

Español

Français

Deutsch

Trans**mission** Relationships

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. 8) 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?



Solo, Indonesia

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 2021: Indonesia



Mennonite church and mosque face to face

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 second in the Transmission series. It explores the relationship between Anabaptist-Mennonites and Muslims, in light of ethnic and religious differences.

In Indonesia, two Mennonite young adults introduce viewers to two communities—one rural and one in a large city—as the Mennonites cooperate with Muslims in those locations. They explore the question: What does it mean for Anabaptist-Mennonite Christians to live as a small minority in the largest Muslim country in the world? Then the story jumps to a group conversation in the Netherlands, as participants discuss their presence as Anabaptists alongside Muslims in their community.

The hosts of the video are Hani Yopita, a member of the Jepara Mennonite church, and Adi Nugroho, a member of the Mennonite church in Solo. They both live and work in Indonesia.

The video runs 10:43 minutes, with three distinct segments. Information and discussion questions on the individual segments are on the following pages. To find background information for each segment, go to p. 8.



*Hani Yopita, Jepara
Mennonite church member*



*Adi Nugroho, Solo
Mennonite church member*

Tempur, Indonesia

Hani visits Tempur, a village high in the mountains of Indonesia. There, a small Mennonite community is integrated into a larger Muslim context. The church building and mosque are located directly opposite each other, and both religious communities practice respect and cooperation toward each other.

To ponder and discuss

1. Pastor Danang Kristiawan recounts basic facts about the beginning of the Mennonite church in Indonesia. Review together some of the facts about the first Mennonites who arrived in Indonesia from the Netherlands. (The background section of this study guide has more information.)
2. What were some of the challenges for Poniyah, the first Christian in Tempur? What do you think gave her the strength to endure the difficulties and to stay firm in her faith? Share with others in the group about times when you have struggled to remain firm in your faith. What helps you stay strong? Are there ways in which the others in the group have encouraged you in your faith journey?
3. In Tempur the local Muslims and Christians helped build and renovate their respective places of worship—right across the street from each. Why do you think they were able to do that? Do you think that kind of exchange would be possible in the place where you live? Why or why not? Would you be able to support efforts like that in your community? Why or why not?
4. Mariyono gives statistics of the inhabitants of Tempur: Christians number 39, and Muslims number 3,575 people. Try to imagine what some of the challenges might be for those in the minority group. What would be the challenges for those in the majority group? Are there any ways in which the two groups might complement each other or learn from each other?
5. Suwadi mentions two specific Bible passages that spoke to him at the time of his conversion to Christianity. Read John 14:6 and Matthew 5:43–48. Can you identify elements in those two passages that might have encouraged him to take that big step in his faith? Can you name any Bible passages that were meaningful to you in the early days of your Christian life?
6. Hani speaks of seeing “God’s face” in every resident of Tempur. This recalls the biblical story of brothers Jacob and Esau who, after years of estrangement, encounter each other and experience reconciliation. Review orally the story told in Genesis 27:1–28:5 and 32:3–11. Then read together Genesis 33:1–17. Note the reference to the “God’s face” in Genesis 33:10. What do you think Jacob meant by that statement? How does it tie in with Hani’s experience in this video?

“So, what does it mean for Anabaptist Mennonite Christians to live as a small minority in the largest Muslim country in the world?”

Hani Yopita – member of the Mennonite church in Jepara



“Over time, I felt called by the Lord Jesus. My husband was Muslim and got angry when I went to church... but I was not afraid to follow the Lord Jesus. I asked for peace from the Lord Jesus.”

Poniyah – the first Christian in Tempur



“The Muslims helped build this church building by donating expertise and materials. Then we Christians helped with the renovation of the mosque.”

Suwadi – husband of Poniyah and Mennonite church administrator



“Tolerance is when Christians and Muslims help and learn to love each other (as Jesus taught us to) without allowing religious backgrounds and traditions to become barriers between us. I see God in every face—in every person’s face in Tempur. I’m not seeing a Muslim or a Christian, but I see God’s face in them!”

Hani Yopita – member of the Mennonite church in Jepara



“There are about 108,000 Mennonites in Indonesia today. Muslims and Christians grow up together, learning to trust, respect, and appreciate each other.”

Danang Kristiawan – pastor, theologian, and historian



“I chose to be Mennonite because we are a church of peace. Even so, Tempur surprised me. I had not anticipated how I would be affected by the tolerance I experienced in the small community of Tempur.”

Hani Yopita – member of the Mennonite church in Jepara



Solo, Indonesia

Adi explains that Solo, a city of more than 500,000 inhabitants, once experienced much conflict and violence. Today it is described as a “city of peace,” as members of the Christian and Muslim communities create and carry out joint strategies of peacebuilding.

To ponder and discuss

1. What are some specific things Muslims and Christians in Solo are doing to decrease violence and build good relationships in their setting? What do you think inspires them to work at those goals? What might be some obstacles in their efforts?
2. Consider the factors that lead to violence in cities and in smaller communities, in Indonesia and in your own country. What social, economic, cultural, and religious issues might be behind the conflicts? What realities lead to people to having “short fuses” and doing violent acts? What role do the local authorities have in either discouraging or encouraging conflict?
3. Read the story of an interfaith encounter between Philip, a follower of Jesus, and an Ethiopian court official (Acts 8:26–39). Discuss what you notice about the interactions in this story. What could have gone wrong with this encounter? What choices did the two men make that led to a good encounter and a fruitful conversation about faith?
4. As a group, discuss the role of schools, libraries and books in teaching about peace, both in Solo and in your own community. How have they played a role in your own journey of peace?
5. Consider important elements that need to be present for interfaith dialogue to be successful—in Indonesia and in your own community. What is the importance of sharing in a joint vision with people who are culturally or religiously different from you? How can peacemakers build a shared vision for peace?
6. In Matthew 22:34–40, Jesus boils down all God’s instructions into two commandments. How do these commandments apply when you’re relating to people who are different from you—in language, cultural practices, beliefs, political persuasion, race, gender, age, etc. Can you think of examples of the second commandment being lived out well, in your community or country?
7. As you learn about peacebuilding in Indonesia, consider the peacebuilding efforts in your own country. Who is cultivating peace in the community where you live and how are they doing it? How are you, either individually or as part of a larger group, helping to create peace? Are there peacebuilding activities your group might want to work at together or with other local partners?

“In Matthew 5, verse 9, we read, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ We carry out analyses and prepare strategies on how to build peace in the city. Being present at the location where we are needed is very important. We work at building interfaith dialogue honestly, sincerely, and thoughtfully—to cause change.”

Paulus Hartono – pastor and interfaith dialogue practitioner



“... When you say that you are following Jesus Christ, you must prove that thing. You must follow the way of Jesus in your daily life, especially in bringing peace... Muslim friends also hope for bringing peace in that place, and we have the same vision.”

Adi Nugroho – member of the Mennonite church in Solo



“This collaboration between Muslim and Mennonite youth is extraordinary. This happens where fellow Indonesian youth can understand each other. We all have roles to play for Indonesia, no matter who we are and where we come from.”

Aldi Rizky – student at the Al-Mu’ayyat Islamic boarding school



“Later, some become better people in the community, whereas before they joined groups that were far from peace.”

Dian Nafi – leader of the Al-Mu’ayyat Islamic boarding school



“We are learning that building sustainable peace in the city, as in the countryside, demands long-term commitment. We are discovering this effort brings hope and lasting relationships.”

Hani Yopita – member of the Mennonite church in Solo



The Netherlands

A group of Dutch Anabaptists has conversation about the context in which they live, where both Anabaptists and Muslims are minorities within the larger secular society. They ponder how they might build deeper relationships with their Muslim neighbors. A Dutch pastor reviews the early days of the Anabaptist movement in the Netherlands.

To ponder and discuss

1. The Dutch discussion group highlights the role of curiosity to help connect people who are different from each other. What role might curiosity play as people work at building peace? How might curiosity manifest itself in intercultural relationships?
2. The apostle Peter struggled with how to relate to people who did not share his Jewish cultural and religious background. Read the story in Acts 10:1–48. What were some things he had to overcome in order to connect with people from another culture? How did the Holy Spirit help Peter expand his vision and build a relationship with Cornelius and his community?
3. Review Annegreet's comments about prayer. What do you think about her suggestion? Imagine your life if you stopped your activities five times a day to pray. What is the role of prayer as groups seek to carry out interfaith efforts together?
4. This video shows several situations in which people live as a minority with a larger society: Christians in Tempur and Solo, and the followers of Menno Simons and Muslims as minorities within the Netherlands. Discuss some of their challenges minorities face in the contexts shown in the video. How do disparate groups attempt to address those challenges?
5. Consider together a cultural or religious minority group present in your own community. Discuss some things about that group's history, traditions, or practices that you are curious about. Do you think they are also curious about your group? How could you create a situation in which you and members of that group might feel comfortable having conversation about those points of curiosity?
6. Hani mentions the practice of adding a small amount of ginger to a cup of coffee to create a wonderful new flavor. How does that new way of preparing coffee relate to the topics in this video? Maybe your group wants to try an unfamiliar beverage or food item as a way of learning about people who are different from you.
7. As you prepare to leave today's conversation, read together from the apostle Paul's instructions to the Christians in Rome (Romans 12:9–21). Pray that the Holy Spirit will encourage you as you practice love in action in your own context.

"The communities are rather segregated from each other: so the white Dutch community, so to speak, and then the Moroccan communities, and then you have the Turkish community, and then you have also newcomers, the refugees."

Hanneke Poorta – member of the Bussum-Naarden Mennonite church



"When they were coming to the neighborhoods, they provided a lot of delicious food, but it was difficult to have a deeper level of conversation because of language difficulties."

Janneke Priester – member of the Bussum-Naarden Mennonite church



"What I've tried to develop as a personal skill is to be curious. If you want to fight discrimination, be curious."

Matthys Hajonides – member of the Bussum-Naarden Mennonite church

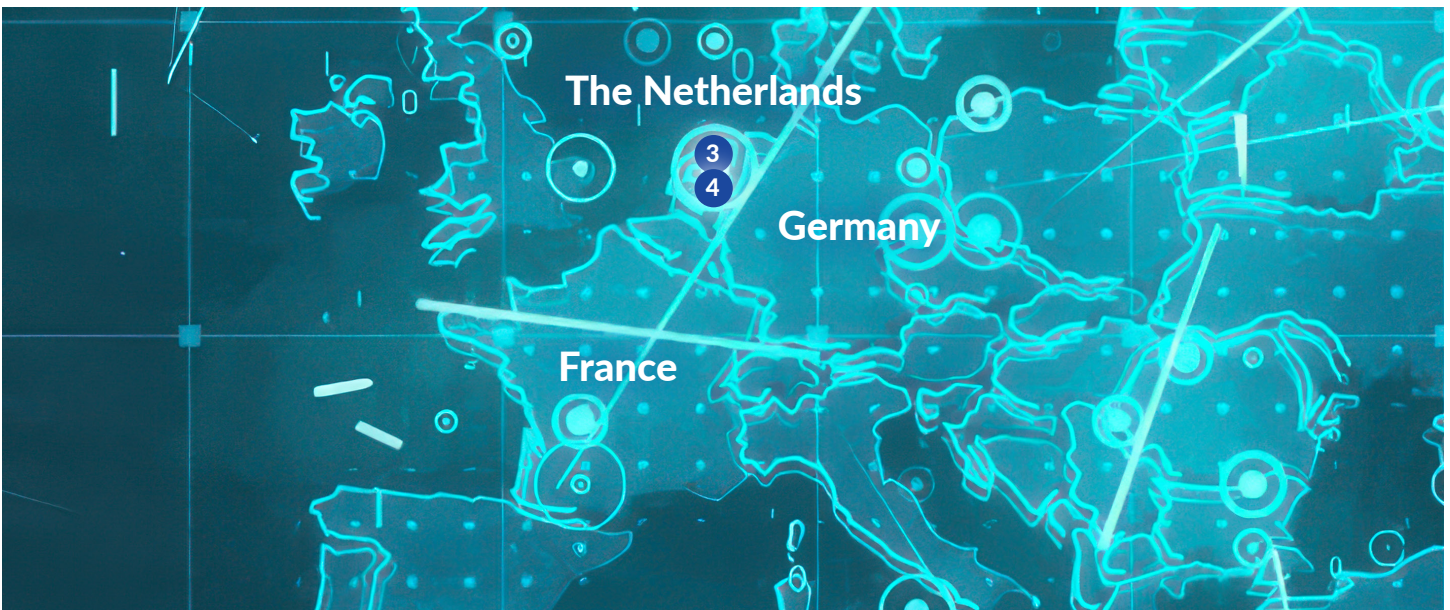


"Maybe we do need to pray again, five times a day. It has to do with the inner faith and to reconnect with trust and to reconnect with the Holy Spirit."

Annegreet van der Wijk – pastor of the Bussum-Naarden Mennonite church



Background information



- 1** Tempur is a village located on the northern mountains of the island of Java, Indonesia.
- 2** Solo, also known as Surakarta, is a major city in central Java, Indonesia.
- 3** Witmarsum is the birthplace of Menno Simons and is located in the Friesland region of the Netherlands.
- 4** Bussum and Naarden are municipalities located southeast of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Context

Some relevant statistics to keep in mind as you watch this video: Today around 2.3 billion people on earth call themselves Christians (29 percent). People who follow the Islamic faith make up the second largest group, at 2 billion (26 percent). The next highest religious group is Hinduism, with over 1 million followers (15 percent). According to the Pew Research Center, almost 2 billion people worldwide call themselves nonreligious, agnostic, or atheists (24 percent).

The two countries shown in this video—Indonesia and the Netherlands—have historical ties to each other, with European exploration and colonization of Southeast Asia starting in the sixteenth century. Today, their societies deal with challenges—and successes—in relation their religious, ethnic, and multicultural makeup.

Indonesia

Located in Southeast Asia, the archipelago country of Indonesia encompasses more than 17,000 islands in a region of approximately 1,904,569 square kilometers (735,000 square miles). With influences from China, Europe, and the expansion of Islam, the country has a long history of being a melting pot of various cultures, traditions, languages and religions.

Over the country's long history, cultural and religious influences have included Chinese merchants and Hinduism from the fifth through the fifteenth centuries, and Islam starting in the thirteenth century. In the early 1500s Christianity arrived, through Portuguese colonizers, who brought the influence of European culture. From then through the twentieth century, the major European influence has been through the Dutch colonizers, who brought the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith to Indonesia.

In 2021, the population of Indonesia stood at 276.4 million inhabitants. The majority—87 percent—were Muslim, and the country is considered to be the most populous Muslim-majority nation. Protestants and other Christian groups made up 10.7 percent of the population. Approximately 3.1 percent of the population was Catholic, followed by 1.7 percent of Hindus, and less than one percent each who followed Buddhism and Confucianism.

Indonesia consists of approximately 300 distinct native ethnic groups and over 700 languages and dialects. The largest and politically dominant ethnic group are the Javanese, comprising 42 percent of the population. They are followed by the Sundanese, ethnic Malays, and Madurese. Chinese Indonesians comprise approximately 3 percent of the population but are very influential economically.

The two locations featured in this video are on Indonesia's island of Java. Tempur is a village located in the mountains near Mount Muria, in the northern part of the island. Solo (also known as Surakarta) is a major city located in central Java.

The Indonesian church

The Anabaptist-Mennonite community in the country had its beginnings in the nineteenth century, with the arrival of missionaries from the Netherlands. Today, Indonesian Mennonites number approximately 108,000. According to Mennonite World Conference, Indonesia has become the fifth largest Mennonite center in the world.

The Indonesian Mennonites are organized into three synods (conferences), all of whom are members of Mennonite World Conference. In July 2022, they hosted the seventeenth assembly of Mennonite World Conference. Because of the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the assembly was downsized and held as a hybrid event.

1. Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa (Evangelical Church in the Land of Java, also called Javanese Mennonite Church or GITJ).

Several streams flow together in the history of this synod. The first influence is of the Dutch Mennonite Mission Society (Doopsgezinde Zending) formed in the Netherlands in 1847, which sent its first missionaries, Pieter and Wilhelmina Jansz, to Java in 1851. The first Mennonite mission congregation in the Dutch East Indies (today Indonesia) was formed in the coastal town of Jepara, at the western foot of Mount Muria, when the first believers were baptized in 1854 by Pieter Jansz. (The first segment in the video focuses on that community.)

The second stream is represented by a Reformed congregation begun in Kayuapu at the southern foot of Mount Muria, under the leadership of missionary Hoezoo of the Dutch Missionary Society (Nederlandsch Zendelingen Genootschap).

The third stream is a large, powerful indigenous Javanese Christian movement, under the leadership of Ibrahim Tunggal Wulung. He was a scion of the royal family of Solo in central Java, and he became a hermit mystic on Mount Kelut in East Java.

Eventually, by the turn of the twentieth century, all three of these streams were united into one family of congregations under the leadership and care of the Dutch Mennonite Mission, with missionaries from Netherlands, Russia, and later Germany and Switzerland. The synod ran hospital, a leprosarium and several schools.

The Japanese occupation in the 1940s brought many hardships to the people of this synod. With the independence of Indonesia in 1945 the churches began to develop and grow, though not without struggle. Eventually, with renewed help from Europeans and the North American Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Indonesian Mennonites were able to resurrect one of the mission hospitals and reopen many schools and start others, including one, and later a second, theological school in Pati. The church grew very rapidly, though in a predominately Islamic context. In the 1990s the synod suffered from a schism, which after several years was healed.

Today the GITJ synod consists of 123 congregations, with some additional congregations in formation, and some

45,000 baptized members. The congregations are located mainly along the coast of north-central Java, with a few in the cities of Semarang, Salatiga, and Yogyakarta.



In the mountains of Tempur

2. Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (Muria Christian Church of Indonesia, also known as GKMI).

GKMI started as an indigenous Christian movement begun by a Chinese Indonesian couple by the name Tee Siem Tat and Sie Djoen Nio. This happened in the city of Kudus in north-central Java in the early 1900s. The group identified with the Mennonite family of churches when the first believers sought baptism from Russian Mennonite missionaries working under the Dutch Mennonite Mission (Doopsgezinde Zendingvereniging) in the Muria area in December 1920.

This group organized itself in 1925 using the Dutch language name Chineesche Doopsgezinde Christengemeente (Chinese Mennonite Community) and was recognized by the government of the Dutch East Indies in 1927.

By the 1940s a half-dozen congregations had been formed incorporating also groups of Chinese Indonesian believers who had come to faith through the ministries of the Mennonite missionaries working mostly among the Javanese population in the area. They sometimes also used the Chinese name Tiong Hwa Kie Tok Kau Hwe (Chinese Christian Church). In 1948 they organized themselves into a synod called Khu Hwee Muria. By 1958 they changed the name of the synod to Persatuan Gereja-Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (Union of Muria Christian Churches of Indonesia).

The GKMI sprang up in Chinese Indonesian communities in the towns surrounding Mount Muria, an ancient volcano along the north coast of in Central Java. Since 1960 it has spread beyond the Muria area and into other ethnic groups on the four main islands of western Indonesia.

Today, this synod encompasses 76 congregations and more than 17,600 members living on the islands of Java, Bali, Sumatra and Kalimantan.

The video features some of the peace efforts undertaken by members of the GKMI church in Solo (Surakarta). Solo has

the reputation as a “city with a short fuse.” It was the center of the infamous riots in the period between 1911 and 1999. By the end of the twentieth century, the riots were mainly aimed at the Chinese Javanese and had a deep impact on the members of the GKMI. Even now, Solo is known as a breeding ground for extremist networks, including Jemaah Islamiyah, an Al-Qaeda-affiliated network in Southeast Asia. Solo-based Islamic groups were connected to the Christian-Muslim conflicts in 1997 to 2001, the Bali bombings of 2002 and 2005, the Marriott Hotel bombing in Jakarta and more. The city suffered religious and sectarian attacks, even in recent years.

In the last few years, much work has been done on peace initiatives in Solo. Paulus Hartono, a Mennonite pastor and practitioner of interfaith dialogue, together with the commander of the Hizbullah front, Yanni Rusmanto, took the first steps for a peaceful cooperation. The road to peace has been bumpy, but the partners continue building friendship, understanding and trust. The Perdamaian peace library mentioned in the video was set up to connect Christian and Muslim students and to initiate peace discussions and activities.

3. Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Congregation, also known as JKI).

The youngest Mennonite-related church in Indonesia is Jemaat Kristen Indonesia. This church was founded in 1984 by Adi Sutanto as a split from the GKMI. This church has a charismatic and evangelistic worship style.

JKI encompasses 400 churches with around 47,000 members. The churches are concentrated mostly in Java, in cities and towns with the biggest church in Semarang. There are also six congregations in southern California and one in the Netherlands.

The synod also operates the Sangkakala Theological College located in Kopeng, Salatiga.

To learn more about the church in Indonesia, visit the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: <https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Indonesia>. You can also learn more by visiting the website of Mennonite World Conference (mwc-cmm.org) and searching for Indonesia.



Solo

The Netherlands

Located in northwestern Europe, the Netherlands has a population of over 18 million inhabitants. Approximately 54 percent of them practice no religion. Christians make up about 41 percent and Muslims make up about 6 percent.

The country is considered one of the “Low Countries,” along with Belgium and Luxembourg. The name “Holland” is sometimes used for the country, and people from the Netherlands are referred to as Dutch.

Historical context

The Netherlands have a special significance to people around the world who call themselves Anabaptists or Mennonites. They take their name and theological perspective from the influential leader Menno Simons. He was born around 1496 in the village of Witmarsum, Friesland, in the northern region of the Netherlands.

In 1524 Menno Simons became a Catholic priest in the nearby village of Pingjum. He sharpened his beliefs by reading the Bible, and eventually left the Catholic church. He became an itinerant preacher and evangelist, preaching the Anabaptist principles throughout the country, despite being considered a heretic by the church authorities. He also produced many writings.

Begun in Switzerland in 1525, the Anabaptist movement expanded quickly in Europe during the sixteenth century. Some Anabaptists took up arms and tried to establish God's kingdom on earth through violence, which was answered by more violence against them. But for Menno Simons, non-violence and defenselessness were essential concepts. In a period when persecution was at its highest level, Menno Simons took the lead of the much attacked congregations and led them through difficult times.

In later years, the Mennonites in the Low Countries were severely persecuted and many of them fled to Poland and from there to Ukraine, Canada, United States and further.

To learn more about Menno Simons, visit the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: Menno Simons: [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Menno_Simons_\(1496-1561\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Menno_Simons_(1496-1561)). For a list of his writings see: <https://www.mennosimons.net/completewritings.html>.

In the nineteenth century the Netherlands administered the region called the Dutch East Indies, which included the islands that would later become the country of Indonesia. Dutch Mennonites first went to Indonesia in the 1800s, under the Dutch Missionary Society. Their evangelistic efforts led to the founding of the Mennonite church in that country.

Muslim presence in the Netherlands

Today, after Christianity, Islam is the second largest religion in the Netherlands and is practiced by an estimated 6 percent of the population.



Menno Simons

From the sixteenth century on, the Netherlands experienced sporadic immigration from the Ottoman Empire and the Dutch East Indies (later called Indonesia), but the Muslim population in the country remained low.

In the 1950s, the number of Muslims in the Netherlands increased because of immigration from Indonesia. The first (wooden) mosque was built in 1951 in Balk in Friesland by a group of Moluccan ex-soldiers from the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army. The first stone mosque, the Mobarak mosque in the Hague, was built in 1955.

In the 1960s, tens of thousands of Turkish and Moroccan guest workers went to the Netherlands to work in the Dutch industry. In the 1970s and 1980s, many guest workers were joined by their families. The thought of a speedy return to their homelands faded, as the guest workers, together with their families, sought a place in the Dutch society. They sought space for their religious practices, and the number of mosques increased rapidly. The first mosques were often “living room mosques” and later, business premises, schools and association buildings were rented or bought to be used as mosques.

In 1975 the former colony of Suriname, in South America, became independent. In 1980, 300,000 Surinamese took advantage of the opportunity to settle in the Netherlands. About 10 percent of Surinamese in the Netherlands is Muslim, with origins in India or Java.

While the phenomena of guest labor and family reunification led to a growth of the Muslim population in Dutch society, from the late 1980s their number increased due to a growing flow of refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East. This group is composed mainly of Iraqis, Syrians, Afghans and refugees from former Yugoslavia.

Because it was thought that the immigrants would eventually go back to their original countries, not much attention was given to integration of these people into the larger Dutch society. Several isolated groups developed within the Dutch society, where their own language is still spoken, their home traditions continue and where, because of language differences, education lagged behind mainstream education.

This reality has led to much frustration, especially from the second and third generations, who sought their identity in their parents' traditions and ways of living. The mutual understanding among the various groups living in the country came under heavy pressure. And this is the situation today: the immigrants as well as the more established Dutch population both fear for their traditions and their way of life. There are many initiatives to overcome the differences, but the mutual distrust is great.

Dutch Anabaptists today

Today in the Netherlands, there are about 5,000 followers of Menno Simons, in approximately 100 congregations. They do not use the name "Mennonite" but call themselves Doopsgezinden (baptism-minded). They are members of the Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit (General Mennonite Society, or ADS). The Dutch Mennonites collaborate with many organizations worldwide as an expression of living out their faith.

Dutch Anabaptists are active in Mennonite World Conference, and the current president of MWC is Henk Stenvers, from the Netherlands. The Dutch Anabaptists hosted the third assembly of Mennonite World Conference in 1936 and the eighth MWC assembly in 1967.

For more on the Anabaptists in the Netherlands, visit the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: <https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Netherlands>.



A group of Dutch Anabaptists

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!

Project supporters

Anabaptist Mennonite Network, Great Britain
Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Deutschland e.V. (AMBD), Germany
Association des Eglises Evangélique Mennonites de France (AEEMF), France
Association Française d'Histoire Anabaptiste-Mennonite (AFHAM), France
International Menno Simons Centrum (IMSC), Netherlands
Mennonite Church Canada International Witness, Canada
Mennonite World Conference, a worldwide community of Anabaptist-related churches

Project sponsors

Affox AG, Switzerland
Anabaptist Mennonite Network, Great Britain
Doopsgezinde Stichting DOWILVO, Netherlands
Doopsgezinde Zending, Netherlands
Horsch-Stiftung, Germany
Mennonite Central Committee Europe
Stichting het Weeshuis van de Doopsgezinde Collegianten
De Oranjeappel, Netherlands
Swiss Mennonite Conference



**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