

# Rhizome

Updates from the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism

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## Texts Now in Translation

In preparation for Renewal 2027 in Kisumu, Kenya this April, the ISGA—with grant support from the Schowalter Foundation—published three new translations of John Driver's *Life Together in the Spirit*.

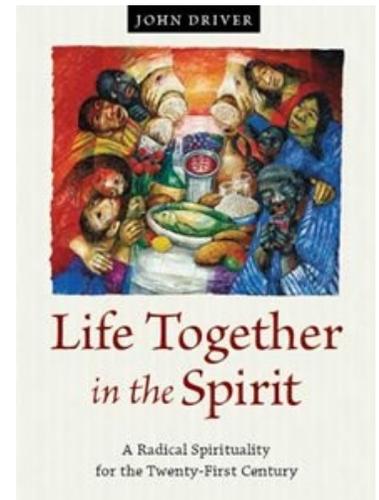
Originally published in Spanish, the ISGA helped to create an [English](#) version, along with a new introduction and as responses from around the global church, for distribution at the MWC Assembly 2015 in Harrisburg, PA.

The [French](#), [Indonesian](#), and a new [Spanish](#) translations were released at the MWC

General Council meeting in Kenya this year. All are now available online through [MWC](#) and the [ISGA](#).

Translation work on the Driver volume continues with a Portuguese version nearing completion and a [Korean](#) edition already available through *Plough Publishing*. With each added translation, this resource is shared with more Anabaptists around the world.

Translation work also continues on *Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship*. In mid-June, the French translation was pub-



lished; the Indonesian translation will be completed and available very soon. Both translations will be accessible on the ISGA website as well as the Anabaptist Wiki. The French translation is available at [archive.org/details/TreTmoin](http://archive.org/details/TreTmoin).

## Roth Receives Ecumenism Award

Director of the ISGA, John D. Roth, received the Washington Theological Consortium Ecumenism Annual at a service at the Virginia Theological Seminary on Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2018. He received the

award alongside Dr. Timothy Wengert, professor emeritus at United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia.

This award is in recognition of their work that led to the 2010 service of reconciliation between the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonite World Conference, which produced the historic document "[Healing of Memories: Reconciling in Christ](#)."

Roth also presented the Figel Lecture for

Ecumenism, "Healing of Memory: Lessons for Church Unity from the Lutheran-Mennonite Dialogue." "For me this is a symbolic marker on a journey that I, along with the larger Mennonite Church, have been on for nearly 20 years," Roth said.

The idea of healing memory—or, in the language of the dialogue, "right remembering"—has had a major impact on many ecumenical dialogues that address histories of oppression, suffering and misunderstanding.



“GAMEO continues to be an authoritative online resource for information relevant to Anabaptist-Mennonite life, history, and thought”

biblioteca  
DIGITAL ANABAUTISTA

# GAMEO Going Global



GLOBAL ANABAPTIST MENNONITE ENCYCLOPEDIA ONLINE

At their annual meeting on May 18-19, 2018 in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, the Global Anabaptist-Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO) management board agreed on a plan for increasing the number of articles by authors from the global church. In collaboration with Mennonite World Conference’s annual Renewal 2027 event, GAMEO will solicit 20 new articles each year from writers in the country that hosts the commemoration event.

This year, Francis Ojwang, co-author of *Forward in Faith: A Seventy-Year Journey, 1942-2012* (a history of Kenyan Mennonite Church), has agreed to write a series of congregational and biograph-

ical profiles from Kenya.

In 2019, when the Renewal 2027 event moves to Costa Rica, GAMEO editors will focus on expanding articles from that country. In addition, editors agreed to work on updating the theological articles in GAMEO during the coming year, while also moving forward with targeted updates of several specific North American Anabaptist groups.

The digital encyclopedia now includes over 16,400 articles and receives nearly 1300 daily visits. GAMEO is housed by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen College and is supported by contribu-

tions from a wide range of North American historical societies, educational institutions, and private individuals.

“GAMEO continues to be an authoritative online resource for information relevant to Anabaptist-Mennonite life, history, and thought,” says general editor John D. Roth.

## GAMEO and the Digital Age

## BiDA Growth

The Biblioteca Digital Anabautista has now grown to a collection of nearly 170 titles from at least 92 authors. Most publications by Semilla, a Latin American Mennonite seminary, have been digitized and posted, marking a significant milestone in the development of this resource.

All Spanish editions of Mennonite Mission Network’s *Missio Dei* have also been added to the collection,

and the Spanish translations of the Global Mennonite History Series are in process. The BiDA will soon add works by Dionisio Byler and an expanding assortment of other theological materials.

The goal of the project is to provide a stable on-line platform of Anabaptist-Mennonite theological resources to support Distance Learning courses being

Read the article by Jason B. Kauffman, MCUSA archivist, on GAMEO and Anabaptist public history in a digital age. The article, [“The Mennonite Encyclopedia, GAMEO, and Public History in a Digital Age.”](#) can be found on [anabaptisthistorians.org](http://anabaptisthistorians.org).

offered by various project partners on two continents. Visit the collection [here](#) and spread the word about this incredible resource.



BiDA Sponsors

# Looking to the Future by John D. Roth

From the moment of its inception, the ISGA has been committed to the principle of collaboration—all of our projects have been in partnership with other church-related agencies or groups. Our gift has been providing expertise, administrative oversight—and, if possible, funding—to support collaborations that enhance our understanding of the global church and encourage its mission in the world. In addition to our more visible programs, here are a few additional projects that we are actively supporting:

## Mennonite World Conference Renewal 2027

Renewal 2027 is a 10-year series of events commemorating the 500th anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement, with an annual celebration in a different region of the global church, always in association with a MWC event. This spring, the 2019 Renewal program will take place in Costa Rica on April 6, 2019 as part of the MWC Executive Committee meeting. The theme of the event is “Justice on the Journey: Migration and the Anabaptist-Mennonite Story.” We recently received a grant from Oak Grove Mennonite Church to support this gathering; but I am still committed to raise an additional \$12,000 to cover the cost.

## Hosting Guests

Recently, I was pleased to host presidents of seven national churches associated with the Conservative Mennonite Conference who were in the US to participate in the CMC church wide assembly.



## Promoting Scholarship

In late January, 2019 the ISGA will host Agustina Aleman and Alejandro Martin López, of Argentina, who will spend five weeks working in the Mennonite Historical Library and the Archives of the Mennonite Church on a project related to Mennonite mission movement, gender, and the indigenization of the church. Support for this project also comes from the Schafer-Friesen Fellowship.



Eighteen Maasai women from a Mennonite fellowship slept the night on the grounds of Nyamasaria Primary School in Kisumu, Kenya, to attend Renewal 2027. Mattresses for the group and several hundred young people were supplied by friends of the ISGA. — Len Rempel/MWC

## Encouraging Publication

Watch for an upcoming announcement of a publication by Lisa Weaver and Elizabeth Miller Richer titled, *Let the Children Come*. The book is a beautifully illustrated, 12-unit curriculum on basic Anabaptist principles intended for children or new believers. An extension of the “[Bearing Witness Stories Project](#).” *Let the Children Come* has a strong focus on the global church. We hope to make it available in translation as well.



# New Archival Digitization on the Anabaptist Wiki

A new project has begun on the [Anabaptist Wiki](#). Anicka Fast, a PhD candidate at Boston University and historian of missions in central Africa, has begun scanning a significant collection of materials from the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and the Mennonite Brethren Mission archives with the goal of making them publicly available on the Anabaptist Wiki. Although still in the initial stages, the first of seven sections within the AIMM archives – including financial documents and missionary correspondence – is already accessible to other researchers. This collection of resources not only contains important documents for other historians and missiologists, but also provides greater archival preservation and access for Congolese Mennonite churches. Explore the initial [collection](#), and a heartfelt thank you to Anicka for her vision and dedication to this project.

# CELEBRATING THE BEGINNING OF ANABAPTISM

By John D. Roth, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism

Every year on the Sunday closest to January 21, Mennonite World Conference invites its 107 member churches to join in a celebration of World Fellowship Sunday. The worship themes vary from year to year, but the rationale for the timing of the event has remained constant—on January 21, 1525 a small group of earnest Christians in Zurich, Switzerland participated in a baptismal service that launched the renewal movement that we know today as Anabaptism.

As with the beginnings of every reform movement, the identity of the movement was not fully formed on that wintry day in 1525. Indeed, traditions as varied as the Amish, Mennonites, Hutterites, and a dozen other groups all claim the early Anabaptists in Switzerland among their founders. But each of these groups can also identify other beginning points. The Amish, for example, trace their origins to a renewal movement around Jacob Amman in 1693. The Hutterites first practiced community of goods in 1528, and did not adopt their name from Jacob Huter until several years later. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, several German Mennonites promoted 1561, the death date of Menno Simons, as “one of the most important days of our church fellowship.” Meanwhile, another group vigorously opposed all such commemorations, insisting that the only appropriate marker for Anabaptist-Mennonite beginnings was Easter Sunday or, perhaps, Pentecost.

When we shift our attention to the global church, the question of “beginnings” becomes even more complicated. Did

the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition in Java begin with the arrival of Pieter and Johanna Jansz in 1852; or with the indigenization of the church under the leadership of Tunggol Wulung a decade later? Did the Meserte Kristus Church of Ethiopia begin in 1945 with the first Mennonite missionaries from eastern Pennsylvania? with a powerful renewal movement called Heavenly Sunshine in 1962? or with the decision by Ethiopian church leaders in 1965 to identify their church as “Christ the Foundation”?

Over the past century, most Mennonites of European descent have come to regard the January 21, 1525 date as almost sacrosanct; yet this event became the focus of historical veneration only relatively recently when Mennonite leaders from seven countries gathered in Switzerland in 1925 to coordinate relief efforts for Mennonite refugees in South Russia. Celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the first baptisms in Zurich helped to assuage the skepticism within their member churches about ecumenical collaboration.

In the coming decade, Mennonites around the world will have the opportunity to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement however they choose to do so. In 2015, following conversations with member churches and ecumenical partners, the MWC Executive Committee approved a ten-year series of events called “Renewal 2027.” Beginning in 2017, MWC is planning an annual celebration in various parts of the world, highlighting especially the ways

in which the Anabaptist tradition has found expression in the context where the event is being hosted.

Plans are also well underway for a significant celebration in Europe in 2025, organized in conjunction with a meeting of the MWC General Council and the assembly of European Mennonite Churches, that will include input from ecumenical partners, European Mennonite and Baptist historical societies, and the local Swiss Mennonite church. So, as MWC has publically affirmed for decades in its World Fellowship Sunday, the baptisms of January 21, 1525 will be a significant date to commemorate.

But MWC’s commemorations will conclude at its 18<sup>th</sup> global assembly, likely to be held somewhere on the African continent, in 2027. Doing so is a powerful reminder that the Mennonite tradition is not locked in its 16<sup>th</sup> century European origins. We are part of a global movement, ever renewing, that is both rooted in the past—be that Jerusalem, Zurich, or Amsterdam—and oriented to the future.

*A version of this editorial was originally published in the August 2018 issue of The Mennonite.*

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