

unanimously to recommend that the 2010 Assembly ask forgiveness “of God and of our Mennonite brothers and sisters” for the wrongs of the persecution and its legacies “up until the present day.” Larry Miller, General Sec. of MWC responded: “We receive your commitment to rightly remember this shared history, and your vulnerability in taking steps to heal the fractured body of Christ...”

See MWC website: “About MWC, “ Who We Are,” “Activities and Impact.” Five global Anabaptist networks cooperate for learning and serving—Mission, service peace, health, education. Plenary Sermons from Indonesia Assembly, 2022. Publication: Semi-Annual Courier. **Total Revenues**—2019-2022—\$6,379,171.00

*Sources include: Doug Schlegel, in *Leben, A Journal of Reformation Life*, Oct, 4, 2017) and websites for MCC and MWC*

Selections Relating to Anabaptist History

Compiled by Urbane Peachey

January 29, 2023

1517, Beginning of Reformation, Martin Luther, Germany

THE ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT in Switzerland—1520’s was a break from city council and state control of church decisions.— more than differences over baptism and the Lord’s supper. Reformation grew out of social, religious and political unrest. The reformation including the Anabaptist movement was influenced by the Humanist tradition of Erasmus. There was widespread recognition of corruption in the Catholic church including sale of indulgences—paying money to priests and bishops to hear confession and receive forgiveness.

Felix Manz originally worked together with Ulrich Zwingli on a new translation of the Bible. But differences soon emerged. Manz and his friends accused Zwingli of delaying the Reformation and of making compromises with government-church authorities.

Dissenters wanted to take Scripture as the only guideline for faith and actions. They denied, among other things, the existence of purgatory, and demanded the abolition of the holy mass and infant baptism because they were not mentioned in the Bible.

But in 1525, Zwingli was not willing to break with the City Council, the Council ordered that anyone who did not baptize their infants was to be arrested. On January 21, 1525 Conrad Grebel and George Blaurock met **illegally** in the home of Felix

Manz and decided to break off after years of conversations with Swiss Reformed leader, Ulrich Zwingli.... Blaurock asked Grebel to re-baptize him on the basis of his profession of faith and Grebel consented. In turn, Blaurock baptized the others present. They were subject to arrest and imprisonment. Felix Manz was later sentenced to drowning in the scenic Limat River on the edge of Zurich, Switzerland. The movement soon spread from Switzerland up the Rhine River valley, to Holland, northern Germany and Danzig-Prussia. Global migrations followed.

THE ANABAPTIST VISION, 1943, BY H. S. Bender (Excerpts)

“The Anabaptist Vision,” given as a presidential address before the American Society of Church History in **1943**, has become a defining global Mennonite benchmark address. Opening lines of three points follow:

“a. First and fundamental in the Anabaptist vision was the conception of the essence of Christianity as **discipleship**. It was a concept which meant the transformation of the entire way of life of the individual believer and of society so that it should be fashioned after the teachings and example of Christ....

“b. ... in the Anabaptist vision, a new **concept of the church** was created by the central principle of newness of life and applied Christianity. Voluntary church membership based upon true conversion and involving a commitment to holy living and discipleship was the absolutely essential heart of this concept....

“c. The third great element ...was the ethic of **love and nonresistance** as applied to all human relationships. The Brethren (i.e. Anabaptists) understood this to mean complete abandonment of all warfare, strife, and violence, and of the taking of human life....”

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, (MCC), formed in 1920 in response to Russian famine after Soviet Union was formed in 1917.

After WWII, MCC was for a time the third largest relief agency in Europe. More than 200 North American relief workers served in Europe.

During WW II, nearly 5,000 Mennonite men were in alternative service in the US, also about 5,000 men in Canada. Although not drafted, some 2,000 women mobilized in the US, according to historian Rachel Goossen.

The churches of Europe were in trauma physically and theologically after WWII. **In 1948 World Council of Churches asked the historic peace churches for a statement on the Christian basis for pacifism.** The outcome was the historic pamphlet, “Peace is the Will of God.” The document became a major ecumenical discussion piece and triggered a series of peace conferences in Europe for a decade (Puidoux). North Americans were represented through the Peace Section of MCC.

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE, formed 1925 on 400th Anniversary of Anabaptist Movement, initiated by German Mennonite minister, Christian Neff.

“**MWC membership** in 2022 included 109 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ national churches from 59 countries, with around 1.47 million baptized believers in close to 10,300 congregations—Africa 36.43%, Asia and Pacific 20.58%, Europe 2.98%, Latin America and the Caribbean 9.51%, North America 30.50%.”

Commissions of MWC: Deacons, Mission , Peace, Faith and Life. Faith and Life Commission has been in conciliatory conversations with Catholics, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventist’s, and Lutherans. In October 2009, Lutheran World Federation Council voted