



Washington Memo



A publication of Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Volume LIV, No. 1

Prophetic witness: A look back at 2021 and ahead to 2022



MCC photo/Tammy Alexander



You listened

2,400+ people attended
our seminars, webinars
and other events

Email mccwash@mcc.org
to invite us to speak



You studied

850+ people downloaded or
ordered the *Peaceful Practices*
small group curriculum
mcc.org/peaceful-practices



You visited

132 meetings with
policymakers, 40 of them
including constituents
or MCC partners

Download *How to be an advocate*
at washington.mcc.org



You wrote letters

4800+ emails to Congress

Sign up for updates at
washington.mcc.org



You joined us

15 learning tours and other
experiential opportunities

Check mcc.org/events

Above: Senator Young (R-Ind.) talks with Climate Riders Anna Paetkau, Greta Lapp Klassen, Sierra Ross Richer and Doug Kaufman on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

Introducing

National Peace & Justice Ministries!

There were big changes for our staff team in 2020 and 2021. In addition to a number of staff transitions, the former Washington Office and National Program teams joined together under a new name, National Peace & Justice Ministries (NPJM). This merger will allow better collaboration between our education and advocacy work and between our domestic and international focus areas.

NPJM will continue to work toward societal transformation by engaging with Anabaptist communities, encouraging involvement in advocacy and advocating directly to U.S. policymakers. We couldn't do this work without you and your passion to learn with us, advocate with us and hope with us for a better world. —*Tammy*

My child, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, you will find a future, and your hope will not be cut off. (Proverbs 24:13–14)



National Peace & Justice Ministries staff at a November 2021 gathering in Akron, Penn. (from left to right): Jes Stoltzfus Buller, Kirstin De Mello, Saulo Padilla, Tammy Alexander, Kate Parsons, Daniela Lázaro-Manalo and Hannah Markey. COVID-19 safety protocols appropriate for outdoor events were followed. Not pictured: Charles Kwuelum.

MCC Photo/Brenda Burkholder

Toward racial equity

As we lay witness to the ever-present harm of racism and its impact on loved ones, neighbors, friends and beyond, congregations have expressed a need for resources that might help them engage this topic in a meaningful way. In response, MCC developed *Embracing Beloved Community*—a curriculum that invites congregations to faithfully embrace diversity in a radical realization of God's kingdom.

This 7-week biblical study, designed for congregations new to the topic, includes group prayers, Scripture, biblical reflection, journal prompts and homework videos. You can download both facilitator and participant guides at mcc.org/embracing-beloved-community.

In 2022, you can look forward to peace camps, conversation guides and additional racial equity events and materials. The first peace camp is slated for Spring and will provide young adults with in-person learning experiences as they visit significant sites, interact with local partners and learn about the ways they can work to dismantle racism and build peace in their context. Conversation guides will be geared towards helping congregations and individuals navigate difficult conversations around some of the most divisive issues in our country today. —*Daniela*

Download *Embracing Beloved Community* at mcc.org/embracing-beloved-community

We'd love to hear from you!

In fall 2021, Daniela Lázaro-Manalo joined our team as racial equity education and advocacy coordinator and began a listening tour to assess needs for further program development around anti-racism and anti-colonialism education. Daniela would love to hear from you! If you are interested in sharing how your congregation is engaging these issues and how MCC might resource and support this work, please contact Daniela at daniela.lazaromanalo@mcc.org.

Toward ending mass incarceration

MCC's long history of restorative justice work has drawn us to educate on the crisis of mass incarceration in recent years. In 2021, MCC staff across the U.S. collaborated to update an important learning tool for groups interested in more deeply understanding the racial disparities in the U.S. incarceration system.

"You Got Booked" is an experiential learning tool where participants gain insights into the ways the U.S. criminal legal system has led to the current crisis of mass incarceration. In 2022, MCC staff will be available to facilitate this experience with churches and other groups.

MCC is committed to advocacy efforts that address racial, economic and social inequities embedded in the U.S. criminal legal system—a system that perpetuates mass incarceration and disproportionately hurts people of color. In 2022, there will be opportunities to advocate for sentencing reforms and transformative legislative proposals that aim to address root causes and bring about restorative justice solutions. —*Jes & Daniela*

Contact us at mccwash@mcc.org for someone to facilitate "You Got Booked" with your group!

Karin Kaufman Wall, MCC Central States, leads youth at the 2019 Mennonite Church USA convention in the learning exercise "You Got Booked" to help them learn about the causes of mass incarceration.



Photo courtesy of Mennonite Church USA

Toward ending gun violence

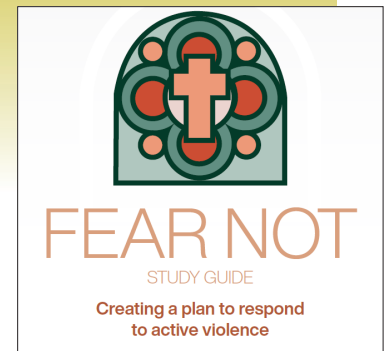
Violence is disorienting and devastating, yet we have normalized its existence in our lives, and even in our churches. In recent years, MCC heard requests from pastors for resources that would help congregations navigate the challenging question of how to balance safety with a commitment to nonviolence. MCC's new curriculum for churches in the U.S., FEAR NOT, helps congregations engage with questions of safety, nonviolence and faithfulness and build their own policy for responding to violence in their unique context.

In Mexico, gun violence has taken the lives of more than 68,000 people in the past three years. The United States is the world's leading gun exporter, with hundreds of thousands of weapons going to Mexico each year. Lax U.S. gun laws mean that even legally sold guns can end up in the hands of criminal groups, gangs or security forces linked with human rights abuses.

MCC's partners in Mexico have asked us to advocate to the U.S. government to address this violence. Policy changes such as prohibiting exports of military-style assault weapons and requiring improved background checks would result in fewer injuries, deaths and instances of forced migration.

Look for more educational resources and opportunities for advocacy in 2022. —*Jes & Kate*

Download your copy of *FEAR NOT: Creating a plan to respond to active violence* at mcc.org/Fear-Not



Toward living sustainably



MCC photo/Kate Parsons

Staff with the Institute of Intercultural Studies and Investigation, an MCC partner in Mexico, inspect a greenhouse that will provide a more stable environment for crops to grow. Community members report that rainfall is no longer predictable due to changing weather patterns.

“Requests to work on climate advocacy come directly from our international partners.”

Requests to work on climate advocacy come directly from our international partners who tell us of the ways a changing climate has resulted in fewer harvests, loss of livestock, stress on water resources, reduced income, food insecurity and the need to migrate to find employment.

Everyone needs clean water, clean air, healthy food and a place to call home. Addressing climate change means not only changing individual behaviors but also rethinking global structures and policies that result in those who have contributed the least to climate change bearing the brunt of its impacts.

In 2021, we supported a number of environmental justice bills and a bipartisan infrastructure package containing various climate-related provisions. MCC sponsored the virtual Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) conference in April, focused on climate justice.

Through our partnership with the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions (CSCS), we were excited to host the CSCS Climate Riders in July on the final stop of their nearly two-month trek across the continental U.S. Riders met with members of Congress and their staff to share a request for equitable and just climate legislation. We could not have accomplished so much without the help of Clara Weybright who wrapped up a one-year CSCS fellowship in July.

We look forward to continuing the important work of addressing climate change in 2022 with an advocacy campaign expected to launch in the fall. We will continue to press for U.S. government policies that fund global adaptation projects and lower U.S. greenhouse gas emissions while at the same time being mindful of unintended negative impacts on vulnerable groups. This includes the impact of carbon pricing proposals on rural and low-income households in the U.S. and the impacts of mining for rare earth elements and other materials needed for renewable energy components. —Tammy & Kate



MCC photo/Tammy Alexander

CSCS Climate Futures Fellow Clara Weybright prepares Climate Riders for their Congressional visits.

Toward dignity and rights for migrants

In 2021, the world remained a dangerous and inhospitable place for migrants. In the United States, our borders are largely militarized barriers that keep people from seeking safety and our laws prevent individuals from reuniting with family or pursuing a better life. Xenophobic policies and media narratives about newcomers contradict the biblical commandment to welcome and love strangers.

U.S. immigration practices continue to unjustly detain and deport immigrants and violate the rights of asylum seekers. The U.S.-Mexico border remains closed to many immigrants under “Title 42,” a Centers for Disease Control order intended for use as a public health protection, not an immigration policy.

MCC’s immigration education work focuses on providing learning opportunities that invite Anabaptists and others to consider a faithful response to biblical teachings of hospitality. Educational and experiential activities in 2021 included:

- Accompaniment of a Mennonite Disaster Services (MDS) delegation to the Mexico-U.S. border to identify areas where MCC and MDS can work together to respond faithfully

to the needs of asylum seekers and other migrants;

- Lectures at Goshen College on the theme of migration;
- Speaking at a Brethren in Christ (BIC) conference on biblical narratives through the lens of migration;
- Virtual and in-person border learning experiences with participants from Mennonite Church USA and BIC constituent groups;
- Youth seminars and workshops for MennoCon21 in Cincinnati; and,
- Co-facilitation of migration trauma seminars in Tucson, Ariz., and Goshen, Ind.

Advocacy to Congress and the Biden Administration continues to be urgently needed. In September, MCC joined 176 faith-based organizations in calling for the Biden administration to stop all deportation flights to Haiti.

In November, MCC gathered with members of the Welcome With Dignity Campaign and Doctors for Camp Closure to request the termination of Title 42. Doctors, faith leaders and advocates delivered over 200,000 signatures affirming that Title 42 is neither humane nor medically relevant.



MCC photo/Saulo Padilla

Pastor David Maldonado from College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., participates in a vigil during an MCC border learning tour in November 2021.

In 2022, MCC will continue to advocate with coalition partners against Title 42 and other unjust policies, such as “Remain in Mexico,” prioritizing the voices of immigrant communities in the struggle to restore asylum protections and provide improved pathways to citizenship.

We look forward to our continued partnership with you in the coming year as we invite the Church and policymakers to respond faithfully to the call for hospitality toward all of God’s children. —Saulo & Hannah

Check mcc.org/migration for opportunities to join virtual and in-person learning tours, webinars and other events.



MCC photo/Saulo Padilla

MCC border learning tour participants pray at the border wall in Douglas, Ariz., in November 2021.

Toward a more peaceful world

Peace education

Peace is a fundamental component of MCC's work, and yet it is hard to define. Peace is a broad category—it is anti-militarism work and interpersonal dialogue. It is international policy and local community efforts.

In 2021, our peace education in the U.S. encompassed various pieces of the broad spectrum of peacebuilding. Some of the highlights are: a partnership with the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition on educational resources towards reparation (dofdmenno.org), collaboration on a campaign with Mennonites Against Militarism, a curriculum on healthy communication in conflict (mcc.org/peaceful-practices) and several trainings on peace theology.

In 2022, we will continue this education through peace camps, resources that provide input on how to have specific conversations around hot-button issues, interactive learning tools that increase understanding of complex international conflicts and more small group studies for learning about social justice issues here at home. —*Jes*



Participants of the Multicultural Peace Collaboration and U.S. Mennonite Brethren denominational leaders stand together in front of the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, Ala., as part of an interactive learning experience MCC facilitated in July 2021.

Download [Peaceful Practices: A guide to healthy communication in conflict](http://mcc.org/peaceful-practices), mcc.org/peaceful-practices

North Korea

Two years after initial COVID-19 border shut-downs, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) remains largely closed. The U.S. continues to impose strict sanctions and conduct military exercises, limiting opportunities for engagement.

Together with a broad network of advocates in 2021, MCC advocated for humanitarian engagement, an end

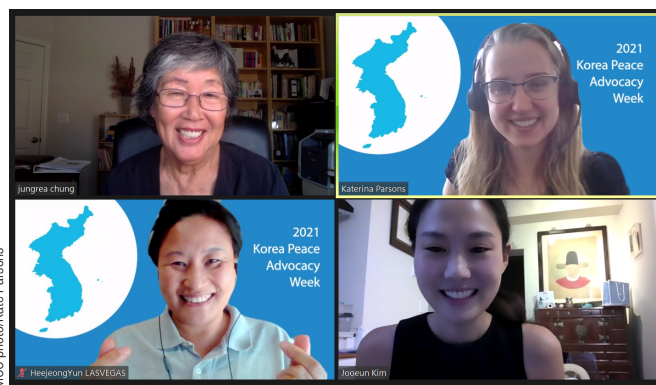
to the travel ban and passage of the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act (H.R. 3446) which calls for a formal end to the Korean War and a pathway to peace. In July, MCC supported a grassroots lobby day with over 200 participants. Staff also help to lead monthly gatherings of Christian advocates calling for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

In 2022, MCC will continue to advocate against sanctions that limit humanitarian aid and people-to-people engagement. Staff will also work to secure additional co-sponsors for pro-peace legislation related to the Korean Peninsula, building understanding and awareness of the unresolved war and resulting tensions. —*Kate*

Middle East

In Syria, broad-based sanctions are having a significant impact on vulnerable populations. U.S. economic sanctions, in combination with protracted conflict, leave many Syrian families with minimal access to electricity and fuel.

Additionally, worsening conditions in Syria have ripple effects on neighboring countries like Lebanon, which is in the midst of a worsening economic crisis. In October, Hannah Markey visited partners and Syrian civil society leaders in Lebanon to learn about the impact of economic sanctions on



Senator Cortez Masto of Nevada cosponsored the Divided Families Reunification Act (S.2688) after meeting with constituents who highlighted the difficulty of separated Korean American and North Korean families.



Hannah Markey and Chris Rice, director of MCC's United Nations Office, join MCC Lebanon staff and partners at Popular Aid for Relief and Development to visit displaced Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese families living in temporary housing communities.

local communities. In 2022, MCC will continue to oppose sanctions that restrict humanitarian aid.

Palestine and Israel: Despite being a violation of international law, the Israeli government continues to expand settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In May, violence broke out in Gaza following illegal Israeli settlement activity in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.

MCC supports the Palestinian Children and Families Act (H.R. 2590) which aims to end settlement expansion, home demolitions and child detention. In 2021, staff met with

Congressional aides to seek support for the bill and brief them on the Gaza blockade's humanitarian impact.

In 2022, MCC will continue to support legislation that improves humanitarian access, human rights protections and the prospects for peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

—Hannah

Toward health and wellbeing

The global community continues to face the challenges brought on by COVID-19 after its emergence two years ago, including a strain on material and human resources.

In July, MCC hosted a webinar calling for an equitable pandemic response. Also in July, staff co-organized and sponsored an interfaith prayer vigil, with in-person and virtual components, calling for global access to COVID-19 vaccines and a temporary waiver of patent protections for manufacturers. César García, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference, shared a biblical reflection and more than 100 persons attended in-person, with over 1000 joining virtually.

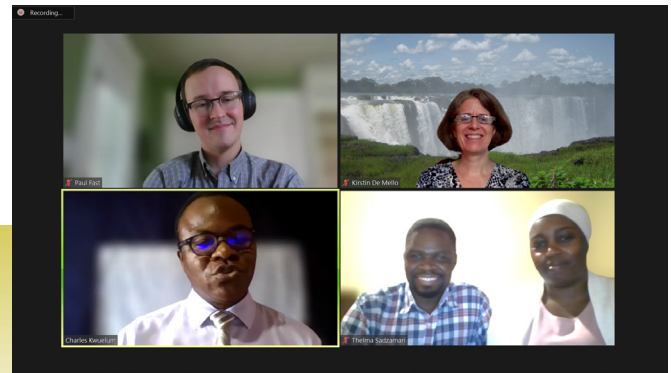
In February, Charles Kwuelum spoke at a virtual congressional briefing on “Key Human Rights Challenges in Nigeria,” urging Congress to prioritize psychosocial support approaches in addressing security issues in Nigeria which have been compounded by the pandemic. MCC supporters sent hundreds of emails to Congress urging legislators to take specific actions on mental health and psychosocial support, COVID-19 and foreign assistance.

In 2022, we will continue to engage policymakers and push for increased funding for mental health and psycho-

social support in U.S. foreign assistance (the MINDS Act), better COVID-19 vaccine access and mass production (the NOVID Act and the COVID-19 Defense Act) and expanded “Special Drawing Rights” to help countries recover from the economic shocks of the pandemic. We will also continue to advocate for a temporary waiver of COVID-19 vaccine patents and work toward a reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

With increased focus in the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on locally-led development—a model MCC has decades of experience with—we will look to increase opportunities for virtual and in-person meetings with policymakers for our MCC staff and partners in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In virtual meetings with State and USAID officials last year, staff and partners shared stories on locally-led peacebuilding programs that include food assistance, sustainable livelihoods and psychosocial support.

We will continue to depend on you to influence and engage your members of Congress and the Biden administration to urge robust, life-saving and unconditional foreign assistance. —Charles



Charles Kwuelum joins other MCC staff on a July webinar about the impact of COVID-19 on MCC programs and advocacy efforts to influence the U.S. government's global pandemic response.

National Peace & Justice Ministries

Resources for deepening your engagement



Peaceful Practices

A guide to healthy communication in conflict

Available in Spanish

mcc.org/peaceful-practices



Invite us to speak

with your congregation or group.

NPJM staff can speak on immigration, peace, racial equity, climate change, Palestine and Israel, foreign assistance and more!

mccwash@mcc.org

You Got Booked™

You Got Booked

A mass incarceration learning tool

Contact: mccwash@mcc.org



FEAR NOT

Creating a plan to respond to active violence

Available in Spanish

mcc.org/Fear-Not



November 15, 2021

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause enormous devastation. To date, 52% of the world's population has received at least one dose of the vaccine, while only 4% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose.

To address global COVID-19 vaccine inequality, Sens. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) have introduced an amendment to the fiscal year 2022 National

Advocacy

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Embracing Beloved Community

AN INTRODUCTION TO UNDERSTANDING OUR BIASES ON RACE



Embracing Beloved Community

An introduction to understanding our biases on race

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