

Courier Correo Courier

Volume 41, Number 3



**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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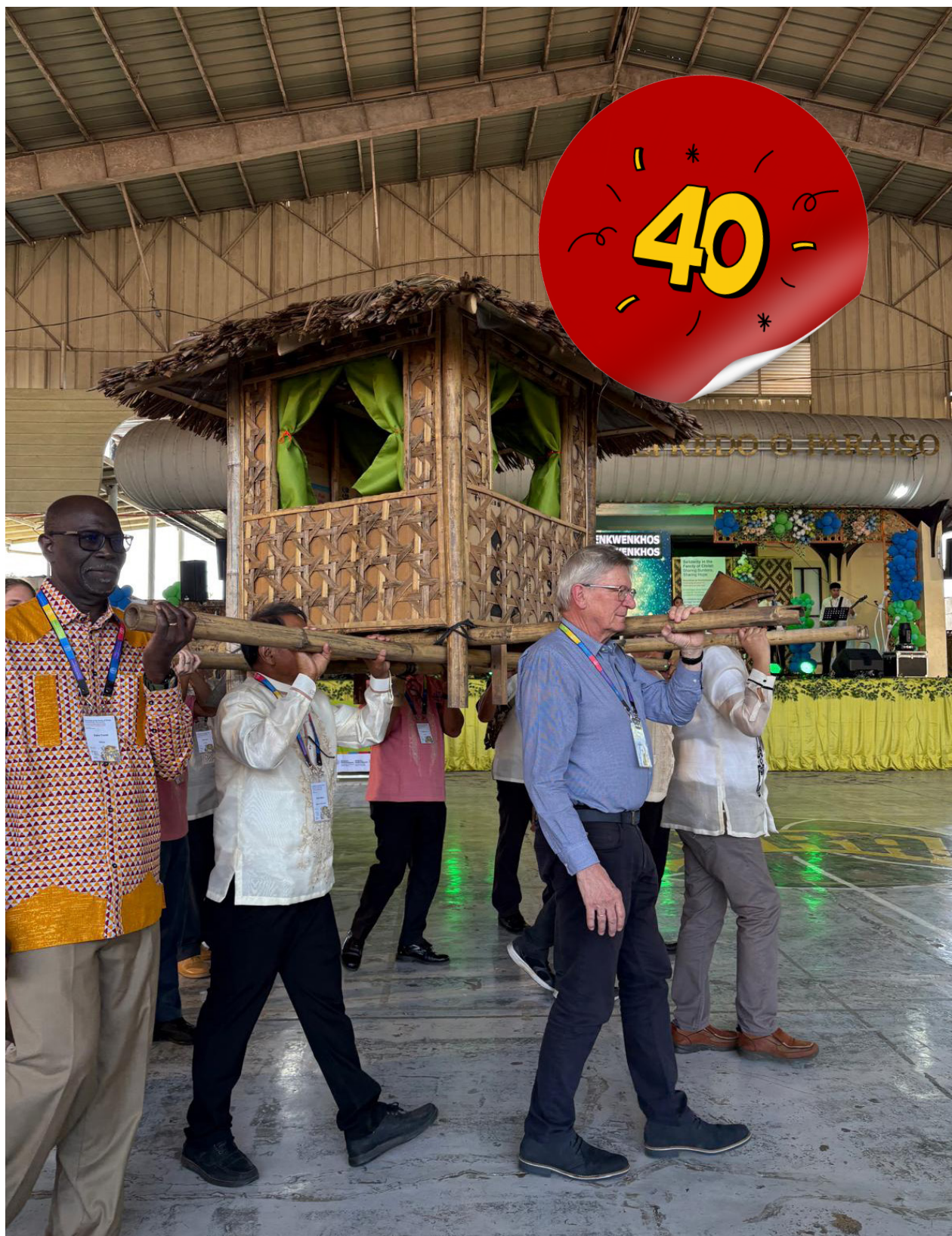
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Cover Photo:

Leaders from Mennonite World Conference and the Integrated Mennonite Church carry a nipa hut into the Renewal 2026 celebration event in the Philippines. The procession acts out of the concept of Bayanihan, the spirit of communal unity, cooperation and mutual support.

Photo: Janet Plenert

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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.

Mennonite World Conference,
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Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1 Canada.
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Word from the editor



Living out the truth we believe

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

—Philippians 4:8

In this age of disinformation, psychologists are warning us that the more we hear a claim, even an outlandish or exaggerated one, the more we begin to view it as plausible.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians gives us an antidote to this tendency: spend our attention on that which is good: true, honourable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy.

This issue attempts to do that in the telling of stories.

It's a taste of the Renewal event which took place in the Philippines in March 2026. The program there was focused around the Filipino concept of *bayanihan*, carrying each other's burdens (see pages 3-6).

Amid the troubles of the world – and even the conflicts within the church – it's easy to think that nonviolent means can't possibly solve intractable violent conflicts; that under pressure we all revert to our baser natures; that differences between people must cause fear and hostility.

But we have better stories to tell! We know the community can come together to rebuild the neighbour's house!

We have seen strangers come from far and wide give needed supplies after a fire (see page 7).

We have witnessed God's love break cycles of addiction and trauma, putting people on a pathway to wholeness and flourishing (page 8).

We have carried burdens of heartbreak and rupture, yet found – often through the same community that inflicted the wounds – that God's grace is sufficient to bind up our hearts and give us hope to persevere and keep on loving (page 9).

We have brought tangible care to those in need outside our church, and in so doing, removed distance between neighbours and shared the light of the gospel without words (page 10).

We have seen our faithful efforts to share what we have produce effects multiple times the original input (page 11).

We are training ourselves to invest in people and their transformation through encountering difference (page 12).

So let us repeat the stories of God's goodness. Let us make outlandish claims believable through repeating that good can overcome evil, that peace is stronger than violence, that unity is possible amid significant difference, and that love transforms even hatred into soul beauty.

And as we live in our different corners of the world, “grant us the courage to be your hands and feet” (page 5) who not only *tell* the stories that are true but *create* them with our lives.

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

PS. What are your stories of God's goodness? Share with us!

Courier is interested in your contributions. Submit your photograph, 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.

Carrying burdens through testimony and prayer



Global Mennonite gathering in the Philippines highlights solidarity, faith and shared witness

Nearly 300 participants from more than a dozen countries gathered in the historic town plaza of Lumban on 14 March 2026, for the 9th annual Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Renewal event. Centred on the theme “Solidarity in the Family of Christ: Sharing Burdens, Sharing Hope,” the gathering underscored the call to “carry each other’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2–10).

The Renewal event brought together members of the Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines (IMC), MWC’s Executive Committee and the Young AnaBaptists (YABs) Committee.

Through worship, testimonies, cultural expression and prayer, participants witnessed to unity, resilience and mutual care across cultures and continents.

“*Bayanihan*” was not only a metaphor for Renewal 2026: it was acted out. IMC church leaders including (l–r) pastor Joel De Leon, IMC president Zaldy Magansay and pastor Richard Rancap, carried a nipa hut into the event venue.

“This embodies the spirit of communal unity, cooperation and mutual support,” says Bishop Eladio Mondez of IMC. “Beyond its literal meaning, *Bayanihan* symbolizes the Filipino people’s strong sense of community, where individuals willingly help others without expecting anything in return, especially during times of need, disasters or communal activities. It reflects the deep-rooted importance of collective effort and support in Filipino society.”

Kristina Toews



Young people from Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines (IMC) volunteered at Renewal 2026, including singing and dancing.

Bayanihan

A highlight of the opening ceremony was a symbolic procession featuring a traditional nipa hut (*bahay kubo*), representing the Filipino value of *bayanihan*. This cultural practice – where neighbours work together to move a home in times of need – served as a vivid metaphor for the gathering's theme.

Rooted in unity, compassion (*malasakit*) and cooperation, *Bayanihan* captures a defining characteristic of an Anabaptist understanding of the gospel.

"God calls us to respond with solidarity and selfless action to the needs of others in our global church," said César García, MWC general secretary. "In doing so, we experience *Bayanihan* in our family of faith and carry it into a world that longs for faithful love and enduring solidarity."

The program also celebrated the heritage of the Philippines through music and dance.

Several church districts presented traditional performances of dance and music, joining faith with local identity (see page 5). Among the featured dances was *Pandanggo sa Ilaw*, a folk dance symbolizing light in darkness, inspired by Matthew 5:14–16. Other performances included the *Cariñosa*, reflecting themes of love and connectedness and harvest dances celebrating God's provision through agriculture.

Solidarity in shared commitment

Testimonies and prayer formed a central component of the program.

"As I listened [to the stories of IMC

pastors], I heard faith, perseverance and a deep trust in God," said Blessing Joy Turqueza, Asia representative on the YABs Committee. "Even in hardship, they continue serving. Even in uncertainty, they continue trusting God to provide. And through it all, I have seen hope in the community of believers."

Blessing Joy Turqueza emphasized that solidarity within the church is not rooted in perfection, but in shared commitment. "The church carries wounds and questions," she said, "but we also carry something greater – faith, hope and the love of Christ. When we stand together as the family of Christ, supporting and encouraging one another, we begin to see God's faithfulness" (page 9).

Sindah Ngulube, a Brethren in Christ bishop from Zimbabwe, spoke of solidarity after a devastating fire at a boys' residential school. Remarkably, all the children escaped without harm. In the aftermath, the local church community mobilized quickly to provide care and begin rebuilding efforts (page 7).

Doug Klassen, executive minister of Mennonite Church Canada, asked for solidarity in discerning the Anabaptist commitment to peace amid discussions about military preparedness and potential conscription in Canada (page 12).

"Seventy years ago, many Mennonites claimed conscientious objector status," Doug Klassen said. "Today, we must ask ourselves what we would do. We need to learn from the witness of Mennonites in Colombia and Myanmar, who continue to embody peace in difficult contexts. The global church has much to teach us."

The interconnected nature of the MWC family

Participants were formally welcomed by IMC President Eladio Mondez and Lumban Mayor Belen Raga, who both expressed gratitude for the opportunity to host an international gathering. The presence of global church leaders alongside local congregations highlighted the interconnected nature of the MWC family of churches.

The Renewal gathering is part of a multi-year series of events held in different regions around the world, each designed to celebrate the shared history and diverse expressions of Anabaptist faith. MWC's Executive Committee members join local participants at a mass worship event where the hosts and the guests share gifts. In addition to worship and teaching, these gatherings provide space for storytelling, relationship-building and prayer for the global church.

The offering collected at the service was designated for IMC's Fair Share contribution to MWC.

The gathering concluded with shared meals and fellowship, and a renewed sense of solidarity.

"In worship, singing, prayer and cultural exchange we are reminded that the global church is called to bear one another's burdens," said John D. Roth, Renewal coordinator. "I have been especially inspired by the energy and commitment of the young people in the IMC to witness to God's love in a fractured world. Their faith is a powerful sign of hope for the future of the church."



Liesia Unger

Cariñosa is a dance from South Luzon District that integrates fans into the movements. It comes from the Maria Clara suite of folk dances.



RG Photography

Kulising is the name of a bamboo instrument used by the Ilongot (also known as Bugkalot) people with the Tagem dance.



RG Photography

The unity dance proclaims “none shall be lost.”

A brief history of Mennonites in the Philippines

Mennonite involvement in the Philippines began shortly after World War II, primarily through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

MCC entered the country around 1947 to provide postwar relief, medical aid and reconstruction assistance. This work introduced Mennonites to Filipino communities, especially in rural and economically affected areas.

In 1965 Missions Now, Inc. (MNI) was founded and began as an independent Filipino mission organization, rooted in local evangelistic work, especially among rural and tribal communities in northern Luzon.

Over time, MNI developed partnerships with North American Mennonite mission agencies. These collaborations included support from agencies such as Eastern Mennonite Missions (formerly Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities), which worked with MNI on leadership training and church planting.

In 1987, MNI experienced internal conflict and direction changes. By 1991, those within the movement who maintained a strong commitment to Mennonite teachings reorganized to form the Integrated Mennonite Church, IMC).

IMC became part of the wider global Mennonite family by joining Mennonite World Conference in 1992.



RG Photography

The rice dance from Central Luzon district is a celebration of the hard work that leads to the bounty of harvest.



RG Photography

All Renewal unity dance. guests joined in the



RG Photography

Pandanggo sa Ilaw is a fandango-based folk dance from Mindoro.

Participating in worship together

Dances at Renewal express culture and unity

“Dance uses familiar movements to connect with God, engage community and express thanksgiving while expressing our cultural practices, especially in celebration occasions,” says Marcial Arenos from Binuangan Mennonite Christian Church, North Luzon District, Integrated Mennonite Church in the Philippines. “It’s an embodied expression of worship that involves collective participation.”

The program of Renewal 2026 in the Philippines was punctuated with cultural dances from several IMC church districts with distinct cultural backgrounds. Performances from local dance groups from the districts is also a feature of regional and cultural gatherings of IMC.

The dances feature traditional costumes (sewn by church members), symbolic gestures and repeated movements that tell a story. These features reflect the traditions and values of the communities, says Blessing Joy Turqueza, YABs representative for Asia and one of the officers of the Philippine Mennonite Youth Fellowship of IMC.

“Using dance enhances worship and prayer or Scripture readings; we can speak in our language, our traditions and our culture,” says Marcial Arenos. It’s also a mode of community outreach where the preservation of culture and dialect through dance creates bonds with Indigenous communities.

“These traditional dances symbolize unity and celebration for us in the Philippines. The Bible says also that everything shall confess Jesus and every tribe will celebrate the glory of God (Philippians 2:10-11). So that’s why we celebrate God with our dancing,” says Shammah Micah B. Abadier from Red Cross Village Mennonite Church, Central District, IMC.

Pandanggo sa Ilaw

One of the dances on the program was Pandanggo sa Ilaw. This folk dance from Lubang Island, Mindoro, is derived from the Spanish fandango of the colonial period. It depicts courtship through balancing lighted lamps signifying fireflies.

“The beauty of the dance depends on how clear and steady the fire carried by the dancer remains,” says Felipe Magbuhos, Jr.,

from Lacao Mennonite Bible Church in Lumban. Originally it would have been done with candles, but they now use a battery-operated light.

“As it is said ‘You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven’ (Matthew 5:14-16).

“This dance serves as a reminder that in the midst of dark situations, our lives – the ‘light’ we hold in our hands – must serve as an inspiration and a testimony to the goodness of God,” he says.

At the end of the Renewal program, all participants and international guests were invited to do the unity dance together. This dance to the Igorot tune “Gangsa, Aysi may awawan” (“none will be lost”) regularly forms part of the annual convention of IMC.

“As we wave and stretch our hands like this, that’s how we praise our God,” says Shammah Micah B. Abadier.

“Let us be reminded that though we are from different countries, provinces and towns, speak different languages or dialects, and are diverse in culture and status in life, because of our faith in Christ, we are one in the bond of his love, united in Christ, sharing burdens, sharing hopes.”

Bishop Eladio Mondez

Closing prayer

Gracious God, the Prince of Peace,

We thank you for the shared heartbeat of this global family. As we close this time of Renewal, our hearts are full. We thank you for the diverse voices, the different languages and the one Spirit that has gathered us under the shade of your grace.

Lord, we ask that the fire of renewal we felt here today would not be a fading. Like the lamps in the darkness, let the truth of your Word stay steady and balanced within us. May your Spirit remain our guide and our source of strength.

As we return to our different corners of the world, grant us the courage to be your hands and feet. Where there is conflict, make us peacemakers. Where there is injustice, make us seekers of your righteousness. And where there is despair, let us carry the light of your hope.

May we walk in the way of Jesus – grounded in community, committed to service and overflowing with Your love. We go now, not just as individuals, but as a global body of believers, renewed and ready to serve.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Peace,

Amen.

—Felipe Magbuhos, Jr., is a pastor and education director in IMC. He spoke this prayer at the Renewal 2026 event in the Philippines in March 2026 “Solidarity in the family of Christ: Sharing burdens, sharing hope.”

Zimbabwe

Neighbours extend God's gracious hands



BIC Zimbabwe

More than 500 men from Brethren in Christ Church Zimbabwe gathered at Victoria Falls in May 2026 for the national men's conference.

In the spirit of solidarity in the family of Christ: sharing burdens and sharing hope, I want to share briefly about a burden during my last term as bishop and how God intervened and raised people to share the burden and give hope again.

In the month of June 2024, the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe was befallen with a tragedy. Around 4 a.m., a mysterious fire broke out in the Peter Mlotshwa boys dormitory at Matopo High School, one of our church-run schools.

Fifty-one Form 1 students (aged 12-13) and their dorm father escaped fire in the new dorm. Everything they had was burnt including food, blankets and uniforms.

Sharing burdens

As in Galatians 6:2: "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

The law of Christ is to love one another. To love your neighbour as yourself.

Many came to assist including the First Lady of Zimbabwe; former students of Matopo; Brethren in Christ Church sister schools, both primary and secondary;

members of the Matopo community and Brethren in Christ Churches; and Sethule Trust.

Seeding hope

Despite the burden that had befallen us, God's gracious hand was with us and he enabled the brothers and sisters and other partners to help us carry the burden of rebuilding the boys dormitory at a cost of US\$73 000. A cost we could not carry on our own.

I was relieved that after the inferno, no life was lost and all the boys escaped unhurt including their dormitory father (boarding master). To God be the Glory!

Let us therefore continue sharing burdens and sharing hope with one another as the body of Christ in the global church.

We are encouraged to share the love and hope of Christ in our communities and never give up. As in Galatians 6:9: "So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up."



Sindah Ngulube is Bishop Emeritus of Brethren In Christ Church - Zimbabwe Conference. He is one of the Africa representatives on MWC's Executive Committee. He spoke this reflection at the Renewal 2026 event in the Philippines in March 2026 "Solidarity in the family of Christ: Sharing burdens, sharing hope."

**As in Galatians 6:2:
"Bear one another's
burdens, and in this
way you will fulfill the
law of Christ."**

India

Prayer, preaching and perseverance

“So, then as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone.”
—Galatians 6:10

The children of God are called to extend their hands (or their talents) to those who are downtrodden, unreached, isolated, so that others can taste Christ's love and be restored to a life of dignity and inclusiveness.



Sunil Kadmasat

Nimita Mallick and Angel Majhi of Brethren In Christ Church Nuagaon, Odisha, India, share artwork they created for Peace Sunday 2025.

As the parable of talents motivates and guides us to use the talents given to us by the Almighty, our Creator, we are warned not to leave our talents unattended and wasted.

When we praise the first two servants for their fruitful attempts in using the talents given by their master, would we think that they could help or inspire the third one to utilize the talent instead of burying it and save himself from being thrown in darkness?

Here the question of sharing burden comes.

We are here in this world to help each other to grow in the love of Christ and thus share hope.

The children of God are called to extend their hands (or their talents) to those who are downtrodden, unreached, isolated, so that others can taste Christ's love and be restored to a life of dignity and inclusiveness.

Healed by the mighty power of prayer

Here is a story of a girl from my church whose father performed witchcraft as his livelihood.

It happened that one of his daughters was healed by mighty power of prayer to our living God by a group of people who continuously communicated and preached the gospel to the family.

As a result of those prayers, the father of the family eventually left his witchcraft and the whole family accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour.

The youngest daughter of the family has achieved a master of divinity degree and is now teaching in a discipleship school, run by one of the congregations of my church.

This is an example of sharing burdens which shares hope.

Preaching the gospel to the unreached

My next story is of an 87-year-old gentleman, also a member of my church.

His whole life he has spent in preaching the gospel to the unreached, bringing many of them to Christ. It was not an easy task since he often had to confront rejection, enmity and various hardships. He had

many struggles in life but he focused on the mandate of Jesus to share the gospel.

I met him recently when I went to a church member's house to pray. The man's cheerful attitude, even at his advanced age, is a reflection of sharing hope.

Persevering in prayer

My third story is the testimony of God's faithfulness and the transforming power of the gospel.

Bearing the burden of sharing gospel, a young gentleman from the East India conference of my church reached out to the people of tribal area who even never heard of the name of Jesus. The doors were closed and conversation rejected. There seemed to be no hope of acceptance – only rejection, opposition and even open threats prevailed.

But along with a group of believers, the young man fasted, wept and continued to pray earnestly.

God in God's time raised up a person of peace within the tribal community who accepted Jesus and opened his house to other believers. Gradually hostility diminished.

Today, approximately 480 believers cheerfully serve the Lord, worshipping in four established churches and 30 vibrant house fellowships.

The opposition did not disappear immediately, but a transformation gradually took place. Addictions were broken. Families experienced reconciliation and peace. Fear gave away to faith.

Today, the church members are motivated and trained to use the skills they have for their livelihood.

Thus, the children of God are sharing the burden and bringing forth the hope which unites us with Christ.



Sipra Biswas is a member of Bharatiya Jukta Christa Prachar Mandali (BJCPM, India United Missionary Church), an MWC member church in India. She is one of the Asia representatives on MWC's Executive Committee. She spoke this reflection at the Renewal 2026 event in the Philippines in March 2026

“Solidarity in the family of Christ: Sharing burdens, sharing hope.”

Philippines

Joys and burdens are intertwined

I am from the Philippines, and I am grateful that our IMC family can witness God's faithfulness among people from many tribes, cultures and nations.

I still remember the first time I saw the global church gathered in Germany. I was amazed. For a moment, it felt like I was seeing a glimpse of heaven: people from different places and languages, yet all praising the same God in their own languages, in their own ways.

It reminded me that even in differences, we truly are one family in Christ.

But as we all know, the Christian life is not always easy. Along with joy, there are also burdens.

Buy one, get one

I grew up in the church as a pastor's kid. Both of my parents are pastors, so I grew up seeing not only the joy of ministry but also the burdens that come with it. It's a "buy one, get one."

In the past few years, our church community experienced some painful moments. Some workers and churches left. And as young people in the church, many of us did not fully understand what was happening or had happened. It was something the elders carried. As youth, we simply felt the loss.

People we used to worship with were suddenly gone. Ates and Kuyas who had been part of our lives. Relationships changed. And we had questions we did not know how to ask.

For me, it felt like a kind of heartbreak. Because when people leave, it feels like something in the family has broken.

But even in those difficult moments, I have also seen something hopeful. I have seen members continue in faith despite their own burdens.

Faith amid hardship

I wanted to understand more about the burdens our pastors carry. So I asked some of them to share their hearts with me.

A pastor shared that one of his deepest burdens is for the well-being of pastors in our district: to improve their economic

situation, repair church buildings and provide more opportunities for pastors and lay workers to be equipped for ministry. Yet even while carrying these concerns, he continues serving faithfully, trusting that God will strengthen the church and its leaders.

Another pastor spoke about the many responsibilities they carry in ministry. Many pastors serve with limited resources while also caring for their families and raising their children. Yet despite these challenges, they continue serving faithfully, trusting that God will provide for their needs.

One pastor shared a very personal testimony. At 69 years old, she needed a very expensive heart surgery. At first, she hesitated because of the cost. But her family reminded her that we serve a God who hears prayer. Churches prayed, people prayed and through God's provision, the surgery became possible.

Through that season of sickness, she saw God's faithfulness. And even now, in her 70s, she continues serving the Lord with the life God has sustained.

Another pastor spoke about the burden of unity in the church. That unity does not happen overnight. It takes patience, humility and love. Yet even when it is difficult, they continue working for peace and understanding within the church.

Two young pastors also shared the challenge of leading congregations where many members are older than they are. It can be intimidating at times, but they continue stepping forward in faith, learning to lead with humility while faithfully serving the people God has entrusted to them.

Listening for hope

Listening to their stories helped me understand more deeply the burdens of ministry. And what they shared was only a small glimpse of everything they have been through. Yet I also heard how the community of believers helped carry those burdens with them; strengthening them along the way.

As I listened, I also heard something else. I heard faith. I heard perseverance. And I

heard a deep trust in God. Even in hardship, they continue serving. Even in uncertainty, they continue trusting God to provide. Even through difficulties, they continue loving and leading the church.

Through this, I have also seen hope in the community of believers. I have seen churches continue worshiping together. I have seen people praying for one another. I have seen pastors and members choosing to keep serving together.

In the Philippines, we have a beautiful value called *bayanihan* – the spirit of helping one another carry burdens for the good of the community. There is a saying: "*Magaan ang mabigat kapag nagtutulungan.*" (Heavy becomes light when people carry it together.) I believe this is also what the church is called to be. Galatians 6:2 reminds us: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Sometimes ministry is difficult. Sometimes unity takes time. Sometimes the burdens feel heavy.

But when we stand together as the family of Christ: praying, supporting and encouraging one another, we begin to see God's faithfulness.

My hope for our churches, and for the global church, is that we continue living in this spirit of solidarity. Because the truth is, the church has never been perfect. We carry wounds. We carry questions. We carry burdens.

But we also carry something greater: faith, hope, and the love of Christ. And one day, we will all stand together before God: people from every tribe, every language and every nation. Worshipping God. Just like through MWC events.



Blessing Joy Turqueza is a member of the Integrated Mennonite Churches, Inc., in the Philippines. She is the Asia representative on the YABs Committee (2025–2028). She spoke this reflection at the Renewal 2026 event in the Philippines in March 2026 "Solidarity in the family of Christ: Sharing burdens, sharing hope."

Switzerland

Reaching a hand to the neighbour



RG Photography

Raphaël Burkhalter prays alongside members of the Integrated Mennonite Church at the Renewal 2026 event in the Philippines.

My local church in Switzerland is the fruit of a Mennonite church plant. When cars and tractors were still rare, Mennonites gathered in the rural hills all over the region, in farmhouses and meeting places that offered education, shelter and a simple chapel for communal worship.

After some years, these communities stepped down from the remote mountain tops where they had once received asylum and increasingly joined village life in the valleys. Their language changed too: Mennonites were known for their German schools and churches, but now everything had to be in French.

This move from a rural mindset to a more suburban way of life was an intentional choice of two Mennonite congregations who recognized the need for a paradigm shift. They went down from the mostly Mennonite-populated mountains to meet new neighbours, encounter other Christian denominations, and discover new

perspectives. Sharing the burdens of one's neighbour gained new depth when the neighbour was no longer a close relative, but perhaps a complete stranger.

The community widened, the perspectives broadened, but the Anabaptist identity remained. To illustrate this, let me share one story that encourages us today to carry one another's burdens.

The community responds

A young mother in our town recently received the devastating news that she suffered from a serious heart disease. Her illness caused her energy levels to drop so low that she struggled to care for her household; even cooking became difficult. She decided to share this burden with a woman from our church – and the community responded.

In our church, a group of women and men provides a food delivery service for anyone in need. Whether or not they belong to our congregation, they can receive meals.

The community widened, the perspectives broadened, but the Anabaptist identity remained.

Elderly widows, men who never learned to cook for themselves, families with a new baby, and people who are grieving a painful loss all seek help from this network of care.

This food delivery service is a small solidarity taskforce that helps lift heavy burdens from people's shoulders. The young mother with the heart disease was deeply moved; she had never imagined that women she did not even know, from her own town, would cook for her every day, providing a meal – and even dessert – for her and her family.

My church continues to offer this food service to anyone in the community who is in need. It supports families after joyful events such as the birth of a child, as well as during difficult times when strength or finances are lacking to prepare meals. Women and some men prepare food for those in need and seek to remove at least a part of the weight from their neighbours' shoulders.

This practice has deep roots in our tradition. In rural Mennonite communities, large families with many children often cooked and ate together, sharing life in practical ways. Helping one another through pain and trial, joy and happiness, has long been a common thread in the church – and it remains a living sign of our Anabaptist identity today that reaches the hand to the neighbour.



Raphaël Burkhalter is a member of Konferenz der Mennoniten der Schweiz/Conférence mennonite Suisse. He is the Europe representative on the YABs Committee (2025–2028). He spoke this reflection at the Renewal 2026 event in the Philippines in March 2026 "Solidarity in the family of Christ: Sharing burdens, sharing hope."

Bolivia

Fulfilling the law of Christ

In recent years we have been hearing of war and conflicts in many regions; armed conflicts have been escalating, provoking thousands of displacements, millions of poor and a sense of hopelessness and distress.

It seems that we are experiencing the kind of signs Jesus described in Matthew 24 as signs of “the end of the age” (v.3).

Jesus’ words echo in our minds and souls: “And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold” (v.12).

It is during this type of circumstances that we as believers are called to show our faith by embodying solidarity as a way of living and not just as a concept. When wickedness is increasing, God’s love should shine brighter in and from us.

Bearing each other’s burdens

In the letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul states that if we want to fulfill “the law of Christ,” we must carry each other’s burdens. In other words, Paul is simply asking us to keep our eyes sensitive to the need around us.

When I think of the church accomplishing this task, I see myself growing up in extreme poverty in the south of the Dominican Republic.

There was not armed conflict present, but poverty was so extreme, that often our only meal of the day was green boiled bananas and nothing else. Other days, just a glass of sugar water was all we had.

The pastor of our local congregation understood this call to share burdens. Not only did he share whatever he had with us, but he also knocked on doors with an international aid organization to set up a sponsorship program for our community. This provided food, clothing and education to many of us.

When this happened, our burden became lighter and our days started to have a little more than just green boiled bananas or a glass of sugar water.

Sharing hopes

“Tomorrow will be a better day!”

It was a favourite saying that came out of my mother’s lips when I went to her, sobbing and complaining, even saying that I was going to skip school that day because I was hungry. She repeatedly explained to me that God had already planned a much better day for us. Then she said, please go to school, because education is your opportunity to success.

I later learned that the better day that God has planned for someone often has to do with someone else listening to the calling in Galatians 6:10:

“So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith.”

It was an Anabaptist couple in the USA who decided to take advantage of an opportunity to child sponsor a child, in the south of the Dominican Republic. They used the resources God had given them to share the burden with that young boy. They provided the means for him to have more food, clothing and an education.

They became the inspiring fountain of waters of hope that irrigated a better future for that young boy, Francis Pérez de León, and for my parents and my siblings.

Sharing hopes is a decision, a commitment, that we as part of the family of Christ are to accomplish.

We have a great opportunity to let God’s love be relevant and transforming in the lives of many that are suffering. And if we conclude that our financial resources are not enough to support others in need, then let’s use an even greater resource we have at hands: prayers.

Praying for one another

In the book of Ephesians 6:18 the Apostle commands us:

“Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.”

When we share the burdens and hopes



Kristina Toews

Francis Pérez (right) shares with African brothers Sindah Ngulube and Samson Omondi at Renewal.

And if we conclude that our financial resources are not enough to support others in need, then let’s use an even greater resource we have at hands: prayers.

with our fellows in need, we are opening doors to a better future not only for those who are directly receiving or benefiting from our actions, but also for those who will be then reached by those we impacted first.

For that Anabaptist couple who sponsored me, this translates as all the people that God has allow me to reach in over 30 years of ministry.

We are the family of Christ, and you are not alone.



Francis Pérez de León is a leader in Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Boliviana. He is one of the Latin America representatives on MWC’s Executive Committee. He spoke this reflection at the Renewal 2026 event in the Philippines in March 2026 “Solidarity in the family of Christ: Sharing burdens, sharing hope.”

Canada

Investing and exercising

Mennonite Church Canada has 205 congregations spread out across the vast land of Canada. Our eastern-most congregation and our western-most congregations are 5 300 kms apart.

I first entered pastoral ministry in 1992 as a youth pastor. I loved the youth of my congregation. I loved their energy. I loved how sincerely they practiced their faith. I loved the sincere hope that they had for the future.

I have been in ministry almost 34 years now. The last seven years I have been helping to lead our denomination.

They don't see its relevance. However, we have found that when we give youth a taste of what is happening in the global church, their perspective changes.

So, for the MWC Assembly in Indonesia three years ago, we appointed one youth from every region of our national church, and we paid all of their costs to attend.

When my board asked me what this was going to cost, I replied by saying that we can think of it as a cost, or we can think of it as an investment. This investment has already been giving us very good returns. We are growing leaders for our church, and these leaders have a global perspective.

While we are very thankful for this, it is also a problem. Learning how to build peace is something that takes practice. Being able to talk about why you believe in peace takes practice. It is like a muscle in your body. If you don't use it, it gets weaker.

In November, the Canadian government announced that it wants to recruit more soldiers to be ready in case any of the global conflicts come to Canada. We ask ourselves, what if things get really bad and the government calls for conscription? What will the responses of the Mennonite Churches be?

More than 80 years ago, during World War II, there were many of our young people who asked for conscientious objector status. Today, I am not so sure what most would do.

We need to learn the lessons of the Mennonite churches in Colombia. We need the Mennonites in Myanmar to teach us what we once knew. We need to peace witness of the global church to come back to us in fresh ways.

Please pray for us. Pray that we do not be afraid. Pray that we have eyes to see how so many of the Mennonite churches in the Global South have been such incredible witnesses for the peaceful way of the gospel.

Pray that we can know again, deep in our hearts, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who, through his sacrificial love, has overcome the world and shown us the way of the Kingdom of God.



Wayne Janz

The congregation of First Mennonite Church in in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, sends greetings to the global family on Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday 2024.

What's going well: youth

It was those years in youth ministry that has helped me see the necessity of making youth ministry a priority for Mennonite Church Canada. I feel strongly that the best gift we can give our youth is a faith that is anchored in a local congregation and a faith that is shaped by the global church.

Many youth in Canada see the church as an aging institution. Many think that church is something that older people like to do.

Where we struggle: peace

I would also like to share something with you that is a challenge for us. Over the years in North America, we have had many scholars write excellent books on the subject of peace. Many of us have read their books and taken their courses.

We have also enjoyed many years of peace in our country. There are no active conflicts. Canada has not been actively involved in wars for many years.



Doug Klassen is the executive minister for Mennonite Church Canada. He is one of the North America representatives on MWC's Executive Committee. He spoke this reflection at the Renewal 2026 event in the Philippines in March 2026 "Solidarity in the family of Christ: Sharing burdens, sharing hope."



Peace Sunday 2026 Worship Resources

1 Theme and texts

a. Theme:

**Solidarity:
from
power over
to
power with**

b. Why this theme was chosen:

This is the direction of solidarity: power moving with compassion toward those who are oppressed. Sometimes our different mixtures of power and vulnerability mean that we need to have our feet washed. And sometimes we need to wash others' feet.

When we practice solidarity, we consciously move from a position of *power over* (or *under*) others to *power with* others.

c. Biblical texts:

- **Exodus 3:1–10**
“...I have observed the misery of my people...; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them.... Now go, I am sending you...”
- **John 13:1–17**
“...So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you....”
- **Philippians 2:5–11**
“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...”

2 Prayer Requests

- May we share the same mind that was in Jesus Christ: in humility, may we join our fellow humans in solidarity and self-giving love. May we choose the humbling way of the cross, the way of solidarity with those who are vulnerable or oppressed.
- Help us to practice mutuality as we come alongside others. May we consciously move from a position of power over others to power with others. May our hearts and hands be open to truly share – not only giving but also receiving and learning – as we practice solidarity.
- Lord, help us to recognize the ways we have contributed to oppression of others, intentionally or unawares. Teach us repentance and help us enact meaningful reparations.
- In a time of wars and rumours of wars, Lord, give us courage to be peacebuilders. May we practice peace as we walk through our daily lives. May our prayers for peace move us to collective action, especially alongside global Anabaptist siblings experiencing daily violence.
- We lift a special prayer for the people of Palestine. As Anabaptists, we follow the path of peace they have witnessed to in the name of Jesus since the beginning of the church. Along with them, we thank God for the Holy Spirit who is working creatively to confront theologies of violence with messages of love, solidarity and justice.

3 Song Sug- gestions

🎵 **It's okay to change your mind**
by Annie Schlaefer

Read more on page 9

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

4 Additional resources

mwc-cmm.org/peacesunday

a. Additional resources in this package

- Liturgies and prayers
- Teaching resource
- Testimony
- Song information

b. Additional resources available online

- Pictures (including all used in this package)
- Children's activity/colouring page





5 Activities

What does peace look like?

John Driver was a life-long witness to the gospel in USA, Spain and across Latin America. He often taught his students this simple poem about the work of Anabaptists.

*God is a God of peace.
Jesus Christ is the Lord of peace.
The Spirit is the Spirit of peace.
God's kingdom is the kingdom of peace.
The gospel is the good news of peace.
God's children are makers of peace.*

- Create an image inspired by these words.
- Make one design for the whole poem, or focus on a single line.
- Draw, paint, use a photograph or create a collage of many images. (No-AI generated pictures, please!)
- Share your drawing with others.

To share with the global Anabaptist family, please send your image to photos@mwc-cmm.org with your name and a brief description of the artistic medium.



Juan Carlos Moreno Girardot, Colombia



Raul Rincon, Portugal

Contact Information:

Andrew Suderman | MWC Peace Commission Secretary

AndrewSuderman@mwc-cmm.org | mwc-cmm.org/peace-commission

How did you use these resources to practice peace?

✉ Send your stories, photos, videos or artwork to photos@mwc-cmm.org

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



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Photo:
Nix Mercado

Serving one another

We are called to serve one another with the gifts we have received. This is the work of being good stewards of God's grace as a worldwide Anabaptist family.

Working together in solidarity guides our steps as a communion as we reach out in courageous love to a beautiful yet hurting world.

You are helping to build thriving communities across 110 national member churches in 61 countries. Your investment in the global church expresses solidarity to 10 000+ member congregations spanning the globe. Spaces of solidarity enables us to learn deeply. God is using each of us for kingdom purposes.

You can make a difference through investing your financial gifts in the worldwide mission of Mennonite World Conference. We reflect God's light together as we serve our communities.

When you make a financial gift in solidarity, you are

- building leadership capacity among young adults;
- extending ministries of peace & justice;
- sharing with churches facing challenges;
- collaborating in fellowship, worship, service & witness.

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

- Mennonite World Conference
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Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1
Canada
- Mennonite World Conference
PO Box 5364
Lancaster, PA 17606-5364 USA

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

Creation Sunday

A new day to worship together



In the beginning was the Word... All things came to be through him.
John 1:3

*Praise the Lord, my soul... How many are your works, Lord!
In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.*
Psalm 104:24

Creation Day is a worldwide Christian observance on September 1. Many churches celebrate it on the following Sunday, so it is also called [Creation Sunday](#). Christians mark central events in the story of our faith on certain days, such as the incarnation at Christmas, the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter, and the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Likewise, the annual celebration of Creation Sunday is an invitation to commemorate the divine act of creation, the first step of salvation history, and reflect upon the central conviction that God's loving authorship and faithful presence to all that is created is worthy of our gratitude and praise. This brief paper explains why Christian congregations may wish to celebrate Creation Sunday.

1. CHRIST IS LORD OF ALL CREATION

The New Testament proclaims Jesus as the pre-existent Creator of heaven and earth: "Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3; cf. Gen 1:1). Moreover, Christ continues to sustain the universe ("in him all things hold together," Col 1:17) and through Jesus' death and resurrection God is pleased "to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Col 1:20). He is "the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev 22:13). Scripture proclaims the risen Christ's Lordship extends to all creation. God has "placed all things under his feet" (Eph 1:22) and all creation will bow before him (Phil 2:9-11). All who proclaim "Jesus is Lord" should recognize his Lordship not only of our individual lives but of the whole creation. Creation Sunday helps proclaim Jesus as Lord of all.

2. THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF CREATION

God as Creator is a foundational, unifying biblical tenet for all Christians. The Bible begins with the rich story of the creation of all that exists with the refrain, "God saw that it was good." After the creation of land animals and humans, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen 1:31). A consistent thread throughout Scripture declares God's creative deeds, ranging from elaborate accounts (e.g. Gen 2, Ps 19, 104, Job 38-39, Psalms 8, 82-83) to condensed proclamations (e.g. Ex 20:11, Neh 9:6, Isa 46:26, Jer 10:12-13, Jonah 1:9, Acts 17:24-25, Rom 4:17, Heb 1:13, Rev 4:11). The Bible teaches that God created all that exists out of love. We believe that this God who created all that exists is One God who exists eternally as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19) and who chose to create and sustain the



Review Creation Sunday resources curated by the Creation Care Working Group

With hearts of gratitude for the beauty and sustenance that God gives us through creation, we are excited to announce **Creation Sunday** on 6 September 2026.

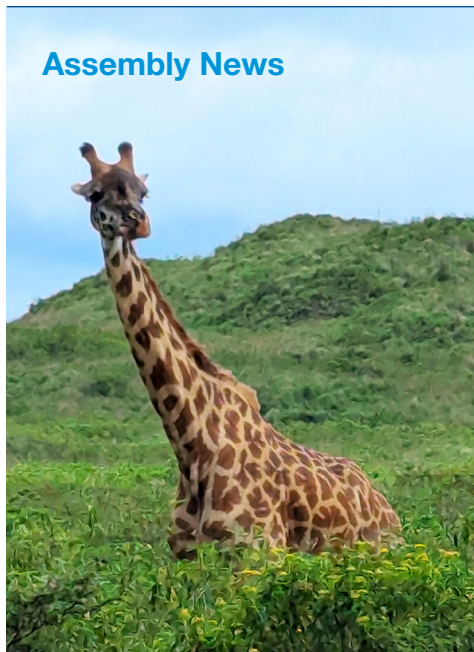
MWC invites Anabaptist churches to join together to celebrate God's act of creation on the first Sunday of September every year.

It becomes a day when Christians worldwide enter into the story of our faith by celebrating central convictions together, like the birth of Jesus at Christmas, the resurrection of Jesus at Easter, and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

We encourage your church to consider joining other Anabaptist churches – along with other Christian traditions – in celebrating God's act of creation this Sunday, and to reflect on how we can be faithful stewards of all parts of this rich, diverse natural world.

Creation Sunday joins **Peace Sunday**, **Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday** and **YABs Fellowship Week** as a time the Anabaptist global family celebrates around a common theme in worship together.

Assembly News



Assembly date announced:

6–13 June 2028
Christ unites us
Arusha, Tanzania

Did you know? Swahili will be one of the official languages of Assembly.



Visit mwc-cmm.org/assembly for all the latest news.

MWC Publications Request

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- ☐ English
- ☐ Spanish
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Photo: Ebenezer Mondez

Not a program but a table

Solidarity comes from the Latin *solidus* — whole, firm, united. It is more than sympathy (“I feel sorry for you”) or empathy (“I understand how you feel”). Solidarity says, “I will stand with you.” It is the willingness to bear one another’s burdens.

Our church has recently studied the text from Matthew 9:9–13. It gives us a clear picture of this Christ-shaped solidarity. Jesus does not save from a distance. He enters humanity and sits at the table with tax collectors and sinners. He stands with those others avoid.

As John Stott observed, the cross first reveals God’s identification with sinners before it reveals God’s judgment against sin.



RG Photography

Local worshippers joined international guests at MWC’s Renewal event in the Philippines.

Solidarity is the witness of Incarnation itself.

My local congregation Maranatha has tasted this grace. When our Indonesian-American congregation began worshipping alongside immigrants from diverse ethnicities, we discovered that solidarity is not a program but a table.

We listened to stories of displacement, shared meals, prayed in multiple languages and carried burdens that were not originally ours. In those moments, Bonhoeffer’s words rang true: “*The church is the church only when it exists for others.*”

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus forms a community that stands with the poor, the mourning, the meek, the sick and the forgotten. Solidarity is an act of standing together – the strength that makes the body of Christ whole.

May the Mennonite World Conference global family in 2026 embody this firm, united, Christ-like solidarity with courage and joy.

Sunoko Lin is the MWC Treasurer and serves with the Officers. He is also pastor of Maranatha Christian Fellowship, an LMC member church in California.