



**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

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Cover Photo:

(l-r): Donggyu Ahn, Heonsoo Lyu, Junghee Suh, Sunju Moon and Byeongwook Lee from South Korea participate in the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism activities in Zurich, Switzerland, 29 May 2025.

Photo: Karla Braun

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Word from the editor



This issue of *Courier* is a taste of the 500th anniversary.

Inspired by Zwingli's famous invocation to "do something courageous!", MWC gave the theme "The Courage to Love" to our 500th anniversary year. We marked it with a registration-free event in the streets of Zurich, Switzerland, on Ascension Day, 29 May 2025.

It's also the 100th anniversary of MWC since it was the celebration of 400 years of Anabaptist that provided the pretext for the gathering of the first Anabaptist leaders (see page 25).

After a full day of choir performances (see page 15), workshops (see page 21), a panel discussion (see page 22), video screenings and art exhibits, minutes of pealing bells called the tired crowds to the worship service (see page 8).

Although the movement that started 500 years ago resulted in schism within the universal church, what characterized the anniversary event was gathering. The day in Zurich was not only attended by more than 3 500 Anabaptists from around the world; it also featured fellowship and worship with representatives of 13 global Christian communions and 3 multilateral ecumenical organizations.

Most notably, the Reformed Church of Zurich (perceived as an enemy to the early Anabaptist martyrs) was a generous collaborator. Use of the Grossmünster – whose poor sightlines and limited seating unfortunately meant too many eager attendees were turned away once capacity was reached – was a gift from the Reformed Church. Leaders of that global communion also participated meaningfully in the reconciliation service that closed the event (see page 10).

The "disruption" (see page 6) in the service jolted the audience to attention after a long day of traversing the downtown in the hot sun or cramming into packed seminar rooms. But it was also a reminder of how the first Anabaptists made room for God's Spirit to surprise and discomfort, leading them to develop fresh perspective on what it means to be the church in the world. It was also a model of how listening, confession and openness to alternative forms of action can shape renewal movements into willing participants in God's mission together with each other and other members of the global communion. And these invitations extend to us today.

Contributors to the written liturgies for the worship service in Zurich which you will read here included Jürg Bräker, Rainer Burkart, César García, Anne-Cathy Graber, Jakob Fehr, J. Nelson Kraybill, Larry Miller, Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, John D. Roth, John Rempel.

The event followed the triennial meeting of the General Council (see page 27) and was followed by the Global Youth Summit (GYS) (see page 30) which occurred on a triennial basis for the first time. This ensured representatives from some 60 countries were presented in Zurich alongside the thousands who tuned in online to watch the livestream in real time or to view the service in the days, weeks and months that followed.

We invite you take a journey with us to that day in Zurich. Through looking back, may we also look ahead. May the courage to love shape our movement for another 500 years of following Jesus together.

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

***Courier* is interested in your contributions. Submit your artwork/graphic art to photos@mwc-cmm.org for consideration for use in *Courier*. Please ensure images are full resolution. Include artist's name and local church. Include a short description of the artwork. See artwork on page 25.**



Irma Sulistyorini



Stephanie Setiawan



Dale Gehman

Liam Rimes, an event volunteer, helps participants find their desired workshop at the Friedenskirche in Zurich, Switzerland.

Mickael Woelcke, an event volunteer is ready to help at a historical walking tour station.

J. Nelson Kraybill passes through a tunnel of song formed by choirs singing *Siyahamba* (We are marching) at the close of the worship service in Zurich, Switzerland.

A celebration of reconciliation



The bells rang out across the city that full of Anabaptists. An estimated 3 500 or more people filled the streets of old Zurich on Ascension Day 29 May 2025 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism.

“Today, as Mennonites in Switzerland we are a small community,” said Gladys Geiser and Lukas Amstutz, co-presidents, Konferenz der Mennoniten der Schweiz, opening the worship service. The host city is the location of the first known adult baptisms of the Anabaptist movement. “But as we can see in this service, we are part of a movement that has become diverse and international.”

All nations together

From its beginnings with a few courageous believers in Europe, now Mennonite World Conference has 111 member churches (after the Executive Committee meeting a few days earlier in Germany) in 61 countries around the globe.

“Today we can all gather here: all nations as it says in the Word – all nations, all tribes, all languages – together here. This is special because it’s only the Lord who could do things like this,” said Jean-Claude Ambeke, a Mennonite Brethren from Angola, currently living in France.

A slightly overcast morning turned into a sunny day for walking historic streets, cramming into lecture rooms or listening to choirs. Courtesy of the Reformed church, there was even a pop-up vendor giving out ice cream.

Participants could stretch their legs while following a historical walking tour or role-playing scenarios of a “story trail” while more than a dozen workshops offered perspectives on Anabaptism: testimonies, historical surveys and present-day issues. Additionally, Swiss theologian and journalist Judith Wipfler led a panel discussion with today’s Anabaptist leaders who live in areas of conflict and challenge reflecting on “a world on fire.”

Five choirs from around the world gave an indoor and outdoor concert and joined a mass choir for the worship service. They led Assembly favourites like “Ewe Thina” and “*Kirisuto no heiwa ga.*” A new song was introduced by Songs of Peace with a chorus calling “We want justice, we want peace!”



Scan here to view song information

An important step

Line ups for the closing worship service began midafternoon. The 1 200-seat Grossmünster was full to capacity, as were the overflow venues (Predigerkirche with 350 seats, Friedenskirche with 250, FEG with 100 and ad hoc addition Helferei with 130) – and still 100s were left outside, sitting in the plaza or scattered to cafés, watching on cellphone screens.

Meanwhile around the world, thousands tuned in online on personal screens or together with others at churches, offices or museums.

With representatives from 13 global communions and three multilateral ecumenical organizations as honoured guests, the service was not only about Anabaptism but another step in the path of reconciliation.

A journey of reconciliation

“We all inherit a legacy of pain from Reformation divisions. We know that differences of theology and practice remain, but we rejoice in the journey of reconciliation that we have shared together,” said Janet Plenert in the worship liturgy.

 [Turn to page [10](#) to view this liturgy]

The service featured leaders from the Lutheran World Federation and World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and a message from Pope Leo XIV brought by Cardinal Kurt Koch, prefect of the Dicastery on Promoting Christian Unity. “I assure you of my prayers that our fraternal relations will deepen and grow,” the cardinal read.

While MWC’s John D. Roth and WCRC’s Hanns Lessing confessed their communion’s “common witness to the unity of the church,” general secretaries César García and Setri Nyomi washed each others’ feet in what J. Nelson Kraybill called “a tangible expression of our commitment to reconciliation.”

Another concrete expression of support was the use of Reformed church buildings – including the iconic Grossmünster at no charge.

“Meeting again in the Grossmünster 500 years after the division – now as a ‘reconciling family’ – created a powerful

new moment in our collective memory that I hope will change the way the next generation tells our story,” said John D. Roth, Renewal events coordinator for MWC.

The event which was strategically framed as a commemoration thus closed on a note of celebration. Choirs from five regions formed a tunnel of song as guests exited the church to the notes of Siyahamba, “we are marching in the light of God.”



Scan here to watch the worship service online

Meeting again in the Grossmünster 500 years after the division – now as a ‘reconciling family’



Irma Sulistyorini

Margaret Brubacher and a friend enjoy fellowship in Zwingliplatz, Zurich.



Eduard Klassen

General secretaries Setri Nyomi of World Communion of Reformed Churches and César García of MWC wash each other's feet while leaders Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing of WCRC and John D. Roth of MWC read a litany of confession.

Opening prayer

Prayer of invocation

Let us join our hearts in prayer.

Compassionate God, in a world divided by nationalism, religious conflict, xenophobia and war, you have brought us together today as people of many nations, languages and church bodies.

Your grace, O God, makes this gathering in love possible. Thank you for the overwhelming hospitality shown to Anabaptists by the city of Zurich and the Reformed churches of Switzerland. Bless such a generous expression of kindness!

Thank you for the witness of all here today who know and express your reconciling love. Even as the global church is sometimes divided, you summon us to live as sisters and brothers in Christ. Give us courage to love each other and the “other” – whoever that may be.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us today so that your healing and love can flow through us to the world. Make us – and churches we represent – “one new humanity” united in love, “so that the world may know” that our hope is in Christ – in whose name we pray.

Amen.



Memonite World Conference

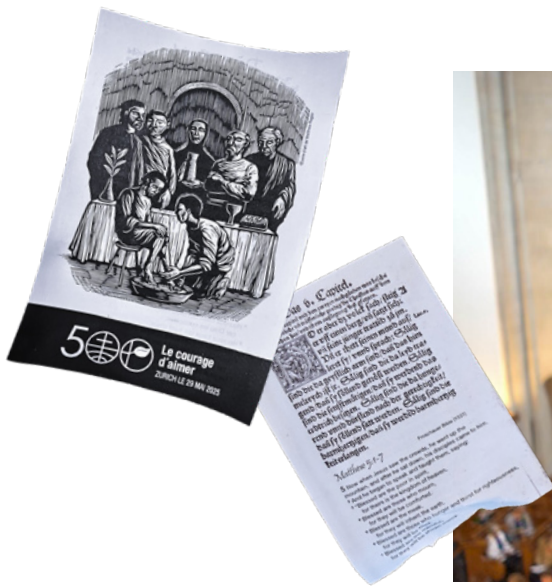
Sunoko Lin, MWC treasurer, leads the opening prayer in the Grossmünster at the closing service of the anniversary day in Zurich, Switzerland.

Give us courage to love each other and the “other” – whoever that may be.



Dale Gehman

Some 1 200 worshippers from around the world filled the Grossmünster for the closing service with thousands more watching online.



Irma Sulistyorini

Aman Ganjboir, YABs delegate from India, prepares to drop leaflets from the mezzanine for the “disruption” in the worship service.

Woodcut artwork by Matthew Regier.

Disruption

People of God

A Church Disruption by Some People of God

Liturgist: People of God, we gather together in this historic city of Zurich, home of a 16th-century renewal movement led by Ulrich Zwingli, and the birthplace of that movement that we know today as Anabaptism.

[Hundreds of small paper flyers with messages on them flutter down from the balcony onto the people sitting in the pews and on the podium. Three demonstrators in period costume stand up and exclaim.]

First demonstrator: What kind of church is this?! Who really belongs in the body of Christ? Scripture calls the followers of Jesus to separate themselves from those who do not live a pure life!

Second demonstrator: Exclude those who do not baptize only upon confession of faith!

Third demonstrator: Exclude those in authority who do not let our congregations live quietly and in peace!

Liturgist: You are disturbing a worship service! Who are you? Why are you doing this?

First demonstrator: We are your Anabaptist forebears. Christ is our authority. Even he disturbed the peace!

Liturgist: Tell us more. We want to respect our traditions.

Second demonstrator: We have studied the Scriptures. God has given us a vision!

First demonstrator: Listen to us!

Third demonstrator: The kingdom of God is at hand!

First demonstrator: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness!

Third demonstrator: To the rich we say, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also!”

Second demonstrator: To the powerful we say, “War is contrary to the will of God.” We will obey God rather than human authority!

Third demonstrator: Christ sides with those who have no helper – with refugees, victims of violence, those imprisoned for their faith and identity.

Liturgist: Wait... please! Listen to the Word of the Lord as spoken by the Apostle Paul:

Don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.... God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you. We have many parts in one body, but the parts don’t all have the same function.... Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honour to each other.



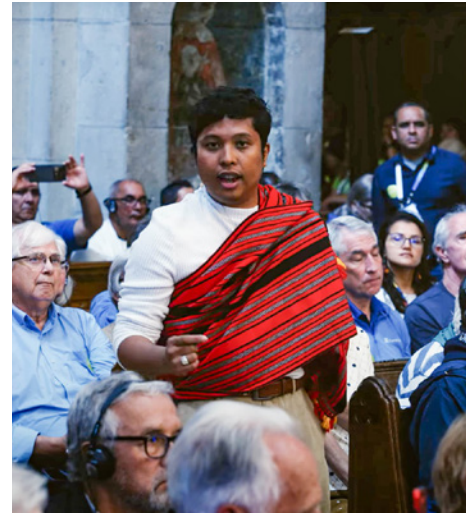
Mennonite World Conference

James Jakob Fehr (Germany) in period costume as the first demonstrator.



Mennonite World Conference

Ulrike Schmutz (Switzerland) as the second demonstrator.



Mennonite World Conference

Ebenezer Mondez (Philippines) with regional dress as the third demonstrator.

Confession and Lament

Liturgist: The congregation has been listening. Thank you for this reminder from our past.

We share your hope and we share your grievances. All who are assembled here today wish to be more like Jesus. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Let us pray for the grace to confess our sins and go out to live holy lives.

First demonstrator: Thank you for hearing us.

Liturgist: The waters of baptism have divided us.

[pouring water]

But those who drink from the healing water of Jesus, will never be thirsty again. Cleanse us Holy Spirit, refresh us with the water of eternal life.

We do not believe that Jesus died in vain. We do not believe that those who suffered for their faith through the ages did so in vain.

Second demonstrator: Yes! We needed to hear this from you. The words we speak must motivate us to action. That is why we have returned for this commemoration.

Liturgist: Let us pray. Almighty God, we come before you not because of our righteousness but because of your great mercy.

First demonstrator: Forgive us for the arrogance of thinking that we could be perfect and without sin.

Second demonstrator: Whether we live in communities set apart from the world or in the midst of the world, forgive us for being blind to the needs of our neighbours.

Third demonstrator: Forgive us for those times when we have failed to “do justice and love mercy.”

First demonstrator: Forgive us for our silence ... for failing to give “the reason for the hope that is in us.”

Second demonstrator: Forgive us when we have refused to work with people different from us, even when the need was great.

Third demonstrator: Forgive us when we have looked down on other churches and missed opportunities to learn from and partner with them.

Thank you for those communities of faith who have opened their hearts to us and who walk together with us in the path of Jesus.

Liturgist: Receive our petitions, O Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Together let us join in the prayer that Christ prayed, each in our own language.

“Our Father...”

Assurance of Forgiveness

Liturgist: Christ himself said, “Your sins are forgiven. Go and sin no more.” We are forgiven, loved, and free. Amen.

MWC vice president Lisa Carr-Pries (Canada) and former MWC president Danisa Ndlovu (Zimbabwe) led this liturgy. Ebenezer Mondez (Philippines), James Jakob Fehr and Ulrike Schmutz played the roles of the disruptors.

Sermon

The Courage to Love

She was a young, enslaved girl. We don't know her name, but we do know that she was a prisoner of war. We can only imagine the vulnerability, loss and trauma she must have endured as a displaced person – an enslaved refugee in a foreign land.

The story is told in 2 Kings 5. Naaman, a commander in the Aramean army, has just won a significant military victory over the people of Israel. As part of the spoils of war, he has seized a young girl, forcing her to serve as a servant to his wife.

But now Naaman, the one who enslaved her, is ill. And the young girl knows exactly what is needed to cure him.

This is a moment of truth – living among the people who shattered her dreams, severed her relationships, destroyed her family and took away her possessions, freedom and cultural identity, she faces a profound choice.

How will she respond to those who have threatened her well-being?

Throughout the day, participants gathered at the “Schipfe” to view the site where early Anabaptists were drowned as punishment for their beliefs.

Some 500 years ago, Ulrich Zwingli was faced with the same question: How should he respond to those threatening his and his city's well-being? The circumstances were very different. He was the leader of the Reformation in Zurich and pastor in this very church.

In the spring of 1529, Catholic authorities were threatening to crush the Reformation in Zurich. Worried that his reforms were about to collapse – that the advances of the gospel would be stopped – a frustrated Zwingli wrote an urgent appeal to the City Council, urging them to mobilize an army.

In a letter to the Council, Zwingli included a phrase that would later become a slogan of the Swiss Reformation. “For God's sake,” wrote Zwingli, “do something courageous!”

For Zwingli, the focus was clear: courage, in the face of the enemies of the gospel, meant mobilizing for war.

What does courage look like when we face difficult choices? That question is as relevant today as it was 500 years ago or in the 9th century before Christ.

By all accounts, Naaman's servant girl should have remained silent. After all, she was young; she was a woman; she was an Israelite; and she was enslaved. She had no right to speak.

Moreover, Naaman was a Gentile and an oppressor – reasons enough to be hated by the Israelites. And his skin disease made him even more impure from the perspective of Jewish law.

Nothing gave her the authority to speak, and yet she did. She found the courage to act in a way that transcended her identity as a victim... she found the courage to respond with compassion and even love.



Preshit Rao

Following the “disruption,” César García, MWC general secretary, preaches on The Courage to Love.

She had the courage to love, offering her perpetrator what he could not obtain through his power: healing, freedom and the possibility of a new beginning.

Courage is precisely what victims need to find their voice and resist the silence that others want to impose upon them.

Yet courage – especially in response to our abusers, perpetrators, or enemies – comes in many forms.

For Zwingli, courage in the face of the gospel's enemies meant mobilizing for war.

For some Christians, courage often includes the expectation of punitive justice, demanding that perpetrators pay for their actions and suffer fair retribution for their violent crimes.

For many political leaders, courage includes righteous retaliation against enemies.

Some people demand justice in ways that close the door to the possibility of forgiveness and transformation for the oppressor, ensuring that the cycles of violence will only continue into the next generation.

Jesus, however, offered a different model. He did not deny or ignore the terrible violence, oppression and injustice of his day. But neither did he seek retribution or revenge. In Luke 4, immediately after announcing his ministry in the synagogue by reading from Isaiah 61, Jesus mentions the story of Naaman and his miraculous healing.

Though he doesn't name the young girl, we recognize in her actions something that goes to the very heart of the gospel. Jesus was never afraid to confront injustice; however, the justice he preached opens the door for the transformation of the oppressor. In the Gospels, justice is not retributive; it does not give the oppressors what they deserve, but rather what they need: truth, love, compassion, the possibility of transformation and forgiveness.

In the story from 2 Kings, the young girl refuses to see the vulnerability of her oppressor as an opportunity for vengeance or retribution. Instead, her voice embodies hope and inclusivity for someone who has caused her incredible harm.

She had the courage to love, offering her perpetrator what he could not obtain through his power: healing, freedom and the possibility of a new beginning. She gave Naaman not what he deserved but what he needed: the chance to be transformed.

That is love beyond human comprehension.

Five hundred years ago, a new movement in the church in Zurich and throughout other regions of Europe found courage in their relationship with Jesus, in his life and teachings, his death and resurrection, affirming that God's call to loving your enemy is not “idealistic” or “naïve.” For them, the courage to love, made possible

by the work of the Holy Spirit, was the only path to a new humanity. This movement came to be known as Anabaptism.

That is the Christian tradition we are commemorating here today. Unfortunately, Zwingli and other European church leaders of that era perceived the Anabaptist movement as a threat and responded with violence and persecution.

For God's sake, do something courageous!

Early in the morning of 11 October 1531, Zwingli led a group of Zurich soldiers to a battlefield just outside the city to face the Catholic army threatening his vision of a reformed Zurich. Almost immediately, they were overwhelmed. As they attempted to retreat, Zwingli was killed, along with at least 500 other citizens of Zurich.

Today, as we commemorate the memory of the early Anabaptists, I invite us to ask ourselves – both as individuals and as churches: what does it mean to “do something courageous, for God's sake”?

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, can we find the courage to break cycles of violence?

Can we directly confront our past, not to affirm and revisit our victimization, but as a way to heal our wounds and those of others, and to mend fractured relationships?

Can we become beacons of hope in a world where fragmentation and division seem to be advancing on every side?

Can we envision our future pointing toward a new creation, where compassion and love open the door to new beginnings?

The courage to love – actively, imaginatively and vulnerably – is more than a technique for conflict resolution; it is a deeply embedded spirituality, a remarkably original strategy. In a world where evil begets evil and violence generates more violence, love has the power to break those chains. Love has the potential to heal both the one who loves and the one who is loved.

Christian friends – following in the footsteps of Jesus, let us together have the courage to love, for God's sake!

César García is general secretary of Mennonite World Conference. Originally from Colombia, he lives in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.



Mennonite World Conference

Anne-Cathy Graber, secretary for ecumenical relations.



Mennonite World Conference

Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing, executive secretary for communion and theology, World Communion of Reformed Churches.



Mennonite World Conference

Cardinal Kurt Koch, Prefect, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, brings greetings from Pope Leo XIV.

Reconciliation liturgy

Our journey to reconciliation

Leaders from the respective communions spoke these words. As Lutheran and Mennonite representatives spoke, they traced a cross on each other's forehead. As the Reformed and Mennonite representatives spoke, the general secretaries washed each other's feet.

Representatives from Mennonite World Conference

- Anne-Cathy Graber, secretary for ecumenical relations
- J. Nelson Kraybill, former president
- Janet Plenert, former vice-president, current coordinator of regional representatives
- John Roth, chair, Renewal planning committee
- Larry Miller, general secretary emeritus

Representative from the Catholic church

- Cardinal Kurt Koch, Prefect, Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity

Representative from the Lutheran World Federation

- Rev. Dr. Anne Burghardt, general secretary

Representatives from the World Communion of Reformed Churches

- Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing, executive secretary for communion and theology
- Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, interim general secretary

Mennonite

In our worship today, Mennonite World Conference along with representatives from other Anabaptist and Free Church traditions, gather alongside representatives of the Roman Catholic church, the Lutheran World Federation,

and the World Communion of Reformed Churches to make a common witness.

We all inherit a legacy of pain from Reformation divisions. We know that differences of theology and practice remain, but we rejoice in the journey of reconciliation that we have shared together.

In 2003, Catholics and Mennonites concluded a five-year dialogue titled "Called Together to Be Peacemakers" which took as its starting point a shared recognition that "allegiance to Christ as Lord takes precedence over the demands of the state."

More recently, Catholic and Lutheran participation in the Trilateral Dialogue on Baptism has helped to clarify points of convergence as well as ongoing differences around our understanding and practice of baptism. We regard these dialogues as a gift to the church.

"...We rejoice in the journey of reconciliation that we have shared together..."

—Mennonite

Catholic

Message of the Holy Father Leo XIV to the participants in the commemoration of 500 years of the Anabaptist movement

We rejoice that we have been able to As you gather to commemorate 500 years of the Anabaptist movement, I cordially greet all of you, dear friends, in the first words spoken by the risen Jesus: "Peace be with you!" (John 20:19).

In the joy of our celebration of Easter, how can we fail to reflect on Christ's



Dale Gehman

Larry Miller, general secretary emeritus, MWC, traces a cross on the forehead of Rev. Dr. Anne Burghardt, general secretary, Lutheran World Federation.

appearance on the evening of that “first day of the week” (ibid.), when Jesus not only entered through walls and closed doors, but through the fearful hearts of his disciples. Moreover, in imparting his great gift of peace, Christ was sensitive to the experience of the disciples, his friends, and did not hide the marks of his Passion still visible in his glorious body.

By receiving the Lord’s peace, and accepting his call, which includes being open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, all the followers of Jesus can immerse themselves in the radical newness of Christian faith and life. Indeed, such a desire for renewal characterizes the Anabaptist movement itself.

The motto chosen for your celebration, “The Courage to Love”, reminds us, above all, of the need for Catholics and Mennonites to make every effort to live out the commandment of love, the call to Christian unity, and the mandate to serve others. It likewise points to the need for honesty and kindness in reflecting on our common history, which includes painful wounds and narratives that affect Catholic-Mennonite relationships and perceptions up to the present day. How important, then, is that purification of memories and common re-reading of history that can enable us to heal past wounds and build a new future through the “courage to love”. What is more, only in such a way

can theological and pastoral dialogue bear fruit, fruit that will last (cf. John 15:16).

This is certainly no easy task! Yet, it was precisely at particular moments of trial that Christ revealed the Father’s will: it was when challenged by the Pharisees that he taught us that the two greatest commandments are to love God and our neighbour (cf. Matthew 22:34-40).

It was on the eve of his Passion that he spoke of the need for unity, “that all may be one... so that the world may believe” (John 17:21). My wish for each of us, then, is that we can say with Saint Augustine:

“My entire hope is exclusively in your very great mercy. Grant what you command, and command what you will” (Confessions, X: 29, 40).

Finally, in the context of our war-torn world, our ongoing journey of healing, and of deepening fraternity, has a vital role to play, for the more united Christians are the more effective will be our witness to Christ the Prince of Peace in building up a civilization of loving encounter.

With these sentiments, I assure you of my prayers that our fraternal relations will deepen and grow. Upon all of you, I invoke the joy and serenity that come from the risen Lord.

From the Vatican 23 May 2025

Leo PP. XIV



View message of the Holy Father Leo XIV here

“...Our ongoing journey of healing, and of deepening fraternity, has a vital role to play...”

—Catholic

Mennonite

In 2010, the Lutheran World Assembly, convening in Stuttgart, Germany, formally affirmed a “Mennonite Action,” based on the report of a five-year dialogue titled “Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ.” A service of reconciliation included mutual expressions of forgiveness and a commitment to interpret Lutheran Confessions and Mennonite narratives of their past in light of the common history described in that report. That process marked a key moment in relations between our two communions and has laid the foundation for further learnings from each other on themes of baptism and the Christian relation to the state.



Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, interim general secretary of World Communion of Reformed Churches, washes the feet of César García, general secretary, MWC.

At the service of reconciliation in 2010, all of those present shared the sign of the cross as a way of making present to us the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The cross touches the wounds of sin, heals our brokenness and restores our lives. It promises healing through God's grace and points to the gift of a new heart and a new spirit.

Today, the Mennonite World Conference and Lutheran World Federation remember and renew our commitment with the sign of the cross.

Lutheran

In the "Healing Memories" dialogue we committed ourselves to listening carefully to each other's story and recounting the history of our shared beginnings in a way that both sides could affirm. The Lutheran conviction that God's initiative makes our response in faith possible was warmly received by the Mennonites. The Lutheran appeal for forgiveness for having persecuted Anabaptists was freely granted. A shared and honest analysis of baptism helped to open the door to a fruitful Trilateral Dialogue on Baptism with Mennonite World Conference and the Catholic church.

We thank God that more and more Lutherans and Mennonites appreciate each other's witness to the gospel.

"...We thank God that more and more Lutherans and Mennonites appreciate each other's witness to the gospel..."

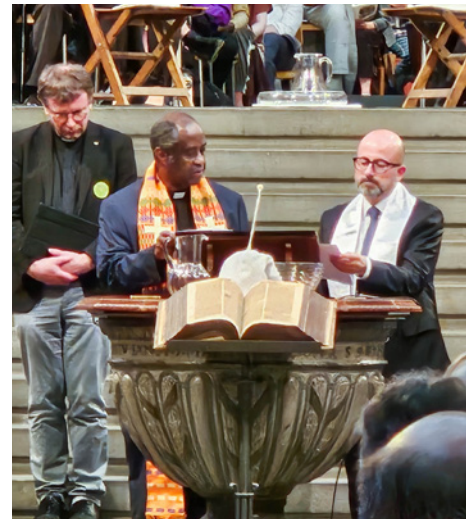
—Lutheran

Mennonite

Today in Zurich we celebrate the steps toward reconciliation that we have taken with representatives of the Reformed tradition.

In 2004, the city of Zurich and the Swiss Reformed church helped to erect a memorial plaque on the bank of the Limmat River acknowledging the execution of Felix Manz and six other Anabaptists in Zurich.

Three years later, the Swiss Mennonite Conference and the Reformed Church of the Canton of Zurich concluded a significant dialogue committing themselves to an ongoing journey of reconciliation. In that document, Mennonites affirmed that "We do not belong to ourselves. We belong to Jesus Christ, who calls us to follow him and has torn down the wall of enmity and united people near and far in one body."



Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi (WCRC) and César García (MWC).

Last week the Mennonite World Conference General Council formally received a statement drafted with representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches titled "Restoring Our Family to Wholeness: Seeking a Common Witness."

As we hear a litany of confession, gratitude, and commitment drawn from this statement, Mennonite World Conference general secretary César García and World Communion of Reformed Churches interim general secretary Setri Nyomi will wash each other's feet as a tangible expression of our commitment to reconciliation. We invite all of you to bear witness to this sign of repentance and forgiveness.

Reformed

We have confessed the common origin of our churches and the pain of its fracturing. We ask God to bless the rediscovery of shared understandings of the gospel so that they might inspire evangelism and peacemaking.

Mennonite

In the presence of representatives of the whole church, the Mennonite World Conference and the World Communion of Reformed Churches make a common witness to the unity of the church.

Mennonite World Conference

Eduard Klassen



Irma Sulistyorini

Church leaders representing MWC, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, Lutheran World Federation and the World Communion of Reformed Churches, read a reconciliation liturgy.

Reformed

Today, we commemorate the common origins of our global communions, acknowledge our fractured relationship, and rejoice that, building on efforts over many years toward mutual understanding and reconciliation, we can respond to Christ our peace by living into the unity of the Spirit. Bound together, we pledge to be humble, patient, truthful and, above all, loving, as we walk together as one body of Christ.

“...We ask God to bless the rediscovery of shared understandings of the gospel...”

—*Reformed*

Mennonite

Gathered under God’s loving gaze, we celebrate that our identity is found in our common confession of Jesus as Lord, our shared ancestors in the faith, and our common call to discipleship and gospel witness in a fragmented world.

Reformed

Our traditions have blessed us with a passion for justice and peace. May the God of the cross and the resurrection give us the heart and the mind to pursue peace and to practice the justice that resists violence, oppression, and ecological devastation, a justice that finds its fullest expression in forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation.

Mennonite

Today, as Anabaptist and Reformed members of Christ’s body, we affirm that our witness to the world is nourished and sustained by God’s grace, which enables us to love God, each other, and all creation.

Reformed

We commit ourselves to the sacred mission of proclaiming the gospel of love in all our contexts, each with their own challenges and demands. We will not let fear, mistrust, or obstacles to dialogue keep us from this calling.

Mennonite

We promise to journey together to heal the wounds of the past and to re-member the body of Christ. We pledge to learn from each other by sharing the richness and diversity of our traditions. We bind

ourselves to purposeful cooperation that affirms God’s mercy and opens doors to the justice that leads to peace.

Reformed

Together, we pray for the body of Christ. In Christ, we are members of one another, brothers and sisters of the same flesh and the same Spirit.

Mennonite

Together, we embrace the gift of unity in the belief that you, O God, are restoring your family to wholeness. Amen.

Confessing our Faith Together

In recognition of our shared identity within the body of Christ, the participants stood together and recited – each in their own language – the Nicene Creed. This ancient statement of Christian faith arising from the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea marks its 1700th anniversary this year.

A litany for the healing of the nations

The litany was punctuated with water pouring from a basin as a reminder of baptism and brief organ music.

Today we have gathered for worship in the city where the first Anabaptists were inspired by the teachings of Ulrich Zwingli ... and by the waters of the Limmat River where Felix Manz, the first Anabaptist martyr, was executed.

[Water pours]

God of love, we remember Felix Manz and followers of the Lamb in all times and places who have suffered faithful discipleship.

A loud voice cries from the throne of God, "I am making all things new... To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." (Revelation 21:5, 6)

[Water pours]

Loving God, with a world torn by war and a global church too often divided, how we thirst for you to make all things new! Come, Lord Jesus!

[organ interlude]

"[An] angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit,

producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." (Revelation 22:1-2)

"In painful awareness that our differences became a source of conflict and division, we now pray for the courage and the creativity to reshape them in ways that enrich our unity in the body of Christ."

[Water pours]

For the healing of the nations! For the healing of the church! "In Christ we are members of one another, brothers and sisters of the same flesh and the same Spirit..."

Healing God, the river of the water of life has reached us. Leaves of the tree of life have brought healing between church communions represented here today.

[organ interlude]

"It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'

And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.'

And let everyone who is thirsty come.

Let anyone who wishes, take the water of life as a gift." (Revelation 22:16-17)

The courage to love in a troubled world

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come:

Through the Holy Spirit's work within us we have renewed hope as we see signs of healing and unity in the global church.

We have hope as we see vitality in churches represented here today that are geographically distant from denominational roots in Europe.

We have hope as we see evangelism and peacemaking working together at many places around the world.

Most of all, we have hope because in Christ you have promised that you will go with us "always, to the end of the age."

Come, Holy Spirit, inspire us with the faithfulness of saints through the ages. Like them, let us never be ashamed of the gospel. Lord Jesus Christ, bless us with courage to risk loving each other, our neighbours, and even our enemies as you have loved us.

Amen.

International choirs

Among the many highlights of the commemoration day in Zurich was singing. Worship choirs had the privilege of playing a central role in bringing together voices from diverse backgrounds to celebrate faith, reconciliation and unity.

The participating choirs included

- Eastleigh Fellowship Centre (EFC) Mennonite Church Choir – Nairobi, Kenya
- Ágape Band – Asunción, Paraguay
- Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) Chamber Singers – Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA
- Songs of Peace – Liestal, Switzerland
- TIARA (The Indonesian Anabaptist peRforming Art) TIARA – GKMI Anugerah Church, Jakarta, Indonesia

Among these choirs, the Eastleigh Fellowship Centre (EFC) Mennonite Church Choir stood out to me as particularly fascinating.

EFC Choir

The EFC Choir, representing a Mennonite church in Nairobi, was one of five musical ensembles selected to showcase Anabaptist music from around the world at the 500th-anniversary event in Zurich. They eagerly embraced the opportunity to share the love of Christ through a rich fusion of African musical traditions and gospel harmonies.

The choir performed twice – an indoor concert at the Predigerkirche and an outdoor performance at Zwingli Platz, in front of the Grossmünster church, without amplification. They also participated in the final worship service, which was livestreamed globally.

The choir describes its musical style as afrofusion. “Our music brings together influences from different countries across Africa,” says choir member George Ochieng.

Furthermore, the choir itself reflects Kenya’s cultural diversity, as its members hail from various ethnic backgrounds.



EFC Choir performs “*Anawuok adhi e dala wa ka Nyasaye*” (“I am already on my way to our heavenly home”) with soloist Sheila Omondi in the Predigerkirche, Zurich, Switzerland.

A ministry of music

For the EFC Choir, music is more than just performance – it is ministry. Their deep commitment to Christian faith drives them to share Christ’s message through song. Music, for them, is a way to strengthen faith, uplift spirits and offer encouragement to others.

The choir believes that their voices serve as instruments of healing and unity, capable of breaking cultural barriers and touching lives across different backgrounds. Their performances embody themes of hope, perseverance and divine grace, reminding listeners of God’s enduring presence.

Favourite song

The EFC Choir actively composes and arranges music that reflects their faith journey and cultural heritage. Their style blends traditional African rhythms with gospel themes, creating a unique and spiritually enriching worship experience.

While some of their songs come from hymn books, others originate from unknown composers or are written by choir members themselves.

One of their most cherished songs is “*Yesu Vamuvamba*,” which translates to



EFC Choir with soloist Naaman Ochieng performs “*Anawuok adhi e dala wa ka Nyasaye*” on the outdoor stage in front of the Grossmünster in Zurich, Switzerland.

“Jesus Was Crucified” in Tiriki, a language spoken by the Tiriki people from western Kenya. The song reflects on Christ’s crucifixion and the liberty it brought to humanity, resonating deeply with themes of sacrifice, redemption and forgiveness.

Often performed during Easter services and revival meetings, this song carries an uplifting melody and profound lyrics that inspire worship and reflection. Choir members share that the song strengthens their personal faith and serves as a reminder of God’s sacrifice and the power of redemption.

A divine calling

The EFC Choir views worship through music as a way to strengthen faith, encourage spiritual growth and foster community unity. Their performances extend beyond their home church, as they frequently travel across Kenya, singing at church services, revival meetings, conferences and music festivals.

While the choir members are deeply dedicated to their music ministry, it remains a part-time commitment. Many of them pursue careers in education, business, healthcare and other fields to sustain themselves, as the choir lacks the financial resources to support full-time musicians.

Despite these challenges, choir members devote significant time to rehearsals, church services, and special events, viewing their musical gifts as a divine calling rather than just a hobby.

Additionally, the choir actively mentors young musicians and encourages youth involvement in worship, helping cultivate the next generation of Christian artists and leaders.

The Anabaptist 500th anniversary

Being invited to perform at this historic 500th-anniversary celebration is both an honour and a spiritual milestone for the EFC Choir. Their presence in Zurich allows them to share their music on a global stage, connecting with Anabaptist communities worldwide.

This celebration is a powerful testament to the endurance of faith, emphasizing how Anabaptism has thrived through centuries of persecution, change and growth. By participating, the choir sees themselves contributing to history, showcasing their African Mennonite musical heritage in an international Christian setting.

The choir regards this anniversary as a reminder of unity, perseverance and spiritual revival. They hope that the event will strengthen bonds among Anabaptist congregations, providing opportunities for learning, reconciliation and renewal.

Representing Kenyan Anabaptists at this milestone celebration was a privilege. Members of the EFC Choir hope that their music uplifted and inspired attendees, reminding them that faith transcends borders and that music is a universal language of worship.

Electrifying music

Experiencing these choirs firsthand was truly electrifying. There was something profoundly moving in hearing voices from different corners of the world blend together in harmony, each carrying its own culture, history and faith.

Each choir brought something completely unique to the celebration – whether it was afrofusion rhythms, Latin gospel, or acappella sacred music. Witnessing this diverse musical expression of faith deepened my understanding of how worship through song unites believers across traditions and nations.

—Melvin Banda is a member of Mennonite Brethren Church in Malawi. He served as the YABs delegate for his church in the meetings in 2025.



Scan here to watch the EFC choir online



Eastleigh Fellowship Centre Mennonite Church Choir – Nairobi, Kenya



Ágape Band – Asunción, Paraguay



Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) Chamber Singers – Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA



Songs of Peace – Liestal, Switzerland



TIARA (The Indonesian Anabaptist peRforming Art) – GKMI Anugerah Church, Jakarta, Indonesia

Stephani eSetiawan

Mennonite World Conference

Mennonite World Conference

Mennonite World Conference



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

Mennonite World Conference

Annual report: 2024

Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

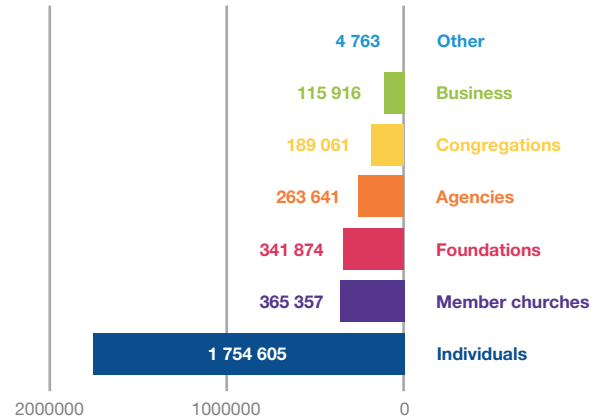
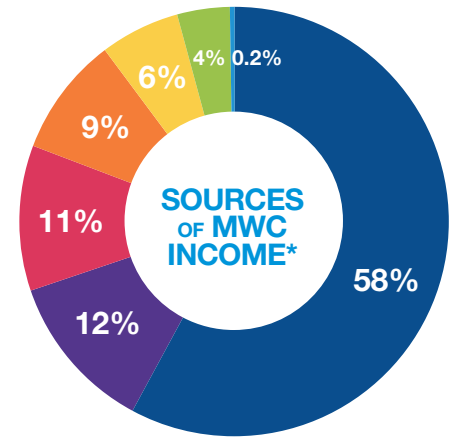
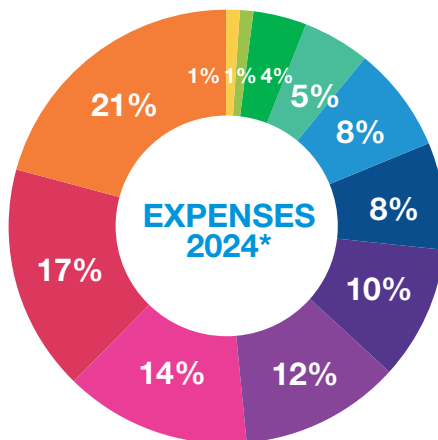
Thank you! ¡Gracias! Merci !

Your involvement with MWC fuels the 500-year commemoration of the Anabaptist movement – a legacy of radical faith, unwavering peace and unstoppable unity. As a global family, we are each a piece of the same mosaic, reflecting the beauty of God's design.

Through your generosity, brothers and sisters worldwide are following Jesus, living his call to unity and building peace in a fractured world. God's Spirit is working through each of us to tear down barriers, ignite hope and embody justice and reconciliation.

Your partnership with MWC sparks a transformative movement that continues to change lives and empower future generations to share Christ's message of peace, love and unity worldwide.

- Interchurch relations
- Global Anabaptist networks
- Commissions
- Governance
- Global gatherings
- Global Church Sharing Fund (GCSF)
- Regional representatives
- General secretariat
- Communications
- Development
- Administration & operations



TOTAL REVENUES **3 035 217**

*All amounts in US\$

Transformation

Valentina Kunze from Uruguay says one word comes to mind regarding her experience with MWC: transformation.

"Being part of this global community has broadened my perspective," she says. "It's a privilege to connect with something bigger than myself: bigger than my home, church or country."

This experience deepened her faith, introducing her to believers worldwide who worship the same God in diverse ways. "I've met people with completely different lives, yet we believe in the same God. That's powerful."

Valentina now sees the church as a global body. She is passionate about helping others experience a broader, hope-filled view of following Jesus.

Join us

Your gift can transform lives. Make an impact today! In a divided world, your support helps build a global church rooted in God's peace and reconciliation.

Invest in MWC's mission:

- Empower leaders to grow and serve like Jesus.
- Strengthen congregations to live out unity.
- Foster global communion that builds peace across cultures.

Help lay the foundation for a future filled with love, unity and hope.

Give - Serve - Walk Together Always.

Help the worldwide Anabaptist family thrive by making a gift to MWC today!

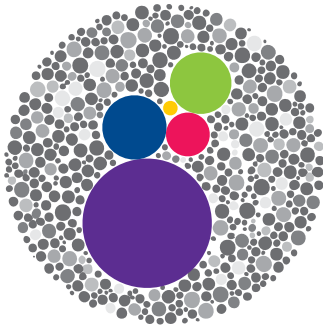
Scan the QR code, donate now at mwc-cmm.org/donate, or send your contribution to

Mennonite World Conference
50 Kent Ave, Suite 206
Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1
CANADA

Mennonite World Conference
P.O. Box 5364
Lancaster, PA 17606-5364
USA

Valentina Kunze, chair of the Young AnaBaptists (YABs) Committee.
Photo: Preshit Rao





Africa
918 262 (62%)

North America
226 775 (16%)

Asia and Pacific
207 366 (14%)

Latin America and the Caribbean
105 375 (7%)

Europe
15 165 (1%)

Baptized members of Mennonite World Conference member churches

TOTAL MEMBERS: **1 472 943**



Henk Stenvers

Rev. Siaka Traoré, (MWC regional representative Central West Africa); Rev George Kaputu Nzila, CEFMC; Rev. Jean Felix Cimbanga, CEM (Communauté Evangelique Mennonite); Robert Irundu Mutundu, CMC (Communauté Mennonite au Congo); Henk Stenvers, MWC president; Rev. Daniel Nelson Canganguela, IAIMA (Mennonite Brethren in Angola); Shadreck Kwendanyama, Mennonite Brethren church in Malawi.

Sharing each other's burdens and joys

"Their commitment to passing down the message of peace and gospel inspires me to live a sacrificial life for peace."

This was the reflection of a pastor from MWC member church Bible Missionary Church, Mennonite, from Myanmar at the end of an MWC solidarity visit. Nearly 20 leaders convened in neighbouring Thailand. The pastor was reflecting on learning sessions on the Anabaptist movement and what it means to be a church dedicated to the ways of Jesus Christ's peace.

MWC's outreach in word and deed across the worldwide Anabaptist family of faith is a crucial way for all of God's children to share each other's burdens and joys.



Agus Mayanto

Andrew Suderman (Peace Commission), Andres Pacheco Lozano (Peace Commission), Agus Mayanto (regional representative), César García (general secretary), Tigist Tesfaye (Deacons Commission)



Renewal 2024

"Transformation in the Bible is always communal, not individual," said César García at [Renewal 2024*](#) in Curitiba, Brazil. "It requires dialogue in the community, where diversity of position enables us to correct mistakes of the past to deepen our relationship with God in the years to come."

Our global mosaic was on full display as the Executive Committee met with local Anabaptists from three MWC member churches in Curitiba, Brazil, 6 April 2024.

"The Renewal 2024 evening showed us different realities of being followers of Jesus: the suffering, the joy, the growth and opened our eyes that God's work knows no barriers. We are God's work in progress," said Paul Dück, representative of MWC member church COBIM (Convenção Brasileira das Igrejas Evangélicas Irmãos Menonitas).

Siaka Traoré



Reaching beyond themselves

The Democratic Republic of Congo is home to nearly 200 000 Anabaptists who find their homes in four MWC national member churches.

In 2024, the Mennonite Brethren church (Communauté des Églises des Freres Mennonites au Congo) celebrated their centennial. Henk Stenvers (president) and Siaka Traoré (regional representative for Central/West Africa) represented MWC at the week-long festivities in August.

Reaching out beyond themselves, these brothers and sisters bless those who have been impacted by violence. For years, Congolese MBs have been hosting internally displaced people from conflicts in the Kasai region. Late in 2024, active fighting erupted again in eastern DRC where the CEFMC has congregations.

MWC supports CEFMC through calling the global family to prayer. As Anabaptist member churches and related agencies each respond according to their capacities and constituencies, MWC makes an impact by convening and coordinating the work to prevent duplication or omission.



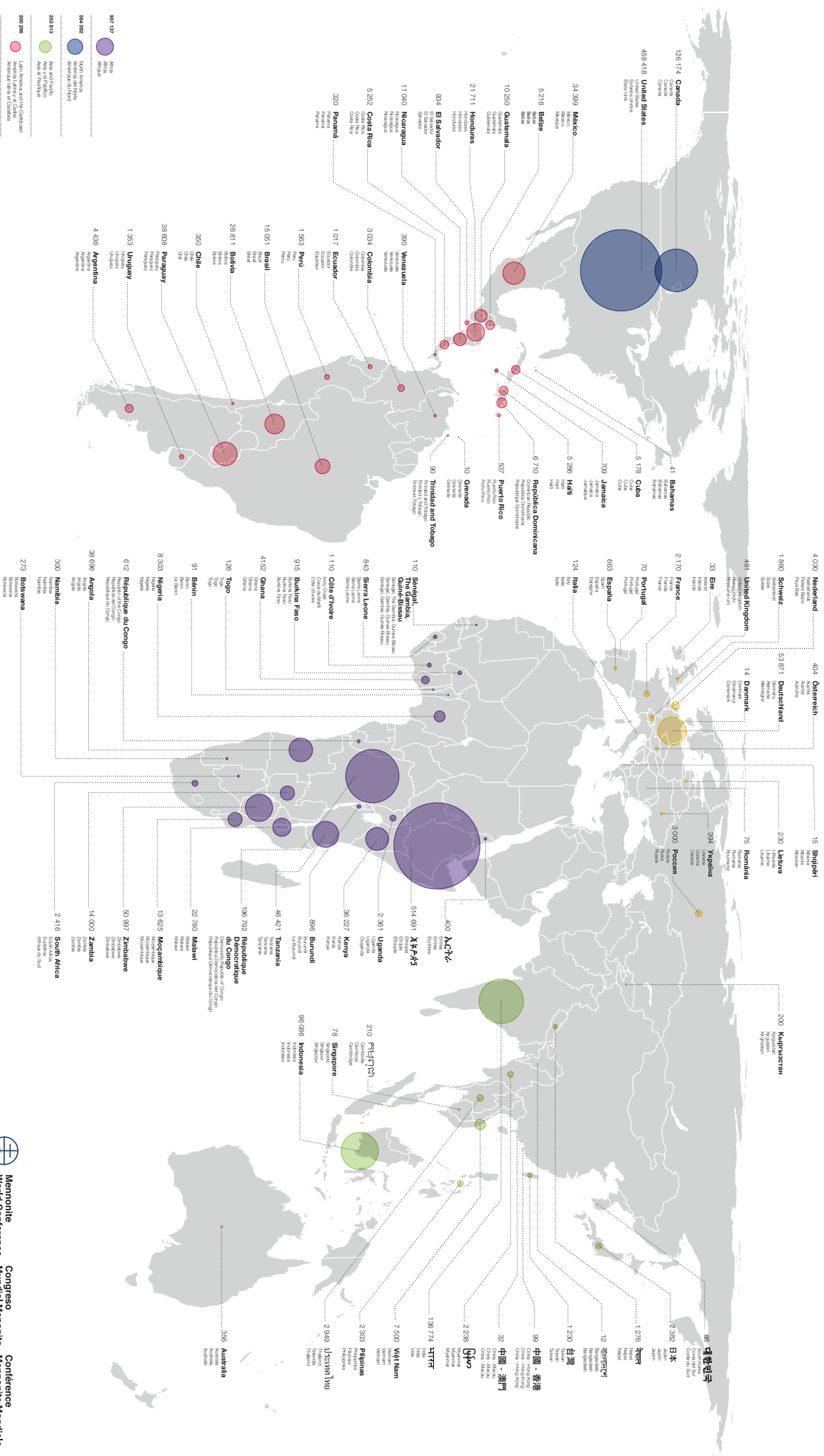
The courage to love
ZURICH 29 MAY 2025

The Courage to Love in a world on fire

We commemorate 500 years of Anabaptism in 2025 with a special event 29 May in Zurich. We pray that the boldness of our spiritual ancestors may inspire the courage we need to live as Jesus followers today.

Anabaptist churches: Mennonites, Brethren in Christ, Church of the Brethren, Amish, Hutterites, Bruderhof and others
 Iglesia anabatistas: Mennonitas, Hermanos en Cristo, Iglesia de los Hermanos*, Hutterita, *Bruderhof* y otras
 Eglises anabaptistes : Mennonites, Freres en Christ, Eglise des freres*, Amish, Hutterites, Bruderhof et autres

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Églises anabaptistes: Mennonites, Frères en Christ, Église des frères*, Amish, Hutterites, Bruderhof et autres



**Mennonite
World Conference**
A Community of Anabaptists

**Congreso
Mundial Mennonita**
Una Comunidad de

**Conférence
Mennonite Mondiale**
Une Communauté

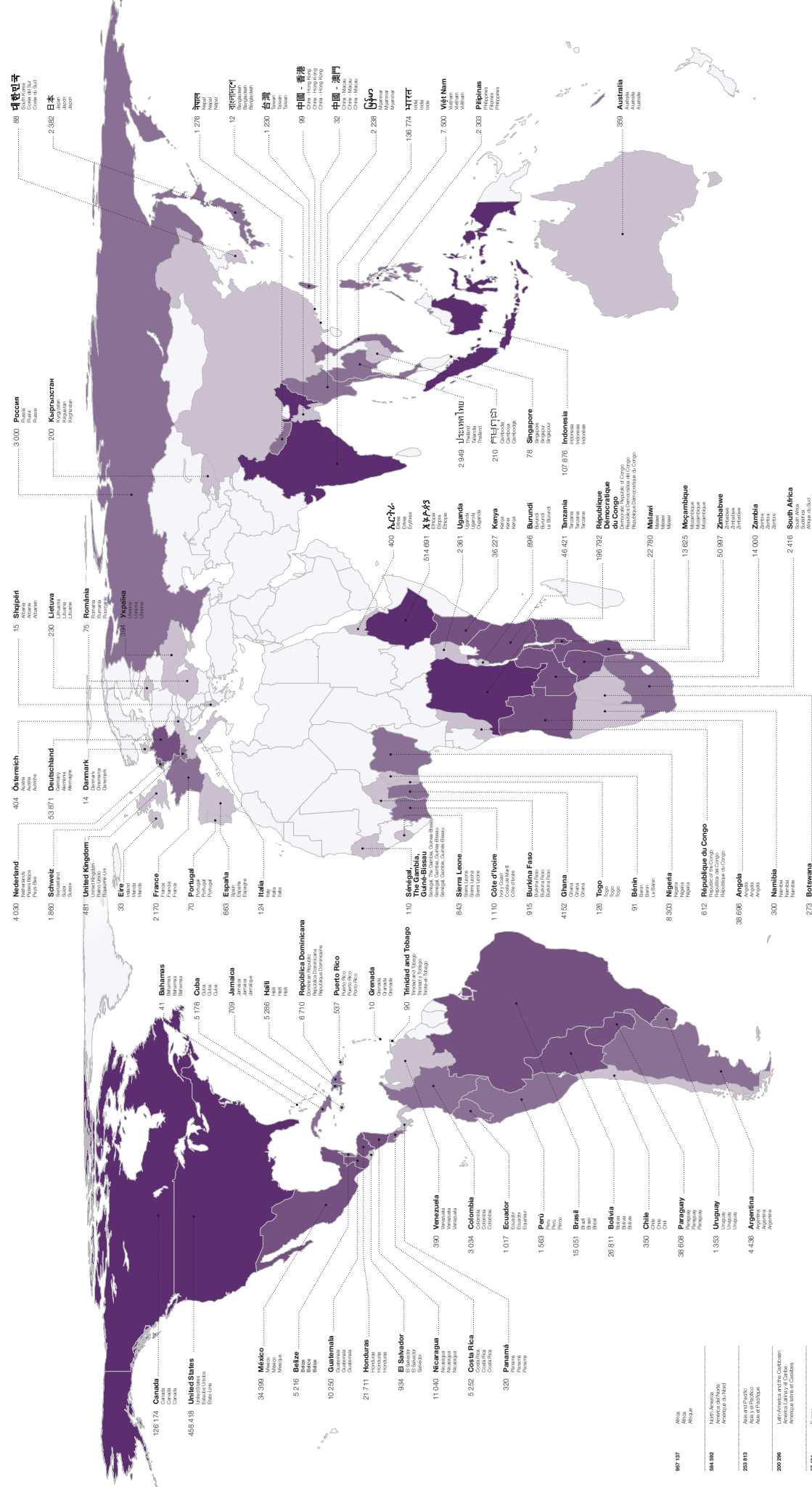
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Anabaptists around the world

Anabautistas de todo el mundo

Anabaptistes du monde entier

Anabaptist churches: Mennonites, Brethren in Christ, Church of the Brethren*, Amish, Hutterites, Bruderhof and others
Iglesias anabaptistas: Menonitas, Hermanos en Cristo, Iglesia de los Hermanos*, Hutteritas, Bruderhof y otras
Églises anabaptistes : Mennonites, Frères en Christ, Église des frères*, Amish, Hutterites, Bruderhof et autres



Mennonite World Conference
A Council of Churches related Churches

Congreso Mundial Mennonita
Una Conferencia de Iglesias Anabaptistas

Conférence Mondiale des Églises Anabaptistes

Organized since 1925
Organized since 1925
Organized since 1925

Following Jesus, living and working together
Following Jesus, living and working together
Following Jesus, living and working together

1. The Mennonite World Conference is a voluntary association of churches and church members from all over the world, committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the peace and justice of the world.



Number of members

Workshops

Activities for the commemoration of 500 years of the Anabaptist movement in Zurich on 29 May 2025 included 18 workshops over two periods. Rooms in several locations throughout the downtown generously provided by the Reformed church were bursting with participants eager to engage with stories and analysis of Anabaptists living out “the courage to love” in history and today.

Workshops ranged from a full-participation sing-along drawn from Mennonite hymnody to a panel discussion on the trilateral dialogues on baptism with Catholic and Lutheran partners, to a survey of Mennonite engagement with peace and justice work in the Middle East, to sharing testimonies of communal living and loving enemies.

Here is a peek into one workshop:

Culture of memory within religious minorities

Like in many minority religious movements, the Anabaptist movement has a narrative – a shaping story. This story includes memories of persecution, discrimination and migration. If left unattended; these stories can easily lead into the lava eruption in a world which is already volatile.

Speakers for this workshop were Andrea Strübind, Astrid von Schlachta, and Danang Kristiawan.

Andrea Strübind, from within the Baptist tradition, is professor of church history and historical theology at Oldenburg University in Germany. Astrid von Schlachta serves as the General Council delegate for Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland. She is also a research assistant with Arbeitsstelle Theologie der Friedenskirchen in Germany. Danang Kristiawan is a pastor at GITJ Jepara and lecturer at SSTAKW Bible School in Java, Indonesia.

Andrea Strübind and Astrid von Schlachta informed the audience of the Anabaptist history from its inception in 1525 and navigated through various global socio-political events which have taken place since then.

Danang Kristiawan shared his experience with minority Christians in his home country Indonesia where Muslims are the majority.

Main points

- A life of persecution and expulsion is more concerned with finding places to hide than to leaving visible monuments.
- The Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana*) of 1530 condemns Anabaptists.

- In Indonesia, Christianity is linked with colonialism.

Initiatives to prevent the eruption of lava

In geography, a volcanic eruption is the expulsion of gases and molten lava from within the Earth through a vent onto the Earth's surface or into the atmosphere. Equally, in real life, any issue that could lead to adversity among human beings could produce a metaphorical eruption – faith perceptions being one of them. This can lead to irreparable damage to not only the conflicting people but the world in general.

Although the city of Zurich and the Reformed Church were among the villains for the early Anabaptists, today there are dialogues between Reformed leaders and Anabaptists at various levels. (See “Seeking a common witness together.”)

For the Lutherans, the urge to dialogue with Anabaptists dates back to the 450-year commemoration of the Augsburg Confession in 1980. It was concluded by the Lutheran World Federation admitting that statements in the 1530 document were provocative to the Anabaptists and that the confessions do not reflect to the realities of the current believers of both faiths.

By the grace of God, during the 2010 Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Stuttgart, the Anabaptists received an apology for the past persecutions.

In Indonesia, the Mennonites in Jepara have come up with a Mennonite-Islam friendship initiative. It is an endeavour that is firmly embedded on Colossians 1:20, the incarnation of Christ, as well as contextualizing love creatively. The theological basis of Mennonite Islam friendship, especially creatively actualizing

love, includes commitment to identity, openness to vulnerability and creative imagination.

In addition to the expertise and experience presenters shared in the topic, workshop participants asked questions and shared perspectives.

One participant who identified as of Pakistani origin, living in Canada, was opinion that, in most cases persecutions and discriminations result from leaders' orchestrations.

Others asked about the persecution experiences of Indonesian Anabaptists. The growing church of young people has little direct experience, said Danang Kristiawan.

In answer to the question *How can we respond to government foreign policies that uphold nationalism*, workshops presenters emphasized that we need to earnestly build bridges and continue dialoguing.

Conclusion

The topic needed more extended time. Each country has its own scenario of persecution and discrimination. Courage is a process by which the conflicting parties maximise their mental and moral potentials to control impending danger. Therefore, persistent and open deliberations on the issues will be beneficial not only to the conflicting faiths but a more habitable earth. Thence enabling the event theme executable: the courage to love.

Jumanne Magiri Mafwiri is a member of Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania. He serves as MWC regional representative for Eastern Africa. His impetus to attend the workshop followed the persecution of Christians in Uganda in 1885–1887, after which the Uganda government has declared 3 June each year as a martyrs' day which draws pilgrims from various places.

Panel discussion

Anabaptist voices in a world on fire

Under the title *Standing Between the Lines in a World on Fire*, voices from five continents gathered on May 29 at the Friedenskirche. On the occasion of the 500th anniversary, they debated a burning issue: how to remain faithful to the Anabaptist heritage of peace and nonviolence in a world torn apart by conflict, injustice and trauma?

In front of a packed audience, the discussion took place in two parts: each speaker shared a testimony, followed by a group discussion. Moderator Judith Wipfler, a Swiss journalist, introduced each speaker, weaving a common thread of vulnerability, courage and commitment.

switches into survival mode – flight, fight or freeze – which hinders our ability to regulate our emotions, reason and our connection with others.

But, there are “community antidotes”: singing, worship and solidarity. These practices, rooted in Anabaptist history, enable individuals to re-engage in a process of resilience and healing.

“We must protect our spirits so that we do not pass on the violence we have suffered,” she said emotionally, referencing a father in Gaza, a poignant image of wounded humanity. “When we become aware of our wounds, we can choose not to repeat the suffering.”

providing material support, she emphasized the importance of listening: “Sometimes I would make food, but they wouldn’t eat. First, we had to understand their needs.”

Now living in the state of Morelos (close to Mexico City), she continues to support families searching for missing loved ones. Her message is clear: the church has a vocation of accompaniment, of active compassion and must be a place of listening for suffering.

“Even without money, we can walk alongside those who are searching.”



Mennonite World Conference

Carolyn Yoder (USA) speaks about trauma healing.



Irma Sulistyorini

Rebeca González Torres (Mexico) speaks about working with migrants.



Irma Sulistyorini

Siaka Traoré (Burkina Faso) speaks about being a mentor.

The science of trauma in the service of peace

Carolyn Yoder (author of *The Little Book of Trauma Healing* and creator of the STAR (Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience) program), opened the session.

Coming from the USA, she began by telling the story of a father who was confronted with violence and chose a peaceful response, thereby breaking a destructive cycle.

Drawing on recent advances in neuroscience, she went on to explain that when faced with a threat, the human brain

Migrants and dignity: walking with those who suffer

Drawing on Psalm 137, Rebeca González Torres spoke of loss, exile and longing for peaceful times in her work with migrants in Mexico. In this biblical lament, she recognized the feelings of those she accompanies: uprooted, vulnerable, often invisible.

Together with her husband, she founded a “house of peace” near a migrant detention centre near the border with the USA. “We welcome people when they are released, sometimes barefoot, with nothing.” Beyond

Serving with humility in West Africa

Siaka Traoré from Burkina Faso offered a profound reflection on what it means to be a “mentor” or “encourager” in his context.

As regional representative for the Mennonite World Conference, he is connected to 10 communities spread across several countries in West and Central Africa, bringing together more than 240 000 believers.

In a region marked by political instability, community tensions and linguistic challenges (official languages French,

English, Portuguese, in addition to tribal languages), he works to strengthen churches through transparency, humility and brotherhood. “A leader is not there to be served, but to serve,” he reminded the audience, quoting Mark 10:45.

Beyond internal conflicts within churches, he cautions: “Many see the Mennonite World Conference as an NGO. We must remember that it is first and foremost a communion of churches.”

Through his work on the ground, he embodies mediation, unity and peace, emphasizing how mutual encouragement is a powerful motivator in crisis situations.

Where being a pacifist is an act of faith

The mere presence of Amos Chin in Zurich was nothing short of a miracle. The pastor in Myanmar had to overcome administrative and political obstacles to leave a country at war.



Mennonite World Conference

Amos Chin (Myanmar) speaks about living under military rule.

“Myanmar is under military rule. It takes courage to go to church,” he said.

Coming from a Buddhist family, he faced rejection for following Christ: “When I was baptized, I was excluded from my family.”

Today, he accompanies a young Mennonite generation threatened by conscription. Some are arrested, others live in hiding. Despite this, his message remains rooted in nonviolence. “We teach pacifism even in this extreme context.”

His heartfelt cry resonated with the audience: “Why does the world forget Myanmar when it is so mobilized for Ukraine? Our suffering is just as real.”

Active faith in a world of fire

Hans Ueli (John) Gerber, a Mennonite from Switzerland, offered a peaceful but lucid summary. He reminded us that conflicts are part of human life and are not problematic in themselves. What matters is what we do with them.

“Conflict is neutral. Violence, on the other hand, is always destructive,” he said.

Citing the work of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Friedrich Hacker, he urged caution regarding violent solutions: “Violence claims to resolve evil, but it is the evil it claims to resolve.”

He also referred to the frequent confusion between peace as the absence of conflict and peace as a dynamic of justice. Peace, in the Anabaptist tradition, is demanding: it requires truth, courage and community.

“What sustains us is love. But what guides us is humility.”



Irma Sulistyorini

Hans Ueli (John) Gerber (Switzerland) speaks about conflict and peace.

Conflict is neutral. Violence, on the other hand, is always destructive.

Discussion

The final discussion provided an opportunity to exchange views.

Amos Chin reiterated the importance of global and equitable solidarity.

Carolyn Yoder advocated for a culture of active nonviolence based on solid research. She pointed out that nonviolent conflicts are resolved on average three times faster than those involving violence.

Rebeca González Torres urged churches to move beyond a purely spiritual stance and engage concretely with people who are suffering. “Often, we just say ‘God bless you,’ but that’s not enough.”

This panel will be remembered for powerfully illustrating how the Anabaptist tradition can continue to provide a prophetic voice in a troubled world.



Irma Sulistyorini

Global peacemakers answer questions on a the “world on fire” panel to a packed house at the Friedenskirche, Zurich, Switzerland.

— Maude Burkhalter is an editor with Alliance Presse, a Swiss publisher of Christian materials, and a member of Église évangélique mennonite Tavannes, Switzerland.

This article first appeared in the newsletter of Konferenz Der Mennoniten Der Schweiz/Conférence Mennonite Suisse.



Scan here to watch the panel discussion online



Historian Joel Nofziger from the Mennonite Heritage Center, Harleysville, Pennsylvania, USA, explains the background of the “Schipfe” as Anabaptism@500 event guests from around the world tour the city centre in Zurich, Switzerland.



Members from Mennonite Church British Columbia participate in the Story Trails (l-r): Annelise Nickel, Mariana Rodriguez Toews, Daniela Rodriguez Toews, James Nickel, Laura Sportack, Jesse Nickel



Participants could discover 10 outposts with a historical summary and present day story on the walking tour.

Walking tour & Story trails

Reflections in Zurich

My tour to Zurich first points to my immediate feelings as we approached the bus stop and at a last corner, pointed the river in which Felix Manz was drowned.

At once and out of nowhere did I have my emotions rise with little body sweats for minutes. Taking it that I was actually witnessing the drowning “ceremony” helplessly, I sobbed in silence.

This massive event had in attendance people of all races from across the continents of the world with majority being Anabaptists. Others like ecumenical guests, Catholics, Lutherans and believers of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and others as passers-by joined the session.

The Anabaptist case scenarios awakened my feelings with fresh thoughts of what I could have done especially with the differences the Anabaptists had. Learning about the Anabaptists’ differing concerns – to a point of disowning others as erring groups – makes me see the current world in which we equally hold different analogies but coexist in the same community as religious free.

Often as we sit in tough religious discussions or theological debates, I mention in such topics so wrestled that in all the differences held differently from each other in the group and as emerge, may it be clear for all that the mission for which we are called is not ours’ but God’s.

The origin of Anabaptism feels to call me to a full commitment to Christ in all the

circumstances. It is very painful the blood baptism given Manz. However, the fact that he prayed his last in forgiveness is so overwhelming and I desire all the believers grew to accepting Jesus despite what ‘comes-may’!

The 500th anniversary of Anabaptism calls to an appreciation of our other members in Christ, and that our aim is to embrace them with their differences and with prayers that God shall speak to them. We ought to embrace them, extend our love unto them, noting our differences but appreciating their mission as it is true to Christ.

—Nyangore Christopher is a member of Kenya Mennonite Church. He served as the YABs delegate for his church in the meetings in 2025.



The fountain on Neustadt-Gasse, the street where tradition holds the first Anabaptist baptism took place is the likely water source for that first believer's baptism ceremony.

"Although Anabaptists generally do not believe in relics, it is interesting how many seasoned Mennonites I have seen sticking their heads under the fountain, washing themselves or even collecting a small vial of water to take home!" writes artist Gareth Brandt. The painting "baptism of choice" is included in the exhibit and book *Radical Roots*, published by Masthof Press.

"You are no longer citizens of the 21st century... Moreover, you are a stranger to Zurich in these turbulent times.... You are invited to partake in creating the imaginary world depicted in this booklet.... The story is full of all kinds of people and encounters, each presenting opportunities and choices. Who will you meet? What can you learn? Who can you trust?"

—Story Trails by David Stutzman

News

MWC at 100: "We come together and share"

"He has done marvellous things!" An international ensemble with members from the USA, Germany, Colombia and Indonesia led the congregation in singing these words to open the fundraising celebration of 100 years of Mennonite World Conference.

One of those marvellous things is 110 national churches agreeing to walk together through MWC. César García preached from Psalm 133: "'Living together as one' is a gift from God, a tangible and attractive reality," he said, like "a pleasant aroma draws attention" and "that can be seen and felt here and now."

Challenges facing societies in 2025 are remarkably similar to those of 1925, historian John D. Roth recounted: a recent pandemic, political polarization and rising nationalism.

"There were approximately 250,000 baptized Mennonites in the world: 98% of them lived in Europe and North America," he said. "Today... the Anabaptist family includes 2.13 million members in more than 80 countries."

MWC at its 100th anniversary celebrates with living out unity amid diversity. (Sadly, today, as in 1925, some church leaders were unable to be present due to visa problems.).

"We continue to face many challenges. And yet, 500 years after our beginnings in Zurich, MWC continues to keep alive a vision of believers who are committed to following Jesus; living out Christ's call to unity; and seeking peace within our families, our congregations, our communities, our countries and in all human relationships," said John D. Roth.

Leaders from MWC's past and present

MWC impacts church leaders today through friendships and opportunities to learn. YABs mentor Ebenezer Mondez interviewed leaders from MWC's past and present.

"MWC has been the best place to see and participate in movements transforming and extending the church and to find friendships," said Larry Miller, former general secretary.



YABs mentor Ebenezer Mondez interviews leaders from MWC's past and present (l-r): Larry Miller (USA), Amos Chin (Myanmar), Valentina Kunze (Uruguay), Timo Doetsch (Germany), Rebecca Osiro (Kenya).

Irma Sulistyorini



Karl Braun

Vikal Rao, Janet Plenert and Sunoko Lin lead a line of dancers during the singing of “Hakuna akaita” during the 100th anniversary celebration for MWC.



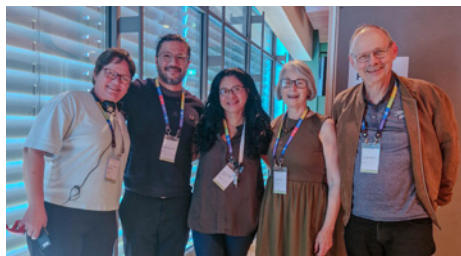
Irma Sulistyorini

Mennonite Central Committee leaders Ken Kim and Ann Hershberger give a token of congratulations to Henk Stenvers, MWC president, at the 100 anniversary celebration.



Stephanie Setiawan

John Fumana and Ephraim Disi view the 100th anniversary photo banners at the anniversary celebration.



Stephanie Setiawan

Karina Derksen-Schrock, interpretation coordinator with interpreters Andrés Pacheco Lozano (English to Spanish), Karen Flores Vindel (English to Spanish), Sylvia Shirk (French to English), Claude Baecher (English to French).

Taking the role then called executive secretary “saved his life,” Larry Miller said. Rather than working as a theology professor and writing dusty theology books no one would read, he spent his working energy on the global church as MWC grew from Northern-dominated to Global-South-inspired; from a focus on local congregations to an awareness of the global church; from a meeting every six years to life together as a global communion; and from nursing wounds of martyrdom to healing wounds of division.

For Amos Chin, living in a country suffering military dictatorship for decades, MWC connects him with role models who inspire him to walk the way of peace in his own community. The leader of Bible Missionary Church, Mennonite, in Myanmar said MWC leaders have challenged him to discipleship and service that move from theory to action on subjects like climate justice.

“Unity in Christ does not erase differences but transforms them into opportunities for mutual learning and love,” Amos Chin said.

Young AnaBaptist (YABs) leader Valetina Kunze of Uruguay said MWC has taught her humility and widened her perspective as

she has seen how “my own way is not only way; how other cultures have other qualities of Jesus.”

Former vice president Rebecca Osiro of Kenya said MWC not only “expanded her courage to love but implanted courage to serve.” Coming from a church “where women were not seen,” she found opportunities to exercise leadership among women theologians, the trilateral dialogues group and as MWC vice president. MWC has taught her that “each one has something and we come together and share,” she said.

Timo Doetsch, General Council delegate from Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Deutschland (AMBD), spoke of lessons learned and hopes held. Through MWC, he has learned about mutuality – “being served by those we don’t necessarily like” – and the hope that “our little gift of peace can shape world Christianity and beyond.”

Lots to share

“We (MWC) are small but have lots to share,” said Philipp & Elke Horsch of the HORSCH Foundation in Germany. They support MWC’s mission “to help Anabaptists work together for a more peaceful world where we are salt and light, learning to cross borders between ourselves so we can model crossing borders in the world.”

Special guests at the celebration included leaders of nine world communions or multilateral church organizations. (These ecumenical guests remained as observers at the General Council meetings that followed and brought greetings from their constituencies.)

Representing the future of MWC, leaders offered closing prayers of blessing in English, Ndebele, Swiss German, Spanish, Bengali, French, Amharic: “rooted and centred in faith and renewed for the road ahead.”



Elina Ciptadi

Fellowship at the 100th anniversary celebration reception: Wendy Kroeker (Canada), Timothy Adh Dharma (Indonesia) Amos Chin (Myanmar), Agus Mayanto (Indonesia), Paulus Wijaja (Indonesia), Francis Kamoto (Malawi), Andi Santoso (Indonesia).



View a recording of the whole event.



Wilhelm Unger

Executive Committee, General Council and Global Anabaptist network participants at Schönblick, Schwäbisch-Gmünd, Germany.

News

From celebration to commemoration MWC General Council plans for the future

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) concludes its triennial General Council (GC) meeting 26-28 May 2025 in Schwäbisch-Gmünd, Germany, with a clear framework for the future.

The meetings were bookended by celebration and commemoration. A special program 25 May 2025 celebrated how the first Mennonite World Conference 100 years ago has grown into a world communion of Anabaptists. Leaders rooted in the 16th century Radical Reformation continue to live out the audacious vision to seek unity amid diversity. General Council members from 52 countries across the globe represented the church of today and the future at the

500th anniversary commemoration day in Zurich, Switzerland, on Ascension Day, 29 May 2025.

The Executive Committee (EC)* convened on May 23-24, 2025, to approve MWC's operational plan for 2025-2028, which is based on the 2025-2031 strategy discussed at the General Council.

MWC General Council is made up of delegates from all member churches. This group of church leaders meets every three years to shape the mandate of MWC, share concerns and insights and worship together.

Additionally, the Global Anabaptist Networks for education (GAEN), mission (GMF), peace (GAPN), and service (GASN)



Irma Sulistyorini

Fellow Nederlanders Rev. Dr. Samuel van der Maas, representative of the World Evangelical Alliance, and Gerrit Jan Romeijn, GAPN member, greet each other.



Kristina Toews

Pablo Stucky (Colombia), Rainer Burkhart (Germany) and Iris de León-Hartshorn (USA) pray at the opening of a General Council session.



Elina Ciptadi

Jorge Morales (Colombia) and Rosa Beatriz Barrios Nuñez (Uruguay) participate in the General Council meetings with the help of simultaneous interpretation into Spanish.



Stephanie Setiawan

General Council delegates discuss, discern and decide on proposals from the MWC Workbook.

held planning and resourcing sessions concurrently with the General Council, along with participation in worship times.

Representatives from world Christian communions and multilateral ecumenical bodies attended the General Council meetings as observers (Anglican Communion, Baptist World Alliance, Disciples of Christ, Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, and Global Christian Forum, World Evangelical Alliance and Organization of African Instituted Churches). Each one brought greetings from their church or entity at the start of a session.

On the third day, they offered perspectives on Anabaptist identity and ecumenical relations during a panel moderated by César García, MWC general secretary. Representatives of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (Roman Catholic Church), the Old Catholic Bishops' Conference / Union of Utrecht, the Moravian Church Worldwide Unity Board, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the Salvation Army, the World Methodist Council, and the World Council of Churches joined the ecumenical delegation for the worship service in Zurich.

Clearer path forward

“Our gathering with church leaders every three years is a time of learning together and building a common mind for being the church together in the world,” says César García, MWC general secretary.

General Council came to consensus that



Stephanie Setiawan

General Council delegates use coloured cards to register three types of decision response.

MWC's future direction should forge strong connections between churches, address creation care and empower MWC Networks and young people.

Two teaching documents, “For God so Loved the Cosmos” (on creation care in the climate crisis) and “Restoring Our Family to Wholeness: Seeking a Common Witness: A Common Statement of Confession, Gratitude and Commitment” (arising from dialogues with the World Communion of Reformed Churches) were approved.

MWC strategy 2025-2031 was agreed upon with one yellow card.

“With this strategy as guidance, MWC staff will be able to formulate operational goals and plans,” said César García.

Networks

General Council approved the Networks' Terms of Reference (TOR). First proposed in 2012, the revised terms provide a clearer purpose and consistent structure for MWC Networks in 2025.

“This will make it easier for member organizations to focus on their purpose: stronger collaboration, sharing of best practices, providing shared opportunities for training and accomplish things together that each cannot attempt individually,” said J. Ron Byler, MWC coordinator of Commission secretaries.

(In its earlier meetings, the EC decided to dissolve the Global Anabaptist Health Network due to a failure of the Network to coalesce.)

The 2025-2028 Fair Share plan and financial projections were also approved. In the discussion, delegates were reminded that Fair Share can be negotiated.

“Negotiating is particularly relevant for



Irma Sulistyorini

Eldon August (Paraguay) speaks to a proposal using the coloured card discernment system.

member churches who are experiencing war or natural disasters or those whose financial means are lower than their country's economic indicators. Meanwhile, in the spirit of 2 Corinthians 8:13–15, we encourage churches with more financial capability to give beyond their Fair Share amount," said Bruce Campbell-Janz, MWC Chief Development Officer.

"MWC will enter the next three years on solid financial ground due to increased foundational and individual giving, and we thank our donors and supporters for your affirmation of MWC's work," says MWC Chief Financial Officer Jeanette Bissoon.

 [Turn to page 17 to view our annual report]

Young adult engagement

Several proposals regarding youth engagement were on the decision docket. Since the YABs Committee was implemented in 2011, the role has continued to be refined.

General Council approved re-appointment of the YABs (Young Anabaptists) Committee members on a three-year cycle (instead of six). Two currently serving YABs Committee members will remain for a second three-year term to ensure continuity.

This change follows the decision to make the Global Youth Summit (GYS) a triennial event (increased frequency from every six years) on the same schedule as the General Council.

"For young adults today, the probability of life-altering changes happening within their six-year term is high – from studying to working, from singlehood to raising their own family, or relocating between

cities or even countries. Three years is a more feasible length of commitment," said Ebenezer Mondey, YABs mentor.

The proposal to change the MWC Constitution to include YABs delegates in the body of General Council did not reach consensus. In the discussion that ensued, General Council members affirmed the work of the YABs and the importance of training young adults for leadership. However, there was reticence to bring on a young adult as an additional voting General Council delegate for each full member church.

The decision was postponed for more discernment.

"If it were accepted, it would be great," said Tusia Andina, the YABs delegate from JKI, Indonesia. (the YABs held parallel meetings to the General Council). "We'd have 'youth thought' in discussions; critical questions on decisions, more of a wider view on everything."

"If we function on consensus, we have to believe that the Holy Spirit is acting, even when a proposal is defeated or deferred," said Erik Loewen, YABs delegate from Asociación Hermandad Evangélica Menonita – Filadelfia, Paraguay.

New member churches

Since 2022, several churches have engaged the MWC membership application process and were approved by the Executive Committee. General Council welcomed the new members of MWC:

- Mennonite Church Burundi – **full member** (approved by Executive Committee in 2024)
- Kanisa La Mennonite La Kiinjili Tanzania – **full member** (approved by Executive Committee in 2023)

- Mennonite Brethren Church in Ukraine – **associate member** (approved by Executive Committee in 2023)

The Executive Committee meeting also approved associate member church Iglesia Cristiana Menonita del Perú, bringing the total to 111. However, the Peruvian church planted by Colombian children's ministry workers will come before the General Council in 2028.

"Though the information sessions involved a great deal to process, they reflected the genuine care and commitment for the global church," said Tigist Tesfaye, Deacons Commission chair and member of the listening committee.

Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, outgoing chair of the Faith & Life Commission, offered a resourcing session on how the Gospels and Paul's letters to speak about the nature of baptism and following Jesus. "Baptism is linked indivisibly to the unity and diversity within the body of Christ," he said. "Our challenge is to make baptism operational in our churches and within MWC itself. We are God's hands and feet in our world."

Commissions led a time of worship to open each day and "life in the church" closed the day with testimonies of witness from around the world.

Among others, Tom Eshleman and Hyacinth Stevens from LMC spoke of operating with love amid diversity on the "fault line" of polarization in the USA while Roman Rakhuba of Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Ukraine shared about pastors serving on the front line in Ukraine, sharing God's love with children and soldiers affected by war.

"We prayed when people shared their stories with us. We prayed in our delegate sessions. We prayed in our caucuses. We prayed in our Anabaptist family meetings," said J. Ron Byler, member of the listening committee. "At these meetings, we prayed."

The Executive Committee is elected from the General Council (GC) and meets annually. Two members from each continental region are elected from the GC; a president and vice president are also elected by the GC. The treasurer and general secretary are also members of the Executive Committee.



Elina Ciptadi



Ima Sulisvorini

Participants in the GYS (l-r): Anja Körber (Germany), Catalina Bonilla (Colombia), Sasha Kunze (Uruguay), Elvis Ramón Torres Sequeira (Uruguay), Celeste Pérez Selva (Costa Rica), Sol Silva (Argentina).

Rashard Allen (USA), Simon Okoth (Uganda) and Jumanne Magiri Mafwiri (Tanzania) display the MWC tagline and logo.

YABs & GYS

Young Anabaptists eager to encounter the global family

During the Global Youth Summit (GYS) in 2015 in Pennsylvania, USA, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) general secretary César García said, “If you want a revolution, ask someone young to lead.”

This year’s GYS was the latest step in MWC’s journey of walking with young leaders in following Jesus together.

From the creation of the GYS in 2003 in Zimbabwe, through the formation of a Young Anabaptists (YABs) Committee and creation of a staff role for YABs mentor, young people have had increasing participation in sharing gifts in the global church through MWC.

Space for young leadership grew this year with the first *triennial* GYS, 29 May–1 June 2025 – occurring halfway between Assemblies.

It was also the first time YABs delegates* met for several days before the GYS, concurrent with the General Council. They shared some worship and resourcing sessions together.

“We aimed to prepare these 38 young leaders to analyze their own contexts and listen to the others... and also learn from others around the world,” said Ebenezer Mondez.

All five continents had at least one representative. “Sadly many others were not able to join due to visa denials.”

“This experience was very enriching for the YABs delegates and opened their eyes to a much bigger church reality around the world,” said Ebenezer Mondez.

YABs proposal

The proposal to include YABs delegates in the body of General Council did not reach consensus. In the discussion that ensued, General Council members affirmed the work of the YABs and the importance of training young adults for leadership. However, there was reticence to bring on a young adult as an additional voting General Council delegate for each full member church.

In the end, the General Council wasn’t ready to make a decision. The decision was postponed for more discernment.

Watching the consensus videos before attending the meetings and seeing it in action at the General Council gave Isaac Gborbitey trust in the process. “If anyone has any questions about us and our involvement, what gifts we bring to the church, how we can work together, it’s good to talk to have to find a way to come together and bring out something beautiful,” said the YABs Committee member for Africa.

“We want to pay respect to the GC process and give reverence to the scale of the responsibility of being in General Council,” said Sebastian Mireles, YABs delegate from U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

“This would be a good opportunity for us, but in God’s time – not ours,” said Laura Mesa Perez, YABs delegate from Anabautistas, Menonitas y Hermanos en Cristo – España (AMyHCE), Burgos, Spain.

Nyah Tindlsey, YABs delegate for LMC, USA, heard the General Council delegates’ concerns about finding capable young leaders. “I made a mental note to talk to my co-youth leader. How are we teaching new leaders to step up when it’s our time to move on?”

“While I’m a little bit sad because I was hoping for a ‘yes,’ it was especially moving that my continent, Latin America, stated that they [GC leaders] will do more discipleship and mentoring of young people for leadership,” said Sol Silva, YABs delegate from Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Argentina. “It is important for young adults

“It’s good to talk to have to find a way to come together and bring out something beautiful.”



GYS participants discussed their views of the church in small group huddle sessions.

Ma Hai Yanghaiyang



Youth and young adult participants at the Global Youth Summit at Schönblick, Schwäbisch-Gmünd, Germany, 30 May–1 June 2025.

to live out biblical principles and show leadership capabilities before becoming a part of the General Council.”

Even with the decision deferred, General Council delegates can still consider young people’s perspectives, said Sumantha Mandi from BCJPM India.

“We could have discussion before they go and make decisions,” said Tusia Andini from Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (JKI church). “This way, their vote will already include our voice.”

“We are learning from the experience of coming to GC and YABs meetings,” said Aman Ganjboir, YABs delegate from Mennonite Church India, and Torsten Sawatzky, YABs delegate from Asociación Hermanos Menonitas, Paraguay.

GYS

Following the energizing day in Zurich, 195 young people attended the Global Youth Summit, Empowered by love” (1 John 4:10).

In total, 51% of young adult participants came from Europe, 24% from North America, 15% from Latin America, 7% from Asia and 3% from Africa.

Worship sessions were led by the young people themselves, with an ad hoc band representing each continental region leading one event. Plenary speakers Anne Hansen (Germany), Maude Burkhalter (Switzerland) and Lane Miller (USA) spoke on ‘Who are we in God’s love?’ ‘What does loving ourselves look like?’ and ‘What does it mean to love others?’

“The highlight of GYS was digging deeper into God’s love with the global family and sharing thoughts with one another,” said Sunil Kadmaset, GYS participant from Brethren in Christ Church Odisha, India.

The three short days were packed with the worship session, discussion groups (by language) and 10 workshops ranging from conversations on the value of community for the Anabaptist family, prayer, mental health, climate to activism (Mennonite Action) and using playfighting to transform aggression nonviolently.

The event closed with a prayer time for the global church. Participants gathered around a large world map to post notes on which they’d written their prayer requests.

“This generated a special moment of

bonding in what brought us there: the fact that Jesus is so much bigger than our own communities and calls us to be aware of the global church community, and be actively part of it,” said Valentina Kunze, YABs Committee chair.

“I would like to encourage the youth of all our member Conferences to participate in GYS 2028 that will take place in Ethiopia. It’s a great opportunity to fellowship in-person with other youth from different parts of the world who share our faith. It’s also an important enrichment opportunity to learn from the culture of our Ethiopian host conference, one of the largest in MWC. What a wonderful way to get to know one another and each of our stories!” said Ana María Morales, GYS participant from Colombia.

Ecumenical News

Living in a new era



Irma Sulistyorini

Leaders of global communions and multilateral ecumenical organizations joined the General Council meetings as observers. They shared their perspectives in a panel discussion moderated by César García: Rev. Paul Tch , Disciples of Christ World Communion; Rev. Dr. Andreas Ohlemacher, Lutheran World Federation; Tim Gee, Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers); Prof. Dr. Otniel (Oti) Bunaciu, Baptist World Alliance; Rev. Neil Vigers, Anglican Communion; Rev. Nicta Lubaale, Organization of African Instituted Churches; Dr. Hanns Lessing, World Communion of Reformed Churches; Rev. Dr. Casely Baiden Essamuah, Global Christian Forum; Anne-Cathy Graber, Mennonite World Conference; Rev. Dr. Samuel van der Maas, World Evangelical Alliance.



Irma Sulistyorini

Rev. Dr. Andreas Ohlemacher, LWF and Prof. Dr. Otniel (Oti) Bunaciu, Baptist World Alliance share about their first encounter with Mennonites.

“Reconciliation is central to our faith as Anabaptists,” said César García, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) general secretary. “We knew that as we commemorate the division and fragmentation that occurred in the body of Christ 500 years ago, we needed to bring together our mother churches – the Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed churches – to bear witness to the healing God is bringing among us and will continue to do in the process of reconciling everything under Jesus’ kingdom.”

Accompanying the General Council

Church leaders from other Christian traditions accompanied MWC General Council (GC) members in their meetings. Each ecumenical guest brought greetings at the beginning of the GC sessions.

“I feel like I’m in a family reunion,” said the Rev. Paul Tch , general secretary of the Disciples of Christ World Communion.

For the final GC session, César García interviewed the ecumenical guests about their connections to Anabaptism and their hopes for the church.

“The best way to learn who you are is to try and work it out with an ecumenical partner. [It’s] a voyage of rich discovery into the mystery of God’s grace,” said the Rev. Neil Vigers, Programme Executive for Unity, Faith & Order for the Anglican Communion.

César García asked each guest to share about their experiences with Mennonites. Prof. Dr. Otniel Bunaciu, vice president of the Baptist World Alliance, said he first heard of Mennonites as a child receiving Christian aid parcels in Eastern Europe. “One of the parcels contained quilts. I learned they were from Mennonites. All the ‘80s and ‘90s during the cold Romanian winters, I had a Mennonite quilt that covered me.”

The Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing from the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) said conversations with Mennonites are very significant as WCRC discusses how to be God’s church in a world marked by violence. “This is something where the Mennonite history is very important for us.... My hope is that we recover this joint history to something that will serve the kingdom.”

Fellowshipping together

As part of the Anabaptism@500 commemoration day in Zurich, MWC hosted a reception for representatives from 13 global communions and 3 multilateral ecumenical organizations. MWC gifted representatives from the global communions a copy of the Anabaptist Community Bible, which “reflects the distinctive hermeneutic of the Anabaptist tradition,” said César García.

Church leaders from the diverse communions shared greetings and thanksgiving for the ministry of MWC. “Though they were unable to send representatives, the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Orthodox Church) and the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church also sent meaningful written greetings for the commemoration,” said César García.

“The Anabaptist commitment to peace, faithfulness, justice and reconciliation reaches far beyond your own tradition and is a gift beyond measure for the *oikoumene*. Our hearts are glad for your witness over the centuries and we look to your future with courageous love,” said the Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah, Secretary of the Global Christian Forum.

“The Lutheran world gives thanks today for the witness of the Anabaptist-Mennonite communion, for its radical and uncompromising commitment to love and to seek peace. We can all learn from your courage to love, a love that continually opens doors toward deeper communion among us,” said the Rev. Dr. Anne Burghardt, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation.

Celebrating worship in confession and hope

Reconciliation guided the planning for the worship service on 29 May 2025. MWC officers, former officers and ecumenical representatives entered the worship service

together as part of the procession.

The service included liturgy of reconciliation which incorporated parts of the recent statement, “Restoring our Family to Wholeness: Seeking a Common Witness” that was approved by both MWC and WCRC.

“As Reformed Christians, we are deeply grateful to the Mennonite World Conference for inviting us to journey together toward mutual understanding and reconciliation,” said the Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, general secretary, WCRC. “In Christ we are members of one another, brothers and sisters of the same flesh and the same Spirit.”

Representing newly appointed Pope Leo XIV, Cardinal Kurt Koch from the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (Roman Catholic Church) brought a message during the service: “The motto chosen for your celebration, ‘The Courage to Love’, reminds us, above all, of the need for Catholics and Mennonites to make every effort to live out the commandment of love, the call to Christian unity and the mandate to serve others.”

“We are living in a new era: churches who once regarded each other as enemies have found ways to apologize and forgive, to work toward the healing of memories, and to take steps toward reconciliation, even amid our ongoing differences,” said Henk Stenvers, MWC president.

Global Christian Communions and multilateral ecumenical organizations represented:

Anglican Communion
Baptist World Alliance
DECC - Disciples of Christ World Communion
Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (Roman Catholic Church)
Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers)
International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference /
Union of Utrecht
Lutheran World Federation
Moravian Church Worldwide Unity Board
Organization of African Instituted Churches

Pentecostal World Fellowship
The Salvation Army
World Communion of Reformed Churches
World Methodist Council

Global Christian Forum
World Council of Churches
World Evangelical Alliance



Dale Gehman

Representing recently appointed Pope Leo XIV, Cardinal Kurt Koch from the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (Roman Catholic Church) brings a message during the service.



Karla Braun

Setri Nyomi (World Council of Reformed Churches) exits Zwingliplatz as choirs sing and foam cloud hearts waft above.



Lisa Carr-Pries (Canada) and Sindah Ngulube (Zimbabwe) pray for Roman Rakhuba (Ukraine) after his sharing about the church in Ukraine.

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Via Instagram: [@mwcmml](https://www.instagram.com/mwcmml)



Roopam Rao

Past and present MWC leaders celebrate 100 years of MWC (l-r): Sandra Báez, César García, Henk Stenvers, Larry Miller, Eleanor Miller, Janet Plenert and Danisa Ndlovu.

The President's Corner

"Who are my brothers?"

It was a few years ago that we had a Commissions meeting in the Netherlands. With others I picked up people from the airport. We were at the evening meal when my phone rang. It was someone calling on behalf of a Commission member from Angola whose flight had been delayed. The caller relayed the message that the Angolan man was ready for his brother to pick him up.

When I arrived at the meeting point, the person who called was still there. I will never forget the surprise on his face when he realized that I was the "brother" of this African man.

We did not fit into what he imagined when he thought about brothers. My Angolan brother and I did not fit into the stereotype.

Isn't that what being Christians and especially Anabaptists is about in the world of today?

In this world, people hate others because they look different, because they have different political ideas, because they speak a different language, because... because.... There are so many reasons.

We need courage

If we want to follow Christ, who taught us to love the other as ourselves, we need courage.

Courage to say NO to hate and yes to love, even if goes against our own interests.

Courage to love, even if others do not love us.

Courage to not fit in, but to show a different way, a way that leads to peace instead of war.

We need the courage that people showed 500 years ago in Zürich, when they defied the powers of that time because they wanted to be true followers of Christ.

I hope and pray for many more surprised faces like that man in the airport, when we as a communion of followers of Christ, show love for each other, live out our unity despite differences and so spread a message of peace.

Henk Stenvers is president of Mennonite World Conference (2022-2028). He lives in the Netherlands.



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Photo: Karla Braun

Build on a foundation of love

We invite you to **join the MWC movement! Stand in solidarity** with Anabaptist sisters and brothers from north, south, east and west. 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 call on God to grant us The Courage to Love in a troubled world.

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- 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

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

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

Next Assembly

Assembly 18 theme revealed: Christ unites us

"If you come to the next Assembly, you can also have a shirt like mine!" said Kelbessa Demana, General Council delegate for Meserete Kristos Church (MKC). Dressed in a traditional, crisp white shirt with intricate embroidery, he was part of a delegation that invited the General Council to the upcoming Assembly 18 in Ethiopia.

Held in Ethiopia 11-15 January 2028, the global Assembly will have the theme "Christ unites us."

The National Advisory Council (NAC) for Assembly 18 was appointed in 2024. They meet by Zoom every two or three months to continue planning the event which will bring Anabaptists from around the world to worship and fellowship together.

"January was chosen due to the climate and holidays," says Liesa Unger. "The Assembly will be between Ethiopian Christmas and Epiphany celebrations."

The five days of Assembly are animated with daily worship services, workshops, local tourism and service and learning opportunities. There are activities for all ages, including special programming for children and youth.

Multilingual worship from an international choir is always a highlight.

The Global Youth Summit will take place concurrent with the Assembly. Participants will take part in Assembly programming with select options for GYS only.

The General Council* and YABs Delegate* meetings will precede the Assembly.

"A special focus will be laid on Assembly Scattered, which will be offered to all from 15-17/18 January," says Liesa Unger. Post-event tours within the region extend the opportunity to visit MKC congregations in Ethiopia and more fully experience the region.

The location in East Africa offers a greater opportunity for Mennonites from neighbouring countries to attend Assembly.

"Although we recognize there are grave concerns around the environmental costs of travel, the tremendous gifts of fellowship at



Stephanie Setiawan

Leaders of Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) invite participants to join Assembly 18 in Ethiopia in 2028.

this once-every-six years event must also be held in balance," says César García, MWC general secretary.

"We hope you start to make holistic plans to participate in this Assembly!" says César García.

*Every MWC member church will be asked to send a YABs Delegate to represent their church, their country and their culture to the MWC General Council and attend the Global Youth Summit. A YABs delegate is expected to serve the YABs network for the next three years.

*MWC's member churches and conferences each send one to three delegates (based on the population of the church or conference) to General Council meetings. This group of church leaders meets every three years to shape the mandate of MWC, share concerns and insights, and worship together.

We look forward to our next Assembly, which will be held in Ethiopia: 11-18 January 2028.

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Photo: Irma Sulistyorini



Kristina Toews

MWC Officers and EC members join in worship service during the General Council meetings.

A litany of thanksgiving

Going forth with courage and love

(One voice reads the unbolded text. All voices respond together with the bolded text)

As we express our gratitude for the Spirit's presence, inspiring us with the courage to love, let us respond together with "Thanks be to God!"

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. Through the Spirit's work within us, we have hope as we see:

... the deepening of our unity as a global communion.

Thanks be to God!

... reconciliation with our sisters and brothers in other communions.

Thanks be to God!

... the steadfastness of our fellow believers in Myanmar.

Thanks be to God!

... our spiritual family's acts of love and sacrifice in Ukraine, in Colombia, in Ethiopia.

Thanks be to God!

... sisters and brothers in the Congo and Nigeria who have returned good for evil.

Thanks be to God!

Finally, we have hope because of the promise that your Holy Spirit will never forsake us!

Thanks be to God!

As we go from here, Almighty One, set us on the path toward your kingdom.

We heed your call!

Wherever you send us, let your perfect love cast out our fear.

We go forth in confidence!

Come, Holy Spirit, inspire us with the faithfulness of saints through the ages.

We follow their example!

Go forth, sisters and brothers, in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen