Circles – moved by the idea of a circle; creates a powerful image; chose the moon because it also contains both shadow and light
We heard that Mennonite faith and theology is present and important in Mennonite peacebuilding work. Here it is represented by the movement of the Holy Spirit. Faith is where peacebuilders find strength and hope to continue. We see God’s spirit when offenders are moved to repent and victims to forgive. The strength of Mennonite theology is in reconciliation and forgiveness, but we need to work on a theology that supports victims, such as lament.
Internal conflicts are in the shadow side. To look at the way Mennonites deal with our own conflicts, one might be surprised we are peacebuilders. Current and historical division among our churches, our participation in the colonization of indigenous land, the struggle to include people with other gender and sexual orientations, and re-victimization of women who have suffered domestic or sexual violence. We prefer to focus peacebuilding on others rather than ourselves.
Invoked in our peacebuilding work. We listened to stories of courage and resilience of people in communities working to achieve structural change.
Impacts of race on our peacebuilding are also in the shadow side. While Mennonites come from all over the world, White Mennonites struggle to see a Mennonite identity separate from their ethnic traditions. Many Mennonite peacebuilding institutions are led by white Mennonites and much of the funding comes from white Mennonites. There is a reluctance to do real anti-racism work. Also, if peacebuilding is decolonization, as was one thesis, than we need to work to decolonize our own structures.
This is a ray of hope in Mennonite peacebuilding. We were inspired by the deep commitment to work shoulder to shoulder with partners on the ground in peacebuilding, to take partners seriously.
We were reminded that while we work for justice and peace we also need to acknowledge the pain too. We need to be alive physically and psychologically to do peacebuilding.
Around the edge we have the cycles of the moon. This reflects the dynamic nature of peacebuilding. Sometimes we will be more in the shadow, sometime in the light. This is natural and okay.
Reflections (in notes below pictures) by Sara Brubacher and Myla Leguro
Artwork by Sara Brubacher
Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival
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