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Word from the editor



A foretaste of the kingdom

“Let’s think as citizens of a new nation in which there is not a gap between rich and poor, but where economic equality exists between all people.

“Let’s think as citizens of a new nation in which there is not racial discrimination, but where cultural diversity is affirmed and celebrated.

“Let’s continue experiencing the reality of this new kingdom among us today.

“Let’s continue sending micro-communities that live out this kind of mission. Our church is called to be a foretaste of the kingdom! That is our mission!”

César García, Mennonite World Conference’s general secretary, lays out this vision and calling in *God’s People in Mission: An Anabaptist Perspective*.

This issue of *Courier* shares stories of how MWC’s Network members equip the church to live out this foretaste of the kingdom:

In Benin, the doors of **Casa Grande** are open wide to welcome orphans into a home of love, offer an education and equip with vocational skills for both economic and environmental sustainability.

In India, graduates from **Little Flock Discipleship School** are transforming remote villages with education and a message of hope from Jesus.

In Spain, a diverse collection of **Anabaptist-related churches** minister to the needs in their local contexts, and come together for fellowship and inspiration despite their different origins.

In Paraguay, **ASCIM** is reaching into Indigenous communities with trained care workers who show the love of Jesus through medical treatment and vocational training.

In North America, **Mennonite Disaster Service** crosses international boundaries and draws together volunteers from every Anabaptist stripe as they rebuild homes after disasters.

These testimonies provide a taste of how Anabaptist churches around the world are living out mission. Members of the Mission Commission and the steering committees of the Global Anabaptist Service Network and Global Mission Fellowship also reflect on the purpose of their Networks. They not only encourage each other and learn together, they also attempt to live out this new nation under Christ where diversity is celebrated and equality is practiced.

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



The Networks will gather alongside the General Council meetings in 2025. The year marks the 500th anniversary of the first Anabaptist baptisms.

“Those first Anabaptists in Switzerland made a plan for evangelizing Europe, and within a year or two, most of them had been put to death. So that’s a reminder of the implications of the work we do,” says James Krabill.

At the 2025 meetings, the revised terms of reference will be up for consideration. The new document is streamlined and has greater clarity on the roles of the Networks and their leadership.

Share a gift today!

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Cover Photo:

School garden at Casa Grande in Benin. Read more on page 7.

Photo courtesy of the Casa Grande

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Bring what is in your hand

Mission Commission:
Rafael Zaracho,
 secretary;
James Krabill,
 chair

The church as the body of Christ is central in God's activity of reconciliation in the world. We want to embody this idea in our global structure.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) is an organic community and not a bureaucratic institution. As a global church, we are committed to serving people rather than building an infrastructure to maintain our institution.

Although we want to have a strong body that follows plans, policies and healthy organizational principles, all this exists to serve people and to nurture relationships.

We speak of MWC as having a heart with four chambers with the Commissions representing each one: Faith & Life (theology), Peace, Deacons and Mission.

The **Mission Commission** has the mandate to strengthen mission and service awareness in national churches.

"We create conversations that show how mission and service belong together within Anabaptist theology," says James Krabill, chair of the Mission Commission. "We encourage different organizations to partner together, but we're not an administrative body that programmatically does mission."

"What we do is facilitate conversations. We network across organizations doing mission and we try to provide resources that help them to do their work better. We get people together," he says.

The **Mission Commission** also oversees the Networks which are a gathering place for agencies and organizations that serve the church as expressions of the church.

"It's easy for these agencies to create a life of their own and not be in conversation with the other parts," says James Krabill. "When we gather, we strengthen our understanding that mission and service are all part of being faithful to kingdom priorities."



Irma Sullistyorini

Both service and mission are inextricably linked to the church as a gathering of Christ-followers in the world. If that link is lost, something is missing.

These are the general goals of the **Mission Commission** and the **Networks**.

1. To link arms in mission – north, south, east, west.
2. To pray for each other, encourage each other and partner together as God leads us.
3. To learn from each other.
4. To share resources in mission – prayer, personnel, teaching and finances.

Since 2015, other networks have also been emerging:

- **Global Anabaptist Education Networks – Primary and Secondary [GAPSEN] and Higher Education [GAHEN]**
- **Global Anabaptist Peace Network [GAPN]**
- **Global Anabaptist Health Network [GAHN]**

Background

The **Global Mission Fellowship (GMF)** and **Global Anabaptist Service Network (GASN)** are established Networks.

GMF was started in 2003 around the Assembly in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. It meets in-person every three years alongside the General Council. In between those meetings, there are online gatherings.

From consultations on *diakonia* and service in Pasadena, California, USA, in 2006, ongoing dialogue and consultation led to the formal formation of **GASN** in 2012 in Switzerland.

The GMF promotes consultation, cooperation and works on intercultural mission and building churches, says Nelson Okanya, GMF steering committee chair.

It's an opportunity for members to learn from each other, he says. Organizations can create strategic spaces to contribute to what each other are doing around the world in mission as they ask:

- What's happening in that part of the world?
- What's happening in this part of the world?
- What can we learn from one another?

Barbara Hege-Galle, GASN steering committee chair, says GASN emerged because there were groups whose focus on service bound them together in mission-focused spaces.

"It is hard to explain the value of spending this time together without planned tangible outcomes," says Barbara Hege-Galle. "What you get from the Network is the growing knowledge of each other – who is working where – and knowing that you are not the only ones doing this work."

To encourage and build up

"These are the things the Networks are for: that people are encouraged and recognized in the ministry and service they provide and also affirmed in the personal experience they share with each other," says Barbara Hege-Galle.

A comment from in-person meetings alongside the General Council in Kenya in 2018 is seared in memory. Members of the group were speaking of their experiences with microfinance. One member from the Global South was quiet during the discussion but afterward came to Barbara Hege-Galle. He assumed others had more wisdom and he was only

there to learn, he said, but he realized he also had relevant experience to share.

GASN is growing in its capacity to create these spaces for sharing.

Recent webinars have been structured with one featured presentation plus sharing time. Members learn about one organization – its best practices, its areas of challenge – and have the opportunity to ask questions.

In smaller groups members can further discuss their own relevant experiences and expertise and ask questions. Finally, they all have opportunity to pray for and encourage each other.

A global shift

"I have been 'singing' the fact that the centre of Christianity has shifted from the Global North to Africa, Asia and Latin America," says Nelson Okanya.

But Nelson Okanya notes that shift is not as apparent when it comes to missiology where the majority of voices still come from the Global North.

"How do we create that cross-fertilization in our spaces so we can listen to voices that actually are hosting the church in large numbers?" says Nelson Okanya.

This shift is apparent in the global Anabaptist family: some two-thirds of baptized believers live outside Europe and North America, the historic poles of Anabaptism: 37% in Africa, 20% in Asia and the Pacific, 10% in Latin America and the Caribbean; only 3% in Europe and 30% in North America.

The Mission Commission took a step to address the unrepresented voices with the 2018 book [**God's People in Mission: An Anabaptist Perspective**](#), with contributors from all over the world.

Barbara Hege-Galle regrets that it seems "our Southern brothers and sisters still look to the North." There's a tendency to defer to those who are educated in formal institutions. "But those are not the ones who are the most important."

"We are all part of it; you are not alone" is a key message for GASN participants, says Barbara Hege-Galle.

The Networks – where all come to the table as equals – is one place to hear voices from other places. Each has been structured with a steering committee with a representative from each region.

"But we have a long way to go," says James Krabill.

GASN Member organizations



Kristina Toews

Africa

- *La Casa Grande* - Benin
- *Centre de Réflexion et d'Appui aux Initiatives de Développement* – DR Congo
- *Meserete Kristos Church Development Commission* – Ethiopia
- *Mennonite Association for Peace and Development* – Malawi
- *Passion Center for Children* – Malawi
- *Igreja Irmãos em Cristo em Moçambique* – Mozambique
- *Brethren In Christ Church (Zambia Conference)* – Zambia
- *BIC Compassionate Ministries-Zimbabwe* – Zimbabwe

Asia & Pacific

- *Brethren In Christ Church, Odisha* – India
- *Emmanuel Ministries (BJCPM)* – India
- *Little Flock Fellowship (BJCPM)* – India
- *Mennonite Brethren Development Organization* – India
- *Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India* – India
- *Mennonite Diakonia Service-GKMI Synode* – Indonesia
- *Japan Mennonite Fellowship (JMF)* – Japan
- *Korea Anabaptist Center* – South Korea
- *Nepal BIC Church/Brethren in Community Welfare Society* – Nepal
- *Integrated Mennonite Churches, Inc.* – Philippines

Europe

- *Caisse de secours* – France
- *Christliche Dienste* – Germany
- *Mennonitisches Hilfswerk e. V.* – Germany
- *Doopsgezind WereldWerk* – Netherlands

- *Services Missionnaires Mennonites/ Schweizerische Mennonitische Mission* – Switzerland

Latin America & Caribbean

- *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Boliviana* – Bolivia
- *Iglesia Misionera Anabaptista* – Bolivia
- *Associação Menonita Beneficente* – Brazil
- *Associação Menonita de Ação Integral* – Brazil
- *Associação Menonita de Assistência Social* – Brazil
- *Asociación Sembrando Semillas de Paz* – Colombia
- *Centro Cristiano para Justicia, Paz y Acción Noviolenta* – Colombia
- *Fundación Agropecuaria Tejiendo Esperanza* – Colombia
- *Fundación de Educación para la Paz y Resolución de Conflictos Edupaz* – Colombia
- *Fundación Menonita Colombiana para el Desarrollo* – Colombia
- *Comité de Justicia y Paz* – Costa Rica
- *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de El Salvador* – El Salvador
- *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Guatemala* – Guatemala
- *Programa Fundameno* – Guatemala
- *Red Regional de Justicia y Paz - RedPaz* – Guatemala
- *Acción Cristiana Educativa Menonita* – Honduras
- *Comisión de Acción Social Menonita* – Honduras
- *Proyecto Paz y Justicia* – Honduras
- *Comisión de Emergencia Anabautista de Nicaragua (CAE)* – Nicaragua
- *Comisión de Paz y Justicia de las Iglesias Anabautistas de Nicaragua* – Nicaragua
- *Asociación de Servicios de Cooperación Indígena Menonita* – Paraguay
- *Servicio Voluntario Menonita* – Paraguay

North America

- *Mennonite Central Committee Canada* – Canada
- *Mennonite Central Committee* – USA
- *Mennonite Disaster Service* – USA
- *Mennonite Health Service Alliance* – USA
- *Mennonite Mission Network* – USA

A communications shift

With members coming from cultures around the world, there are different ways of sharing knowledge and experience. For many, stories rather than reports or didactic methods are the ways to share.

Stories move us from the dryness of numbers and reporting (which are fine in their own right), to engaging people in *changing moments*, not just statistics, says James Krabill.

“When you tell a story, there are more than facts; there’s a life to the telling. It gives witness not only to what was going on but also the impact it has on you and the world around you,” says Barbara Hege-Galle. “To listen to each other requires patience and respect.”

“If we value the global voices, then we all need to be able to come to the table,” says Nelson Okanya.

It also means we have to make it possible to hear one another. This applies to translation and the words we use and also to just making sure each one can hear, says Nelson Okanya. “Make it accessible.”

That means putting a priority on making sure each one can be present. “That doesn’t mean a handout,” says Nelson Okanya, but it means being honest about global financial disparities.

“When we gather and we hear inspiring stories from parts of the world that don’t have a lot of financial resources, it just reminds us that that the gifts are so much more than money,” says James Krabill.

“What often inspires us is faithful service and activity. In some cases, being faithful has brought on persecution or difficult life: through stories, we are reminded that the gifts that we’re talking about are multiple,” says James Krabill.

“Everybody comes to the table with something. Bring what is in your hand,” says Nelson Okanya.

Growing together

James Krabill invokes Ephesians 3 where the Apostle Paul says it is together that we grow into the knowledge of the wisdom of God. Often theologians focus on defining ‘wisdom,’ he says, “but maybe the most important word is ‘together’.”

“It really requires everyone bringing knowledge and wisdom to the table so that *together* we grow into that knowledge,” says James Krabill. It’s a constant reminder

that there is no one person, no one professor, no one pastor, no one culture that understands everything about the wisdom of Christ.”

‘Together’ has been a key component in MWC themes: included in the Assembly themes from 2022 (Following Jesus Together Across Barriers), 2009 (Come Together in the Way of Jesus Christ), implicit in 2003 (Sharing Gifts in Suffering and in Joy) and key in MWC’s new three-part tagline that sums up the mission: Following Jesus, living out unity, building peace.

Both churches and organizations that are part of the Mission Commission Networks are in the process of figuring out how to witness to the world, how to build peace (sometimes at odds with mission) and how to function together as the body of Christ.

Tensions and divisions

Nelson Okanya observes the opportunities in the tensions, even as divisions are occurring.

“Mennonite World Conference is sort of a safe place where those who want to maintain an Anabaptist identity and be part of that stream of history can do that,” he says. “And they find themselves around the tables with people that they just divided out from.”

“It’s hopeful. It creates a space for people to stay in conversation.”

The Networks – with their focus on work instead of theology – can be a helpful place for building relationship on collaboration without focusing on differences.

“I think Mennonite World Conference kind of creates that space that’s a little bit less threatening,” says James Krabill.

The Shared Convictions provide a theological grounding so members can focus on learning from each other, doing things together and worshipping together.

“People eat together and have communion together,” says Nelson Okanya, referencing the times he’s seen leaders eat together in network contexts – leaders who otherwise don’t tend to work together.

The fellowship, the learning and the strategy sessions are all so valuable when done face-to-face, says Barbara Hege-Galle. But the most important part of being together at face-to-face meetings in Virginia in 2023 (making up for COVID-related challenges to meet in Indonesia in 2022) was a story. A member from India said

what she told the group in person could not have been shared in any other forum. For the safety of those involved, it could not be shared in a newsletter, email or even an online meeting.

“It’s different when you meet and see the face of the other person,” says Barbara Hege-Galle. “And this is worth spending that money for triennial meetings so that you have the opportunity to know the face on the other side of the screen.”

GMF

Member organizations



Africa

- Igreja da Comunidade Menonita em Angola – Angola
- Igreja Evangélica dos Irmãos Mennonitas em Angola – Angola
- Igreja Evangélica Menonita em Angola – Angola
- Église Évangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso – Burkina Faso
- Communauté des Églises des Frères Mennonites au Congo – DR Congo
- Communauté Évangélique Mennonite – DR Congo
- Communauté Mennonite au Congo – DR Congo
- Meserete Kristos Church – Ethiopia
- International Mennonite Mission of East Africa – Kenya
- Kenya Mennonite Church – Kenya
- Mpingo Wa Abale Mwa Kristu – Malawi
- Mennonite Church Nigeria – Nigeria
- Grace Community Church in South Africa – South Africa
- Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania – Tanzania

- Brethren In Christ Church (Zambia Conference) – Zambia
- Ibandla Labazalwane kuKristu eZimbabwe (Brethren in Christ Church) – Zimbabwe

Asia & Pacific

- Bharatiya Jukta Christa Prachar Mandali (India United Missionary Church) – India
- Bhartiya General Conference Mennonite Church – India
- Bihar Mennonite Mandli – India
- Brethren In Christ Church, Odisha – India
- Gilgal Mission Trust – India
- Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India – India
- Mennonite Church in India Dhamtari CG – India
- The Governing Council of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of India – India
- PIPKA - GKMI Synode – Indonesia
- Nepal BIC Church/Brethren in Community Welfare Society – Nepal
- Integrated Mennonite Churches, Inc. – Philippines

Europe

- Igreja dos Irmãos Menonitas de Portugal – Portugal
- Anabautistas, Menonitas y Hermanos en Cristo – España (AMYHCE) – Spain

Latin America & Caribbean

- Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Argentina – Argentina
- Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Belice – Belize
- Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Boliviana – Bolivia
- Iglesia Misionera Anabaptista – Bolivia
- Liga de Iglesias Anabautistas de Bolivia – Bolivia
- Aliança Evangélica Menonita – Brazil
- Associação das Igrejas Menonitas do Brasil – Brazil
- Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia – Colombia
- Iglesias Hermanos Menonitas de Colombia – Colombia
- Asociación Iglesias Cristianas Menonitas de Costa Rica – Costa Rica
- Sociedad Misionera Cubana Hermanos en Cristo – Cuba
- Conferencia Evangélica Menonita, Inc. – Dominican Republic
- Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de El Salvador – El Salvador

- Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Guatemala – Guatemala
- Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña – Honduras
- Organización Cristiana Amor Viviente – Honduras
- Jamaica Mennonite Church – Jamaica
- Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas Anabautistas Menonitas de México – Mexico
- Conferencia Menonita de Mexico – Mexico
- Asociación Misión Evangélica de los Hermanos en Cristo en Nicaragua – Nicaragua
- Asociación Hermanos Menonitas – Paraguay
- Convención de los Pastores de las Iglesias Mennonitas del Paraguay / Vereinigung der Mennonitengemeinden von Paraguay – Paraguay
- Convención Evangélica de Iglesias Paraguayas Hermanos Menonitas – Paraguay
- Convención Evangélica Hermanos Menonitas Enlhet – Paraguay
- Convención Evangélica Hermanos Menonitas Nivaclé – Paraguay
- Convención Evangélica Menonita Paraguaya – Paraguay
- Consejo de las Congregaciones de los Hermanos Menonitas del Uruguay – Uruguay
- Konferenz der Mennonitengemeinden in Uruguay – Uruguay
- Casa de Restauracion y Vida Shalom – Venezuela

North America

- Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) – Canada
- Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada – Canada
- Mennonite Church Canada WITNESS – Canada
- Multiply – Canada, USA
- Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM) – USA
- Brethren in Christ World Missions – USA
- Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) – USA
- Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) – USA
- Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) – USA
- Mosaic Mennonite Conference – USA
- Rosedale International – USA
- Virginia Mennonite Missions (VMM) – USA

Benin

Following Jesus in a very big house

It's a pleasure to see this wonderful God whose children are everywhere and whose love is poured out on all of them, wherever they are.

When you see streets lined with trees in the community of Allada, it means that the Casa Grande is approaching. Our neighbourhood is different from the other neighbourhoods because the streets are lined with trees. It's a demonstration of our environmental protection efforts and a sign of our struggle against deforestation.

Casa Grande started as a home for children who were orphaned or needed more support than their families could give. Today, we have expanded our activities to include education (primary through secondary) and vocational training along with sharing the Word of God through these development actions in communities. Farming, clean fuel sources and waste management projects include a pig-rearing unit, creating ecologically friendly charcoal and latrine-building.

Our education ministry pays special attention to girls who often face pressure to drop out. Additionally, there are supports for children with disabilities and other vulnerabilities. The centre has recruited a physiotherapist and speech therapist to work with these children.

Our waste management and recovery work and creation care work trains women and girls in the community on how to maintain and use latrines, make cooking fuel from garbage and make better compost.

When we support a child's education at our Leaders of Africa school, family members are involved. The children in our ministry who are directly affected by our work in 2023 number 86, but we can estimate the number of those indirectly to be close to 800. To estimate the number of those indirectly to be close to 800. To find the number of people affected, we multiply because we assume that this child has a father, a mother and a sibling. By supporting the child, it's already a relief for the family members.

The lost daughter

When her family fell on rough times, a girl of six or seven who we will call "F" was sent to live with a rich woman to earn money for F's aunt. F soon ran away. The police found her and put her into a centre. After five years, F came to live with us in Casa Grande.

When F came to us, we set out to find the family of the child. We spent many nights, we travelled many kilometres, we crisscrossed villages.

Nearly 200 km away from Casa Grande, we found a family who had a story of a lost daughter, very much like F. We listened to the story of the child's separation from her family.

Suddenly, a young woman came out of the house who looked just like F, as if she were the older sister. "This is our child!" we said! Another woman appeared who also looked like F after they had told us their story. The older woman showed us a photo of the daughter she had lost and we showed her a photo of the girl we had found.

When we showed the photo to the mother, she ran around the village. She threw herself on the ground, cried, shouted and jumped for joy. "Glory to God! Oh, God has found my daughter again!" It was a day of celebration; the village came out in droves to surround us.

This story has touched the whole community, and we still have a relationship with F, whom we returned to her mother. The whole family was so happy because their lost girl had been found.

Everyone belongs

People didn't like disabled children learning together with healthy children. But through the support project for disabled children, we have created inclusion, where healthy children and disabled children grow side by side and study in the same classroom.

Two little boys from unwed mothers have come into our care with great medical needs.

Casa Grande, in Benin, was founded by mission workers from Burgos Mennonite church in Spain (Iglesia Evangélica Comunidades Unidas Anabautistas, part of MWC member church Anabautistas, Menonitas y Hermanos en Cristo – España) who were involved in Benin Bible Institute. Today, partners include Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonisches Hilfswerk, Mennonite Men and others. Casa Grande is a member of the Global Anabaptist Service Network (GASN).

One, whom we'll call T, was given to the care of his aunt who neglected him. He had a severe level of malnutrition. When you look at T, all you could see were his bones. A neighbour called the police who took him to the hospital, but the aunt would not pay for his care. So, a judge issued a placement order to bring the child to our home.

Even when the child was entrusted to us, we were a bit afraid, but we are very happy that God could use us to save this child's life. Today, when people come to see the child, they do not believe he is the same child.

But we reply, it is the child!

The other child, whom we'll call P, has a mother who is in prison and who is struggling with her mental health. She threw him away like a parcel, so the juvenile judge ordered the child to be taken into our care.

When we brought him home 10 months ago, we discovered he has a severe case of sickle cell anemia, a disease that is very difficult to treat. Every month, we spend days in the hospital with P, but we haven't been in the hospital for nearly 4 months now.

We started praying and P is doing very well now.

His mom is still in prison, so we pray with P, meditate on the Word together and help this child discover his future and to feel the warmth of God's love.



Koissivi Bienvenu KADJA is the national coordinator of Casa Grande in Allada, Benin, since 2019. He joined the team in 2011 and has worked in several roles.

Website: casagrandebenin.org

India

Following Jesus from Bengal to Bhutan and beyond

Little Flock is situated at the foot of the Himalayan mountains, surrounded by beautiful scenery – forests and rivers, mountains and tea gardens – reaching out to seven Indian states and bordering on three neighbouring countries: Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

We have set up the four following objectives:

- #1 Transform disciples into Christ-like character.
- #2 Equip disciples with Scripture.
- #3 Impact lives through effective disciples.
- #4 Multiply disciples.

Our ministry wings include a discipleship training centre; discipleship training workshops; child development centres (schools for socially, economically and politically marginalized children with free tuition and provided meals); basic computer training centres; prayer and counselling centres; blood donation camps; eye camps; children's festivals.

After studying in Little Flock's training school, students have a bigger vision to learn and serve. They have gone on to health training or theological colleges. Other organizations and denominations send their grassroots workers for training for the mission field.

Here are some case histories:

Social and spiritual transformation

Transformed from drug addiction through the power of the Holy Spirit while training in Little Flock in 2018-2019, Saikhoram Reang went back to his village Gaurangapara, Tripura. He was filled with vigour to work among the poorest of the poor children deprived of basic food, school, education and parental care.

Little Flock helped him establish a child development centre. Children are taught songs, skits and artwork, both biblical and secular. The school has brought dropouts back into education, now at the high school level.

Since 2020, Saikhoram Reang and his team have been a great blessing to educate, feed and spiritual enlighten 71 children.

From timid man to fearless missionary

When he joined Little Flock in 2014, Bibek Narjinary was extremely timid and introverted. But his life was radically transformed.

Seeing his motivation for mission

work, Little Flock sent him to study in a theological college. After the completion of his master's degree, he committed his life to establish a school for the most underprivileged children in the Nornoso forest village of Karbi Anglong, Assam.

This place has no road, electricity, school, market or church for 400 children and their families. The community is alien to the gospel. "I am ready to die for the sake of the gospel here," says Bibek Narjinary.

Untouchable spirit of faith and grace

Dimasa tribes in North Cachar Hills, Assam, are vehemently opposed the gospel. Christians, a micro group, are considered "untouchables."

But Gobilal Ponglo, who was discipled at Little Flock in 2010, returned to his village and has stood rock solid in his faith in spite of persistent persecution from his neighbours. He has been instrumental in forming a couple of house churches and has started a child development centre in the village.

This is not easy place to practice Christian faith, but God has been so good and so gracious to protect them.

A trainer for transformation

Discipled at Little Flock in 2011, Kripa Joy Reang also works as a passionate missionary in the North Cachar Hills. His gift is to establish new mission stations in the remotest pockets of the region.

On one of his mission ventures, he met Samson Reang in Dasta, South Tripura, who was running a tiny nursery school for poverty-stricken refugee children. Kripa Joy Reang discipled him for a bigger work. As a result, Samson Reang has established a Victory English School with a hostel and a chapel.

This school is an agent of social, educational, economical and spiritual transformation where 200 students are studying from nursery to Standard 5.

Beyond the borders

Amrit Kujur, an Adivasi man, discipled in 2010, has been instrumental in assisting the Little Flock missionary in East Nepal. Amrit Kujur has formed house fellowships in Tokla tea gardens.

Growing faith in the forest

Another Adivasi evangelist, Chotelal Oraon and his wife Filmita Oraon continue to

Little Flock Discipleship School is a "ring" of fellowships in Uttar Medabari, Alipurduar District, West Bengal, India. In 1985, Little Flock was established as an evangelical church organization to carry out the Great Commission in the northern part of West Bengal. However, as the ministry spread, the need to train, equip and send disciples into unreached regions became apparent. The first batch of Little Flock Discipleship School with 12 disciples began in April 2010 in a rented house in the village called Bamanpara. By 2024, the 14th batch is being completed, adding another 24 to the 201 disciples who have been trained.

Little Flock is part of India United Missionary Church (BJCPM-Bharatiya Jukta Christa Prachar Mandali) and runs in partnership with Nappanee Missionary Church. It is a member of the Global Mission Fellowship (GMF).

work to establish God's kingdom among the forest villages of North Bengal. Since they were led to Christ and discipled in 2010, they have established two churches.

In Lothabari village, where they started a fellowship house, there is now a small church building to serve the congregation.

India has witnessed renaissance among the majoritarian religion in the last decade. We have seen a lot of challenges in doing mission work and encountered persecution. So we have a paradigm shift in mission strategies. One-to-one sharing of the gospel and training lay members to carry the mission is crucial. Discipling believers to develop Christ-life character is a necessity. We take an apostolic approach by training native leaders to share the gospel in the remotest places. We believe in being the agent of social, economic and spiritual transformation for eternal purpose.

And we pray continuously.

Through the work of Little Flock, churches are being revived to disciple believers and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in unreached areas. And the young generation Christians are catching up with the vision.

We thank God for opportunities to spread the good news of Jesus Christ in these regions and countries.



Reverend Asit Basumata serves as a principal at Little Flock Discipleship School in India. He has a Master of Divinity and has worked as a professor at the Pax Christiana Bible College in Chennai and as a project coordinator for an HIV/AIDS project. He presented about Little Flock Discipleship Schools along with Mr Gyan Mochary, executive of Little Flock and president of Literacy International India, in a GASN webinar, 10 September 2024.

Spain

Living out unity in Spain

We were very few when we began to call ourselves Mennonites or Anabaptists in Spain. We gathered to develop relationships, interact with some frequency and explore topics of common interest.

This is how EME, or Spanish Mennonite Encounter was born, which takes place every two years near the church that organizes it, to get to know each other better. Any member who wishes can attend and some come from other countries.

For two or three full days, we enjoy regional food varieties, different styles of worship; we follow a theme, have a conference speaker and mix in dialogue groups; we have workshops, hear testimonies and a Sunday preacher; we deepen friendships, plus do a little tourism together.

The remarkable diversity enriches us and stimulates us to grow in love. We work at following Jesus while the Holy Spirit surprises us with divine wonders.

A broad collection of mission

The Mennonite church in Barcelona remains small but a foundation provides housing for migrants.

For decades we have been walking with two Brethren in Christ churches in Madrid, another one Catalunya and a mission point in Asturias.

The “evangelical church” of Vigo has a ministry among Roma people (formerly called “Gypsies”).

The “Anabaptist” church of Burgos is much larger, with a mission point in another town, and is in the process of a generational transfer. In 1999 they started La Casa Grande in Benin: a home for abandoned children, providing education to many in the area. (See page 7 in this issue)

Heavy immigration to Spain brought brothers and sisters from the Amor Viviente churches in Honduras (founded by missionaries of Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions) who inspire us as they have planted half a dozen churches and continue to train people and have new mission points.

CTK (Koinonía Theological Center) was started with leaders from Madrid and Burgos who had the desire to train others. Some communities have used CTK to study the Bible and Christian doctrine together with an Anabaptist approach, also learning principles of Christian ministry for service in churches. Students travel from their cities one Saturday a month, and community is created by sharing class dynamics, dialogue in groups, and a meal around the table.

To know each other is to treasure each other, regardless of which community we belong to.

To know each other is to treasure each other, regardless of which community we belong to.

A yearly retreat that nurtures fraternal communion between pastors and leaders of such diverse groups is perhaps what is most surprising. No structure or formality threatens the idiosyncrasy of the groups. We invite newly arrived missionaries to get to know us in this setting.

Everything seems fragile and spontaneous, but there is a desire for the Spirit of God to minister to personal needs. Yes, at the meetings each year agendas and topics are discussed, but above all it is where leaders worship together and share their progress and their needs with frank vulnerability, receiving prayer, love and support from their colleagues. We laugh and cry together. Lately, about two or three times a year we meet on Zoom to continue this level of fellowship.

I can't help but think that all the best in the kingdom of God is a gift of the Holy Spirit. When I look back I see clearly that what God initiates and does in us and through us is what is lasting. Everything we achieve in our own strength or with our human talents may well falter and fall one day.

Therefore, let God really be the protagonist of our lives and works, and let us choose to have the Spirit working in us. We are learning to be the family of God.



Connie Bentson Byler has lived in Spain serving with Mennonite Mission Network for four decades. She and Dennis Byler are members of United Anabaptist Communities of Burgos, though living two hours away since retirement in 2018.

Website: menonitas.org

AMyHCE (Anabautistas, Menonitas y Hermanos en Cristo / Anabaptists, Mennonites and Brethren in Christ)

is a small movement of churches in the Anabaptist tradition that linked as a single conference in FERED. This federation of evangelical churches facilitates the recognition of our churches within the Spanish legal framework. To give several examples, this allows that weddings celebrated in our churches have legal validity; we have permission to provide care in prisons and hospital chaplaincy; and in Burgos, the city council gave land to build a meeting place.

We have been linked to MWC from the beginning, which has made us visible to our sister churches in Europe and beyond. Gathered in a national group is useful but MWC gives us a valuable sense of belonging to an ecclesiastical reality with a global Anabaptist identity. AMyHCE is a member of the Global Mission Fellowship (GMF).



Courtesy AMyHCE

EME (Spanish Mennonite Encounter) 2017 in Barcelona with 170 participants.

Paraguay

Building peace with holistic services

As there is a multicultural population in the central Chaco of Paraguay, it goes without saying that peace in this region can only be maintained through cooperation. If the gap between those who are economically weaker and those who are economically stronger widens too far, it is foreseeable that social conflicts will arise. Therefore ASCIM, which is based on the Christian faith, is committed to ensuring that the people of this region shape their lives in cooperative coexistence.

After all, if every person has been given dignity by God, then no one must be left behind; the basic needs of all people must be met with the aim of ensuring harmonious coexistence.

ASCIM provides partnership programs in education, health, business and social-spiritual orientation. By working together as partners in the various areas of life, people become aware of each other, get to know and appreciate each other, and talk and plan together. It's not about small, temporary projects, but about long-term cooperation that serves peace.

Accident uncovers illness

If you saw this 50-year-old woman from the Nivaclé community of Nicha Toyisch, you might think she was 70. This woman, let's call her Lisa, had been riding on a motorcycle. Somehow, her left big toe caught between the chain and the cogwheel while driving, and the toe was completely torn out of her foot.

The big toe is not only the largest digit, but also the most important for walking.

Lisa was taken to hospital by camioneta (small truck) but was not able to pay for an operation in a private hospital. She arrived in Yalve Sanga at 6 pm, with blood loss and severe pain. There was an open wound where the big toe should have been.

We set to work with what we could. We gave her a local anesthetic, during which the nurses placed an IV, through which she also received painkillers. We were then able to wash out the wound

with disinfectant in relative peace, already with less pain, because we couldn't have any inflammation. Then we stopped the bleeding. We pulled the remaining skin over the open wound as much as possible and stitched it together so that it would no longer bleed and could heal (although it could take a long time) and bandaged it well.

After all, if every person has been given dignity by God, then no one must be left behind.

Lisa remained interned with antibiotics, painkillers and tetanus vaccination. Her adult son, who still lives at home, was very concerned. He accompanied her through the whole time.

However, we noticed that Lisa possibly had other ailments. Normally, older patients take advantage inpatient treatment to eat a heartier diet. With Lisa, the nursing staff noticed how much she left on her plate.

And she had a persistent cough the nurses found suspicious. Sputum was examined for tuberculosis, and lo and behold, Lisa's biggest enemy was the TB bacillus, not the amputated toe.

So we started treating the tuberculosis. Lisa continued to receive daily wound care, and the protein-rich diet started to taste better.

After 10 days, she had recovered sufficiently to be discharged. The wound still needed some time, but she was able to get around at home with a walking aid. The ASCIM-trained community health worker from Nicha Toyisch and the nurse who visits the settlement weekly took care of the regular dressing changes.

After about two months the foot was healed and after six months the TB treatment was completed.

Written by Dr Richard Wiens, chief physician at Sanatorium ASCIM

This story shows our impact in one moment in a person's life as part of our practical work over the long term.

In the field of education, we offer training for teachers. In the health sector, there is training and accompaniment for health personnel and preventive care, consultations and if necessary referrals for patients. We cooperate with administrative boards of the settlements on cost estimates, give advice on livestock farming and agriculture and offer training in bookkeeping. We provide socio-spiritual training for women. We provide teaching materials for kindergarten and we train Indigenous teachers. Voluntary services are available with recommendation from their home church.

Overall, we believe our work is holistic and contributes to peace.

All glory to God!



Heinrich Dyck Harder is the vice director of ASCIM (Asociacion De Servicios De Cooperacion Indigena – Menonita) in Yalve Sanga, Paraguay.

Website: ASCIM.org

This mission of ASCIM (Association of Services within the Indigenous-Mennonite Cooperation / Asociacion De Servicios De Cooperacion Indigena-Mennonita in Spanish) is to promote socio-economic growth in Indigenous communities through partnership programs in education, health, economy and socio-spiritual orientation and thus supports harmonious intercultural coexistence. ASCIM grew out of evangelization and cooperation efforts between three German Mennonite colonies and their Enhlet and Nivaclé neighbours at Yalve Sanga in the Chaco in western Paraguay. It was officially incorporated in 1978. ASCIM is a member of the Global Anabaptist Service Network.



Courtesy ASCIM

Meeting of CEA graduates.



Prepared by the MWC Regional Representatives for 19 January 2025, or at any time convenient for your congregation in 2025.

Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday

Worship Resources

Theme and texts

a. Theme:
The Courage to Love

b. Why this theme was chosen:

The first baptisms in the Anabaptist tradition took place in secret in Zurich, Switzerland, on 21 January 1525. A small group of Jesus-followers acted together with courage on their shared understanding of Scripture and the church, different from their political and religious context. Today there are churches all over the world in the Anabaptist tradition, acting together with courage to love each other, different from our political and religious contexts that too often pull us apart.

c. Biblical text options:

Old Testament:
Genesis 50:15-21
Psalms: Psalm 133
Gospel:
Luke 7:36-50
New Testament:
1 John 4:7-21

d. Relationship between the theme and biblical texts:

- Joseph forgave his brothers and took care of them.
- How good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!
- The woman courageously showed her love for Jesus, in ways that were beyond acceptability.
- Let us love one another, for love comes from God.

2

Prayer requests

Prayer requests from MWC

- We give thanks for your creation with all of its beauty and diversity on earth and in the heavens.
- Lord, we seek your forgiveness for our failures to live up to your plan and purpose. We seek your courage and power to follow Jesus's teachings to cooperate with you in restoration of your kingdom in a world that is broken and messy.
- Together we pray that we may recognize and affirm the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of our sisters and brothers of our various national church conferences, and live into the unity we have been given in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Pray that God's love will flow through the churches to the youth in their communities, reaching them with the message of Jesus. Pray for the churches in some parts of the world who have the challenges of many children and young adults.
- Pray for the churches in some parts of the world who face the challenges of many aging members.
- Pray for the MWC event on 29 May 2025 in Zurich, to commemorate 500 years of Anabaptism, in the context of renewed relationships with the Reformed Church (WCRC).
- Pray for the current needs in the MWC family as expressed on the MWC prayers page: mwc-cmm.org/en/prayers

3

Song suggestions

Songs from MWC 2022 International Songbook

Africa #22

Somlandela / We will follow / Je te suivrai / Seguiremos

Asia: #11

Kirisuto no heiwa / May the Peace of Christ

OR #12

Dalam Yesus kita bersaudara / In Jesus Christ We are One Family

Europe # (1990)

[Vrede dragen in Gods naam / We are people of God's peace, words by Menno Simons, Worship Together #677](#)

Latin America: #30

Cantai ao Senhor / Oh Sing to the Lord / Cantad al Senor / Pujilah Tuhan

North America: #36

True Evangelical Faith / Le fe de Cristo / Wahrer Glaube wird / Iman Injili Yang Murni

Song videos available online at mwc-cmm.org/awfs.

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



4

Multimedia resources

In this package (pages 3-13)

- Liturgies and symbols for gathering and benediction
- Sermon
- Commemorating 500 years of Anabaptism with history, liturgy and reconciliation
- Children's activity
- Tithes and offering suggestions
- Celebration ideas



6

Additional resources

See mwc-cmm.org/awfs

- Written resources online in English, Español, Français, Deutsch, हिंदी and Português
- Video readings of Scripture texts
- Video sermons in English, Español, Français and Deutsch
- Video testimonies in English, Español, Français, 中文 and Swahili
- Song videos
- Photos
- Celebration map

5

Offering

- MWC invites congregations to take a special offering for our global Anabaptist family on Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday. One way to do this is to invite every member to contribute the cost of at least one lunch in their own community to support the core ministries and Commissions of MWC and to acknowledge that we are all members together. This is a manageable amount for nearly every MWC member around the world, except in times of drought, flooding and violence.
- Go to page 8 for more ideas to celebrate a special offering time for Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday.



First Mennonite Hutchinson KS, USA

BICC Mt Pleasant Harare, Zimbabwe



Youth of GKMI Kudus, Indonesia

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

Contact Information:

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Janet Plenert, MWC Regional Representatives Coordinator, ✉ janetplenert@mwc-cmm.org

📷 Please send your photos and testimonies regarding your celebration to photos@mwc-cmm.org

USA

Living out unity with boots and shovels

On 29 July 2024, Brent Trumbo was serving as crew leader in Barre, Vermont, USA, alongside Old Order Mennonite volunteers from Dayton, Virginia, and the Lancaster County, Pennsylvania area. The longtime MDS volunteer attends Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Virginia, USA.

“I was dumbfounded when I saw what they were doing,” he said. The women, most of whom were in their early 20s, were using shovels to fill five-gallon buckets (20L) with mud, then carrying them, one in each hand, out of the basement of a 200-year-old home that had been inundated with river mud.

“They were carrying about 40 pounds (around 18 kgs) in each hand,” he said. “They did this for hours on end with no stopping and no slowing down.”

And they were singing while they worked. “Their harmony was phenomenal,” said Brent Trumbo. “You could have made a recording in that basement.”

Brent Trumbo marvelled at the beautiful singing that rose up out of the mud in that basement. “It was a nasty environment,” he said. “We put some temporary lights down there but it was dark. It didn’t smell good.”

But the conditions didn’t seem to faze the women at all. So he joined in the work.

“I was trying to keep up with them,” said Brent Trumbo, who is 65. “I did have to take a couple of ibuprofen (painkiller).”

He recalls getting a little teary-eyed on his last day on the job, which was 2 August 2024.

“These were young people who were so hardworking. They were humble. They were very friendly and they’d come over and chat with me for 20 minutes very comfortably,” he said. “They restored my hope in the next generation. That’s genuinely the way I feel. I get very emotional when I talk about it.”

He had no idea the photo he took of the women with muddy dresses would be viewed by thousands on Facebook and Instagram.

“How blessed I am to see the wide variety of Mennonites that have come to clean up and rebuild through MDS.”

“People thought this was someone getting creative with AI!” said Brent Trumbo, who would like to assure people that he’s a real human being.

Who’s not in the photograph? The homeowner, a man who periodically brought snacks and drinks down into the basement for the volunteers, and had a look of stunned surprise when he saw the work being accomplished.

“As we were leaving, I was pulling out, I noticed that he had walked out into the yard and had just sat in a lawn chair – and it appeared like he was crying,” said Trumbo. “I am sure he was just in shock. It was a very touching moment.”

This story was first published on MDS’s website after the photo was shared on social media.



Reflection from MDS executive director Kevin King:

In late August, I spent several days in Barre, Vermont, visiting the MDS project and surrounding communities. I joined volunteers from Arizona, New York,

Illinois, Ohio, Virginia, Minnesota, Indiana and listened to flood survivors and the local community leaders. Three major floods have impacted north and central Vermont in the last 12 months. I heard stories how when thunderstorms arise, many residents relive the trauma and wonder if the fourth flood will hit them.

Over breakfast one morning with local Baptist pastor, Dan Molind, remarked: “How blessed I am to see the wide variety of Mennonites that have come to clean up and rebuild through MDS

– from the Amish to the progressive English. How is that possible?!”

I shared that it was out of our compassion, obedience to the Scripture and gratefulness to God.

We as an Anabaptist community of faith may have our differences, but I always come away seeing MDS volunteers live out their unity in Christ by putting their faith into action.

And I remain encouraged.

Website: mds.org

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) responds to disasters, rebuilds homes and restores hope by organizing and empowering volunteers to respond to people hit by disasters in the USA and Canada. Created in the 1950s as an organized expression of the Anabaptist practices of mutual aid, today MDS is respected by national disaster management agencies in both countries. In 2022-2023, MDS had more than 7 000 volunteers – some skilled in construction, others completely unexperienced – from the supporting Mennonite churches, other churches or none at all, and from across the spectrum of Anabaptist identity in North America, from Old Order Amish to the variety of urban and technologically savvy Mennonites. MDS is a member of the Global Anabaptist Service Network.



Brent Trumbo

MDS has been responding to a repeat flood disaster in and around Barre, Vermont, USA, where volunteers have mucked out or repaired more than 50 homes. The women pictured cleaned mud out of the basement of a home flooded with river water.



Save the date!

Renewal 2025

The courage to love: Anabaptism@500

Celebrating 500 years of Anabaptism

Thursday, 29 May 2025

Zurich, Switzerland

Workshops, musical performances and a panel discussion culminating in an ecumenical worship service.

Online prayer hour

“Prayer has been our spinning wheel,” says Okoth Simon Onyango, leader of the Mennonite church in Uganda. “Thanks to the global church for the resilience in your prayers. It is encouraging to know that someone somewhere in the globe is reporting your issues to God.”

You are invited to join the Deacons Commission and regional representatives on a Zoom prayer call.

“As we gather on Zoom for Online Prayer hour, it’s a way we see each other, shoulder each other’s burdens, cry and celebrate our joys together,” says Tigist Tesfaye, secretary of the Deacons Commission.

“This boosts up our fellowship as a family of faith.”

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



Next events: 14:00 UTC

- Friday, 17 January 2025
- Friday, 21 March 2025



Henk Stenvers (r), MWC president, with (l-r) Rev. Georges Kaputu, CEFMC community evangelist, Rev. Noko, legal representative of Communauté des églises baptistes Unies, and Rev. Antoine Kimbila, président CEFMC.

We are one

Evangelism rallies, energetic music and dancing all day; witnessing, altar calls with a dozen respondents. Praying is loud, through tears or joy. You can feel the enthusiasm.

I was heartily welcomed by the Mennonite Brethren church in DR Congo to celebrate their 100th anniversary in August 2024.

The multiday event was held in a big new church built across from the MWC member church’s headquarters in Kikwit, Kwilu province, an eight-hour drive over 500 kms from Kinshasa.

But the distances did not deter: people gathered.

Some 2 500 people packed the large church to celebrate the anniversary of CEFMC (Communauté des Églises de Frères Mennonites au Congo) in 5 hours of worship service.

Bishop Daniel Onashuyaka Lunge of the ecumenical Église du Christ au Congo (ECC) gave a sermon on unity – an ever-present challenge for church communions around the world.

CEFMC, an MWC member church, has its challenges but also many gifts.

The leaders of CEFMC want to see the church become self-supporting but also to create healthy partnerships. They pray for pastors and evangelists to spread the message.

They are dealing with trauma from colonialism and a culture of mistrust resulting from systemic corruption in government systems.

The need for qualified leadership in the church is acutely felt; not only for education

but also to practice countercultural servant leadership that is not tempted toward corruption, tribal divisions and ego-driven displays of power.

The vast geography of the resource-rich country creates both riches and hardships. Protracted violence, especially from armed rebels in the East, sends displaced people to all corners of the country and beyond.

I presented Antoine Kimbila and CEFMC with a plaque of commemoration on behalf of the global family. To remind them they are part of this large global family who shares their joys and struggles.

And they have a lot of gifts to share with our family.

The **emotional vibrancy** of their connection to Jesus is a gift. Even through an hours-long church service, their faith is palpable.

Their **practice of community** is a gift. Church members welcome displaced people from the East with open arms. They listen and share strategies for trauma healing. They offer food and even take refugees into their own homes.

Their **faith** is a gift. In the West, once we have money, we build. In DRC, when there is a vision, they begin to build, praying patiently and trusting for what is needed to continue.

Their **baptisms** are a gift. For some, conversion entails a significant turning away from another way of living. In their baptisms and beyond, they live out a strong sense of being saved.

When I visit churches, I always say, “I can greet you in the name of César García (our general secretary), but not in the name of MWC because then you would be greeting yourself. You *are* MWC.”

Then I take a picture with the gathered people waving at the camera as they greet the other 1.5 million believers who are MWC.

My being there is a sign of their part in this bigger global family. That is why these in-person visits continue to be important in a time of Zoom meetings.

As I taste the dust and the heat and feel the joyful spirit of faith and hope in Jesus alongside these believers on the other side of the world, we are both reminded that we are one. We are worth each other’s time. We are tied together in this global family of faith.

Henk Stenvers, from the Netherlands, is the president of MWC (2022-2028).



Scan to donate

Photo:
Henk Stenvers

Add your fragment to the MWC mosaic!

We invite you to **join the MWC movement!** Stand in solidarity with Anabaptist sisters-and-brothers from Argentina to Zimbabwe. When we work together, we learn from each other while blessing the world.

You can make a difference through **investing your financial gifts** in the worldwide mission of Mennonite World Conference as together we form a beautiful mosaic as a global Anabaptist family of faith. Like all mosaics, our beauty comes from every piece that forms part of the whole.

When you contribute, you form part of this diverse image:

- resource and strengthen Anabaptist leaders around the world
- encourage congregations to live out Anabaptist faith
- nurture a thriving global communion through MWC gatherings in person and online
- equip MWC's commissions, networks, YABs (young adults) to serve the church

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

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

Thank you for sharing your gifts with the MWC global family!

From our Leaders: Mission Commission

A spirit of teamwork

The Mission Commission provides MWC member churches with resources and a forum for dialogue on global witness and service. The commission brings together the Global Anabaptist Service Network (GASN) and the Global Mission Fellowship (GMF) and enables dialogue and direction around pressing issues and opportunities in global witness and service.

For mission agencies and churches, the Mission Commission hopes to stimulate global, continent, regional and local partnerships in outreach, focusing on places where people have not yet had the opportunity to know Jesus.

For service agencies, the Mission Commission seeks to enable both dialogue and inter-agency collaboration in response to the pressing needs of God's people and our communities.

The June 2023 meeting in Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, was essential to promote and consolidate the sense and spirit of teamwork. Some 60 GASN and GMF members were able to gather.

In addition, over the past years, the use of online meetings has been helpful to the work of the Mission Commission, especially in coordination with our two current networks. These webinars gave members an opportunity to learn together, share knowledge and experience, and ask questions and pray together.

In 2024, the Mission Commission held the following webinars:

- February: "Sharing best practices of 'Good Dear Child' and 'Youth development Project'"
 - Presenters: Dejene Gurmessa (Ethiopia), Abdi Dubela (Ethiopia)
 - Organized by GASN
- June: "The hope of Christian witness/mission in a polarized world"
 - Presenter: J. Nelson Kraybill (USA)
 - Organized by GMF
- September: "Impact of making disciples in the life of individuals, society and church through Little Flock Discipleship School"
 - Presenters: Asit Basumata (India), Gyan Mochary (India)
 - Organized by GASN



James R. Krabill

James Krabill with students at STAKWW (Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Wiyata) in Pati, Indonesia.

- October: "Succession in service: preparing the next wave of mission leaders"
 - Presenters: Ebenezer Mondez (Philippines), Tigist Tesfaye (Ethiopia), C. Daniel Soto (Argentina), Galen B (USA)
 - Organized by GMF

Currently, the Mission Commission is revising "[Anabaptism and Mission](#)". This online bibliography lists Anabaptist writing on mission produced from 1859 to 2011. Revisions and updates to the present are projected for release at the May meeting in 2025.

A "Martyr Synod" tour of Augsburg for GASN and GMF members is being planned for the 2025 gathering in Germany. This responds to feedback the Mission Commission has received about having a field trip option with in-person meetings.

Conversations continue with the emerging Global Anabaptist Health Network.

- James R. Krabill (USA), chair
- Rafael Zaracho (Paraguay), secretary
- Nelson Okanya (USA), GMF steering committee chair
- Barbara Hege-Galle (Germany), GASN steering committee chair
- Eladio Mondez (Philippines)
- Hyacinth Stevens (USA)
- Simon Okoth (Uganda)
- Felo Gracia (DR Congo)

MWC Publications Request

I would like to receive:

MWC Info

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

- English
- Spanish
- French

Courier

Magazine published four times a year (print: volume numbers 2, 4)

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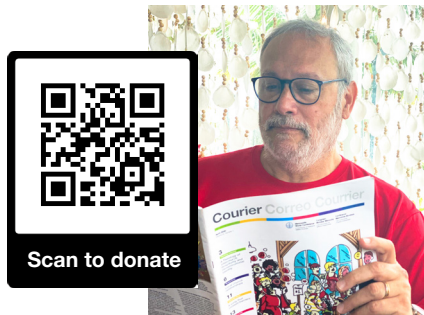


Photo: Elina Ciptadi

The road and the destination

“If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there.” This saying summarizes one of the ideas from Lewis Carroll’s classic children’s tale, *Alice in Wonderland*. Having a *road* and defining your *destination* is crucial if you want to arrive there.

There is a biblical version of that saying in Proverbs 11:14: “Where there is no guidance, a nation falls.” *Guidance, direction, road, destination* – all those words are implied in another word that is sometimes misunderstood and historically problematic but with plenty of theological content: *mission*.

In the book ***God’s People in Mission: An Anabaptist Perspective***, I define *mission* as *everything the church is and does, bearing witness to Jesus Christ in her ministry of reconciliation*. Let me expand this definition a bit more:

Everything that the church is and does

- The church *is* a foretaste of the Kingdom of God.
- The church does not have a message. She *is* the message.
- The church as a message implies her very *presence*. Any mission that is not communal and interdependent is weak.
- The church’s presence announces the gospel of *Jesus Christ* through *words* and *deeds*, thus promoting *reconciliation*.
- The church’s action in its testimonial work includes *everything* it does: worship, pastoral care, teaching, evangelism, service, peacebuilding and health ministries, among other things. What the church does or does not do, and how it does it, is part of its message.

bears witness to Jesus Christ

- Through its words and deeds, the community’s *message* is delivered as a witness, affirming their experience and testimonial knowledge. This implies an approach that is not imperialist (as if they were the master and keeper of the absolute truth) and is not delivered from positions of human power. Instead, it is sharing “from below,” with steadfast humility, our faith experience.
- The message is about *Jesus Christ*, so it must be communicated from a position of *vulnerability* and *service*, just as Jesus did. This requires sacrificial surrender and a cruciform lifestyle that practices ministerial strategies consistent with Christ’s life and work.
- Considering the divine *incarnation* and Christ’s *identification* with discriminated persons, bearing witness to Jesus requires a serious contextualization of the message and an intentional identification with those excluded, ignored or victimized by society.

in her ministry of reconciliation

- The ministry of reconciliation has been *entrusted* to the church. This implies that the new life in the *community*, thanks to the Spirit, makes it possible to experience reconciliation with God and among humans.
- The ministry of reconciliation seeks not only the salvation of the soul in the distant future but also the re-establishment of an *entire relationship* with the *Spirit of God* and a life of *just relationships* which allow us to enjoy the *peace* which the same Spirit makes possible in the new *creation*.

From an Anabaptist perspective, how you arrive at your destination – the *road* – is crucial. That is why our understanding and practice of mission are so important. At Mennonite World Conference (MWC), we want to organize ourselves (structure) and our work (road) in a way that shows what we understand by *mission*.

The MWC Mission Commission brings together a network of agencies from all over the world to work interdependently in a multicultural way. By belonging to the Mission (GMF) and Service (GASN) networks of the MWC Mission Commission, agencies affirm their identity as church organizations, as missional expressions of the church. Through their work, they bear witness to Christ in several areas of specialized ministry, such as church planting and social development. That is what this issue of *Courier* is about. Let’s join our agencies and MWC networks to follow Jesus, live out unity, and build peace!

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

Read César García’s chapter, “The fulfillment of our mission” and 9 other chapters on the Mission Commission’s 10 statements in *God’s People in Mission: An Anabaptist Perspective*, edited by Stanley W. Green and Rafael Zaracho, © 2018.

Download book PDF at mwc-cmm.org/en/resources/gods-people-mission-anabaptist-perspective