

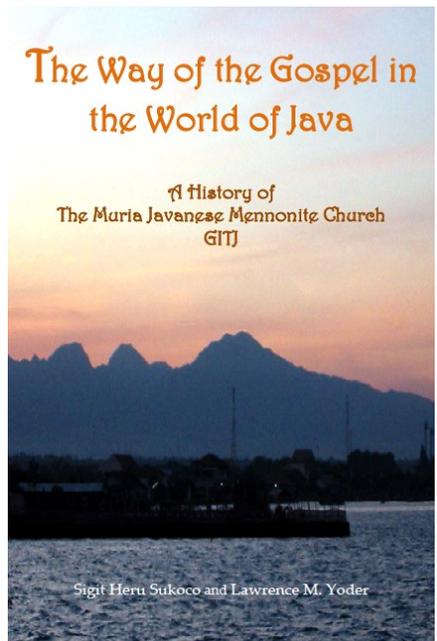
# Rhizome

Updates from the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism

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## ISGA Publishes History of the Muria Javanese Mennonite Church in Indonesia



Sigit Heru Sukoco



Lawrence Yoder

An upcoming book published by the [ISGA](#), *The Way of the Gospel in the World of Java: A History of the Muria Javanese Mennonite Church (GIT)*, tells the story of one branch of the [Anabaptist-Mennonite churches in Indonesia](#). Authors Sigit Heru Sukoco and Lawrence M. Yoder originally wrote and published this history of the Muria Javanese Mennonite Church—known in Indonesia as [Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa \(GIT\)](#)—in 2010 with the title *Tata Injil di Bumi Muria*. The current publication is based on an English

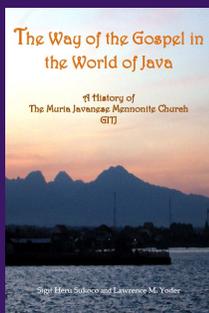
translation by Lawrence M. Yoder, with extensive editing by ISGA director, John D. Roth.

*The Way of the Gospel in the World of Java* gives an account of how missionaries of the Dutch Mennonite Mission, along with indigenous Javanese evangelists, sought to evangelize the people of the Muria region of north Central Java starting in the 1850s. While European missionaries functioned out of a western cultural framework, the Javanese evangelists drew on

their own cultural frame of reference. Over the course of its long history, the developing communities of Christians joined to form a community known as Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa (GIT), or the Muria Javanese Mennonite Church.

One of the indigenous founders of the Christian movement in the Muria area was a Javanese mystic, who took the name [Ibrahim Tunggul Wulung](#). This portrait, commissioned by Lawrence Yoder,

(cont. on pg. 2)



*To purchase a copy of this book, send a check for \$20 (\$30 for shipping within the USA) made out to ISGA to:*

**John D. Roth/ISGA  
Goshen College  
1700 S Main St  
Goshen, IN 46526**

# Mennonite World Conference Assembly Postponed

In August, the Executive Committee of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), together with the National Advisory Committee of Indonesia, [decided to postpone the MWC global assembly](#) planned for the summer of 2021 in light of

the COVID-19 pandemic. The new date for the 17th MWC global assembly—now known as [Indonesia 2022](#)—will be July 5-10, 2022. For more information, check out MWC's publications, [website](#), and [social media posts](#). Meanwhile, MWC Commissions, Global Anabaptist Mission Network, Global Anabaptist

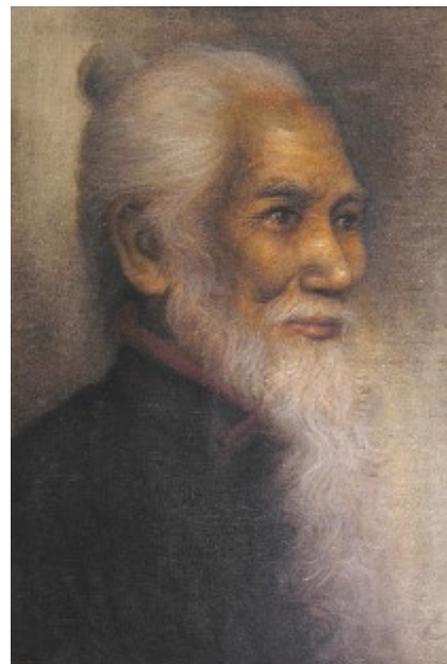
Service Network, the [COVID-19 response fund](#), and many other projects continue to function, thanks to Zoom and other electronic forms of communication.

## Ind. Book (cont.)

was created by Semarang artist Inanta on the basis of notes from missionary journals, the life story of Tunggul Wulung, and portraits of persons assumed to be his relatives.

The publication of this book was set to precede the Mennonite World Conference global assembly in 2021 (now postponed to 2022) to give English-language Anabaptists the chance to learn more about this Indonesian church. The project was made possible with funding support from the [Dooopsgezinde Zendingsraad \(DZR\)](#) and the Indonesia Committee of the [Algemene Dooopsgezinde Sociëteit \(ADS\)](#), as well as the Institute for the Study of Global

Anabaptism. The 464-page book includes numerous photos and is available for purchase for \$20 (\$30 postage paid within the United States). To buy a copy, send a check made out to ISGA to our address listed in the left column.



**Portrait of Tunggul Wulung**

(Photo: L. Yoder)

## Coming Soon: A Travel Guide to MWC's Indonesia 2022

With the history of the Muria Javanese Mennonite Church completed, ISGA director John D. Roth is now turning to a related book—a user-friendly introduction to Indonesia that combines a history of the three Anabaptist-Mennonite churches in Indonesia with a brief travel guide. The small book, to be published by MennoMedia, will be an essential resource for North Americans who are planning to attend the 17th MWC global assembly in Semarang, Indonesia in the summer of 2022.

# ISGA Seeks Input for Collaborative 2020 Anabaptist Storytelling Project

The Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA) at Goshen College has joined 15 other Anabaptist-Mennonite organizations in calling on Anabaptist-Mennonite groups to share their experiences during the remarkable historical, biological, and social events of 2020 as part of a collaborative storytelling project called [Anabaptist History Today \(AHT\)](#).

Created by Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) Archives and Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, AHT is the first large-scale, collaborative digital project of its kind in the Anabaptist community.

“We are living through an unusual moment in world history—marked by a global pandemic, a climate crisis, intense conversations about race, economic uncertainty, and political division,” said John D. Roth, director of the ISGA. “Someday our grandchildren will look back on the events of 2020 and want to know more. This project will help provide sources for interpreting

our times from diverse perspectives in the global Anabaptist-Mennonite community.”

The ISGA invites individuals, congregations, schools, and organizations to tell their stories of living during these changing times. Contributors may share their experiences through a variety of media, including videos, audio recordings, photos, journal entries, artwork, poetry, and personal reflections. An [online form](#) guides contributors through the process.

To learn more about the AHT project, visit <https://aht.libraryhost.com/s/archive/page/Welcome>.



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## Welcome!

Join us in recording Anabaptist life in today's changing world. Historical, biological, and social realities have made 2020 an exceptional year. *Anabaptist History Today* invites you to [share your stories](#) as you live in these times.

## New Social Media Logo to Represent ISGA



Over the summer, ISGA launched several new logos for developing a stronger social media presence. Designed by the Goshen College Communications and Marketing department, these logos feature the ISGA initials with the Goshen College colors and olive branch. With these visual identity markers, we hope to increase our name and identity recognition in the online community. Additionally, we hope to gradually build our social media presence and networking ability in order to share news about our work more broadly with people all over the world. You can help by going to our [ISGA Facebook page](#) (if searching for this page, type in our full name), liking and following us, and sharing this page with friends who might be interested in our work. Also, be sure to check out our [Facebook video series](#) on the “Day in the Life of the Global Anabaptist Church” project.



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# ANABAPTISM ONLINE

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

During the early 1980s, as Christians in Ethiopia faced severe persecution, the Meserete Kristos Church survived by shifting the primary focus of congregational life to small house groups. The groups that emerged—often women who would meet for coffee, bible study, discussion, and prayer—were organized but fluid, quickly incorporating new people and then multiplying as the church grew.

In modern times we have grown accustomed to thinking of church growth in terms of charismatic personalities and sophisticated marketing strategies. But throughout most of church history, movements of revival—be it the Waldensians, the Lollard followers of John Wycliffe, the Hussites, the Anabaptists, or early Pietists, Quakers, and Methodists—were started by small groups of people who gathered to share their stories, read scripture, and ask about its meaning for their lives.

It seems that something similar may be happening in our own troubled times. By all outward appearances, the inherited structures of Christianity in the West—and with it, the Mennonite church—are either in decline or being called into question. Yet even as traditional institutions are weakening, remarkable signs of new life and vitality are appearing at the edges.

Consider, for example, the flourishing of informal theological conversation that has emerged among Anabaptist-Mennonites around the world in various settings on the Internet. Just as the printing press opened up an entirely new mode of discourse that enabled the rapid spread of Reformation ideas in the sixteenth century, the Internet has created possibilities for fresh, creative, and sometimes unruly forms of theological engagement.

In the fall of 2018, for example, Nindy Sasongko, a member of the

Indonesian GKMI church and a PhD student in theology, collaborated with other colleagues to start @Theology—a podcast in Bahasa Indonesian that is “collegial, non-apologetic, and conversational.” The site quickly attracted the interest of other Indonesian young people who found @Theology to be “a space for students of theology from different backgrounds . . . to dismantle powers in the disciplines of theology and religious studies.” The group has now posted 185 podcasts.

Numerous other forums for theological conversation have also recently emerged among Spanish-speaking Anabaptist-Mennonites. Thus, Carlos Martínez García, a Mennonite journalist, pastor, and church historian in Mexico City, has helped to initiate “Café con aroma anabautista,” an informal exchange of theology, music, poetry, and art. The “Women Doing Theology in Latin America” meets regularly for online conversations, most recently to read together biblical texts focused on the theme of reconciliation. A group of women in central Mexico have launched “Café entre Chicas Meno-Mex,” that often includes participants from the US, Central and South America. Elsewhere, one can follow conversations among Latin American Mennonites at sites such as “Un Momento de Anabautismo,” “Merienda Menonita,” “Diálogos Anabautistas,” or “Revista Anabautista Digital.”

At the same time, Mennonites in South Korea have hosted numerous webinars on topics related to reconciliation. And in North America, groups such as “Anabaptist Historians,” “Marginal Mennonite Society,” and “Young Anabaptist Radicals” offer read-

ers thoughtful, provocative insights that often unsettle established assumptions. Among plain Anabaptists, Lynette Yoder, originally from Holmes County, Ohio, has posted some 300 videos on YouTube that give her nearly 100,000 followers an intimate glimpse into the daily life of a more conservative group, often interspersed with reflections on faith and practice.

*“In these times of crisis, technology has offered a way of breaking through the limits of resources, time, and distance...”*

“I think we are in a very interesting time,” reflected Rebeca González, a Mennonite pastor in Mexico. “In these times of crisis, technology has offered a way of breaking through the limits of resources, time, and distance and enabled us to reflect together on the biblical text in order to respond to the great questions we are asking.”

Clearly, the Internet and social media are no substitute for face-to-face community. But if the sixteenth-century Anabaptists were alive today they would likely be challenging traditional forms of communication by live-streaming podcasts, creating webinars, and posting blogs.

We should be attentive to the signs of renewal wherever they find expression.

*A version of this editorial was originally published in the [September 2020 issue](#) of Anabaptist World.*

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