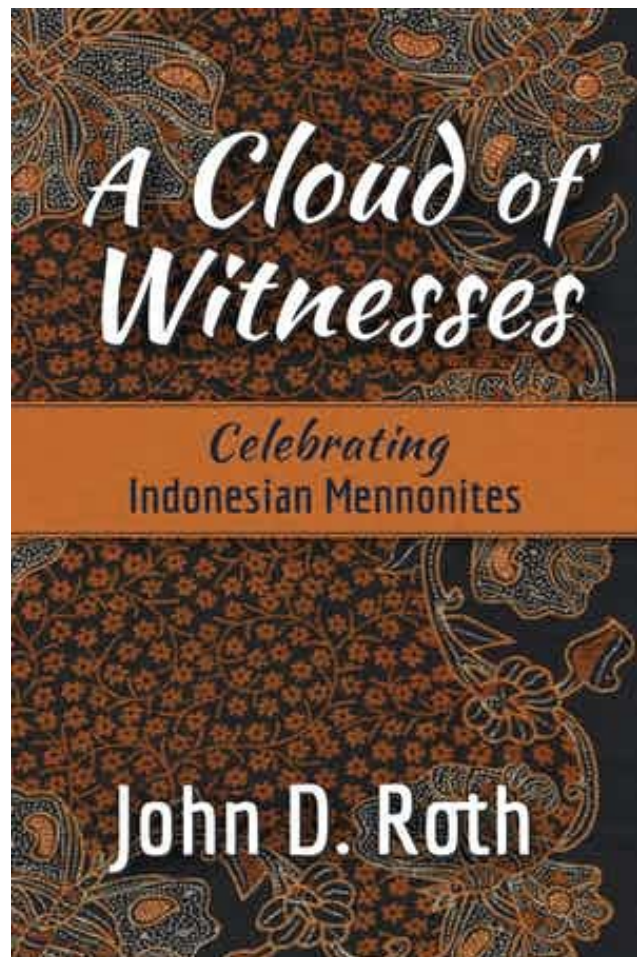


New History of Indonesian Anabaptists and Travel Guide Published

[ISGA](#) director John D. Roth has just published a new book detailing the history of three streams of Anabaptist-Mennonite church groups in Indonesia. *A Cloud of Witnesses: Celebrating Indonesian Mennonites* has already received enthusiastic praise from scholars and from Indonesian church leaders. “*A Cloud of Witnesses* is a rich, informative, crunchy, and tasty glimpse into Indonesian Anabaptist-Mennonite churches—GITJ, GKMI, JKI—written in a broader Anabaptist-Mennonite history. This book is written with a passion for and dedication to Christ and reflects a commitment to the global Anabaptist family through Mennonite World Conference,” writes Rev. Andios Santoso, former general secretary of GKMI (2014-2019) and member of the [Mission Commission of Mennonite World Conference \(MWC\)](#).



Initiated in the mid-nineteenth century, these three church groups represent the oldest Mennonite faith communities in the world outside of Europe and

North America. The book weaves together stories of Indonesian history, Dutch missionary work in Java, and the indigenous Christian movements that sprang to life



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Indonesia Book (cont.)

in the midst of this. The three MWC-related synods that are currently active in Indonesia will co-sponsor the upcoming [MWC global assembly](#) scheduled to take place in Semarang, Central Java, in July of 2022. These groups include the Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa (GITJ), the earliest Javanese group; the Persatuan Gereja-Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI), a group that arose among Indonesians of Chinese descent; and the Sinode Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (JKI), a newer, more charismatic group that has expanded to Australia and the USA.

Danang Kristiawan, a GITJ pastor from Jepara, who also teaches at the Wiyata Wacana Seminary in Pati, writes, “This book successfully describes the Mennonite community in Indonesia that grew up in three different conferences, each of which has a unique culture and background. It tells us not only about the past, but also about struggles in the current Indonesian context. This book helps readers ‘taste’ the flavor of Mennonites in Indonesia.”

This book arrives just in time to engage travelers from all over the world in the history of the Indonesian Mennonite church as they prepare to attend the [17th](#)

[MWC global assembly](#). In addition to its rich historical content, *A Cloud of Witnesses* also includes travel tips, notes on culture, language, and tourist sites, and even several recipes. MCUSA conference minister Steve Kriss calls *A Cloud of Witnesses* an “excellent preparation for those anticipating the upcoming Mennonite World Conference assembly in 2022, whether attending face-to-face or virtually.”

The book is available to purchase online through Amazon or MennoMedia: <https://www.mennomedia.org/9781513809403/a-cloud-of-witnesses/>.

“Grab a copy, and I will see you in Indonesia!” says Santoso.

Recordings of Latin America Church Leaders Preserved

In the [March issue](#) of *Rhizome* we reported on an ISGA-initiated project to help preserve hundreds of interviews that Jaime Prieto, a Costa Rican Mennonite historian and church leader, conducted over the course of several decades as part of his research for [Mission and Migration](#) (Pandora Press, 2010), the Latin American volume of the Global Mennonite History Series. In the initial phase of that project,

we provided financial support to transfer the interviews from cassette tapes to digital format.

Early this summer, Joshua García, a sophomore Communications major at Goshen College, digitally remastered the files to improve the audio quality. Now, with the help of Luis Tapia (see story on next page), the files have been organized and systematically saved as part of a larger ISGA vision to create a digital archive of resources related to the global Anabaptist-

Mennonite church. We will soon be adding additional audio files to the collection, including sermons from Mennonite worship services in Burkina Faso and interviews with former MCC and TAP workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Jaime Prieto

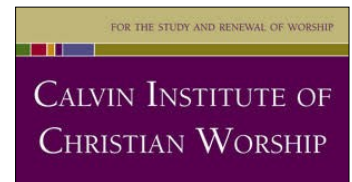
“Believe and Be Baptized”: ISGA Promoting Webinars, Workshops, and Study Guide

This past summer, on June 6 and 13, the ISGA collaborated with Mennonite World Conference on a series of webinars titled “[Believe and Be Baptized: Global Conversations on Baptism](#).” In the first of the webinars, John D. Roth engaged participants from nearly 40 countries on the theological and historical roots of baptism in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, noting also some differences in beliefs and practices that characterize the global church today. In the following session, Thomas Yoder Neufeld, chair of the MWC Faith and Life Commission focused especially on a recent ecumenical dialogue that brought Catholics, Lutherans, and Mennonites into a sustained conversation on baptism for the first time in nearly 500 years. The webinars served as the [MWC Renewal event](#) for 2021, an annual global initiative that Roth has coordinated for the past five years. Recordings of the webinars—including versions with Spanish and French subtitles—will soon be available at the MWC website.

The webinars reflect an on-going commitment by MWC to promote broad engagement with the report of a [trilateral](#)

[dialogue on baptism](#) (“Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church”) in which representatives from the Mennonite, Catholic, and Lutheran traditions engaged in a six-year conversation on baptism. The final report, published in [The Mennonite Quarterly Review](#) (January 2020), noted several significant convergences among the three groups, particularly in the close link between baptism and Christian discipleship.

To continue this conversation on baptism, the ISGA—supported by a grant from the [Calvin Institute for Christian Worship](#)—is creating a study guide that will help to make the report of the trilateral dialogue more accessible. Roth is also partnering with various regional MC USA conferences to organize a series of workshops to invite insights and responses from Mennonite pastors. The first of these workshops are scheduled for [Columbus, OH \(Nov. 6\)](#) and [Lancaster, PA \(Nov. 13\)](#), with more to follow in the spring of 2022. The study guide—which will be translated into Spanish and French—should be available to churches by the end of the year.



New ISGA Research Assistant and Translator

Luis Tapia, a Chilean theologian and mission worker in Ecuador, joined the ISGA team this summer. Tapia, who grew up in the city of Valparaiso, was originally part of the Chilean Baptist church, which he describes as theologically similar to Southern Baptist churches in the USA. During his studies in a Baptist seminary in Chile, he discovered Anabaptism and was especially attracted by the radical discipleship of the Anabaptist tradition. After further studies in education and an MA degree in philosophy, Tapia served as pastor of the Quito Mennonite Church in Quito, Ecuador. He then moved to Elkhart, Indiana, to study theology at [Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary](#), graduating in the spring of 2021 with an MDiv. Tapia is passionate about Anabaptist theological education, especially for Latino communities in both North and South America who often do not have access to theological teaching or materials.

Tapia’s work with the ISGA has involved translating various ISGA texts into Spanish, making our educational material accessible to churches who communicate primarily in Spanish. He has also helped to add numerous new Spanish books to the [Biblioteca Anabautista Digital \(BiDA\)](#), which has become a crucial resource for Spanish distance-learning courses in many settings. And he is currently communicating with various Latin American Anabaptist church leaders with the goal of adding new archival material about their churches to the [Global Anabaptist Wiki](#).

Additionally, Tapia helped to finish an archival project initiated by Jaime Prieto of Costa Rica (read more in the previous story). Welcome to the team, Luis!



SWEET HOUR(S) OF PRAYER

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

Several years ago, while participating in a study tour of the Meserete Kristos Anabaptist churches in Ethiopia, I happened to share a room with a local church leader. On the first evening, as we were preparing to go to sleep, he told me rather casually that he would be getting up at 4 in the morning for a period of prayer and asked if I was interested in joining him.

The invitation took me by surprise. And, to be honest, it filled me with a bit of dread. I believe in prayer, and I knew prayer was central to the spiritual life of the Meserete Kristos church. I had heard numerous stories of all-night prayer meetings that had sustained the church, especially during the difficult years of persecution.

But as a task-oriented person, disciplined in the virtues of efficiency and linear thought, I couldn't imagine praying longer than about eight minutes at a stretch, perhaps 10 to 15 minutes at the most.

Breakfast was not scheduled until 7 o'clock. How would we possibly fill two or three hours with prayer?

Curiosity — along with a sense of spiritual inferiority — prompted me to accept the invitation. So the next morning, long before sunrise, I found myself standing anxiously in a room alongside my new friend. He began to pray, fervently, in Amharic; I began, haltingly, in English.

Just as I had feared, I soon ran out of words. Embarrassed, I finally interrupted his prayer to ask him for counsel. The essence of his advice, which unfolded in further conversations over the following five mornings, was something like this.

Prayer is not a speech, it is a posture. Prayer is not a technique, but it does have a structure.

Begin, my friend suggested, by acknowledging the miracle of life — the gift of your breath and the promise of new day. Let your mind be filled with gratitude for God's presence in every part of Creation and for God's boundless love for you and for this world.

If you must think, focus on thoughts of gratitude. Open yourself to the reality of God's holiness. Let your mouth express words of praise, honor, thanksgiving, worship, wonder, awe, love and joy.

Then slowly allow that awareness of God's glory to shine a light on yourself as you truly are. Let your mind attend to your relationships — especially the fears, resentments, shortcomings and anxieties that you associate with those relationships. Name them, aloud if you are able, and then let the warmth and light of God's presence wash over each of your confessions.

Next think about the specific people in your family, your workplace, your congregation, your community. Name what you desire for them, and again note God's warmth and light infusing each person that comes to mind. Expand that circle to the work of the church, the needs of various groups of people, the struggles confronting your country, the challenges faced by brothers and sisters around the world.

Infuse your supplication with praise. Alternate between praying out loud and praying "in the spirit within."

If your mind turns to Scripture, recite Scripture. If it goes to a song, sing the song. But wherever your mind goes, name God's presence.

In truth, my friend's counsel was less prescriptive than what I have described here. Yet during our six mornings of sustained prayer together, this is the gist of what I slowly came to understand.

And even though I felt slightly sleep-deprived, by the end of the week the thought of praying for two hours no longer seemed impossible.

“Curiosity — along with a sense of spiritual inferiority — prompted me to accept the invitation. Just as I had feared, I soon ran out of words.”

I think I am not alone — especially among my friends in Europe and North America — in the mix of wonder, skepticism and admira-

tion I have for Christians in the global church who speak casually about prayer meetings that last for hours or throughout the night. But my brief tutelage in prayer in Ethiopia has made the possibility of sustained prayer seem much less mysterious.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Anabaptist-Mennonites from around the world have gathered regularly for an [online prayer hour hosted by Mennonite World Conference](#).

Could this be an opportunity for you to learn a new spiritual practice?

A version of this editorial was originally published in the March 2021 issue of [Anabaptist World](#).

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