

“Power and Preservation: Enabling Access to the Sources Behind Our Stories” Affirmations and Commitments

As historians, archivists, and church and mission leaders from around the world, we gathered in Goshen, Indiana (USA), from June 17–19, 2019 for a symposium convened by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism. Together for the first time, we gained a new recognition of each other as allies in the effort of preserving the sources behind our stories. As a group, we affirm the following:

1. As followers of Jesus Christ our history connects us, reminds us of the Spirit’s activity among us, and calls us forward into the future.
2. The task of telling and preserving our stories is urgent because of the deterioration of records and the loss of oral memory.
3. We share rich resources:
 - A deep commitment, vision, and desire to promote preservation and access
 - A wide variety of technical skills and expertise
 - Imagination and creativity
 - Broad networks and established relationships
 - Individual spheres of influence
 - Records, stories and experienced storytellers
 - Human, institutional, and financial resources
4. Archives play a crucial role in helping us to understand the inseparability of the stories of church and mission.
5. Equitable access to sources is necessary because we share the ownership of our stories.

We recognize the various significant barriers to preservation and access:

- Borders
- Financial constraints
- Language
- Limited skills in preparation and the management of historical resources
- Lack of information
- Difficulty of international collaboration
- Restrictions on access by those in power
- Institutional weaknesses and lack of commitment

We commit to the following:

1. To foster habits of preservation throughout the global Anabaptist-Mennonite community.
2. To look for new ways to deepen our collaboration across continents.
3. To engage in new and continued efforts to preserve sources and to promote access.
4. To nurture enthusiasm within our communities for the tasks of collecting sources and sharing stories.
5. To make space for diverse narratives that are well-researched, well-sourced, and justly told.
6. To mitigate the barriers of language.
7. To encourage our leaders to dedicate resources for institutional support for this task.
8. To encourage the continued writing, rewriting, and publishing of the history of the church.

We call on our leaders to support us in these commitments.

Francois Tshidimu (Congo) – Mennonite Church
Jayaker Yennamalla (India) – Mennonite Brethren
Ursula Giesbrecht (Paraguay) – Archivist / Menno Colony
David Irala (Paraguay) – Mennonite Brethren / IBA -- Marturía Project
Bok-Ki Kim (South Korea) – Mennonite Church of South Korea
Young Ha Bae (South Korea) – Mennonite Church of South Korea / Publisher
Danang Kristiawan (Indonesia) - GITJ
Pamela Sari (Indonesia) - JKI
Jaime Prieto (Costa Rica) – Association of Mennonite Churches in Costa Rica / Historian
Calixte Bananzaro (Burkina Faso) - EEMBF
Henok Mekonin (Ethiopia) -- MKC
Patrick Obonde (Kenya) – Mennonite Church of Kenya
Anicka Fast (Canada) – Mennonite Church Canada / PhD Student
Bruce Yoder (Canada) – Mennonite Church Canada
Lawrence Yoder (USA) – MCUSA / Historian
Jeremy Rich (USA) – Prof. of History, Marywood University
Elizabeth Miller (Colombia) -- MCC
Jason Kauffman (USA) – MCUSA Archives
Wilbert Shenk (USA) – Fuller Theological Seminary
Karl Stutzman (USA) – AMBS Library
Jan Shetler (USA) – Prof. of History, Goshen College
John Lapp (USA) – Mennonite Mission Network
Hannah Keeney (USA) – MB Library and Archives and Fresno Pacific University
Abe Dueck (Canada) – MB Historical Commission
Frank Peachey (USA) – MCC Archives
Lola Gingerich (USA) – AIMM Archives
John D. Roth (USA) – Prof. of History, Goshen College and ISGA
Grant Miller (USA) – ISGA
Laura Miller (USA) – Student, Goshen College and ISGA