



**Mennonite
Mission
Network**

The mission agency of
Mennonite Church USA

Missio Dei

Exploring God's work in the world

Walking together in mission

Following God's call to
reconciliation

SPECIAL EDITION

Missio Dei is published by Mennonite Mission Network to invite reflection and dialogue about God's mission in today's world. Some features in the series focus primarily on the biblical and theological foundations of the mission task. Others present ministry case studies or personal stories of attempts to be faithful to Christ's call. Perspectives represented reflect the passion and commitment of the agency: to declare in word and demonstrate in life the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, "across the street, all through the marketplaces, and around the world."

Executive Director/CEO: _____ Stanley W. Green
Editor: _____ James R. Krabill
Copy Editor: _____ Karen Hallis Ritchie
Design: _____ Cynthia Friesen Coyle
Consulting Editor: _____ Paula Killough
Production: _____ Brenda Hess

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Mennonite Mission Network, the mission agency of Mennonite Church USA, exists to lead, mobilize and equip the church to participate in holistic witness to Jesus Christ in a broken world. With offices in Elkhart, Ind., and Newton, Kan., Mission Network supports ministries in more than 57 countries and 31 U.S. states.

Mission Network is committed as an agency to providing relevant resources for the church. *Missio Dei* is such a resource, inviting reflection and conversation about God's mission in 21st-century contexts. It is offered free of charge to nearly 1,000 pastors and lay leader subscribers. Additional copies may be purchased at <http://store.MennoMedia.org/Missions-C1055.aspx> for \$3.95 each, or \$2.95 for quantities over 100.

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Walking together in mission

Following God's call to reconciliation

SPECIAL EDITION

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What is our

We live

context? in a fragmented world.

Some of us suffer from economic and political oppression. Others find themselves enslaved to sin, materialism, and other false gods of our day.

As followers of Jesus Christ who long for God's new creation, we acknowledge our own brokenness and our dependence upon God. But we also find hope in the promise that in Jesus "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:19-20, NRSV). As Christians, we are called to advance this reconciliation and peace, since we know, with the apostle Paul, that God is "entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:19b-20a).

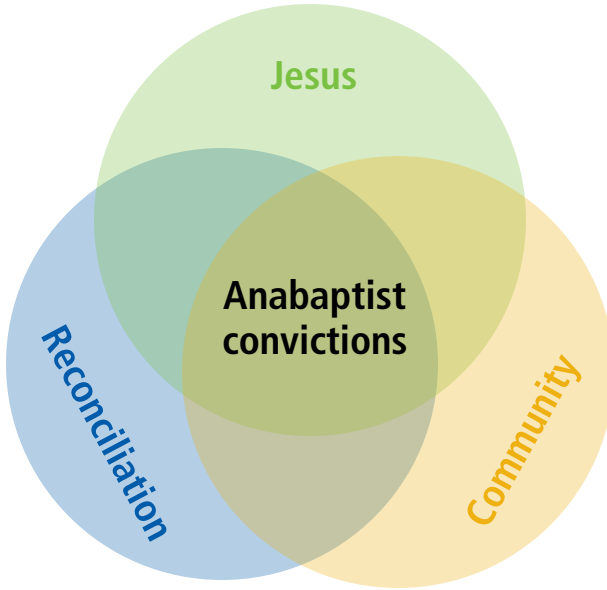
Who are we and where did we come from?

Mennonites are spiritual descendants of the 16th-century Anabaptists, who were radical disciples of Jesus Christ. Rather than appeal solely to church tradition, the Anabaptists sought to restore the church's primary allegiance to the person of Jesus Christ. They were zealous in sharing their faith, demonstrating God's love in daily life, and extending forgiveness to those who persecuted them.



Menno Simons was a contemporary of the Protestant Reformers, and his followers became known as Mennonites.

Three affirmations have been central to Anabaptist convictions over the years:



1 Jesus is the center of our faith

We claim him as both Savior and Lord. Just as God calls us to believe in Jesus for salvation by grace through faith, God calls us to follow Jesus, to become members of a new community, and to invite others to join us on this journey.

2 Community is the center of our life

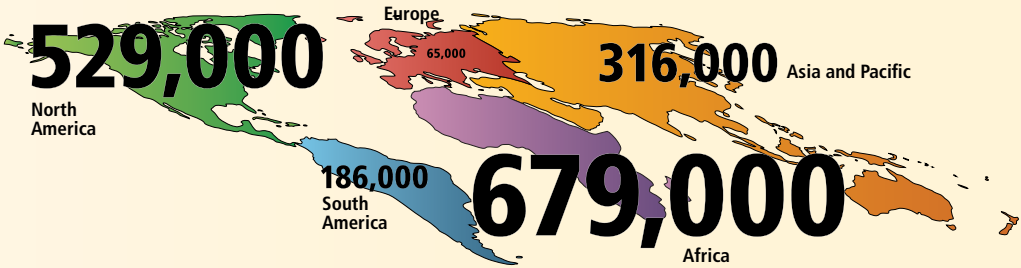
Our life together in Christ as a faith community demonstrates God's intent for all people. Our common life and worship prepare us to be sent forth by God to bear witness in word and deed to the reconciliation that has come to us in Jesus Christ.

3 Reconciliation is the center of our work

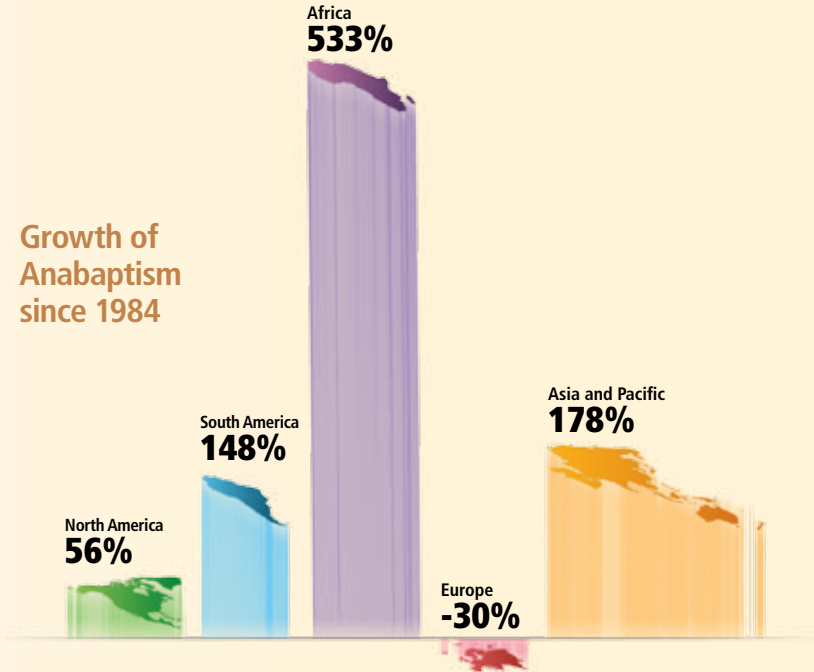
In gratitude for the reconciliation God has offered us in Jesus, we seek to extend healing and hope to our neighbors, our enemies, and the broken world in which we live. We know that the work of reconciliation is well beyond our frail and limited human capacity, and is made possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us.

Where are Anabaptist Christians today?

Anabaptist population by continent



Growth of Anabaptism since 1984



1984 statistics from Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/contents/W6763ME.htm. 2012 statistics from Mennonite World Conference 2012 World Directory.

Numbers include Anabaptists that are not part of Mennonite World Conference.



What is our calling?

We believe that the purpose of the church is derived from the calling and sending activity of God:

God sent the Son, Jesus, into the world.

Together, they sent the Spirit.

And now, in turn, God sends forth the church, to bear witness to the reconciliation God is making possible through Jesus Christ.

This is the basis of our calling as God's people.

Mennonite Church USA, the largest branch of the Anabaptist movement in North America, states it this way in the vision statement it has adopted for the church:

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

Local communities of faith represent God's primary means for carrying out the mission of the church. Each member is called to be an ambassador of reconciliation and each congregation is to serve as a channel of God's grace, joy and peace to the world.

Mennonite Mission Network has been commissioned by Mennonite Church USA to help communities of faith carry out the mission in a special way—by “leading, mobilizing and equipping the church in its mission.”



Equipping the church in its mission: Christian Service participants, sent by Mennonite Mission Network, help further the local church's vision for service and outreach. Here, Micah Yoder works on reading skills with Chase at KidReach after-school program during Service Adventure in Philippi, W.Va.



Jesus is the center

In Christ, we come together with others to share the good news.

Cornelius Maka (right) visits with Mission Network workers Joe and Anna Liechty Sawatzky after church at Harvest Time Ministries in Mandela Park, Mthatha, South Africa.



What do we believe about mission?

Partnerships

Mennonite Mission Network invites and encourages congregations and area conferences to partner for mission in the United States and around the world.

Mission Network and two U.S. congregations in Allegheny Mennonite Conference partner with Good News Theological College and Seminary in Accra, Ghana, to train leaders of independent churches. Rev. Humphrey Akogyeram, a graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Elkhart, Ind.), teaches this class that represents 40 denominations.



Mennonite Mission Network serves 21 area conferences of Mennonite Church USA in all their diversity: rural and urban congregations, younger and older populations, long-standing and new immigrant communities, speaking multiple languages, and many with varying convictions about how to be God's faithful people in today's world.

We embrace this calling with a commitment to serve the whole church in all of its parts. We seek to be a bridge of understanding, reconciliation and engagement when challenges face us as a diverse body of Christ.

The following **nine beliefs** inform and guide our approach to ministry:

The mission and glory belong to God.

- ① **God's redemptive reign sets the agenda for our mission.** God's mission is to set things right in a broken world, to redeem it and to restore it to its intended purpose. This mission of God is the church's reason for being. By participating in God's mission, the church becomes a living sign of God's intended future for the world.
- ② **Mission is rooted in God's love, focused on Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.** The mission is God's. Jesus, who went about preaching, teaching, healing the sick, and delivering people from evil spirits, who was crucified and resurrected, is the means (the way), the message (the truth), and the model (the life) for all mission. After Jesus' ascension, the Holy Spirit was poured out to move, transform, inspire and empower the church in mission. The church nurtures its life in the Spirit through Bible study, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines.
- ③ **Our mission overflows in joyful response to God's abundant grace.** When we experience the immeasurable height, depth and breadth of God's love, we are compelled to share with others the grace, joy and peace that overflow our lives.

The church is the primary model and messenger of God's love.

- ④ **The church is a sign of God's redemptive reign.** The church is called and sent into the world to invite all people into that reign, and to demonstrate the living presence and power of God through announcing salvation, proclaiming and demonstrating peace, and serving the world in the Spirit of Jesus. The church demonstrates its faithfulness to God's purposes by being a responsible steward of God's creation, and living as a prophetic community and a holy nation in relation to the powers of the world.
- ⑤ **Faithful congregations extend and reproduce themselves.** Every congregation is called to be faithful, healthy and vital, and to initiate activities from which new congregations and ministries are born. Faithful congregations nurture all believers into loving accountability, and guide those expressing interest to commitment to Christ and the church. They live out the practices of the reign of God.



Training leaders

Christian Service programs provide many opportunities for leadership development.

Mennonite Voluntary Service participant Emma Stahl-Wert (front) gardens in Tuscon with women who were formerly homeless.

REDEMPTION + LOVE = JOYFUL RESPONSE

- ⑥ **The church expects opposition and is willing to suffer.** In a fallen world, the church expects opposition and hostility. Members of the church risk their lives to represent the love and presence of Jesus, regardless of the consequences. The church stands in solidarity with poor and oppressed people, trusts in God for its defense, and places its hope in God's faithful promises.

Reconciliation and transformation are possible.

- ⑦ **The gospel reconciles and transforms creation.** By word and deed, the church announces to the world the good news that people and communities can be reconciled to God and to one another—that they can be transformed into Christ's image, and experience the healing of God's grace and peace. Christ empowers his followers to love their enemies and to believe that no one is beyond God's love and forgiveness. Christ's ministry shows that the gospel is to be proclaimed and demonstrated to all, and that only love can overcome evil.
- ⑧ **The model of Jesus' earthly ministry requires that the gospel be adapted to cultural context.** The mission of God is always incarnated within a cultural context, as best demonstrated by God's Word taking on human form in Jesus. This means that our approach must always be one of seeking to discover how God is already at work in a culture, and then engaging in



Business as mission

Sharing God's love takes many forms depending on the context.

Dale (pictured) and Bethsaba Nafziger use their coffee business to show Jesus' love to people around them, including their employees of different faiths and others they come in contact with in Nepal.



serious reflection about how best to participate in this divine activity in ways that are culturally sensitive, relevant, life-giving and transforming.

- ⑨ **The final victory already belongs to God through Christ.** The future of God's plan to "bring all things together in Christ" is not in question. It will be just as John described it in the book of Revelation—a great multitude of people from every language, tribe and nation, standing before the throne of the Lamb, praising God!



**What are the
values that
shape our
organization?**



Respect

Mennonite Mission Network's engagement in Argentina has been built on a commitment of mutual respect and partnership that includes the preservation of the Toba language. Here, Argentinian Bible translators Cornelio Castro, José Oyanguren, Germán Díaz and Ismael Castro compile an encyclopedic dictionary of Toba-Qom words.

Following are the values that shape us and form our culture at Mennonite Mission Network. Our goal is that they will become a natural outgrowth of who we are, what we do, and how we do it. They represent our intentions as individuals and teams within the organization.

- ① **Vision.** We are committed to and will articulate our organizational vision and will stimulate a passion for God’s mission around the globe.
- ② **Spiritual vitality.** We are committed to being prayerful, joyful followers of Jesus, sensitive to God’s calling and direction, modeling sensitivity to God’s Spirit, and nurturing awareness of God’s leading in our daily work.
- ③ **Church-centeredness.** We embrace God’s mission calling for the church by inviting the involvement of local congregations and by encouraging churchwide mission. We seek to support the participation of congregations and conferences in mission by planning strategies to partner and assist in ministries—local, churchwide, and global in nature.

Vision statement

Every congregation of Mennonite Church USA is engaged in holistic witness and participating in God’s work of reconciliation in Jesus Christ throughout a broken world.



Spiritual growth: Mennonite Mission Network Christian Service programs provide times of reflection for personal and spiritual growth. Radical Journey participant Katie Wahl writes in her journal during her time in Paraguay.



Prayer

We at Mennonite Mission Network are committed to being prayerful followers of Jesus Christ. We also value the prayers of others on our behalf.

Pastor Charles and Teresa Geiser of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., pray during Mennonite Mission Network's Day of Prayer on May 18, 2012.



U.S. partnerships

Mennonite Mission Network brings churches, organizations and participants together in ministry. We partnered with Peace and Justice Academy, a Mennonite Education Agency-affiliated school in Pasadena, Calif., to send a Youth Venture team to *Iglesia Menonita Rey de Gloria* (King of Glory Mennonite Church) in Brownsville, Texas. Here, Youth Venture participant Casey Gibson helps Melissa Perez (left) and Alexandra Garcia with a beading project.

- ④ **Intercultural diversity.** We affirm and support the advancement of intercultural diversity and the dismantling of racism. We work actively to build strong intercultural relationships and increase our ability to serve diverse groups and congregations in their mission involvement. We strive to deepen relationships with all individuals regardless of age, race, color, national origin, gender and abilities, and envision people of many nations, tribes, peoples and languages as participants in the kingdom of God.
- ⑤ **Community.** We seek to cultivate a spirit of unity and grace that demonstrates compassion and forgiveness in interpersonal and community relationships. We seek to set an example, both by being trustworthy and by extending trust in our relationships across the church.

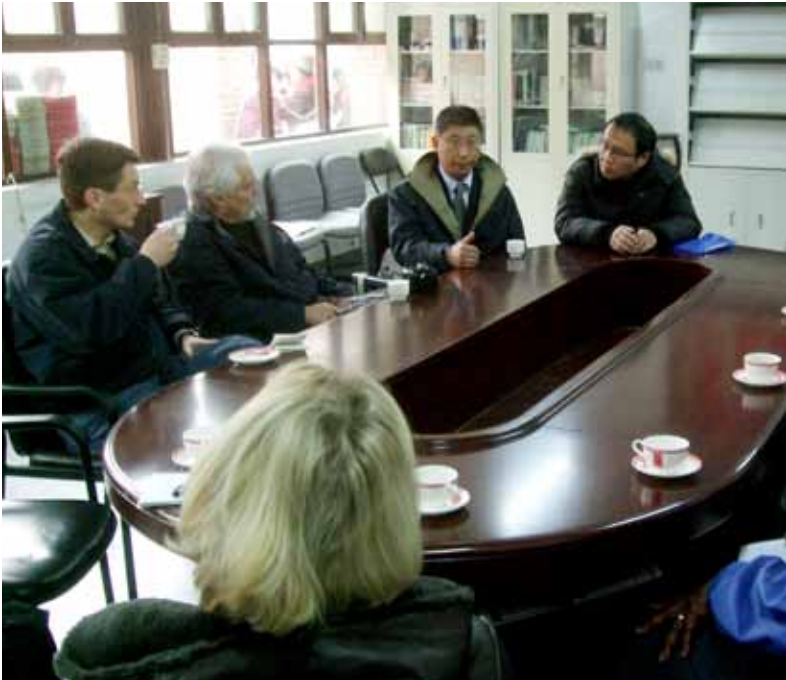


Intercultural diversity: Brad (third from left) and Brenna Steury Graber serve as youth workers in three Mennonite congregations in Paris. The retreat they participated in provided a way to get to know the youth who come from many different countries and cultures. Pictured above are Manon, Rudy, Brad, Romain, Timothée and Valentin involved in a team-building activity.



Community: Ray Epp (pictured) and Akiko Aratani, mission associates, work as directors with a food and agricultural initiative at Menno Village. This community, located in Sapporo, Japan, emphasizes health and creation care.

- ⑥ **Collaboration.** We seek to foster an approach to mission in which every partner is an equal at the table. We develop effective, cohesive teams that work cooperatively together, accepting and sharing responsibility. We foster this cohesion by working together to make decisions in ways that promote ownership and commitment.
- ⑦ **Interdependence.** We demonstrate mutuality by strengthening connections and communication between work groups, building partnerships and networks among complementary groups and agencies, within our constituency and with partners around the world.
- ⑧ **Innovation.** We show flexibility and exhibit openness to new strategies, procedures and opportunities by nurturing a learning culture and by expanding our skills and knowledge. We demonstrate this openness to taking risks by encouraging, planning, and helping to implement new ideas.
- ⑨ **Stewardship.** We discern and promote wise use of both natural and financial resources, and encourage self-care and sensible workloads.



Collaboration and interdependence: Mission is a dialogue between Mennonite Mission Network and the partnerships that have been formed with Mission Network workers and volunteers, partner churches and partner organizations. Above: Mennonite Partners in China delegation meet with Yin Hongtao (James), the administrator for Mennonite Partners in China, and Beijing Tongzhou Christian Church Pastor Lu Dong.

Intergenerational

Mission Network provides opportunities for families to serve together in short-term assignments through the SOOP program. The Oesch family served for two weeks at Fraser Valley Gleaners in Abbotsford, British Columbia. Back row: Mike, Lorren, Curtis, Carl Goosen. Front row: Jana, Caleb, Sadie, Elaine Goosen. Carl and Elaine operate the Gleaners.





What sources inspire and give birth to our ministries?

Mennonite Mission Network works actively to develop ministries in partnership with others and in response to opportunities that originate from a variety of sources.

Agency priorities

Our desire at Mission Network is to see people of all cultures transformed by Jesus Christ and to encourage the emergence of new faith communities equipped to be about God's mission in the world. This is our primary commitment and calling in developing new ministries and supporting those in existence for some time. To that end:

We partner with others

to establish and equip missional congregations and their leaders

to engage their culture and the world

with the whole gospel of Jesus Christ.

U.S. constituency

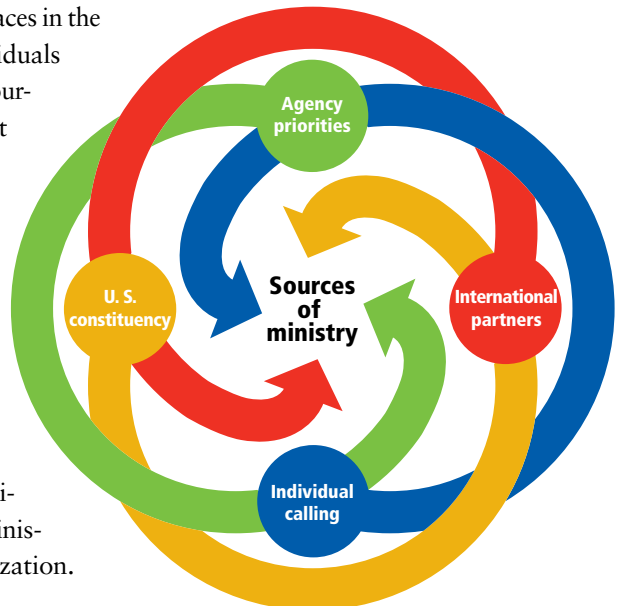
We serve nearly 1,000 congregations scattered across 21 area conferences making up Mennonite Church USA. This diverse body brings to the table many passions and ideas for ministry that we seek to encourage. Special working relationships have been developed with two sister agencies—Eastern Mennonite Missions and Virginia Mennonite Missions, with congregations hosting local ministries of our six short-term service programs, and with Executive Board staff of Mennonite Church USA.

International partners

With over a century of mission effort around the world, we have worked to foster ministry relationships that align our own priorities with the aspirations of more than 100 partner organizations in 57 countries worldwide. Many of these are members with us of the Global Mission Fellowship and the Global Anabaptist Service Network, who together share a commitment to finding new ways within the Mennonite World Conference family to collaborate in God’s reconciling purposes in the world. Because of our historic relationship with Mennonite Church Canada, particular ministry initiatives and relationships have developed between us.

Individual calling

In many instances, God places in the hearts and minds of individuals the desire to serve. We encourage such applicants to test their callings with friends, family, and their faith community, and to seek counsel and confirmation on what the Holy Spirit may be saying to them. Further conversations with our staff then explore whether a fit can be found between the individual’s calling and our ministry priorities as an organization.





What is our commitment?

We believe that the church most faithfully participates in God’s mission when it calls forth leaders as prompted by the Holy Spirit to inspire the congregation for its ministries in the world, and to ensure that every member of the faith community is empowered, equipped and supported for their unique vocation in witness. Through training, teaching, listening, and ministries of presence, we support new leaders as their ministries develop, and walk alongside faith communities as they grow.

We believe that the church exists for the task of bearing witness to the coming of Christ’s kingdom in the world. We seek to hold together evangelism, witness and personal transformation with peace, justice and social transformation—believing that each of these values has an important place within the kingdom of God.

We join our hearts and lives to John’s vision in the last book of Scripture:

Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation and tribe and language and people (Revelation 14:6, NRSV).

Holistic Christian witness

The church exists for the task of bearing witness to the coming of Christ’s kingdom in the world. Mennonite Mission Network seeks to hold together evangelism, witness and personal transformation with peace, justice and social transformation—believing that each of these values has an important place within the kingdom of God.



Holistic witness

Mennonite Mission Network supports Quito (Ecuador) Mennonite Church's holistic Christian witness and ministry with program funds and by sending Mission Network workers. The church provides temporary housing, helps refugees adjust to life in Ecuador, offers workshops on relevant topics (pictured at left), and coordinates small-group Bible studies (pictured here).

For further reading

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- For an extensive bibliography by and about Anabaptist-Mennonite missions and workers, see www.amb.edu/publishing/documents/Anabaptism-and-Mission.pdfresources.
- For a statement of the missional commitments of Mennonite Church USA, see www.mennoniteusa.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/11/PurposefulPlan_2012Feb22_ApprovedByEB.pdf.

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Walking together in mission: Following God's call to reconciliation

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This special edition of *Missio Dei* is our attempt to describe our work and its part in God's vision of shalom, when all things are at peace and as they should be, in Christ, when the kingdom has come.

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Together, sharing
all of Christ
with all of creation

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