

Rhizome

Updates from the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism

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ISGA Initiates Research Fellow Program



Anicka Fast



David Irala



Danang Kristiawan



Luis Tapia

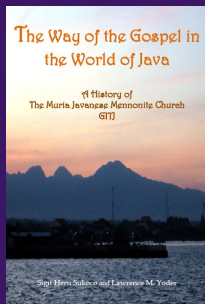
The [Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism](#) (ISGA) has recently gathered several scholars from around the world to collaborate on research related to Global Anabaptist-Mennonite history and theology. This initiative grows out of ISGA's mission to foster academic research oriented toward the beliefs and practices of the global church and to nurture a closer sense of fellowship among Anabaptist-Mennonites around the world. The newly-appointed Research Fellows will join with the ISGA in promoting a deeper understanding of our global fellowship and communicating the vitality and growth evident within the tradition.

The ISGA has identified four scholars from around the world to begin this work: Danang Kristiawan (Indonesia), Luis Tapia (Chile/USA), Anicka Fast (Burkina Faso/Canada), and David Irala (Paraguay/England). The Research Fellows share the commitments articulated by historians, archivists, and church leaders at the "Power and Preservation Symposium" facilitated by the ISGA in 2019 (see the [Fall 2019 Rhi-](#)

[zome](#) for more details) and have agreed on the importance of recognizing "the power of historical memory as a potential source of theological identity and church renewal." Each scholar is currently engaged in translation work of some kind, building bridges between their discipline, their research findings, and specific church contexts.

The Research Fellows will serve for two-year terms, supporting the work of the ISGA not only through research and writing but also by providing counsel to the ISGA Director and representing the ISGA in local settings for specific ISGA projects (e.g., the Global Anabaptist Wiki, GAMEO, or translation projects).

To support the work of the Research Fellows, the ISGA will provide a research/book budget of up to \$500 annually, convene Zoom (or in person) meetings 2-3 times a year, and regularly feature their scholarship in our Rhizome newsletter. We welcome Anicka, Danang, David, and Luis to the ongoing work of the ISGA!



Check out our new
Purchase and Order
webpage!

[https://
www.goshen.edu/
isga/purchase/](https://www.goshen.edu/isga/purchase/)



The Spanish
translation of *Bearing
Witness* is now
available!

www.bida-es.org

Updates to the Global Anabaptist Wiki

In the last year, the ISGA has made several exciting changes to the [Global Anabaptist Wiki](https://www.anabaptistwiki.org) (GAW) to make the site more visually appealing and user friendly. The entire site has a new visual design format that has a more contempo-

rary feel. Additionally, we've redesigned the home page to more clearly show the various parts of the site, along with highlights of newly-added pages. Anyone is welcome to contribute content on the GAW website—read our updated

instructions for sharing your material on the [“Contribute Content” page](https://www.anabaptistwiki.org/contribute-content). Check out the amazing new design of the Global Anabaptist Wiki here: [www.anabaptistwiki.org!](http://www.anabaptistwiki.org)

Research Fellow Bios

Anicka Fast (Canada/ Burkina Faso)

Raised in Papua New Guinea, Anicka has also lived in a variety of francophone contexts in Africa and Québec. In 2020, she completed a PhD in theology at Boston University, where she focused on the history of Mennonites in Belgian Congo. She currently works for both MCC and MMN, teaching courses about the history of the church and its mission in Africa, and supporting African historians in writing the stories of their churches. She seeks to encourage connections and collaboration between historians in the global North and South.

Danang Kristiawan (Indonesia)

Born and raised in Indonesia, Danang currently works as a pastor of a GITJ church in Jepara and teaches Anabap-

tist history and theology part-time at a Mennonite seminary in Pati. His primary academic interests include interreligious dialogue, religious history, pastoral pedagogy, and Anabaptist theology. Danang is passionate about bringing Anabaptist-Mennonite theological and historical teaching to Indonesia in ways that translate more accurately into this cultural context. He hopes to begin writing historical and theological material that originates from an Indonesian perspective (rather than translated from English).

David Irala (Paraguay/ England)

After working as a youth pastor in Asunción, Paraguay, and teaching at Instituto Bíblico Asunción (IBA), David has just started a PhD in theology at Durham University in England. During his studies, he will continue to work with IBA. He hopes to formulate a critical conversation to analyze assump-

tions in biblical and theological education and provide a framework for developing theological curriculums, especially in the context of Paraguay. His main research interests are in practical and historical theology, and theological education with an Anabaptist approach.

Luis Tapia (Chile/USA)

Luis grew up in Valparaíso, Chile, and encountered Anabaptism through theological/philosophical studies and pastoral ministry in the Baptist and then Mennonite Church. After finishing an MDiv in theology at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Luis has just begun a PhD program in theology at the IBTS Centre/Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His research is focused on the intersection of Anabaptist theology and the Latino context. He will continue to live in the USA and teach theology through various Anabaptist-Mennonite related programs.

Goshen College Searches for New ISGA Director

Following the [announcement](#) of [Director John D. Roth's appointment](#) as project director of [MennoMedia's new "Anabaptist at 500"](#) project, Goshen College has strongly affirmed its commitment to supporting the ongoing work of the ISGA. Not only will its work continue, but the ISGA will expand its scope to include oversight of the [Mennonite Historical Library](#). The new ISGA director will also have a faculty appointment in the Goshen College history department and teach several courses relevant to global Christianity and the work of the ISGA. Goshen College has initiated a [search for the new ISGA director](#) and hopes to announce the new hire later this spring.

The ISGA grew out of Roth's experience of being "[born again](#)" into the global church in 2011. This spirit of inspiration has brought about many projects over the years for the ISGA — facilitating research, education, preservation and networking to build up the community of the global Anabaptist church. ISGA projects initiated by Roth include: the [Bear-](#)

[ing Witness](#) project to publish present-day martyr stories; the [Global Anabaptist Profile](#) survey of faith and practices among Anabaptist-Mennonite churches around the world; the [Global Anabaptist Wiki](#) website to preserve and make available user-generated stories and archives; numerous [publications](#); an expanded [ISGA website](#), and various other projects noted in [Rhizome newsletters](#) stretching back over eight years.

As we look to the future, the new director will continue to lead the ISGA in nurturing connections among the various members of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church and fostering academic research specifically oriented to the global church. Additionally, the ISGA will become more integrated into the life of Goshen College, with the director leading new initiatives in student engagement, research, and internships through ISGA, and helping to connect ISGA's work to Goshen College's strengths in community-engaged learning.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the ISGA as its exciting work continues to grow under the leadership of a new director!

ISGA News and Project Updates

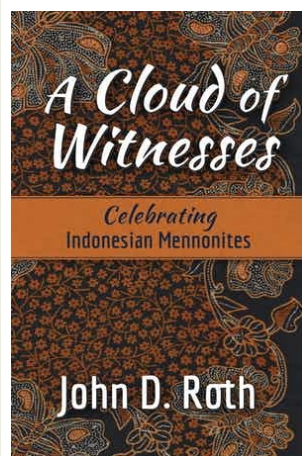
Spanish Workshops on Writing Congregational Histories

On Saturday, March 19, 2022, Carlos Martínez—a Mennonite journalist, historian, and pastor in Mexico City—hosted the first of four [Spanish-language workshops](#) designed to encourage participants to take an active role in preserving sources relevant to the history of their congregations and to reflect on how they can tell the history of their congregations in creative and relevant ways. Watch for a fuller report on these workshops in an upcoming issue of *Rhizome*.

Spanish Translation of Bearing Witness Finished

Initiated by the ISGA in 2012, The [Bearing Witness Stories Project](#) collected modern day stories of costly discipleship from Anabaptist churches around the world. In 2016, a collection of

these stories was published in the book [Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship](#) edited by Charles E. Moore and Timothy Keiderling. Recently, Rut Correa, a Paraguayan Anabaptist translator, finished [a translation of this book into Spanish](#). This translation was edited into a digital book and is now available through the [Biblioteca Digital Anabautista](#) (BiDA)!



Indonesia Book Gifted to all MCUSA Churches

In October 2021, the ISGA sponsored the distribution of a free copy of John D. Roth's [A Cloud of Witnesses: Celebrating Indonesian Mennonites](#) to all churches who are part of [Mennonite Church USA](#) (MCUSA). Roth wrote this book as an accessible window into Indonesian Mennonite history and a travel guide for those interested in attending the [Mennonite World Conference global assembly](#) in Indonesia this summer. We are deeply grateful for a grant from the Oak Grove Mennonite Church (Smithville, OH) and the contributions of ISGA supporters that made this possible.



COMMEMORATIONS

By John D. Roth, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism

In May of 1859, August Heinrich Neufeld, pastor of the Ibersheim Mennonite congregation in Rhein-Hesse, Germany, issued a call to “every Mennonite congregation in the Old World and the New” to begin planning for “one of the most important days in our church fellowship” — namely, the 300th anniversary of the death of Menno Simons on Jan. 13, 1861.

Much to Neufeld’s surprise, however, his proposal sparked a minor controversy. Some church leaders thought it was inappropriate for a tradition that emphasized humility to call so much public attention to itself. Commemorations like this, they feared, were simply imitating the self-congratulatory practices of the Lutheran and Reformed state churches.

Others argued that the true founder of the Mennonite tradition was not Menno Simons, but Christ alone.

Still others grumbled that Anabaptist beginnings went back to Switzerland, with the baptisms of 1525, not to Menno, who came along later.

The debate that swirled around Neufeld’s seemingly innocent proposal is a good reminder that public commemorations of historical events can be more complicated than they initially appear.

Nevertheless, historical memory is central to the church’s identity and witness. Throughout Scripture the people of God are repeatedly admonished to remember — to step back from the ordinary events of daily life to recall “the mighty works of God” in their past. When the Children of Israel crossed the Jordan River, for example, Joshua set up twelve stones to commemorate God’s miraculous intervention. “In the future,” Joshua instructed his followers, when your descendants ask their parents, “What do these stones mean?” they should tell the sto-

ry of God’s miraculous intervention on their behalf (Joshua 4:20).

When members of the Jewish Sanhedrin asked the apostle Stephen to give an account of his faith, he responded not with a doctrinal statement, but rather with a long narrative of God’s saving actions in Jewish history (Acts 7).

Rituals of remembering in the biblical tradition are both an expression of worship and a form of renewal. Collective acts of memory help to form the church’s identity, reminding us of our highest ideals and equipping us to resist easy conformity to the status quo.

Yet, as Neufeld’s colleagues worried, commemorations can also easily become a form of idolatry in which a group worships itself instead of the Creator. In his book *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*, theologian Miroslav Volf suggests principles of right remembering that are relevant for MennoMedia’s recently announced “Anabaptism at 500” initiative and other plans to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the first baptisms in Zurich in 1525.

First, the Anabaptist-Mennonite commemorations in 2025 should be an occasion for confession — both in the sense of confessing our faith in Christ and of confessing our theological blind spots, our moral lapses, the sins of commission and omission that have been a part of our tradition from the beginning. Commemorations of Anabaptist beginnings should inspire us to confess our faith and nudge us to confess our shortcomings.

Second, “right remembering” always includes more than one story. It may be tempting in 2025 to focus only on the Swiss-South German Anabaptist tradition, which traces its beginnings to those first baptisms in Zurich. Yet many

streams have fed into the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, each offering its own gifts. Our commemorations should avoid telling only one version of the Anabaptist story, recognizing the multiplicity of narratives that have sustained and renewed the tradition, including those of our brothers and sisters in the global church where the Anabaptist tradition is now growing the fastest.

Finally, right remembering should lead to renewal. Commemorations of Anabaptist beginnings should inspire all of us — young and old alike — to appreciate the gifts we have received, challenge the habits of the past and listen afresh to the stirring of the Spirit, which is making all things new (Rev. 21:5).

Collective memory is an expression of power. How we tell our story is always an argument — sometimes in disguise — about who we are and who we want to be as a people of God. I hope the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism will renew a scattered and forgetful tradition through the gift of right remembering.

How will your congregation participate in those acts of remembering? It’s not too soon to start the discussion

A version of this editorial was originally published in the April 2022 issue of [Anabaptist World](#).

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“Finally, right remembering should lead to renewal.”