

ISGA Awarded Grant from the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship



Baptism of Henok Mekonin with the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia

Five hundred years after the first Anabaptist baptisms in Zurich—and the wrenching divisions that followed—is it possible for the Catholic, Lutheran, and Anabaptist descendants of those groups to heal the wounds of those debates? Aided by a Teacher-Scholar grant from the [Institute for Christian Worship at Calvin University](#), the [Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism \(ISGA\)](#) will help to foster ecumenical conversations about baptism within the global Anabaptist-Mennonite family. The pro-

ject will both strengthen historical and theological understandings of baptism in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, while also encouraging open conversations about pastoral issues related to baptism in various cultural contexts.

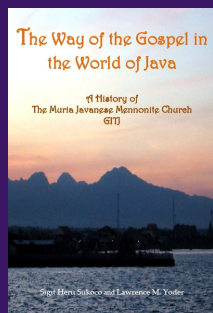
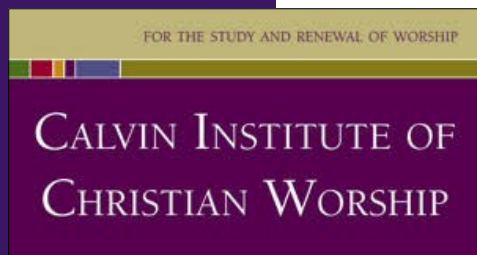
Between 2012 and 2017, representatives of the Catholic Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Lutheran World Federation, and Mennonite World Conference (MWC) met for a series of substantive conver-

sations about their understandings of baptism. The final report of those trilateral conversations summarized the main areas of theological affirmations, “gifts received” from the other two groups and “challenges accepted” for ongoing consideration. The report—titled “Baptism and Incorporation in the Body of Christ, the Church”—recently appeared as a special issue of [The Mennonite Quarterly Review](#).

In December 2020, ISGA Director John D. Roth received a Teacher-Scholar Vital Worship Grant from the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship that will enable the ISGA to prepare a study guide that will make “Baptism and Incorporation in the Body of Christ, the Church” more accessible to lay leaders. The grant will also fund the translation of the study guide into Spanish and French, and

(cont. on pg. 2)

Vital Worship Grant, Cont.



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

support several webinars and seminars that will enable a wide range

of people—including Catholics and Lutherans—to participate in conversations about baptism and its relevance to the life of the church today.

The Teacher-Scholar grants are designed to help make the knowledge and expertise of those doing academic study accessible to lay people in congregations in order to infuse new life into congregational worship practices. "I'm

deeply grateful to the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship," said John D. Roth, "for enabling projects that are intended to deepen understanding of the rituals of worship. Baptism is central to Anabaptist-Mennonite identity, yet many pastoral questions persist around baptism and it continues to be a major point of division within the Body of Christ."

Working with both conference leaders in [Mennonite Church USA](#) and with the [Faith and Life Commission of MWC](#), the ISGA is now mapping out a timeline to prepare materials and schedule webinars and seminars. Roth has already begun collaboration

with Tom Yoder Neufeld, chair of the MWC Faith and Life Commission, on the text of the study guide. He is also collaborating with Anicka Fast (Burkina Faso) and several others in organizing a series of interviews with church leaders throughout the global Anabaptist-Mennonite family on their understandings and practices around baptism. In addition to serving as an archival record of MWC perspectives on baptism, the digital library of interviews will be a helpful resource for videos that may emerge from the project.

Stay tuned for more information!

Publications & Resources

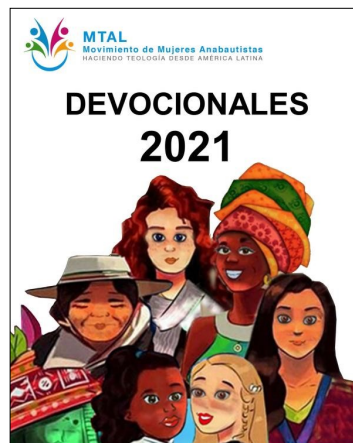
The fall 2020 *Rhizome* featured the publication of a history book that tells the story of the GITJ synod—one strand of the Indonesian Mennonite Church. *The Way of the Gospel in the World of Java: A History of the Muria Javanese Mennonite Church (GITJ)* is still available for purchase! Follow this link for more information: <https://www.goshen.edu/isga/publications/>

Coming Soon: *A Cloud of Witnesses: Celebrating Indonesian Mennonites*. John D.

Roth has recently completed a user-friendly introduc-

tion to Indonesia. The book, scheduled for publication by Herald Press in the fall of 2021, will be an essential resource for those planning to attend the 17th MWC global assembly in July, 2022.

A recent addition to the [Biblioteca Digital Anabautista \(BiDA\)](#) has generated much excitement. The [Movimiento de Mujeres Anabautistas Haciendo Teología desde América Latina](#) (MTAL—Movement of Latin American Women Doing Theology) [created a devotional for 2021](#). Their main goal was to "produce a devotional book for women written by women...



from a Anabaptist-Mennonite Christian faith perspective." BiDA is an online digital library with theological resources in Spanish that ISGA helps to maintain in collaboration with several other organizations. For more information and links to the devotional, search for "Movimiento Mujeres" on this site:

<https://biblioana.org>

Oral Interviews from Latin American Church Leaders Now Digitized

Jaime Prieto Valladares, a Costa Rican Mennonite historian, church leader, and former seminary dean, loves to hear the stories of Latin American Mennonite church leaders. For more than a decade, he traveled throughout Mexico, Central America and South America, recording interviews with over 130 pastors, administrators, and lay people. Those interviews formed a key part of the extensive research he conducted that resulted in the publication of Prieto's book [Mission and Migration](#) (Pandora Press, 2010), the Latin American volume of the Global Mennonite History Series.

Until recently, that valuable resource of oral recordings was preserved on dozens of cassette tapes that were becoming increasingly fragile. Last December, with the financial support and encouragement of the ISGA, Prieto completed the project of digitizing these important his-

torical records, thereby ensuring that the interviews will be available to future generations of scholars. The recordings are especially important in light of the fact that churches in many of these contexts have limited paper archives and tend to value oral traditions at least as much as formal records. Prieto has also created a catalogue of the dates, locations, and length of each recording.

"The process took many hours to accomplish," writes Prieto, but he expressed delight that "these interviews can become part of the heritage of the oral history of Mennonites and Anabaptists and made accessible for use by other historians."

This digitizing project is one more tangible outcome of the ["Power and Preservation" Symposium](#) that the ISGA organized in June of 2019. That conference brought together more than 20 historians, pastors, librarians, and archivists from around the world to [discuss the preservation of Anabaptist-Mennonite histories](#).



Jaime Prieto Valladares

ISGA Collaborations

On November 10, 2020, the ISGA participated in Round 2 of "The Anabaptist Story Lives On: Virtual Museum & Archive Tour." This virtual Zoom tour organized by TourMagination involved archivists and executive directors from Anabaptist and Mennonite museums, archives, and heritage centers in the USA and Canada. In the November session, John D. Roth introduced the work of the ISGA in a presentation titled "From Zurich to Addis Ababa: How Anabaptism Became a Global Movement." Follow this link to watch the presentation: <https://www.tourmagination.com/vtour-2/>

As a part of a collaboration with MWC, ISGA Administrative Assistant, Kristen Swartley, has been supporting the work of the [Creation Care Task Force \(CCTF\)](#). The task force, appointed in the summer of 2020 by MWC, recently completed a survey of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite Church to gain better understanding of current attitudes toward the on-going climate crisis. Swartley has helped to organize and translate survey results. After last fall's hurricanes in Central America, Swartley also connected with survey participant Karen Flores Vindel for on-the-ground information and wrote a piece about the impacts of climate change titled "Hurricanes wreak havoc in Central America." Follow [this link](#) to read the story on the MWC website.

As the 500th year anniversary of the first Zurich baptisms in 1525 draws nearer, the film production company Affox AG, headed by Swiss Mennonite Max Wiedmer, has partnered with a variety of Anabaptist-Mennonite organizations to create a series of five short films (one per year, with a final 90 minute docu-drama to appear in 2025) featuring Anabaptists around the world today. The first 10-minute film focusing on the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia is already available, and production for the second film in Indonesia and the Philippines will start soon. ISGA's director, John D. Roth, has served as a consultant for this project. Look through the posts on our Facebook page to find links for a project trailer and first film featuring the Ethiopian Mennonite church: <https://www.facebook.com/instituteforthestudyofglobalanabaptism>. For French, Spanish, Amharic, and German translations of this trailer, follow links under the Youtube video or check the [Affox AG Youtube page](#).

RICH NORTH, POOR SOUTH?

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

In a remarkable little book titled [*Sharing Gifts in the Global Family of Faith*](#) (Good Books, 2003), Pakisa Tshimika and Tim Lind reported on a two-year project, sponsored by Mennonite World Conference, in which they led 13 workshops in 10 countries on the theme of gift sharing among churches in the Anabaptist-Mennonite global communion. In the course of their work, Tshimika and Lind uncovered a host of inspiring stories, compiled an inventory of the diverse gifts churches around the world were prepared to share, and developed a compelling biblical argument for giving and receiving as the basis of healthy church relationships.

In the course of their conversations, Tshimika and Lind also noted a deeply entrenched pattern in which Mennonite churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were understood largely as “needy recipients,” while churches in Europe and North America were “wealthy givers.” On the surface, it’s easy to understand the source of these assumptions. In 2015 close to half of the world’s population (46%)—mostly from Latin America, Asia, or Africa—was subsisting on less than \$5.50 a day. Today, 62 percent of the world’s millionaires reside in Europe or North America, with almost 40 percent of these millionaires living in the U.S.

These impressions are further reinforced by the daily headlines. Back-to-back hurricanes in the past month once again yielded familiar images of flooding in Honduras and Nicaragua, with calls from MCC to provide relief aid. News of violence in Tigray, Ethiopia, have prompted concerns for how the MKC church there can play a more active role in peacemaking. On an even larger scale, during the course of the past six months, a remarkable coalition of US and European Mennonite mission and relief agencies have collaborated in an effort—led by Mennonite World Con-

ference—to provide direct financial assistance for sister churches in the global South who are affected disproportionately by the global COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of October, the initiative had distributed some \$414,700 in direct financial aid to 53 national Anabaptist churches in 28 countries.

On the surface, it may seem that these news stories and the recent COVID-19 response only reinforce the image of wealthy Mennonites in Europe and North America sharing their largesse with the needy churches of the global South. But the deeper truth is much more complicated.

In the first place, the stereotype of the “rich North” and “poor South” hides the reality of profound wealth disparities within Europe and North America, disparities that are also reflected in the economic resources of our Mennonite congregations. Emerging economies in many countries associated with the global South—e.g., China, India, Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, and Indonesia—now have large middle classes, including groups of wealthy Mennonites. The task force that dispersed the money gathered in the MWC COVID-19 Fund, included members from Burkina Faso, the Philippines, and Colombia. Various Anabaptist groups in many countries that received assistance—e.g., Nicaragua, DR Congo, India, Ecuador, and Mexico—cooperated with each other in assessing local needs and coordinating the distribution. And in several instances, national churches served as a conduit to pass along resources to other groups in neighboring countries. Thus, Mennonite churches in Burkina

Faso supported the church in Sierra Leone, and the Mennonite Church in Colombia facilitated projects in Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela.

Seen through a still different lens, we in the North are profoundly needy. Many Mennonite groups in North America are spiritually impoverished, hesitant to share the Good News and uncertain about their future. And the current fragility of democracy in the United States should make us cautious about sharing confident judgments about the political conditions of other countries.

“Every member of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church has something to contribute—not in the condescending sense of the ‘widow’s mite,’ but as a vital and necessary thread in the fabric that binds us together.”

Throughout their book, Tshimika and Lind repeatedly insist that every member of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church has something to contribute—not in the condescending sense of the “widow’s mite,” but as a vital and necessary thread in the fabric that binds us together.

Even as we continue to share a portion of our economic abundance, what gifts are we willing to receive from brothers and sisters elsewhere in the world?

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

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF
GLOBAL ANABAPTISM

Goshen College

1700 S Main St

Director: John D. Roth

Communications/Project Manager:

Kristen Swartley