



World Fellowship Sunday 2017

Worship Resources

Prepared by MWC
Member Churches
in Europe for
22 January 2017

Theme and texts

a. Theme: **My Cry is Heard**

b. Why this theme was chosen:

The theme was chosen because of the current situation with many refugees and immigrants coming to Europe. Many people in Europe look for ways to respond to the challenges while others are afraid. Many feel helpless and are looking for answers. How will the church respond to the different needs we hear and see around us?

c. Biblical texts:

Psalm 40:1-10
Genesis 11:1-9
Acts 2:1-18

d. Relationship between the theme and the biblical texts:

When we feel lost, helpless and alone, who can we trust? The reading from Psalms speaks of God as the one who is faithful, who gives us refuge and reason to be thankful, and who hears our cry. In the stories in Genesis and Acts, we learn about communities receiving the Spirit of God in ways that were far beyond their imagination. God heard their cries, and responded in ways they did not expect. Do we experience that our cry is heard? Do we hear when others cry out?

2

**Prayer
Requests:**
In Germany, children sometimes read the prayers for the whole congregation.

a. Prayers from European MWC members:

- Pray that those who are taking care of refugees will not become overwhelmed, losing strength and motivation as the needs wear on.
- Pray that refugees will not fall into depression due to the weight of their past and hopelessness about their future.
- Pray that Christians will see refugees as human beings in need, and will not contribute to Islamophobia.
- Pray that Christians will share the gospel of hope and peace with an attitude of respect, humility, wisdom, courage, knowledge, skills and the guidance of God's Spirit.
- Pray that God's Spirit will provide a new understanding across cultural divisions, and even more, that we will learn how to live together and shape a common future.
- Give thanks that our societies are being enriched by refugees.
- Pray that European churches will be able to inspire people and share the gospel in societies that are becoming more divided and violent.



Liesja Unger

b. Prayers from MWC:

- Give thanks that Anabaptists around the world are united in faith across language and cultural differences.
- Pray that Anabaptist churches all over the world will welcome the stranger in their congregations and in their communities.
- Give thanks for the growing networks in the MWC family – mission, service, health, peace and education – that encourage and strengthen.
- Pray that our MWC members who are suffering persecution and hardship may have courage and hope to persevere.



3

**Song
Suggestions
from the
MWC
International
Songbook
2015**

- #38 You are holy
- #20 Sari Srishti
- #16 Chukkeso Wangwiye
- #8 Senzeni
- #37 O Senhor é a minha
- #1 Ewe Thina
- #33 Vater unser Vater
- #24 La Paz de la Tierra

4

**Symbolic
worship
activities
or visual
resources**

- Visual symbol: dial phone or a stack of cell phones
- Greet each other without any words
- Greet each other using many different languages: Hello (English), Bonjour (French), Hola (Spanish), Habari (Kiswahili), Salam Pembuka (Indonesian), Grüß Gott (Bavarian), Chasaq Huil (Kekchi), Tadiyaas (Amharic), Konnichi wa (Japanese), Namasté (Hindi), Mbote (Kikongo)
- Lunch bags or lunch boxes for a One Lunch Offering



Henk Stenvers



Liesia Unger

5

**How the
One Lunch
Offering
can be
included in
worship**

MWC invites a special offering to be taken for our global Anabaptist church community on World Fellowship Sunday. One way to think about this offering is to invite every member to contribute the cost of at least one lunch in their community in order to support the networks and resource in MWC. Sacrificing one lunch is our humble way of giving thanks to God and supporting the ongoing ministry of God through our global church community.

6

**Additional
resources**

www.mwc-cmm.org/wfs

**a. Additional
resources
in this package**

- Suggested liturgies for gathering and for benediction
- Biblical interpretation for sermon content
- European stories for sermon content
- Offering ideas
- European cultural suggestions (recipes)

**b. Additional
resources
available
online:**

- Pictures (including all used in this package)
- Videos
- Songs

Contact Information:

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Suggested liturgies for gathering and benediction

Gathering/Call to Worship

Today, overcoming the fear in our lives, we
celebrate the power of God.

Today, overcoming indifference and all hatred in
our lives today, we celebrate the love of Christ.

Today, overcoming the excess and violence
in our lives, we celebrate the transforming
presence of the Holy Spirit.

For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but
a spirit of power and love and a sound mind.
Amen

*Reiner Kanzleiter, taken from the Mennonite
Hymnal (Germany/Switzerland)*



**Celebrating World Fellowship Sunday 2016 in Palermo, Italy.
Photo: Henk Stenvers.**

Benediction

Look at your hands.
See the tenderness that is in them.
They are God's gift to this world.

Look at your feet.
See the way they should go.
They are God's gift to this world.

Look at your hearts.
See the fire and the love in your hearts.
They are God's gift for this world.

Look at the Cross.
See Jesus, Son of God and our Healer.
He is God's gift to this world.

This is God's world.
And we will be there for everything under the
sun.

God bless you and keep you.
God care for you.
God keep you safe.
God fill your life with love.

May God radiate the warmth of our hearts and
shine through the peace of Christ every day until
His world is here. Amen

*Taken from the Mennonite Hymnal (Germany/
Switzerland)*



Biblical background for sermon content

Psalm 40:1–10

God Hears Our Cries

- David tells of God’s deliverance from a life-threatening situation (v. 1–10).
- David has “waited patiently” for the Lord (v. 1). The Hebrew word here means that David is “actively, anxiously awaiting, with every fiber of his being” for the Lord. This is no quiet resignation – the psalmist is fully confident that God will come to the rescue.
- God hears and sets the feet of the psalmist on a secure rock and puts a “new song” in the psalmist’s mouth (v. 3). The “new song” marks a new beginning, a radical change from what has come before. The singer celebrates a new beginning after being rescued from the “desolate pit” and “miry bog” (v. 2).
- David feels contentedness that comes from trusting God (v. 4–6). When we rely on God, we will not be immune to the problems of life, but we can see beyond those challenges to a new vision and a new song.
- We can trust that God hears our cries. But we need to remember that also God relies

on us to be God’s ears and hands and feet responding to the cries of others.

Genesis 11:1–9

The Tower of Babel

- Fearing that they might lose the unity among themselves, the people wanted to have a civilization that firmly supported a one-world culture, ending all differences and diversity. Everyone understood the others, because all could identify with each other. They wanted a dominant culture to which all would belong – a dream which many nations still pursue.
- God destroyed that dream. The unity of language was broken. God heard their cries, and responded in a way that they did not expect.
- One can read the variety of languages as a curse that God imposed to doom their tower project to failure. But you can also look at it differently. God created variety in creation. Where there is no diversity of cultures, we have eliminated the richness of life that God celebrates. God wanted the people to learn to value diversity.

Acts 2:1–18

Passover and Shavuot/Pentecost in Jerusalem

- *Shavuot* is the Hebrew word for “weeks” and refers to the Jewish festival which occurs seven weeks after Passover to mark the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Greek Jews called it Pentecost, because it is 50 days after Passover.
- In Jesus’ time, Jewish people from all over the world came together in Jerusalem to celebrate the gift of the Torah. In the streets, you could hear the Latin of the soldiers, the Greek of the scholars, and the Aramaic of the ones who live there. Most people knew some



Open air worship service on a farm in Schwetzingdorf, Germany.
Photo: Liesa Unger.



Greek, but it was not their first language. The noise from so many languages must have made some people think of the story of the Tower in Babel and wish for unity in language again, as it existed in the beginning.

- The relationship of these many people to the Torah was different. Some people were from small Jewish communities in Israel. Some came from other territories with completely different cultures (e.g., Medes, Parthians, Syrians, Asians). They were part of these foreign cultures, but they did not fully fit in because they also belonged to the people of the Torah.
- Some had not been born as Jews, but had recently converted, and so they were religious immigrants. In the world around the Mediterranean, it was fashionable to try new cults and religious practices. Those who were not born Jewish, but had recently joined Judaism, were seen as suspect. One cannot belong to something and try something else tomorrow. They needed to prove that they were truly Jewish, believing in the living God and belonging to God's people who had been preserved through changing times.
- There were also religious people, sympathetic to the Jews, who were fascinated by the Torah and believed in this God, but could not quite commit to the Jewish community. These were financial supporters, however they could not accept the full commitment to being Jewish, and were not able to participate in normal Jewish social life.
- If at all possible, everyone came to the big annual festival in Jerusalem. Together, they observed the Passover, the festival which celebrates a people on the road, away from Egypt, away from the political control which left them no room to live. They celebrated the freedom given by God who called them to their own community. *Shavuot*, or Pentecost marked the end of this celebration time. The goal of connecting with God like at Mount



**Coffee after a worship service in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
Photo: Liesa Unger.**

Sinai had been reached. God had heard their cries, the Torah came to the people and God spoke in the language of everyday life. God remains the Holy One, who also dwells among the people.

- Among them were those who believed that the Torah had taken shape in human form, in the life of Jesus. Now they could really say that the long journey out of Egypt had come to an end (Passover). Jesus is what life looks like when God dwells among the people (*Shavuot*/Pentecost).

Coming of the Holy Spirit

- On this day of *Shavuot*/Pentecost, it happened. The book, the words that were celebrated, came to life. The Spirit came as a wind and storm; as flaming fire. Both the wind and fire penetrated deep into people. Tongues of fire spread, and the people started to sing, in languages that went straight to the heart. People praised God, telling of God's mighty acts. Whomever wanted to hear could see that here the Torah of God spoke right from the heart of these people, becoming alive in the words they spoke and sang. The love of God was seen in the fire, burning now in humans. Godself shines light in and through humans.



Communion at the Mennonite Brethren Convention in Germany.
Photo: Liesa Unger.

- Everybody heard them **in their own native language**. They had travelled far, sought to understand the Torah, listened and discussed its meaning in a language which they had to tediously learn and understand. Before this day, the language of God seemed out of this world. Now, everything was suddenly familiar. They understood each other in the language of their own culture, home, daily lives. The Asian was still Asian, the Arabs were still from Arabia, the scholars still from Alexandria – but they could all hear in their own language what was being said.
- Peter put it into words that were familiar to those who had studied the Torah for a long time. This fulfilled what everyone had expected in the coming together to celebrate the Torah. The instruction of God had long been associated with humans, but it is no longer from the outside. Now, it is flesh and blood. Peter quoted from the prophet Joel (2:28), saying that all people will prophecy, dream dreams and see visions because God is living, and now dwells among them.
- Secondly, Peter pointed out this Spirit is not some incomprehensible force. It carries the life of Jesus of Nazareth, which is here as a community in human form. In the life of Jesus, the Torah had fulfilled its ends and

spread from there, now in the form of this human community.

Meaning for Today

- What is happening here went beyond Peter’s quote from Joel. The prophet did not talk about overcoming the boundaries between languages and peoples. That came unexpectedly, as a surprise. God’s being is much too rich to be confined to only one culture or national community.
- Diversity is difficult. International languages like English today or Greek back then do not solve the problem – in a foreign language, no one feels like they are able to express their thoughts and feelings exactly, leaving a feeling of being homeless. Sometimes languages like English (or Greek back then) remain deeply connected with a specific culture, for example, what we call the West. Then this culture infiltrates our thinking, and the language prevents appreciating diversity or even wipes it out.
- But even understanding each other’s language is not enough. There are also many cultural misunderstandings and tensions. Stresses arise when, for example, in some cultures, men feel they have to protect their women by sequestering them within the



A worship service in Lisbon, Portugal. Photo: Liesa Unger.



home, while in other cultures, the values of self-determination, equality and freedom are considered to be much higher. Is it possible to be unified across our cultures, so that all can live well together? The Spirit of Pentecost creates not only the ability to understand each other in the language of our hearts, it also creates a new community in which not all have to adapt to one dominant culture.

- This new community must search for new ways of living together. After Pentecost, the people in Jerusalem opened their homes and shared with those who wanted to belong. This new life came from the Spirit of Jesus. This soon led to conflicts in the early church, but they stayed on the path, journeying together.
- In Europe, we often hear: “We are all human, we all have to share only one world.” This is an expression that tries to capture some hope that there is a possibility of a shared life despite all the difficulties. We can have good encounters across the huge trenches that divide those who live in security and people who have only what they can carry with them, like the settled Europeans and the refugees arriving in Europe. Out of those encounters there arises something which we can express from a Christian perspective: There is a God

who has created all of us, and has called us to live in his world and in his community. The vague idea of a common humanity will not be enough to inspire us about a common future. As refugees come to Europe and we engage with them, there is a touch of this Pentecostal spirit of the open houses in Jerusalem and the international community of the early church.

- We need this miracle of Pentecost in Europe today. It is not enough that we all speak a common language. It takes more – we need to understand each other as if talking in our own mother tongues. It is not self-evident that we will find a common way in the future, in which everyone can bring his peculiarity and in which everyone can say: “Yes, this is what life should look like”. In order to discover a new growing community where the needs of one are not dictated by another, we must move beyond the fears of losing our protection. We need to enter into the community that Jesus prayed for: “I wish that they may all be one, as I and the Father are one” (John 17:11). This happens when the Spirit of God enters and fills our languages, cultures and lifestyles with the life of Jesus, celebrating and illuminating our differences and unifying them in the community beyond what we can imagine.
- Pentecost may come to mean farewell to some aspects of the present as we know it and love it, and taking off into the unknown. God heard the people’s cries, and responded in a way that they did not expect. We all need to remember that we are only travelling to a new home.



A worship service at the Burgos Anabaptist Church in Spain.
Photo: José Lozano.

The content from Genesis and Acts is from a sermon preached by Jürg Bräker of the Evangelische Mennoniten-Gemeinde Bern (Evangelical Mennonite church) in Bern, Switzerland, on Pentecost Sunday 2016.



European stories for sermon content

Netherlands – Refugees in Groningen

In the Mennonite Church, we have often discussed the question, Can we disobey the law, as citizens and as Christians? Can we take in asylum seekers? Is this our Christian duty? In 1986, these questions became more than theory when Armenians living in the Netherlands were told that they would be sent back to Turkey if they did not have a permit for the Netherlands.

The churches in Groningen had arranged together that refugees would be accommodated in our city if they sought refuge here. The Mennonite church also prepared, and on 31 October, 1986, five Armenians and two Tamils knocked at our door.

A small part of our church community was against hosting them in the many rooms behind the church. We tried to work with the pros and cons, but of course, we made many mistakes. Every day, we were afraid that the police would find out. Alone, we could have never made it, but we had help from other churches.

A negotiator was working on our behalf with

the federal government. We had the feeling this would probably take a year, or even many years. In Dutch style, we celebrated the Feast of St. Nicholas (5 December), Christmas and New Year's with our guests. Then, using materials from the Byzantine Institute in Utrecht, we observed Orthodox Christmas (6 January), which is a solemn occasion for the Armenians. Our normally simple Mennonite Church got a metamorphosis that morning for the two-hour-long service with many rituals (water, oil, candles, icons, painting). Afterwards, we celebrated with a big meal.

At 5 p.m., quite unexpectedly, a report came from The Hague that the five Armenians could remain in the Netherlands and the two Tamils could go to Germany (where they had come from). They would not be sent to Turkey! We all celebrated with big hugs and then said goodbye.

Now and then we still have contact with these seven people, and we planted a tree to remember each guest. We learned a lot from this action.

Written by Renze Yetsenga, a member of the Doopsgezinde Gemeente (Mennonite church) in Groningen, The Netherlands.

France – Learning with Iraqi refugees in the Department of Ain

Moved by the situation caused by the advance of Daesh at the end of 2014, 20 members of three Christian communities in the small town of Bellegarde decided to accommodate a family of refugees from Iraq. After nine months of waiting, the Mikho family with two grandmothers, two parents and three boys was announced in the train station one Saturday evening.

The media were eager to show a more positive



Churches in the Netherlands send greetings for World Fellowship Sunday in 2015. Photo: IJke Aalders.



story than the decline of a fearful Europe, so a photographer and journalist covered the arrival. A media parade continued in the days and weeks that followed, and made the response given in our modest homes appear disproportionate.

Within one month, the family received a minimum income and a housing allowance. Nine months later, the family was so well integrated that Arabic-French translators are no longer needed, and both the husband and wife have employment. Our Christian communities have become like a new family to them, stepping in to replace those from their homeland.

The wealth of skills others bring to our group has been valuable in giving ideas, and letting the family know they are at home. Our group accompanied the family in obtaining refugee status, their residence cards, medical papers, etc. We also supported the parents in education, children's activities, and access to employment.

Catholics, Protestants, Adventists and Mennonites learned to better know and appreciate each other as we work together. We often find ourselves in the situation of the learner. When I try to use a few Arab phrases, I realize the road they have to travel in the opposite direction to reach us. We try to show as much as

possible our songs and readings in both French and Arabic. We are happy to share with them our understanding of the Christian faith.

Both grandmas spend much time embroidering colourful pictures evoking biblical or religious scenes. We thus discover an ancient culture: our Iraqi friends are from the province of Nineveh.

Their Christian history is impressive. From Roman times, they have resisted influences from the East (Persian mystery religion) and the West (Rome, Byzantine Orthodoxy, Islam, even Catholic and Protestant missionaries). The intervention of the U.S. army in the 20th century ended their way of life, motivating other regional reactions, with the catastrophic consequences that we now see.

We are on a journey with our friends; a journey of language, history and culture. This is not just about being welcoming and hospitable, but about being brothers and sisters in humanity who meet across borders.

Written by Daniel Goldschmidt, a member of Eglise Evangélique Mennonite (evangelical Mennonite church) in Saint-Genis-Pouilly, France.

Germany – Community draws together in Enkenbach-Alsenborn

Robert Beutler knows all too well what it means to be persistent. After hearing of a Syrian refugee family's arrival in his hometown of Enkenbach-Alsenborn, he made a point of contacting the family to welcome them. It was only after the third attempt, however, that Mr. Beutler finally caught the entire family at home.

“These refugees come here to a completely foreign world, but we expect them to integrate,” says Mr. Beutler. “It's necessary for them to get a foothold, and that means helping each other out and supporting each other.”



**Meeting of European Anabaptist leaders in 2015.
Photo: Liesa Unger.**



Sometimes that support is as simple as making sure the mailbox is properly labelled with the new family's name or helping get the trash out on the proper day. Filling out complicated paperwork and attending appointments are also on the agenda.

Mr. Beutler is a member of the Mennonite church in Enkenbach-Alsenborn. When the church board heard of the wave of refugees coming to Germany, they organized a meeting of local churches, clubs and politicians, out of which a citizens' initiative grew.

“When the number of refugees and asylum seekers swelled right on our doorstep, the public authorities were faced with a huge, almost overwhelming task. That makes it all the more important that we as a church community step up and help where we can,” says Rainer Burkart, pastor of the Mennonite Church in Enkenbach-Alsenborn. “Right from the beginning, we worked closely with the Catholic and Protestant churches, and with town authorities.”

This group calls itself “Begegnungen in Enkenbach-Alsenborn: Menschen helfen Menschen.” The title makes the purpose clear: Encounter – people helping people. Regular visits to make certain basic needs like food and clothing are being met, a weekly 10-kilometer run, and free German classes are a few examples of their activities.

One particular opportunity for building relationships is the Begegnungscafé, a meeting for young, old and everything in-between. Each Tuesday afternoon, a neighborhood church's fellowship hall resounds with Arabic, Farsi, Urdu or Albanian, mixed with English and German. Everyone is invited – regardless of official residency status, nationality, language or religion – to eat cake and drink tea or coffee while laughing together over shared language attempts and hearing of new and interesting cultures.



**Lunch after a worship service in Regensburg, Germany.
Photo: Liesa Unger.**

At the café, Mr. Beutler makes contact again with individuals or families he has visited in their new homes. They are usually reserved at first, unsure of Beutler's intentions. “But their eyes always light up when I see them again. Eventually they build enough trust to open up a little bit,” says Beutler.

As with any work where people are involved, aiding refugees can be very demanding and disappointing, especially when cultural differences seem insurmountable. One can feel exploited or frustrated by inaccurate perceptions of what life in Germany will be like. Conversations with others in the community and church family can be a positive way to deal with these difficulties.

This area of community development gives Mr. Beutler the most joy. “The work with the refugees has something satisfying and comforting about it. But it is the overall trend that makes me happiest. Many from our church family and community are really dedicated to the work. There's something warm and familiar in our interactions with each other. It's great.”

Written by Dora Schmidt, a member of Mennonitengemeinde Enkenbach (Mennonite church) in Enkenbach-Alsenborn, Germany.



Love opens hearts to learn more – Mennonite Brethren in Neuwied

Refugees have been part of the story of the Mennonite Brethren church in Neuwied since its beginning: the history of our church is marked by efforts to integrate people from different cultural backgrounds.

Evangelische Freikirche Mennonitische Brüdergemeinde Neuwied, Germany, was founded after World War II by refugees from West Prussia (now Poland) and is the oldest Mennonite Brethren Church in Western Europe. At the beginning, the Mennonites who founded the church had to work out a way to worship together with brothers and sisters from different Christian traditions like Protestant, Plymouth Brethren and Baptists. The next generation learned to integrate Christians from Croatia and South America who joined the church in the 1960s. In the mid-1970, the integration of great numbers of Mennonites from the former Soviet Union was a challenge. Even though they had the same Mennonite roots, they held to some specific traditions that differed from the culture of our church. But with God, nothing is impossible. Over the years, brothers and sisters from North America, Asia and Africa have also become part of this colourful community of Christ followers.

Presently, we are a congregation of 460 members that Christians from more than 14 different nations call their home. Even though the background and traditions of our church members are sometimes very different, their faith in and commitment to the one Lord Jesus Christ help to build bridges between each other.

A new chapter

A completely new chapter of church life began about eight years ago, when we had the courage to open our doors to people with a completely different religious background.



Juan Ferreira makes an announcement at Iglesia Evangelica Manantial de Vida, a Brethren in Christ congregation in Tenerife, Canary Islands. Photo: Tim Huber, Mennonite World Review.

How did that happen?

Community leaders from our city came to us with the request: would we be willing to open a youth club and help the city take care of young people 12–17 years of age with an immigrant background? Looking back, we know we were very naïve at the time; nevertheless, we were faithful when we said yes to obey God’s command “to seek the peace and prosperity of the city” (Jeremiah 29:7, NIV).

And so, this youth club (30 young people from Muslim and Yazidi background) found a home in our church building. We quickly realized that these young people took it for granted that they could attend “their meeting place” at any time. When the doors opened, they entered, whether it was to a ladies meeting, a prayer time or another event. When they found the doors locked, they would simply sit on the steps in front of the entrance and hang out there, not caring if it was day or night.

The first three months this youth club opened were really stressful for the church! We only survived this time with much prayer, patience, discussions and by setting up some rules and consequences for the youth.



**Chairs of regional and national Mennonite and Anabaptist conferences in Austria, Germany and Switzerland.
Photo courtesy of Liesa Unger.**

Appreciation, respect and Christian charity

To our surprise, the relationship with the young people got better in the coming months. In our church, the young people experienced something they had not received so far: appreciation, respect and Christian charity. The leaders of the city were amazed to see the behaviour of these young people change in a positive way.

Through the experience with the youth club, we were prepared to welcome the refugees and asylum seekers with open arms and hearts when they came to church looking for help and fellowship. For us, their religion is very foreign. It's hard to hear what these people have experienced on their journey to Germany, fleeing from war and terror. But on the other hand, it is also hard for them to get settled in a completely new culture with all these traumatic experiences that happened to them. We hear often that it is not what we say that makes them come to church but the warm love and care they feel.

This love opened their hearts to learn more about this Jesus of whom we speak. And so, we started with a Bible study group in Farsi and later another in Arabic. When people out of this group find faith in the living God and are baptized, we

are aware that there will be more changes in our church through these new brothers and sisters.

Every nation and tongue

Everybody noticed that when the first brother from Iran was baptized. When he came out of the water, his Persian friends responded with a storm of true jubilation that struck the rest of the congregation speechless with surprise. But when we realised that we were witnessing God's promise come true – that people from “every nation and tongue” will be part of his kingdom (Revelation 7:9) – there was joy everywhere!

Meanwhile, we have learned that it's a blessing that our typical German characteristics such as punctuality and order are being supplemented with characteristics from other countries, such as spontaneity and hospitality. Though hospitality is supposed to be a special trademark for Christians, we are learning a lot about it from people from an Eastern background. They always seem to have time to talk and enjoy a cup of tea while having fellowship. Their doors and tables are always open for guests.

Investing in strangers takes courage, because in doing so we leave our well-known comfort zone. But what we learn living this way is indescribable. The encounters with my new friends from around the world, has changed my life so positively that I cannot imagine what it was like when they were not yet a part of my life.

Walter Jakobeit is pastor of the Evangelische Freikirche Mennonitische Brüdergemeinde Neuwied, Germany, (MB church).



“Not in my name” – European Mennonites reject violence

Mennonite churches in Europe are responding to the violence and displacement in the Middle East that is affecting their society. Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden (AMG – Mennonite church in Germany) and Algemene Doopsgezind Societeit (ADS – Dutch Mennonite society) each wrote a letter to their governments urging peace.

The AMG recognizes its country’s compulsion to respond to terrorism with action, the obligation to show solidarity to France following November’s attacks and the desire to use the state’s power to protect its citizens and others who are vulnerable. “From our perspective, however, it does not follow from all of these motivations that military action in Syria is the appropriate response,” writes Doris Hege, AMG board chair.

“We are in no way convinced that military action will achieve greater security,” Hege writes. The development of a political future for people in the affected areas “would involve working toward a future for the region that is economically just, providing adequate support, initially through relief organizations, and also long-term in the



Dutch churches put peace into action. Participants in a weekend conference packed a shipping container full of Mennonite Central Committee relief kits for Syria at the Dutch fellowship centre Dopersduin in Schoorl in October 2015. Photo: Johan Tempelaar.

development of democratic civic and social structures.”

Similarly, ADS urged that “assistance for the victims of this drama, support for organizations which pursue this effort and the stimulation of dialogue between the parties should be the cores of policy.” “The Mennonite community... does not see violence as the means by which to approach conflicts, let alone the means by which to end them,” write Frans Dukers and Henk Stenvers, ADS moderator and secretary.

To their respective government’s military actions, the ADS and AMG declare: “Not in my name.”

[Click here](#) to see the letter from AMG to the German government (in English and German).

[Click here](#) to see the letter from ADS to the Dutch government (in English and Dutch).



Delegates at a regional conference in Schwandorf, Germany. Photo: Liesa Unger.



Offering Ideas

MWC invites a special offering to be taken for the global Anabaptist church community on World Fellowship Sunday. One way to think about this offering is to invite every member to contribute the cost of one lunch in their own community in order to support the networks and resources of our global Anabaptist church family. Sacrificing one lunch is our humble way of giving thanks to God, and supporting the on-going ministry of God through the church.

This gift of “one lunch” per person once a year is something that all MWC members can do. Some people have resources to give much more than this, and should be encouraged to do so. Others with more scarce resources might be encouraged to hear that the Executive Committee of the Mennonite World Conference, with members from every continent, is confident that most adults all around the world can give the equivalent of one lunch per year for the work of the global church.

Here are some ideas on how to plan an offering like this work in your congregation.

- Plan for One Lunch offerings to be given in special envelopes or culturally appropriate lunch bags/containers during the worship service.
- Plan for a second offering designated for MWC during the worship service.
- Plan for a shared congregational meal together before or after worship on World Fellowship Sunday.
 - This could be “potluck”, with each family bringing big dishes of food to share. Include an offering for MWC with the meal.
 - Have people each bring a packed lunch, labeled “vegetarian” or “non-vegetarian” or any other culturally-appropriate labels. These packed lunches are then available for auction or for purchase or donation by



“One Lunch” offering bags from the World Fellowship Sunday celebration at College Community Church Mennonite Brethren in Clovis, California, USA, on 26 January 2014. Photo courtesy of Dennis Becker.

everyone to take home, or to eat together after worship.

- Plan for a time of shared fasting and praying for the global church during a mealtime before or after worship on World Fellowship Sunday, and include an offering for MWC during that time, an offering that would be at least the value of the meal that is not being eaten.

Funds that are gathered through this special offering in each congregation can be sent directly to Mennonite World Conference using the various mechanisms shown on our website (www.mwc-cmm.org/donate). Or, these funds can be sent to your conference office, clearly marked as designated for Mennonite World Conference and indicated as World Fellowship Sunday offering, and you can ask that they pass the funds on to MWC.

We are grateful for every congregation that is part of our global Anabaptist family. Together, we support each other and learn from each other so that each and every one can be a stronger servant and witness for Jesus Christ.



European cultural suggestions (recipes)

Hutspot (Netherlands)

Hutspot is a dish of boiled and mashed potatoes, carrots and onions. According to legend, the recipe came from the cooked bits of potato left behind by hastily departing Spanish soldiers during their Siege of Leiden in 1574 during the Eighty Years' War, when the liberators breached the dikes surrounding the city. Dutch people all over the world still celebrate the anniversary of this event, known as Leidens Ontzet. Traditionally, the celebration includes consumption of a lot of hutspot, but Dutch people also eat it throughout the wintertime.

Preparation/Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients for 8 servings

- 6 onions, cut into very small pieces
- 6 big carrots, cut into very small pieces
- 8 peeled potatoes, each one cut in 4 pieces
- 120ml/ ½ cup evaporated milk
- 60 gr/ ¼ cup butter
- Salt and pepper

1. Boil the onions and carrots for 20–25 minutes. Drain.
2. Boil potatoes in a separate pot for 20–25 minutes. Drain.
3. Add onions and carrots to the potatoes, add remaining ingredients and mash well.
4. Warm all together and serve hot.

Löffelspätzle (Germany)

There is no typical German food in Germany because each region has its own recipes. Spätzle is a dish from Schwaben, in the south of Germany. Traditionally, Spätzle are made by scraping long, thin strips of dough off a wooden chopping board (Spätzlebrett) into boiling water. This recipe is a variation that is prepared using one or two tea spoons, the so called "Löffelspätzle", spoon Spätzle. It is said that this has been one of the first ways to make this dish.

Preparation/Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients for 3-4 servings

- 360 gr/3 cups of flour
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 4 eggs
- 60-120 ml/¼ --½ cup cold water

1. Lightly beat eggs. Mix salt into eggs.
2. Sift flour into large mixing bowl. Add eggs to flour and beat until smooth.
3. Add cold water until desired consistency is achieved.
4. Fill large pot halfway with water and bring to light boil.
5. Form small dumplings with a teaspoon and drop into boiling water. A second spoon can be used to help push the dumpling into the water. Cook until all dumplings are floating freely (about 1 - 2 minutes).
6. Move cooked dumplings to serving dish with slotted spoon.
7. Repeat until all of the dough is cooked into dumplings.
8. Drain excess water from serving dish before serving. Spätzle can be served with gravy, meats, vegetables, lentils, grated cheese, apple sauce and more.



Löffelspätzle. Photo: Liesa Unger.



Tortilla de Patatas (Spain)

Tortilla de patatas, also known as Spanish omelette in English, is an omelette made with eggs and potatoes and fried in oil. The word tortilla originally meant a small torte, or cake, and is not related to the corn or wheat based tortillas from Central America. According to legend during the siege of Bilbao in 1835, general Tomás de Zumalacárregui created the tortilla de patatas as an easy, fast and nutritious dish to satisfy the scarcities of the Carlist army.

Preparation/Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients for 6 servings:

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 pound potatoes (800 grs), thinly sliced.
- 1 or 2 large onions, chopped.
- Salt
- 4 eggs

1. In a large frying pan, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Sprinkle potatoes lightly with salt. Cook until golden brown and crisp.
2. Once the potatoes are golden, stir in the onions. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions soften and begin to brown.
3. Meanwhile, beat eggs together with salt. Pour eggs into pan and stir gently to combine. Reduce heat to low and cook until eggs begin

to brown on the bottom.

4. Loosen bottom of omelet with a spatula, invert a large plate over the pan, and carefully turn the omelet out onto it. Slide the omelet back into the pan with the uncooked side down. Cook until eggs are set.
5. Serve with salad or with a glass of Gazpacho Andaluz.

Poule au pot à l'ancienne (France)

Henry IV of France was said to have declared that, "If God gives me a longer life, I will see to it that no peasant in my kingdom will lack the means to have a chicken in the pot every Sunday." This classic French dish was said to be created to reflect these sentiments. Unfortunately for King Henry, despite popularity among his people, he did not live long but was assassinated in May 1610 after 12 earlier attempts on his life.

Preparation/Cooking Time: 2.5–3 hours

Ingredients for 6 servings

- 1 big chicken
- 800g/1.5 pounds carrots
- 300g/2 cups turnip or similar vegetable
- 4 leeks
- 1 big onion with 2 cloves
- Salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon chopped thyme
- 1 bay laurel leaf

1. In a big pot, cover the chicken with water. Cook to boiling point, and then skim off the very top layer.
2. Add all of the remaining ingredients to the water with the chicken. Cover and cook 2–2.5 hours, until the meat comes off the bones easily.
3. Serve the stock first, then the meat with the vegetables. Can be served as is or over rice or potatoes.



Lunch after a worship service in Madrid, Spain. Photo: Liesa Unger.