



EXTENDING BEYOND

Awakening to God's love

Photo by Rudy Stoppe
on Unsplash.com

A message from Mike Sherrill



Julian of Norwich, a 14th-century anchorite mystic, is well known for her book *Revelations of Divine Love*. It's the oldest surviving book in the English language known to have been written by a

woman. Still readily available in print and e-book forms, Julian reminds us that in brokenness and strain, "all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." The certainty with which Julian utters this comfort is based on the pre-eminence of God's love. In the swirling vortex of our lives' pilgrimages, God, who loves all humanity — and each of us personally, is present. This is our hope, that ultimately "all shall be well."

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an organization put that love into action. Love requires determination. In Psalm 57:7 (NRSV), the psalmist said, "O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody." The term "steadfast" used here is translated from the Hebrew term, *nachon*, meaning: fixed in place, established, determined. "My heart is steadfast" is perhaps easy to say when life is going smoothly,

but often much harder during troubling times. Psalm 57 was likely written by David, while he was in a cave, running for his life from the wrath of King Saul. In the dark cave, David trusts in the Light. He is determined to abide in God's steadfast love — not just for the present moment, but for today and tomorrow. The Psalmist is determined to be awake to God's love.

At Mission Network, we are determined to abide in God's steadfast love. We are determined to be awake to the actions of God's Spirit. We

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"Love your neighbor as yourself."

Mark 12:31 (NIV)

Hope brings comfort: Being the gospel through crisis

By Zachary Headings

As the coronavirus continues to infect our world, it's important not to forget that before COVID-19, crises were already raging around the world. These ongoing crises are destroying the well-being of people and thrusting them into harm's way. Not only are these crises still happening, but they have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

People around the world are fleeing war and economic strife. Some of them are moving in next door. Jesus calls us to love our neighbors, no matter where in the world they are. Following that call, Mennonite Mission Network is responding to ministries that assist those searching for better lives.

Mission Network personnel help refugees stranded by Lesbos fire

Recently, Mission Network personnel David and Sophie Lapp Jost were in Lesbos, Greece, with the German Mennonite Peace Committee, for an annual tour to learn about the economic, political and environmental crises that forced people to flee their homes. While there, a fire tore through Moria, a refugee camp housing more than 12,000 people.

The tour participants paid for emergency food and water for some of the refugees resting in the shade of some of the island's 11 million olive trees.

"Our group has also met daily with a group of six young people and brought them food, medicine, and water, and has



Photo by Sophie Lapp Jost

Migrants walk by the new camp, located on former military shooting grounds.

gotten legal advice for them," David Lapp Jost wrote.

He continued to say that neither Americans, Europeans, nor the refugees seem to understand that decades of aggressive American wars and infusions of arms in the Middle East and parts of Africa, across many presidential administrations, are significantly responsible for this situation.

Mission Network contributed directly to Lesbos Solidarity, upon recommendation from the German Mennonite Peace Committee, an organization that supports the Pikpa Camp. This camp is a safe and healthy space for the most vulnerable refugees: pregnant mothers and children, those who are ill, and those who live with disabilities. In addition to the Pikpa Camp, Lesbos Solidarity runs a



Photo by Sophie Lapp Jost

Front entrance to the former Moria Camp, three days after the fire.



Photo by Loren Hostetter

Alba Silva of *Iglesia Menonita Quito* prepares rice, beans, milk powder, sugar and toilet paper to share with refugee families facing food shortages due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

project called Mosaik. It offers language classes, crafts, activities, and part-time work making high quality bags out of recycled materials.

“Please keep the people of Lesbos in your prayers,” Sophie Lapp Jost wrote. “The situation is complicated by COVID-19, the Greek authorities, and local people who are unhappy with what life in the last decade has become on the island.”

Quito congregation aids refugees

The congregation in Quito, Ecuador, has assisted refugees (most commonly from Colombia and Venezuela) since 2002. With assistance from partners, the Quito church’s refugee project has helped between 80 and 100 refugee families each month.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a dire need to provide food for people, since many refugees survive day-to-day, working on the streets or in informal labor. Together, with volunteers from the church and generous donations through Mission Network, the project expanded to give food rations to more than 200 families each month.

Alexandra Meneses, co-coordinator of the church refugee project said, “We are a small community; however, God has allowed us to serve our brothers and sisters, accompanying them to find hope and be the visible and concrete presence of God in their lives.”

Meneses reflected on the difficult circumstances and how the community has had to adapt to its new realities: “We have been challenged to face crisis situations that have sometimes threatened to sink our boat, and our Church in the midst of so many challenges and uncertainty,” Meneses said. “We have seen the fidelity of God that has accompanied us on this pilgrimage.”

Mission Network is supporting churches in the

development of a holistic gospel that calls congregations to care for people who have been forced from their homes, as well as others in need. This kind of partnership is how Mission Network lives out its call to lead, mobilize and equip the church to participate in holistic witness to Jesus Christ in a broken world. ■

Your generous gift assists us in advancing God’s reconciliation and peace through the work and word of Christ. **This Christmas, join in and be the gospel. Visit www.MennoniteMission.net/Donate.**

Meet our mission workers



David and Sophie Lapp Jost serve in Bammental, Germany. David Lapp Jost works with DMFK, the German Mennonite Peace Committee — a partner of Christian Peacemaker Teams — in fundraising, environmental advocacy and congregational speaking engagements. Sophie Lapp Jost serves in a pastoral position with a local congregation. As her language improves, she hopes to volunteer with local refugee resettlement programs.

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believe the Holy Spirit empowers and calls the church to engage God's mission in the world. Mission Network exists to serve the church in that shared, sacred calling. We are at a watershed moment in history — an awakening, an energizing wave invigorating our call to engage the cultures and communities around the world. In these strenuous times, the words of 1 Peter 4:11 (*The Voice*) are timely: "Speak as though God put the words in your mouth ... Serve as though you had the strength of God behind you. In these ways, God may be glorified in all you do through Jesus." This is why we do what we do, and how we go about doing it.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, God's work in the world continues. Therefore, if we believe that God's work continues — and we do firmly believe this — then our participation in that work will continue. With 100 years behind Mission Network and its predecessor agencies, we need to look at the 100 years ahead of us. God will be there. The steps we take now are foundational to that journey.

As we continue on this journey together, we are deeply grateful for your continued generous support. This is an exciting time to partner with Mission Network. We are responding to the present challenges with compassion and creativity. And we are building a future by passionately engaging our call to service, church planting, discipleship training, and international partnering. This season of challenge is inspiring us to re-imagine our work as we prepare for the opportunities ahead. God is doing a new thing (Isaiah 43:19).

We will ultimately get on the other side of this pandemic, and we will emerge renewed, refined, and ready for cutting-edge partnership in God's work in our hearts, in our homes, in our church, and around the world. May the grace and peace of Christ be your daily companion through the Advent season and into the coming year! ■



Mike Sherrill
Executive Director

Thank you for being part of what God is doing! How is God calling you to share in additional ways with Mennonite Mission Network?

www.MennoniteMission.net
Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

Office locations:
Elkhart, Indiana
Newton, Kansas

Meet our mission workers

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Photo by David East

Delicia Bravo and **Peter Wigginton** with their daughters Ariana (left) and Aliyah Wigginton-Bravo (right), work in Quito, Ecuador. Bravo and Wigginton serve as Ecuador partnership coordinators and also in the church programs using their gifts in music, education, and children's and youth ministries. They walk alongside *Iglesia Cristiana Anabautista Menonita de Ecuador* (ICAME) through the Ecuador Partnership, which includes *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* and Central Plains Conference.



Photo provided

Jaden Hostetter serves at the Quito Mennonite church, working with music and youth ministries — which includes both Ecuadorian and refugee youth. He also serves in the broader work of the church with the *Vida Juvenil* after-school program and the refugee project.