

Courier Correo Courrier

July 2023
Volume 38, 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'Églises Anabaptistes

3

Inspiration and reflection

**Renewal:
the core of the
gospel**

6

Perspectives

- Living every day is a miracle
- “We are peace-loving Mennonites”
- Hope takes action in despair
- Hope was never lost
- “If we do not give up...”
- Deep faith fills Bowls of Hope

14

Country Profile

Taiwan

17

Resources

- Peace Sunday
- Online Prayer Hour
- The Officers' Column
- From Our Leaders
- In Memoriam



Cover Photo:

César García, MWC general secretary, speaks at Renewal 2023 in Abbotsford, B.C., Canada. See his speech on page 20.

Photo: Karla Braun

Word from the editor



Partake in this global communion

What a joy to be together!

This issue of *Courier* features Renewal 2023.

Three years after it was first planned, this special event took place in British Columbia.

Renewal is a series of events to remember the birth of the Anabaptist movement in 1525 and to look forward to who and what the Anabaptist-Mennonite church is becoming around the world today and for the future.

Mennonite World Conference initiated this series of events in 2017, the year Lutherans were commemorating their church's 500-year anniversary. Each year, alongside the Executive Committee, MWC and local member church hosts organize a local event where MWC's international guests from each continental region share inspiring stories of God at work through the church today.

"We sang together, we prayed together and we heard testimonies from sisters and brothers from different places and different contexts on how they experience Jesus Christ, our hope. Testimonies that made us realize that even when we are one, our circumstances are very diverse. And that is the beauty of Mennonite World Conference; although our context is very different, we are one in Christ. We are one in our hope that it is Christ that reaches out to us and says, 'follow me'! He reaches out: it is on us to grab that hand and live in hope."

Those were president Henk Stenvers' words to the Anabaptist-Mennonites who gathered in Abbotsford, B.C., Canada in March 2023. He had just returned from visiting Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren churches in Peru and Colombia and he brought greetings from those brothers and sisters to the ones in Canada.

"Mennonite World Conference is the living witness of that hope, bringing people together in one communion, over borders of nationality, colour, language, economic circumstances and culture. Just like God wants to bring people together, Mennonite World Conference wants to break walls down so that we can be a communion that is a gift from God."

"It is important for churches to know that we are part of a bigger communion: that sisters and brothers around the world know about them; share our triumphs and challenges; and pray for each other. My experience in visiting churches in many parts of the world has taught me that being part of a big, global communion gives hope, especially for churches that are isolated, or that experience conflict and persecution. The felt solidarity, the prayers, the visits, sometimes financial help, that all lifts up the hearts of the people in the churches."

"Mennonite World Conference is us all," Henk Stenvers says. "And I want to encourage you to be part of the daily life of MWC. To stay informed about what is happening with our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world."

As you read the stories in this *Courier*, you are taking part in MWC. You are witnessing how our hope in Jesus Christ transcends barriers, uniting us as one body. Please share these stories with one another, and share your stories of following Jesus Christ with us.

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

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Courier/Correo/Courrier



Volume 38, Number 3

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

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Courier/Correo/Courrier is available on request.

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Courier/Correo/Courrier (ISSN 1041-4436) is published four times a year: April and October in print; February and July in digital format only.

Mennonite World Conference,
Publication Office: *Courier*, 50 Kent Avenue, Suite 206,
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1 Canada.
T: (519) 571-0060.

Renewal



2017

Augsburg, Germany, 12 February 2017
“Transformed by the Word: Reading the Bible in Anabaptist Perspectives”



2018

Kisumu, Kenya, 21 April 2018
The Holy Spirit transforming us



2019

San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica,
 6 April 2019
Justice on the Journey: Migration and the Anabaptist-Mennonite Story



2021

online 6 and 13 June 2021
Believe and Be Baptized: A global conversation on baptism
#1 The Anabaptist-Mennonite Tradition: history, theology and pastoral challenges
#2 Giving and Receiving within the Body of Christ: Learning from the Mennonite-Catholic-Lutheran Conversations on Baptism



2022

Semarang, Indonesia, 10 July 2022
Following Jesus together



2023

Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada,
 25 March 2023
Jesus Christ, our hope

In 2017, Mennonite World Conference began a series of events called Renewal.

The original vision was organized with a view toward the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Anabaptist movement in Zurich, Switzerland, in 2025.

It included several key components:

1. The event should honour the past but focus primary on the present and the future.
2. The event should take note of Anabaptist beginnings in Europe but should focus especially on the global witness of the church today, highlighting the way the Anabaptist movement has found expression in the distinctive cultural context of each host country.
3. The event should connect with ordinary church members as they testify to the ways in which the Holy Spirit is present in the church today.

The format of each Renewal event has varied. Sometimes it has been a day-long gathering, with meals and workshops. During COVID, we hosted the event on-line as a global webinar. More recently, in Abbotsford, British Columbia, we celebrated with a two-hour evening worship service. But at each occasion, we have sung together, prayed together, shared together, been inspired together and welcomed the presence of the Holy Spirit as the good news of the gospel continues to find expression in many different cultures and contexts.

Anabaptism began as a renewal movement. It has endured for 500 years only because each generation of Anabaptist-Mennonites has been renewed by a fresh movement of the Spirit. Beginning in 2017 in Europe and culminating in 2028 in Ethiopia, the MWC Renewal initiative has celebrated this ongoing renewal of Anabaptism around the world.

Join us in 2024 as we celebrate the MWC Renewal event in Brazil, and then again for a global family reunion in Zurich in 2025. And be sure to keep 2028 on your calendar when we gather for Assembly 18 to celebrate the remarkable ways that the Holy Spirit has been moving in the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia!

— John Roth, coordinator of Renewal events

We talked with MWC leaders to ask what they think of Renewal.

What do you think?

- How do we as Anabaptist-Mennonites truly seek renewal at this point in history?
 - What changes might we need to make?
 - What risks must we be open to take?
- Can we be as radical as the early Anabaptists were in their time? Would we want to be?
 - What risks are there in being radical?
 - Can renewal be nonviolent?
- What strategies or postures do we need to face the challenge of being a united a global Anabaptist family today?

Join the conversation! Add your own thoughts at mwc-cmm.org/en/renewal-core-gospel

Contributors:

- Anicka Fast, Faith & Life Commission, secretary (Canada/Netherlands/Burkina Faso)
- Andi Santoso, Deacons Commission, chair (Indonesia/USA)
- Andrés Pacheco Lozano, Peace Commission, chair (Colombia/Netherlands)
- Henk Stenvers, Executive Committee, president (Netherlands)
- Lisa Carr-Pries, Executive Committee, vice president (Canada)
- Sunoko Lin, Executive Committee, treasurer (Indonesia/USA)
- Thomas R Yoder Neufeld, Faith and Life Commission, chair (Canada)
- Tigist Tesfaye, Deacons Commission, secretary (Ethiopia)



Agus Mayanto, MWC regional representative for Southeast Asia, at Renewal 2023 host church South Abbotsford Mennonite Brethren Church.

Photo: Karla Braun

Renewal: the core of the gospel

Over the past 100 years, the world has changed immensely and at the same time, not so very much, says Henk Stenvers; both then and now, there is nationalism and polarization in church and society, and even war in Ukraine.

As we prepare to mark 100 years of MWC and 500 years of Anabaptism in 2025, it's a time to look forward, says Henk Stenvers. "This is a time to look at what is the significance of our message and mission for the coming years. Are the topics important in the Reformation still essential for us at the moment? Are new topics added? Have topics disappeared?"

"Studying the history of our church tradition helps us to remember who we really are and reminds ourselves of the true foundation which is grounded on the Bible," says Tigist Tesfaye.

"Renewal is not about recovery of the past, even if it includes remembering it," says Tom Yoder Neufeld. "Renewal is opening ourselves to the life-giving breath of God, the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 37)."

"It is the promise that resides in the call to repentance, to 'turning' and heading in a new direction. It is the gift in forgiveness, opening the future to reconciliation. It is central to the drama of baptism, of dying with Christ and then walking in the newness of life, living the resurrection. It resides in the hope of a new heaven and a new earth," says Tom Yoder Neufeld.

"Renewal implies looking with new lenses to the past as well as re-imagining the present and future," says Andrés Pacheco Lozano. "In order to be renewed we must retell our stories. Retelling stories can be a transforming experience because it allows us to (re)shape the narratives that form our identity. This liberating creativity opens the possibility for new interpretations to live out the radicality of the gospel message of justice and peace in the present and into the future".

"Renewal moves us from old to new," says Andi Santoso.

"The God who is also spirit calls people

in different eras throughout history, always to bring something new and connect us to God. The newness is something that is spiritual and natural (e.g., there are seasons – spring after the winter)," says Andi Santoso.

"It's important to be in a constant state of renewal," says Lisa Carr-Pries. "It's not a one-size-fits-all situation. We need to pay attention. Renewal requires our ears; it requires a change of view on a constant basis."

"New wine can't go into old wineskins; it will burst," says Sunoko Lin, reflecting on Mark 2. When Jesus tells the paralyzed man to take his mat and go home, he gave the man more than he expected: the ability to walk *and* carry. "Renewal brings something *new* or *better*. Jesus promised new wine, new wineskins; not only to walk but pick up the mat."

Radical

"The need for renewal remains constant, whether our focus is on identity (What does it mean to be Anabaptist?), or on task (What is our mission in the world? Evangelism? Peacemaking?)," says Tom Yoder Neufeld.

"I don't think renewal is so much about how Anabaptism has been adapted to different contexts and realities as it is about seeing the nuances and the ways in which new forms, or visions of Anabaptism have been emerging in different places," says Andrés Pacheco Lozano. "The ways in which the Anabaptist tradition came to a given place and the ways in which people and communities have embodied it in those places have made unique hybrid compositions in many parts of the world."

He says we should speak not only of polygenesis but polyAnabaptism to see that there are differences and variations. "A space like MWC has the potential to place them in dialogue: that is one of the most important gifts of our global communion: to put all these visions and embodiments of Anabaptism into conversation."

One young pastor in the Netherlands told Henk Stenvers: 'We will really be Mennonites again when the police are knocking at our doors.' "The peace message of Christ was radical," says Henk Stenvers. "Are we in Global North becoming part of society too much in the sense of conforming to authority, economic systems.?"

"Is there renewal in our relationship with others in our life?" asks Andi Santoso. We need to challenge the status quo and consider the social aspect of salvation as well. "Jesus brought reconciliation through himself: are we making a difference in working at peace and justice? Is there a change in how we conduct ourselves?"

"Today, renewal should make us uncomfortable...especially if we hold a fair bit of power," says Anicka Fast. "When the Anabaptist movement began, it was disruptive and bothersome. People on the margins of the church challenged what powerful church leaders were saying. Renewal will often unsettle."

As a historian, she studies the story of the church in Africa which is driven by waves of revival, led by Africans, led by women."

The East Africa Revival started in the 1930s and swept across Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. "It started with friendships and fellowship between African Christians and European and North American missionaries. They would repent together of attitudes toward each other. They developed strong friendships, and become close-knit groups called revival fellowships."

"The first Mennonite bishop of Tanzania, Zedekiah Kisare, recalled that when revival arrived it was as if a fuse had ignited dynamite: it was an explosion," says Anicka Fast.¹ "Everyone started weeping and crying. They changed their lives. The American missionary bishop changed his attitude of superiority toward African Christians. It was a complete change of heart that led to a new way of living together."

"Revival exploded boundaries between denominations. People wanted to take communion together," says Anicka Fast. Unfortunately, "sometimes renewal is happening and we hold on to things and block it."

Risks

Sometimes we need to leave everything behind to experience new things and really

depend on God, says Andi Santoso. He did so personally, leaving behind culture and his ministry, to study in the USA. “Seeing new realities, I question my own faith, my beliefs. If God exists, where is God’s love in this broken reality? There’s a communal aspect to churches as we become the broken healer, the broken peacebuilder.”

The need for renewal shouldn’t make us defensive. “We still have challenges: intercultural challenges, enormous difference in economic situation. How the Global North became so rich; how economic streams go with exploitation of countries in Africa for well-being of the Global North: those are reasons for repentance,” says Henk Stenvers. “Part of renewal is recognizing that things have to change.”

Leaning on the work of theologian Dorothee Söllee on spirituality, Andrés Pacheco Lozano identifies renewal as a (spiritual) process that includes three dimensions. *Via positiva*: celebrating God’s gifts and how they have been expressed in different times and contexts. *Via negativa*: letting go of the ego, confronting the ways in which we have benefited from or reinforced oppressive systems (including discrimination based on race, gender, ability or class, and other forms of injustice and violence, including the human-induced climate emergency) and seeking to recognize and heal the wounds that these have caused and repair the broken relations. And *via transformativa*: being transformed in order to transform the injustices and violence in the world.

“Based on the gifts we build on, the systems and practices we confront and let go of and the wounds we visit, the invitation must be to be transformed and to incorporate new practices, new understanding, new ways of seeing Anabaptism,” says Andrés Pacheco Lozano.

Strategies

“Renewal is individual, but it’s also a posture you can take as a communion, ... like how we take decision in consensus, talking to each other even if it takes a long time,” says Henk Stenvers. “Together in dialogue with each other and in dialogue with the Spirit, we want to find out what God is saying to us. That means openness to each other (listen to what people are saying), openness to time (no hurry to make decisions) and listening to what the Spirit brings.

“Listening is what moves people,” says Henk Stenvers. “What does the Bible say to you, what does the Bible say to me, and how can we find each other in that.”

“If we come from a place there hasn’t been renewal, it can be hard to put our brains in a place to hear from those who have,” says Anicka Fast. The stories may sound strange, but the work of the Holy Spirit is often scary. It crosses barriers.

“Renewal happens when people take a step, together as a group, and start to repent together, pray together, and study the Bible together in small groups,” Anicka Fast says.



MWC Executive Committee and staff tour Mennonite Central Committee B.C.’s campus in Abbotsford, B.C., with director Wayne Bremner.

Photo: Karla Braun

“There’s something very political about renewal and revival. It’s never limited to something inside individuals. Historically revivals almost always begin with repentance movements; making things right that have been broken, often in relationship,” says Anicka Fast.²

“Renewal is connected to mission: enlarging the family of God,” says Anicka Fast. “Recognizing in our own hearts where we are not faithfully following – and then changing.” What arises is both a new way of being church and new perspectives on social relationships.”

During the Mau Mau anticolonial war in Kenya in the 1950s, the “*abalokole*” – the revived ones – would not participate in war. “These revived ones would say ‘I cannot kill someone for whom Christ died.’ They drew on this strong idea that Jesus makes us into a new kind of family – one that crosses the boundaries of ethnic group,

race and nationality – as a reason not to participate in either side of the war,” says Anicka Fast.³

“The only way to transform is to practice,” says Lisa Carr-Pries. We’re tempted to hide our bad parts because we fear being condemned or dismissed by others; we don’t like accountability because it feels like shame about not meeting standards. “That’s not what the church can be about if we want to renew. Admit we made a mistake and want to do better.”

“We need to try on radical things that feel uncomfortable,” says Lisa Carr-Pries. “We need to be a community that is like a trampoline: it has some give; it catches people before they get hurt; it’s fun.”

There’s nuance in communities of practice. We aren’t going to get it right even when try. There’s room for mistakes and there is room for repair, says Lisa Carr-Pries. And we work under the assumption not everyone is on board.

“Repair and forgiveness are not necessarily the same thing. Flourishing, reconciliation, homecoming, belonging – these are words that invite transformation in communities of practice.”

“If we avoid discussing topics, if we restrict conversations, that’s one of the most counter-productive ways of dealing with these things,” says Andrés Pacheco Lozano. “If anything, global spaces should precisely help us in our process of renewal: understanding that siblings of faith in different contexts will have different ways to contribute to our own struggles and our own questions of what it means to be a church.”

“We’re going to have to get better at holding multiple truths at the same time,” says Lisa Carr-Pries. “That is different than being wishy washy or fence sitting.”

Today, there are multiple ways the church is facing critical times from divisions within to climate emergency without. Crisis reveals the need for renewal – and to avoid dealing with challenges is in itself violence.

Ideally, MWC should create spaces, opportunities and conditions for relationships to happen and to also experience difficult conversations – and be transformed in the process.

Continued on page 19

Ethiopia

Living everyday is a miracle

by Tigest Tesfaye

Ethiopia is a country located in the Horn of Africa. We're unique in some ways but the same with the rest of African countries in some other ways. We're a very poor country with a population of around 110 million.

Living in a country where problems are like the air you breathe – it's not easy; especially when you have access to go out of the country and declare your freedom. But staying and living among my people – it's a bittersweet reality, but that's who I am. That's where I can find purpose in my life.

Drama of trouble

This last year, 2022* it was a very joyful, and the same time, a very sad time personally and as a nation.

Our country is passing through a lot. We were happy at some point last year that the conflict in the north was over, but unfortunately, another one started in the western part of the country.

Let's talk about our economy. It started to deteriorate – as you also faced – during COVID-19, but it continues to go down due to the non-stop conflict in the country.



A walking path on Entoto Mountain in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Photo: Tigest Tesfaye

Unfortunately, the conflict also is followed by tribalism, which has become a chronic problem. It has become a challenge for us to live together; this intolerance of difference has started to dismantle our very fabric of society.

This also leads the country into another wave of economic and political disaster. It's going from bad to worse. Food inflation is skyrocketing and makes so many people struggle.

Droughts also hit the southeastern part of our country where now, it gets really worse such that people start to die due to hunger.

The religious conflict between the Orthodox and the evangelicals, or the Protestants along with the Muslims, is another character in the cast of this drama of trouble.

So, the life we're living in our country is very difficult to live.

Living despite

Such a situation is really challenging our churches, our societies, our congregations, our friends and our society in large, but we're living.

We don't know how, but we're able to live everyday as a nation. We're supposed to have collapsed, but we're going. Of course, not in the standards of the West, but we're moving.

If I have to give you an explanation, I just don't have it.

All the political social economic explanation and analysis would indicate that we should collapse. We should be 'the new Syria.'

For some, living everyday is just a miracle. Waking up in the morning, for some, is really a miracle.

But we're living. How?

An answer in God

As a Christian, I have an explanation. I believe that God is our strength. God is the creator of us, our Saviour who never gets tired or weary with our poverty or our conflicts.

I know so many people get tired. Even for me, I get tired asking of people to pray for

our country month after month, year after year, about this or that: pray for the conflict in Ethiopia; pray about the poverty levels. It gets tiring for so many people across the globe to hear that we keep on "begging."

But I believe in the Creator of us, our Saviour, who never gets tired, who never gets weary of our problems.

God gave power to the weak, provides for the needy, and gives us strength to move and the ability to see tomorrow. We don't know how, but God does it. Jesus is our hope.

I found one definition of "hope" on the internet. It says: "Hold On; Pain Ends."

So God is our hope. Hope that makes us to hold until the pain goes away or that enable us to endure it.

I'm able to pass it through. I'm able to pass it through and through and through, with all this personal and nation crisis, in fellowship with my fellow brothers and sisters.

We pray together every day.

Starting early in the morning from 5:00 to 6:30 am. We might sound really pious, but we simply pray and ask God for strength, for power, for more grace to live every day.

We gather together to share our personal burdens and also our country's cry. We encourage each other with the hope that we receive from Christ who himself is our hope.

So, brothers and sisters, as we celebrate our history and foundation as an Anabaptist movement, we turn to the same source as our persecuted forefathers and foremothers: that's Jesus Christ. He is the only hope to hope for – with or without pain.



Tigest Tesfaye is a youth mentor and coach, a member of Dehub Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, and author of *Mewetacha* (The ladder – a dream connector). She is secretary of the Deacons Commission.

Tigest Tesfaye spoke at Renewal 2023 – Jesus Christ, our hope – in Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, 25 March 2023 (presented via video). This article has been adapted from her presentation.

* This refers to the Gregorian calendar system. In Ethiopia, we use the official calendar of the Orthodox Tewahido Church which has 13 months and has a different starting point that puts it seven or eight years behind the Gregorian calendar.

Myanmar

“We are peace-loving Mennonites”

by Amos Chin

want to highlight some of the political situation and current events in Myanmar.

Political climate

Regarding the political situation, I will not provide details.

Since the military coup on 1 February 2021, there have been terrorist killings and armed revolutions in all regions in Myanmar.

I will present a few highlights only citing the United Nation's report (27 February 2023):

- There are 1.6 million refugees who have fled their homes in Myanmar, and the people of Sagaing Division and Chin State are facing the worst.
 - The conflicts are continuing throughout Myanmar, and the humanitarian needs of displaced people and refugees are increasing.
 - IDPs are living in precarious conditions in displacement camps and temporary camps, and are mostly sheltered in the nearby jungles.
- According to Media Monitor Collective, since the military coup, 53 786 civilian houses have been burned and destroyed.
 - In addition, there are 2 725 civilian deaths due to armed conflict, and Sagaing Division has the highest number of deaths with 2 047, according to Media Monitor Collective.
 - 24 065 civilians have been arrested and detained as a result of the coup and armed conflict.
- According to information from the United Nations and civil society organizations, the people of Sagaing Division and Chin State are the most affected by the war and are in need of emergency assistance. (Most of our Mennonites are living in the conflict regions.)

We are also happy to record that MWC provided US\$10 000 for food and medicines for 415 refugee families of Mennonite in last year. Thank you, MWC.

You fed us when we were hungry. When we are down, you comfort us. You help us when we are refugees. You bring us a ray of hope when we are hopeless.

Inflation and food shortages

Due to the impact of civil war, conflict and domestic inflation, livelihoods have become rare. There is a shortage of jobs. Meanwhile, the price of goods is rising at an alarming rate.

Not only the war victims, but there is a lack of food in many places. More than 45 percent of the country is suffering from food shortages. In Myanmar, we people usually eat food three times a day, but now, many people only eat once a day. This number is increasing. Some don't eat even once a day.

BMC Mennonite families are also greatly affected by the food shortage. Some members attend Sunday worship without eating at all. It is our great challenge to help the vulnerable Mennonite families in the congregations.

International organizations are unable to come and help.

Mennonite youth and armed revolution

After the military coup, young people took up arms against the military. The armed struggle is affecting our Mennonite youth: some Mennonite youth are also willing to join the armed struggle. Some young people are already participating in the armed revolution.

They also have a bitterness and avid to take arms against the military.

Our biggest challenge is the Mennonite youth and the armed revolution. We are also guiding our young people not to get involved in armed revolution, violence and political conflict. We absolutely do not want our youth to participate in the armed revolution. We absolutely do not want our youth to be involved in the political conflict.

We are peace-loving Mennonites because we believe only in the nonviolence movement.

Therefore we are holding Mennonite Youth Peace Conferences in several regions. We fully believe that through the Mennonite Youth Peace Conferences, our youth will be trained as peacemakers.

We also request you to help us with prayer support for this project of the Mennonite Youth Peace Conferences.

I would also like to record my special thanks to our friends, Mennonite Church Canada for prayers and financially supporting for the Youth Peace Conferences and any other things we need in mission work.

Dear MWC and Mennonite Church Canada, you are the angels sent by God to Myanmar. You fed us when we were hungry. When we are down, you comfort us. You help us when we are refugees. You bring us a ray of hope when we are hopeless.

The world forgets our condition, but you remember us. You are true and very Mennonite.

Eventually Jesus Christ is still our hope. *Shalom.*



Amos Chin is the president of Bible Missionary Church – Mennonite, and MWC member church in Myanmar. He also serves on the MWC Executive Committee.

Amos Chin's presentation at Renewal 2023 – Jesus Christ, our hope – was delivered by John D. Roth in Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, 25 March 2023. This article has been adapted from her presentation.



Read more
A declaration for peace



Call to prayer for
Myanmar

South Korea Hope takes action in despair

by Kkot-ip Bae

To talk about hope, I have to start with despair.

There's a question that I often get when I say I'm from Korea. It's "Which Korea?"

Yes, it's been 77 years since Korea was divided into North and South Korea. The deep-rooted fear that comes from a history of war and the insecurity that comes from that fear have created a lot of different forms of despair.

South Koreans have four major obligations. One of the obligations is the duty of national defense. And one of the duties of national defense is the duty of military service. This obligation applies to men between the ages of 18 and 40 in South Korea. They are conscripted to serve as soldiers for one and a half years. After that, they have to train regularly as reserve soldiers.

People say it's gotten better, but the military culture is still very violent. The stories of bullying, suicides and shootings is not hard to find in the news.

When you think of conscientious objectors in South Korea, the most common group that comes to mind is the Jehovah's Witnesses. There are also various organizations such as World Without War. And there are struggles of those who have survived imprisonment and stood up for their beliefs.

As of 2020, conscientious objectors no longer go to jail. This is something I've found hope for over this past year, but there's still a long way to go. The current alternative service system has a punitive nature to it, where you have to serve twice the length of your military service and you are only allowed to work in prisons.

There are also alternative services that are not a conscientious objection in nature. My younger brother graduated from a government-run agricultural university and started farming potatoes. In Korea, the number of farmers is decreasing, and there are no young farmers, so a select group of young men is chosen to farm in place of his military service. Similar cases are also

Our motivation and hope in the midst of the struggle for recognizing the legal status of Conscientious Objectors are in Jesus who is our teacher and example for the long-standing commitment in the Anabaptist-Mennonite community to the principle of nonviolence.



Members of Mennonite Church South Korea met with Jeremiah Choi, MWC regional representative for Northeast Asia (second from left, seated) and Kkot-ip Bae (second from right, seated).

Photo: courtesy Jeremiah Choi

found in certain industries. The application process is very tough, and the duration is also three years.

My younger brother was recently informed by the government that he was allowed to replace military service with farming. The church had been praying together and I can't tell you how fortunate he is. But, no, it's not a feeling of relief,

because my friends still have to go to the army, and my neighbours still have to go to the military.

Korean Mennonite churches are constantly trying to stand in solidarity with conscientious objectors. We invite them to give lectures, and we try to listen to their voices through face-to-face meetings. Our motivation and hope in the midst of the struggle for recognizing the legal status of Conscientious Objectors are in Jesus who is our teacher and example for the long-standing commitment in the Anabaptist-Mennonite community to the principle of nonviolence.

Most people may think that there is nothing wrong with the current system of conscription. But I see despair. I'm grateful that there is a community that also sees despair and takes action. That community is my local congregation and Mennonite Church South Korea (MCSK). We also have MWC walking the path together with us as disciples of Jesus.

Recently, MWC has issued a statement of support for conscientious objectors, largely in response to the challenges that the MCSK is facing. The MWC statement is an effort to stand in solidarity with us. And that signifies hope for me, and for my fellow Mennonites in Korea.

Thank you.



Kkot-ip Bae (배꽃잎) is a member of Nonsan Peace and Joy Mennonite Church in South Korea. She studied sociology and digital media content and works as social economy program planner specialist with design responsibilities for social value propagation. She is the Asia representative in for the MWC YABs Committee (Young AnaBaptists).

Kkot-ip Bae spoke at Renewal 2023 – Jesus Christ, our hope – in Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, 25 March 2023. This article has been adapted from her presentation.



Read more
Declaration on
Conscientious Objection



Peace Sunday 2023 Worship Resources

Prepared by the
MWC Peace
Commission for
17 September 2023

1

Theme and texts

a. Theme:

**We are Family!
Participating in
God's family**

b. Why this theme was chosen:

In Jesus' prayer, Jesus asks God that his disciples may be one just as he and the Father are one. But he doesn't stop there. He offers the hope that "they also may be one in us" (John 17:21), that his followers may participate in God, in the divine itself, so as to be a visible sign to a watching world. This year's Peace Sunday resources explores what it means to be one with God and with each other.

c. Biblical text:

John 17:20-26

2

Prayer Requests

- For the conflict in Ukraine. May those involved in the conflict recognize the humanity of the other across the border. May they recognize their interconnectedness and put an end to the pain and suffering. May they recognize that war ultimately only tears people further apart.
- For a change regarding the hostility the Indian government has exhibited toward Christians.
- For people in Myanmar – especially our Mennonite siblings – as they experience ongoing violence.
- For our Mennonite siblings in North America (i.e., Turtle Island) to explore ways of standing in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and their struggles for land, recognition, dignity and restitution.



Juan Francisco Novoa

3

Song Sug- gestions

From the MWC International Songbook 2022

- Dalam Yesus kita bersaudara / In Jesus Christ, we are one family
- Tapaiko Cheuma / I am your child
- We, your people, sing your praises / Bon berger, ton peuple t'adore / Kami Umat-mu Memuji
- You're not alone

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

- Suggested liturgies for gathering and benediction
- Prayers
- Teaching resources

b. Additional resources available online:

- Pictures (including all used in this package)



5

Activities

Community Mapping

Creating a social “family” tree

Purpose: to highlight the many and broad social connections that we as communities of faith have.

- In advance: create, out of construction paper, a tree trunk with a few branches. Tape or attach the tree trunk on to a wall.
 - Create larger branches that can symbolize members of the faith community.
 - Create smaller branches for communities church members are connected to (e.g., school, another congregation or church structure, other church ministries, workplaces, etc.)
 - Out of paper, form leaves of many colours
- Invite members to add their name to a branch.
 - From those branches, each member can then begin to highlight the different social connections that they may have.
- Use leaves to highlight specific people to whom one is connected through the different “branches”. Take the time to validate the things that have or can cause chaos.

Hopefully this result in a beautiful, wide, vibrant and colourful tree that expands across the wall, highlighting the many connections the church community has.

With permission, send your story and photo to photo@mwc-cmm.org to share with the global Anabaptist family.



Bethel Mennonite Church in Balodgahan, India celebrates Peace Sunday 2022.

Ashish Miliap



Lacao Mennonite Bible Church in Lumban, Laguna (IMC - Philippines) celebrates Peace Sunday in 2022 by singing international songs and creating the peace garden (suggested activity from the worship resource) where members write on the fruits and vegetables about “how we can make an impact in the community.”

Regina Mondez

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.

Portugal Hope was never lost

by José Arrais

The world changed profoundly since 24 February 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine. This has had a strong impact on all Europeans.

We have 14 Mennonite conferences in 11 countries in Europe, all of them with their own culture, history, work within our Anabaptist-Mennonite family.

In 2018, the Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Ukraine hosted our annual gathering with participants from Austria*, France*, Germany*, Lithuania, Netherlands*, Portugal*, Spain*, Switzerland* and the MWC president in Zaporizhzhia and Bardiensk.

So you might imagine when the violence began last year, people from all the conferences in Europe started asking: “What are we going to do to help our brothers and sisters?”

From the smallest to the biggest, they all wanted to help in different ways. All the conferences had a role to help what is going on in Ukraine. Some send funds, all pray, of course, and some even take initiative to bring relief supplies directly to Ukraine.

There was one conference – a small conference, located close to Ukraine – who started to help right away in a very specific, caring way.

The Mennonite Brethren church in Lithuania (Lietuvos Laisvųjų Krikščionių Bažnyčia), started to pack vans in Vilnius and drive all the way to Ukraine to share goods with MB brothers and sisters in Ukraine.

They stop in Poland overnight, pass through the border and drive on into Ukraine to meet the brothers and sisters and give them supplies. Then they turn around to drive home, often waiting hours at the border due to the long lines of people seeking to leave.

At first, they didn’t even have time to explain about their excursions; they just started acting.

I shared with other churches when I learned of this. They also sent funds and goods.

“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”



The Mennonite congregation in Purmerend, Netherlands, sends a greeting of encouragement to Mennonite churches in Ukraine.

Photo: Doopsgezinde Gemeente Purmerend

The big effort by all the rest of the European family, each of them in a different way, to bring relief was a fantastic way to show hope to our sisters and brothers in Ukraine.

This solidarity is not only between Anabaptist-Mennonite churches in Europe and Ukraine but between the European churches to help each other help Ukraine.

It is a living out of 1 Corinthians 12:26-27: “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

The situation in Ukraine is still a challenge. We keep in touch as the needs continue, and we keep praying.

We thank God that hope was never lost. Keep praying.



José Arrais is from Lisbon, Portugal. He is a member of Loures Mennonite Brethren Church and serves as MWC’s regional representative in Europe. His work of interacting with the European Mennonite church leaders, hearing their needs, challenges, and blessings, is a source of joy and motivation to prayer, and he is eager to continue deepening and adding to those relationships. José Arrais is married to Paula; they have three children and one grandchild.

José Arrais spoke at Renewal 2023 – Jesus Christ, our hope – in Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, 25 March 2023. This article has been adapted from his presentation.

*Indicates national churches from this country are members of MWC.



Read more
Mennonite witness amid suffering and hope in Ukraine



A pastoral letter for Anabaptist-Mennonites in Ukraine

Paraguay

“If we do not give up...”



Young people worship at Iglesia Menonita Concordia, Paraguay.

Photo: Iglesia Menonita Concordia

I think the Apostle Paul was onto something when he encouraged us to “not give up” as we strive – and hope – for what we desire. It was in our time of loneliness, isolation, separation and loss that we vividly felt the urge to hope for something else – something more.

by Cynthia Dück

A couple of years ago as we were swimming upstream against COVID-19, hope seemed to be hard to come by. I don’t know about your churches, but we were forced to dive into the deep end of the modern digital age – or rather bellyflop into it.

Month after month, we worked tirelessly on learning how to film high-quality video, add the little subtitles and create engaging content to make the services dynamic and participatory for all group ages at the same time!

Eventually, we got better at it and we paddled through the two-year parenthesis.

At the beginning of last year, COVID-19 restrictions loosened up and we were finally able to return to “normal.”

But how do you “be normal” after such a long time? Our numbers weren’t what they were and our online participation was meager. On top of that there were significant financial losses among many of our members and deep pain over those who were no longer with us.

As a congregation, we didn’t have a special verse for this time. But if I had to say we had one – Galatians 6:9 would have been it.

“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.”

During COVID-19, we *hoped* that the people would return.

And they did.

Then, we *hoped* that the first year back together would prove to be a year of growth and reconnecting after such a long separation.

And it was.

We now see the pews filling up with brothers and sisters, the children running through the yard in their Sunday School programs, the youth going out to local hospitals and doing evangelism, small groups meeting in homes and uplifting each other, etc.

On the other hand, paradoxically (and somewhat unconsciously), we had also hoped for some facets of our pre-pandemic lives to return. With a great sense of weariness and melancholy, we realized that we could never recover all that had been lost along the way. Not all that we had hoped for came true.

I can’t quite say what the secret is to finding or having hope. However, I think the Apostle Paul was onto something when he encouraged us to “not give up” as we strive – and *hope* – for what we desire. It was in our time of loneliness, isolation, separation and loss that we vividly felt the urge to hope for something else – something more.

Last year we were able to meet in person and celebrate MWC’s Assembly 17 in Indonesia. Our encounter felt like a true homecoming after a long time of separation. As we met, we harvested a global collection of testimonies, which we then took home to share with our communities. We heard stories, much like our own, filled with difficult challenges and joyful triumphs.

May we continue to be encouraged to patiently await and enjoy God’s plentiful harvest. And not give up on hope.



Cynthia Dück is the MWC Regional Representative to Brazil and Paraguay. She lives in Asuncion, Paraguay, together with her husband and three teenaged children. They attend and serve at Mennoniten Brüder Gemeinde Concordia / Iglesia Hermanos Menonitas Concordia (Concordia Mennonite Brethren Church).

Cynthia Dück spoke at Renewal 2023 – Jesus Christ, our hope – in Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, 25 March 2023. This article has been adapted from her presentation.

Canada

Deep faith fills Bowls of Hope

by Ashley Rempel

When I think about hope, I am very thankful to have quite a long list to choose from where I see it. Here I will focus on how I see hope in my church through the community outreach and the youth – and how they intertwine.



Donated food packages at Bowls of Hope.

Photo: Chilliwack Bowls of Hope Society



Volunteers sort and pack food relief packages.

Photo: Chilliwack Bowls of Hope Society

Love and dedication

I have the privilege of being a youth leader at my home congregation for the past four years. What has given me hope through this opportunity is watching how the youth group (12-18 year olds) has grown significantly and the love they have for others and Jesus.

When I started youth leading, there were smaller numbers at my church. We were going through a time of changing youth pastors, and it was a good group, but small. Today – where on a full night we have a little over 30 youth (big for our church) – I cannot help but see hope for the future of the church.

When diving deep into conversations about faith, life and anything with these youth kids (especially my High School Girls small group), my hope soars. I see the thought and the intent they have. Seeing these youth's love and dedication to their faith gives me so much hope as I have many friends who have left church or do not take it as seriously anymore.

This hope extends even further when I see how these youth are involved: they serve and wash dishes at church banquets; they deliver Christmas cookies and cards to a neighbouring seniors' living facility; they shovel snow at the church; and they participate in clean-up days. The one that stands out the most to me is seeing members of my youth group participate at our conference summer camp, Camp Squeah. There, these teenagers are leaders to younger children. They both exemplify and teach about the love of Christ to children.

This is where I see hope so clearly.

Then I switch lenses and look to the community outreach which my church has been participating in over the past few years especially since COVID-19.

Laughter and leadership

We are blessed as a congregation to have our own building. Through this, as a congregation we have been able to

provide space for many different community outreaches.

One example is Bowls of Hope. This not-for-profit organization has a room full of food supplies in our building. They provide struggling families with meal plans week-to-week to make sure they have food. I see hope in the way my congregation is reaching out and helping those around it.

The real special moment for me was when the youth group volunteered to help at Bowls of Hope. I saw the youth kids having fun. They jumped into the kitchen to help prepare the ingredients for soup to feed 1 000 children in our city. There were tears (yes, that might have just been because of the onions), lots of laughter – and a sense of hope. Hope for the ways in which the church is aiding the community around them and hope for the youth in the servant-heartedness already present in situations like these.

I am extremely blessed by my home congregation and have appreciated the time I have had reflecting on the hope I have around it. This fills me with excitement to see where the Lord moves next in this time and to see how these youth inspire others.



Ashley Rempel is a high school French and social studies teacher from Chilliwack, B.C., Canada. She serves at the Mennonite retreat centre Camp Squeah in summer. A member of Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack, B.C., Canada, she served as the MC Canada representative for her region at the Global Youth Summit (GYS) in Indonesia. There, she found hope in attending workshops with youth pastors from around the world to listen to their experiences and hear their input of how to make youth groups and the church welcoming for this next generation.

Ashley Rempel spoke at Renewal 2023 – Jesus Christ, our hope – in Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, 25 March 2023. This article has been adapted from her presentation.

Taiwan

Serving “the least significant of the brothers and sisters of Jesus”

Fellowship of Mennonite Churches in Taiwan

Established in 1962, the Fellowship of Mennonite Churches in Taiwan (FOMCIT) is a conference of 24 congregations in Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung and Hualien. It is a branch of Anabaptism, and a member of Asia Mennonite Conference and Mennonite World Conference. Impacted by COVID-19, the total baptized membership in 2022 was 1 935. The ministries of FOMCIT include evangelism, church planting, social services, theological education and publication.

In Taiwan, the denomination is known for its contributions in social services. Currently, there are three social ministries in Hualien: the Mennonite Christian Hospital; the New Dawn Educare Center for people with physical or mental disabilities; and the Good Shepherd Center for girls and women who have been abused.

History

Anabaptism first set foot in Taiwan in 1948 when Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) started medical and relief work among the Indigenous peoples in response to Presbyterian missionary Rev. James Ira Dickson's call. Mennonite missionary doctors, nurses and pastors – including Dr. and Mrs. Robert Hess and Rev. and Mrs. Glen Graber – moved to Taiwan and began running mobile clinics in remote, mountainous places.

In January 1955, MCC established the Mennonite Christian Hospital (MCH) in Hualien, a city in Eastern Taiwan. Back then, the area was considered remote and

backward; Indigenous peoples accounted for approximately 25 percent of its population. In the same year, the General Conference Mennonite Church Commission on Overseas Mission also started church-planting ministries in Taiwan, which led to the development of FOMCIT.

The mission ended its operations in the country in 1994, when FOMCIT entered into a covenant with the Mennonite churches of North America to become sister churches.

Contributions and Significant Developments— Social Welfare Organizations:

Mennonite Christian Hospital

Located in Hualien, the Mennonite Christian Hospital (MCH) is a comprehensive-care institution that specializes in community health, geriatric medicine and long-term care. The 500-bed regional teaching

hospital offers a wide range of medical services to people in Eastern Taiwan, and it is currently the largest Mennonite hospital in the world¹.

Seventy-five years ago, MCH started out as a mobile medical team that offered relief work among Taiwan's Indigenous peoples. The hospital was built in 1955 by Dr. Roland Brown, the founder and former superintendent of MCH, with only 35 beds at first.

Throughout the years, more than 160 Mennonite missionaries had come to serve at MCH. Advocating peace and stressing a life of “service to the Lord,” they quietly dedicated their lives to Hualien. Seven of the missionary doctors and nurses were bestowed the Medical Dedication Award by the Taiwanese government, and Dr. Roland Brown was granted the Order of the Brilliant Star with Violet Grand Cordon by President Lee Teng-Hui, a rare honour



Planted by William Voth, his wife Matilda, and Marie Regier, Meilun Mennonite Church was one of the first few Mennonite churches in Hualien, a city in Eastern Taiwan.



Roland P. Brown, the Mennonite doctor who founded the Mennonite Christian Hospital.

Photo: All photos supplied by FOMCIT

symbolizing outstanding contributions to the development of the nation.

The missionaries lived out Mennonite values. After they retired and returned home, local staff picked up the baton. With more than 1 500 employees, of which 20 percent is indigenous, MCH and its affiliates continue to care for the disadvantaged and the vulnerable.

MCH's affiliates include MCH Shoufeng Campus and Residential Home for Mentally Disabled Adults, Shoufeng Nursing Home, Mennonite Postpartum Care Center and Home Care Services. MCH also set up multiple funds to support Indigenous peoples and people who are underprivileged or disabled.

Looking into the future, MCH will continue to serve "the least significant of the brothers and sisters of Jesus" (Matthew 25:40), and will strive to improve the health of the community by enhancing its quality of service and medical capacity; leveraging AI technologies; and equipping employees with the knowledge, skills and resources they need.

As a Christian hospital, MCH cares about staff members' faith. Prayer meetings and small groups are held regularly. Upholding its mission, MCH will keep on sharing the gospel through medical service and serving as if it is serving the Lord (Matthew 25:36).

New Dawn Educare Center

Founded in 1977 by Mennonite missionaries Rev. Otto Dirks and his wife Elaine, the New Dawn Educare Center offers both day and residential services to clients with a wide range of physical and mental disabilities.

Rev. Otto Dirks and Elaine came to Taiwan in 1968 with their young son Randall. Their original task was to plant churches. Soon after they arrived in Taiwan, they had a second son who was born with Down syndrome. Later, they adopted an Indigenous girl who was physically and mentally disabled.

Back then, disabilities was stigmatized; families often neglected or abandoned their disabled children. The Dirkses observed this and decided to support these children. They returned to Canada to study special education and came to Taiwan again in 1977. With their new expertise and

the financial resources they had raised, they established the New Dawn Special Education Center in Hualien (Later renamed as the Taiwan Mennonite New Dawn Educare Center).

Serving people with physical and mental disabilities for more than four decades, New Dawn offers a variety of educational and therapeutic approaches, including music, animal, and art therapies; vocational training; and opportunities for internships or employment with local businesses.

New Dawn's hard work was recognized by the government; in 2019, it received the Presidential Culture Award in Humanitarian Dedication. Seeing a rapid increase in the number of people affected by Kanner's Syndrome (a form of autism), New Dawn endeavours to build a support network for people with the syndrome. In 2020, New Dawn started building the Joy Campus, a green residential care home for adults with Kanner's Syndrome.

New Dawn is dedicated to building a friendly environment and offering resources to help people with physical and mental. New Dawn will continue to empower both the clients and their families with the necessary abilities to live with a disability and to care for an individual with a disability.

Good Shepherd Center

In the 1980s, child prostitution was rampant in Taiwan. Indigenous children living in remote, mountainous tribal communities were sold into prostitution by their poor families, but the general

public was unaware of this issue. In 1987, a 16-year-old girl was sent to MCH's Emergency Department because of septic shock caused by sexually transmitted infection and pelvic inflammatory disease. Doctors and nurses fought hard to save her, and she survived. However, they discovered that she was sold into prostitution when she was 8 years old. For many years, she was trapped in brothels in Taipei.

A pediatrician and a social worker at MCH asked Rev. Fang-Fang (Katherine) Wu, a Mennonite pastor and later the first CEO of the Good Shepherd Center, to join them in rescuing children and teenagers from prostitution and sexual exploitation.

Growing up Mennonite, Rev. Wu was deeply influenced by missionaries like Dr. Roland Brown and his wife Sophie, Dr. Carl Epp and his wife Hilda, and MCH nurses Helen Willms Bergen and Sue Martens Kehler. The way they acted justly, loved mercy, walked humbly with God and served the least of the brothers and sisters of Jesus was imprinted in her heart. It was a natural response for her to do the same.

Taiwan

MWC member church

Fellowship of Mennonite Churches in Taiwan (FOMCIT)

Total baptized members	1 230
Total congregations	24

Source: MWC, 2023



Residents and caregivers outside New Dawn Educare Center's first location.



New Dawn's leadership team today. CEO Gui-Hua Liang on the far right.



The Good Shepherd Center's leadership team. Fourth from left is Yu-Gui Chu, Good Shepherd's current CEO.



Linshen Road Mennonite Church in Taichung, founded by Glen Graber in 1954, was the first Mennonite church in Taiwan. Today's building was completed in 1993.

The rescue work began, and the Good Shepherd Association (later known as the Good Shepherd Center) was established. Every week, Rev. Wu would visit Indigenous villages across Hualien, looking for young victims and girls who were at risk. Unprotected and unsupported by the government, Rev. Wu worked with local churches, held afterschool programs in tribal villages, raised the public's awareness on the issue of child sex trafficking, and urged relevant authorities to recognize the seriousness of this daunting issue. Whenever she discovered a victim, she would rescue her and hide her in Good Shepherd's shelter home.

Encouraged by Rev. Wu, the Good Shepherd Association joined FOMCIT in 1990, and its name was changed to the "Good Shepherd Center."

One morning in 1993, Rev. Wu was beaten by gangsters while she was on her way to work because she "got in the way of their money-making business." This incident caught the attention of the media and the wider public. People were astounded and concerned, and the government finally enacted laws to protect children and teenagers. Because of this, child prostitution gradually ended.

The Good Shepherd Center is now a shelter for teenaged girls who have been abused, are delinquent, were sexually assaulted or neglected; for women and children suffering from domestic violence; and for pregnant teenagers. It also holds afterschool programs for underprivileged families and helps disadvantaged women find jobs. The Good Shepherd Center is committed to helping those in need to find hope.

Challenges and opportunities

The Mennonite denomination is small, with only 24 churches and less than 2 000 members. In the early years, Mennonite churches were often confused with the Presbyterian, as many of our pastors had Presbyterian background. Our leaders worked hard to strengthen members' Mennonite identity.

Over the past 20 years, there has been a charismatic movement in Taiwan. The younger generations are more attracted to the charismatic churches. We need new



Morning prayer meeting at Nantun Church.

strategies to share the gospel, engage the younger generations and keep our values.

Meanwhile, with our commitment to social justice and pursuit of mercy and humility, FOMCIT's social ministries remain vital to society. By serving the least significant of our brothers and sisters and viewing our work as service to the Lord, we will continue to carry out our values and put our faith into action.



Written by Jessica Lu, a third-generation Mennonite. Special thanks to Mr. Harold Lu for his coordination and invaluable input throughout the process, and to Rev. Kim Chen, the Mennonite Christian Hospital, the New Dawn Educare Center, and the Good Shepherd Center for their generous contributions of information.

Share the impact

“Thank you for sending!”
“News from *Courier* will add faith and knowledge to us.”

These are responses we've received after *Courier* brings you testimonies, teaching and news from the global Anabaptist-Mennonite family around the world.

How have you been moved by the sharing you read in *Courier*? How have you shared that with your wider church community?

Tell us what you learned – and what you want to learn more about!

We welcome your feedback.



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Online Prayer Hour

“Prayer is the backbone of the church. We need to practice it as a body of Christ regularly,” says Tigist Tesfaye, secretary of the Deacons Commission.

“Praying together is a spiritual discipline for us to grow together. As we gather on Zoom for Online Prayer hour, it's a way we see each other, shoulder each other's burdens, cry and celebrate our joys together.

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

Visit mwc-cmm.org/online-prayer-hour-registration to register for the next online prayer meeting.



Next events: 14:00 UTC

- Friday, 21 July 2023
- Friday, 15 September 2023
- Friday, 17 November 2023
- Friday, 19 January 2024

The Officers' column

Meet vice-president Lisa Carr-Pries, appointed in 2022.



Lisa Carr-Pries, MWC vice-president.

Photo: Christian Argha Aditya

1. What does it mean for MWC to be a communion of churches?

I am grateful for the global church. For many, it has years broadened my understanding of the world beyond my local context and has helped me raise my children to be globally conscious human beings. It definitely changed the course of my life and deepened my faith and spirituality. I have hope for the relevance of the Anabaptist church for the transformation of each person's life.

2. How do I pray for the global church?

I pray that our global churches will be a witness of hope to the world where despair and violence reign.

3. What is your hope that the church will accomplish in the next 5 years?

That we continue to celebrate our unity in Christ by celebrating the gift of our diversity

in our theologies, backgrounds, cultures and in faithful discipleship.

4. What are you reading that gives hope to the global church?

I read daily the meditations that come from the Center for Action and Contemplation. I strongly believe that we as Jesus' followers need to have equal parts of action and contemplation in our Christian walk.

“We need both action and contemplation to have a whole spiritual journey.... Action may lead you to contemplation and contemplation may lead you to action. But finally, they need and feed each other.” (CAC Daily Meditation, May 13, 2016)

5. How do you serve your local congregation?

I love to lead worship and music in my local congregation. I delight in creating worship services that have the congregational members engaging their whole beings as they come to be part of a community of faith that practices faithful living.

6. What is your professional training?

I have a bachelor of church music, a bachelor of theology and a master of theology. I am a lifelong learner and have pursued additional courses and received a certificate in spiritual direction and a certificate in conflict management and congregational leadership. I have loved being a pastor for most of my adult life.





Photo: Meetinghouse,
Kresna Kurniawan

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Join the MWC movement! Stand in solidarity with Anabaptist sisters-and-brothers from Argentina to Zimbabwe.

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From our Leaders

Universally appealing core values



Meet Hiro Katano of Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan
Member of the Faith & Life Commission

How do you serve MWC?

I have been a General Council member, representing Nihon Menonaito Kirisuto Kyokai Kyogikai (Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference), since 2016. I serve MWC by connecting it with my church conference through correspondence, information, translation and teaching. I also began to serve as a member of Faith and Life Commission in July 2022.

How do you serve your local church?

I have been a member of Sapporo Bethel Mennonite Church since 1998 with regular assignments of preaching and worship leading. My wife Miwako and I reside at Fukuzumi Mennonite Center in Sapporo. The Center is owned and managed by our church conference to host guests, provide space for worship services, business meetings and other gatherings. I also help my wife with her ministry as a self-supporting pastor.

On behalf of Anabaptist/Mennonite churches in Japan, I have been organizing Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI) since its launch in 2010. I have had other opportunities to present lectures, workshops, and writing assignments on peace theology both inside and outside of the Mennonite denomination.

What does it mean for the body of Christ to be unified?

For me it means to keep returning from time to time to our common values as followers of our Lord Jesus.

Faith: we regularly return to the life, teachings and ministry of Jesus to examine our discipleship.

Life: we regularly meet in a community of faith to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit for renewal and growth.

Work: we regularly pursue holistic reconciliation with God, others, self and creation in our daily walk of faithful living.

While my framing is based on the so-called Anabaptist essentials, these core values are universally appealing to other denominations as well.

What book or podcast have been reading/listening to lately whose insights you would recommend?

I have been blessed and inspired by "The Jesus Way: Small Books of Radical Faith" series by Herald Press. These 10 books are concise, readable and clearly focused exposition of Anabaptist faith and worldviews. I developed them into booklets to introduce basic Anabaptist faith to Japanese youth.

What MWC resource do you recommend and why?

"Shared Convictions of Global Anabaptists" is worth reading, reciting, reflecting and studying to embody. While our church conference has its own confession of faith, Shared Convictions helps us obtain more comprehensive, additional and communicative elements of Anabaptist faith.

What We Believe Together by Alfred Neufeld is a helpful guide as we dig into the document. I organized a workshop to explore the Shared Convictions and made a series of sermons based on the learnings. I am now expanding them into a series of video lectures on basic Anabaptist doctrines.

Continued from page 5

Renewal: the core of the gospel

“The church is as a living system,” says Andrés Pacheco Lozano. “A system that does not have exchange with the environment around it is stuck. It dies in the long term. We should learn from our legacy in conflict resolution/transformation: denying conflict is not the solution. If addressed properly, conflict can lead to transforming not only of opinions but also relationships, for growth.”

“It’s not easy to sit in the same room with people who have different experiences or who interpret similar experiences in a different biblical or theological way,” says Andrés Pacheco Lozano. But, like a family, “when you come to the dining table, you also talk about the difficult parts.” Putting aside some of the power dynamics that come into play with a family metaphor, the dining table is a space for sharing both joys and difficult topics, and a space that is returned to again and again, hopefully able to engage the topics in a different way.

“We can be inspired, challenged, transformed and renewed by the witness from siblings in other parts of the world. That’s the beauty and the challenging part as well. Maybe, if anything, diversity is what empowers us,” says Andrés Pacheco Lozano. “MWC is an opportunity for growth.”

“There’s a lot of reason for hope. We as MWC we are an example of how you can cross barriers culturally, nationally and also in theology and still be one communion,” says Henk Stenvers. “Our challenge is to be open. To change even if we don’t know what that change will bring. When Christ asks to us to be one, this is the only way we can be one: in hope and trust in God.”

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In memoriam

Eunice Litwiller Miller (1926-2023)



Eunice Litwiller Miller (1926-2023)

Photo: supplied

Eunice L. Miller, 97, died on 24 March 2023 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Eunice Miller translated for Mennonite World Conference, working as a team with her daughter Marisa from 2003 to 2021.

She was born 5 February 1926 in Pehuajó, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, to Ada and Nelson Litwiller, who had been appointed by Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM) in 1925 to serve in Argentina. Eunice was married 13 September 1947 to Daniel W. Miller, from Akron, Pennsylvania, Ohio (son of Orié O. Miller and Elta W. Miller).

Eunice and Daniel Miller were missionaries/fraternal workers (1950-1986) serving in Argentina and Uruguay under MBM (now Mennonite Mission Network), and later in Mexico under the Franconia Mennonite Conference. During 1986 they traveled throughout Central America with the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary, offering biblical formation to members of congregations and meeting with local church leaders in small communities, “to reflect and consider the Anabaptist concept of the church as a possible model for our churches today.” (“Holistic Mission in Action”, Coretta Thomson, MQR, Jan. 2023). As Coretta also wrote in this article, “the story of their work demonstrates the

putting into practice of the holistic models of church and mission... which put equal emphasis on spiritual salvation and physical well-being... indicating that comprehensive discipleship and horizontal church structures aid the spiritual growth of both missionized and missionaries...”

Eunice Miller described her work with her husband: “We formed a pastoral couple, doing joint work; this is how a fraternal relationship should be. There must be no difference between men and women. Each one makes their contribution according to their gifts... We are all pastors in a community of believers. We are all servants, serving one another...”

The couple retired in 1986 in Buenos Aires, where they became members of the Iglesia Anabautista Menonita de Buenos Aires (IAMBA).

She is survived by two children; six grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; two sisters.

Comments from Mennonite leaders:

“Eunice chose the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as a guide for community practice, and encouraged Mennonite churches to recover their historic theological roots in the Anabaptist movement of the 16th century.”

—Linda Shelley, *Mennonite Mission Network*

“Eunice was the great driving force that awakened the spark enlightening the search for building a more radical, more Anabaptist, more ecumenical community. As a committed pacifist, she taught us to stand up against and resist any injustice, any exclusion, any tyranny. We are all brothers and sisters; in the Christian community there are no titles, there is no hierarchy. That is for the army, not for the followers of Jesus.”

—Luis M. Alman, *church leader, Iglesia Anabautista Menonita de Buenos Aires (IAMBA)*



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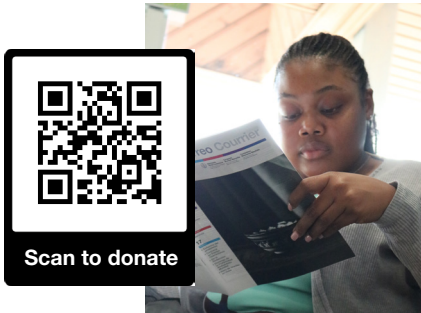


Photo: Karla Braun

A spirit of repentance and Renewal

“That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:21)

With these words from the Gospel of John 17:21, we warmly greet the sisters and brothers of Anabaptist churches worldwide and also those from other Christian communions.

At this moment in history, we reflect on the first 500 years of the Radical Reformation. “Renewal” is the name that the Mennonite World Conference has given for a decade of regional events around the memory of five centuries of our existence as a community of faith. We are approaching these 10 years of commemorations by focusing on our history from a global, ecumenical and transcultural perspective.

We remember the past to look toward the future. We want to recall our roots as we express gratitude to God for the inheritance of the faith we have received. But we also come before the Lord in a spirit of repentance and renewal, committed to learning from the past to grow in our relationship with God both here and now and in the years to come.

Why do we need each other?

With the theme of “Jesus Christ, Our Hope,” we seek to explore how our Anabaptist tradition has offered its witness to the world about Jesus as our hope since the 16th century.

Unity is one of the challenges that we have historically faced in the Anabaptist world.

Why do we need to be one globally with other members of our family of faith?



Conversation at tables after the Renewal event at South Abbotsford MB Church, B.C., Canada.

Photo: Karla Braun

Why do we need something like Mennonite World Conference, a body that facilitates unity around 10 000 local congregations, 108 national conferences and 1.5 million baptized believers?

In contexts of persecution, oppression or violence, reasons why we need a global church seem more evident to our members: a global communion offers support when local congregations cope with difficult circumstances (e.g. financial resources, political advocacy, pastoral care).

In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, global interdependency is crucial for projects exceeding a local church’s capacity (e.g. mission, theological education, formation of new agencies).

What do our churches say about Jesus?

However, beyond pragmatic reasons to look for unity, our Anabaptist tradition must recover the idea of a visible global church.

The reason I affirm this has to do with the New Testament concept and practice of ecclesia. Scripture speaks of interdependent local congregations that lean on each other for theology, pastoral care, financial support in times of crisis and mission, among other things.

However, even more, critical is the fact that Jesus linked the credibility of his life to the unity of his followers.

Mennonite World Conference is the global “space” where we can receive unity as God’s gift.

As we thank God for Jesus Christ, our hope, let us also maintain an attitude of repentance for the divisions that have arisen among us, negatively affecting the impact of Jesus’ life and ministry in a world marked by polarizations, divisions and fragmentation.

- Let us ask for forgiveness for all the wounds that we have caused on Jesus’ body.
- Let us seek the renewal that sees the lack of unity of the church as evidence of sin.
- Let us seek the unity that comes from a contrite heart that recognizes its sin.

I pray that reflecting on John 17:21 will renew our understanding of Jesus as our hope. May we embody hope by showing the world that the blessing of unity is possible when Jesus is the centre of our lives.

César García is general Secretary of Mennonite World Conference. Originally from Colombia, he lives in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. He delivered a version of this speech at Renewal 2023 in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada, on Saturday, 25 March 2023.