

Español

Français

Deutsch

Transmission

Maturity

Study Guide

Video stories of faith in action

Historias en vídeo de la fe en acción

Histoires vidéo de la foi en action

Video-Geschichten über den Glauben in Aktion

Following *Jesus*, living out *unity*, building *peace*

The Transmission series

Meet your global family

Commemorating the 500 years of the Anabaptist movement, this series of five short videos offers glimpses into how Anabaptists in various parts of the world are living out their faith. You will meet dedicated individuals and communities who face specific challenges and yet find their own unique ways of practicing an active faith as Jesus' disciples.

Young Anabaptist hosts guide you to over a dozen countries and help you understand the shared identity of the Anabaptists around the world. Hearing these stories, you will be inspired for your own Christian journey, in your own setting.

Transmission 2020 Ethiopia

Members of the Meserete Kristos Church, an Anabaptist faith community of over 500,000 members, share about their struggles with persecution, the involvement of youth in the church, cultivating spiritual maturity, and the importance of music and prayer. (Video length 10:16 minutes)

Transmission 2021 Indonesia

Two young adults talk about the cooperation and dialogue between Mennonites and Muslims as part of a peaceful witness. A small group in the Netherlands explores the realities of interfaith dialogue in their setting. (Video length 10:44 minutes)

Transmission 2022 Latin America

Inspirational stories from Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Honduras focus on how people of faith are living out, in practical ways, their commitment to care for God's creation. (Video length 11:14 minutes)

Transmission 2023 Migration

The video looks at the realities of refugees and other displaced persons in United States, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Greece, and it highlights how Christians are offering them love and practical help. (Video length 10:26 minutes)

Transmission 2024 Peace and Justice

Anabaptist young adults live out their commitment to peace amidst conflict and injustice in Ukraine, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Canada. (Video length 15:53 minutes)

Videos and study guides

The five videos inform, inspire, and invite discussion in various settings such as Sunday school classes, youth meetings, worship services, Anabaptist schools, small home groups, and more. Individual study guides provide background information and include questions for discussion and study.

The videos and study guides are available in various languages spoken by members of the Anabaptist/Mennonite family around the world. You can access them, for free, at these websites. (Search for Transmission.)



Mennonite World Conference
mwc-cmm.org



CommonWord
commonword.ca



Affox AG
affox.ch



Mennonite
World Conference

Congreso
Mundial Menonita

Conférence
Mennonite Mondiale

affox
production of film,
television, multimedia

For leaders

Planning the sessions

Preview: To understand the entire series, you might want to watch all five videos before leading any sessions. Notice the different themes that emerge and the geographical areas that are covered. Ideally, you should plan for enough sessions to show and discuss all five videos with your group. But if that is not possible, pick the videos that will best fit with your group's interests and the time available.

Adapt: The videos in this series can be used in a variety of ways. As a leader, you will decide what will work the best with your group, so feel free to adapt the ideas here to suit your setting and the length of the sessions. For example, you might show only part of a video, if the time is short. Or break up each video into smaller segments to be viewed at various points in one session.

Dig deeper: As you plan, see the "Background information" section of this guide (p. 10) for additional information, such as historical background, maps, statistics and more.

Sharing the guide: Consider whether you want to download and print the discussion pages from the study guide to share with group members. This is not essential, but paper copies would provide a space for participants to take notes and would make the discussion questions available for everyone.

Leading a session

1. Begin today's session with a brief welcome and an opening prayer.
2. If your group has viewed a video in a previous session, do a brief recap on what was viewed then. You might ask group members about a story, idea, or question that stuck out for them from that previous session.
3. If you copied pages ahead of time for the participants, hand them out now. Invite group members to take notes as they watch, or to identify discussion questions they would like to talk about later.
4. View today's video together. You can watch the entire video, or you could break it up into smaller segments, interspersed with conversation.
5. Invite responses from the group members to what they have watched. To lead toward deeper conversation, you can offer a discussion question, a quotation, or a Bible passage to guide the conversation. These are suggested for each video segment.
6. In your conversations, make sure to guide the group's thinking toward your own setting and community. Did the video present any ideas that inspire your group to do something right where you are? What might be a next step for your actions?



Church in Nazareth

Concluding a session

As you come to the end of each session, feel free to pick one of the prayers or blessings below.

1. To close, invite group members into a short time of silent reflection. Then, as a parting blessing, a participant could offer a spontaneous prayer, or you could do together one of the suggested prayer and blessings. Another option is to end the session by singing a song together.
2. Remembering all the stories you witnessed in this video, what new understandings have you gained about the global family of Anabaptists? How do these stories encourage or challenge you? Take time as a group to pray for your siblings around the world—people like you who are partners with God in spreading peace and justice far and near.
3. Scripture has many reminders that the Creator is a God of peace and justice. Ponder together the words of Psalm 85:9–10: “God’s salvation is very close to those who honor him so that his glory can live in our land. Faithful love and truth have met; righteousness and peace have kissed.” Offer words of thanksgiving for the witnesses of God’s peace in this video.
4. For a closing prayer, invite the group to pray together the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13). Tying it with the stories you have just witnessed, you might highlight verse 10: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it in heaven.”
5. Offer a simple sending blessing: “The Lord lift up his face to you and grant you peace” (Numbers 6:26).
6. Explore other prayers and blessings from the Anabaptist family in North America:
 - Anabaptist Worship Network www.anabaptistworship.net
 - Together in Worship www.togetherinworship.net/Home
 - Leading in Worship www.leadinginworship.com

Invitation to respond

After the session, you might want to give feedback to the producers of this series. Feel free to send your comments to info@affox.ch.

Share the stories

Ranging from 10 to 16 minutes, the five videos inform, inspire, and invite discussion in various settings:

- Sunday school classes
- Youth meetings
- Worship services
- Anabaptist schools
- Small home groups

Individual study guides provide background information and include questions for discussion and study.



Indonesia



Netherlands

Transmission 2020: Ethiopia



City of Addis Ababa

Transmission is a series of five video productions leading up to the year 2025 and the five-hundredth anniversary of the Anabaptist movement.

This video is the first in the Transmission series. It tells the story of the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, the fastest growing Anabaptist church in the world, representing almost one third of the global family. The video explores four topics: learning from persecution, spiritual maturity, making room for younger generations, and the importance of community.

The video also speaks briefly about the first Anabaptist martyrs who were killed in sixteenth-century Switzerland and mentions the experience of Mennonites who were persecuted in the former Soviet Union. These stories inspired Ethiopian Christians during the years they lived as an underground church.

The host of the video is Salomé Wiedmer, a French Mennonite who—at the time of the video production—was working with a non-governmental organization in Greece. Currently she and her family live in the United States.

The video runs 10:15 minutes, with four segments. Information and discussion questions on the individual segments are on the following pages. To find background information on the church, go to p. 9.



*Salomé Wiedmer
International reporter*

Learning from persecution

The Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) is a member of the global Anabaptist family. Like the first Anabaptist believers in sixteenth-century Europe, and the Christians in the former Soviet Union, Ethiopian believers have a history that includes martyrdom. Despite past persecution and oppression, the MKC has grown in both numbers and maturity.

To ponder and discuss

1. Discuss together the realities Ethiopian Christians faced during the former times of persecution. How did they respond? What were the practices that kept them from being isolated from each other and becoming discouraged?
2. Mekonnen speaks of the courage displayed by people facing the persecutions. How do you think they stayed strong in their faith? What role might baptism have played in keeping them connected to each other and to God?
3. The New Testament church faced persecution because of their faith in Jesus. Together read the story of Paul and Silas in prison in Acts 16:16–36 and review what happened to them. What strikes you about how these messengers of the gospel behaved? How did others respond to their actions? Where do you see God at work in the events?
4. Tertullian, a second-century Christian leader, wrote: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” What do you think he meant? How might this relate to the experience of the Ethiopian Christians in times of persecution and today? Can you think of other examples of church growth under difficult circumstances, in other places?
5. Take some time for personal storytelling: Were there times when you, your family, or your congregation faced hardships because of your beliefs or practices? What sustained you and others in those tough times?
6. Read Aster Debose’s testimony on this page. What do you think strengthened her to respond in that way? How might the affirmation “Jesus is Lord” help Christians who are in danger?
7. The Ethiopian leaders visited Russia to learn more about how the Christians there lived as an underground movement. Why was that important to them? What can we learn from hearing the stories of Christians in other places? What have you learned from hearing the MKC story?
8. Jesus said that his followers would experience persecution and tough times. Read his words in Matthew 10:38–39. What do you think Jesus meant when he encouraged his followers to “pick up your cross” and follow him? Read also what he said in Matthew 5:11–12. What is your response to both passages? How might your church or this group help you follow Jesus in times of hardship?

“Those people who came to the Lord during the persecution—those people were really very strong people, because they came deciding to die or to get into prison... Any security person could put you in prison and torture you.”

**Mekonnen Dessalen –
former MCC relief worker**



“At [one] point we [could] gather around ten but usually five or six people... because we [were] afraid maybe the communist government [would] send spies.”

**Kelbessa Mulata –
MKC vice president**



“They were searching about Menonites in Russia to ask how they resisted in the underground movement.”

**Shimeles Retta – mission manager,
Germany-Ethiopia**



“We were sitting in the prayer room surrounded by two hundred people with guns. They said: “We will kill you!” And I said, “No, you cannot kill me because Jesus is Lord.”

**Aster Debose –
former health assistant**



“One day I scooped up sand with my hands. I prayed to God that the number of Christians and churches would be as many as the grains of sand in my hands. God answered my prayer. Today there are more Christians than I can count!”

**Aster Debose –
former health assistant**

Growing in spiritual maturity

Following the times of repression and persecution, the Meserete Kristos Church now experiences more freedom. But its members continue to practice the lessons learned during those difficult days. The leaders seek to encourage all members to grow in spiritual maturity and to build a faithful and loving community together.

To ponder and discuss

1. One of the characteristics of the Ethiopian church is impressive growth. Aside from numerical growth, what other aspects of maturity do you see in this video?
2. What are some ways in which Ethiopian Christians are nurturing a deeper spiritual life and a strong community? How do these disciplines help both the individual Christians and the broader faith community? Is there one spiritual practice that you especially admire?
3. Read together Acts 2:41–47. What spiritual disciplines did the early followers of Jesus practice? See also the words of encouragement from Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:16–22. Which practices do you see in your own faith community? Are there any practices you would like your church to emphasize more?
4. In the letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul gives suggestions of things those followers of Christ should do to grow in maturity in Christ. Read Colossians 1:28–29 and Colossians 3:12–17. Identify one or two practices that seem especially important in your own context today.
5. Tell each other about one spiritual discipline that you try to practice. Or identify a person whose example of spiritual discipline inspires you. How does your church encourage these kinds of spiritual disciplines? What are some obstacles to keeping a spiritual discipline? Consider some other ways in which your church could help people grow spiritually. How might you be involved personally?
6. The people interviewed in this video emphasize the importance of prayer as a sign of a mature Christian. Do you agree with this view? Explain your thoughts. What is the role of communal prayer in contrast to private prayer? How is prayer taught and practiced in your own congregation? Are there ways in which your church could strengthen the practice of praying together?
7. As a group, look at the invitation in Hebrews 10:23–25 to stir each other up in love and good deeds. Pray together thanking God for the ways in which your congregation experiences this invitation. Ask God to help your church live this out even more, in visible ways.

“According to Colossians, we teach and preach and also rebuke our members to become mature and come into the likeness of his Son, Christ.”

Birru Robele – MKC chairperson



“They just put the accent on community and learning from each other, and teaching each other, and encouraging each other. As well as prayer time... They do put an emphasis on praying together and really standing together in faith.”

Salomé Wiedmer – international reporter



“A mature Christian is a person that prays regularly, and MKC has been encouraging its members to have a prayer life.”

Tewodros Beyene – MKC former president



“The young generation are benefiting from this, from all the people that have prayed so much for the church. And it’s the reason why the Meserete Kristos Church has grown so much—it’s because of prayer.”

Salomé Wiedmer – international reporter



“The highest level of Christian maturity is growing to the likeness of Christ. Christian maturity can be determined by the knowledge of the word of God we have and the determination we have to live according to the word of God.”

Desalegn Abebe Ejo – MKC president



“When you serve and serve, the maturity comes. But if somebody is only sitting in the church and just absorbing, I don’t think there will be any maturity.”

Mekonnen Dessalen – former MCC relief worker



Making room for the younger generation

In their life together, the church in Ethiopia values the contributions of younger members and gives youth opportunities for serving and sharing with the larger body. Young people are especially involved in congregational music.

To ponder and discuss

1. Salomé ties the growth of the church to how older leaders are empowering youth. What do you think about that connection? Can you see examples of empowerment in the video?
2. Experts on church growth observe that the transfer of faith can become less effective from the third generation onwards. Then the message of the church risks becoming stagnant or weakened. Church life might move toward traditionalism and rigidity, with younger generations abandoning the faith. How have Ethiopian Christians counteracted this problem? What do you think this requires of the older church leaders who carry the vision and the power? What does it require of the younger people in the church?
3. Do you see similar challenges in your own church when it comes to keeping faith alive in younger generations? What is your congregation doing to help youth and children in your midst own the faith for themselves? What practices in your church help empower and encourage younger people to use their gifts? Are there other ways in which you could help them contribute? What might the older generation need to give up to make way for them?
4. Jesus saw the value of even the youngest members of the community. Review what he said about children by reading together Luke 18:15–17, Matthew 19:13–15, and Mark 9:36–37. Compare Jesus' teachings in all three passages. What does he say about children? What does he say about those who don't welcome God's reign as a child?
5. Can you tell of a time when an older person in the church encouraged you? What did that person say and do that helped you step forward and offer your skills and talents to the church community?
6. The apostle Paul encouraged young Timothy to grow in faith and to use his gifts for the good of the church. Read Paul's words in 1 Timothy 4:11–12 and 2 Timothy 1:5–7. How do you think the young man received these words from his mentor? Do they still ring true today? Maybe your group wants to write a similar note to the youth group in your congregation.
7. If this feels comfortable for your group, take time to express to each other your appreciation for specific gifts offered by each member of your group. How do you see each other contributing to the well-being of the congregation and of the larger world? Pray together thanking God for the gifts each person offers.

"Church population is the young population. So they are the ones who are taking responsibility to do so many kinds of ministries, in worship, in music. They are very active in church ministry."

**Kelbessa Mulata –
MKC vice president**



"I want to write a song which pleases God—and humans as well."

**Dejene Tjubaa –
young church musician**



"The youngsters use almost every kind of instrument available. This helps to keep them in the church and also for evangelizing the young groups outside the church."

Solomon Demissie – choir leader



"Music today has significantly moved from where it was... in terms of how powerful it is to attract young people. Leaders have been quite helpful in terms of not being narrow, and in terms of letting young people explore music to get to the message that they want."

Basiliei Birru – youth leader



The importance of community

Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee! In this concluding segment, Salomé experiences the roasting, grinding, and serving of local coffee. She concludes with a comparison between Christian community and a rich cup of coffee.

To ponder and discuss

Right now you might be craving a hot drink as your group ponders together the connection between coffee beans and a community of believers. Maybe you want to share a cup of coffee, tea, or hot chocolate together. As you sip, have conversation about the following questions.

1. Review Salomé's statement about similarities between coffee and the church. Does that analogy work for you? What does it look like when a faith community is green and ungrounded? Do you agree with Salomé that testing and trials might cause the church to be more fruitful and appealing to people outside the church? Do you think that persecution is necessary for church growth to happen? What other kinds of hardships might threaten the church in your own context?
2. Consider the status of one coffee bean by itself—one lonely Christian. Is it possible to be a follower of Jesus all by yourself? How do you as an individual become more mature when you experience life with other "beans"—other followers of Jesus?
3. In John 13:34–35 Jesus expresses high expectations for his followers. What kind of "grinding" and "brewing" might need to happen for you, as individuals and as a community, to live out Jesus' commands fully? Consider what the "aroma" of love might look like to others outside your community.
4. The theme verse of the Transmission series is Psalm 145:4: "One generation shall declare to another God's mighty acts." What acts of God have you seen in this video, as expressed by Christ's followers in Ethiopia? How do you see God at work in your own setting? How do you communicate God's mighty acts to others around you? What words of encouragement do you need today?
5. Take time to pray as a group, thanking God for Christ's followers in Ethiopia. Pray that their neighbors will be attracted by the aroma of their love and faithfulness. Pray for God's protection as they face any new challenges and threats that might emerge. Pray also for your neighbors—that they will be attracted by the aroma of your own witnesses to them. Speak words of blessing to the members of your own group as you seek to be faithful to Christ's way in your own places of work, rest, and worship.

"Because we have learned and heard about these stories, why can we not learn from that and be encouraged (by the Ethiopian Christians)? And not wait for persecution but actually act today and pray with the same faith that Aster had... for churches to grow and for young people to step up?"

**Salomé Wiedmer –
international reporter**



"The whole process of making coffee takes time and there are different stages... to finally be beautiful coffee. And I think sometimes as Christians, we are staying in that the stage of these green beans that don't have any flavor, that don't have any smell and aroma. But we can go further by being grounded, to be able to bear more fruit and be useful to serve God. And for that, you need to be many, many, many beans (to make a cup of coffee). And I think that's the beautiful thing about community and the beautiful thing about the church is that we get to do that together if we have the desire to let ourselves be grounded."

**Salomé Wiedmer –
international reporter**

Background information



1

Addis Ababa is the capital of Ethiopia and the country's largest city, with over five million people living in its larger metropolitan area. The city hosts the African Union headquarters and UN offices. The Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) has its headquarters there, from where it coordinates the activities of MKC congregations across Ethiopia and beyond.

2

The Meserete Kristos Seminary has its main theological campus in Bishoftu (Debre Zeit), about 50 km southeast of Addis Ababa. Formerly a college, the educational institution is vital component of MKC's broader strategy to train leaders, pastors, and workers in for its expanding network of congregations. Regional centers extend the training into other areas of the country.

3

Nazareth (also called Adama) is a major city about 100 km southeast of Addis Ababa. A large MKC congregation is located there, and the city often serves as a hub for church gatherings, youth events, and mission outreach in the Oromia region. A regional campus of Meserete Kristos College/Seminary is also located in the city.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia, with over 120 million people, is Africa's second most populous nation, after Nigeria. This multiethnic, multireligious, multilingual nation is in northeastern part of the continent. The country's largest ethnic group is Oromo, which makes up 35 percent of the population, with Amhara as the second largest group at 27 percent of the Ethiopian population.

Ethiopia is considered one of the oldest Christian countries in the world. The country has never been colonized by European powers, but internal conflicts, civil wars, ethnic and religious divisions, and economic collapse have deeply affected its people.

The largest religious group in the country is the Ethiopian Christian Orthodox Church, with 44 percent, followed by Muslims at 34 percent. Protestants make up approximately 19 percent of the population, and that percentage includes the Anabaptist denomination, the Meserete Kristos Church. Smaller groups include the Catholic church, Jews, Baha'i, and traditional religions.

Meserete Kristos Church



The Meserete Kristos Church is one of the largest member churches of Mennonite World Conference, with over 500,000 baptized members. It makes up 25 percent of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite family. Planning is happening for the church to host the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in 2028.

MKC has approximately 1,400 congregations across the country, with vigorous churches-planting efforts in many locations. It operates a seminary and regional Bible schools, has an organized ministry in evangelism, along with prison outreach, development and more.

The name “Meserete Kristos” means: “Christ is the foundation,” a key concept in 1 Corinthians 3:11, and a favorite verse of Menno Simons. While the church identifies itself as Anabaptist, it does not use the term “Mennonite.”

History

Foreign Mennonite relief and development workers first arrived in Ethiopia in 1945, serving with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to provide relief after the brief Italian occupation (1936–1941). Denied missionary status, they focused first on relief, then expanded to education and health care. They established schools, hospitals, clinics and other social services and helped communities engage in productive agricultural and income-generating activities.

In the early 1950s more explicit missionary work began under the direction of Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. In the early days, Mennonite missionaries emphasized the reading of the Bible, teaching scripture in schools and Sunday schools. They encouraged local Christians to do more than just read and understand the scriptures but also to practice the principles in the Bible, witnessing through actions as well as with words.

On June 16, 1951, ten Ethiopians from the Ethiopian city of Nazareth—where evangelism was banned—were baptized in Addis Ababa. This date is now considered the beginning of the Meserete Kristos Church.

The foreign mission workers were involved in the local work for several decades. But there was a desire for local believers to lead the church's efforts, and by 1962, Ethiopian leaders were overseeing all the church's ministry.

Over the years MCC continued working with MKC and other local partners in providing emergency supplies and in projects focusing on peacebuilding, trauma awareness training and health.

Underground years

In 1974, the Marxist Derg regime overthrew the empire of Haile Selassie and seized power in Ethiopia. The new regime took over church property, persecuted Christians, arrested church leaders, and banned gatherings of more than five people.

The MKC was officially banned in 1982. All local churches were closed, and property—including hospitals, schools, church buildings and money in the bank—was confiscated by the communist regime. Five of the church leaders were jailed for years.

During those years, church activities went underground, with members meeting in small groups in secret locations to avoid persecution. The new believers knew that they had to be prepared to pay a high price for their faith, and that sometimes included imprisonment. By their courage, Ethiopian Christians followed in the tradition of the early Christian martyrs, the first Anabaptists in sixteenth-century Europe, and the twentieth-century Christians in communist countries.

Despite the hardships, the church flourished during its life underground, as believers continued to witness to a spiritually alive faith and the presence of God in their midst.

Systematic persecution of Ethiopian Christians lasted until 1991, when the communist regime fell. At the beginning of the underground phase, the church had numbered 5,000, but when MKC re-emerged in the early 1990s, the church had grown to 50,000 members. In the time since then, evangelistic efforts have increased, and the current membership is over 500,000.

Goals and strategies

Growth is an important goal for the Meserete Kristos Church, in two dimensions:

- **Numbers.** Following the example of the early church in Acts 2:47, MCK seeks to constantly increase the number of believers. The strategic plan calls for every local congregation to grow by ten percent every year.
- **Spiritual maturity.** Leaders seek to help believers grow in Christlikeness, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, and influencing society positively. They believe that individual spiritual growth and church growth are interrelated.

MKC's growth continues despite Ethiopia's political, social, and economic challenges. An article published by Mennonite World Conference outlines ten strategies for growth adopted by the national church:

1. Praying fervently

Prayer is central to the church's ministry. Prayer teams intercede for the church's mission and for unreached people groups, sometimes focusing on specific ethnic groups during services. Leaders, ministers, and members regularly engage in night-long prayer meetings and dedicated prayer times before decisions.

2. Calling new people to faith in Jesus

Every Sunday service ends with an invitation for non-believers to accept Christ. The Holy Spirit is seen as the one who convicts hearts, with preachers serving as vessels. New believers are prayed for, contacted by members, enrolled in discipleship classes, and integrated into church life. Members are encouraged to bring non-Christian friends so that such invitations are meaningful.

3. Remaining small and growing

To keep congregational fellowship close and pastoral care effective, congregations with over 1,000 members are divided into two groups. "Mother churches" nurture new "offspring" congregations until they are self-sustaining, fostering both quality and quantity in growth.

4. Sharing the gospel is every believer's responsibility

MKC teaches that all who have experienced Jesus should share Jesus' message with others. Before they are even baptized, new members, receive training on how to bring others to Christ, with the understanding that evangelism

doesn't require formal theological training; personal testimony is powerful.

5. Implementing a strategic plan

Launched in 2022, Agenda 2819 is a plan that redefined MKC as a missional, evangelistic church with the mission "to preach the gospel to all people and make them disciples of Jesus Christ." The plan set an annual growth target of ten percent and identified unreached areas for church planting. Leaders at all levels receive training, and progress is reviewed quarterly.

6. Ordaining evangelists in congregations

The goal is that every congregation have at least one evangelist dedicated to proclaiming the gospel and mobilizing members for evangelism and church planting. Evangelists form outreach teams to visit streets and villages, with many conversions resulting from this grassroots work.

7. Mobilizing resources locally

Though most members are not wealthy, they are generous. Rural congregations and urban believers alike give tithes, offerings, and special gifts. Some fund church planters' salaries; others help converts who must leave incompatible jobs (e.g., prostitution, alcohol sales) to start new livelihoods.

8. Using the people's language

MKC aims to preach and teach in the heart languages of its audiences, avoiding political overtones and enabling deep connection. Evangelistic and discipleship materials are produced in multiple languages, and ministers are encouraged to be multilingual.

9. Placing church planters in unchurched communities

Church planters are placed within their own cultural contexts, where their familiarity aids gospel sharing. In areas dominated by traditional beliefs, converting key community leaders often leads many others to follow.

10. Following the lead of the Holy Spirit

Believers and leaders are encouraged to depend on the Holy Spirit for guidance. In the mission field, Spirit-led acts—such as praying for the sick—often open hearts to the gospel. While MKC avoids spectacle-driven miracle events, it welcomes God's confirmation of the gospel through transformed lives.



A church service in Addis Ababa

Education and leadership training

With rapid church growth comes the increasing need to provide leadership training. The church has given priority to preparing church leaders, pastors and evangelists through theological education. Meserete Kristos Seminary (formerly Meserete Kristos College) has a main campus in the city of Bishoftu (Debre Zeit). It offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs in Bible and theology, leadership training, and practical ministry, and peace and development. The seminary is accredited with the Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa.

Courses are taught in Amharic and English, and additional campuses and congregational Bible programs in other locations make education accessible to students in other locations. Students from neighboring countries have also trained in the seminary.

In 2020 MK Seminary began an education partnership with Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, U.S., and Mennonite World Conference. This collaboration expanded the opportunities for Ethiopians to attain a graduate degree. In addition, volunteers from other parts of the global Anabaptist community have helped in the educational ministry of the seminary through teaching assignments, donations, and practical help.



Serving coffee

Responding to violence and offering care

Over the past years, economic, political and interreligious tensions and conflicts have plagued parts of the country. Members of the Meserete Kristos Church have experienced effects of the instability and have also been active in reconciliation efforts.

In early 2024 MKC members were caught in a tribal conflict that began in the western region of the country. Several leaders and adherents lost their lives in the crossfire. Many people were displaced as armed groups burned and looted church buildings. Other members were affected as the armed groups destroyed and looted their homes and farms, leading to loss of livelihood.

Responding to violence, MKC members have asked the international Anabaptist community for prayers for peace as the Ethiopian Christians sought to practice nonviolence and lead in reconciliation efforts.

In May 2025, Mennonite World Conference issued another call for prayer as members of MKC faced religious persecution from extremist factions. This included an attack on an evangelist working in the West Haranghe region who later died of his wounds.

In recent years, the church has taken leadership in peace-building efforts. One effort in the southern region focused on healing trauma experienced by people affected by violent conflicts. The training program works with community elders, women and youth representatives, local government officials, teachers and influencers in the community. MKC has also helped communities and local institutions to restore peace between warring groups by facilitating conversations and promoting reconciliation in conflict-affected villages.

Over the years MKC members have also been involved in relief and development through MKC's Development Commission, addressing needs of vulnerable people in communities disrupted by poor economic prospects, famine and violence.

The church also operates a prison ministry team in over fifty prisons, offering practical assistance to prisoners as well as conducting Bible studies and doing evangelistic outreach. These efforts have even led to congregations within prison walls and training of future church leaders. This ministry also gives training in restorative justice, peacemaking and reconciliation to prison officials and community leaders.

The Meserete Kristos Church website is www.meserete-kristoschurch.org. To learn more about the church in Ethiopia, see a special issue of the journal *Anabaptist Witness* with the theme, "Mission and Peace in Ethiopia" at www.anabaptistwitness.org/volumes/volume-11/issue-1. The magazine *Anabaptist World* also has numerous articles on the Meserete Kristos Church. Go to www.anabaptistworld.org and search for the topic there.



Praying together

In gratitude

The video series was conceived by Max Wiedmer, a Swiss Mennonite from Affox (a video, film, and multimedia company) and Hajo Hajonides, a Dutch Mennonite from the International Menno Simons Center. D. Michael Hostetler, a Mennonite video producer in Canada, helped shape the series and provided some video direction. Video teams from various parts of the world captured the stories on location. This study guide was written by Hajo Hajonides and Virginia A. Hostetler. Layout by Meagan Matiz and coordination by Max Wiedmer.

Thank you!

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**One generation shall declare
to another God's mighty acts.**

Psalms 145:4

**Una generación pondera tus obras
a la otra, y le cuenta tus hazañas.**

Salmo 145:4

**Une génération dit à celle qui la suit
combien les oeuvres de Dieu sont belles.**

Psaume 145,4

**Eine Generation soll der anderen
von Gottes Taten erzählen.**

Psalms 145,4

