

Transmission Latin America 2022

Creation Care

## Study Guide



How the Latin Americans tackle Creation Care and their responsibility towards future generations.

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## Introduction

Transmission is a series of five, 10-minute video productions leading up to 2025, the 500-year celebration of the Anabaptist movement. Latin America is the third in that series. Each of the productions gives voice to young adults from a different continent. In each case, they grapple with issues they face as Anabaptists.



The video “Transmission Latin America 2022; Creation Care” focuses on examples of how our brothers and sisters in Latin America are practicing creation care.

The stories cover four different countries, each with their own set of challenges. We visit various Mennonite locations and people, who are all very much concerned about the future of their children and the next generations. They want them to live in a better and cleaner world.

In Colombia we meet a group of church members who share practical actions in their daily lives, that help reduce wastage of natural resources.

In Brazil we talk to a Mennonite farmer who is continually seeking to improve his crop production practices.

In Ecuador church members encourage the use of cloth diapers that are cheap and cause much less waste for the environment.

We also went to Honduras where hurricanes are occurring more often and with more destructive effects because of climate change. The church members were confronted with a flooded church and worked hard to restore the church as well as the wounded and traumatized people.

Finally, we went to the Netherlands in Europe to see what future possibilities are available to deal with water problems.

We hope to show you a picture that Creation Care is something we all consider as urgent and on which we are all called to take action. No matter how small the actions are, because they are worldwide the small drops of all actions eventually form a sea of results.

This study guide is designed to provide added perspective and depth to these faith journeys. Latin Americans, Europeans and North Americans worked together to bring this unique production to life. To view this and the other video series in many languages, search “Transmission” on:

<https://mwc-cmm.org>

The study guides can also be found here.

## Discussion topics

The idea is to view the video in a group setting. It may be good to watch the video and briefly discuss in the group what caught your attention. Then watch the video again so you have a good grasp of what has been said.

As discussion leader, you can guide the conversation with your own questions and input, but the questions below may also help you in this discussion. Of course, you can pick the questions you think are interesting for your group. The situation you are in may differ from the issues addressed in this video and in these questions. If you come up with new insights or questions, please feel free to share them with the production group by contacting [hajo.hajonides@ziggo.nl](mailto:hajo.hajonides@ziggo.nl)

1. How, if at all, has your church engaged with the topic of climate change?



2. Yomaida tells us that in Bogota, Colombia, a group of 4 members of the church (Grace, Juliana, Pablo and Vanessa) formed a special taskforce to initiate actions in the field of Creation Care. What do you think about such a taskforce? Is it something that could work in your congregation as well?

3. Most of the actions are small steps to help preserve nature. Grace shows us a shop that sells used clothes and other items. Also, the congregation makes reusable cloth bags to reduce the use of plastic bags. This helps to preserve raw materials that are mined or grown on our earth. What kind of items could be reused in your environment? Are there already initiatives and what are they?



4. Juliana shows us how she uses local products for food. Also she reduces her use of meat and uses many grains, vegetables and fruit. Do you have any ideas about adapting your daily menu to become more animal and environment-friendly? What suggestions do you have?

5. Pablo is making a statement by walking and cycling a lot more. And instead of using a car, using public transportation. Can you think of ways to reduce the use of cars or other carbon fuel consuming means of transportation? What would be the advantages and the disadvantages?



6. Vanessa is raising her family in wise waste management by separating waste categories, reusing water from the shower and minimizing water usage. The small steps can help a lot when many families are participating. Can you think of other small measures that are easily implemented, but have a large impact when many participate?



7. Andreas is emphasizing the fact that sharing ideas can lead to great results. How do you think you can organize “idea sharing” in your congregation?

8. When we jump to Brazil, we meet Samuel. In the tradition of the Mennonites, he is working constantly on the efficiency of farming. But he realizes that soil conservation is necessary for good farming. Innovation, like direct planting and detailed monitoring of the soil condition, is crucial. What are the big issues concerning farming activities in your country? How is the preservation of the land safeguarded?



9. The massive fields shown in the video have very few of the trees/hedges/grass margins that are necessary for non-human life to thrive. Brazilian land also suffers from a lot of deforestation for different human activities. While the world’s human population cannot be fed solely from small fields, the consequences of large-scale farming on local biodiversity should not be ignored. How do you feel about these tensions?



10. In Ecuador, Delicia tells us about reusable cloth diapers. Ecuador has many refugees from other countries, who have very little money. A baby uses about 6 diapers/day representing significant expense. The congregation in Quito makes the diapers because they are cheap, they contain less chemicals, are reusable and cause less waste. The Quito

congregation has developed a very simple concept to help people to save money and also to save the environment. Can you think of similar concepts that contribute to Creation Care?

11. In Honduras, Jonathan shares the panic and the fear when the waters of Rio Chamelecón flooded the neighborhood due to heavy rains from Hurricanes Eta and Iota. Have you experienced similar threats caused by climate change?



12. In your surroundings what are the biggest effects of climate change. What should change in your vicinity to significantly reduce the pollution? Are measures being taken already and if not, what could be done to start the action?



13. Ela tells us that lately the number of hurricanes has increased. She also speaks about the resilience of the congregation. They started helping, washing, cleaning, removing mud, taking care of victims and providing mental support. How do you think your congregation would act in similar circumstances?

14. In the Netherlands Floriëtte gives us some solutions for water management. If there are some (potential or future) water issues in your country, which of the solutions below would be appropriate for your situation? Discuss other options. If other effects of climate change are being felt, what solutions would you suggest?



15. Another question seems important: are we not trying here to go beyond the limits of what the Earth can sustain? Is it fair to cover coastal areas of the sea for human housing while many non-human creatures rely on these important areas? What could be the impact on biodiversity if we continue to over-cultivate the earth?



**Dike**



**Overflow Basin**



**Floating Houses**



**Reforestation**

a. **Dikes.**

This is an investment that has been applied in various situations. Since the sea level is gradually rising, mankind will have to work on this more.

b. **Overflow basins.**

Rivers can contain a lot of water, but with extensive rainfall the water has nowhere to go other than over the surrounding land. This uncontrolled flooding can be prevented by creating overflow basins. If the river water rises the excess water can be channeled into predefined basins and thus prevent disaster.

c. **Floating houses.**

In many parts of the world floating houses and even small floating villages already exist. Most of the time lakes or quiet parts of the sea are used to build these villages. A lot of development is now going on to build these houses and villages in areas where the water is slowly swallowing the land like low atoll islands in the Pacific.

d. **Reforestation.** Water formerly absorbed by soil can now flow freely and quickly because the trees and shrubs that kept the soil in its place have been removed. It is vital that trees and shrubs return so the soil becomes stable again.



16. Ixel from Honduras states that “as young people the power is in our hands. We don't need to wait to be adults or older people to act. I think we are the engine for change.”

The problems caused by climate change are huge. The solutions, like Floriëtte addresses are huge as well. What can young people – whose future we are talking about – do to conquer the large issues of climate change.

After her journey through Latin America Ophélie is asking us:



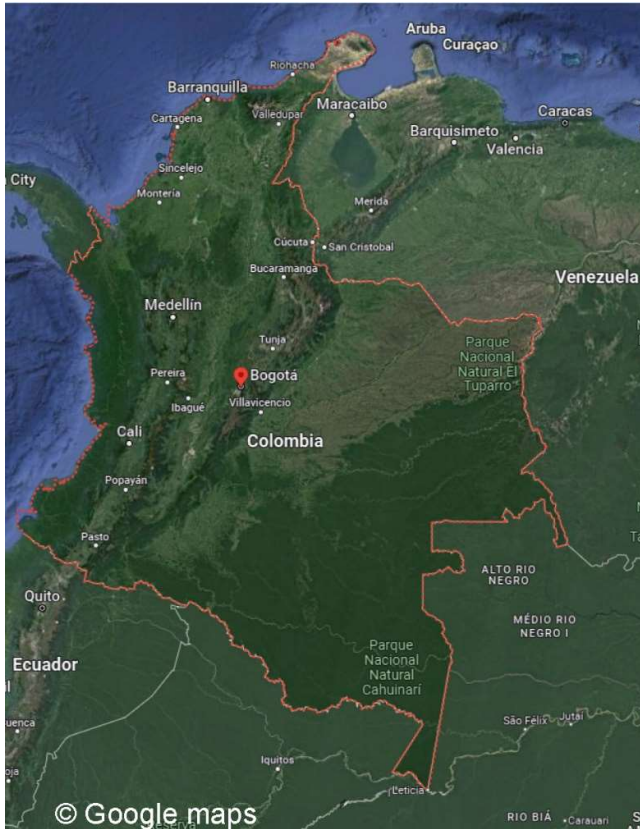
17. What would happen if each of us makes lifestyle choices like in Colombia?

18. What would happen if we dare to be innovative like the farmers in Brazil?

19. What would happen if we became responsible like the folks in Ecuador?

20. What would happen if we advocate for change by educating ourselves about complex issues like in Honduras?

## Context for Colombia



For thousands of years before Europeans arrived Amerindians lived in what is now Colombia. The first Spaniard to land in the area was Alonso de Ojeda in 1500. The capital Bogotá was founded in 1538. In 1564 Colombia was made a captaincy-general. The colony thrived and many African slaves were taken there.

In 1819 Simon Bolivar defeated the Spanish. Subsequently, a new nation was formed consisting of Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Bolivar became dictator in 1828 but he resigned in 1830 and Colombia became separate from Ecuador and Venezuela.

In the 19th century, Colombia was a troubled country and 8 civil wars took place during that period. In the early 20th century Colombia was, generally peaceful and the economy developed. Exports of coffee increased.

In the 1960s left-wing guerrillas began operating in Colombia. Then in the 1970s cocaine production increased and it continued to increase in the 1980s. The drug trade led to a great deal of violence. In the early 1980s, Colombia was hit by a severe recession.

In the early 21st century the situation improved. Violence declined after 2002 and the economy grew rapidly and poverty and unemployment declined. Colombia, like the rest of the world, suffered in the recession of 2009 but the economy soon recovered. The country also suffered severe floods in 2010. Today tourism in Colombia is growing and the country is developing steadily. In 2020 the population of Colombia was 50 million.

### Brief History of Mennonites in Colombia

In Colombia we can distinguish two main groups of Mennonites. The first are the Mennonites who stem from the missionary work mostly by Mennonites from the United States of America. It all began in the fall of 1945, when the General Conference Mennonite Church sent Mary Hope (Wood) and her husband, Gerald Stucky, together with Janet Soldner and Mary Becker, to begin mission work in Colombia. In 1946 they settled on a small farm near Cachipay, about 50 miles southwest of Bogotá, to start a boarding school for children whose parents were isolated due to leprosy. From there the faith spread. Mary Hope Stucky died in 2020 at the age of 103. Currently there are four Anabaptist groups working in Colombia resulting from various mission initiatives.

The other group consists of Low German Mennonites who started to settle in Colombia in February 2016. These immigrants come mainly from regions in Mexico, but others come from the United States, Canada and Bolivia.

These Mennonites are mostly so-called "Russian" Mennonites who formed as an ethnic

group in the 19th century in what is present-day Ukraine. These Mennonites live in colonies where they try to preserve their conservative values and lifestyles.

In 2012 there were 2,825 members in 67 congregations in Colombia.

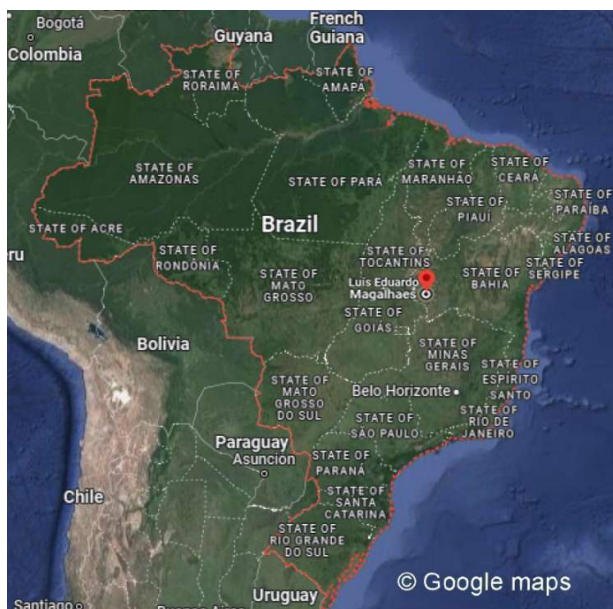
### **The Teusaquillo congregation.**

The Mennonite Church of Teusaquillo in Bogotá, Colombia is led by Peter Stucky, son of Mary Hope and Gerald Stucky. Peter won the International Menno Simons Preaching prize in 2022.

The congregation is very active and supports initiatives like “Total peace for violent Colombia” to end the continuing troubles between the guerrilla militia and the government but also to protest against the violent government and police forces. Many members of churches in Colombia, like the Teusaquillo Mennonites, marched with protesters to help ensure a peaceful demand for justice.

The church members were also strongly involved in providing food and other supplies to the refugees from Venezuela. It shows that the members are very committed to their fellow men and women and strive to help wherever possible. This empathy and love for their brothers and sisters led to a group within the congregation especially focused on creation care, looking to find ways to help nature with simple solutions that can be implemented by individuals.

## **Context for Brazil**



The Portuguese discovered Brazil by accident. Pedro Alvares Cabral landed on 23 April 1500. Then, in 1501 Amerigo Vespucci led another expedition to the new land. At first the Portuguese showed little interest in Brazil although merchants set up coastal trading stations and they exported Brazilwood. When the French began to trade with the Brazilian Indians, the alarmed Portuguese founded a colony to strengthen their claim to the area. Brazil began to grow when sugar was introduced in the late-16th century. The sugar plantations were worked by African slaves. Around 1760 new crops such as cotton, cacao, and rice were introduced. In 1763 Rio de Janeiro became the capital. Later Brazil experienced a coffee boom.

After 1929 the world was gripped by depression and demand for Brazilian coffee collapsed. After months of violence, the army intervened and Vargas became the dictator of Brazil. In 1960 a new capital was created at Brasilia. In the early 1960s, Brazil was facing worsening economic problems and in 1964 the army staged a coup.

Even though the repression by the army was severe the Brazilian economy grew rapidly by over 10% a year. Still, not everyone benefited. Many people were very poor. Worse, in the 1970s inflation began to climb steeply. Unemployment also rose in Brazil. After 2002 the economy and the population of Brazil grew rapidly. In 2020 the population of Brazil was 212 million.



## Mennonites in Brazil

In 1930 about 200 Mennonite families moved to Brazil. The largest concentration of Mennonites is in three suburbs of Curitiba and other concentrations are Colonia Nova, near Bagé, and Witmarsum. All are in the southern three states of Brazil.

More in the north, in Bahia State, we meet Samuel Epp, a Mennonite farmer who lives near the village of Luis Eduardo Magelhaes. Samuel is constantly aware of his duty to preserve the earth and seeks for more efficient ways to grow crops, without exhausting the soil.

We shot the images at the farm of the Epp family. Samuel's church is the Igreja Evangélica Comunidade Cristã in Luis Eduardo Maghalaes. He told us that his father wanted to become a pastor but God called him to farm the land and support missions with the money from the farm, to help develop the kingdom of God. Samuel follows in his footsteps.

## Context for Ecuador



The native people of Ecuador grew crops of maize, beans, potatoes, and squash. They kept dogs and guinea pigs for meat. In the late 15th century they were conquered by the Incas.

The Spaniards first sighted the coast of Ecuador in 1526. The Spaniards conquered what is now Ecuador in 1534 and founded the city of Quito on the remains of a captured Inca city.

The diseases brought by the Spaniards, especially smallpox decimated the native people of Ecuador. The Spanish brought slaves from Africa to Ecuador to work on sugar plantations.

In 1859 Ecuador split from Columbia and became independent. In the late 19th and early 20th century, Ecuador's economy

flourished. Panama hats were made in the country and exports of cacao boomed. After the depression prosperity was restored in the late 1940s by a banana boom. Oil was discovered in 1967 and it soon became Ecuador's main export. Other exports are shrimp, bananas, coffee, cacao and sugar.

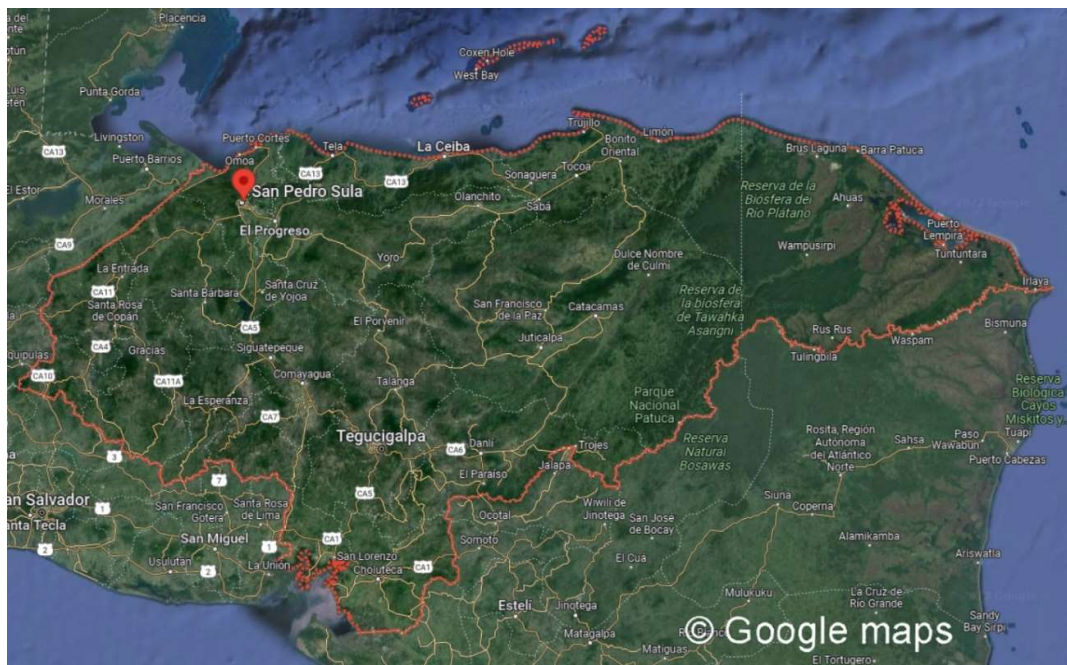
In the 1970s Ecuador's economy prospered, mostly due to oil. Due to low oil prices Ecuador was gripped by recession in the 1980s. There was also high inflation and high unemployment. Ecuador's economic problems continued in the 1990s and grew worse at the end of the decade with severe inflation. In the early 21st century poverty in Ecuador declined. Today tourism is a fast-growing industry in Ecuador. In 2020 the population of Ecuador was 17 million. The economy is growing although it is still heavily dependent on the oil industry.

### The Mennonite congregation in Quito

The community of the Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Quito is not very big. A part of the congregation consists of refugees from the surrounding countries like Venezuela and Colombia. Since many of the families are not permanent residents, the goal of the congregation has been to accompany the families that are in Quito, as long as they are there, inviting all to deeper faith and to be formed by Christ-like love. Since a number of the

congregation's members work with refugee families that may carry trauma from experiences of violence, people like Paul Stucky and Nathan Toews came from MCC Colombia to offer training and support. Also, the community is very focused on helping the refugees with more material support like the use of reusable, environment-friendly and cheap cloth diapers. Church member Delicia Bravo-Aguilar shows us the process.

## Context for Honduras



Before the Europeans discovered the Americas, indigenous peoples lived in Honduras. The greatest of them were the Mayans. The first European to reach Honduras was Christopher Columbus on July 30, 1502. The area became known as Honduras from the Spanish word for depths. The Spanish conquest of Honduras began in 1523.

Although Honduras became independent from Spain in 1821, complete independence was in 1839. In the early 20th century exports of bananas came to dominate the economy of Honduras.

In 2007, President of Honduras Manuel Zelaya and President of the United States George W. Bush began talks on US assistance to Honduras to tackle the latter's growing drug cartels in Mosquito, Eastern Honduras using US special forces.

Honduras suffered badly when Hurricane Mitch struck in 1998. Mitch destroyed about 70% of the country's crops and an estimated 70–80% of the transportation infrastructure, including nearly all bridges and secondary roads. Across Honduras 33,000 houses were destroyed, and an additional 50,000 damaged. Some 5,000 people were killed, and 12,000 more injured. Total losses were estimated at US\$ 3 billion. Later in 2020 the country was struck by two hurricanes Eta & Iota, which also caused much suffering and devastation.

Although the country is slowly recovering economically, a huge migration problem developed, where many people left the country to find a better future in the USA. Honduras remains a very poor country. In 2020 the population of Honduras was 9.5 million.

## **Brief history of Mennonites in Honduras**

The first Mennonite group to come to Honduras in 1950 focused on evangelism, but also on medical, educational, agricultural and community-based programs. The Iglesia Evangélica Mennonita Hondureña was established in 1969 and in 2020 covered 104 congregations and about 6,000 members. Amor Viviente (Living Love), founded in 1974, is another charismatic group which has now 80 congregations and 12,550 members.

Most of the Mennonite communities in Honduras provide a Christian witness and alternatives to urban youth caught in the power of drugs, alcohol, prostitution and abandonment. Furthermore, they help refugees and migrants who are in need of virtually everything.

### **The congregation of the “Vida en Abundancia Iglesia Evangélica Menonita” (Life in Abundance Evangelical Mennonite Church)**

The neighborhood of Chamelecón, a suburb of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, is not a very safe place to be. In late 2014, this already tense neighborhood became a war zone — with two gangs fighting each other for control. The congregation, which once drew some 200 people, now has about 70 at its services.

Despite the violence, the church feels strongly it needs to stay, doing its best to improve the community and bring hope and peace. With the help of a MCC program, volunteers are trained to present in schools once a week, teaching fifth and sixth graders lessons on respect, forgiveness, self-esteem, education, human rights and conflict resolution. By reminding children of these values, ideally they will be better equipped to deal with the violence around them — and more able to remember that they can choose to be different.

In Chamelecón, pastor José Fernández of *Vida en Abundancia Iglesia Evangélica Menonita*, says he’s noticed that in recent years gangs brought in new members from outside the community, and he suspects that’s because young people in Chamelecón aren’t as interested in gang life anymore.

“We want to really strongly work with children and young people . . . so that the moment comes when a young person says, ‘I don’t see the need to join these gangs,’” Fernández says.

Then in 2020, disaster struck. Honduras was hit twice in a fortnight by Hurricanes Eta and Iota. The resulting floods from the Rio Chamelecón river ruined the church. But with the resilience, so characteristic for the congregation, the church was cleaned and restored and the people were helped with their traumas and medical support.

## The Transmission video series

Producer Max Wiedmer, a Swiss Mennonite from Affox (a video, film, and multimedia company), together with Hajo Hajonides, a Dutch Mennonite, from the International Menno Simons Center, developed a video project to commemorate the first Anabaptist baptism in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525. Alongside other festivities being organized in Europe, the two partners are producing five short videos each year between 2020 and 2024. Each video covers a topic that is close to the hearts of Mennonites around the world. To emphasize the global dimension, the videos are being filmed in different countries.

These videos are intended to be used in workshops, discussion groups, Sunday schools, and so on. The videos are narrated or subtitled in several languages, making them widely applicable. Each title has a study guide which provides background information about the country where the recordings were made and about the subject itself. The guides include questions that can serve as a basis for discussion.

In 2020 the first video was produced, on the subject “freedom of belief.” This film was shot in Ethiopia and is about the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, which was heavily oppressed during the country’s totalitarian communist regime. In spite of that oppression, the church grew – an impressive development. Today it is the largest anabaptist conference in the world.

In 2021 the second video is about the dialogue between Muslims and Christians. In the video Hani and Adi share their faith journeys on how they relate as Mennonites (a small minority) and Muslims (a large majority) in Indonesia. It shows how the Mennonites in Indonesia can live together in peace.

The Transmission video series can be found on the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) website: <https://mwc-cmm.org/> Search for “Transmission.” Here you also find the Study guides which can be downloaded for free.

## Profiles

Ophélie Christen-Sprunger	Climate-conscious student, Switzerland
Andreas Horne Morillo	Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogota, Colombia
Yomaida Cardona	Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogota, Colombia
Grace Morillo	Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogota, Colombia
Juliana Morillo	Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogota, Colombia
Pablo Stucky	Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogota, Colombia
Vanessa Cubillos	Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogota, Colombia
Samuel Epp	Mennonite farmer in the province of Bahia, Brazil
Delicia Bravo Aguilar	Evangelical Mennonite Church of Quito, Ecuador
Gina Martinez	Refugee from Venezuela in Quito, Ecuador
Isis Leyton	Refugee from Venezuela in Quito, Ecuador
Jonathan Fuentes Herrera	Chamelecón Mennonite Church, San Pedro Sula, Honduras
Kevin Alberto Rodriguez	Chamelecón Mennonite Church in San Pedro Sula, Honduras
Ixel Gabriela Rodrigues	Chamelecón Mennonite Church in San Pedro Sula, Honduras

Ela Jael Casto	Medical Doctor Central Mennonite church, Honduras
José Fernández	Pastor of the Chamelecón Mennonite Church and President of the Honduran Mennonite Church, Honduras.
Floriëtte Hajonides	Mennonite Church Bussum-Naarden, Netherlands

## Project supporters

The production group offers thanks to these contributors and the many others who helped make this video possible.

### Partners

AFHAM, Association Française d'Histoire Anabaptiste-Mennonite: <https://histoire-menno.net/>

AMBD, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Deutschland e.V.; <https://ambd.de/>

Anabaptist Mennonite Network: <https://amnetwork.uk/>

Dr.ir. Rutger de Graaf-Dinther from Blue21 <https://www.blue21.nl>

IMSC, International Menno Simons Centrum: [www.mennosimonscentrum.nl/lmsc](http://www.mennosimonscentrum.nl/lmsc) [English site](#)

Mennonite Church Canada International Witness: <https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/international-witness>

Mennonite World Conference, a community of Anabaptist-related churches celebrating 500 years in 2025. <https://mwc-cmm.org>

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