

An introduction to Mennonite Church USA

Mennonite Church USA is an Anabaptist denomination with roots in the Radical Reformation of 16th-century Europe. From its beginnings in mostly German-speaking parts of Europe, the Mennonite Church today is growing rapidly in many parts of the world. In fact, more Mennonites currently reside in the southern hemisphere than in the northern. In the United States, people from various faith traditions, ethnicities, nationalities and other backgrounds are also identifying with the vision and mission of Mennonite Church USA. (For more information about Mennonites and their faith, visit ThirdWay.com.)

Sharing a vision of healing and hope

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

That's where it starts: **the individual follower of Jesus Christ.** Mennonite Church USA wouldn't exist without the individual people who have responded and are responding to God's call.

Local congregations are communities in which these individuals can find support for their efforts to live out their faith, share their joys and sorrows with each other, learn about and discuss biblical teachings, and discern together what it means to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ. In local congregations, individuals can pool their resources of time, abilities and money to join in God's work in the world in ways they could not do alone.

Likewise, through participating in **area conferences**, congregations can connect with each other and pool their resources so that they are able to do more than they would be able to do alone. All Mennonite Church USA congregations belong to one of **21 area conferences**, each of which has its own distinct culture. Some conferences are organized as regional districts, while others are organized based on historical ties or theological similarities. Conferences help congregations share resources for Christian nurture and worship, pastoral and lay leadership, witness and evangelism, justice-making, peace-building and church planting.

Conference gatherings also offer opportunities for individuals representing congregations to hear from each other and see the bigger picture of God's activity in the wider church, as well as to discern together ways to be engaged in what God is doing.

The area conferences make up **the denominational body of Mennonite Church USA** and provide congregations with a direct link to

the larger ministries and constituency groups of the denomination, which exist to help local faith communities embody the message of Christ's love, peace and reconciliation.

Mennonite Church USA is part of **Mennonite World Conference**, a global community of 1.6 million believers representing 100 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ national churches from 57 countries on six continents.

Denominational organization

Mennonite Church USA was formed in 2002 by the merger of the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church, both of which were binational (U.S. and Canada) denominations. Mennonite Church USA has more than 100,000 adult members in about 900 congregations and 21 area conferences. It is the largest of numerous Mennonite groups in the United States. Mennonite Church Canada, which was organized at about the same time, has about 33,000 members.

Mennonite Church USA organizational structures are relatively "flat" compared to many other denominations. An 18-member volunteer **Executive Board** guides the denomination and is accountable to **congregational and area conference delegates**, who meet every two years at a national assembly. The Executive Board supervises the executive director and national office staff.

Delegates to the **national assembly** traditionally discern and process statements and resolutions related to Mennonite belief and practice. Delegates at the 2011 assembly in Pittsburgh set aside the usual order of business to spend time discerning future direction and priorities for Mennonite Church USA.

The **Constituency Leaders Council**, a group consisting of Executive Board representatives, conference leaders, constituency group representatives and agency and national office staff, meets semi-annually to listen, discern and advise the denomination on issues facing the church.

Constituency groups work to serve the needs of their members across Mennonite Church USA and connect them to the larger vision and mission of the church. These include:

- **African American Mennonite Association**
- **Iglesia Menonita Hispana**
- **Mennonite Men**
- **Mennonite Women USA**
- **Native Mennonite Ministries**

National office staff work at carrying out the priorities identified by the delegates and board. (The priorities decided upon in July 2011 are shown in the next column.) They also support interconference connections and collaboration, coordinate the denomination's biennial conventions, provide communication services for the denomination, and oversee the denominational archives.

Our seven priorities

Mennonite Church USA has adopted seven priorities to guide our ministry across all parts of the church. The first three priorities express the core of congregational life from an Anabaptist perspective. The other four priorities identify areas for particular emphasis over the next 10 years, particularly through area conferences, churchwide agencies and the denomination.

- 1. Christian formation.** This priority reflects the centrality of Jesus Christ in the church. Missional Mennonite congregations call people to Christian commitment, disciple them in the way of Christ, teach them to embrace the Scriptures, help them develop Christian identity from an Anabaptist/Mennonite perspective, and cultivate their vocational calling.
- 2. Christian community.** This priority reflects the communal, organic nature of the body of Christ. Missional congregations worship together, extend hospitality, practice scriptural discernment, cultivate Christ-centered unity, and learn to agree and disagree in love.
- 3. Holistic Christian witness.** This priority reflects the winsome nature of the church's witness. Missional churches share the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed, birthing new communities of faith. They reflect God's coming reign by striving for peace and justice.
- 4. Stewardship.** This priority reflects our commitment to surrender all that we have for the sake of God's reign. Missional churches cultivate whole-life stewardship, care for creation, and practice mutual aid.
- 5. Leadership development.** This priority reflects our commitment to develop leaders at all levels of the church. Missional churches help all of their members reach their potential as they follow God's call.
- 6. Undoing racism and advancing intercultural transformation.** This priority reflects our intent to dismantle individual and systemic racism in our church, develop intercultural competence, heal racial divisions, and value all the gifts of God's diverse people.
- 7. Church-to-church relationships.** This priority reflects our desire to give and receive gifts in the broader body of Christ, working toward Christian unity as a witness to the world. We cultivate a particularly close relationship with Mennonite Church Canada since we share a common history, confession of faith, and ministerial polity, and many joint ministry ventures.

Churchwide agencies and ministries

The various agencies and ministries of Mennonite Church USA have their own boards but also collaborate with the Executive Board in carrying out the vision and collective mission of the denomination.

Everence helps individuals, organizations and congregations integrate finances with faith through a national team of advisors and representatives. Everence offers banking, insurance and financial services with community benefits and stewardship education. www.everence.com

MennoMedia produces faith-based print, video, radio and web materials with ideas for living out your faith from a Mennonite perspective. www.mennomedia.org

Mennonite Education Agency works to strengthen the life, witness and identity of Mennonite Church USA through the support and advocacy of Anabaptist-Mennonite educational programs, events, organizations and schools. www.mennoniteeducation.org

Mennonite Health Services Alliance strengthens and extends Mennonite and other Anabaptist health and human service organizations with resources to enhance organizational performance in relationship to their values. www.mhsonline.org

Mennonite Mission Network's goal as the mission agency of Mennonite Church USA is that every congregation and all parts of the church would be engaged in God's mission across the street and around the world. Mission Network partners with others to equip missional congregations and their leaders to share the whole gospel of Jesus Christ in their culture. www.mennonitemission.net

In addition, *The Mennonite* serves as the magazine of Mennonite Church USA, providing a forum for diverse voices and perspectives from across the church. www.themennonite.org



A visual design to unite us and remind us of who we are

Time after time, the Spirit in the form of a dove announces the coming of God to us. As Mennonites, we recognize the centrality of Christ as proclaimed in Scripture, revealed through the Holy Spirit and discerned in Christian community. The dove represents Jesus and the missional calling to follow him into the world—gracefully, joyfully and peacefully.



Mennonite Church USA

Area Conferences

- Allegheny Mennonite Conference
- Atlantic Coast Conference
- Central District Conference
of Mennonite Church USA
- Central Plains Mennonite Conference
- Eastern District Conference
- Franconia Mennonite Conference
- Franklin Mennonite Conference
- Gulf States Mennonite Conference
- Illinois Mennonite Conference
- Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference
- Lancaster Mennonite Conference
- Mountain States Mennonite Conference
- New York Mennonite Conference
- North Central Conference
of the Mennonite Church
- Ohio Conference
of Mennonite Church USA
- Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference
- Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference
- South Central Mennonite Conference
- Southeast Mennonite Conference
- Virginia Mennonite Conference
- Western District Conference

Churchwide Agencies and Ministries

Everence

The stewardship agency of Mennonite Church USA
www.everence.com

Mennonite Health Services Alliance

Supporting health and human service ministries
for Mennonite Church USA
www.mhsonline.org

MennoMedia

The publishing and media agency of Mennonite
Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada
www.mennomedia.org

Mennonite Education Agency

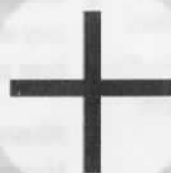
The education agency of Mennonite Church USA
www.mennoniteeducation.org

Mennonite Mission Network

The mission agency of Mennonite Church USA
www.mennonitemission.net

The Mennonite

A monthly magazine for members
of Mennonite Church USA
www.themennonite.org



Congregations

*joining in God's work
in the world.*

Executive Board

National staff

and Delegate Assembly

Constituency Leaders Council (CLC)

Constituency Groups

www.mennoniteusa.org

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www.mennoniteusa.org

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Church
USA**