Volume #6, #2 April 2025

The ADC Disciple

Anabaptist Disciples of Christ is an affiliation of Conservative Anabaptist churches seeking likeminded fellowship, instruction, and accountability in church administration and congregational life in the Biblical pattern of the Apostolic church.

Celebrating 500 Years of Anabaptism – In a Broken Vase

by Dean Taylor

Editor's note - To commemorate the 500th anniversary of the birth of Anabaptism, I've asked Dean Taylor to enlarge on his Facebook post dated January 21, 2025. It gives me great delight in sharing this feature article that so well encapsulates the Anabaptist movement.

The Japanese have a remarkable art tradition called **Kintsugi** *(keen-TSOO-gee)*. It's an art form, yes, but more importantly, it's a way of seeing the world. Here's how it works: when a vase breaks, instead of throwing it away or hiding the damage, they repair it with gold. By doing this, the cracks don't just become visible—they become the most striking part of the vase. The result? A piece that's more beautiful and valuable not in spite of its imperfections, but because of them.

Contrast that with Western culture. Here in the West, we chase perfection—polishing, editing, covering up. Even our language gives us away. Take the word **"sincere."** It comes from the Latin *sin cera*, meaning "without wax," referring to an unblemished vase with no cracks to conceal. Where Kintsugi celebrates the beauty of flaws, "sincere" tells us the norm was to erase them leading to a need for a word to prove your vase does not contain any repairs. It's a fascinating difference: one philosophy finds strength in imperfection, the other hides it.

During this 500th anniversary of Anabaptism, it's tempting to focus solely on celebration. But let's be honest: it's not just a pristine, polished story. No, this milestone is like a *Kintsugi* vase—marked by cracks, yet radiant with grace and the hard-earned lessons of the past. In 500 years, we've accomplished incredible things, but we've also stumbled, fallen, and made our share of mistakes. The cracks are undeniable. And yet, they're part of the story, part of what makes the vase beautiful.

On January 21, 1525, a small group of young radicals gathered in secret, risking everything to make a bold declaration of faith. In their illegal church, tucked away from the watchful eyes of religious and political authorities, they baptized one another as adults—something that, in their world, was not just unconventional but revolutionary. This single act defied the religious order of the day, rejected the authority of the state over spiritual matters, and set in motion a movement that would ripple across Europe and beyond.

Not long after, in the village of Zollikon, perched on a hill near Zurich, this fledgling group began meeting regularly. They broke bread together, shared scripture, and dreamed—what the world might look like if they took the teachings of Jesus seriously. They weren't just studying the Bible; they were rethinking the very concept of what it meant to be the Church.

For centuries, the Church had been an arm of the state, entangled with political power and authority. But these early Anabaptists did something radical: they severed that tie. Faith was no longer imposed—it was chosen. The Church was no longer a tool of governance—it became a community of believers, bound not by geography or empire, but by conviction. This newfound independence wasn't just theological; it was intensely practical. Without the state to lean on, they had to lean on each other.

But for all their passion, this new vision came with its struggles. The simplest command from Jesus—"go"—challenged them in ways they hadn't anticipated. How do you

go into the world while staying rooted in community? How do you spread the Gospel not as lone individuals but as a unified church? These were the questions they wrestled with in those early days. And their answers would shape not just their movement, but the very idea of what it means to live out faith.

"I believe the Word of God without a complicated interpretation, and out of this belief, I speak."

Years ago, while reading the letters of Conrad Grebel, I came across a few of his statements that, to me, encapsulate the radical simplicity of the early Anabaptist movement. Writing to his old mentor, Grebel declared, *"I believe the Word of God without a complicated interpretation, and out of this belief, I speak."* In another letter, he pressed even further, stating, *"The teaching of the Lord has been given for the purpose of being put into practice."*

That's the key: belief married to action. For the early Anabaptists, receiving the Word of God meant more than intellectual assent—it demanded practical application. It defined them then, and it should define us now. Yet, in modern American Christianity, this directness feels almost foreign. We're inundated with books, sermons, and devotionals urging us to "abide in Christ" or "stay in the Vine," but the idea of actually implementing the teachings of Jesus—radical forgiveness, love of enemies, a life of simplicity—is rarely in fashion.

Of course, it wasn't much different in their time. Michael Sattler, another early Anabaptist leader, was clear about salvation by faith. But he also issued a dual warning: *"Beware of the scribes and the Pharisees."* To Sattler, the Pharisees represented the old Catholic trap of trying to earn salvation through works. But the scribes? They symbolized something just as dangerous—those new Reformers who, in their zeal, wrote beautiful things and preached impressive sermons. Yet in their theology and life they rejected works altogether. As Sattler wrote, they were guilty of *"rejecting works without faith in order to raise up faith without works."*

It's a hard balance, but that's what made the early Anabaptists stand out—and it's what got them burned at the stake. Taking seriously Jesus' teachings on subjects like war, separation from the world, global mission, and even their radical use of economics lit a fire that, in just two years, saw more than 12,500 believers willing to give up everything for their faith, including their lives.

What's more, it's hard to imagine this all happening in a more turbulent time. When the Anabaptist movement began, Europe was being shaken to its core—engulfed in wars, deep divisions, plagues, and economic collapse. The year 1525, when the first adult baptism took place, was the same year that Suleiman the Magnificent, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, declared a jihad against Europe.

By 1526, Suleiman's forces had swept into southern Europe, crippling Hungary and leaving the region vulnerable to further Ottoman expansion. Just a year later, in 1527, as the Anabaptists were drafting their first confession, mutinous troops sacked Rome and forced the Pope into hiding. Then came 1529. Thousands of early Anabaptists had fled to Moravia, seeking refuge, while Suleiman's armies nearly conquered Austria. For many, it felt like the apocalypse was unfolding before their eyes.

Yet, amidst this chaos, something remarkable happened. God was refining a remnant—a group of believers who clung to the radical conviction that Jesus had given humanity a blueprint in the Sermon on the Mount. They believed these teachings weren't lofty ideals or metaphors—they were instructions meant to be lived out, even in the face of unimaginable turmoil. One can't help but wonder how different history might have been if Christians had consistently turned to Christ's example and teachings during times of war and crisis.

For me, it all comes back to a single, haunting question: *What if Jesus really meant every word He said?* It's this question—this relentless challenge—that ultimately led me to the Anabaptists.

When the Anabaptists came to America, they brought with them their convictions, including the delicate balance of nonresistance. Even during the war cries of the American Revolution, they navigated these turbulent waters and formed tight-knit communities of faith across the country. These were some of the beautiful parts of our story. In his book *Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War*, historian Steven Nolt highlights one of the more remarkable aspects of their legacy. Despite the widespread acceptance of slavery in the 1700s and 1800s, Nolt writes that there is "virtually no suggestion that colonial and nineteenth-century Mennonites and Amish owned slaves." In 1688 the Germantown Mennonites had help to lead the first public protest against slavery on record in America.

This was not by accident. The Anabaptists' commitment to living out Jesus' teachings—including the radical call to love one's neighbor—shaped every facet of their lives. At a time when so many were willing to compromise their values for economic or social gain, the Anabaptists quietly held their ground. These things were good.

But there were cracks in the vase too—serious ones. From the very beginning, sectarian attitudes and divisive arguments tainted the movement's message. How does one maintain a true separation from the world, fueled by fiery conviction, while still showing charity to those who think differently? It's a challenge the Anabaptists faced early on, and it remains a challenge today.

There are deeper cracks in our story too—cracks that are hard to look at but impossible to ignore. Some are glaring: tragic moments of racial discrimination in American Mennonite churches, disastrous missteps fueled by misogyny, abuse cover-ups, and toxic leadership. These aren't just unfortunate chapters; they're wounds that demand acknowledgment.

Then there's the cracks that we keep trying to ignore. We've all heard the warnings about Russian Mennonite materialism—the tales spun in a way that makes it sound like those attitudes are foreign to us. But are they? History suggests otherwise. Over time, subtle compromises and creeping comfort have led us closer to the very values we once stood against.

And then there's politics. There have been times when the church, swept up in the tide of political fervor, veered into agendas that ran completely counter to the faith we profess. These weren't just small detours—they were deep betrayals of the values that once shaped us. Each time, the cracks grew wider. But all these fractures, need more than repair. They need to be filled with gold so bright that we never forget them—so that we can remember, and learn, and never lose our way again.

This is where the real art comes together. Over the years, I've seen it time and time again—the instinct to react, to break away from the past, all with hope to start fresh and hide from the mistakes. I've done it. I've seen entire groups do it. And yet, I've seen that those attempts to escape the cracks usually lead right back to the same mistakes—or worse. It's as if the harder we try to hide or run from the brokenness, the more it finds us.

That's why the philosophy behind **Kintsugi** is so profound. The beauty of a broken vase isn't in pretending it was never shattered. It's in the gold that fills the cracks, in the painstaking process of restoration. At my age I've finally started to learn that the most valuable lessons didn't come from avoiding the cracks. They came from facing them. From letting God step into my brokenness and do what I could never do. What I found was that the gold He poured into those fractures didn't just hold me together—it made me more usable and therefore more beautiful than I ever could have from hiding these mistakes.

"The only way to keep a broken vessel full is to keep it always under the tap."

That's how I'm celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Anabaptists—not as five centuries of "getting it right," but as five centuries of learning. Learning through God's faithfulness in our weakness. It's not about a flawless history; it's about a God who mends, redeems, and continues to work in us—not in spite of our flaws, but through them.

This is the legacy we inherit—not one of perfection, but of restoration. It's not a story of our brilliance, but of God's grace—a God who chooses to work through broken vessels. And as D.L. Moody so beautifully put it, "*The only way to keep a broken vessel full is to keep it always under the tap.*"

Praise the Lord for 500 years of learning, growing, and living graciously. To Him be all the glory.

Over 30 years ago, Dean Taylor and his wife, Tania, walked away from military life after a life-altering encounter with the teachings of Jesus in Scripture. Dean and his family now live in Sugarcreek, Ohio, where they are members of Crosspointe Mennonite Church and serve as part of the ministry team. Dean also serves as president of the Zollikon Institute, an Anabaptist educational institution committed to nurturing a new generation of church leaders and missionaries. He carries a deep passion for both Anabaptist education and missions, holding firmly to the conviction that the local church must remain central to both.

PASTOR SPOTLIGHT

Ken and Diane Beachy serve at Emmanuel Mennonite Fellowship, Amanda, Ohio.

They have eleven children – Jaron, married to Vivian Beachy; Kendra, married to Justin Stoltzfus; Greg, married to Caitlin Weaver; Clarissa, married to Evan Jackson; William, married to Katrina Zook; Liz, married to Chance Hostetler; Ginni, married to Neil Hostetler; Michael; Patrick; Tommy; and Bobby.

They have twenty-five grandchildren with two more due at the time of this profile.

Ken was ordained May 23, 2004, as a minister.

Ken works alongside three of his sons as a power equipment dealer and service provider. Since moving to the community some nineteen years ago, the "shop" has given Ken and his family many opportunities to get to know and interact with members of the local community.

Ken reflects on his pastoral journey – "As I reflect on the past twenty-one years as a pastor, I think first of God's faithfulness in supplying ALL our needs from His glorious storehouse of riches in Christ Jesus. I also think of the team with which I've been surrounded, and I thank God for the blessing of faithful men with whom I've had the privilege of working alongside. The journey hasn't always been easy, but God has used the rough spots to shape and change me to become more like Him. We have been part of an outreach church for the past nineteen years. While there are many unique blessings that characterize small outreach churches, there are also many unique challenges to face and work through, but God is faithful!"

Ken enjoys the works of Oswald Chambers and Warren Wiersbe and uses their writings in sermon preparation.

One of Ken's favorite recent reads has been *Henry and the Great Society* by H.L. Roush.

Thank you, Ken and Diane, for your faithful service to the Church of Christ!

ADC Church Profile —

Living Hope Mennonite Fellowship, Florence, Colorado, was founded in March 2019.

The current pastoral team consists of Nevin Stoltzfus, Lead Pastor; Arlin Roth and Merle Miller, Assistant Pastors; and Jon Miller, Elder.

Current membership is 50.

LHMF began as a sister church to Skyline Mennonite (Canon City) when Skyline's attendance exceeded building capacity due to New Horizons Ministries' continual influx of personnel. Many of LHMF's members previously worked for NHM as young adults and are now raising families resulting in thirty-nine children ages ten and under at LHMF presently. Some are still involved in NHM or in Choice Books. Skyline and LHMF co-sponsor Canon Christian Academy for both children of church members and community children. Both churches co-sponsor a widows' banquet each fall, serving 200 area widows. LHMF also participates in Florence Community Praise in the Park periodically to worship with other community churches; holds a VBS which is open to the community; and actively supports the local Crisis Pregnancy Center and Hope House for teen mothers.

Current Building

Youth Group

Since the church's inception, the church's youth have served with I58 in Romania, Germany, and Greece; with DNI in Turkey, Bangladesh, and New York City; and with Fairplay Boys Camp in South Carolina. They also attend Elnora Bible Institute in Indiana.

LHMF is in Florence, a little historical town at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and with a population of approximately 3900. Drug addicts and bike gang members mix with California tree-huggers and weathered ranchers to create a unique demographic. Fremont County has eleven correctional facilities (four federal and seven state) and 20% of the population are inmates.

While renting an arts center/historical church building for the first six years, LHMF was able to purchase a building last year in the middle of a residential neighborhood and trailer park and is completely renovating it to house church gatherings.

Thank you Pastors for letting us get a glimpse into your church!

New Building Renovation

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE
Lonnie Beachy – *Chairman*
Mark Miller – *Vice-Chairman*
Dave Nisly – *Secretary-Treasurer*

Nate Yoder – *Editor*
614-736-1727
janate3@frontier.com

P.O. Box 55, Walnut Creek, OH 44687 | anabaptistdisciplesofchrist.org

Missions Update

Sponsorship Opportunities in India

Women's Sewing Centers

Three Sewing Centers were launched in Delhi slums in February 2024. The ladies, including Christians, Muslims, and Hindus, are happily developing practical skills they can use to support their families. Already, numerous families have put their faith in Jesus through these Centers. There is capacity to open more Centers, and there are workers equipped and waiting to be empowered through sponsorship.

Startup cost: $500/one-time Ongoing cost: $350/month

Literacy Centers

One Child Literacy Center was launched in a Delhi slum in February 2024 and in an Odisha village in April 2024. The children are receiving basic education instead of roaming the streets aimlessly. They are also learning Bible songs and stories. Adult literacy centers for ladies are much needed as well. There is capacity to open more Centers, and there are workers equipped and waiting to be empowered through sponsorship.

Startup cost: $250/one-time Ongoing cost: $350/month

Computer Training Centers

One Computer Center was launched in Delhi in September 2024. The youth are developing marketable skills, hearing the gospel, and will get jobs instead of aimlessly getting involved in drugs and mischief. They will receive recognized certificates for the programs they complete.

Startup: approx. $5,000/one-time

Ongoingcost: $1,200/month

To sponsor one of these programs, or for more information about other opportuniites, visit our website.

Current Initiatives

- **India:** *Tim and Gina Kuepfer serve in Dehradun with the need for additional families and individuals to join their ministry, including short-term (1-12 months) opportunities*
- **Albania:** *a strategic church-planting opportunity and potential hub/training center for ADC*
- **Detroit:** *a possible café purchase to create service and short-term mission experiences*

We are ready to send people, but we need your ongoing support. As the missions arm of ADC, Impact International belongs to you—your ownership and commitment to regular giving are crucial.

Are you called to go?

Whether you're called to join an existing team, advance another of Impact's initiatives, or pursue a unique ministry God has placed on your heart, we are here to support and guide you through that process. Opportunities are available now, and we anticipate even more opportunities in the coming months.

We deeply appreciate your commitment to prioritizing Impact International in both financial giving and sending workers. Your partnership is essential as we continue to follow God's leading and engage in His mission.

Stay informed—scan here to sign up for WhatsApp updates

IMPACT INTERNATIONAL

PO Box 21

Sugarcreek, OH 44681

www.impactintl.org