



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

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

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

Missional Frontier: Portugal

Our goal is to share every year one missional frontier with the members of Global Mission Fellowship (GMF) and Global Anabaptist Service Network (GASN). The idea is to inform, learn, and inspire about the work and challenges that Anabaptist churches and organizations are facing in a particular country.

Mennonite Churches in Portugal

Background

In September 2020, our association went through some profound changes in its structure.

First, we saw some board of administration members and church leaders leave the association for different reasons. A pastoral couple, Kardoso Mente and Maria Efekele, left Portugal to start a new journey in France. Kardoso used to be the secretary of our association and pastor of the African church. José Arrais, long-time president and national leader, was replaced by Marques Mente.

Otto and Marjorie Ekk who are representatives for Multiply and project leaders for mission in Portugal will return to the USA in December 2021. They end their official time of service in Portugal after more than 30 years in this country.

Secondly, what used to be the Association of MB Churches of Portugal (AIMP) became the MB Church of Portugal (IIMP) with a board composed by Marques Mente, as the president, Raul Florez as treasurer, and Inês Parente as secretary. We used to be recognized legally as an association with a religious character, now we are fully recognized as a church which changes our legal status to a religious entity.

This board of directors legally represent all the Portuguese Mennonite churches before the state and the international partners.

The MB church of Portugal also has what is called a leadership council which gathers at least two leaders of each local church and coordinates the daily life of our church conference. This body is recognized as the center of decision making both legally and internally.

Current situation of churches in Portugal

Espaço Vida Mais in Massamá.

The church in Massamá is currently a small but very consolidated group of people, who meet weekly to worship God. Since the beginning of the pandemic, this community has not had face-to-face meetings until March 2021, and is just restarting very recently. The church recently experienced a change of leadership with the departure of José Arrais Velez and his wife Paula Velez and with the entry of Joanna Pharazyn to assume the leadership of this group.



Marques Mente (I), his wife Celma Mentos, and their children Eliana and Elise.

Social work through the Solidarity Store linked to the mission of this church has grown considerably in recent months, and has helped to establish more contacts and friendships with the local inhabitants. We pray that some or many of these people will come to know Jesus and become part of the church life, and for creativity and wisdom so that the store team will be able to use the opportunities that God provides to make the connection of faith with these people.

Let us also pray for the leadership of Joanna, now accompanied by her husband Jonathan, that they will be able to bring a vision refreshed by God, that will in turn bring renewal and growth.

The African church of Queluz Pendão

With the recent departure of Pastor Moisés and his wife Maria to live in France, this community saw yet another group of decisive leaders leaving to emigrate to other countries. This church has seen several leaders and members move over the past 10 years, namely to France, and is currently a very small group that is considered to practically be a re-implantation of a church.

Even so, this small group led by Adão and Miriam remains solid in the faith and very committed to the church. Throughout the pandemic months, this group has faithfully met face-to-face on Sundays to celebrate Jesus and study his Word, except on occasions when they have been unable to meet due to government restrictions.

Pray for Adão and Miriam who are giving some more logistical supervision to the church but who are not pastors.

Our church conference is praying for new pastors for this church, that will likely take on more multicultural characteristics in the future, to renew this community's vision and strength their path to growth! Therefore, we ask for prayers for a pastoral couple for this community!



A gathering of the Loures congregation

The Loures local church

Marques Mente and his wife Celma Mente are the leaders of the Loures MB local church.

This church as now about 40 members plus other regular visitors.

This church has been meeting face-to-face most of the time during the pandemic, excepting the periods where there were legal restrictions.

The Loures church is the first MB church of Portugal founded in the beginning of the 1990s. Marques Mente is the pastor since 2012, his wife Celma joined him in August 2016.

Solidary Store in Loures

The second-hand store in Massamá has contributed to the local community for years and to replicate its model in Loures was an old wish that was fulfilled. On Saturday, April 24, D'NOVO was inaugurated on the premises of the Centro Evangélico da Flamenga.

The new store will be open to the community three times a week on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

In addition to making clothes and household items available at affordable prices, the new store aims to be a point of connection with the community. The coordinators are Celma Mente and Nadine Brakovski, with the help of German volunteers, Adriana and Leah. In addition, people from the community are already helping voluntarily, namely Helena and Ana.

Let us pray for this to be another means to reach people with the love of Christ.

Progress Network Association

In January 2015, the “Associação dos Irmãos Menonitas em Portugal” (legal structure of the Mennonite Brethren churches in Portugal) founded the “Associação Rede do Progresso”. The goal was to develop an association that would be the social arm of the churches with a structure capable of developing projects that would create a social impact, mainly in the county of Loures and beyond, and that needed greater organizational capacity to increase their sustainability.

As the name “Rede” (network) indicates, since the beginning, the objective of this association was to operate in a network, i.e., in partnership with other organizations.

Practically since the beginning of Rede do Progresso, the FOP organization (Friends of Portugal) has been its main partner and investor. It's an organization based in the USA, with a strong influence of Portuguese descendants who love Portugal and wish to support their people, projects and churches. Currently the Rede do Progresso covers projects such as “A Ponte” (co-work offices), SHIFT (a social acceleration project), the Solidarity Store in Massamá (linked to the mission of the Mennonite Brethren church in that neighborhood) and supports the Solidarity Store in Loures, also linked to the mission of the Mennonite Brethren Church in this county.

By Marques Mente

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