

ANABAPTISM 500: PRESENTATIONS BY GARETH BRANDT

A number of activities and projects are being initiated around the world to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Anabaptist origins in 2025. This portfolio includes some of my contributions to this commemoration. As a former college professor who taught Anabaptist History & Theology for 17 years, I have both the academic background and the personal passion for the subject matter. As an ordained Mennonite minister for more than three decades, I have a deep and enduring commitment to the churches and denominations that have grown out of these origins. As an artist, I have the creativity and gifts for engaging and meaningful oral and visual presentations.

SIGNATURE OFFERINGS:

I offer a variety of presentations, but these are ones that are uniquely suitable for celebrating the origins of Anabaptism 500 years ago.

- **“What Happened 500 Years Ago and Why it Still Matters”** is a lecture / workshop that uses a timeline of events related to the Anabaptist movement from 1522 to 1527 to explain the “polygenesis” (diverse origins) of the Anabaptist movement and how those diverse origins might also result in diverse expressions today.
- **“Becoming Anabaptist”** is a poignant, dramatic, and sometimes humorous poetry reading about personalities and events in the 16th century Anabaptist movement, and my own experiences of becoming Anabaptist and being Mennonite.
- **“Roll Over Menno”** is a sermon on 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 (a text that contains Menno’s motto verse 11) that likens the factions in Corinth to that of Mennonites over the years and presently.
- **“Radical Roots: Sites and Stories of Anabaptist Origins”** is a portable art gallery of 15 watercolor paintings with accompanying story placards. This can be set up almost anywhere and is perfectly paired with a sermon, lecture, storytelling, and/or a poetry reading.

NOW AVAILABLE!

Radical Roots is a full-color coffee table book including above paintings, stories, and poetry. Inquire at your local bookstore or order from the publisher.

<https://www.masthof.com/collections/new-books/products/radical-roots>

OTHER STORYTELLING AND POETRY READINGS:

- **“Stories of the Anabaptists”** Any number or combination of stories and/or poems from each of the geographical regions of Anabaptist origins that highlight major events and personalities of early Anabaptism.
- **“What do you see in the Martyr’s Mirror?”** Readings and paraphrases of letters and stories from *Martyr’s Mirror* and writings from the 16th century.
- **“From Carousing Dropout to Courageous Leader”** A reading of the paraphrased letters of Conrad Grebel to his mentor, Vadian, that illustrate the transformation of this important early Anabaptist leader.
- **“Menno Goes to School”** This is an imaginative story, especially for children, about what Menno learned in school, most likely a Franciscan monastery near his home.
- **“Naked Anabaptists and Celtic Clothes”** is a narrated slide show of a visit to London, England and Iona Scotland, comparing two different movements on the edge of Christendom.

OTHER SERMONS:

- Genesis 1 “A Pacifist Creation Story” contrasts the poem in Genesis 1 with the Babylonian creation myth of the exilic era.
- Deuteronomy 20:16-18, etc. “Conquering Canaan (Canada) for Christ” reads these texts in light of the Doctrine of Discovery and the process of reconciliation with our Indigenous hosts.
- Psalm 109 “I Want to Strangle You!” How does a pacifist pray a psalm calling for extremely violent vengeance?
- Micah 6:1-8 “What does God want from us?” An exposition of a familiar verse in its literary and prophetic context
- Matthew 5:38-48 “How to be a Perfect Christian” explores alternative ways of looking at this favorite Anabaptist text.
- Matthew 11:2-11 “What are you expecting?” addresses our misconstrued ideas about judgment; ideal for Advent.
- Luke 3:21-22 “Who am I?” addresses the big question of identity using the words Jesus heard at his baptism: “You are my beloved one in whom I am well-pleased.”
- Luke 4:14-30 “Why did Jesus come?” lets Jesus explain the purposes of his coming: to bring peace and justice.
- Romans 12:17-21 “What would you do if...?” explores the classic question posed to pacifists with a biblical and practical response.
- Luke 12:49-53; 19:36-46; 22:35-38 “Does the Prince of Peace promote violence?” looks at three difficult texts in the Gospels.
- Ephesians 6:10-20 “Spiritual Warfare” looks at the weapons of the Spirit that equip us to wage peace.
- 2 Peter 3:8-13 “Beginning with the End” explains how eschatology shapes our present life, ideal for the New Year.
- “Walking in the Resurrection” based on 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Romans 6:4 is a topical sermon using insights from Myron Augsburger’s classic devotional book.

OTHER LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS:

- “An Anabaptist Peace Theology” looks at the biblical foundations for peacemaking and the varieties of biblical pacifism.
- “School of Heretics” examines an Anabaptist view of Scripture rooted in historical practices and based on the present Mennonite World Conference statement on Scripture.
- “Communion Services: Sip or Sup? Closed or Open? Serious or Celebratory?” examines some of the common issues concerning the meaning and practice of communion.
- “From Munster to Menno” makes the claim that the Munster debacle profoundly shaped Menno’s [and subsequent Mennonites’] spirituality and theology.
- “Second-Hand Pants” explores an economic spirituality and imagines practical opportunities for simple living.
- “Meanwhile on Turtle Island” explains how the Doctrine of Discovery was being enacted in North America at the same time as Anabaptist origins were happening in Europe.
- “Mennonite Privilegium” faces the truth of how Mennonite settlers in various regions of Canada have benefitted from the displacement of Metis and Indigenous peoples.
- “Prague, Poland & Politics” is a narrated slide show of a historical tour, reflecting on how Mennonites were caught amidst political changes, making us wonder how we might respond to our own political realities.
- “Running toward Community” develops a biblical theology of diversity in community and applies it to various issues of division and separation that plague us.
- “The Transformation of Menno Simons” chronicles the influences that led Menno to leave the Catholic priesthood to join the radical Anabaptists.
- “Under Construction: Reframing Men’s Spirituality” deconstructs warrior-based men’s spirituality and proposes a constructive model based on collegiality and nonviolence.
- “Violence in the Bible” gives various Christian responses to this age-old hermeneutical dilemma. This can be divided into two, one for both testaments.

“Anabaptist Beginnings”

This is a four-session course (with optional expansion to as many as 12 sessions) that introduces the 16th century Anabaptist movement using PowerPoint pictures from Europe. It includes both historical stories and theological reflections on present issues.

- Major Cultural Shift: Life in the 16th century
- Baptism as Rebellion: The Swiss Anabaptist Movement
- Picnic Blanket Community: The German/Austrian Anabaptist Movement
- Responding to Violence: The Dutch Anabaptist Movement

HONORARIUM

Although I appreciate a generous honorarium for my engagements, I have no required fees and do not want money to be a barrier to my services. I appreciate openness about what can and will be offered so that my expenses can be covered. Please use \$250 per session as a guide.