

# RHIZOME

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## Bearing Witness *en español*

From its beginnings the Bearing Witness Stories Project, an initiative of Goshen College's [Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism](#), has been a global endeavor with input from a variety of international church members.

Yet, until very recently, its website was only accessible in English.

Recognizing the barriers an English-only site posed to global users, Bearing Witness launched a [Spanish version of the site](#) in December, after only nine months of web presence.

Since March [the English site](#) has served as a collection point for stories of costly discipleship to Jesus Christ from around the world, mainly from within the Anabaptist tradition.

Although some stories previously existed in multiple languages on the original English site, there was no easy way for non-English speakers to navigate the site or find the stories that existed in their preferred language.

Despite the difficulty users faced in accessing non-English content, the few stories available in Spanish or French received fairly

high levels of interaction from global users.

Their reception further encouraged the ISGA to prioritize development and presentation of multilingual material.

The new design redirects Spanish-language users to a parallel Spanish site with the same basic content as the English site. (Cont. on pg. 2)



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## ISGA to be involved in MWC Assembly

With the arrival of 2015, the [Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism](#) has turned its attention to planning for [Mennonite World Conference Assembly 16](#) in July.

Held every six years, MWC Assembly is the world's largest gathering of global Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, and Brethren in Christ. Different regions

rotate hosting responsibilities for the event, with this year's assembly to be held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

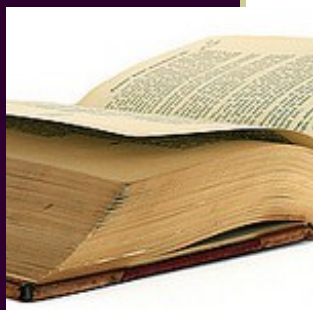
Given the ISGA's goal of supporting deeper relationships between North American Mennonites and the global church, Assembly 16 will be a significant locus of energy for the ISGA this year.

During the assembly itself, the

[Bearing Witness Stories Project](#) will execute a major storytelling project, inviting those in attendance to share their stories of risk, innovation, suffering, and sacrifice in following Jesus.

Sometimes these may be individuals' stories; other times they may be the stories of a congregation or even a whole denomination. (Cont. on pg. 3)

## Upcoming Book with Plough Publishing



**P**lough Publishing, the independent publishing house of the Bruderhof, is partnering with the [Bearing Witness Stories Project](#) to release a collection of short stories focused on costly discipleship.

The book will include stories from early church history and the period of the early Anabaptist martyrs as well as more contemporary stories from the global church.

“We want stories that...serve to inspire, encourage, and challenge the church worldwide,” wrote Plough editor and Bearing Witness Steering Committee member Charles Moore in an email.



Plough has proposed an ambitious timeline for the project, with the hope that the book will be ready for release by

[Mennonite World Conference Assembly](#) in July of 2015.

Consistent with the objectives of the Bearing Witness Stories Project, Plough is inviting story submissions from interested individuals.

If you have a story suggestion, please send it to Timothy Keiderling ([tjkeiderling@mailstack.com](mailto:tjkeiderling@mailstack.com)) at [Plough Publishing](#) by February 1, 2015.

## ISGA Personnel in Colombia

**P**ersonnel from the [Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism](#) were active in locations outside of their Goshen College offices last fall. In September Elizabeth Miller, administrative assistant at the ISGA, traveled to Bogotá, Colombia to teach an intensive course at the Seminario Bíblico Menonita de Colombia (Colombian Mennonite Biblical Seminary).

Miller became acquainted with the seminary during a four-year term with [Mennonite Central Committee](#) in Bogotá. Although she now lives in the U.S., Miller returned to Bogotá to teach a course on the

histories of the Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren churches in Colombia, which had been the focus of her MCC assignment.

Mennonite Central Committee funded her travel, while the ISGA allowed for considerable flexibility to accommodate the course schedule itself.

Eight students attended the class, all from the Mennonite denomination. The course, conducted in an intensive one-week format, focused on the relevance of history for current church life and ministry.

Course participants discussed the relationships among ecclesiology,

mission, and historical context and the need for both change and continuity within the church.

Participants also learned about the different historical resources that are available to churches interested in learning more about their own history. In one session, for example, course participants looked at historical documents stored online at [AnabaptistWiki.org](#) to understand how Colombian Mennonite perspectives on social action changed throughout the 1970s.

As with all courses offered at the seminary, the final session concluded with a shared agape meal and time for fellowship.

### Calling all translators!

Bearing Witness is looking for volunteers who can translate between English and Spanish, French and German.

Contact Elizabeth Miller at [elizabethmm@goshen.edu](mailto:elizabethmm@goshen.edu) if you have an interest in translating.

### *En español, cont. from pg. 1*

A variety of people throughout the Americas have contributed to the translation of the site's content, but Milka Rindzinski from Uruguay has been an especially critical translator.

Spanish was chosen for the initial foray into offering multilingual

content because of strong, established connections in Latin America and the accessibility of Spanish translation.

Eventually Bearing Witness hopes to launch versions of the site in German and French as well.

Although the Spanish site does not yet have as many stories as the original English site, it will be regularly updated to include new content. The blog, however, will remain a feature of the English site.

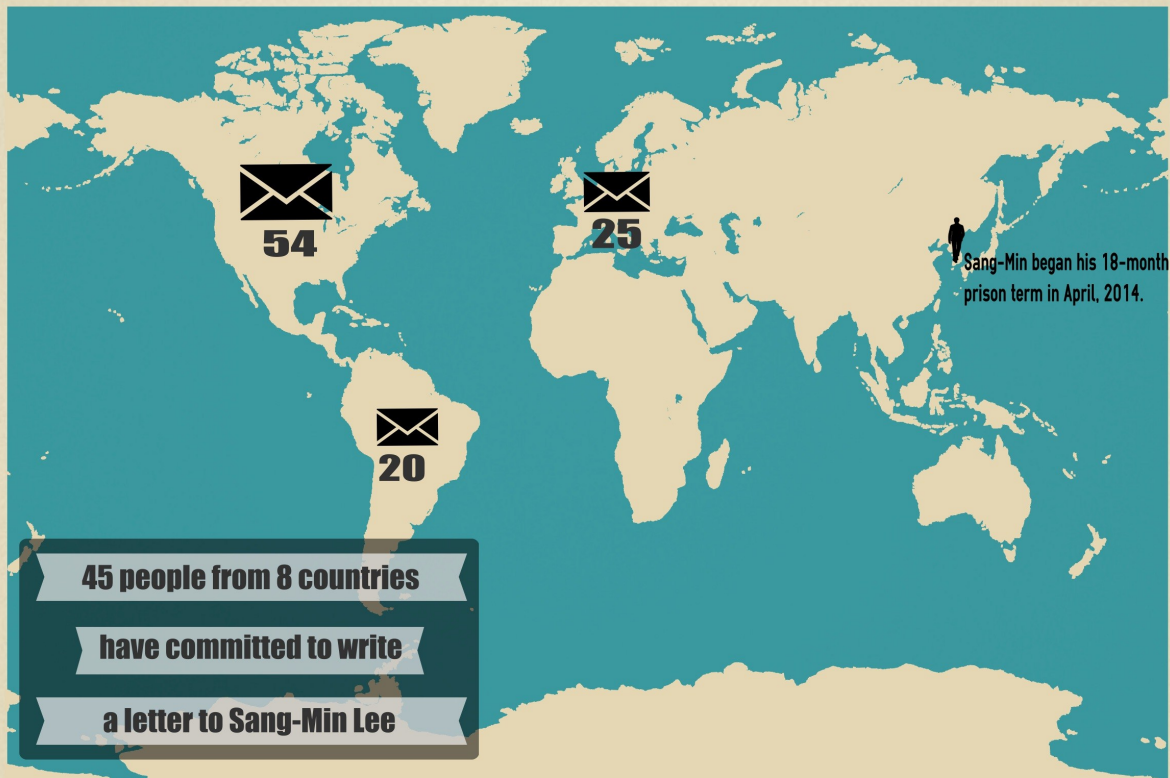
*Para leer este artículo en español, haga clic aquí.*

In May 2014 the [Bearing Witness Stories Project](#), in collaboration with Colombian Mennonite peace agency [Justapaz](#), initiated a [letter-writing campaign](#) for South Korean Mennonite conscientious objector Sang-Min Lee. The initial hope was that Lee would receive at least one letter of support and encouragement in each month of his imprisonment.

But that goal has been surpassed many times over! As of December 2014, forty-five people from eight different countries have committed to writing a total of ninety-nine letters to Lee.

## LETTERS to SANG-MIN LEE

INDIVIDUALS AND CHURCHES  
HAVE COMMITTED TO WRITE  
99 TOTAL LETTERS TO SANG-MIN



## MWC Assembly , cont. from pg. 1

The stories, recorded in video format, will later be formatted and made available online for access by global church members.

In addition to the storytelling project, Bearing Witness will also have a presence in the exhibition hall.

Immediately following Assembly, organizers and Research Associates of the [Global Anabaptist Profile](#)—a joint project between the ISGA and MWC—will meet together in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania.

Over four days, Research Associates will present their results and begin data interpretation, with the opportunity for groups to respond with questions and observations to each other's results.

Conrad Kanagy, professor of sociology at Elizabethtown College and co-coordinator of the GAP, hopes that the cross-cultural nature of the consultation will inspire all involved with energy and imagination as they return to their own contexts.

“There is also the goal of renewing friendships with each other that were first forged two years ago when we met for [the initial consultation](#) in Goshen,” said ISGA Director John D. Roth.

The consultation does not mark the end of GAP, but rather an important first step towards using the survey data to draw larger conclusions about beliefs and practices among MWC and its member churches.

# Editorial : Resistance and Hope

by John D. Roth

On October 29, 2014, only six months after the radical insurgent group, Boko Haram, abducted some 200 schoolgirls in northeast Nigeria, the same group attacked the headquarters of the Ekklesiay Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), forcing the church's staff and Bible college students to flee for their lives.

During the past year, at least 3,038 EYN members have been killed, 96,000 EYN members forced from their homes as refugees, and at least 18 of the 50 EYN church districts have been closed altogether, with another 19 districts directly impacted by the violence.

As I read the [weekly updates](#) on the Church of the Brethren web sites, I feel both outraged and helpless. Nearly as many EYN members have suffered violent deaths in recent months as the total number of Anabaptist martyrs in the entire sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Do people care about the devastating persecution that these brothers and sisters in the faith are undergoing? And even if we did take notice,

what, exactly, should we do in response?

Mennonites in North America have been largely shielded from the raw violence unleashed in the world today—for most of us, mass suffering remains as distant and impersonal as the U.S. drones flying silently above the Pakistani and Iraqi borders.

We are war-weary, numbed by the all-too-familiar images of beheadings in Syria, civil tensions in the Ukraine, suicide bombs in Afghanistan or Israel, student massacres in Mexico, and funeral processions in Palestine. In the face of overwhelming suffering, I confess that sometimes it seems like ignorance is the better option—if we don't know what is happening, perhaps we would not feel so helpless.

But deep down, I know better. Recently, I have been inspired by three small expressions of resistance and hope, all of them anchored in the Psalmist's conviction that ultimately God is indeed the Lord of history.

For more than a decade, a small group of Christians has gathered at noon every Wednesday outside the court-

house in my hometown of Goshen, Indiana in a public lament for the on-going wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. They sing a few hymns, pray for the victims of violence, and remind our community that the suffering of these people—soldiers and civilians alike—matters to God, and should matter to us.

Then in late November, the student-led Hymn Club at [Goshen College](#) organized a hymn marathon, resolving to sing every verse of every song in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. Leaders of the initiative invited participants to regard their singing as a prayer for peace in the world, and they encouraged supporters to contribute funds to support [Christian Peacemaker Teams](#).

As I participated in that circle of song, gathered around a flickering candle, I was overwhelmed with a renewed sense of God's love and providence and presence, in all places and for all of God's children.

Finally, this fall, a group of teachers at the Bienenberg Mennonite Theological Seminary (Liestal, Switzerland) issued a statement, only a few pages long, called "[Using](#)

[Violence Against Violence? A Peace Church Perspective.](#)"

The statement openly named the sense of powerlessness they felt in light of the recent terror in Iraq and Syria. And it recognized the standard objections that people have raised against Christian pacifism. But then in simple, non-defensive language, the teachers at Bienenberg restated their commitment to the Gospel of Peace.

Their language was deeply biblical, humble in tone, and modest about any claims that the gospel of peace would guarantee a certain outcome. But it was unmistakably clear in their conviction that the resurrection—not enmity, fear, or death—will have the last word, that God's love "will make everything whole."

I confess that I do not fully understand what all this means when I read the morning headlines. But I am committed to naming the suffering that I see in the world, to voicing my lament, to singing songs of praise and petition, and to embracing the deep mystery that God's love is stronger than fear, and that life in the resurrection is stronger than death.

*Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will take joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength. ~ Habbakuk 3:17-18*

John D. Roth is director of the [Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism](#). A version of this editorial originally appeared in the January 2015 issue of [The Mennonite](#).