



EXTENDING BEYOND

Compassion, bravery, and the pursuit of hope

Leaning on God's word
during uncertain times.
Photo by Cynthia and
Rebekah Coyle.

A message from Stanley W. Green



Humans have faced crises before: plagues, wars, economic meltdowns, and widespread devastating famines. I believe that it is not trite or reckless to say we will get beyond this

pandemic also. All of us must act responsibly. We must, among other things, practice physical distancing, we must wash our hands, and we must wear masks.

Sadly, we have temporarily shut down some of our voluntary service programs to comply with governmental directives and to protect the participants. We have also canceled in-person meetings and resourcing events.

It is troubling to know that so many across our church are feeling cut off and isolated from

their regular worshipping communities. In light of this, we have launched The Hope Series: daily prayer devotionals, weekly Bible studies, and stories of God at work around the world, as a way to provide connection and spiritual resourcing for our constituents and beyond.

During this crisis, we sense a peculiar call to us, and to all Christians, to be agents of hope. For us, this commitment forces the question, "Where can we find hope?"

Our mission compels us to announce God's hopeful vision of a better world in which human and non-human creation can thrive.

I believe this crisis presents us with a significant opportunity: to reconceptualize mission as a hope-filled engagement grounded in the promise of a God who is committed to the
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Let your
steadfast
love, O Lord,
be upon us,
even as we
hope in you.

—Psalm 33:22



Amidst a world pandemic, the work of God continues

By Zachary Headings

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread across the world, prompting both isolationist practices and panic as the world attempts to quell the virus. The world is changing before our eyes. Places of worship lay empty as congregations meet in the virtual world. Without active clientele, small businesses close, unable to maintain their expenses in the wake of the virus. People across the world struggle to stay healthy and receive proper medical treatment when they fall ill.

Amidst all this strife, the work of God continues.

Mennonite Mission Network is committed to continuing to spread the good news of Christ through this trying time. Many of our international personnel and partners are finding creative ways to serve their communities. Even while working from home, Mission Network staff are spreading God's love through programs like The Hope Series on Facebook Live.

While many aspects of life continue through the pandemic, some things are changing. Service Adventure units closed their doors early in mid-March. The Sent

Conference, scheduled for late April, was postponed until this fall. Some Youth Venture trips have been canceled.

Mission Network is striving to keep moving forward. At this point, programs that are scheduled to start in the fall of 2020 are still on. We will continue accepting applications for international workers and interns. Now, more than ever, the work of God must continue through new formats.

“We are pondering the question, ‘What is the missional opportunity for every follower of Jesus in this crisis?’” said Stanley W. Green, executive director of Mission Network. “How can we serve our immediate and global neighbors,

using digital platforms, and share the love of Christ with many living with fear and isolation?”

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—Stanley W. Green

The Hope Series

The Hope Series is one of the exciting ways that Mission Network is adapting to this new world. This series includes various Facebook live sessions, all at 1 p.m. Eastern: Scripture reading and prayer time (Mondays–Wednesdays), a check-in

with international partners (Thursdays), and Spanish-language Scripture reading and prayer (Fridays). Additionally, several virtual cohorts will meet over Zoom and share the word of God with one another. For more information about The Hope Series, visit www.MennoniteMission.net.

“Our hope in using social media is that we make a space in which we can grow closer to God, create community, and love our neighbors even within our isolation,” said Jason Boone, coordinating minister for Mission Network’s Peace and Justice Support Network (PJSN). “Whether we like it or not, our lives are different now, but they don’t have to be different in an utterly lonely way.”

Like us on Facebook at [@MennoniteMissionNet](https://www.facebook.com/MennoniteMissionNet) to catch The Hope Series the moment it goes live.



From Ray Epp

Ray serves with his wife, Akiko Aratani, as directors of Menno Village, an organic farm on the island of Hokkaido, Japan.

“Since December, I had been planning to travel during this very time with my son, Ken, to France, Switzerland and Germany to visit friends and introduce him to Anabaptist historical sites. About two weeks ago, my friend in France told me that schools were closing and people around her were nervous about getting visitors from Japan. ... Within two days, I canceled my trip.

“... It is lambing season right now at Menno Village, so I and the rest of the family have been enjoying the new baby lambs. We continue to meet with small groups of our neighbors in the town to care for each other and to share together how to better care for our soils and renew our town.

“... It is in many ways a time of renewal, a time to reflect on what is really important. We think about and pray for friends and family in other places. Even though we cannot be with them in person, we can pray for them asking that God will meet them in the midst of these troubling times.” ■

Our international partners and personnel are also doing their best to adapt to this new reality.

Your financial support has enabled Mission Network to adjust to this global pandemic and continue to help those who are in need. Now, more than ever, Mission Network needs your continued support to continue these important ministries. These are difficult times for everyone, and with your help, we can work to make the world a better place through the love and message of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Thank you. ■



From Janie Blough

Janie serves with her spouse, Neal Blough, in Paris, France.

“Neal and I are hunkered down inside, but not idle. The mission continues via Internet, Skype, Facetime and Zoom. We are all well and doing our best not to let coronavirus find a home in our midst. We may only go out for a few reasons such as to the pharmacy or to buy groceries. We are also allowed out for individual exercise as long as we keep the authorized distance from other people and carry an attestation of our reason for being out of the home. Homeschooling via schoolteacher connections is becoming the norm. Both Neal and I are continuing our teaching load via different Internet options. It’s working well. Although, with so many people working from home, Internet connections are slower.

“Some church connections have been coming through WhatsApp, especially Lenten devotions sent by our pastor. People can respond to what she has sent, as well as offering up prayers for all, using the same site. Many of these prayers are either Psalms or based on Psalms. A Sunday school meeting was held by a telephone conference call after a PowerPoint was sent to all the teachers. It will be interesting to see what other kinds of interaction will develop. Imagination and creativity are becoming action words in more ways than one.” ■

SPREADING HOPE



Photo by Marlene Wall

In March, students at LCC International University in Lithuania move mattresses to set up the gymnasium as a quarantine zone.



Photo by Linda Shelly

Mission Network staff members, such as Church Relations Representative Ann Jacobs, share social media messages of hope via Facebook live as part of [The Hope Series](#).



Photo by David Moreno

In Iquitos, Peru, from left, Juan Carlos Moreno of *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* (IMCOL), delivers food to Lery Ijuma, Carlos Java and their son, Evans Java. Lery and Carlos invited IMCOL to form a congregation in the Monte de Sión neighborhood where they live.



Photo by Linda Shelly

Mission network's program called [Hope Communities](#), begun in April. It consists of three virtual gathering spaces that help participants focus together on a topic for individual growth and communal support. Discipleship Initiatives Director Marvin Lorenzana leads a group that supports Latino leaders.

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redemptive healing of the world shaped by a history of pain and suffering. This promise reassures that God will not abandon a hurting world. Not only that, but:

- It is an invitation to us to reject the temptation to surrender hope.
- It is an invitation to refuse to despair in the face of horrific suffering.
- It is a call to participate actively with our lives and our words in ways that infuse the reality so many are experiencing, with the hope in God's purpose for healing and restoration of all creation.

Thankfully, we are heartened to see so many who are demonstrating compassion, bravery, mutual aid and generosity. On the road to restoring our hope, these are our "heroes." We don't all have to aspire to be heroes; we must, each of us, however, seek to follow Jesus through words and deeds that bring healing and hope in a hurting world. ■

Stanley W. Green

Stanley W. Green
Executive Director

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

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