, we meet regularly in more than 20 places of worship with at least 16 trained pastors. We have close to 1000 baptized members.

Burkina Faso

MWC member:

*Église Évangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso**

Baptized Members	668
Congregations	21
President	Thioro Bananzoro
Contact	Abdias Coulibaly

Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Burkina Faso)

Baptized Members	52
Congregations	4

* Indicates that this union of churches is a member of Mennonite World Conference

Source: Global statistics – 2018 MWC Directory

Almost all of the Christians are first generation Christians – the majority come from animist or Muslim families – a fact that explains certain situations of persecution that we know of. We have many Christian women whose husbands are not Christians.

Leadership training is a priority. In 2009, a centre for basic biblical training opened, responding immediately to the need to train servants of God who can read and write in the Jula language, so they would not be excluded from the grace of serving the Lord simply because they hadn't completed a formal Western education.

Today, the church has arrived at a stage of self-expansion and self-management.

Not to pat ourselves on the back, but the churches have remained united during these 40 years. The prayer of the Lord in John 17 has been answered effectively in our midst. This does not mean that we have not been tested in our fellowship and unity, but God has granted us the grace to see his interest above our own personal interests.

For reasons of survival, a number of members have engaged in entrepreneurial activities. This has been an asset, opening up greater contact with the population of the province in order to witness to our faith and have easy access in different places to plant new congregations. In principle, these entrepreneurial activities should also lead the churches to achieve autonomy in a third realm: financial.

Young people make up the majority of the population, both nationally and in the church. The population of our local congregations is young. They reassure the elders that there will be people ready to take over. It is our responsibility to put our confidence in them and to give them confidence.

Women breathe life into our local congregations. They are the ones who work quietly and profoundly when they are convinced by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. We must review our culture in light of the Word of God so that it does not become a handicap for women to effectively serve the Lord like their mothers in the Bible.

On a social level, for more than 10 years the Église Évangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso (EEMBF) has invested itself in the fight against AIDS in partnership with MCC. This program has allowed us to communicate Christian values and share the love and grace of God with thousands of persons. Today, on the basis of our confidence in Jesus Christ, we are accompanying a number of persons, especially women, who are engaging in activities that generate revenue. From our perspective, we hope to become an NGO in order to better contribute to development aid.

As far as Mennonite World Conference is concerned, our churches have brought a significant contribution through representatives in the Mission Commission, the Peace Commission and the Deacons Commission.

Although we are small in number, EEMBF is not seen as lesser among its sisters. We give thanks to God for this attitude of humility.



To celebrate their 40th anniversary, members of EEMBF (the Mennonite church of Burkina Faso) paraded through the village of Orodara.

Photo: Denis Peterschmitt

Perspectives

Following our retrospective look and considering all that the Eternal has accomplished among us, we cry out that thus far the Lord has helped us (1 Samuel 7:12). This is not to say that we have completed the work. In light of this recognition, the Lord says to us: *“Look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting”* (John 4:35). In the face of this call, we confess that there is more to do than what has already been done.

Our perspectives for the future fall into two areas:

1. Self-expansion

Burkina Faso in general, and the province of Kénédougou in particular, remain largely unreached by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. After 40 years, the challenge

is still there in its entirety. We must go, but it is necessary to teach all that was commanded to those who have already believed. The growth of the church will take place on the foundation of training and sending.

- Interest in targeting Muslims. Loving them and winning them for Jesus Christ.
- A special ministry for children.
- A ministry directed toward the environment.

2. Financial autonomy

Financial autonomy is possible. To achieve it, we must create a foundation of mutual trust based on transparency. If church members are well taught and well informed on management of the resources of the churches, they will contribute enormously toward adequately meeting needs.

Conclusion

The celebration of our anniversary is a pause to review what God has done through each one of us, but more than anything to realize that there is more to do than what has been done.

We ask future generations not to see their predecessors as extraordinary persons. Whatever we did, we did with you. We have confidence in you and know that you are able to do more than what we did.

To the generation now rising, we want to pass the baton on to you. You must seize hold of it and act. Bring your part that is more beautiful than ours. In Jula we say, *“Fen k abo l la mi ka fessa ni l y e”*: That out of you might come something better than yourself.

Ala ka duba aw ye!



Siaka Traore is a pastor and leader in Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso and a chair of the Deacons Commission of Mennonite World Conference



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

GYS: Global Youth Summit 2021

**Life in the Spirit:
Learn. Serve. Worship.**

GYS is a gathering of Young Anabaptists (age 18+) from all over the world. The fourth Global Youth Summit will be held just before Assembly Gathered of Mennonite World Conference, on 2-5 July 2021 in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia (about 50 km south of Semarang, location of Assembly Gathered, 6-11 July 2021).

Participants at GYS will learn through teaching, interacting, worshipping and playing alongside youth from different cultures and contexts.

Days will include worship, workshops, games, music from different countries and time for fellowship with young people from around the world.



Who will your church send to participate in this once-every-six-years opportunity to learn, serve and worship in one spirit along with youth from around the world?

In addition to the participants, each MWC member church can select one young person to represent them as an official delegate. These young leaders will be asked to survey the youth in their national church and report to other GYS delegates.

During delegate sessions at GYS,



Photo : Marisabel Castillo

« Ce que j'ai le plus aimé au GYS c'était de louer Dieu ensemble dans différentes langues, mais d'un seul esprit. »

Marisabel Castillo (Costa Rica), participante au GYS 2015

“The best thing about the GYS was meeting different people from around the globe and learning as a group.”

Wyclif Ochieng Otiento,
GYS 2015 delegate, Kenya

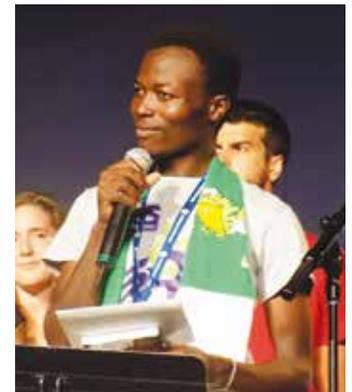


Photo: Wyclif Ochieng

these representatives will present their reports and discuss topics concerning youth, church and Anabaptist faith. Delegates will be responsible to lead a worship session with their continent group. After GYS, the delegates report back to their national church about what they learned and experienced.



Indonesia
2021



**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



Meet the YABs committee:
 Ebenezer Mondez (Philippines) for Asia and the Pacific;
 Larissa Swartz (USA) for North America;
 Jantine Brouwer-Huisman (Netherlands) for Europe;
 Makadunyiswe Doublejoy Ngulube (Zimbabwe) for Africa;
 and Oscar Suárez (Colombia) for Latin America.

Photo: Karla Braun



Worship at GYS 2015. Photo: Dania Ciptadi

At the last GYS, a delegate from each continent was chosen to represent the young Anabaptists from their continent. These delegates, together with their mentor Tigist Tesfaye (Ethiopia), form the YABs committee.

The YABs Committee organizes the following GYS. During the years between GYS, they also connect with young people in their region, organize YABs Fellowship Week, and engage young adults around the world through social media (Facebook www.facebook.com/younganabaptists/, Instagram www.instagram.com/younganabaptists/).

If you have a question about young Anabaptists around the world, please contact the YABs committee through Facebook or by email (yabs@mwccmm.org).

If you have questions about GYS, write to Indonesia2021@mwccmm.org.

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

Semarang offers Javanese hospitality and warmth and many cultural heritage sites rich in religious colours.

“Everyone is guaranteed to be comfortable in Semarang, because this city has high pluralism and is very tolerant,” says Indonesia Minister of Tourism Mr. Arief Yahya.

Experience Indonesia: visit Thekelan Village

Thekelan Village is known for its tolerance among different religions. Every Christmas, Buddhists and Muslims in the region visit the church in Thekelan Village to wish the Christians a Merry Christmas.

Local GYS planning team:



Pastor Samuel Anton Sidharta (JKI)



Yunarso Rusandono (GITJ)



Daniel Talenta SL Tobing (GKMI)



Indonesia
2021

Executive Committee news

MWC makes space, shares hope

“Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord,” said Mennonite World Conference (MWC) President J. Nelson Kraybill. At the Executive Committee meetings, eight pastors and leaders from Asociación Iglesias Cristianas Menonitas de Costa Rica shared about how their congregations are growing together and start new ministries.

The MWC Executive Committee (EC) met 8–12 April, 2019 in Heredia, Costa Rica, home of the first Mennonite congregation planted by Rosedale Mission in 1965. From that first fellowship, there are now 23 Mennonite congregations who joined with MWC’s Renewal 2027 celebration, a one-day Anabaptist anniversary event that preceded the EC’s annual meetings.

Appointed by the General Council, Executive Committee members meet annually to carry out the work of MWC. These two representatives from each region manage the finances, authorize programs, approve task forces, articulate the vision and mission and develop long-range plans.

Discussion and agreement

The EC discussed and approved guidelines on appointment of specialists to Commissions and application to the Jubilee account of the Global Church Sharing Fund.

Overall in finances, unrestricted contributions are positive position, but net assets saw a significant drawdown due to spending for the General Council meetings in Kenya in 2018. Fundraising for these meetings is more challenging than for Assembly, the worldwide gathering every six years. “Efforts are on the way to help resolve this situation,” said MWC treasurer Sunoko Lin.

The Executive Committee withdrew the proposal, “MWC Policy for Dealing with Controversial Issues,” presented to the General Council in Kenya last year, which proposed guidelines for a process to discuss controversial topics in MWC. At the 2019 meeting, the EC passed a new resolution by consensus, emphasizing the goal for mutual learning in MWC. “We want to provide a safe space for our groups to learn from each other on matters of faith and life,” read the new resolution. “We recognize that our member churches have confessions of faith and ecclesial practices that are not always in agreement with each other. Beyond the Shared Convictions, MWC does not advocate a single confession or practice for our member churches.”

Communication and consensus

Living out the priority of relationships in MWC, Glen Guyton of Mennonite Church

USA taught on intercultural competence. An effective intercultural communicator prepares, observes, compares, reflects, inquires and respects, said Guyton.

MWC makes an important link to other worldwide Anabaptist churches, said MZ Ichsanudin, EC member for Asia. “Maybe we can learn from the experiences of our brother or sister from another continent. Maybe it applies to our congregation, can make us a better congregation. We are enriched from each other.”

Three EC members were not able to attend the meetings, one for family reasons, two due to visa complications.

For the first time, the EC invited Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), International Brethren In Christ Association (IBICA) and International Community Of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) to attend the meetings in the role of advisors. These organizations are also global in scope of work, and work in a close relationship with many of MWC member churches. Ron Byler (MCC) and Doug Sider (IBICA) were present.

“Remember, sisters and brothers, that salvation and reconciliation through the cross and resurrection are the greatest hope for us and for a broken world,” said Kraybill.

MWC Commissions strengthen bonds of communion

From 25–27 June 2019, leaders and members of the four Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Commissions met together for a time of face-to-face discussion, reflection, worship and strategic planning to advance the mission of MWC.

Approximately 40 women and men from around the globe gathered for the meetings convened at the Mennonite Conference Centre Dopersduin, one of three retreat centres run by



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

Jesus Christ: Our Hope

28 March 2020

Columbia Bible College,
Abbotsford, B.C., Canada

the Algemene Doopsegezinde Sociëteit (Dutch Mennonite Church).

Global Anabaptist Peace Network

More than 200 peacebuilders came together at the 2nd Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival at Mennorode retreat centre in Elspeet, The Netherlands, 27–30 June 2019. They explored the theme “On the Way of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,” building on the ecumenical initiative promoted by the World Council of Churches. During the conference, Mennonite World Conference’s Peace Commission launched the Global Anabaptist Peace Network.

—a Mennonite World Conference release



Costa Rican Mennonite leaders share joys and challenges with the MWC Executive Committee.

Photo: J. Nelson Kraybill.

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:

- PO Box 5364,
Lancaster, PA 17808 USA
- 50 Kent Avenue,
Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 CANADA
- Ave. Calle 32#14-42, Piso 1,
Bogota, COLOMBIA

Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday worship materials

Anabaptist 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). Each year, we encourage Anabaptist-related churches across the globe to use a common theme in their service on the Sunday closest to 21 January. On this date in 1525, the first baptism took place in Zurich, Switzerland.

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.

Materials for 2020 were prepared by North American church leaders on the theme "**Jesus Christ: Our hope**" from the texts Lamentations 3:21–26, Psalm 62, Mark 2:1–12, Ephesians 1:15–19.

Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday is a Sunday when Anabaptist congregations around the world can lament together about the pain and suffering churches are experiencing; bring each other to Jesus for healing and hope, just like the friends of the man who was paralyzed brought him to Jesus; pray for each other just like Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus.



Even in deep troubles, we come together from around the world to follow Jesus, who gives us hope.

Download this resource to celebrate Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday in your local congregation with the global Anabaptist family in January or at whatever time is convenient for your congregation in 2020. Send pictures and stories from your congregation's celebration to photos@mwc-cmm.org

www.mwc-cmm.org/awfs

"One another's keepers"

"Isisu somhambi asinganani, singangophondo lwempunzi."

Literally: the stomach of a traveller is as tiny as the horn of a buck.

Volunteer MWC Regional Representative for Southern Africa Barbara Nkala learned generosity from childhood.

Her mother "who had little and was annoyingly generous" would quote the proverb above as she gave food to visitors – "yet we never slept on empty stomachs."

Her grandfather's large home was a refuge and place of celebration not only for extended family but also vagrants and anyone who had less than he.

So, Barbara Nkala makes a budget to give, including needy people in the neighbourhood, vulnerable people who try to make a living, church projects, hospitality in the home – and MWC – in her giving plan.

Additionally, "many times, there is impromptu giving when directed by the Spirit."

Since 2009, Zimbabwe has been experiencing an ongoing crisis of hyperinflation. Recently, the government outlawed the U.S. dollar which was serving the country in the absence of a stable national currency.



Barbara Nkala

Photo: supplied

"Despite living in one of the more difficult countries economically, Barbara gives generously to others in need – and to MWC," says Arli Klassen, MWC Chief Development Officer.

"Whatever we do for the least of these, we give to God," Barbara Nkala says. "A deep relationship with God and his amazing love and numerous blessings made me realize I can never give enough to really match those free gifts and blessings from God."

"I really appreciate the drive to build meaningful relationships globally," says Nkala. "It is through MWC that I have learnt to appreciate that diversity provides a rich tapestry of perspectives in God's kingdom."

"I have seen more and more that we are one another's keepers."

—Mennonite World Conference release

President's column

Meet your Global Mission Fellowship (GMF)

The Mission Commission facilitates the Global Mission Fellowship (GMF), a global fellowship of dialogue, support and connection for Anabaptist-related churches and mission groups. There are 71 member organizations operating out of 36 countries.

GMF Vision

- God's mission through the church involves conveying the whole gospel of Jesus Christ across spiritual, cultural, economic and political boundaries and within a church's local settings.
- The church's mission includes ministries in word and deed to persons and peoples outside the community of Christ with the goal of making disciples and bringing these new disciples into fellowships of believers.
- The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed through a spectrum of evangelistic, disciple-making and humanitarian/social activities.
- Every church, whether at a local, national or regional level, has the responsibility to develop and sustain its God-given gifts for doing and being in mission.

Objectives

- Encourage collaboration and dialogue among members (via email, WhatsApp, regional in-person meetings)
- Share best practices
- Accomplish together what each could not attempt individually
- Honour and value gifts from Anabaptist mission agencies and groups of all sizes

The GMF gathers every three years.

One member of GMF is Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India (MCSFI), itself a network of nine Mennonite and Brethren-in-Christ denominations in India and Nepal. MCSFI organizes gatherings of pastors, women and youth, and runs social service and disaster relief projects both within the regions of the member bodies and in unreached areas of India.

Which organizations are part of GMF? Find out here:

<https://mwc-cmm.org/gmf/>

Immigrants revitalize the church

Joji Pantoja reminds me of how immigrants spread the gospel in the early church.

Like Lydia of Acts 16, Joji Pantoja is an international businesswoman and chair of the MWC Peace Commission. Born in the Philippines, she moved to Canada in 1986, then in 2006 returned home as a Mennonite missionary.

While in Canada, she received hospitality from a Mennonite congregation that was so diminished in numbers they almost closed. Instead, the church made space for Chinese, Filipino and Indian immigrants to worship in their own languages.

Children of those immigrants spoke English, and some joined the English congregation. Attendance grew tenfold to a youthful, multicultural body of 200.

"God intends the church to be a diversified farm," says Joji Pantoja. "Having only one crop depletes the soil."

Joji Pantoja knows farming – coffee farming. In the Philippines, she founded awarded-winning "Coffee for Peace." Philippine farmers and investors with her company grow and sell coffee in ways that respect soil and workers. A quarter of earnings goes to peacemaking.

Migration like Joji Pantoja experienced uproots people from society and family, making Christian community attractive.

Writing from Corinth, the apostle Paul in Romans 16 greets a long list of believers at Rome whose names indicate they were immigrants who found a spiritual home among Christians in Italy.

Today, Mennonite Brethren church leader José Arrais of Portugal welcomes changes African immigrants bring to congregations in Lisbon.

"We used to be very *still*," he says with a smile. "African immigrants brought vibrant worship, energetic music, new food, a sense being family... and also are most likely to invite others to faith."

In modern France, "Churches have become laboratories of anti-racism," says Mennonite missionary Neal Blough, "just like when the early church was the only institution in the Roman empire where all races and classes mixed."

The church today should view arrival of newcomers as an opportunity to show hospitality and expect that immigrants will bring spiritual and cultural strength to our congregations.



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



The Global Mission Fellowship in Kenya in 2018.

Photo: Wilhelm Unger



Joji Pantoja

Photo: J. Nelson Kraybill



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Photo: Tony Schellenberg

Sharing what we need, not what we deserve

“They deserve their suffering”, a person said about migrants arriving in the country during a local church meeting in Colombia.

The person continued: “These people bring it upon themselves, fleeing from the policies of their government that they themselves elected. And also, they decided to come here illegally. Because of all this, I say they deserve their suffering.”

The reality of migration is not something that only the Minority World countries face. This is a global phenomenon.

As such, many of our churches in different cultures face the same dilemma: Should we back anti-immigration laws in our country? or should we help those that are arriving despite their legal status? This dilemma becomes even more complex when we remember that what is legal in a society is not always just, and that what is just can sometimes be illegal. As Jesus would say, when referring to the laws of his time: “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

The immigrant is a person who lives their reality in two worlds: their original culture and the place where they find themselves. An equivalent term in Scripture would be a pilgrim. This term reminds us that as members of the people of God, we live in diaspora, as exiles in the world. We are called not to conform to society (Romans 12:2), but rather to live according to the values of the kingdom of God, a kingdom to which we acquire a new citizenship.

The above implies that as faith communities – even those members who we were born in the country where we reside – we share with immigrants this same experience of not belonging to the place where we live.

Throughout our ongoing pilgrimage, we can easily identify with those who have left their land and their culture. We can offer space and grace to other people, who like ourselves, are on the periphery of society.

At the end of the day, God has not given us what we deserve, but rather has made us new citizens of God’s kingdom. Included in this citizenship is renouncing human paradigms of power and domination, and sharing the same hospitality that we have received with others.

There can be political and ideological reasons for deporting migrants, as well as economic explanations for why anti-immigration laws exist. However, there are no theological or biblical reasons for supporting them.

Perhaps some migrants arrive in our countries having made poor decisions that force them to leave their home.

Perhaps some deserve the suffering that they face.

Even so, as followers of Jesus, we believe in a God who does not give us what we deserve, but rather what we need. As Christians, we are called to be a people of new beginnings, a people of hope, a people from whom love and care for the foreigner naturally flow, even when it is considered illegal in certain contexts.

In this issue of the *Courier*, we have chosen to highlight this topic that is so relevant in our world today, a world in which protectionist policies result in dehumanizing treatment for millions of people. It is about immigrants, who like many Anabaptists in past centuries, left their land pressured by violence, persecution or lack of opportunities. They look for new communities of hope, a foretaste of the kingdom of God that enables them to start afresh.

It is my prayer that as the global church we always remember that we are citizens of God’s kingdom, pilgrims and foreigners in this world.



Hand-stitched quilts for relief.

Photo: Rhoda Shirk



César García, MWC general secretary, originally from Colombia, lives in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada., USA.