



**Mennonite  
World Conference**

A Community of Anabaptist  
related Churches

**Congreso  
Mundial Menonita**

Una Comunidad de  
Iglesias Anabautistas

**Conférence  
Mennonite Mondiale**

Une Communauté  
d'Eglises Anabaptistes

# Statement

## Being Anabaptist Christians Today (1993)

Mennonite World Conference General Council Meeting  
Africa Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Women's Gathering  
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 14–21 July 1993

1. Gathered together from thirty-eight countries and many contexts at Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) these days in mid-July 1993, we have shared stories and testimonies which cause us to examine our own cultures in light of the gospel. Truly we have been a community seeking to discern and interpret faithfully God's Word for our time.

### Identity and Witness

2. Anabaptists understand the church to be a community where God's word is the center of action. From that context comes Anabaptist character, beliefs and practice.
3. Anabaptist identity must be contextualized. Difficulties in being Anabaptist differ by context; such as, religious tensions, tribal tensions, church tensions, identity crisis, equality of women and men, authority in the church. Contextualization is a complex issue facing Anabaptists in all cultures, demanding continuing discernment.
4. The growth of Islam is a dilemma for Anabaptists committed to the way of peace. To reach Muslims, and others, for Christ.
  - 4.1. We seek a sure foundation in our faith based on
    - strong commitment to Christ
    - diligent study of the Scriptures
    - fervent prayer
    - the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit
    - a close, loving community
  - 4.2. We seek to offer a loving witness as friends, giving ourselves in effective ways to all in need, without regard for their faith.

### Women and Men

5. The church must be more intentional in teaching equal responsibility of men and women in home and church.
  - 5.1. Let us share our stories with one another.
  - 5.2. Let men be encouraged to help women out of the boxes in which they have put them.
  - 5.3. Let women be confident in their self-worth.
  - 5.4. Let us encourage and train women in church leadership.
  - 5.5. Let us develop a discipleship that encourages men to undertake responsibilities so women may participate more fully in church and society.
6. We recognize some unresolved matters in regard to women and men:
  - 6.1 The void in the home that occurs when women assume additional responsibilities.
  - 6.2. The problem of ordination in light of differing understandings of Biblical teaching.
7. We need continuing discernment concerning ministry in the church, for it is the Holy Spirit, not men or women, who calls and confers the gifts of the Spirit.

## **Interdependence**

8. The goal of interdependence is mutual relationships worldwide based on confidence, trust and accountability.
9. Interdependence happens when people learn to give as well as receive, to receive as well as give.
10. Interdependence means change (metanoia), but in what ways, is yet unclear. The process of maturity and independence from parent missions in affluent countries is long and painful, but we commit ourselves toward the goal of interdependence.

## **Mennonite World Conference**

11. We envision Mennonite World Conference as a worldwide body of Anabaptist churches whose spiritual gifts and resources are shared as equals among equals.
12. We envision a flow of communication and fellowship, church to church, within regions and across regions, to link visions and missions around the world.
13. We envision a way of working together to meet mutual needs by sharing ideas and concrete resources.

## **Some suggestions**

14. Several suggestions are offered:
  - 14.1 Make ways for people to control their own finances thus overcoming dependency.
  - 14.2. Involve young people in church life for fresh ideas and approaches.
  - 14.3. Be careful with words. For example, use inclusive language when referring to people; avoid terms like “third world” and “underdeveloped.”
  - 14.4. Provide for interaction among churches of the Southern hemisphere.
  - 14.5. Collect stories and statistics of Brethren in Christ and Mennonite women in church ministry.
  - 14.6. Provide opportunity for people-to-people visits and interaction involving both leader and lay, younger and older, men and women, rural and urban.
  - 14.7. Prepare for Calcutta 97 by circulating maps, pictures, directories, videos, among the Anabaptist family.

## **Final words**

15. We sense, thereof, being Anabaptists today means:
  - 15.1. Living the faith in a way that pervades all of life.
  - 15.2. Being brave enough to live our faith so that we may be brave enough to suffer for our faith.
  - 15.3. Finding ways to make love the solution to conflict in our homes, churches, world – beginning with ourselves.
  - 15.4. Being salt and light, seeking justice and making peace in our world.
16. As Brethren in Christ and Mennonites, we are called to be a new creation in Christ, responding first to Scripture which frees us from the limits of our cultures and traditions. To fill the vacuum of dying ideologies in our world we commit ourselves to seek God intently so we can indeed demonstrate what we profess in proclaiming Christ as Lord as did the first and sixteenth century churches. Joyfully we, both women and men, are free to use the gifts the Holy Spirit gives to the church.

---

**Date Approved:** 22 July 1993  
**Approved By:** MWC Executive Committee

---