The Garifuna Story
A Tale of Overcoming Obstacles

BY PASTOR E. OMAR GUZMAN

LMC has a number of Garifuna Mennonite Churches. LMC also has connections with a network of Garifuna churches around the USA and in Central America. This group of churches does amazing Kingdom work. So perhaps, we should ask, “Who are the Garifuna?”

SOME HISTORY

The story of the Garifuna stands as a modern tragedy in western civilization. The people called Garifuna originated from two migrations, one voluntary and one forced. It is believed that some African peoples crossed the Atlantic, perhaps as early as 1300, and came ashore on some of the islands in the Lesser Antilles chain off the northern coast of Venezuela. Here, they intermarried with other tribal groups in the Caribbean. Other Africans came to the Caribbean as a result of the western slave trade. When slave ships ran aground on the reefs and islands of the Lesser Antilles, survivors of those wrecks found refuge and intermarried with other Caribbean groups. They are sometimes referred to as Black Caribs.

By 1635, one large community emerged on Saint Vincent Island in the Lesser Antilles. Although few mineral resources existed on the island, its shores contained abundant fish. Saint Vincent was largely ignored by the colonial...
In the 20th century, the growing Garifuna community, which was mostly employed as fisherman, began to move into agriculture, textiles, and service industries. Unemployment concerns also generated emigration pressure to neighboring Central American countries and to the coastal urban centers such as the USA and some coastal European countries.

Today as many as 300,000 Garifuna live along the coasts of Belize, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and especially Honduras. More than 100,000 have emigrated to the USA.

**AN LMC CONNECTION**

EMM missionaries started a Garifuna congregation in Honduras in the late 1940’s. In 1986, EMM began a Garifuna congregation in New York City, the Evangelical Garifuna Church in the Bronx with Celso Jaime as pastor. In 2006 after much discernment, the Bronx church sent me to Manhattan to start a new congregation, the Evangelical Garifuna Church of Manhattan. From this beginning in New York City, a multiplication movement, the Mennonite Garifuna Mission, emerged. Over the last 10 years new congregations opened in Brooklyn, a second congregation in the Bronx, and one each in Miami, Houston, New Orleans, Boston, Seattle, Wilmington, NC, and Los Angeles. Mennonite Garifuna Mission also started two churches that are not necessarily Garifuna churches. Mennonite Garifuna Mission also supports other Garifuna churches that are not Mennonite churches.

Four churches were planted in Honduras, one of them in the capital, Tegucigalpa. Over the next few years, we are preparing to start new churches in Spain and France. We hope to send missionaries back to Africa in the future.

Many of the new Garifuna churches emerged from the Manhattan Garifuna Church. In Manhattan, we regularly identify, train, and send one, two, or three young couples to new places to start churches. When the Manhattan church decided to plant our first church in Brooklyn, we only had 30 members, including children and young people, at the time. A church need not be large to start another congregation. We choose young people to send before they are locked in to buying homes, getting a good job, and other western, materialistic temptations. We select the candidates carefully, and then mentor them in the home congregation for six months to two years until they are ready to go.

Leaders of Mennonite Garifuna Mission travel constantly to visit these families and help them to define a strategy to follow in the area and stay well connected to them. These leaders bring reports to the other churches in the network, and we do not abandon them if difficulties emerge. It can take two to five years for a new church to form and gain enough strength to function on its own.

Spiritually, we bathe our spiritual life in prayer. Congregations generally hold a prayer meeting every Sunday night for intercession. Prayer occurs regularly during the week. Prayer and fasting occurs once a month as a congregation. The churches commit to fast in January, June and October each year. Prayer powers because of the lack of resources. However, by the early 1700s both French and British navies sought to take over Saint Vincent. By 1795, the British controlled the island, slaughtered most of the Garifuna population, and murdered the leader, Joseph Chatoyer. The British captured the remaining Garifuna, perhaps as few as 5,000, and expelled them from the island. Many were exiled to Roatan, a small bay island off the coast of Honduras. By 1797, with the approval of the Spanish government, many Garifuna migrated from Roatan to the Honduran coast.

**GARIFUNA, CHRISTIAN, AND MENNONITE**

Being Garifuna connects a person to a language, a culture, and a history — in this case a history of tragedy, a culture of defeating obstacles, and a commitment to God’s mission. Employment and financial security have been consistent obstacles over the centuries, which have created emigration pressure. The search for work pushed the Garifuna people to major urban centers around the Atlantic basin and the western Pacific coast. The Garifuna communities that gather in these urban centers become locations of interest for Mennonite Garifuna Mission church planters.

Many Garifuna are Christians, many more are Mennonite Garifuna Mission church planters.
La historia de los garífunas — un relato sobre vencer obstáculos

POR PASTOR E. OMAR GUZMÁN

LMC cuenta con un cierto número de Iglesias Menonitas Garífunas. LMC también posee conexiones con una red de iglesias Garífunas alrededor de los EE. UU. y Centroamérica. Este grupo de iglesias realiza un increíble trabajo del Reino. Por lo tanto, ¿quién deberíamos preguntarnos “¿quienes son los garífunas?”

UN POCO DE HISTORIA

La historia de los garífunas constituye una especie de tragedia moderna en la civilización occidental. El pueblo garífunas se originó a partir de dos migraciones, una voluntaria, la otra forzada. Se cree que algunos pueblos africanos cruzaron el Atlántico, quizás hace tanto como en el año 1300 y llegaron a algunas de las islas de la cadena de las Antillas Menores al norte de la costa de Venezuela. Allí, se mezclaron con otros grupos tribales del Caribe. Otros africanos llegaron al Caribe como refugiados de la trata de esclavos. Los misioneros EMM fundaron una congregación garífunas en Honduras a finales del siglo XIX. En 1968, EMM fundó una congregación garífunas en Nueva York, la Iglesia Evangélica Garífuna en el Bronx con Celso Jaime como pastor. En 2004, después de mucho discernimiento, la iglesia del Bronx me envió a Manhattan para iniciar una nueva congregación, la Iglesia Evangélica Garífuna de Manhattan.

A partir de estos comienzos en Nueva York, emergió un movimiento multiplicador, la Misión Menonita Garífuna. En el transcurso de los últimos 10 años, se abrieron nuevas congregaciones en Brooklyn, una segunda congregación en el Bronx y congregaciones individuales en Miami, Houston, Nueva Orleans, Bostón, Seattle, Wilmington, NC y Los Ángeles. La Misión Menonita Garífuna también fundó dos iglesias que no son necesariamente garífunas. Igualmente, la Misión Menonita Garífuna apoya a otras iglesias garífunas que no se den en determinación misional.

En Honduras se plantaron cuatro iglesias, una de ellas en la capital, Tegucigalpa. En los próximos años, nos preparamos para fundar nuevas iglesias en España y Francia. Muchas de las iglesias garífunas nuevas surgen a partir de la Iglesia Garífuna de Manhattan. En esa localidad regularmente identificamos, entrenamos y enviámos de una a tres parejas jóvenes a sitios nuevos para que abran iglesias. Cuando la Iglesia de Manhattan decidió plantar nuestra primera iglesia en Brooklyn, solo contábamos con 30 miembros, incluyendo niños y jóvenes. Una iglesia no necesita ser grande para abrir esta congregación. Esos pequeños pensionaron jóvenes antes de que se involucraran en tentativas materialistas occidentales tales como comprar casa, buscar buenos trabajos y otros. Solíamos tomar a los candidatos cuidadosamente y luego los instruímos en la congregación local por espacio de seis meses a dos años hasta que estarían listos para partir.

GARÍFUNA, CRISTIANO Y MENONITA

Ser garífuna conecta a una persona con un idioma, una cultura y una historia; en este caso, una historia trágica, una cultura deoser obstáculos y un compromiso con la misión de Dios. El empleo y la seguridad financiera han representado obstáculos consistentes en el largo de los siglos. Los líderes de la Iglesia Garífuna de Manhattan, pero no desde líder de esta manera (discipulando y enviando) son reemplazados por aquellos que tienen esa visión. Creemos que la preparación de los líderes nuevos y jóvenes que enviámos a nuevos lugares debe ser realizada por los líderes.

Los pastores que no desean liderar de esta manera, disciplinan y enviando, son reemplazados por aquellos que tienen esa visión. Creemos que la preparación de los líderes nuevos y jóvenes que enviámos a nuevos lugares debe ser realizada por los líderes.

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New believers and emerging leaders have a mentor that walks with them on the Christian journey in order to provide some accountability. That is what we mean by intentional discipleship.

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Los líderes de la Misión Menonita Garífuna viajan constantemente para visitar a sus familias y ayudarles a definir una estrategia para seguir en el área, así como para permitir que las iglesias garífunas nuevas se unan a la congregación.

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**CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE:**

**Habecker Mennonite Church**

**DISTRICT:** Landisville-Manor District  
**LOCATION:** 451 Habecker Church Road, Lancaster, PA 17603  
**DATE OF FOUNDING:** 1724  
**AVERAGE SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE:** 150  
**WORSHIP SERVICE:** 10:00 a.m.  

**PASTORS:** Chris and Dawn Landes

Habecker Mennonite Church was established in the 1700’s by young immigrant farming families looking for a community of peace and faith. Today that spirit continues as Habecker is now an intercultural congregation of about three-fourths native Karen speakers and one-fourth native English speakers who worship their One God together in two languages. Our focus is on welcoming those who come and sharing our faith and gifts.

The Karens, originally from Myanmar/Burma, began coming to Lancaster around 2008 from refugee camps in Thailand. They brought with them their gifts of hospitality, singing, gardening and weaving, which fit so well with the Habecker members who hosted the first Karen families. Sewing circle is a busy place each month where old and young alike speak a common language of love, making comforters and kits to send to people in need around the world through Mennonite Central Committee.

Weekly gatherings include Sunday school and worship as well as afternoon thanksgiving services in different homes, celebrating birthdays or other significant milestones in the community. Of course those gatherings are not complete without a meal of food! The children would also love more people to help organize activities.

Check out our website at www.habeckerchurch.com to learn more.

**CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE:**

**Maple Grove Mennonite Church**

Maple Grove Mennonite Church is celebrating its 150th anniversary in August of 2018. We were the first Mennonite Church in what we know as the Big Valley in central Pennsylvania. While there were other Anabaptist groups, including Amish in the area long before 1868, we emerged from a progressive split from one of the Amish churches. There are currently many expressions of Anabaptist faith in the Big Valley, including three different Amish groups identified by the color of their buggies: yellow, black, and white. In many ways, our community mirrors Lancaster County but without all the tourists, traffic, and restaurants.

When we ask the community around our church who they think Maple Grove is, the answers we get depend on who you ask. There are still some who equate Mennonites with Amish. These people are somewhat surprised to learn that they are welcome to worship with us and can join our church. Visitors generally respond by saying they find the Maple Grove congregation warm and welcoming.

Maple Grove has developed a number of leaders and pastors over the decades. We identify and develop emerging leaders consistently and send them in various ways. Alan Kauffman, the current pastor, was raised and nurtured from within the congregation. He was later identified as having pastoral gifts and was first called to serve as pastor at Glad Mennonite church (also part of LMC) for 12 years before returning to Maple Grove in 2003. Because many leaders were identified, trained and called over the years at Maple Grove, we were one of the featured congregations in a video focused on internal leader development back in the 1990s. The Mennonite Church produced this video to highlight this ‘called from within’ process and encourage other churches to do the same.

Maple Grove gives in a variety of ways, and we engage the community around us and beyond. We regularly offer our facilities and our van to people in the community. We participate in a number of mission efforts, including a local homeless shelter, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Operation Christmas Child, MDS, Sewing Circle, MCC, Meals on Wheels, Vacation Bible School and more. When there is a need, we rally to meet the need as we are able. In 2015, Evan Yoder, a young adult in our congregation, was involved in a swimming accident, leaving him paralyzed from the shoulders down. We were a major part of a larger community effort to raise money and to build him a state-of-the-art apartment attached to his family’s house.

We are in the middle of a five-year goal focus. In our first year, we focused on the Bible with our “Year of the Bible.” Currently, our focus is missions. We are considering the start of a “Parents’ Nite Out” program, which provides babysitting services for the parents in the congregation and the community in order to give couples time alone for a few hours. Yet to come will be a two-year focus on current congregational structure.
WOMEN’S CONFERENCE IN TANZANIA
The Mennonite Church in Tanzania hosted a conference for women from June 11–17. Women from Byerland Mennonite Church and a congregation in Ohio were invited to attend. The theme of the conference centered around Joshua 1:1–7. Women focused on witness, community engagement, deliverance, and trauma healing. A final goal of the conference was to start a new church.

HILL TOP FUN FEST
The annual Slate Hill Mennonite Church Fun Fest occurred on June 2. The HillTop Fun Fest provides free food and lots of fun to the whole community. Visitors enjoy food, games, live music, and fellowship while learning about area ministries and Slate Hill Mennonite Church. This year activities included cornhole tournaments, a bounce house, kids crafts and a variety of games, face-painting, a petting zoo, hayrides, and a juggling performance at the end of the evening.

STEP FORMALLY MOVED TO LMC
On July 1, the STEP ministry program went under the control of LMC. Interim Director, Brinton Rutherford, oversaw the transition during the 2017–2018 academic year. EMU will continue to provide the 30 credits for successful completion of the program. One of the results of the administrative change is a decrease in overhead costs, which has been passed on to students. Tuition will decrease from $3,300 per year to $3,000 per year.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION GRANT
The Quiet Shouts Fund recently disbanded and the funds in the account were divided between LMC and Atlantic Coast Conference. LMC has placed these funds in an account to fund educational opportunities for women. The funds should be in place for disbursement of funds by the fall.

LMC NAME ADAPTATION
As you may have noticed, we’ve begun transitioning to the updated LMC name here in Shalom News, our website and other communication materials. We plan to complete the transition in the coming months.

MINISTERIAL ACTIVITIES
The following men and women were licensed, ordained or installed in recent months:

- **Josef Berthold (Brenda)**, was installed as bishop of the West End Network.
- **Jeremy (Jay) Conn (Vicki)**, was ordained as lead pastor at Martins Creek Mennonite Church.
- **Leonard Dow (Roseuil)**, began his role as pastor of Finance Stewardship for Everson.
- **Rodney Martin (Angela)**, was installed as bishop of the Lancaster, Lititz and Mellinger Districts.
- **Daniel B. Martinez (Marlene)**, was licensed for specific ministry as missionary to Ukraine under Concilio Iglesias Evangélicas Shalom.
- **Marlene D. Martinez (Clavel)**, was licensed for specific ministry as missionary to Ukraine under Concilio Iglesias Evangélicas Shalom.
- **Jonathan Merwarth (Carol)**, was ordained as elder at Maranatha Family Christian Fellowship.
- **Joseph Miller (Lulu)**, was installed as bishop of the Lancaster, Lititz and Mellinger Districts.
- **Miguel Ramos (Mania)**, was ordained as lead pastor at Roca de Restauracion.
- **Albert James Schwartz (Mary Carol)**, was ordained as associate pastor at First Mennonite Church, Berne.
- **Victor Vargas (Virginia)**, was ordained as lead pastor at Iglesia Pentecostes de Woodburn.
- **Efrain Zayas (Lisset)**, was ordained as lead pastor at Iglesia Menonita Palabra de Vida.

MENEZONITE WORLD CONFERENCE
Keith Weaver joined the MWC General Council meetings April 23–26 to represent LMC. One of the first actions of the General Council was to receive LMC as a full member of MWC. Participation in MWC will help LMC nurture valued partnerships with our fraternal partners in the global South. The gathering gave strong consensus to LMC’s application for admission.

MINDI HOOVER JOINS LMC STAFF
Mindi Hoover began work as a part-time administrative assistant for LMC in May. Beginning in July, she will begin as the part-time Administrative Assistant for the STEP ministry program. Mindi lives in New Holland with her husband, Sheldon, and five children. They served for three years with New Hope Uganda and attend Byerland Mennonite Church.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Complete calendar and more details available at LMCchurches.org.

Monday Night Prayer Gathering
Every first Monday of each month
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Conference office, Lancaster, Pa.
717-293-5246

Thursday Night Quarterly Prayer Meeting
July 19, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
717-293-5246

LMC Youth Worker Monthly Breakfast
Every fourth Tuesday of each month
8:00 – 9:30 a.m.
Lyndon City Diner, Lancaster, Pa.
facebook.com/groups/LMCYouthWorkers

Discipleship Conference 2018 with EMM
August 24, 7 p.m.
and 25, 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.
St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, Elizabethtown, Pa.
www.emm.org/discipleship2018

LMC Fall Leadership Assembly
September 29, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Strasburg Mennonite Church, Strasburg, Pa.
www.LMCchurches.org/leadership-assembly-resourcing

2018 Disciplemakers Summit with EMM
October 29 – November 1
MCC’S Welcoming Place, Akron, Pa.
www.emm.org/disciplemakers

Women’s Regional Gathering
November 3, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Stumptown Mennonite Church, Bird-in-hand, Pa.
www.LMCchurches.org/event/womens-regional-gathering

EMM Vision and Fundraising Banquet
November 3, 6:30 p.m.
Eden Resort Courtyard, Pa.
www.emm.org/banquet

Global Fair
July 19, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
717-293-5246

Global Fair
July 19, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
717-293-5246

Global Fair
July 7, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.
Hans Herr House, Willow Street, Pa.
emm.org/globalfair

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July 7, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.
Hans Herr House, Willow Street, Pa.
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JOURNEYS OF HOPE FALL BANQUET
featuring speaker Catherine P. Downing, author of Sparks of Redemptive Grace
October 4th, 2018
Calvary Church | Lancaster
RSVP online at www.nlam.org or call 717-390-4891.

September 8, 2018
Benefit Live Auction & Silent Auction
Market Place, Yard Sale, Children’s Area, Food Court, BBQ Chicken
Landis Homes
www.landishomes.org 717-569-3271

Choice Books’ mission is to share the good news of Jesus Christ in the general marketplace through inspiring and wholesome reading material.

Choice Books of Pennsylvania services nearly 850 of these displays in the Mid-Atlantic states. For more information about Choice Books, visit their website at www.choicebooks.org.

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A Sending Celebration: worker commissioning
July 8 at 6:30 p.m.
Oakwood Chapel
Black Rock Retreat, Quarryville, Pa.
emm.org/commissioning

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