



ALLEGHENY MISCELLANY

The official newsletter of Allegheny Mennonite Conference

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100 FOR \$10



CONSIDER GIVING TO "100 FOR \$10"
STRENGTHENING OUR FAITH COMMUNITY
TOGETHER

Be Part of the Movement

- Be one of the 100: Start a recurring gift of \$10/month (or any amount you choose)
- Spread the word: Invite others in your congregation or network to join the mission

SAVE THE DATES!

2026 AMC Celebration Weekend:

July 31 - August 2, 2026

Laurelville Retreat Center, Mt. Pleasant, PA

Registration is open! Visit the *Events* section of our website to register today!

WHERE IS YOUR CONFERENCE MINISTER?

June 3--Pastor Peer Gathering in Bedford, PA

June 28--Friendship Mennonite Church

July 31-August 2--AMC Celebration Weekend

August 15--West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship

July 6-11, 2027--Mennonite Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio



CELEBRATION 2026 REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

Registration is now open for this year's Allegheny Mennonite Conference Celebration Weekend at Laurelville, **July 31-August 2, 2026!** Visit the *Events* section of our website or scan the QR code to register. <https://www.alleghenymennoniteconference.org/>

We're excited to introduce a *new and improved online registration* process to make signing up easier and more convenient for everyone.

This year, we're also offering special discounts to welcome new participants: first-time attendees will receive *\$100 off per adult, \$25 per child*, and youth grades 7th thru 12th can attend for an *all-inclusive price of \$50*.

Last year's Celebration brought together participants from 13 of our 18 congregations for a joyful time of worship, music, outdoor activities, and community building. We hope to welcome even more participants this year.

We look forward to gathering again, don't miss it!



WELCOME AMC 2026 CELEBRATION SPEAKER BISHOP DWAYNE ROYSTER.

Bishop Dwayne D. Royster, a leading voice in modern faith-based activism, wants to change the world. Whether he is serving as a pastor, challenging the status quo as a political activist, educating and empowering communities as a radio show host, or encouraging and inspiring audiences around the country as a writer and public speaker. Bishop Royster's work is fueled by deep faith and passionate commitment to bringing about social justice.



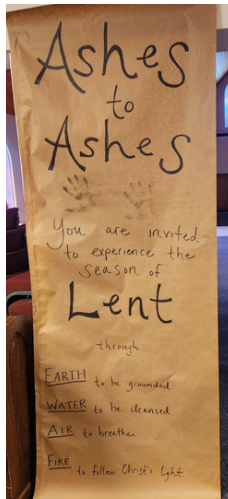
BISHOP DWAYNE ROYSTER

Bishop Royster has served in pastoral ministry for the past 26 years in a variety of positions and denominations, including a season with the Mennonites. Driven by his deep commitment to the four biblical principles of redemption, restoration, renewal, and refreshment, Bishop Royster works diligently to meet people where they are and instill in the congregation a need to be like Christ: slow to judge always ready to offer grace and mercy.

He currently serves as the Executive Director of Faith in Action (formerly the PICO National Network), the nation's largest faith-based organizing movement committed to racial and economic justice with 40+ federations in 26 States and 4 countries.

CHURCH SPOTLIGHT: COMMUNITY MENNONITE CHURCH

Article by: Jason Gerlach, Lana Miller, and Emily Nyce (on behalf of Community Mennonite Church)



For Ash Wednesday, this year we tried something new. Following the Mennonite Church USA Dwelling in Dissonance resource, we created stations representing earth, fire, water, and air. The stations, as well as a walking labyrinth, and pastors present for the imposition of ashes were offered during daytime hours (7-9 am and 4-5:30 pm) that were more accessible for all ages. Our participation in this annual service tripled.

Earlier this month Community Mennonite Church (CMC) hosted the Iglesia Familiar Elyon congregation, a growing Pentecostal church that meets in our building, for an evening meal. The sanctuary and fellowship hall were full of people. Many CMCers played important roles including borrowing tables, cooking and preparing food, serving as table facilitators, and cleaning up. The Iglesia Familiar Elyon congregation was very grateful, and all seemed to have a good time and plenty of food!

In the fall of 2025, nine CMCers participated in Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's Orienting with Word Confessional Bible Study. This year we've utilized Confessional Bible Study in worship services and during the faith formation hour for youth as well as intergenerational gatherings.

This spring, the high school youth have had focused time on the history of conscientious objection. They heard stories of people in our congregation who chose alternatives to serving in the military when the last U.S. military draft call was issued in 1972. For three sessions, a guest from the MCC East Coast Peace and Practice Coordinator led the youth in a series about conflict, peace, and official conscientious objection status.

Over the past two months we've held a weekly prayer vigil for the Middle East which follows a set order of reading, singing, and prayer. Our relationship with a Middle Eastern parish continues to grow, and we regularly read a letter from them during the vigil.

As a congregation, we continue to learn, grow and adapt as we engage with one another and the community that surrounds us.



AMC FAITH IN ACTION: EARTH DAY OBSERVANCES ACROSS ALLEGHENY MENNONITE CONFERENCE



Scottdale Mennonite Church

Congregations across Allegheny Mennonite Conference marked Earth Day through worship and hands-on action, reflecting a shared commitment to caring for God's creation.

Scottdale Mennonite Church observed Earth Day on April 19 with a roadside trash cleanup in its community. Participants collected nearly 30 bags of trash and sorted recyclables into 13

bags. One member found \$20 during the cleanup and plans to use it to purchase durable trash bags for the group's next "trash ninja" event!

Community Mennonite Church participated in an ecumenical Earth Day worship service that has been held annually for the past four years in its own community. This year, the congregation canceled its regular worship service and joined the ecumenical gathering alongside other local churches and Eastern Mennonite University. Following the outdoor service, members returned to the church building for the Faith Formation hour. Although the morning was rainy and cold, participants described it as a beautiful experience of worshipping together outdoors and celebrating God's creation.

Through worship, service, and stewardship, congregations across the conference found meaningful ways to honor Earth Day.



Community Mennonite Church



Community Mennonite Church



A FAITHFUL RESPONSE TO CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

BY KEN LITWILLER

From April 20 to 23, 2026, eighteen credentialed leaders gathered at Laurelville Retreat Center, Mount Pleasant, PA, to reflect on the topic of “A Faithful Response to Christian Nationalism”. We were led by Dr. Drew J. Strait, PhD, from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, who has studied, written, and taught extensively on this topic.

The four days included times of formal input from Drew, active plenary and breakout group discussions among all of the participants, meals together, times of getting acquainted or reacquainted, and free time. The balance of types of engagement was necessary due to the intense and crucial nature of the topic and implications for congregations and leaders. The goal was to develop knowledge, skills, and tools for responding to the threat of Christian Nationalism within a context of empire in our congregations, families, and communities. This challenge is not new. The various peoples of faith described in the Bible lived almost exclusively under empire. The expression of faith, “Jesus is Lord”, was and is a political statement, placing our loyalties to God and with the various “emperors” who would like to claim our first loyalties.

Drew structured his various lectures on the chapters of his book, *Strange Worship: Six Steps for Challenging Christian Nationalism*. However, Drew quoted and described material from at least 28 other books and articles on the topic from various perspectives.

Drew encouraged us to read the Bible as protest literature against the empire. He noted that both ancient Israel and the church lived under the empire directly or indirectly throughout the biblical period. Prophecy and scripture could not confront empire directly since this would have led to destruction, but reading the text from below can reveal the critique. Drew noted that ever since the gains of the civil rights movement over 60 years ago, Christian Nationalists have organized to reverse these gains and to reestablish white, male, and heterosexual dominance over the American society, government, and church. They are better organized than us and their message has prevailed against immense odds. Christian Nationalism is not a majority movement; however, Christian Nationalists have been able to advance their agenda effectively with minimal resistance.

So how shall we respond, both in our society and in our churches? There is nothing to be gained and much to lose by labeling and mocking Christian Nationalists as Stupid, Isolated, and Crazy (SIC). Very few people have been won over by that approach; rather, this type of demonization leads to digging in and expansion of the movement. A better approach is to respectfully raise questions and provide alternative faithful responses. This is not an easy road and will not always produce immediate results. And as church leaders, we need to care for ourselves and for each other as we engage in this struggle.

For persons who would like additional information on this topic, I highly recommend Drew's book, *Strange Worship: Six Steps for Challenging Christian Nationalism*, available through various online book sellers.

Jesus is Lord, indeed!



Participants (not all pictured): Drew J. Strait, Amy Yoder McGloughlin, Kelsey Luke, Jayne Byler, Jason Gerlach, Lana Miller, Emily Nice, Leah Rittenhouse, Stephen Lowe, Cindy Lapp, Becca Cordes, J. Bergen, Dave Swanson, T J Tennesos, Jolene Tennesos, Wes Bergen, Scott Holland, Ken Litwiller



HAVE YOU PREACHED ON MENNONITE ACTION?

Have you or someone at your church talked about Mennonite Action in a sermon? Jonathan Smucker is seeking such sermons to include in his sociological research about Mennonite Action.

Jonathan is currently completing his dissertation focused on Mennonite Action. He is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at University of California, Berkeley. He is also a Mennonite who attends Blossom Hill Mennonite Church in Lancaster County, PA. He has been an active participant in the movement and is using his experience as a participant observer, along with interviews, a survey, and analysis of related texts as data for his research. Jonathan hopes to turn his dissertation into a book.

Sermons are relevant to Jonathan's research as one indicator of how the movement has been integrated into congregational life, meaning making processes, and theological discourse.

If you have archives of such sermons (in the form of a transcript or video or audio recording), please email these to Jonathan Smucker at jsmucker@berkeley.edu with the subject line "Mennonite Action sermon." If you are the author of the sermon, please indicate in the email if you wish to remain confidential in Jonathan's dissertation (where any quotes would be anonymized) or if you instead prefer to waive confidentiality (and have your remarks attributed to you). If you are not the author of the sermon, please be sure to ask the author's permission before sending. You can email Jonathan with any questions. Thank you!

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Have something you want us to share in the Miscellany?

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