



# FAITH IN ACTION

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. —1 Corinthians 3:9

Mariela Sanchez (right) leads singing at *Iglesia Menonita Piedra Viva*, accompanied by Ramón Tapia (center) and Mauricio Chavez (left). Photo by David Fast.

## The newborn of God renews older congregation

By Laurie Oswald Robinson

Shortly after Christmas last year, Naun Cerrato, a participant in Mennonite Mission Network's Sent Network church-planting training, was primed to launch *Iglesia Menonita Piedra Viva* (Life Stone Mennonite Church), a new Hispanic peace congregation in Elkhart, Indiana. But without rental finances, his fledgling community feared there would be "no room at the inn" in which to be born.

At about the same time, Sunnyside Mennonite Church, established in 1947 in Elkhart by a group of Goshen (Indiana) College students, was seeking deeper engagement within the community. But since so many members no longer lived in the church's neighborhood, how could this be?

When longtime friends Cerrato and Charles Geiser, a pastor at Sunnyside, shared their dreams, they began to wonder: Do we need each other to make our dreams come true? Geiser took this question to his congregation, and they invited *Piedra Viva* to have a rent-free home. During joint worship Jan. 12, the groups celebrated *Piedra's* launch Sunday.

"They welcomed us, whether we succeeded or not, and extended grace ...,"

Cerrato said. "We so deeply value our relationship and want to provide what we can to support their dreams, too. We have no money to give, but we generously give our prayers and friendship. Because they have been generous with us, *Piedra Viva* can better shine Christ's

— to be an outreach to the neighborhood. *Piedra Viva* is providing some of that outreach. About 20 people meet for Spanish worship at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday. Attendees include longtime churching Hispanics, new seekers, and migrants within Elkhart city and the wider county.

"We felt that our recently renewed vision statement meshed well with *Piedra Viva's* passion for becoming a strongly Anabaptist peace witness," Graber said. "The new church has deep commitment, and good things are going to happen. I feel grateful that we can be a little part of what they are doing."

*Piedra Viva* is infusing Sunnyside's journey with new vistas, said Terri Geiser, on Sunnyside's pastoral team with her husband, Charles, and Amy Kratzer.

"I think it is so easy to get insulated ... but that is not what Jesus calls us

to," she said. "Sunnyside is seeking a broader vision of open hands in which we give and receive from each other and reach across divides and barriers to be community. Partnering with *Piedra Viva* is a concrete way of doing that." ■

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Naun Cerrato and Charles Geiser talk outside Sunnyside Mennonite Church.

light and peace in a world full of conflict and struggle."

The blessings flow both ways, said Peter Graber, Sunnyside's elder board chair. *Piedra Viva's* passion for forging peaceful relationships in Jesus throughout community has revived the congregation's original purpose

Photo by David Fast

# 7 ways to partner with new peace churches

By Sharon Norton, Mennonite Mission Network Sent coach and co-director for Africa and Europe

1. Share your physical space for a new peace church and commit to pray for that launch.
2. Reach out to, and partner with, a bivocational leader who juggles many responsibilities.
3. Mentor a youth leader or lay visitation minister in the new congregation to help the lead pastor carry the ministry load.
4. Invite the new congregation to breakfast or potluck at your church.
5. Invite the new congregation to join your church retreat and pay their expenses, or give church camp grants to youth in the new church.
6. Engage with Mission Network's Church Relations representative in your area who can raise your awareness of fledgling communities in your backyard that need encouragement to launch.
7. Connect with Mauricio Chenlo, Mission Network's minister for church planting, who can inform your established congregation of additional ways to join the peace church movement:  
[www.MennoniteMission.net/Sent](http://www.MennoniteMission.net/Sent). ■

Cut out or fold over, post, and use this verse for contemplation and prayer over the next month.



Only  
**God**  
gives the  
growth.

—1 Corinthians 3:7

Be the Gospel.



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