

# Transmission Indonesia 2021

## Study guide



How does dialogue happen between Muslims and Christians  
in different settings and cultures, and in spite of  
ethnic and religious differences?

By: Hajo Hajonides

# Contents

- Introduction
- Discussion topics
- Historical context for Indonesia
- Historical context for the Netherlands
- Some numbers
- Profiles
- The Transmission video series
- Supporters and Sponsors

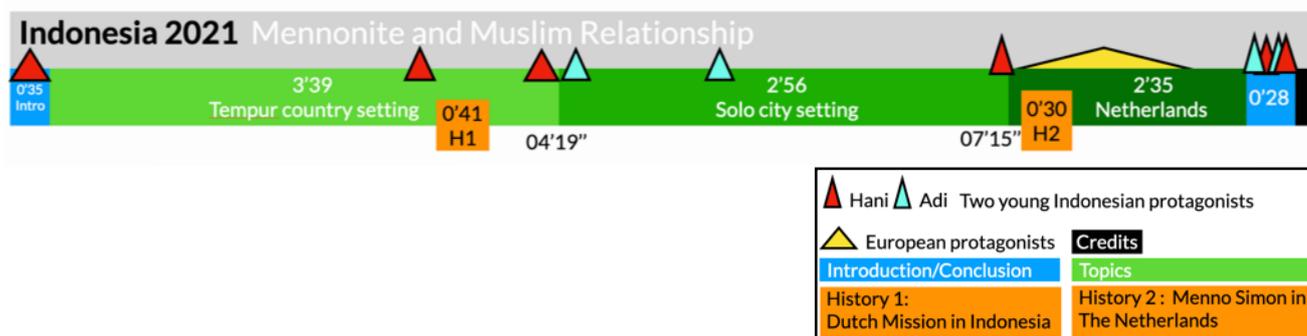
## Introduction

Transmission is a series of five, 10-minute video productions leading up to 2025, the 500-year celebration of the Anabaptist movement. Indonesia 2021 is the second in that series. Each of the productions gives voice to young adults from a different continent. In each case, they grapple with issues they face as Anabaptists.

In this video, Hani and Adi share their faith journeys on how they relate as Mennonites (a small minority) and Muslims (a large majority) in Indonesia. Hani reflects on how she sees the face of God in the people (both Muslim and Christian) she encounters in the remote village of Tempur, high in the mountains of Jepara. Adi introduces the viewer to the power of interfaith dialogue and the resulting transformation of Solo from a city of violence to a city of peace.

From Indonesia the story jumps to the Netherlands, where the relationship between Anabaptists and Muslims is impacted by a Muslim minority. The main issue there is the segregation in the Christian church in relation to the different Muslim communities.

### Timeline Video Transmission Indonesia 2021



This study guide is designed to provide added perspective and depth to these faith journeys. Canadians, Europeans, and Indonesians worked together to bring this unique production to life.

The video “Transmission Indonesia 2021” and this study guide can be found on:

<https://www.affox.ch/en/current-project/>

## Discussion topics

The idea is to view the video in a group setting, maybe even watching the video twice followed by a discussion. As discussion leader, you can guide the conversation with your own questions and input, but the questions below can also help you in this discussion. Of course, you can pick the questions you think are interesting for your group. The situation you are in may differ from the issues addressed in this video and in these questions. If you come up with new insights or questions, please feel free to share them with the production group by contacting [hajo.hajonides@ziggo.nl](mailto:hajo.hajonides@ziggo.nl)



**1.** In Indonesia, the Christians form a very small minority in a Muslim country. Of the 276 million inhabitants 86.7% is Muslim and 10.7% is Christian. In the Netherlands and Europe, the percentages are opposite. What is the situation in your country? Are there religious majorities and minorities, and how do they relate to each other?

**2.** In Europe, society is becoming more secular. Many people say they no longer believe in God and do not visit a church. Would you consider yourself a believer? Why do you think that non-believers come to their conviction that God does not exist for them?



**3.** Do you describe yourself as a practicing Christian or Muslim? In other words, do you participate regularly in worship, a religious discussion group or other religious events? What attracts you to take part? Which religious gatherings are your favorite and why?

**4.** Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world. This of course has an influence on daily life. What are some important differences between your situation and the situation in Indonesia? Is your religion present every day for you and in what way? If your religion is not present every day, how often do you have religious thoughts or experiences and what are they?

**5.** In your country, are there feelings of anxiety, mistrust or indifference between the different religions? If so, what do you notice about these feelings? Where do the feelings come from?



**6.** Adi states that his Muslim friends hope to bring peace. Making peace turns out to be a very human desire, apart from religion. Still, it seems that violence adds urgency in relationships; at least in Solo that was the case. Is there a similar threat in your environment that makes it necessary to start talking with the other party? Why do we find it difficult to listen to people with opinions and beliefs different from ours?

**7.** In Europe religious traditions are heavily influenced by culture and ethnicity, and differences can be great. This has led to many different religious directions. In Indonesia people also experience different cultures and ethnicity, but it seems that the shared (Muslim) religion gives them unity. What is your situation with regard to culture, ethnic differences and religious traditions? In what ways do they strengthen or weaken co-existence?

**8.** Most of the time religious anxiety has its roots in history, culture and misunderstandings between people. Talk about these roots in your own situation. How can people overcome these barriers? Think of small steps.



**9.** Poniyah, the first Christian in Tempur, had a hard time in finding her Christian belief. Share something about your road to your belief.

**10.** Poniyah was an outcast, even to her husband. How do people in your environment respond to you being a believer?



**11.** In 1986 Suwadi (Poniyah's husband) converted to Christianity. He found his belief in Matthew 5 and John 14:6. What is the scriptural anchor in your belief?

**12.** Muslims and Christians in Tempur helped each other in building and renovating their places of worship. Are there similar projects in your community, and if not, would you strive for projects like that? Could you think of actual (local) projects that would bring people of the different religions together?



**13.** Hani choose to be a Mennonite because of the church's position on peace. What factors helped you choose your religion?

**14.** Adi says that the city of Solo (Surakarta) was the base of about 30 Islamic militias, and in 1998 severe riots in Solo led to the loss of thousands of lives. Why do you think that religious militias emerge and choose a violent approach? What kind of people are members of these militias, and what is their background? Are there other ways to address their concerns and feelings?



**15.** Paulus Hartono, a Mennonite pastor in Solo said: "We carry out analyses and prepare strategies on how to build peace in the city. Being present at the location where we are needed is very important. We work at building interfaith dialog honestly, sincerely, and thoughtfully, to cause change." Paulus started many interesting projects. Would such an approach work in your situation? Why or why not?

**16.** Hani says that building a sustainable peace demands a long-term commitment. How can we maintain the courage to go on despite disappointments and setbacks? How can we devote ourselves to such a long-term commitment?

**17.** Annegreet (a Dutch Mennonite pastor) talks about the secularization in the Netherlands and also in Europe. Is that process going on in your country? Is that a direction you are happy with? One point raised in the Dutch discussion is lack of integration of minorities in that society. How is the situation in your country? What could be done about that?



**18.** Although in many parts of the world Muslim radicalism is feared, Matthijs suggests that Europe knows less terrorism or violence but that the Muslims in Europe feel as if their culture is neglected by the national culture. Also some Dutch feel that their culture is changing. Is this the situation in your context and what could be future consequences? Explain how you see the situation where you live.

**19.** Annegreet suggests that we should go for the extra mile to deal with the integration issue. What could that extra mile look like?

**20.** Adi ends with: "Love your neighbor as yourself," and he asks the most penetrating question: "Do we live it?" What is your response?

**21.** Hani Ends with: It only takes a small portion of ginger in the same cup of coffee, to create a wonderful new flavor! What do you think of this conclusion.

## Historical context for Indonesia a



### Javanese Mennonite Church, Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa

Three streams of church life flow together in the life of the Javanese Mennonite Church that calls itself Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa (GITJ).

The first influence is of the Dutch Mennonite Mission (Doopsgezinde Zending) formed in the Netherlands in 1847, which sent its first missionaries, Pieter and Wilhelmina Jansz, to Java in 1851. The first Mennonite mission congregation in the Dutch East Indies (today Indonesia) was formed in the coastal town of Jepara, at the western foot of Mount Muria, when the first believers were baptized in 1854 by Pieter Jansz.

The second stream is represented by a Reformed congregation begun in Kayuapu at the southern foot of Mount Muria, under the leadership of

missionary Hoesoo of the Dutch Missionary Fellowship (NZG--Nederlandsch Zendingen Genootschap).

The third stream is a large, powerful indigenous Javanese Christian movement, under the leadership of Ibrahim Tunggal Wulung. He was a scion of the royal family of Solo in Central Java and he became a hermit mystic on Mount Kelut in East Java.

Eventually, by the turn of the twentieth century, all three of these streams were united into one family of congregations under the leadership and care of the Dutch Mennonite Mission, with missionaries from Netherlands, Russia, and later Germany and Switzerland.

The independence of Indonesia provided the opportunity for the churches to develop and grow, though not without struggle. Eventually, with renewed help from Europeans and the North American Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) they were able to resurrect one of the mission hospitals and reopen many schools and start others, including one, and later a second, theological school in Pati. The church grew very rapidly, though in a predominately Islamic context. In the 1990s the synod suffered from a schism, which after several years was healed. Now the GITJ Synod consists of 114 mature congregations, many congregations in formation, and some 45,000 baptized members.

The video takes viewers to Tempur, a small village at the foot of the mountain Muria. In this village a small Mennonite community is integrated into a large Muslim community. The church and mosque are directly opposite each other, and both communities help each other when help is needed. It is a happy and harmonious community.

### **Muria Mennonite Christian Church in Indonesia, Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia**

Like GITJ, the Muria Mennonite Christian Church in Indonesia or Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI) is a member of Mennonite World Conference (MWC). The church reports 56 congregations and more than 17.600 members living in Java, Bali, Sumatra and Kalimantan.

GKMI started as an indigenous Christian movement begun by a Chinese Indonesian couple by the name Tee Siem Tat and Sie Djoen Nio. This happened in the city of Kudus in north Central Java in the early 1900s. The group identified with the Mennonite family of churches when the first believers sought baptism from Russian Mennonite missionaries working under the Dutch Mennonite Mission (Doopsgezinde Zendingsvereniging) in the Muria area in December 1920.

This group organized itself in 1925 using the Dutch language name Chineesche Doopsgezinde Christengemeente (Chinese Mennonite Congregation) and was recognized by the government of the Dutch East Indies in 1927. By the 1940s a half dozen congregations had been formed incorporating also groups of Chinese Indonesian believers who had come to faith through the ministries of the Mennonite missionaries working mostly among the Javanese population in the area. They sometimes also used the Chinese name Tiong Hwa Kie Tok Kau Hwe (Chinese Christian Church). In 1948 they organized themselves into a synod called Khu Hwee Muria. By 1958 they changed the name of the synod to Persatuan Gereja-Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (Union of Muria Christian Churches of Indonesia).

The GKMI sprang up in Chinese Indonesian communities in the towns surrounding Mount Muria, an ancient volcano along the north coast of in Central Java. Since 1960 it has spread beyond the Muria area and into other ethnic groups on the four main islands of western Indonesia.

The video shows the GKMI church of Paulus Hartono in Solo (Surakarta). Solo has always been a proud city. For hundreds of years it served as the home of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom. Solo is also known for batik, royal traditions and cultural festivals.

But Solo has another reputation as a “city with a short fuse.” It was a center of the infamous riots in the period between 1911 and 1999. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the riots were very much aimed at the Chinese Javanese and had a deep impact on the members of the GKMI. Even now, Solo is known as a breeding ground for extremist networks, including Jamaah Islamiyah, an Al-Qaeda-affiliated network in Southeast Asia. Solo-based Islamic groups had ties with the Christian-Muslim wars in 1997 to 2001, the Bali bombings of 2002 and

2005, the Marriott Hotel bombing in Jakarta and more. The city suffered religious and sectarian attacks, even in recent years.

In the last few years, much work has been done on peace initiatives in Solo. Paulus Hartono, a Mennonite pastor, together with the commander of the Hizbullah Front, Yanni Rusmanto, took the first steps for a peaceful cooperation. The road to peace was bumpy, but in the end they found friendship, understanding and trust. The Perdamaian peace library mentioned in the video was set up to connect Christian and Muslim students and to initiate peace discussions and activities.

### Indonesian Christian Congregation, Jemaat Kristen Indonesia

The youngest Mennonite related church in Indonesia is Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (JKI). This church was founded in 1984 by Adi Sutanto as a split from the GKMI. This church has a charismatic and evangelistic worship style. JKI consists of 325 churches with around 40,000 members. The churches are concentrated mostly in Java, in cities and towns with the biggest church in Semarang. There are also six congregations in Southern California and one in The Netherlands.

## Historical context for the Netherlands



Many Christians in the Anabaptist tradition call themselves Mennonites or Mennoniten, after their influential leader Menno Simons. He was born around 1496 in the Dutch (Frisian) village Witmarsum. In 1524 he became a Catholic priest in the nearby village of Pingjum. Menno Simons sharpened his beliefs by reading the Bible, he left the Catholic church and started preaching the Anabaptist principles.

In 1535 some Anabaptists tried to establish God's Kingdom on earth with extensive violence, which was answered by more

violence against them. But for Menno Simons, nonviolence and defenselessness were essential concepts. His most important writing was "*A Fundamental Doctrine from the Word of the Lord*". In the darkest period, when persecution was at its highest level, Menno Simons took the lead of the much attacked congregations and led them through difficult times. In later years, the Mennonites were severely persecuted and many of them fled to Poland and from there to Ukraine, Canada, United States and further.

Today in the Netherlands, there are about 5,000 followers of Menno, in around 100 congregations. They call themselves Doopsgezinden. They are members of the Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit (ADS). The Dutch Mennonites are active in all kinds of workgroups worldwide and try to bring good works to as many places in the world as possible.

In the 1950s, the number of Muslims in the Netherlands increased because of immigration from Indonesia. The first (wooden) mosque was built in 1951 in Balk in Friesland by a group of Moluccans ex-KNIL soldiers. The first stone mosque, the Mobarak mosque in the Hague, was built in 1955.

In the 1960s, tens of thousands of Turkish and Moroccan guest workers came to the Netherlands to work in the Dutch industry. In the 1970s and 1980s, many guest workers were joined by their families. The thought of a speedy return to their homelands faded, as the guest workers, together with their families, sought a place in the Dutch society. They sought space for their religious practices, and the number of mosques increased rapidly. The first mosques were often “living room mosques” and later, business premises, schools and association buildings were rented or bought.

In 1975 the former colony of Suriname became independent. In 1980, 300,000 Surinamese took advantage of the opportunity to settle in the Netherlands. About 10 percent of Surinamese in the Netherlands is Muslim, with origins in India or Java.

Not only guest labor and family reunification led to a growth of the Muslim population; from the late 1980s their number has increased due to a growing flow of refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East. This group is composed mainly of Iraqis, Syrians, Afghans and refugees from former Yugoslavia.

Because it was thought that the immigrants would eventually go back to their original countries, not much attention was given to integration of these people into the larger Dutch society. This led to several isolated groups within the Dutch society, where their own language is still spoken, their home traditions continue and where, because of language difference, education lagged behind mainstream education. This has led to much frustration, especially from the second and third generation, who sought their identity in their parents' traditions and ways of living.

The mutual understanding amongst the various groups living in the country came under heavy pressure. And this is the situation today. The immigrants as well as the more established Dutch population both fear for their traditions and their way of living. There are many initiatives to overcome the differences, but mutual distrust is great.

## **Some numbers :**

### **Religion in Indonesia**

Total population 2021: 276.4 million:

- Islam (86.7%)
- Protestantism & other Christians (10.7%); About 108.000 Mennonites
- Catholicism (3.12%)
- Hinduism (1.74%)
- Buddhism (0.8%)
- Confucianism (0.03%)

### **Religion in the Netherlands**

Total population 2021: 17.4 million:

- No religion (54.1%)
- Protestantism & other Christians (20.7%). About 5.000 Mennonites (Doopsgezinden)
- Catholicism (20.1%)
- Islam (5.0%)

## Religion in the world

- Christianity is the fastest growing religion worldwide. Today around 2.3 billion People on Earth call themselves Christians.
- Islam is number two. Currently there are almost 1.8 billion Muslims in the world.
- With over 950 million followers, Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world, mainly in India.
- Worldwide, 658 million people call themselves non-religious or agnostic and 138 million atheists.

## Profiles

**Hani Yopitha** is a member of the Jepara Mennonite church.

**Poniyah** was the first Christian in the northern town of Tempur.

**Suwadi** is the husband of Poniyah and administrator for the Mennonite church in Tempur. He is the younger brother of the keeper of the mosque

**Mariyono** is the mayor of Tempur village.

**Danang Kristiawan** is a Mennonite pastor at the GITJ church in Jepara. He is also the director of the peace commission of GTIJ and lecturer at the Mennonite Seminary. Amongst others, Danang organizes mixed Muslim-Christian summer camps and arranges live-in arrangements where young Muslims live with a Christian family and vice versa. He has also done research in the small town of Tempur, where the Muslim and Christian community live harmoniously together and even celebrate each other's holidays.

**Adi** is a church member of the Mennonite church in Solo.

**Paulus Hartono** is a Mennonite pastor at the GKMI church in Solo and director of the Mennonite Diakonia Service (MDS). Paulus has taken many initiatives in the field of Christian-Muslim dialogue. His most notable achievement is that he established a close cooperation between the local Hizbullah militia and the Mennonite Church. About this process, Paulus wrote an interesting book: "*The radical Muslim and Mennonite*". Together they carry out projects, especially in the field of practical emergency aid and organizing peace training for mixed groups of Muslims and Christians.

**Dian Nafi** is the leader of the Al-Mu áyyat Islamic boarding school

**Setyawan Adi** serves as librarian of Perdamaian Peace Library

**Aldi Rizky** is a student at the Al-Mu áyyat Islamic Boarding school.

**Annegreet van der Wijk** is the Mennonite pastor of the Dutch congregation in Bussum-Naarden.

**Hanneke Poorta** is a member of the Bussum-Naarden Mennonite church.

**Janneke Priester** is a member of the Bussum-Naarden Mennonite church.

**Matthys Hajonides** is a member of the Bussum-Naarden Mennonite church.

**Laura Wiskerke** is a member of the Bussum-Naarden Mennonite church.

## The Transmission video series

Producer Max Wiedmer, a Swiss Mennonite from Affox (a video, film, and multimedia company), together with Hajo Hajonides, a Dutch Mennonite, from the International Menno Simons Center, developed a video project to commemorate the first Anabaptist baptism in Zurich, in 1525. Alongside other festivities being organized in Europe, the two partners are producing five short videos each year between 2020 and 2024. Each video covers a topic that is close to the hearts of the Mennonites around the world. To emphasize the global dimension, the videos are being filmed in different countries.

These videos are intended to be used in workshops, discussion groups, Sunday schools, and so on. The videos are narrated or subtitled in several languages, making them widely applicable. Each title has a study guide which provides background information about the country where the recordings were made and about the subject itself. The guides include questions that can serve as a basis for discussion.

In 2020 the first video was produced, on the subject “freedom of belief.” This film was shot in Ethiopia and is about the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, which was heavily oppressed during the country’s totalitarian communist regime. In spite of that oppression, the church grew—an impressive development.

The Transmission video series can be found on the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) website: <https://mwc-cmm.org/> Search for „Transmission“ and on: <https://www.affox.ch/en/current-project/>

## Project supporters

The production group offers thanks to these contributors and the many others who helped make this video possible.

### Partners

AFHAM, Association Française d’Histoire Anabaptiste-Mennonite: <https://histoire-menno.net/>

AMBD, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Deutschland e.V.; <https://ambd.de/>

Anabaptist Mennonite Network: <https://amnetwork.uk/>

IMSC, International Menno Simons Centrum: [www.mennosimonscentrum.nl/Imsc\\_English\\_site](http://www.mennosimonscentrum.nl/Imsc_English_site)

Mennonite Church Canada International Witness: <https://www.mennonitechurch.ca/international-witness>

Mennonite World Conference, a community of Anabaptist-related churches celebrating 500 years in 2025.

## Sponsors

Affox AG, Switzerland

Anabaptist Mennonite Network, Great Britain

Horsch-Stiftung, Germany

International Menno Simons Centrum, Netherlands

Doopsgezinde Stichting DOWILVO, Netherlands

Stichting het Weeshuis van de Doopsgezinde Collegianten De Oranjeappel, Netherlands

Fonds van de Doopsgezinde Gemeente Zuid-Limburg, Netherlands

Commissie Indonesië, Netherlands