

Europe





9 Mennonite Brethren Missions in Europe

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In this brief chapter on such a diverse and extensive subject, we offer a summary survey of the many and varied mission efforts of the Mennonite Brethren. Some of these have been carried out by resident national churches, their members and ministries. Others have developed through strategic and organized efforts of MB mission agencies. Still others have origins with other Mennonite or evangelical groups, and have been adopted by the MBs. These will be presented in chronological order and by country. Following this brief survey, we shall offer some reflections, seeking to find some missional lessons as we look back that will be applicable as we look forward.

The Soviet Union and Russia¹

Shortly after the creation of the Soviet Union (1917), the only Mennonite Brethren Bible School, located in Crimea, was closed in 1924. Most of the Bible teachers emigrated from Crimea to Canada and founded the Winkler Bible Institute. In the Soviet Union, both churches as well as German-language schools were suppressed,



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prohibited and closed, and the teachers in part liquidated. The Stalinist purge in the years 1937-1938 are considered the “dark years” in the story. During this time and during the Second World War, neither the Mennonite nor MB Churches could do much in the area of church life and church planting.

The Mennonite and MBs retained their German language up to the closure of their church buildings and expulsion from their villages. The deportations to the most remote places in the Soviet Union and labeling members as “German” led in many cases to also being called “fascists.” As a result, they were branded and made indirectly responsible for the war between Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Soviet Union. To establish their own churches was now almost impossible, and to establish a new foundation for such before the Second World War was unthinkable.

The revival meetings during the years 1954-56 brought thousands back into the churches, but in this case into the Russian-dominated Evangelical Christian Baptist Churches.² Many Mennonite (and thus German) Christians attended these meetings and became official members. However, this did not apply to the strong-minded MB leaders in Karaganda, Kazakhstan and Novopavlovka, Kyrgyzstan.³ These churches strove for an autonomous recognition by the government and attained the same about ten years after their beginnings.⁴

The missionary efforts of the MB churches within the Soviet Union amounted to individual initiatives. Evangelistic outreach and church planting were conducted yet limited to little growth, however, in the context of severe oppression and the persecution of preachers. Even so, the change of residence of many German families within the Soviet Union often led to the creation of new congregations. These remained either as independent MB churches so as to maintain their German culture and language, or they joined in time with the existing Evangelical Christian Baptist Churches.

During the decline of the Soviet Union, Mennonite Christians already living in Germany founded the first full-time Bible School of the postwar period in southern Russia. In the small village of Belorechensk the instruction began in October 1990 as an initiative of the mission agency LOGOS International, under the leadership of Andrej Rempel, Johannes Reimer, Peter Penner and Heinrich Klassen. Two years later, the Bible school was moved to Saint Petersburg and is now called St. Petersburg Christian University. Since its founding the school has trained hundreds of missionaries, church planters and pastors.

The two waves of German emigration from the Soviet Union to Germany in the seventies and nineties has led to the creation of more than 400 local churches.⁵ Some families of Mennonite origin, however, understood their missionary call was to stay

in the Soviet Union and support the remaining church. Senior preachers like Franz Thiessen in Karaganda, and Heinz Voth and David Reimer in Kyrgyzstan have excelled in this ministry, as well as numerous others of Mennonite origin.⁶

Germany

The expansion of the Mennonite Brethren into Germany began only after the Second World War. This is not as surprising to historians as it is to missiologists. After all, it is important to remember that the MB churches began in 1860 in Ukraine, Europe. However, only about ninety years later were the first MB churches planted in Germany. This fact raises the question of why no churches were planted within this long period. In fact, it was only due to the missionary efforts of North American brothers and sisters, who were sending missionaries to German-speaking Europe, that the first MB congregations in post-war Germany and Europe were founded. The following is an overview of the emergence and development of MB churches and the MB identity in Europe.

A Mennonite Presence Spanning Centuries

Mennonite communities have been established and present in Germany for centuries. The Hamburg-Altona Mennonite Church has existed for more than 400 years.⁷ The Bolanden-Weierhof Mennonite Church was founded in 1682.⁸ “The Association of German Mennonite Churches (VDM) was founded in 1886 as a conference of Mennonite churches in order to promote the preaching of the gospel within the churches, but also to represent the churches before the State and other churches.”⁹ The roots of this Association date back to the seventeenth century.

North American Initiative in Germany

An MB missionary initiative before the Second World War is unknown. Social initiatives were successfully conducted through the efforts of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) along the way; this Mennonite work done during and after the war provided an excellent service that was both helpful and lasting.¹⁰ Since those afflicted by war fled or relocated to the United States and Canada often through Germany, and since the MB churches and conferences had preserved the use of their original German language, there was a desire to offer not only humanitarian aid in war-torn Germany, but also to establish local churches. The MB churches of North America were concerned for the emergence of such communities and thus sent their first missionaries.¹¹

In addition to the families of Anna and Cornelius C. Wall (in Neuwied am Rhein), H.H. Janzen, Jacob Toews, Mary and John N. Klassen, and Selma and Lawrence Warkentin, other missionaries followed. In this way, more churches

emerged. These came together in the beginning of the sixties to form the Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Germany. Ten years later they changed their name to the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Deutschland* (AMBD, Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Germany).¹²

This church planting work was carried out as an initiative of the MB Mission, an agency founded and led by the MB Conference churches in the United States and Canada. The missionary efforts of Selma and Lawrence Warkentin led to the establishment of other churches in Bavaria, southern Germany. Due to the long distance from the AMDB-related churches, the Bavarian MB churches came together to form their own regional conference in 1987. It is called the *Verband der Evangelischen Freikirchen Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Bayern* (VMBB, Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Bavaria). Both church conferences are a result of church planting by North American MB churches in Germany. They still form a fellowship, even if originating from two distinct regions. This is also reflected in their joint representation in the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB).



Selma and Lawrence Warkentin¹³

Over time the associations have taken further initiatives, resulting in other church organizations, such as the *Pioteam Münsterland*, an outreach into the Dresden and Berlin regions.¹⁴

In 2013 the official statistics for these two church associations were as follows:

- AMBD - 15 churches with about 1,600 members.
- VMBB - 5 churches with about 300 members.

German MB Churches with a Soviet Flavor

In the context of the family reunification program of the German Federal Government, thousands of people from the Soviet Union resettled in Germany over the course of decades.¹⁵ This led to the creation of numerous congregations in the different cities of Germany. The freedom they enjoyed in this country resulted in a conscious search for their identity. During this search, some chose the historical name of Mennonite Brethren, others retained the Soviet designation Evangelical Christian

(Baptists), and still others took a new name such as Evangelical Free Church.¹⁶ The search for identity is not yet completed; the return to a common confession of faith serves as a unifying influence.

Following are three categories of immigrant MB churches. First are the autonomous MB churches. The first church of this kind was built in Frankenthal, the Palatinate. The founders were mostly people or their descendants who had been a part of the Karaganda MB Church (b. 1956, modern Kazakhstan). These churches evidence a strong return to earlier MB values and the 1902 Confession of Faith.¹⁷ They emphasize the autonomy of each local church and train their church workers and missionaries in their own internal Bible School. The mission agency AQUILA in Steinhagen is understood to be an extension of these MB churches.

The second group, the *Bruderschaft der Christengemeinden in Deutschland* (BCD, Brotherhood of Christian Churches in Germany), with about 20,000 members is the largest in number. This association retains a strong influence from the former Evangelical Christian Baptists (Soviet era) in its governance structures.¹⁸

The *Bund Taufgesinnter Gemeinden* (BTG, Association of Anabaptist Churches) is the third conference with MB elements. In 2013, it included twenty-six churches with a total of 7000 members. The BTG is also a member of ICOMB. The BTG seeks to represent Anabaptist theology and its principles. In 1989, seven churches agreed to cooperate together, encouraging each other toward shared growth even while guaranteeing the autonomy of each local church. Holy Scripture is the basis of the partnership, these being recognized by all member communities as the Holy Spirit-inspired, infallible, and fully valid Word of God. In addition, the revised version (1975) of the MB Confession of Faith from 1902 and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics are used as a guide for cooperation in theological matters.¹⁹ With regard to the regulation of internal community issues, the member churches are independent.

An inter-church cooperation happens mainly in those areas where the tasks can be jointly handled better and more effectively. One example is the *Bibelseminar Bonn* which offers biblical training at diploma, bachelor, and master levels. Another example is the publishing house, *Lichtzeichen-Verlags*, known for its broad publication and distribution of MB authors.

Austria²⁰

Austria was blessed to receive the Anabaptist message and churches shortly after 1525. However, the severe enforcement of the Catholic Counter-Reformation eliminated or expelled most Anabaptists. This Anabaptist absence continued for centuries. Although a greater measure of tolerance toward non-Catholics developed in the later twentieth century, a general culture of suspicion and intolerance toward

non-Catholics continues. A recent census indicated 4.7% of the population are Protestant, and 0.3% are classified as free Protestant or evangelical.

Following the Second World War, tens of thousands of refugees were fleeing from Eastern Europe, many of whom came to Austria. In 1950, an American MB evangelist, Henry K. Warkentin and his wife Margaretha of Reedley, visited the refugee camps and brought the gospel by showing evangelistic films. The following year MB Mission decided to begin planting churches in Austria and in 1953 sent John and Pauline Gossen, and John and Martha Vogt. They chose Linz as a starting point and began their work. Soon Abe and Irene Neufeld also arrived and the first church was established by the end of 1955.

Many other missionaries arrived, and many also departed. Other churches were begun in Steyr (1955), Wels (1958), Salzburg (late fifties), and Gmunden (seventies). A number of other attempts were made to plant churches; however, while disciples were made, the churches were not established. The churches of Vienna (1969) and Heitzing (2006) joined the MBs from other origins.

Noteworthy is the role of the Austrian churches in the beginning and development of the Bavarian MB churches referred to above. Missionaries Lawrence and Selma Warkentin, while serving in Austria, led outreach teams to Traunreut and other towns in Bavaria. Eventually eight churches were begun in nearby Bavaria. Initially they were part of the Austrian conference, and later formed their own conference (VMBB). A fraternal and mutually supportive relationship continues to this day. The Austrian and Bavarian conferences are represented together in the annual ICOMB gatherings.

A union of the Austrian churches was formed in 1962. Today it is called the *Mennonitische Freikirche Österreich* (MFO, Mennonite Free Church of Austria). Together the churches have sponsored a Bible School (now closed) and regularly sponsors conferences for its members and workers. At the end of 2011 the MFO was composed of five churches and 380 members.

Portugal²¹

Following some encouraging results in Catholic-majority countries in Latin America, and more recently in Spain, the MB Mission of North America began to discern a possible entry into Portugal. Factors in this discernment included: 1) Portugal now enjoyed a more open posture to outside influences following the end of an imperial and oppressive dictatorship in 1974, 2) a “cluster approach” to church planting favored the placement of a team near to Madrid, Spain, where MB Mission also had a very young work—teams in Madrid and Lisbon could support each other,

3) missionaries who had served in Brazil, also Portuguese-speaking, were available to serve elsewhere since Brazilian visas were difficult to acquire at the time, and 4) the Marxist leanings of some of Portugal's former colonies were causing many Portuguese citizens, both European and African, to want repatriation to Portugal—a large influx of new immigrants and refugees seemed like an open door to present the gospel.

The decision to enter Portugal was made in 1984 and the first missionaries, Hans and Waltraut Krueger, arrived in 1986. The following year Manuel and Anne Franco arrived. They began to reach out with home Bible studies, music and English classes, and of course by making as many friendships as they could. Other missionaries arrived soon after, namely Erwin and Joyce Klassen (1988) and Otto and Marjorie Ekk (1989). Not only for MB missionaries, but for those of other agencies, the challenges of a Catholic, traditional and resistant culture were taxing. Missionary attrition was high. Only the Ekks have remained for the long term and still serve to this day in Portugal.

The low receptivity of European countries, and the higher receptivity in some other regions, stemmed the flow of missionaries to Portugal. Providentially, connections beyond MB Mission were available. Missionaries, short- and long-term, joined the Portugal team from Germany and Brazil. Among these were Carola Unger and Walter/Nadia Klause from Germany (with roots in Kazakhstan), and Ilse Kuss and Marcos/Marcia Soares from Brazil. At the same time an Angolan couple joined the team, Mente and Teresa Marques.

Small fellowships began to form and grew, beginning in the Loures area of greater Lisbon. The entire Marques family, with support from a Swiss Mennonite mission, was instrumental in bringing together an African congregation in Amadora made up of mostly Angolan and Congolese immigrants. The Klauses have planted two churches (in Loures and Vila Franca de Xira) among Russian-speaking immigrants, mainly from Ukraine (also other Eastern European countries); they are now beginning a third (Montijo). A second congregation focused on Portuguese nationals began in Massamá in 2000 and is led by Portuguese leaders José and Paula Arrais.

The diverse yet unified cluster of churches comes together regularly for mutual support and fellowship. The *Associação dos Irmãos Menonitas de Portugal* (AIMP, Association of Mennonite Brethren in Portugal) was formed in 1989. In addition to the mutual support of the local churches, the AIMP also operates a thrift store, and is awaiting municipal authorization to begin a community center on land already donated by the city of Loures. The AIMP today is composed of six churches and around 200 members.

Ukraine²²

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the declaration of statehood by Ukraine in 1991, a new door also opened for Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren to return to the land of their birth as a global movement. Not a few of those who either had been born in the Ukraine, or whose parents had been, desired to return to the areas from which Mennonites and other Germans had been expelled almost seventy years earlier. Some MBs returned to visit the birthplace of the MB Church (Molotschna settlement, now Molochansk), others to visit the Crimea where a vibrant Bible school and church had existed in Tschongrav (now Kolodiazne).

Still others, including some Canadian Mennonites, desired to re-engage in a missionary effort to continue the legacy of faith of their forefathers. In the mid-nineties, individuals like Frank Dyck, George Schroeder and Anna Jantz began to return on a regular basis. They led both efforts at spiritual rebuilding of people's lives, and the physical rebuilding of derelict church buildings such as that of the former MB church in Kutuzovka. At the same time, since 1995, the Disciple-Making International (DMI) ministry of MB Mission began sending teams of evangelists that eventually visited most provinces in the Ukraine.

An exploratory visit was made by representatives of MB Mission, Logos International (Germany) and Mennonite Church Canada Witness in 2003. A decision was made by these three agencies to cooperate together in planting churches once again in the Ukraine. Led by James Nikkel of DMI, a strategy to develop three church clusters emerged: one in the Molochansk region (former Molotschna), another in the Zaporozhye region (former Chortiza), and the third in Crimea. Through the tireless efforts of DMI teams, led by Nick Dyck and coordinated locally by Feodor Fedorenko, at least five churches have been planted in these regions (Morosovka, Nikolaipol, Tokmak, Balkovo, Kolodiazne). Other MB churches were planted in Feodosia and Zaporozhye. Two other churches that relate to Mennonite Church Canada were established in Zaporozhye and Kherson.

In 2004, the three mission agencies named above and four local churches gathered to form the Association of Christian Mennonite Churches of Ukraine (ACMCU). The Confession of Faith from ICOMB was accepted as the doctrinal statement of this new conference. From 2004, Logos missionary Jacob Tiessen provided general oversight. From 2007-2013 John and Evelyn Wiens, MB Mission missionaries, gave pastoral leadership to the conference, now composed of ten churches. Since the untimely death of John Wiens in early 2014, the conference has been led by Ukrainians, with continued support from MB Mission Europa.

Lithuania²³

The development of Mennonite Brethren churches in Lithuania is linked to the development of LCC International University. However, before North American involvement, already during the era of Soviet President Gorbachev (1985-1991), some Mennonite families from more distant regions had relocated to Lithuania to be closer to Germany and connections there. With Mennonites from Germany assisting, a small church was begun in Siauliai, and called itself the Free Christian Church. After Lithuania's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1990, a visionary international delegation approached the new Lithuanian Ministry of Education with a proposal to begin an English language institute and a liberal arts Christian college modeled after similar schools in North America. The delegation was composed of Lithuania's evangelical leader Otonas Balciunas, German MB educator Johannes Reimer, and Canadian MB businessman Arthur DeFehr. The proposal found favor and the following year the English language institute was begun in the city of Panevezys, staffed mainly by North American MBs. With spiritual leadership from Frank Dyck and others, a small fellowship began linked with the language institute.

In 1992, because of opposition from the local Catholic Church in Panevezys, it was decided to begin the Lithuania Christian College (LCC) in the city of Klaipeda. Although not formally a MB project, LCC has received heavy investments of personnel and finances from MB individuals, churches and missionaries sent by MB Mission. Ernest and Elfrieda Reimer, leaders and liaisons for LCC, have served for most of its history as champions for the school. Today it is a thriving English-language Christian liberal arts university, serving 650 students mostly from Lithuania and eastern Europe.

Even as MB Mission was contributing to the development of LCC through sending teachers, it recognized an open door to conduct direct church planting in this opening society. From 1994-1997 a number of church planting couples were sent to further develop existing groups in Siauliai, Panevezys and Klaipeda. Other churches were planted in Silute and Vilnius. Christoph and Antonia Haegele, sent in partnership between the AMBD conference of Germany and MB Mission, gave leadership for many years to these emerging churches. Other missions that have contributed to these developments are: Eastern Mennonite Missions (USA), *Kontaktmission* (Germany) and *Deutsche Missionsgemeinschaft* (Germany).

The *Laisvųjų Krikščionių Bažnyčia* (LKB, Free Christian Church in Lithuania) was registered as a consortium in 2003.²⁴ It is composed of seven churches (Alytus, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Panevezys, Šiauliai, Šilute and Vilnius) and just over 200 members.

It participates actively in the Evangelical Bible Institute in Siauliai, as well as promotes summer youth camps, children's clubs, and pastors' and members' retreats. Under the leadership of bishop Arturas Rulinskas, the LKB was welcomed into the global ICOMB family in 2014.

Other Countries²⁵

An effort over twenty years was made to establish an MB cluster of churches in Spain. Some of the rationale used a decade later to enter Portugal, was first thought appropriate for Spain, namely, an increasingly openness to the gospel, as presented by non-Catholics such as Anabaptists, in the wake of the end of the Franco dictatorship. A team of three experienced couples was sent beginning in 1976. They were Ernest/Elsie Friesen, Jim/Patty Friesen, and Ron/Fran Penner. Over the next twenty years, churches were planted in three regions of greater Madrid: Bellas Vistas, Saconia, and Tres Cantos. Some of the original missionaries terminated and were replaced by others so that for most of the years there was a viable missionary team. However, due to an unexpectedly slow response to the gospel and the consequent delay in church planting, by 1989 the MB Mission board had decided to reduce efforts in Spain. By 1995, the reduction of the missionary force, the early transition to Spanish leaders not ready for full ownership, and some confusion on the part of MB Mission in preparing for a healthy transition, all led to a termination of efforts to plant churches in Spain. Only the church in Tres Cantos has survived, grown and now cooperates with another Anabaptist association of churches.

In the last decade, MB Mission has begun to engage in France. One couple uses media and the arts in cooperation with other ministries for evangelism, discipleship and leadership training. An international team is in the Paris area reaching out to North African Muslim immigrants. Also, in cooperation with the Association of Evangelical Mennonite Churches of France, a short-term mission program for French youth has begun. Finally, it is noteworthy that not a few Congolese and Angolan MBs have relocated to France, usually residing in immigrant communities with others of their kind. No organized mission work has resulted among these yet.

Other countries in Europe have hosted MB missionaries, missional immigrants, or short-term teams of mission-minded volunteers. Among these could be listed Belgium, Czech Republic, Switzerland, England and Ireland.

Looking Forward

Nearly 500 years ago, God in his love and sovereignty raised up the Anabaptists as a movement of renewal and mission, beginning in Europe. A small branch of that great global movement has returned to western Europe in the last sixty years—the Mennonite Brethren, also understanding their calling to be a movement of renewal

and mission. On this old continent our story is still quite new. Even so, as we look forward, the preceding pages help us to look back and ask what are the missional reflections, indeed the lessons, we will need as we seek to be faithful to our callings.

It is essential to understand the realities of European cultures. These are diverse and each people group merits its own contextual analysis for mission. That said, there are some common generalizations one might dare to make about European culture, obvious to some though perhaps not to all. Europe is a post-Christian continent. The birthplace of Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Anabaptism, Pietism, etc., while nodding to glorious traditions, is no longer practicing their essence. This is not to say that Europeans are no longer spiritually minded, though secular humanism is likely the dominant worldview. Rather, the search for spiritual meaning leads especially younger Europeans to New Age thinking, relative truth, reincarnation and the occult. In certain countries, the growing population of Muslim immigrants is redefining spirituality. If Europe is post-Christian, it is also postmodern. Rational apologetics, systematic presentations of propositional truths, and scientific fact are no longer the strong allies they once were for western Christians on mission in this continent (see Marlene Wall's and Arthur Dück's chapters in this volume). Our own experience in Spain, Portugal and Ukraine have reminded us that a change in political status does not necessary cause people to change their worldviews and other cultural presuppositions.

As in other continents, the link between migration and mission is unmistakable. In his missional purpose, God continues to move his people around to carry out his mission of bringing transformation through Christ. The great Mennonite emigration from the former Soviet Union back to Germany cannot be understood apart from God's grace and missional purpose. As in North America, Brazil and Paraguay, the challenge for generations to come will be to steward the blessings of freedom and prosperity for the sake of the gospel and its global spread.

Receptive peoples are more often than not immigrants or refugees. Consider the MB beginnings in Germany and Austria after the Second World War. More recently, we note a certain receptivity among nominal Christian immigrants from Angola and Ukraine to Portugal. There are signs that outreach efforts to Muslim immigrants in France and Germany are also finding some receptivity. If God is moving some of his people back to Europe for the sake of renewal and mission (in this regard, note also the many African and Latin American Christians immigrating to Europe), he is also moving peoples, not yet his, to Europe so they will be touched by his love, hear his voice, and heed his call.

On a more practical note, we may note the importance of a stable and long-term presence in the sharing of the gospel in word and deed. Healthy churches and conferences will be planted by nationals and missionaries who stay as long as it takes.

Positive examples of this can be seen in the AMDB of Germany and the AIMP of Portugal. We wonder if greater longevity might have been at least one factor lacking in Austria and in Spain.

Europe is filled with examples of fruitfulness borne out of inter-church, inter-agency, international worker cooperation. Consider the different yet complementary roles played by MCC and MB Mission in the early years in Germany and Austria. Consider how essential have been the contributions of the German, Brazilian and Swiss workers to complete the team in Portugal. Ukraine and Lithuania have seen fruit through the efforts of multiple agencies and workers in cooperation for the advance of the Kingdom.

ICOMB is an excellent platform for inter-conference coordination, exchange, sharing, prayer and mission. Our North American siblings, with their zeal and devotion to God, their church planting efforts, and their vision serve as a model for Europe. Global cooperation with all MB conferences broadens the horizons for God's work. It also pulls the conferences in Europe closer together! In this regard, European MB churches and conferences are motivated to form networks. Voluntary exchanges should therefore be further supported and developed so that common resources can be discovered and grow even stronger. Especially for Europe, the agency MB Mission Europa was founded. This includes the support of existing projects, training of missionaries, preparatory courses for candidates in question, coordination, etc.

The free churches and especially the MB churches are (religious) minorities. This status comes with certain risks: without the European and international "togetherness" they will not survive in the long term. They will move to the mainstream and the MB identity will be discarded over time. A strength of the MB churches is to be autonomous, but at the same time this can be a weakness, especially when church leadership and community develop independently. Not everything that was founded by MBs has continued with this name. Likewise, many good leaders from MB churches have made and are now making important contributions in other ministries.²⁶ This is to be commended, provided they do not deny their own identity and origin. At the same time MB churches need to learn to accept diversity and lay aside their exclusivity, if such exists. Much more important than a name is to live what one believes. In this approach, many churches established by emigrants hope for a greater acceptance of their ministries and organizations.

Europe is a mission field. This reality should cause the MB conferences, churches and ministries, with their presence and their theology, to join forces as well as experience international cooperation. It is necessary to establish strong churches and ministries, which in turn, will serve their communities and develop a holistic missional lifestyle. This is the need of the hour for Europe.

Notes

- ¹ The vastness of the subject of MB missions in Russia, the Soviet Union, and then again Russia is beyond the scope and space of our treatment. Our comments serve merely as an introduction to the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. For extensive treatments the reader is referred to John A. Klassen and Heinrich Klassen (German readers) in the Recommended Reading section, and to Johannes Dyck (English readers) in note 22 below.
- ² This union was called VSECHB (All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists), which was founded and organized in 1944 under the influence of Stalin.
- ³ Viktor Fast and Jakob Penner, *Wasserströme in der Einöde. Die Anfangsgeschichte der Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde Karaganda 1956-1968* (Steinhagen: Samenkorn, 2007), 110ff.; Viktor Fast and Hilfskomitee Aquila, *Wunderbar geführt: 50 Jahre Gemeinde Nowopawlowka, 1958-2008* (Steinhagen: Samenkorn, 2012), 19ff.
- ⁴ Also, some Mennonites gathered and held worship services (often illegally) in private homes. They were compelled to do so since they were not included in other free churches because of their different form of baptism (sprinkling or pouring).
- ⁵ John N. Klassen, *Russlanddeutsche Freikirchen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Grundlinien ihrer Geschichte, ihrer Entwicklung und Theologie* (Nürnberg: VTR, 2007), 93ff.
- ⁶ In all three cases, the persons concerned are part of the Evangelical Christians Baptists, not necessarily referring to themselves as MB, yet hold to and live out an MB theology.
- ⁷ “Mennonitengemeinde zu Hamburg und Altona Kdö.R.,” accessed July 11, 2013, <http://www.mennoniten.de/hamburg.html>
- ⁸ “Mennonitengemeinde Weierhof,” accessed July 11, 2013, <http://www.mennonitengemeinde-weierhof.de/index.php?id=3>.
- ⁹ “Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden Kdö.R.,” accessed July 11, 2013, <http://www.mennoniten.de/vereinigung.html>.
- ¹⁰ Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, *Auferstanden aus Ruinen: Als MCC-Mitarbeiter in England, den Niederlanden und unter rußlandmennonitischen Umsiedlern in Deutschland* (GTS Druck, 1994), 44ff.
- ¹¹ John N. Klassen and Johann Matthies, eds., *In Gott leben wir, bestehen wir und sind wir! 150 Jahre Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinden Beiträge des Geschichtssymposiums in Oerlinghausen, Deutschland* (Lage: Lichtzeichen-Verlag, 2011), 49 ff.
- ¹² “Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Deutschland,” accessed July 11, 2013, <http://www.ambd.de/ueber-uns>.

- ¹³ Source: <http://www.mbherald.com/46/11/storieslive.en.html>
- ¹⁴ “Pioteam Münsterland, Gemeindegründungs-Initiative für das Münsterland,” accessed July 11, 2013, <http://www.pioteam.de/HTM/Website.htm>.
- ¹⁵ Klassen, *Russlanddeutsche Freikirchen*, 80.
- ¹⁶ The BTG is an example of the diverse names chosen. Their twenty-six churches have fifteen different names, yet all in the association adhere to the MB Confession of Faith.
- ¹⁷ “Mennonite Brethren Church Confession of Faith (1902),” accessed January 31, 2015, http://www.anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php/Mennonite_Brethren_Church_Confession_of_Faith_%281902%29.
- ¹⁸ John N. Klassen, *Jesus Christus leben und verkündigen: 150 Jahre Mennoniten Brüdergemeinden* (Lage: Lichtzeichen Verlag, 2010), 183.
- ¹⁹ “Mennonite Brethren Church Confession of Faith (1975),” accessed January 31, 2015, [http://www.anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Mennonite_Brethren_Church_Confession_of_Faith_\(1975\)](http://www.anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Mennonite_Brethren_Church_Confession_of_Faith_(1975)); “Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics,” accessed January 31, 2015, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>.
- ²⁰ Most of the information for this section is taken from Franz Rathmair, “The Mennonite Brethren Church in Austria,” in *The Mennonite Brethren Church Around The World: Celebrating 150 Years*, Abe J. Dueck, ed. (Kitchener and Winnipeg: Pandora Press and Kindred Productions, 2010), 243-254.
- ²¹ Most of the information for this section is taken from Otto Ekk, “The Mennonite Brethren Church in Portugal,” in *The Mennonite Brethren Church Around The World: Celebrating 150 Years*, Abe J. Dueck, ed. (Kitchener and Winnipeg: Pandora Press and Kindred Productions, 2010), 255-262.
- ²² Most of the information for this section is taken from Johannes Dyck, “The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia and the former Soviet Republics,” in *The Mennonite Brethren Church Around The World: Celebrating 150 Years*, Abe J. Dueck, ed. (Kitchener and Winnipeg: Pandora Press and Kindred Productions, 2010), 211-212; more recent information came from John Wiens in personal correspondence with the editor.
- ²³ Much of the information for this section is taken from Ray Harms Wiebe, “Expanding Horizons,” in *The Mennonite Brethren Church Around The World: Celebrating 150 Years*, Abe J. Dueck, ed. (Kitchener and Winnipeg: Pandora Press and Kindred Productions, 2010), 356-358.
- ²⁴ As per the LKB website, accessed February 1, 2015, <http://www.lkb.lt/lkb>.
- ²⁵ Most of the information for this section is taken from Harold Ens, *Mennonite Brethren in Global Mission: Observations and Reflections, 1966-2006* (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2010), 132-136.

- ²⁶ George W. Peters was co-founder and director of the mission school in Korntal. His books continue to exercise a great influence in the German-speaking countries. John N. Klassen, a Canadian MB missionary, contributed substantially to the formation of the Bibel Seminar Bonn. Hans Kasdorf, after his retirement from the MB seminary in Fresno, was for years a lecturer and head of the mission department at Giessen.

Recommended Reading

- Dueck, Abe J. 2010. *Celebrating 150 Years. The Mennonite Brethren churches around the world*. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2010.
- Ens, Harold. 2010. *Mennonite Brethren in Global Mission. Observations and Reflections, 1966-2006*. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2006.
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- Klassen, Heinrich. *Mission als Zeugnis. Zur missionarischen Existenz in der Sowjetunion nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Lage: Lichtzeichen-Verlag, 2001.
- Klassen, John N. *Russlanddeutsche Freikirchen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Grundlinien ihrer Geschichte, ihrer Entwicklung und Theologie*. Nürnberg: VTR, 2007.
- Klassen, John N. *Jesus Christus leben und verkündigen: 150 Jahre Mennoniten Brüdergemeinden*. Lage: Lichtzeichen Verlag, 2010.
- Klassen, John N. and Johann Matthies, eds. *In Gott leben wir, bestehen wir und sind wir. Beiträge des Geschichtssymposiums in Oerlinghausen, Deutschland*. Lage: Lichtzeichen-Verlag, 2011.
- Lapp, John A. and C. Arnold Snyder, general eds. *Testing Faith and Tradition. Global Mennonite History Series: Europe*. Intercourse: Good Books, 2006.

Study Questions

1. Name and briefly describe two examples from Scripture (one from each Testament) where God moved his people around to be a blessing to the nations.
2. When the response to the gospel is low, how should mission agencies and missionaries proceed? When is it appropriate to “shake the dust off” and move to more receptive fields, and when is it necessary to “preach the Word ... in season and out of season?”
3. Where are the bright spots of the Kingdom of God advancing in Europe today? What might be learned from these?