

Volume 40, Number 4



**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:

Young Anabaptists pray for the concerns of their churches around the world at the Global Youth Summit in Germany in May 2025.

Photo: Elina Ciptadi

## Word from the editor



### Unity is God's gift

"So that they may be one, as we are one," Jesus prayed in John 17:22.

This prayer for those who follow Jesus has been acutely relevant since the moment he spoke it.

The Anabaptist movement whose 500th anniversary we mark this year was a "church split" at the time. The many groups within our movement today evidence further splintering.

And so, it is somewhat of a miracle that Mennonite World Conference – a communion of Anabaptist-related churches – has reached its 100th anniversary this year. This miracle has grown broader

and more far-reaching than its originators could have imagined when they countered the splitting impulse to gather as family.

"You start with a mustard seed," said Nancy Heisey, MWC president from 2003–2009. Alongside several other leaders, she reflected on the global communion past, present and future in this issue (see pages 3–6). In response to Jesus' prayer, the Anabaptist "tree" has grown up over these 100 years.

God is the one who gathers diversities of race, language, culture, ethnicity, gender, wealth, ethics and theology, and calls it to unity, Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, said to the General Council in 2018.

Indeed, the diversities within MWC have grown, as shown on our timeline (pages 6–11). We have grown from European and North American church leaders gathering every half decade or so, to leaders from 61 countries from 5 continental regions in ongoing relationship over the years. We have grown from a few pastors and scholars to a network of interconnected preachers, teachers, missionaries, activists, development workers and more.

Although the cultural differences in how we live out our common faith sometimes surprise us, it is theological diversity that most often challenges our unity.

The apostle Paul uses the metaphor of being "chained" to Christ in Ephesians 4. Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, suggested that analogy may be useful for our communion of churches: "You need chains for what does not easily hold together."

For 100 years now, up to 110 national member churches of MWC and the thousands of congregations that make up those entities have chosen to identify with this family. This family is not necessarily in a state of harmony, much less uniformity nor agreement on all things. Instead, "Unity is God's gift, not our achievement," said Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld.


May we receive this gift for another 100 years – with all its challenges – in the spirit of following Jesus: with humility, patience and forgiveness as we suffer with (and, at times, because of!) each other.

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



Scan here to read "Gathered into one" from 2018

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## Courier Correo Courier 50



### Volume 40, Number 2 & 3

*Courier/Correo/Courrier* is a publication of Mennonite World Conference. It is published four times a year, containing inspirational essays, study and teaching documents and feature-length articles. Each edition is published in English, Spanish and French.

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*Courier/Correo/Courrier* (ISSN 1041-4436) is published four times a year: issues 2 and 4 in print and digital; issues 1 and 3 in digital format only.

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Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1 Canada.  
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## Shared Convictions of Global Anabaptists

By the grace of God, we seek to live and proclaim the good news of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As part of the one body of Christ at all times and places, we hold the following to be central to our belief and practice:

- 1 God is known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.
- 2 Jesus is the Son of God. Through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples, redeemed the world and offers eternal life.
- 3 As a church, we are a community of those whom God's Spirit calls to turn from an acknowledgment Jesus Christ as Lord, receive baptism upon confession of faith, and follow Christ in life.
- 4 As a faith community, we accept the Bible as our authority for faith and life, interpreting it together under Holy Spirit guidance, in the light of Jesus Christ to discern God's will for our obedience.
- 5 The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life so we become peacemakers who renounce violence, love our enemies, seek justice and share our possessions with those in need.
- 6 We gather regularly to worship, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to hear the Word of God in a spirit of mutual accountability.
- 7 As a worldwide community of faith and life, we transcend boundaries of nationality, race, class, gender and language. We seek to live in the world without conforming to the powers of evil, witnessing to God's grace by serving others, caring for creation and inviting all people to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

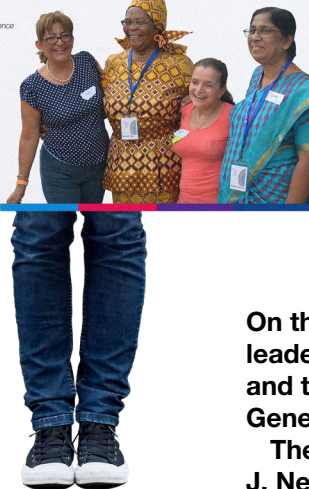
In these convictions we draw inspiration from Anabaptist forebears of the 16th century, who modelled radical discipleship to Jesus Christ. We seek to walk in his name by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we confidently await Christ's return and the final fulfillment of God's kingdom.

Adapted by Mennonite World Conference General Council March 15, 2006

Mennonite World Conference  
A Community of Anabaptist  
Peacemakers

Congreso Mundial Menonita  
Una Comunidad de  
Paz y Justicia

Conférence Mennonite Mondiale  
Une Communauté  
d'Églises Anabaptiques



# Reflect back to reflect forward

## Contributors



**Danisa Ndlovu,**  
president  
(2009–2015)



**J. Nelson Kraybill,**  
president  
(2015–2022)



**Larry Miller,**  
general secretary  
(1990–2012)



**Nancy Heisey,**  
president  
(2003–2009)

**“Can we elevate heroes of peacemaking in the global communion and tell their stories, not just the stories of martyrs from 500 years ago?”**

On this 100th anniversary of Mennonite World Conference, leaders were gathered at Schönblick, Germany, in May to celebrate and to continue the work of MWC through the gathering of the General Council.

The *Courier* editor gathered former leaders (Danisa Ndlovu, J. Nelson Kraybill, Larry Miller, Nancy Heisey) to reflect on the “sweet memories” of watching MWC become a global communion and on our call to have the courage to love and to speak as a peace church to strife in the world today.

## Convictions

The Shared Convictions of MWC came out of a 13-year process from beginning, through drafts, to approval at the General Council.

Some 34 or more Confessions of Faith had been collected from member churches around the world.

“We were emailing back and forth” – “maybe even by fax!” inserts Larry Miller – “looking for commonalities,” says Nelson Kraybill, who was involved in drafting the document.

“It felt like a spiritual moment to actually see in these documents: *these are the things we have in common*,” Nelson Kraybill says. “Follow Christ; peacemaking; mission.”

“We took the statement about we are Anabaptist from the top to the bottom,” says Nancy Heisey. “The top says: *As part of the one body of Christ at all times and places*,... Rather than starting out with: *We are Anabaptists*, we started out with: *the church of Jesus Christ*.”

“At the end, as we adopt these: *we draw inspiration from Anabaptist forebears of the 16th century*. That was a really critical decision,” says Nancy Heisey.

“We intended that beginning and ending to be just as important as the seven points,” says Nelson Kraybill.

**“We value thinking corporately in MWC and that is good,” says Nelson. “But there are times when we can’t wait a month for all the committee work before speaking.”**

The meeting in Pasadena where the General Council approved the Shared Convictions in 2006 was the first one to use the consensus model.

“Nancy (then president) was sitting on the left, Danisa (then vice-president) on the right and one word was still problematic. Jesus Christ *incarnate*,” remembers Larry Miller.

“The North American delegates were in the back defending the word *incarnate*, which had been inserted during the General Council meetings in Zimbabwe.

“Joren Basumata was a warm, quiet laughing fellow from India. He didn’t speak much in meetings. But he rose then to say: *If you include that word, I can’t use this in India. All the gods in India are incarnate.*

“All the blue cards (disagreement) instantly switched to orange (agreement).”

The whole process of how the Shared Convictions came about illustrates how MWC can work together according to the mission of being a global community of faith.

“The Shared Convictions were intended not to replace what churches have already discerned but to affirm what we share together,” says Larry Miller – “what we hold in common,” Nelson Kraybill adds.

“My prayer is that we continue to use them that way and not become a bone of contention,” says Nancy Heisey.

“We shouldn’t be the place where you create a synthesis of something by majority vote, trying to reconcile various opinions. Instead, it’s a place where the gathered body receives their revelation and offers it to the world and sees what happens,” Larry Miller says.



Photo supplied

**The 2003 MWC global Assembly in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, faced many challenges but the theme of “Sharing Gifts in Suffering” brought participants together.**

“It’s been astounding to see how broadly the Shared Convictions have been used,” says Larry Miller. “Affirming what we share together has been very meaningful as we try to work out how to be God’s people in the world.” to wisdom from other places if we want to keep being a church.”

### Fellowship

The global Assembly in Zimbabwe in 2003 was formative in MWC’s mission of facilitating relationships between Anabaptist-related churches worldwide. The country was under dictatorial rule. There was an economic crisis with the host of challenges that come along with hyperinflation. Yet Anabaptists from around the world intended to meet to worship together.

Some 34 or more Confessions of Faith had been collected from member churches around the world.

“We had long discussions whether to even go,” said Nancy Heisey.

“We didn’t want to impose more suffering on the church there,” said Larry Miller. “But the Brethren in Christ would say: *Where is your faith?*”

The BIC Church (BICC) sent a letter to the Netherlands where the Doopsgezind were concerned (as they had been regarding

Assembly in Brazil in 1972) about appearing to support a regime by attending.

“It’s not the government that is inviting you; it is the church!” BICC Zimbabwe responded. The Dutch Mennonites came.

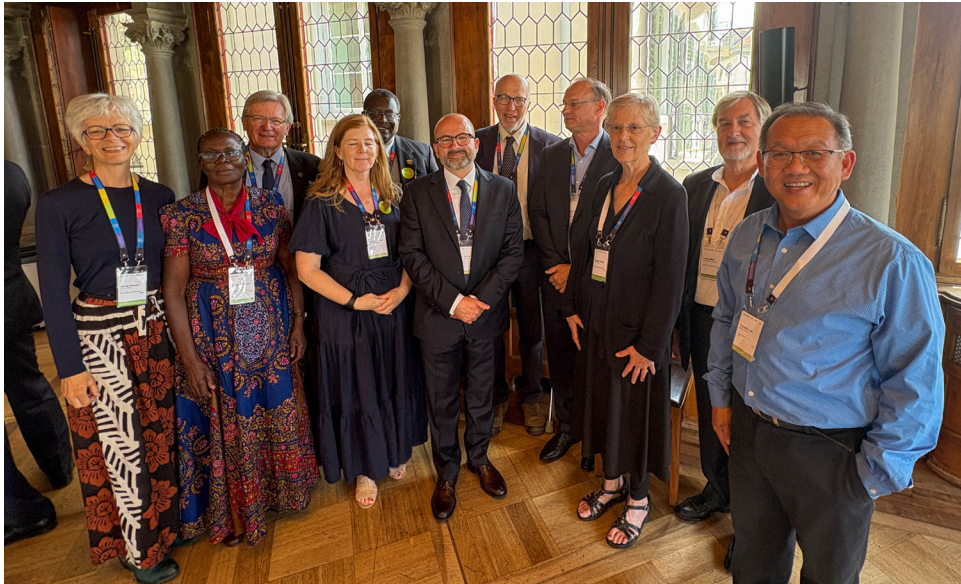
Organizers encouraged attendees to bring a small gift of tea or sugar for the hosts. “I’ll never forget three men from Angolan who had brought bags of dried fish. What an amazing sign of what we want to be for one another,” says Nancy Heisey.

“We were looking at the whole thing from two different worlds,” says Danisa Ndlovu. “From a Zimbabwean African context, we have a saying *The tummy of a stranger is as big as the horn of a god*. When a stranger comes, there will be communion, fellowship. You don’t say: *Why is he coming here to eat the little that I have!*”

“The world has its own stuff going out there, but we as a church can still gather and be a church together,” said Danisa Ndlovu. “The Assembly theme, *Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy*, helped to bring that together. People left with the feeling that it was good to come.”

“That was a foundational experience in our movement toward understanding our global body as a communion,” says Larry Miller.





Kristina Toews

Present and former MWC leaders at an ecumenical reception in Zurich in 2025 (l-r): Janet Plenert, former vice president (Canada); Rebecca Osiro, former vice president (Kenya); Henk Stenvers, president (Netherlands); Lisa Carr-Pries vice president (Canada); Danisa Ndlovu, former president (Zimbabwe); César García, general secretary (Colombia); J. Nelson Kraybill, former president (USA); Ernst Bergen, former treasurer (Paraguay); Nancy Heisey, former president (USA); Larry Miller, general secretary emeritus (USA/France); Sunoko Lin, treasurer (Indonesia/USA).

## Unity

Part of MWC's mission is to relate to other Christian world communions and organizations.

MWC's first secretary to serve as paid staff Paul Kraybill became involved with the conference of secretaries of Christian world communions. This is a gathering of leaders from organized Christian bodies in the world.

Since then, every MWC general secretary has joined the group. César García and Larry Miller have also been called upon to serve as the group's chair. "We decided consciously to engage in those spaces. When they call on us, that recognizes a gift from the Mennonite world," says Larry Miller.

"Part of MWC's work is to help moments of reconciliation in the ecumenical movement grow, both at level of international and national dialogues and ongoing challenges of getting them out to where people are living and worshipping," he says.

"You start with a mustard seed," says Nancy Heisey.

Early seeds of MWC's 2025 reconciliation with the World Communion of Reformed Churches were planted in 1952 when then president H.S. Bender attended an official event at the Grossmünster.

Another seed was what the Lutherans call "the Mennonite Action" in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, in 2010. This apology for the repudiation of Anabaptists in the Augsburg Confession was the culmination of a long process.

The president of LWF brought the action to delegates and said: *We would like to you approve this action either by standing or kneeling in prayer*, Larry Miller remembered. "Suddenly, everyone one was on their knees or standing. The only ones sitting were Mennonite guests."

"I couldn't hold my tears," says Danisa Ndlovu. "It was incredible to see those people on their knees. It was like electricity, a shock; they all fell down."

"As that story has moved its way through the ecumenical world, people who study these things have lifted that out as a new form of *reception*: not only us accepting



Mennonite World Conference

The Healing Memories report was one of the fruits of ecumenical dialogue that MWC has invested in over the years.

documents but also receiving each other in our worship," says Larry Miller.

The worship service in Zurich on 29 May 2025 is a dramatic representation of that "reception" as an *experienced unity*, not necessarily a unity of agreement. In the Grossmünster on that day, it was not just theologians and church authorities in discussion but ordinary people in worship, in liturgy, in life; Mennonites and Reformed in this place of historic division.

## Witness

Growing into being a communion has been accompanied by this care for one another, and learning to find our voice collectively.

"Situations can be diverse, but speaking to the situation is critical. Public words must be well thought; people that see our statement must see integrity in us," says Danisa Ndlovu. "Hurriedly chosen words can bring more fire into a situation instead of reconciliation."

"After decades in ecumenical movement, I am dubious of the impact of statements – except perhaps on ourselves. Perhaps they are most effective when there is suffering



Henk Stenvers

The MB church in Panama (Iglesia Evangélica Unida Hermanos Menonitas de Panamá) worships during a solidarity visit from the Peace and Deacons Commissions in 2015.

in some place in our body that we are speaking about and to. There can be impact especially if it is growing out of our own *pathos*,” says Larry Miller.

When the General Council met in Guatemala in 2000, the African caucus called for a statement about the violence in Eastern DR Congo. Although there were no MWC member churches in that region at the time, “We decided that because so many member churches had a sense of need and engagement with the conflict, we needed to say something,” says Nancy Heisey.

“There was a lot of caution, but I remember saying strongly, *we should write the letter*,” says Danisa Ndlovu.

A year later, the church in DRC wrote a fraternal letter to church in USA just after 9/11 (the attacks on World Trade Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington).

“That was really significant,” says Nancy Heisey.

As a resident of the USA, she was again touched by a message from the global church just after the USA election in 2024. *I want you to know I’m praying for you*, wrote a professor at CEMTA (Centro Evangélico Menonita de Teología Asunción) in Paraguay.

Having lived under military dictatorship,

“he understands what authoritarianism means for the church, with all the complexities of how Mennonites navigated that,” Nancy Heisey says.

“I don’t know where the world is going, but I think that North Americans – churches – are going to have to tune in a lot more to wisdom from other places if we want to keep being a church.”

“I have appreciated the current use of pastoral letters that call to prayer. I would encourage using that format to address not only our own immediate concerns but also prayer for wisdom to navigate; how we should be thinking about doing; encouraging us to search our hearts about our mission; how we express our peace witness in the face of concrete situations today,” says Nancy Heisey.

“Those calls to prayer go out broadly. People in congregations at an ordinary level may actually listen. It’s striking what comes up in our Online Prayer Hour breakout groups, for example.”

“Part of it is to help our own constituency in terms of ‘what are we saying.’ It gives direction and some form of unifying, rallying together around an issue,” says Danisa Ndlovu.

“It connects to our role as a peace church,” says Nelson Kraybill. “We need



Rise and Shine Anabaptist Mennonite Church

Rise and Shine Anabaptist Mennonite Church in the Philippines celebrates Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday.

to continue to strengthen relationship and bonds of love and fellowship in global Anabaptist communion, always with peacemaking and mission held together.

“If we can continue to strengthen those internal relationships in the global body – theology of *salaam/shalom* – then each regional part of the church needs to embody that in their area. We stand with them. We pray with them. We have a call to prayer if there’s a concern. It’s the spiritual bond that will have the most lasting effect rather than political statements,” he says.

“I don’t think we should be politicizing, but we can be people who are trying to do what their faith calls them to do,” says Nancy Heisey. “I put in every letter I write [to my political representatives] *that I am a Mennonite Christian and my people care about this*. There is power in being able to say: *My world church is calling us to prayer on this issue*. As Bishop Charles Nseemani from BICC Zambia said: *We can go talk to our leaders, but they should know we are coming as Christians not as partisans*.”

“When you say Mennonite, people think peace,” says Danisa Ndlovu. “We are known as an Historic Peace Church. If we use it wisely, it’s a good testimony.”



# MWC timeline

## Assemblies

### Global participation

(A membership structure was not formalized until 1952 when European and North American conferences officially joined. In 1972, a further adjustment to membership structure allowed for delegates from national churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Accordingly, earlier numbers refer to attendees, not necessarily members according to today's definition)

### Organizational development

### Ecumenical relationships






#### PHOTO

- 1 1925 Switzerland
- 2 1936 Netherlands
- 3 1952 Switzerland
- 4 1930 Poland
- 5 1948 USA

#### ICON

- ★ First
- 💧 Young leaders



 1	 2	 3			
<div>1925</div> <div><b>Assembly 1:</b> Commemoration of the anniversary of the founding of Anabaptism <b>President:</b> Christian Neff (Germany) Basel, Switzerland <b>1925:</b> 13-16 June • from 5 countries</div>	<div>1936</div> <div><b>Assembly 3:</b> 400th anniversary of Menno Simons' conversion and baptism <b>President:</b> Christian Neff (Germany) Amsterdam, Elspeet &amp; Witmarsum, Netherlands <b>1936:</b> 29 June–3 July ★ Assembly participant from Latin America</div>	<div>1952</div> <div><b>Assembly 5:</b> “The church of Christ and her commission” <b>President:</b> Harold S. Bender (USA) Basel &amp; Zurich, Switzerland <b>1952:</b> 10–15 August</div>			
1925	1930	1936	1948	1952	→
	<div>1930</div> <div><b>Assembly 2:</b> Mennonite relief work, Mennonites in the USSR <b>President:</b> Christian Neff (Germany) Free City of Danzig (now part of Poland) <b>1930:</b> 31 August–3 September</div>		<div>1948</div> <div><b>Assembly 4:</b> Brotherhood and reconciliation <b>President:</b> Harold S. Bender (USA) Goshen, Indiana &amp; Newton, Kansas, USA <b>1948:</b> 3–10 August • from 10 countries ★ Assembly participant from Asia (Indonesia)</div>		
 4			 5		

# PHOTO

- 6 1957 Germany
- 7 1972 Brazil
- 8 1984 France
- 9 1997 India
- 10 2003 Zimbabwe
- 11 2009 Paraguay
- 12 2009 Canada
- 13 2013 Angola

# ICON

- ★ First
- 💧 Young leaders

**1962**

**Assembly 7:**  
The Lordship of Christ  
**President:**  
Harold S. Bender (USA)  
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada  
**1962:** 1–7 August

- ★ Assembly participant from Africa
- ★ executive secretary named

**1967**

**Assembly 8:**  
The witness of the Holy Spirit  
**President:** Erland Waltner (USA)  
Amsterdam, Netherlands  
**1967:** 23–30 July

- constitution approved
- travel fund initiated

**1978**

**Assembly 10:**  
The Kingdom of God in a changing world  
**President:**  
Million Belete (Ethiopia)  
Wichita, Kansas, USA  
**1978:** 25–30 July

- from 48 countries
- new constitution adopted (General Council expanded to include 70 national churches in 38 countries)
- world directory published
- World Fellowship Sunday initiated
- full-time staff person hired and permanent office established (USA)
- ★ president from Asia: Charles Christano (Indonesia)

**1989**

- Baptist/Mennonite dialogue

**1990**

**Assembly 12:**  
Witnessing to Christ in today's world  
**President:**  
Ross T. Bender (USA)  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
**1990:** 24–29 July

- permanent office moved to France

**1993**

- Fair Share financial system developed

**1994**

- ★ global majority shifts South

**1957**

**1957**

**Assembly 6:**  
The gospel of Jesus Christ in the world  
**President:**  
Harold S. Bender (USA)  
Karlsruhe, Germany  
**1957:** 10–16 August

- from 17 countries
- draft constitution adopted



6

**1962, 1967**

**1972-1975**

**1972**

**Assembly 9:**  
Jesus Christ reconciles  
**President:** Erland Waltner (USA)  
Curitiba, Brazil  
**1972:** 18–23 July

- ★ Assembly outside of Europe or North America (Brazil)
- from 33 countries

**1973**

- executive secretary became first part-time, paid staff
- ★ president from Africa: Million Belete (Ethiopia)

**1975**

- ★ mission consultation



7

**1978**

**1984, 1986**

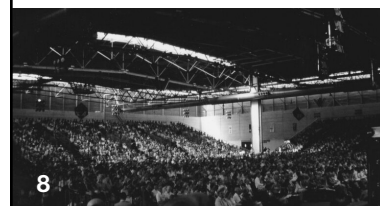
**1984**

**Assembly 11:**  
“God’s people serve in hope”  
**President:**  
Charles Christano (Indonesia)  
Strasbourg, France  
**1984:** 24–29 July

- from 69 countries
- Reformed/Mennonite dialogue

**1986**

- International Mennonite Peace Committee becomes an MWC committee
- Faith & Life Committee initiated



8

**1989-1994**





9

Mennonite Library & Archives

1997

### Assembly 13:

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches

#### President:

Raúl García (Argentina)  
Calcutta, India

1997: 6–12 January

- “Statement of Mutual Expectations” adopted with Mennonite Central Committee
- Global Church Sharing Fund initiated
- Global History Series book project initiated
- global Peace and Justice Network initiated



10

Submitted. Source unknown

2003

### Assembly 14:

Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy

#### President:

Mesach Krisetya (Indonesia)  
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

2003: 11–17 August

- Global Mission Fellowship created
- ★ woman appointed as president
- ★ Global Youth Summit in Zimbabwe



11

Wilhem Unger

2009

### Assembly 15:

Come together in the way of Jesus Christ

President: Nancy Heisey (USA)  
Asunción, Paraguay

2009: 14–29 July

- new constitution adopted along with vision, mission, membership rubric
- regional representatives volunteer staff role created
- ★ Global Youth Summit in Paraguay

1997

1998–2000

2003

2004–2006

2009

2010, 2011



1998

- “God call us to Christian unity” statement accepted by General Council
- introduced Catholic/Mennonite dialogue

1999

- Réseau Francophone Mennonite (francophone network) initiated
- Executive Committee supported “communion” to define MWC and undertook a systematic review and revision of the MWC constitution.

2000

- Global Anabaptist Shelf of Literature book project initiated
- ★ global youth exchange YAMEN! Developed

2004

- ★ youth continuation committee formed, later named AMIGOS

2005

- Lutheran/Mennonite dialogue

2006

- Commissions created: Deacons, Faith & Life, Mission, Peace
- Executive Secretary role renamed General Secretary
- Peace Sunday announced
- Shared Convictions adopted



12

Ray Brubacher

2010

- ★ Executive Committee approved the Youth Task Force’s proposal to form the YABs Committee and YABs Network
- Lutheran/Mennonite reconciliation

2011

- Adventist/Mennonite dialogue



13

Submitted. Source unknown


**2012**

- ★ first General Secretary appointed from the Global South
- permanent office moved to Colombia
- new organization chart developed
- Global Anabaptist Service Network created
- Trilateral dialogue on baptism (Catholic/Lutheran/Mennonite)

Submitted. Source unknown


**2016**

- YABs Fellowship Week initiated

**2017**

- Renewal: a decade of commemoration launched

**2019**

- General Secretary moved to work out of Canada office

Henk Stenvers



Tiz Brotsudarmo

**2022**

**Assembly 17:**  
Following Jesus together across barriers

**President:**

J. Nelson Kraybill (USA)  
Salatiga, Indonesia

**2022:** 5–10 July

- Global Anabaptist Networks expanded to include Peace, Education
- Global Youth Summit in Indonesia

2012

2015

2016-2019

2020, 2021

2022

2025

#### PHOTO

- 14 2012 Italy
- 15 2017 Germany
- 16 2022 Indonesia
- 17 2015 USA
- 18 2021 Colombia
- 19 2025 Switzerland

#### ICON

- ★ First
- Young leaders

**2015**

**Assembly 16:**  
Walking with God

**President:**

Danisa Ndlovu (Zimbabwe)  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA

**2015:** 21–26 July

- from 57 countries
- Global Youth Summit in USA
- consultation on Believers Baptism (Baptist/Church of the Brethren/Disciples of Christ/Pentecostal/Churches of Christ)



MWC photo

**2020**

- Creation Care Task Force created

**2021**

- Colombia office closed due to global pandemic



José Vaca

**2025**

**Anabaptism@500:**  
The Courage to Love

**President:**

Henk Stenvers (Netherlands)  
Zurich, Switzerland

**2025:** 29 May

- from 61 countries: 110 national member churches
- ★ Global Youth Summit in Germany (first triennial event)
- 100-year anniversary of MWC celebrated in Germany
- Reformed/Mennonite reconciliation



Dale Gehman





# Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday

## Worship Resources

1 Theme and texts	a. Theme: <b>Solidarity</b>	b. Why this theme was chosen:  Our MWC tagline lists “living out unity” as a core part of our identity. We exercise solidarity with our fellow Anabaptists across denominational lines locally, around the world, with the body of Christ more broadly, and with partners in building peace and pursuing justice.  Solidarity is another word for the connection we exercise within the body of Christ. Unity expressed through actions reverberates beyond our efforts: we raise our voices and our finances in support; we stand together and lift each other up; we pay attention so that no one is left behind.	c. Biblical text options:  <b>Old Testament:</b> Micah 6-7  <b>Psalms:</b> Psalm 40:1-11  <b>Gospel:</b> Luke 10:25-37  <b>New Testament:</b> 1 Corinthians 13:13	d. Relationship between the theme and biblical texts:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The directive to “act justly, love mercy and walk humbly” tells us how to come alongside others in need</li> <li>• The psalmist rejoices in God’s blessings which can be celebrated “in the great assembly”, just as we extend the blessings we receive with those with whom we stand in solidarity</li> <li>• The Good Samaritan shows costly solidarity and flips our ideas of who is “worthy”</li> <li>• Paul’s letter reminds us that love is above all</li> </ul>
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## 2 Prayer requests

### Prayer requests from MWC

- We give thanks for your creation with all of its beauty and diversity on earth and in the heavens. Your call to solidarity extends to all things you created.
- Lord, we seek your forgiveness for our failures to walk alongside our neighbours in times of need. We seek your courage and power to live out powerful human solidarity that builds the kingdom of God on earth even with people with whom we disagree.
- Together we pray that we may listen and respond to the Holy Spirit’s transforming power that we would have the courage to extend our agency to support others.
- We commit ourselves to solidarity inter-generationally: to listen to and learn from the young people in our midst, who face struggles with employment; to listen and learn from elders, who may be discouraged from a loss of their roles, and to all who struggle with loneliness in a busy and chaotic world.
- As peacemakers, we stand in solidarity for victims of war – within our communion and without – and we demand an end to the organized violence that only tears down.
- Pray for the current needs in the MWC family as expressed on the MWC prayers page:  
[mwc-cmm.org/prayers](http://mwc-cmm.org/prayers)

## 3 Song suggestions

### Songs are from the 2022 edition unless otherwise marked

#### Africa #22

*Somlandela / We will follow / Je te suivrai / Seguiremos*

#### Asia: #12

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

#### Europe (new)

[We want justice we want peace](#)

#### Latin America: #27 (2015)

*Canción para resistir / Song of resistance*

#### North America: #39

*You’re not alone / Tu n’es pas seul / Kau Tak Sendiri*

Song videos available online at

[mwc-cmm.org/awfs](http://mwc-cmm.org/awfs).

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



## 4 Resources in this package

### In this package

- Liturgies and symbols for gathering and benediction
- Sermons
- Testimonies from Europe
- Tithes and offering suggestions
- Celebration ideas
- Children's activity
- Poster

## 5 Additional resources

See [mwc-cmm.org/awfs](http://mwc-cmm.org/awfs)

- Videos
- Photos
- Celebration map
- Anabaptist historical context  
[mwc-cmm.org/en/stories/how-mennonites-came-be/](http://mwc-cmm.org/en/stories/how-mennonites-came-be/)

## 6 Offering

### One Lunch Offering

- MWC invites congregations to take a special offering for our global Anabaptist communion on Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday. One way to do this is to invite every member to contribute the cost of at least one lunch in their own community to support the core ministries and Commissions of MWC. This is a manageable amount in every MWC member church around the world.
- Go to [page 15](#) for more ideas to celebrate a special offering time for Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday.



Roopam Rao

Mennonite Church Rajnandgaon, India



Jean-Luc Husser Béthel, France

Eglise Evangélique Mennonite "Béthel", Algosheim, France



Photo supplied

Amagugu Evangeli, Zimbabwe

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

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📷 Please send your photos and testimonies regarding your celebration to [photos@mwc-cmm.org](mailto:photos@mwc-cmm.org)



## Share a gift today!

### 2025 is a year to remember.

For this year of global Anabaptist milestones, let your generosity shine by supporting the worldwide Anabaptist family through a gift to the Mennonite World Conference.

Together, we can make a difference!  
Thank you for your support.

## Online prayer hour

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

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

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

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

Visit [mwc-cmm.org/online-prayer-hour-registration](https://mwc-cmm.org/online-prayer-hour-registration) to register for the next online prayer meeting.



### Next events: 14:00 UTC

- Friday, 16 January 2026
- Friday, 20 March 2026
- Friday, 15 May 2026
- Friday, 17 July 2026



Preshit Rao

## Commission News

# A tangible source of support and testimony

## Commissions and MWC over 100 years



Photo supplied

**The MWC delegation of Commission members and Officers listened deeply on a visit to DR Congo after the crisis in Kasai in 2018.**

*In the 2009 constitution of MWC, the General Council established standing commissions – Deacons, Faith & Life, Mission, Peace – “on matters of vital concern to the MWC community of churches.”*

*The tasks of Commissions are to prepare issues or materials for consideration by the General Council, give guidance and propose resources to MWC or member churches and facilitate MWC-related networks or fellowships working together on matters of common interest and focus.*

*From the perspective of the Peace Commission, Joji Pantoja shares how the Commission contributed to fellowship, worship, service or witness within the global Anabaptist communion, and how it played its role for MWC to be a global community of faith in the Anabaptist tradition.*

During my time as chair, the Commission worked to translate our peace theology into tangible global witness. Three powerful moments stand out, each showing a different facet of our peace witness.

The first was our work with the Wounaan in Panama, where a community visit led to MWC advocating with their government to protect their sacred Cocobolo trees and their role as forest guardians.

This was peace as concrete, rooted action – defending God’s creation and the communities that sustain it.

The second was the creation of a general statement from MWC affirming our support for Indigenous Peoples’ rights worldwide. This was peace as prophetic positioning. The Commission was instrumental in drafting this, drawing on biblical principles of justice.

This statement moved us from reacting to crises to proactively defining our global identity, giving every member church a theological foundation for solidarity.

The third was our direct intervention for a conscientious objector in Korea, a member of our global family imprisoned for his faith-based refusal to participate in military training. Here, our peace witness became pastoral advocacy. The Commission mobilized all parts of MWC to advocate for his freedom, affirming that our theological stance on peace has real-world consequences for our members.

This action demonstrated that the Commission is not only about broad statements but also about standing with individuals whose lives embody our core convictions, ensuring our global communion is a tangible source of support and witness.

## Cherished memory

I remember the profound silence in the room after we heard the Wounaan elder speak of the forest as a relative. That

moment of shared conviction, where our theology met their lived reality, was sacred.

Similarly, I hold dear the patient and prayerful journey of drafting the Solidarity Statement with Indigenous Peoples. This was not a swift process; it took nearly two years to finalize the position paper. This lengthy period was not a delay, but a necessary season of fellowship. We listened, debated, and refined the text to ensure it truly represented our diverse global family.

The moment when everything was finally harmonized and we adopted it together was incredibly powerful. We were not just approving a document; we were witnessing the fruit of sustained, collective discernment, truly living out the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

### Future

I dream of the Commission creating practical toolkits for churches on how to engage in local truth and reconciliation processes, or facilitating partnerships where churches with experience in land justice can mentor others.

Let's move from making powerful statements to empowering a thousand local witnesses, all connected and strengthened by our global communion.

—Felicitas (Jojji) Pantoja (Philippines),  
Peace Commission, chair (2015-2022)

*Comments from other Commissions:*

### Deacons

“The very important and significant work of the Deacons Commission to walk with the churches in time of suffering and duress as well as in times of rejoicing to encourage our brothers and sisters was and will continue to be as it began in Acts 6:1-7. These experiences truly brought and will continue to bring our communities in closer relationship to be “salt” and “light” to the world”.

—Cynthia Peacock (India), chair (2009-2015)

### Faith & Life

“We developed a dynamic working session where different members prepared case studies about weighty matters that had been decided – sometimes with great difficulty or conflict) in their national

or regional churches. I was thankful for this opportunity to work together with the whole Commission on this task, drawing on experience from all five continents, and learning so much about ourselves in the process.”

—Anicka Fast (Canada), secretary (2023- )

### Mission

“It felt good and right to us and to the Spirit to finally join together Anabaptist bodies from around the world who were engaged in mission. Why wouldn't we cooperate? Why wouldn't we collaborate!?”

—Janet Plenert (Canada), GMF chair (2009)



Janet Plenert

**The Executive Committee uses coloured cards for consensus voting in 2009.**



Karla Braun

**A mix of new and term-ed out Faith & Life Commission members in Germany in 2025 (l-r):** Desalegn Abebe (Ethiopia); Gloria Fumana, GAPSEN representative (Canada); Atsuhiko Katano (Japan); Thomas R Yoder Neufeld, chair, termed-out (Canada); Rebeca Gonzalez Torres (Mexico); Anne-Cathy Graber, secretary for ecumenical relations (France); Tim Geddert, chair, new (USA); Lydia Adi (Indonesia); Anicka Fast, secretary (Canada); Victor Wall, GAHEN representative; Francis Dzivor (Malawi).



### New Officer appointed

At the General Council meetings in 2025, it was decided that the Executive Committee should appoint an additional non-voting officer to ensure full continental representation.

Siaka Traoré has been appointed, effective immediately.

“For me, this appointment expresses MWC's desire to include all members from all parts of the world in the management of the organization's life. In view of its make-up, MWC has adopted the image of a mosaic. By joining the team of officers, we want to make this mosaic visible,” said Siaka Traoré.



### Regional representatives

Two regional representatives are coming to the table in December 2025:

Vikal Pravin Rao, representing nine national member churches in two countries in South Asia and Rosalina Vasco Santana, who will co-represent the Southern Cone region of Latin America with 18 national member churches in six countries.





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Photo: Roopam Rao

## 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.

When you contribute, you are building on the faithful actions laid by Jesus followers across five centuries and in more than 61 countries today.

- 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](https://mwc-cmm.org/donate) to give now or send your contribution to

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

## The Officers' Column

# Courage to Love: A 500-year witness

On 21 January 1525, a small group of believers in Zurich, Switzerland, gathered in secret, driven by a conviction rooted in Scripture.

They longed for a church that was faithful to the way of Jesus, a community where baptism marked a personal, conscious decision to follow Christ. This act of courage, defying tradition and risking persecution, marked the birth of the Anabaptist Mennonite movement.

As we celebrate our 500th anniversary, we remember that beginning with gratitude and humility through the theme Courage to Love, inspired by 1 John 4:7-21 and Psalm 136.

1 John 4:7-21 calls us to love one another, for "love comes from God."

This is the centre of our identity: we love because God first loved us in Christ. The first Anabaptists' courage to act on their faith was a response to God's perfect love, which "casts out fear."

Similarly, the psalmist repeatedly sings, "God's steadfast love endures forever" (Psalm 136). This refrain reminds us that God's love has carried our church through persecution, suffering and renewal.

Today, Mennonite World Conference carries this legacy forward. As we honour 1525, we are reminded that our movement began not with an argument but with an act of love. The first Anabaptists risked everything. Their love is not timid but is enduring and active.

Let us embody such an act – the courage to love. The courage to forgive when wronged. The courage to resist violence with peace. And the courage to follow Jesus even when the way is costly.

**Sunoko Lin is MWC treasurer. Originally from Indonesia, he now lives in Los Angeles, California, USA, where he pastors Maranatha Christian Fellowship, a congregation of LMC: A Fellowship of Anabaptist Churches.**



Moses Kuldeep

**Bethel Mennonite Church Jagdeeshpur, India, shares a fellowship meal as part of their Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday celebration.**

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Photo: Irma Sulistyorini

## Living together as one

### MWC: One hundred years of communion

In circumstances remarkably similar to today's, a group of Mennonites set out on a pilgrimage from South Russia (today's Ukraine) to Zurich, Switzerland, in 1925. They carried a message from the *All Russian Conference of Mennonites* to present at the first global gathering of the Mennonite World Conference.

The delegation expressed these aspirations in their letter: "We welcome the idea of establishing a Mennonite World Union, whose unanimous expression should be a meeting of representatives of all Mennonites in the world."

Creating a global, diverse Mennonite organization would enhance the church, especially among the dispersed smaller groups. It could facilitate funding for church-based schools, encourage mission activities, assist the needy and suffering, address migration challenges, and establish a global directory.

The letter brought an inspiring message of mutuality, of global solidarity, and of hope for unity in the midst of dramatic diversity.

Have times changed? Or do we still need to be reminded of the critical importance of unity given the diversity of our own experiences?

More than 2 500 years ago, another group began a pilgrimage from further East to Jerusalem, carrying a message to be shared among the communities of other Jewish exiled groups. We know this message today as Psalm 133, which begins:

*"Look at how good and pleasing it is when families live together as one!"  
(Psalm 133:1, CEB)*

By singing this song every year, exiles discovered that **"living together as one"** is a gift from God, a tangible and attractive reality.

#### A gift from God

The passage discusses how the oil and dew *descend*. These images illustrate how the psalmist envisioned the *togetherness* of the Israelites: it is bestowed by God. True *togetherness* cannot be constructed or attained through human agreements on doctrines or practices; it is a divine gift.

#### An attractive reality

*Togetherness* is a blessing that attracts further blessings. It is a fulfilling life that extends outward – a fragrance that spreads, a dew that permeates. Just as a pleasant aroma draws attention, the *togetherness* of God's people is something everyone longs to experience. When discovered, it becomes irresistible.

#### A tangible reality

The first word after the title of Psalm 133, the Hebrew word *hinneh* – meaning "look" or "behold" – holds great significance. By inviting us to "look," the text suggests that the *togetherness* of God's people is not merely a "spiritual" concept. Nor is it something we will experience only after death. The *togetherness* of God's people is a *tangible reality* that can be seen and felt here and now.

For centuries, Christian theologians have seen in this psalm a foretaste of the New Testament concept of *being one* or *communion*, where *togetherness* is not understood as uniformity or unison, but harmony amidst diversity.

Like the Israelites in their exile, the Mennonite delegation in 1925 envisioned an organization that would embody *oneness* as a tangible reality. They yearned to be part of a body bigger than themselves, global in nature.

They envisioned an organization embodying this *oneness*.

And today?

We are living out what the delegation envisioned 100 years ago.

This hoped-for fellowship has taken the form of Mennonite World Conference (MWC).

We strive to embody communion.

We facilitate interdependent work in ministries of education, mission and peace.

We assist churches struggling under suffering and work on many other endeavours in the search for facilitating oneness.

As we celebrate this 100-year anniversary, let us remember that *oneness* is a gift from God. Let's be drawn to it. Let's make it tangible. Let's pray that our *oneness* may offer hope to our churches in times of suffering and oppression, and to a world that disintegrates amid violence, nationalism, fragmentation and polarization.

César García, MWC general secretary, originally from Colombia, lives in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. This article is adapted from his 100th anniversary sermon delivered at Schönblick, Germany, on 25 May 2025.