



EXTENDING BEYOND

Christian service and global citizenship

A message from Mike Sherrill



Technology brings information from all over the world into our lives around the clock. There is no doubt that each of us is becoming more and more globally connected.

However, global connectivity is not the equivalent of global citizenship. At its heart, global citizenship is about active learning on a global scale and responding responsibly to those discoveries. Cultivating this global learning should be the responsibility of any globally-oriented organization.

Mennonite Mission Network is driven by its calling to see people of all cultures transformed by Jesus Christ. One way we work at this is through cultivating community ties. This means nurturing connections between churches, our mission agency and local communities across the globe.

In the face of injustice and inequity, it's understandable that one person can feel powerless to

effect any significant change. However, change is possible through collaborative work. Co-laborers find inspiration to challenge the status quo together, locking arms with fellow members of the human family and pushing forward for equitable change.

Naturally, this work requires listening and learning more about what is going on in the world. Thoughtful reflection on history, politics and economics, and the role of each person's own culture develops deeper intercultural competence.

Christian service, in the context of global citizenship, serves to mobilize the inherent cultural desire for human oneness, with gains in intercultural and interpersonal skills, coupled with strong encouragement to boldly pursue healing and hope for humanity. For Mennonite Mission Network, Christian service is one place we see these reflections put into practice. Christian service strives to meet both the inherent desire

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Children at *Les Leaders* (The Leaders) school in Allada, Benin, stand at attention. The school is located on the campus of *La Casa Grande*, a Christian home for children. This ministry is made possible through a three-way partnership between churches in Benin, Burgos (Spain) Mennonite Church and Mission Network.

"We are confident that God is able to orchestrate everything to work toward something good and beautiful when we love Him and accept His invitation to live according to His plan."

— Romans 8:28
(*The Voice*)



Photo provided

Maria Skobtsova House of Hospitality in Calais, France.

Family to help sustain home for people living in exile

By Travis Duerksen

When Joseph and Rachel Givens contacted Mennonite Mission Network about the possibility of becoming mission workers, they came with a keen understanding of what they were not. They were not church planters. They were not pastors. They both knew, however, that they shared a strong calling to reach out to and walk alongside people living in exile in Europe.

In a recent sermon at Tabor Mennonite Church, in rural Newton, Kansas, Joseph Givens recalled some encouragement that Sharon Norton, Mission Network’s co-director for Africa and Europe, gave them. She told them that, together, they would figure out the right opportunity for Joseph, Rachel and their two young sons.

“From that point, we realized this is the organization that we wanted to work with, and their values very closely align with ours,” he said. “Their heart for justice and for the world really aligns with what we want to do.”

At first, the family considered serving in the United Kingdom, by working with a church in a community made up predominantly of immigrants in London, England. However, after a visit in 2019, they found that acquiring the needed visas for their family would be nearly impossible, due to strict U.K. travel and immigration rules.

“We hit a brick wall,” Joseph Givens said. “And so, we prayed about it.”

While their trip to London hadn’t been the success they were expecting, it did put the Givens in contact with Simon Jones, a Baptist minister in the city. He suggested that the family consider partnering with Maria Skobtsova House of Hospitality in Calais, France, where visas are more easily attainable.

Maria Skobtsova House is a Catholic Worker house and community that, as stated on its website, “offers sanctuary and hospitality to vulnerable refugees,” with an emphasis on providing shelter for women and women with children. At the house, residents and volunteers prepare and eat meals together, share daily tasks, practice English language lessons, and join together in recreational activities.

The house is situated in a city that has a complex history with people living in exile. For over 20 years, people have travelled from various countries to gather in and around the city of Calais, which is situated on the point in mainland Europe closest to the U.K. Most of the Maria Skobtsova House residents living in exile hope to cross the English Channel into the U.K., either by raft or on vehicles that travel through the channel tunnel. Around the city, multiple formal and informal camps have been set up over the years,

with law enforcement routinely tearing down campsites and abusing the people living in them, in efforts to make their living conditions so hostile that they will leave. The local city government has enacted bans on the distribution of food and water to exiled people by relief organizations.

“The message [people living in exile in Calais] are getting is ‘We’re not loved; we’re not wanted,’” Rachel Givens said. She described how many people living in exile can be met with a sense of hopelessness when they flee violent situations, only to encounter more violence and hardship in the places where they arrive.

Maria Skobtsova House can only welcome a limited number of individuals and families at any given time, and most guests only stay a week or two before moving on in their goal of reaching the U.K. Yet, it was the community’s focus on hospitality for people living in exile that resonated so strongly with the Givens and their understanding of faith and calling.

Neither Joseph nor Rachel grew up with Mennonite or Anabaptist backgrounds. “We both come from a denomination that didn’t place much emphasis on service or reaching out to others,” Joseph Givens said. “A lot of the emphasis was placed on evangelism.”

Through their high school and college classes, however, both were introduced to Anabaptist writings and theology. “Anabaptists have a long history of trying to live out the words of Jesus when he says, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself and love your enemies and take it seriously,’” Joseph Givens said. “And so, we were both drawn to that.”



Photo by Travis Dueksen

The Givens have been speaking in congregations and at MennoCon21 to raise awareness and support for refugee work in France.

At the end of 2020, Maria Skobtsova House management board formally invited the family into an initial two-year volunteer term, through Mennonite Mission Network, with the possibility of a term extension. The Givens now plan to arrive in France in the spring of 2022. In the meantime, they are studying French, and working full-time jobs as well as coordinating fundraising and prayer support with the help of their Ministry Support Team (MST). An MST is a group of people that partner with a mission worker through encouragement,

prayer, funding and fundraising support.

“Our primary goals will be to show the [people living in exile in Calais], that yes, you are wanted,” Joseph Givens said. “Yes, you are loved. We want you, and God loves you, and God wants you. ... Not to be the White savior, not to be the ones saying, ‘We’re here to fix your problems,’ but to be the people to come alongside them and say, ‘How can we help?’” ■

Mennonite Mission Network is committed to serving through global partnerships and collaboration. Partnering ministries, like the Givens’ work, is only possible through your generous support. **Thank you!**
Give today at MennoniteMission.net/Donate

Global mission partnerships

Global mission partnerships include congregations/conferences in the United States, international conferences/congregations/organizations and Mennonite Mission Network. Relationships are highly valued, and decision-making happens collaboratively. Mission Network also facilitates less structured ways for congregations to relate and learn from global partners.

Argentina global mission partnerships — The Argentina global mission partnerships include Mission Network, Mennonite churches in the United States, and *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Argentina* (IEMA—Argentina Mennonite Church) and their mission entities.



Argentina Chaco global mission partnership — The long-term ministry of the *Equipo Menonita del Chaco Argentina* (Mennonite Team of the Argentine Chaco) with Indigenous churches is supported by

Iglesia Menonita Bragado (Bragado Mennonite Church), the central region of the IEMA, Pike and Sonnenberg Mennonite churches in Ohio, and Mennonite Mission Network.



Visión Evangélica y Misionera de la Región Central (VEMCE—Evangelical and Missionary Vision of the Central Region) — VEMCE, in central Argentina, partners with congregations from Atlantic Coast

Mennonite Conference to plant churches and strengthen mission vision.

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Christian service and global citizenship

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for human connection, as well as Jesus' call to pursue healing and hope for humanity.

Christian service not only seeks to address community-identified needs but contributes to the growth of the participant, as well. It is "learning by doing" in a way that fosters greater mutuality in the world. Vibrant intercultural relationships are central to fostering global citizenship.

While volunteer work is generally understood as "doing for," Christian service should embody a stance of "doing with." Building on the common understanding that "we learn by doing," Christian service takes this a step further and says that we "learn by doing together."

When communities collaborate in service across all sorts of borders, they learn from one another and with one another. This approach leads not only to growth in practical skills, such as language and intercultural competence, but also leads to the development of life skills, including a broadened understanding of values and a deepened sense of identity and civic responsibility.

Global partnerships in Christian service not only influence participants, but they can also energize churches and conferences. This strengthens the identity and calling of the church to nurture followers of Jesus in the global community, who thirst for peace and relational healing, who are compelled to put love into action, and who eagerly pursue justice and equity in the world.

Ultimately, the intersection of compassion, peace and justice fosters global citizenship. Each human being is a unique individual who comes from a unique cultural and social background. We are all citizens of our own particular nation. Yet, more importantly, as followers of Jesus, we are all citizens of God's unfolding kingdom. Every single human is a citizen of the planet Earth. The more we realize that we all stand together on this great blue ship floating in the vast cosmic ocean, the easier it is to cultivate peace and equity, compassion and service for all humanity. ■

Mike Sherrill
Executive Director and CEO

Thank you for being part of what God is doing! How is God calling you to share in additional ways with Mennonite Mission Network?

www.MennoniteMission.net
Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

Office locations:
Elkhart, Indiana
Newton, Kansas

Global mission partnerships

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Bolivia global mission partnership — Together with Mission Network, this partnership includes the *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Boliviana* (IEMB—Bolivia Mennonite

Church) and three South Central Mennonite Conference congregations that are committed to a long-term relationship, involving mutual prayer, inspirational visits and some joint ministries.



Ecuador global mission partnership — Partners include *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* (IMCOL—Colombia Mennonite Church), Central Plains

Mennonite Conference and Mission Network. The partnership planted the congregation that now forms *Iglesia Cristiana Anabautista Menonita de Ecuador* (ICAME—Quito Mennonite Church). ICAME plans and leads refugee ministries as well as other ministries, with support from the partnership.



Mongolia mission partnership — This is a group of individuals, businesses and Ohio congregations that have come together to support a Mennonite presence in

Mongolia, through Joint Christian Services (JCS) International.



Venezuela global mission partnership — Partners include *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* (IMCOL, Colombia Mennonite Church), Central Plains Mennonite

Conference and Mission Network. The partnership supports *Red de Misiones Menonita de Venezuela* (Network of Mennonite Missions of Venezuela) on Isla Margarita and on the Venezuelan mainland, with biblical and theological education, church planting and development.