



ALLEGHENY MISCELLANY

The official newsletter of Allegheny Mennonite Conference

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SAVE THE DATES:

NOVEMBER 7, 2026: AMC FALL
ASSEMBLY, 9AM-NOON ON ZOOM

JANUARY 15-17, 2027: WINTERVILLE AT
LAURELVILLE

MARCH 6, 2027: AMC SPRING ASSEMBLY,
9AM-3PM, WEST PHILADELPHIA

JULY 30-AUGUST 1, 2027: AMC
CELEBRATION WEEKEND AT LAURELVILLE



100 FOR \$10



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STRENGTHENING OUR FAITH COMMUNITY
TOGETHER

Start a recurring gift of \$10/month (or any amount you
choose) to sustain and strengthen the work of Allegheny
Mennonite Conference!

WHERE IS YOUR CONFERENCE MINISTER?

October 11--Pittsburgh Mennonite

October 17--Constituency

Leadership Council Online

October 18--Morgantown COB

November 7--AMC Fall Online
Meeting

January 22-24--Leadership
Retreat

March 6--AMC Spring Delegate
Session, West Philadelphia

April 15-17--Constituency
Leadership Council, Dallas, TX

April 19-22 AMC Pastor' Study
Week at Laurelville

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



Church Spotlight: FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH, CANTON, OHIO

Article by: Kat Gritter

A Warm Introduction

Hello, Allegheny Mountain Conference!

We are First Mennonite Church in Canton, Ohio, and we are grateful, and perhaps still a little amazed, to introduce ourselves as one of the newest possible congregations in the conference. We are thankful for the welcome we have already received and look forward to discovering what our shared life within Allegheny will hold.

First Mennonite is an open and affirming congregation in southeast Canton, shaped by the conviction that the welcome of Jesus is wider than we sometimes imagine. Our mission statement speaks of "using the Holy Spirit's power to create an inviting community with persons who want to live as followers of Jesus Christ." We want that welcome to be more than words in a statement, so we keep learning how to embody it in the ordinary practices of church life: in the ways we worship, ask questions, share meals, and make room for one another.

Learning from Our History

Last October, we celebrated our congregation's 200th anniversary. The celebration gave us an opportunity to receive the history of this place and its people: to remember moments that make us wildly proud, as well as those we hold with confusion and grief.

One highlight of the weekend was a short play written by church member Bob Bowen based on a congregational meeting held in 1946. According to the history gathered for our anniversary, eight members of First Mennonite entered Civilian Public Service during World War II, while eleven others entered military service, most as medics or in other noncombatant roles. Although instructed by his bishop to discipline the latter, our pastor and mission superintendent, J. J. Hostetler, chose loving counsel and continued relationship instead.

In Bob's dramatization, Hostetler tells the congregation, "I know them all, I love them all, and while I disagree with their decision, I don't believe the love of Jesus is shown to them through discipline, but rather through loving counsel."

The play did not give us easy heroes and villains. It allowed us to hear the costly convictions of conscientious objectors alongside the voices of families whose sons had served as medics. It reminded us that discernment is rarely neat. It asks us to hold our convictions while listening deeply, remaining in relationship, and trusting that the Holy Spirit may speak through people who reach different conclusions. Nearly eighty years later, we recognize something of ourselves in that gathering. We remain rooted in our Anabaptist convictions while continuing to ask how those convictions take flesh in the love of Jesus.



A spring circus murder mystery dinner:)



Blooming Cross from Easter

Ministry in the Neighborhood

Thankfully, not every chapter of congregational life carries quite that much weight. Sometimes being church looks like gathering around a supper table, bringing a favorite book to share, or making room in the building for a neighborhood child to finish homework. We share our church property with Lighthouse Ministries, a nonprofit that grew from First Mennonite's ministry with neighborhood children and became an independent organization in 2007. Lighthouse walks alongside young people and families in southeast Canton through after-school programming, tutoring, enrichment activities, summer camps, field trips, and youth ministry clubs. Our organizations are distinct, but our lives remain closely intertwined. Their staff and students bring energy to our shared spaces throughout the week, reminding us that a church building may be most alive when its rooms are being used.

A Summer of Fellowship and Fun

This summer, our congregational life took on a particularly playful rhythm. Summer Supper Clubs gathered once a month in homes and around tables simply to eat, laugh, and know one another beyond Sunday morning. Our Silent Book Club met every other week this summer with an unusual format: we spent the evening reading quietly together and then talked about whatever each person happened to be reading. Even the companionable silence was a gift. Lastly, we thoroughly enjoyed our annual Mennostock, where we listened to a variety of heartwarming performances.



Looking Ahead Together

As summer winds toward fall, some of our reading has become more focused. A group is currently discussing *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, asking what it means to follow Jesus faithfully when Christianity becomes entangled with political power. Our Singing Vigil discipleship group has also gathered to learn songs of solidarity that we can carry into moments of peaceful public witness. These evenings feel less like rehearsals and more like prayer, steadying our bodies, giving us courage, reminding us that we are not alone. Some of our gatherings are serious, some are wonderfully ordinary, and most include food. Together, they reflect the kind of church we are still becoming: a people willing to wrestle with difficult questions, delight in one another's company, and keep making room for the Spirit to surprise us. We are grateful and hopeful to make that room alongside all of you.

WHO'S REALLY MENNONITE?

by Amy Yoder McGloughlin, AMC Conference Minister

"I go to a Mennonite church, but I'm not really Mennonite."

I've been listening to Mennonite Church congregants across the denomination describe themselves for a long time, and I've noticed a troubling trend. Folks that grow up Mennonite are quick to claim the identity, but those that have adopted the tradition often say, *"I go to a Mennonite church, but I'm not really Mennonite."*

My own spouse, who has been attending a Mennonite church almost as long as I have and still identifies as American Baptist, the tradition of his childhood. When I press him on this, he says something like, *"I just don't ever feel like I'd be Mennonite enough for Mennonites."*

Those responses make me feel sad. Being Mennonite, as we all know, is not about the last name you possess, or the school you attended, or the ancestral lineage you carry in your DNA. And yet, we still act that way. There's something we put out in churches that makes attenders who are eager to participate in our congregations reluctant to call themselves Mennonite.

I'll give you a few examples of things that have happened to me recently:

- Someone messaged me to ask me if I was a *"real mennonite"* or if I was a fake Scottish one. I know they were trying to be funny about my last name, but the joke relied on Mennonite identity being an ethnic marker, which it is not. Being Mennonite is about the way you understand scripture, Jesus, and how we are called to live in the world.
- At a Mennonite gathering recently, someone sat down with me, scanned my last name, then looked at my neighbor's name card (my neighbor was a Lehman, I think), and asked where he was from, trying to determine the six ways they might be related. In an act of exasperation, I declared, *"I'm interesting too, you know!"* Everyone laughed uncomfortably, and then it was back to the genealogy exploration.

Even in our Allegheny Conference churches, most of which are not in Mennonite enclaves, the average church population is made up of more folks that did not grow up Mennonite than those that did. Yet, who is in charge? Who makes and enforces the rules? Who is considered Mennonite and who is not? I've noticed that in many spaces, it's folks with a particular kind of last name that take the lead, or who participate in driving the congregation.

We laugh about the ways some Mennonites can connect to each other, but that game also excludes others. This “Mennonite Game” is a way to mark in subtle ways who is “really Mennonite”. Instead of this game that excludes, we can instead play the “Small World” game, one where we make connections in other ways. At our conference events, instead of asking about last names, we can ask, “What church do you attend?” “Where do you live?” “What do you do for fun?” “What do you love about your church community?”

In August at our Annual Celebration Weekend, we ended our Sunday worship singing, “**Draw the Circle Wide.**” It was powerful for me to look around the room and at each face, and see them as part of this conference and part of the Kingdom of God we are working to build together. I hope that energy to draw the circle wide would expand to the ways we define what it means to be Mennonite. Can we see ourselves and those siblings in faith that worship alongside us--those that understand their faith through the lens of discipleship, those who see Jesus as a non-violent savior--as all fully Mennonite? Can we encourage those who claim Mennonite theology to also claim the descriptor of Mennonite, without expecting a particular last name or identifier?

Let’s work together to make the term “**Mennonite**” an expansive name for those that follow in the way of a non-violent Jesus. Because whether you were born into this tradition, or have claimed it in adulthood, if you are participating in a Mennonite community, you are Mennonite, and your last name is a Mennonite last name.

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