



**Mennonite
Mission
Network**

The mission agency of
Mennonite Church USA

FEBRUARY 2013

Beyond OURSELVES

What is an Anabaptist Christian?



What is an Anabaptist?

By Andrew Clouse

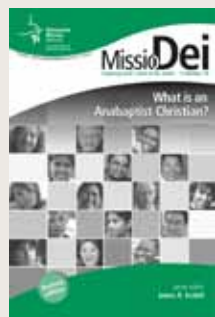
Palmer Becker's 24-page booklet titled *What is an Anabaptist Christian?* may be tiny, but it's had a huge influence on Christians who are eager to learn more about what it means to be an Anabaptist.

Many of those Christians live outside the United States.

The booklet has been translated into nearly 25 languages and has been distributed to pastors all over the world. Becker himself has given workshops on the theme in India, Ethiopia, Vietnam, and Hong Kong.

Over the last 50 years, the face of Anabaptism has morphed, literally. On the cover of the October issue of *Beyond Ourselves*, we featured the profile of a young Congolese woman named

Niclette Mbendji. In the accompanying editorial, James Krabill, Mission Network's senior executive for global ministries, pointed out that more than two-thirds of Mennonites live in Asia, Africa and Latin America. With more than half of the population in these areas being under 25 years old, Mbendji's face represents the image of today's "typical" Anabaptist.



Order a copy or download one for free from our website at **MennoniteMission.net/MissioDei**.

Anabaptism is exploding in regions where it is youngest. In many of these countries, mission workers, both expatriate and local, have quietly led Bible studies,

planted churches, and taught at seminaries for the last 100 years, planting the seed that is now blossoming in amazing ways.

It is now time for the global church to educate the North American church on how Anabaptism makes a difference in people's lives. The future of the church depends on it.

Congo's growing influence



I was very pleased to see your issue focusing on 100 years of presence of the Mennonite Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In the global Anabaptist community of faith, the DRC's three Mennonite conferences are heavyweights. North American Christians often overlook the DRC, partly due to the linguistic gap, even though Philip Jenkins notes in a 2009 *Christian Century* article that "by 2050, the Congo could have 120 million Christians, which would give it the world's fifth- or sixth-largest Christian population." The reality of ongoing grinding poverty and chronic violent conflict for about the last 15 years has resulted in a nation on its knees, and millions of Congolese yearning for the hope that the Bible provides, while also experiencing the justice God promises in the here-and-now. The faithful witness of Congolese Mennonite Christians over the past century has been a profound testimony to God's work in the world today. Inspiring stories of Congo Inland Mission/Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission workers and Congolese church leaders, risking all to spread Christ's message of peace, contain deep lessons for us in the North American church. We need to build bridges of relationship, hear each other's stories, learn each other's songs, and dance together on the "stepping stones" of our shared ecclesial history to experience a taste of God's kingdom. Here's how Philip Jenkins concludes his 2009 article: "However chaotic and turbulent the nation (DRC) is, and however poor and troubled its people, the Congo's churches will play a role far beyond its borders." What will be our supporting role as North American Anabaptists in this future story starring our Congolese sisters and brothers? May God open our eyes to the unfolding story and our role in it.

Bruce Campbell-Janz, Lancaster, Pa.

Campbell-Janz has spent 12 years in Congo, both as a worker for Mennonite Central Committee and as a child of mission workers.

Feedback

▶ Let us know what you think of this issue. What inspires you? Engages you? Infuriates you? www.BeyondOurselves@MennoniteMission.net

Day of Prayer

for mission

May 15

Join Mennonite Mission Network in prayer on the third Wednesday of May for ministries both across the street and around the world. Find out more by visiting our website: www.MennoniteMission.net/DayofPrayer.



Beyond Ourselves is published by Mennonite Mission Network
February 2013—Vol. 12, No. 1
Executive director/CEO _____ Stanley W. Green
Editor _____ Andrew Clouse
Art director _____ David Fast
Designer _____ Cynthia Friesen Coyle
Copy editor _____ Karen Ritchie

© 2013 by Mennonite Mission Network. All rights reserved.
Mennonite Mission Network exists to lead, mobilize and equip the Mennonite Church to participate in holistic witness to Jesus Christ.
Offices in Elkhart, Ind., and Newton, Kan.
Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872
Español: 1-877-665-6662
www.MennoniteMission.net

POSTMASTER: Subscriptions and changes of address should be sent to *Beyond Ourselves*, Mennonite Mission Network, PO Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370.

Cover: Clockwise from top left: Haiam Shank, Chaiya Hadtasunsem, SaeJin Lee, Nathan Penner. Photos by David Fast.



Sharing a conviction to follow Jesus

By Stanley W. Green

At Antioch the earliest followers of Jesus were merely called Christians. From its very beginning the church sought to incarnate itself within the cultures where it was planted. Faithfulness to the kingdom of God announced by Jesus required a critical engagement with human cultures. Sadly, at various times the critical dimension of the engagement with culture was lost. Too often, the result was that the church became accommodated by the culture. Time and again, the consequence of this accommodation was tragic, as, for example, lending support for slavery, recruiting for the Crusades, collaborating in the dispossession of land and rights of indigenous peoples, conspiring in the destruction of cultures deemed to be heathen, and

advocating for apartheid. At other times, the church was overtaken by political ambition and power, undone by materialism and unhinged from God. With these accommodations came a legacy of violence, silence in the face of injustice, tolerance for inequality, and spiritual bankruptcy.

Many sought the renewal of the church when they understood that this legacy contradicts what Jesus proclaimed. Seeking to free themselves from the distortions from accommodation to errant cultural misconstructions, the need was felt among some to distinguish themselves. Thus was born the hyphenated Christian—monastic-Catholics, Protestant-Christians, Pentecostal-Christians and Anabaptist-Christians.

Anabaptist Christians felt convicted to follow Jesus, first, and above all else. In time these convictions were clarified, as, for example, in the *Schleitheim Confession*, Harold Bender's *Anabaptist Vision*, and now Palmer Becker's *What is an Anabaptist Christian?* among others. The three expressions I have referenced have much in common. Each is formulated within the context of the times within which faithfulness was pursued. As these articulations have sought to speak

within the idiom of shifting cultures, adjustment in language and expressions was required. So, too, those who grapple with what it means to be an Anabaptist in very different cultural contexts discover that the Anabaptist commitment to following Jesus takes on different forms or nuance in their context.

I am intrigued by the reflections of Congolese pastor, François Tshidimu, in this *Beyond Ourselves*. Pastor Tshidimu suggests that sharing hospitality is a distinctive of Congolese Anabaptism. Having experienced that hospitality, I know how seriously our Congolese sisters and brothers take this calling. I was awed that schools took half a day off, farmers left their fields, and almost whole villages turned out to welcome us when I made the trip from Kikwit to Mukedi.

Jesus also ensured that hospitality and care was provided to some of the most unlikely people, often by equally unlikely people (e.g., the Good Samaritan).

In this issue, Anabaptist Christians offer ways that the call to follow Jesus faithfully is lived out in their contexts. We were pleased to publish *What is an Anabaptist Christian?* We were surprised, and grateful, by the response it provoked. By request it has been translated into more than a dozen languages and has been requested and distributed in the thousands.

In each of the countries where it has been read, we pray that Christians are asking again, “What does it mean to follow Jesus, here, where I live?” The answers will likely be quite similar in many ways, as Pastor Tshidimu suggests, but there will also be plenty of differences or nuances. This is to be anticipated. The more important question is, “Will it be faithful?”

We appreciate your faithfulness to God's call in mission. Through your sharing, many around the world are discovering new ways of following Jesus truly. Their faithfulness inspires us and we receive a mutual blessing, so that here, and there, we encourage each other as we seek to follow Jesus truly. Thanks!

Stanley W. Green

Stanley W. Green
Executive Director

Those who grapple with what it means to be an Anabaptist in very different cultural contexts discover that the Anabaptist commitment to following Jesus takes on different forms or nuance in their context.

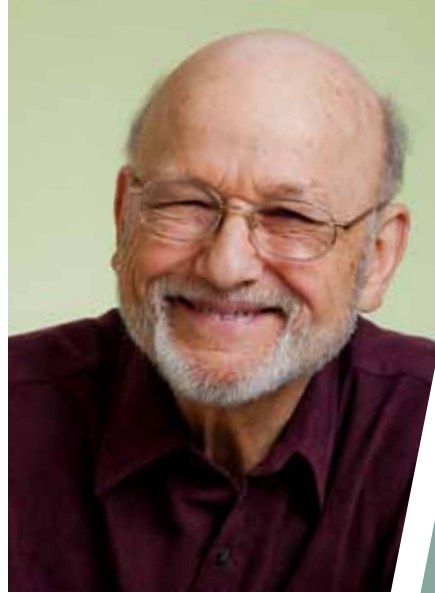
Video extra:

What do other Mennonite Church USA members say about being an Anabaptist Christian? See video interviews at www.MennoniteMission.net/BeyondOurselves.



What is an Anabaptist Christian?

There are approximately 1,774,720 Anabaptists in the world, from Russia to Australia, California to China. They are farmers, government officials, businesspeople, stay-at-home parents, activists, missionaries, movie stars, bicycle mechanics, and auto workers. They speak Mandarin, Tshiluba, Spanish, English, Russian, French, and Pennsylvania Dutch. They are at the top rung of the economic ladder, and the bottom.



▶ **Photo gallery:** Learn more about what makes these Anabaptist Christians tick: www.MennoniteMission.net/BeyondOurselves.

Left to right: Gloria Guadarrama, Kelsey Hochstetler, Osèe Tshiwape, Abby Findley, and Jim Bixler. Photos by David Fast.

So what is the connective tissue that holds this disparate global body together? Palmer Becker, a Mennonite pastor from Kitchener, Ontario, identifies three central elements.

For Anabaptist Christians:

- **Jesus is the center of their faith.**
- **Community is the center of their lives.**
- **Reconciliation is the center of their work.**

What does this look like around the world? For more than 100 years, mission workers from Mennonite Mission Network and predecessor agencies have been sharing Anabaptist principles with Christians in villages, towns and cities all over the world, contributing in at least a small way to the global explosion of Anabaptist churches, especially in Africa and Latin America (*see graphic on page 11*). But beyond numbers, the fruits of these mission efforts are transformed lives and communities—Anabaptist Christians reconciling themselves to God and neighbors.

We asked people who have walked alongside Mission Network in various ways how Anabaptism influences the way they live out their faith in their daily lives. ■

Anabaptism is

a movement whose time has come.



Juliet Kilpin challenges the Big Top crowd at Spring Harvest, one of the largest Christian events in the UK, to experiment with different forms of church in a post-Christian era.

UNITED KINGDOM

Mission Network and predecessor agencies have practiced Anabaptist Christianity in the United Kingdom since 1952, establishing the London Mennonite Centre (now Menno House Birmingham), a hub of evangelism and theological teaching, from which ministries like Urban Expression have grown.

It's about time

Anabaptism takes hold in the United Kingdom as Christianity in Europe declines in influence

Juliet Kilpin, Baptist minister in the United Kingdom

How did you become an Anabaptist?

I grew up in a nonreligious family, but neighbors invited me to the Sunday school of a local Baptist church when I was a young child. It opened up an alternative world for me, which I was warmly welcomed into and which I relished.

At the age of 23, I began training for Baptist ministry at Spurgeon's College. I chose the church-planting and evangelism course as I already felt a strong call to pioneering new expressions of church. The tutor at the time was Stuart Murray Williams [author of *The Naked Anabaptist*] who "subversively" introduced Anabaptist ideas into our lectures. Several years later, in 1997, as my husband and I began to

work closely with Stuart to pioneer the urban mission agency, Urban Expression, we noticed that our founding values had a very strong Anabaptist edge to them. We were drawn to several events and people at the London Mennonite Centre (now Menno House Birmingham) who helped reveal more Anabaptist thinking to us.

The Mennonites are a very small group here in the United Kingdom. Because of the small number of Mennonites, it is easier to call yourself an Anabaptist, and that is how I am increasingly describing myself to those who want to know my faith perspective.

How do Anabaptists in the UK put Jesus at the center of their faith?

The Urban Expression values, which many describe as Anabaptist, have a strong emphasis on a Jesus-

Blessed hospitality

Anabaptists in Congo provide a 'place of rest'

centered approach to Scripture, life and ministry, and the building of community is a high priority for our teams, who are seeking to form relevant ways of being church in some of our most deprived inner-city areas. I think having a Jesus-centered approach has enabled our teams to prioritize the imitating of Jesus in day-to-day life above the petty doctrinal potholes we can so easily fall into. We are by no means experts at this, but there seems to be a sense of freedom to focus on trying to live like Christ rather than trying to have all our doctrine water-tight. This enables individuals and teams to work with people who might think differently from them. I suspect this is where reconciliation works itself out in practice, too. Most of our teams are in very diverse neighborhoods where there is potential for a lot of antagonism and misunderstanding, and so reconciliation and peace-making is again a very natural and organic out-working of living Jesus-centered lives.

How does Anabaptism speak to challenges in the UK context?

It feels as if Anabaptism is a movement whose time has come in a post-Christendom UK, as we grapple with how to follow Jesus in a context where church has a decreasing influence and the story of Jesus is becoming increasingly unknown. The Mennonites and the Anabaptist Network have much wisdom to share, and there seems to be an increasing hunger from a Christian constituency that is coming to terms with being a minority once again. ■

Juliet Kilpin is a coordinator of Urban Expression, a Mission Network partner, and is a freelance trainer and consultant. She is currently a development worker for the Mennonite Centre Trust. She is also a Baptist minister.



François Tshidimu,
Mennonite pastor in
Democratic Republic
of the Congo

Translated by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

When Jesus gave the teaching that is known as the Beatitudes, he was contrasting the status-quo religious system of the Pharisees to what he expected

from his disciples and the crowds of people gathered around him on the mountainside. Jesus redefined the nature of the relationship God desires with us, the people of God, and how we should live out our faith.

Our social class, the authority we wield, and the amount of money we possess has no importance in God's kingdom. The only thing that matters is our sincere dependence and voluntary obedience to God.

The character traits that Jesus mentions in the list of the Beatitudes cannot grow out of legalistic adherence to Pharisaic laws. For instance, legalism cannot produce people who are poor in spirit, or those who extend mercy to others.

The Beatitudes must be understood as a unified whole. We must not choose to practice one of these blessings and ignore the others. Together, the Beatitudes draw us toward Jesus, thus bringing the people of God into relationship with one another. The Beatitudes create in us a unity without the divisions of race and wealth.

The Beatitudes resonate well with many aspects of our Congolese culture and, in the sharing of these understandings, we Congolese Anabaptists can offer a gift to the North American churches. The legacy that our ancestors passed on to us—the songs and dances, the proverbs



DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC
OF THE
CONGO

Mennonite Mission Network and its predecessor agencies began ministry in Congo in 1912. Three large Mennonite denominations have grown out of these relationships. Mission Network continues to work alongside Congolese Mennonites through a Partnership Council.

Abraham and Sarah didn't only give food and water to their visitors, but they gave the strangers a place of rest.

and stories, their philosophy of life and their understanding of the spiritual realm, and the values of nonviolence, unity and hospitality—these help Congolese Anabaptists to have a deep knowledge of what Jesus was teaching through the Beatitudes.

Hospitality

Our worldview elevates sharing and hospitality. Congolese Anabaptists embrace this inheritance and share our wealth with North Americans, whose legacy may not include a deep knowledge of this concept. Congolese hospitality is like that of Abraham, described in Genesis 18:3–4. Abraham said, “Do me the favor, of stopping at my home ... relax under this tree.” Abraham didn't presume that he was blessing the strangers, but wanted for himself the blessing of their presence. Abraham and Sarah didn't only give food and water to their visitors, but they gave the strangers a place of rest.

Unity

Congolese Anabaptists and North American Anabaptists live in different contexts, but Jesus' Beatitudes bring us together and unite us. Our economic crisis is different from yours, yet through sharing and prayers, we are mutually consoled and the burden is made lighter.

Our countries are engaged in many wars and conflicts, but because of Jesus, there are not wars and conflicts between us. Tribalism, racism and nationalism are not what define us. We are people who model Christ's peace. ■

From a sermon preached by François Tshidimu at Florence Church of the Brethren Mennonite near Constantine, Mich., on Nov. 18, 2012. Tshidimu is an Anabaptist businessman and the pastor of Bondeko Mennonite Church in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. He is married to Felly and is the father of eight children and has four grandchildren.



COLOMBIA

Faith family

Colombian Anabaptists turn community of faith into space of love and welcome

Alix Lozano, minister in the Mennonite Church of Colombia

Translated by Andrew Clouse

How did you become an Anabaptist-Mennonite?

I became Mennonite through marriage. I was studying in the theological seminary where I met a group of Mennonite students. Later, I married one of them and we pastored a Mennonite church together in 1981. That's how my journey began.

I was born into a Catholic family, and, later, my father began his faith journey in a Pentecostal church. That motivated me to decide on a Pentecostal pilgrimage. When I began pastoring and learning more about Anabaptist theology, I began understanding that these Mennonites had a different way of understanding the Christian way, that included following Jesus, day-to-day discipleship, the hermeneutic of community, service and commitment with society's most vulnerable, and that the spiritual and the social formed part of the same message of peace. I realized this was the type of theology and church that I had always been looking for.

How do Anabaptist Christians in Colombia put community at the center of their faith?

In Colombia, the community of faith becomes family for the majority of



Alix Lozano teaches at Quito Mennonite Church in Ecuador.

people. People arrive in the big cities fleeing from different armed groups, leaving their homes, their land and, in some cases, their families. Upon arriving, they look for a community of faith that will take them in, welcome them, and that will help supply their basic needs. People from the country also come to communities in the major cities in search of better opportunities, and for their studies. Many of them are all alone. The community of faith becomes a space of love and welcome and acceptance for them. They encounter the reality of the presence of Jesus made visible in the community expressed in the love of others with acts of mutual aid for those who need it most.

How do Anabaptist Christians in Colombia put reconciliation at the center of their work?

Given the reality of many generations of violence in Colombia, the church has become interested in determining the roots of the violence. In this sense, the gospel is not just any “good news,” but the good news of peace. We have had to educate our church

members and provide biblical and theological training to gain this understanding. We understand that the theme of reconciliation is not just one isolated theme of our faith, but is the essence of our faith.

How does Anabaptism speak to the issues that affect Colombia today?

I believe that Colombian Anabaptism today has something to say about the patriarchal system that oppresses, discriminates, and violates women and discredits on the basis of race, sex or sexual orientation. These themes are taboo in many Anabaptist contexts, but it is important to put them on the table and listen to each other and the Holy Spirit’s leading in these times. It is necessary to read the times, as the Scriptures say. I believe we have a long journey still to travel. ■

Alix Lozano is an ordained minister in the Mennonite Church of Colombia. She served as the national church president from 2007-2010, as director of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary of Colombia for 10 years, and is a founding member of the Ecumenical Group of Women Peacemakers in Colombia. She has worked closely with Mennonite Mission Network for many years.

The Colombia Mennonite Church grew from mission workers of a Mission Network predecessor agency who began their mission in 1945. Today, the church’s ministries include a seminary, church-planting and mission work, a school, a home for the elderly, a justice and peace center, a relief and development agency, and a retreat center.

Light to the nations

Anabaptists bridge differences in language, ethnicity and age

Sunoko Lin, Mennonite pastor in Los Angeles

Why did you choose to become a Mennonite?

My Christian faith journey began when I gave my life to Christ at age 16 in 1982 in Indonesia, and I received my baptism in a Reformed church. My faith grew in a Reformed tradition until I came to Los Angeles and joined an Indonesian Mennonite church, Maranatha Christian Fellowship, at age 23 in 1989. However, my Mennonite conviction did not begin

until 2006 when I prepared for my ministerial license to serve as pastor at Maranatha.

What attracts me to the Mennonite faith is its strong emphasis on the life conformed to Jesus' way of life. John Roth, in his book on Mennonite beliefs, wrote: "Knowledge of Christ is inseparable from a life of discipleship. Faith

becomes faith as it is incarnated in daily practice." This implies that being a follower of Christ means living out my faith as a witness to Christ for others to see. Our faith must be visible through our works.

How does your church respond to the needs of its community?

Our church started its first service in 1987 ministering to the first-generation immigrants from Indonesia. In fall 2006, we made a strategic decision to grow the church beyond our ethnicity after we spent months in a discernment process to explore the needs inside and outside the church.

We asked, "Are we relevant to our community?" Our community is a suburb located in the northern section of the city of Los Angeles. It has experienced a dramatic shift in three decades from predominantly white populations to multiethnic populations. It is now the home for immigrants from diverse places

such as Mexico, El Salvador, Iran, Israel, Armenia, Vietnam, Korea, India, and China. One-third of 1.7 million residents in our community are foreign-born. Furthermore, our church is near California State University-Northridge, which hosts students from 70 different countries. We are reminded of Revelation 5:9, which says that Christ has redeemed "every tribe and language and people and nation." Therefore, our Christian witness as the light to the nations can start here.

Since 2006, our church has been holding two services in response to the needs inside and outside the church. Our Indonesian service provides us the ongoing capacity to minister to the first-generation immigrants so that they can worship in their native language. Our English service gives us the ability to retain our second generation and the opportunity to reach out to non-Indonesians in our community.

We hope that our witness may transform lives and help prepare future leaders who will take this missional work forward as they return home. ■

Sunoko Lin lives in Lake Balboa, Calif., with his wife, Natalie, and three children, Hannah, Daniel and Joshua. He is a bi-vocational pastor of Maranatha Christian Fellowship and serves on the Mennonite Mission Network board of directors.

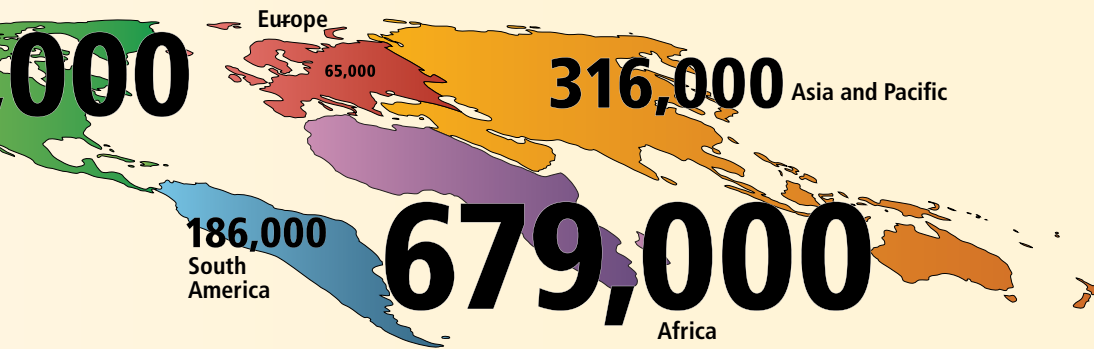


Sunoko Lin and family



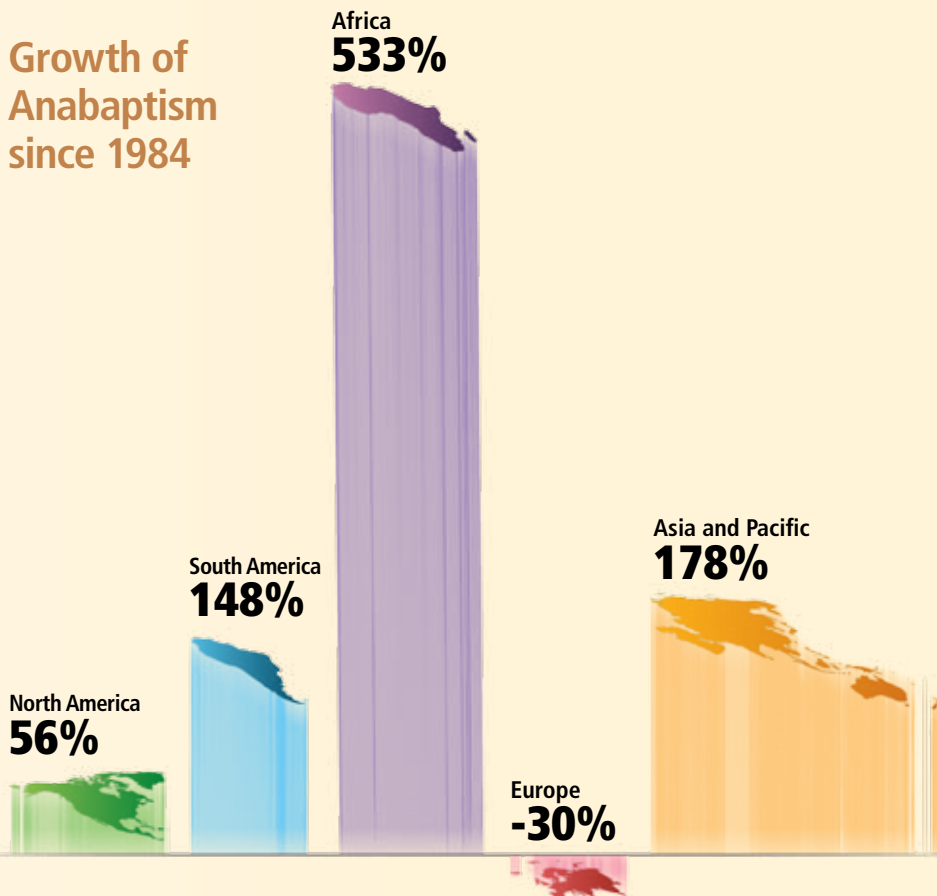
▶ **Mobile *Missio Dei*.** Read more from Lin and others in *New Anabaptist Voices*, part of the *Missio Dei* series. Download the e-book by scanning the QR code or visiting www.MennoniteMission.net/MissioDei.

Anabaptist population by region



Where are Anabaptist Christians?

Growth of Anabaptism since 1984



1984 statistics from Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/contents/W6763ME.htm.
2012 statistics from Mennonite World Conference 2012 World Directory.

Numbers include Anabaptists that are not part of Mennonite World Conference.

New workers enter service

Mission workers beginning assignments between September and December 2012

SOOP

Pamela Epp, Harrisburg, Pa., Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kan., served eight weeks in Akron, Pa.

Lorene and Walter Good, Minier, Ill., Hopedale (Ill.) Mennonite Church, served more than three months in Tucson, Ariz.

Cecil and Susan Graber, Eureka, Ill., Roanoke Mennonite Church in Eureka, served nine weeks in Tucson, Ariz.

Cheryl Hershberger, Hesston, Kan., Hesston Mennonite Church, served four weeks in Washington, D.C.

Julia and Lynn Lehman, Durango, Colo., First Mennonite Church of Iowa City (Iowa), served two weeks in Austin, Texas.

Larry and Maxine Miller, Macon, Miss., Emmanuel Baptist Church in Macon, served four weeks in Shipshewana, Ind.

William and Patricia Strunk, Alden, N.Y., Alden Mennonite Church, served four weeks in Hickory, N.C.

International

Phillip Brown completed a two-month special assignment/internship at Menno Village in Hokkaido,

Japan. He is a member of Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church.

Laura Schlabach renewed her covenant for service as a long-term worker with JCS International and as team leader in Bayanhongor, Mongolia, through August 2014. She is a member of San Antonio (Texas) Mennonite Church.

Wilbert Shenk completed a three-week special assignment teaching at the Centre for Contemporary Christianity at United Theological College in Bangalore and at Union Biblical Seminary in Pune, India. He is a member of Belmont Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind.

Ethel Wedel completed a two-week special assignment as part of a medical team in Thailand and Laos. She is a member of First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

Timothy Wiens completed a two-week special assignment as part of a medical team in Thailand and Laos. He is a member of First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

Wendell Wiens completed a two-week special assignment as part of a medical team in Thailand and Laos. He is a member of First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.



Photo by Luke Gascho

Dominique Hounnon (right), farm manager for Benin Bible Institute's new agro-pastoral project, discusses diversified production with Dale Hess, a director at Goshen (Ind.) College's Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center.

Food for body and soul

Benin agro-pastoral project birthed after long incubation

A 30-year-old dream is unfolding on a 12-acre plot in the West African country of Benin. Chickens scratching in the red soil and rows of tiny seedlings herald hope and bear witness to God's power through the worldwide body of Christ working together.

With the arrival of Dominique Hounnon four months ago, Benin Bible Institute launched an agro-pastoral project that will help pastors of rural congregations learn new ways to provide food for themselves and their families.

The Bible school has trained more than 1,000 leaders who give spiritual guidance to churches and institutions throughout the country. Though some of the graduates act as agents of transformation in government offices and nongovernmental projects, many serve sacrificially in rural congregations that are not able to financially support a pastoral family.

The hope that a bivocational education—leadership training combined with agricultural skills—will help nourish the families of pastors is one of the reasons that Benin

Bible Institute is investing in the agro-pastoral project, said director Bonaventure Akowanou.

Akowanou also believes that pastors will be able to introduce more efficient and innovative methods of crop management and animal husbandry to improve the quality of life in the villages where they minister, thus witnessing to Jesus' love for all people.

"This is one way that God's people can contribute to the health and the economic and social development of our country," Akowanou said.

Political witness

Young Ghanaian Mennonites march for peaceful vote

On Sept. 27, youth from four Ghana Mennonite congregations near the capital, Accra, gathered at 5:30 a.m. with placards to begin a two-hour peace march promoting a violence-free election scheduled for Dec. 7. Many in Ghana were predicting a political crisis during the voting period, including a Mennonite evangelist and youth secretary, Edward Aryeetey. However, the desire for peace prevailed throughout the



Photo by Edward Aryeetey

nation, and John Dramani Mahama was democratically voted to continue in the presidential office. Mahama became president in July of this year, following the death of his predecessor, John Atta Mills.

The Mennonite youth peace march in September launched a four-day event that included debates, presentations, soccer games, and a Sunday morning worship service with the purpose of building Christian community and encouraging faithful discipleship.

The district youth president, Emmanuel Ashitey, counseled the youth to use their energies to build a more faithful church and a more peaceful society.

"Christian youth are a signboard for Christ," Ashitey said. "You have the power to build and to destroy."



Photo by Linda Shelly

From left, clockwise: Cornelio Castro, José Oyangueren, Germán Díaz, and Ismael Castro are compiling an encyclopedic dictionary of Toba-Qom words.

Tongues of God

In Argentina, mission includes the preservation of language

While indigenous languages are disappearing at alarming rates around the world, two Mennonite Mission Network-supported ministries among the indigenous Toba-Qom people of Argentina are ensuring that the Toba-Qom language survives and flourishes.

In one ministry, a team of Toba-Qom translators, in partnership with the Argentine Bible Society, finished a 13-year process in August of re-translating the Old Testament. (Previously, only portions of the Old Testament were available.)

Meanwhile, a team of four Toba-Qom speakers is beginning a Toba-Qom encyclopedic dictionary, building from the *Vocabulario Toba-Qom* (Toba-Qom Vocabulary) compiled in 1980 by mission workers Albert and Lois Buckwalter.

The Toba-Qom are a 70,000-member indigenous group living mostly in the Chaco region of Argentina.

While the language projects are taking place in different cities with different partners, they are both contributing to the preservation of this rich and, according to the United Nations, endangered language.

José Oyangueren, an Argentine mission worker sent by Bragado Mennonite Church, who is an International Partnership Worker with Mission Network, said these projects, in addition to bringing new biblical insights, will help Toba-Qom people recognize the importance of their culture.

“These projects motivate and encourage them,” he said. “It inspires people to value what is theirs (language, culture) as a gift from God.”

Healthy celebration

Ministry of healing in Jesus’ neighborhood

A week of festivities in September drew hundreds of people from across Israel and 11 different nations, culminating a yearlong celebration of 150 years of healing at Nazareth Hospital.

Established in 1861 by Dr. Pacradooni Kaloost Vartan as a four-bed clinic, Nazareth Hospital is now a 147-bed private Christian hospital with 400 employees on a 25-acre campus along a Nazarene hillside.

Over the years, many Mennonite Mission Network workers have served short- and long-term assignments at the hospital, playing key roles in the hospital’s development and growth.

The hospital operates in the context of the Arab-Israeli political environment as a center of reconciliation, employing Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

Nancy Martin, a former mission worker who directed the nursing school and serves as a trustee on the Nazareth Trust board of directors, said that the hospital does not proselytize, but does not hide its goal of healing in the name of Jesus.

“We often refer to our foundation as having three legs,” said Martin. “Demonstrate Jesus’ unconditional love for everyone, support Christians in Nazareth and the Holy Land, and build bridges among Christians in the Holy Land and other parts of the world.”

Established in 1861 as a four-bed clinic, Nazareth Hospital is now a 147-bed private Christian hospital with 400 employees on a 25-acre campus along a Nazarene hillside.



Photo provided by Nazareth Hospital EMMS



Beyond NEWS

Powell retires at 71

Celebration culminates 23 years of service

John Powell, who has worked tirelessly toward creating an anti-racist culture in the Mennonite Church, retired Dec. 31 from Mennonite Mission Network after 23 years covering two different time periods.

Included in Powell's large range of gifts is his beautiful tenor voice. Powell led those who attended his retirement celebration on Dec. 12 in singing "Guide My Feet," a song that symbolizes his faith journey.

Powell worked for Mennonite Board of Missions, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network, from 1969 through 1974. He left the Mennonite Church, angered and disillusioned by the racism he encountered. However, he later returned, serving with Mennonite Mission Network from 1994 through 2012.

"I am deeply humbled," Powell said. "This leaving feels different from my leaving in 1974. It feels good. It is painful in a different way. This time I'm leaving for my own good. I have enjoyed working at Mennonite Mission Network, but finally, at 71, I can say, 'Enough.'"

"We appreciate the leadership you gave in cultivating a vision for justice and reconciliation," said Stanley W. Green, Mission Network executive director, in a statement read at Powell's retirement recognition. "We are especially grateful for the special care you gave to shepherd the agency in pursuit of its vision of becoming a non-racist institution. Your grace, patience and courage challenged and inspired us to go further than we might otherwise have, and we particularly celebrate the momentum you helped stimulate for us on this journey toward a more faithful future."

Mission worker updates

Prayer letter excerpts from around the world



Connie and Dennis Byler, Spain

In November, Connie wrote:

"Our church hosted a women's conference on holistic healing and invited women from all the Protestant churches in town. One of my close neighbors, Vicki, who has only come to our church once, went to every session. She was blessed, and I ask you to pray that she would be open to moving ahead with all she received. Between sessions on Saturday, she spent one hour sharing everything on the phone with her daughter in Switzerland, crying the whole time. When the conference ended, she expressed the desire to bring her whole family into this new blessing.

"Years ago, I blessed my two closest neighbors. Within the next hour each of them had come separately to visit me, something they had never done before or since! This is all a sign of the times of God, opening hearts to the kingdom news."



Jenna and Peter Liechty Martin, Northern Ireland

In November, Jenna and Peter wrote:

"Recently, we visited the Maze/Long Kesh prison, which housed paramilitary prisoners during the Troubles. It is imbedded in the memory of Northern Irish history as the home to internment camps, hunger strikes, and prison breaks. It is currently under plans to be regenerated as a conflict transformation center, though not without controversy. After a decade of lying unused, the signs of decay add to its lifelessness. Inside, the damp mustiness was almost overwhelming. For one of our friends, the sights and smells unlocked memories of trauma and brokenness she had not acknowledged for decades.

"These are traumas we can't understand. Yet, deep within our own consciousness, it is a brokenness we recognize. For us, this is part of the Christian story—we are not fully well unless our world is well. We all share in the trauma and brokenness of our world and, in some sense, our friends' brokenness reveals our own brokenness that we have hidden away."

Holy Spirit glue

The Holy Spirit holds us together

By Ervin Stutzman



I've been a follower of Jesus in the Anabaptist tradition for many years. I instinctively follow the rhythms and routines that express my core beliefs about Christian discipleship. When I was a teenager, we sought renewal in the attempt to "recover" the Anabaptist vision. We viewed the heart of Anabaptism as discipleship. And we understood the church to be a voluntary fellowship of believers who embraced an ethic of love and nonviolence, mutual aid, and bold evangelism, and who engaged in moral discernment as led by the Holy Spirit.

I've come to believe that only by the power of the Spirit is it possible to carry out that vision of the church. I agree with Norman Kraus that the church is a community of the Spirit, a concrete expression of God's ongoing work in the world. And with him, I believe that this community "is not created by sacramental consecration, theological announcement, ecstatic experience, or moralistic achievement." It simply cannot come about through human achievement.

Again, as Kraus says, the community of the Spirit is "an assembly of persons who share a common Spirit, Lord, conviction, and mission. A common loyalty is signified in baptism and a shared life." The Holy Spirit is the "glue" that holds the community of disciples together. As shown in the book of Acts, the Spirit empowers the community of believers, and causes it to grow, and grants the powers of discernment.

This same Spirit calls and sends forth people into God's mission in the world. And by its very nature, the community of disciples itself bears witness to God's grace. The empowering and transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the community calls people to faith (1 Corinthians 14:25; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10; 1 Peter 2:9). Further, the Holy Spirit grants gifts to each member for the mutual building up of the community and for ministry to the world (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; Ephesians 4:11-13). And the Holy Spirit enables our community of faith to discern the will of God as we gather around the word of God. Our Mennonite Church USA vision statement says it well:

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.



Allison Schrag, Mennonite Voluntary Service in Manhattan

After Superstorm Sandy in November, Allison wrote:

"We were without power from Monday night through Friday night. The city was completely shut down on Tuesday, and mostly down on Wednesday. Lower Manhattan resembled a black hole. There were no traffic lights or street lights, so walking after dark was a feat in agility.

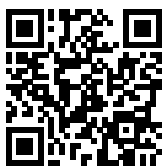
"I heard stories of friends volunteering in Chinatown, and the gratitude the residents showed upon receiving a bottle of water. How is it that this city, once so admired and looked to as a place of fashion and business, can be so crippled by a 24-hour event, that its residents are joyful for a simple bottle of water?

"Menno House is back up and running. However, one of my housemates has a hole in his ceiling, and another housemate's room is not habitable. She's not sure where she'll be staying for the next six weeks until the roof and her ceiling are fixed.

"What have I taken away from this series of strange, unexpected events?

"We as humans are not actually in control. As much as we try, in 24 hours, everything we planned for can be wiped away. Sandy was sobering and humbling for the city, and for me. Why is it that we as humans struggle to learn that we are not in control? Why are we surprised when something like Sandy comes through and wipes out our human structures? These things happen often in our world, but we always think it'll never happen to us. Until it does.

"The city and my house are putting the pieces back together. Some people are still residing in emergency shelters. Others are living in their homes without heat or running water. Your prayers for the victims of the storm and for the grieving community of Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship are appreciated."



Join the prayer network

Consider committing to pray for Mission Network workers around the world. Visit our website at www.MennoniteMission.net/Resources/prayer/ and sign up to be a prayer partner.



Getting duplicate copies?

If you are receiving duplicate copies of *Beyond Ourselves*, or have a change of address, call toll-free 1-866-866-2872, ext 23043.

New versions of Two popular mission resources

(And they're free!)

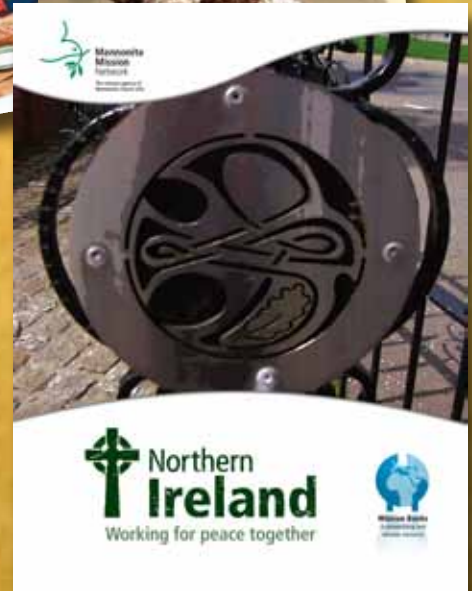
Mission Mosaic

This prayer directory connects you with mission workers and MMN programs and partnerships all around the world. Get one for yourself or order for your congregation.



Mission Bank tools

Stewardship education for the smallest church members! The most recent edition of these resources highlights mission in Northern Ireland and is for use with our blue globe banks (also free). Learn how to make peace and potato bread while teaching kids about mission.



More resources

Find these and all of our resources online at www.MennoniteMission.net/Resources.

PO Box 370
Elkhart IN
46515-0370

CI 12/7/10/2-2013



Mennonite Mission Network

The mission agency of Mennonite Church USA