



# 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



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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

***Rejoice always! Pray without ceasing!*** (I Thessalonians. 5:16-17)

We know you are praying. As we think about the 9,500 congregations that make up the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) communion, we are confident and rejoice that we have round-the-clock prayer, 360 degrees of persistent prayer. There is never a time in our community that someone, somewhere is not praying. For that, our hearts are filled with gratitude.

We rejoice at the privilege of prayer. And we rejoice that we are a praying church. We rejoice that God hears our prayers, and that God encourages us to pray.

Sometimes our prayers are prayers of thanksgiving, rejoicing, and gratitude. Sometimes they are prayers of praise and adoration. Some of our prayers are prayers of confession. Others are prayers of petition. And sometimes, like the Psalmist, they can only be prayers of lament, and submission.

Today, we ask for you to set aside time for prayer: alone, and with others. We want to draw your attention to several situations that are in urgent need of your prayers:

**1) The Mennonite presence in Viet Nam:**

On June 9, 2014, there was a massive attack by local authorities and police on a Mennonite site of worship and study. Some were beaten. 76 persons were arrested and taken in for questioning. Court cases may be pending. From all reports, significant harassment is continuing. The issue at hand is the legal registration (or not) of the Mennonite church(es). Leaders from all sides of this issue are under significant stress and pressure. We need to pray for them. We need to pray for the local and national authorities. We need to pray for MWC as we seek to respond to a very sensitive issue, both inside and beyond the church. We need to ensure them of our prayers.

**2) Israel – Palestine – Gaza:**

We see the news reports. We don't need to say more. What is happening there is not what God wills for that region and for the many suffering there. We feel helpless. But we can lament, and cry out to God. And we must acknowledge that Christian understandings of Zionism and prophecy often fuel the ways that international communities respond in foreign policy, financing, and even arming of both sides. As Christians we must confess our complicity. We must lament

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that we too are broken when it comes to considering resolutions for the conflicts there. We cry, lament, and pray. We pray that concerns for justice and human solidarity will replace doctrine, creed, and vengeance. God is good. And we can rejoice and be confident in the knowledge that God can move hearts, souls, and minds.

**3) Ukraine – Russia:**

Some in the MWC family have long and strong historical ties with this part of the world. Many of our Mennonite brothers and sisters are there, in the midst of conflict, misunderstandings, power-plays, nationalism, violence, and international intrigue. The circles of impact are widening to include Europe, Malaysia, and the United Nations. Again the international community is suggesting an embargo on the sale of arms to Russia. We lament that there have been arm sales at all, now or in the past. The persistent but flawed confidence that arming violence is the way to lasting peace is again proving to be superficial and wrong. The confidence that violence can be good and even redemptive is part of the systemic sin that is at play in that region of the world. We need to pray for leaders; we need to pray that the cycle of chronic dependence on the tools of war can somehow be broken in the hearts and minds of people. God is good. We rejoice at what is possible under God's commitment to justice and peace.

**Our loving, patient, and generous God:**

Because we are confident in your power and love, we sense the freedom to lament, to cry to you, and to ask with the martyrs under the altar: How long will it be... (Rev. 6:10)?

Because we rejoice in your goodness and justice, we ask that you transform the hearts, minds, and souls of those powers that cause untold suffering and injustice.

Because we are mindful of your promises to forgive, we confess our complicity and solidarity in so many ways with the evils perpetrated on human beings also created in your image.

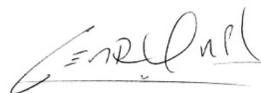
Because we know of your faithfulness, we commit ourselves to you so that your creation can again reflect the glory of your purposes.

As your people we pray: May it be so. Amen.

Thank you for praying with us.



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