



October 2026

Connector

**Central
District
Conference**

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

Knowing Christ's Love...
Answering God's Call

Stories and News from
Around the Conference



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Above: Dr. Mark Vincent speaking at the worship service on Sunday morning. Right: Elizabeth Miller leading a class on global Anabaptism. Below: Members past and present gather in front of North Danvers Mennonite Church in Illinois. Photos: Scott Sarver.

North Danvers Celebrates 175 Years by Brian Johnson

North Danvers Mennonite Church (Illinois) celebrated their 175th anniversary the weekend of September 11-13. North Danvers is often referred to as the "mother church" of CDC. They were the founding congregation of what became the Central

Conference. In 1957 Central Conference merged with Middle District to form CDC.

The weekend was a time of celebration and remembrance for members past and present. Friday night included a shared meal followed by a presentation on the history



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Rich Bucher as Josph Stuckey. Photo: Scott Sarver.

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 of North Danvers by Dr. Perry Bush. Saturday was a time of reunion and an open house with displays that told the story of the past, present, and future of NDMC. Sunday capped off the weekend with a class on global Anabaptism led by Elizabeth Miller followed by a worship service with speaker Dr. Mark Vincent. Bishop Joseph Stuckey (played by Rich Bucher) and John Stuckey also took part.

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Anabaptist Outreach at Faith in Place

In August 2026, Douglas Day Kaufman became Anabaptist Outreach Specialist for Faith in Place. This role focuses on outreach and relationship building with faith communities across Northeast Indiana, advancing community engagement around Faith in Place's programs and policy work.

With a vision for faith and spiritual communities to lead the way toward just, resilient, and thriving communities, Faith in Place works throughout Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin, cultivating a powerful multifaith movement for environmental justice through connection, education, and advocacy.

As part of his new role, Doug will also help cultivate relationships with Anabaptist communities, especially in his region, though sometimes outside of it.

Faith in Place's CEO, Rev. Brian Sauder, also an ordained Mennonite minister, said, "We're thrilled to have Doug join Faith in Place. He brings a depth of experience and relationships in Northeast Indiana that will strengthen the whole Faith in Place community."

"I'm excited about being part of the outstanding team at Faith in Place, a group I have worked with for many years," said Kaufman. "My previous work focused on education; Faith in Place builds on education to move communities to action and advocacy. I'm looking forward to this work, bringing diverse people of faith to seek just responses to the changing climate."

Faith in Place understands the environmental crisis as a spiritual crisis. To address the crisis, they equip faith communities to become environmental leaders in the places they call home. This includes improving energy efficiency in their buildings through energy audits, planting trees for a more just tree canopy,

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Doug Kaufman with wife and pastor of Assembly Mennonite Church, Moriah Hurst.

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caring for land and water, and advancing community resilience. Their three broad program areas are Healthy Communities, Sustainable Energy, and People-Powered Futures.

As faith communities engage in those programs, Faith in Place connects them to a larger network. From 100 percent clean energy to indoor air pollution to data centers, Faith in Place is working throughout the three states advocating for policies and systems for more just and resilient communities.

In Indiana in particular, Faith in Place is working with members of rural electric membership cooperatives (REMCs) to strengthen member participation and give communities a greater voice in decisions about their energy future.

Before joining Faith in Place, Doug was executive director of Anabaptist Climate Collaborative where he previously served as director of pastoral ecology. In those roles he led 20 climate retreats with over 500 pastors and leaders. He also re-articulated an Anabaptist ecotheology based on “the gospel of all creatures,” from the writings of early Anabaptist mystic Hans Hut.

Doug previously served as pastor of his home congregation Benton Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana. He first became passionate about creation care when he started baptizing new members in the Elkhart River, and discovered that sometimes the river is too polluted for safe contact. He led a volunteer Hoosier Riverwatch group for 15 years and became an Indiana Master Naturalist.

Doug is a graduate of Goshen College and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. He has a Master of Theology in ecology from Toronto School of Theology and is pursuing a D.Min. in ecojustice from Berkeley School of Theology. He also was a pastor in Lancaster, PA, and Inglewood, CA, and served as a conference pastor for Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference.

He is credentialed in CDC and is now a member of Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen, where his wife Moriah Hurst is a pastor. He has three adult sons.

Doug can be reached at doug@faithinplace.org, and he is preaching at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, OH, October 18, and at the October 20 forum at Bluffton University.

Safe Church Corner

Madison Mennonite Church

Madison Mennonite Church in Wisconsin spent several months revising their child- and youth-abuse prevention policy for child-focused ministries. They updated an outdated policy to clearly assign responsibility for key tasks so nothing is overlooked, and defined how the church should respond to abuse involving members that occurs off-site.

They also expanded prevention efforts to address ministries serving vulnerable adults and elders. Congratulations to this church’s staff and board for doing the preventative work of good policy writing!

For more information, help or support with your church’s safe church policies, contact the Central District Conference’s Safe Church Coordinator, Kristin Sancken at kristin@mcusacdc.org

Who’s Really Mennonite?

by Amy Yoder McGloughlin

“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.”

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My own spouse, who has been attending a Mennonite church almost as long as I have, 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.

First, 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.

Then, 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 a "real" 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 Allegheny Mennonite Conference 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 the Allegheny Conference and 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,

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and your last name is a Mennonite last name.

Amy Yoder McGloughlin is the Allegheny Mennonite Conference Minister and the Denominational Minister for Education. She lives in Chester County, Pennsylvania on traditional Lenape land with her husband, Charlie, two dogs and nine chickens. Amy is anticipating the release of her first book in the Spring of 2027, entitled, Storied Land: An Ancient and Modern Journey Through Palestine.



Rise Up! Take Courage! Worship Series

Every two years CDC leadership creates a new theme that guides us. Last year we chose the theme: Rise Up! Take Courage! We are buoyed in our rising up and courage-taking by one who walked a perilous journey of faithfulness to his God. As Jesus followers, we draw our resistance and our strength from the same God who inspired Shiphrah and Puah, who empowered Moses, who blessed Hannah, who buoyed Esther, who transformed Saul/Paul, and who raised Jesus. May we hear the voice of God calling us to rise up and take courage, knowing that the living Christ and Holy Spirit are with us today.

Four members of CDC have created a month-long worship series to accompany the theme that can be used by congregations in CDC. Conference Minister Doug Luginbill created the introduction and sermon seeds. Anne

Marie Hardy Spelman of First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, Ohio wrote the children's stories. Jan Lugibihl of Chicago Community Mennonite Church (Illinois) wrote the words for worship, and Adam Tice of Faith Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana compiled the hymn selections.

Each of the four weeks contains:

- Scripture texts
- Sermon seeds to spark ideas
- Suggested hymns
- A children's story
- Words for worship including a call to worship, prayer, and benediction.

Week 1: Voice your Rage!

This week is centered on Psalm 44:22-26, I Samuel 1:9-11 and 2:1-8, and Job 3:1-10. A gift of the Psalms is the invitation to express all our emotions and bring them before God, even our anger and blame. 'It's all your fault,' the psalmist cries out to God. Hannah's pleas before God are so agonizing that Eli accuses her of being drunk. "Why was I even born?" Job laments. What happens when we stuff our anger, refuse to rail at God, and interpret "peace" as the avoidance of conflict? How might God be inviting us to courageously express our anger and outrage in ways that bring transformation to ourselves and our communities? And, of course, we root our response in our commitment to non-violence.

Week 2: Your Deliverance is Near

The Scriptures for this week draw from Old Testament stories in Exodus 3:1-12, Esther 7:1-10, and Psalm 27:7-14. Liberation, justice, and salvation are closely linked throughout scripture. Moses and Esther are two examples of people who bring awareness to and respond to oppression and injustice, resulting in the salvation of an entire community of people. With their mission aligned, God and Moses rise up and go down to Egypt together. Similarly, Esther and her adoptive father, Mordecai, develop a plan to deliver the

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Hebrew people from the power-hungry and vengeful Haman. Who are our partners in doing justice today? How is God providing courage in the face of the injustices we observe?

Week 3: Healing and Hope Arrive

This week centers on stories from the New Testament in Luke 6:1-11, John 16:25-33, and Luke 24:1-10. Sometimes Jesus breaks the rules...or at least reinterprets them with a deeper and fuller meaning. Are there deeply held values, beliefs, and laws that we Mennonites are invited to reinterpret in light of a deeper Gospel message? How does resurrection hope provide courage to follow the radical love of Jesus?

Week 4: Partner with God’s Beloved

The texts for this week come from Haggai, Proverbs, Wisdom, and I Corinthians. It

takes a lot of courage to build or rebuild relationships in the face of criticism and polarization, especially when the relationship is with those we don’t agree with. Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zerubbabel faced deep criticism and resistance to their commitment to rebuild the temple. Paul identifies love as a solid and enduring foundation that allows courage to grow and flourish. How might Wisdom be calling us to rise up and take courage as we partner with God and God’s diverse beloved community?

Access the full resource here: <https://mcusacdc.org/resources/worship-christian-formation/>

Members of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada have created a bi-national prayer for peace as we approach the mid-term elections. You can access it [HERE](#).

**Monthly Financial report
September 30, 2026**

Income	
2026/2027 income to date	\$ 71,802.32
2026/2027 plan	\$ 96,719.75
Difference between income and plan. . . .	\$ -24,917.43
Expenses	
2026/2027 expenses to date	\$ 86,403.88
2026/2027 spending plan	\$ 96,719.75
Under-expenditure against plan	\$ -10,315.87
Difference between income and expenses .	.\$-14,601.56

We are now a quarter of the way through the fiscal year. While actual income has lagged behind the plan, expenses have also been lower than anticipated. Thank you for your contribution to the mission of Central District Conference.

*Report provided by Steve Jolley,
conference treasurer*

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