

Lancaster Mennonite Conference



*Explore
the Core*

reheated



Core Values reflecting a missional Anabaptist identity.

We are people of Christ's peace, as we Explore the Core.

[Participate in the conversation at](#)



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Explore the Core, the original, released in 2008.



Explore the Core: reheated, revised and released in 2012.

[Lancaster Conference website](#)

[LMC YouTube Channel](#)

[LMC Reheated Facebook page](#)

The LMC Core Values process emerged out of Vision 2010. Conference leaders formed the **Core Values Council in 2002**. The result of the Council's work is contained in the two *Explore the Core* curriculum packages.



FOR THE SESSION LEADER

Explore the Core: reheated takes groups through Lancaster Conference core values in a new format from the original version. *Reheated* keeps the same core values, but the video content draws on existing *YouTube* content. While groups who used the original version of *Explore the Core* will find this *Reheated* version a useful second step, any group could begin their exploration of core values with *Reheated*. In addition, the original version provides a wealth of background material to aid in preparing for teaching *Reheated*.

Each session explores one or more of the core values. Teachers can access **this Leader's Guide, the lesson plans, and the Bible Study Worksheets** at the [Lancaster Conference web-site](#).

The session leader can access the video clips with the **hot-links in the Leader's Guide for each video or go to the [LMC YouTube channel](#)** and access the video links from the *Explore the Core: reheated* playlist page. Alternately, a *Reheated* package can be borrowed from the LMC office, which contains **all the video, this Leader's Guide, the background reading documents, lesson plans, and Bible study worksheets** on a DVD ready for use.

Groups are encouraged to interact with the [Explore the Core: reheated Facebook page](#) on a regular basis during the study. LMC staff monitor this page daily and will respond to Facebook postings.



1. Missional Anabaptist Identity

As people of Christ's peace, we build a missional church.

Core Value: Lancaster Conference core values reflect a missional Anabaptist identity.

Objective: **Wrestle with this word "missional" and look at practical responses to it.**

Core Text: Luke 10:1-12

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: **The video, "[Missional Church—Simple](#)," contrasts two different ways of being church. Pay attention to the contrasts that are made between these two different approaches.**

The Dilemma: **Is "church" an address, a building, or what happens on a particular day and time (We go to church.), or is church the people of God both gathered in worship on occasion and scattered into God's mission of reconciliation most of the time?**

Background Reading: Craig van Gelder, "[Culture Shock](#)"

Tim Keller, "[Missional Church](#)"

James Krabill, "[Does Your Church Smell Like Mission](#)"

Other Video: Tim Keller, [Characteristics of a missional church](#)



Discussion Starter Questions

1. Discuss the two kinds of church this video presents (“**invitational, come**” versus “**go, scattered**”). Which one best describes your congregation? Why? Are the two completely exclusive of one another?
2. How does Luke 10:1-12 describe a missional approach? How can you personally be more missional?
3. **If “invitation to an event” does not equal evangelism, then what is evangelism in a missional church context?**
4. How would a missional way of being church rearrange your church budget priorities?

Action

Choose an action your group/congregation will take and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how you can engage in missional activity as a way of life.



2. Jesus Is Center/Allegiance to Kingdom

As people of Christ's peace, Jesus is Lord describes the center of our faith and life.

Core Values:

Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value radical allegiance to the reign of God above all other powers.

Objective: Understand and act on the proclamation, Jesus is Lord.

Core Texts: 1 Corinthians 3:11 For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9-10, 1 Corinthians 12:3, **Jesus is Lord...**

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: **Alan Hirsch**, in "[Jesus Is Lord](#)," challenges Christians to wrestle with an untamed, unsafe Lord of the universe who expects our full obedience to his mission of reconciliation in the world.

The Dilemma: Is Jesus Lord and at the center, or are other things (the Bible, or self, the church, or other options) at the center?

Background Reading: **Elenor Kreider**, "[Worship: True to Jesus](#)"
Shane Claiborne, "[What If Jesus Meant All that Stuff](#)"

Other Video: **Brian McLaren**, "[Jesus and the Kingdom](#)"

Tony Campolo, "[What Jesus Taught](#)"
"[Jesus Be the Center](#)"



Discussion Starter Questions

1. How do you evaluate the New Testament testimony to Jesus as Lord?
2. How do Christians challenge lordship claims like "The US dollar is lord" or the "US economic and military might is lord" with the claim "Jesus is Lord"?
3. Hirsch says that the church has been "masterful" at "domesticating" Jesus. How have you challenged this domestication?
4. Hirsch says that Jesus is "demanding," "dangerous," and "not safe," but "we can trust him." How have you experienced this?

Action

Decide on an action your group/congregation will take to proclaim Jesus is Lord and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts on the Facebook page in As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how you may have "domesticated" Jesus and how you will now proclaim Jesus is Lord.



3. A Way of Reading

As people of Christ's peace, we read the Bible through Jesus.

Core Value: Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value the reading of Scripture that leads to authentic obedience to Jesus Christ. We understand Scripture through Christ, discerned in community, and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Objective: Explore how the New Testament writers understood Scripture and the relationship of their writing to that of the Old Testament.

Core Texts: Luke 24:27, John 14:25-29; Hebrews 12:3, 18-24; 1 Peter 1:20-21

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: In "[The Bible Is Not About You](#)" Tim Keller suggests that the Bible is primarily about Jesus. Brinton Rutherford explores an Anabaptist "[Way of Reading](#)" from the original *Explore the Core*.

The Dilemma: What difference does it make in a missional context if we conclude the Bible is about Jesus rather than about us?

Background Reading: Stuart Murray, "[Anabaptist Hermeneutics: A Summary](#)"

Brian Russell, "[What Is A Missional Hermeneutic](#)"

Other Video: Brian Russell, "[Missional Framework for Studying Scripture](#)"

Vanderstalt and Kalinoski, "[Why missional community is not Bible Study](#)"



Discussion Starter Questions

1. When you consider the core texts, what do you observe is being said about the relationship between Jesus and the Bible, between the Spirit and the Bible, and between the Old Testament and the New Testament?
2. **How do you respond to the claim, “the Bible is not about you?”**
3. If Jesus provided a missional model, if the Bible is about Jesus, and if Jesus is Lord, then what does this mean for the Bible in a missional way of life?
4. How do you practically relate the Bible, church community, and the Spirit?

Action

Decide on an action your group will take to read the Bible through Christ, as community, and guided by the Spirit. Write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts on the Facebook page in As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how you read the Bible and how you might adjust your way of reading.



4. Confessions of Faith/Diversity

As people of Christ's peace, we make statements of belief that capture our diversity.

Core Values:

Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value Anabaptist expressions of this way of reading such as the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. We encourage disciples to engage in theological reflection.

Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value the rich and varied expressions of culture, race, language, and worship emerging through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Objective: Consider the complex combination of formal statements of belief and diversity within the Christianity.

Core Text: Acts 15:1-34

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: "[Ours to Share](#)" and "[Who Are the Mennonites](#)" illustrate the local and global diversity of Anabaptists and introduce the common doctrinal connections of the Anabaptist community nationally and around the globe.

The Dilemma: Should each person make his or her own decisions about doctrine or is there an acceptable place for communally prepared and held representations of belief?

Other Video: Mennonite "[MHS Alliance](#)"
Newsboys, "[He Reigns](#)"

Background Reading: [Introduction to the Confession of Faith in A Mennonite Perspective](#) describes the value of a confession of faith. See also [MWC Shared Convictions](#). A contemporary statement of global belief appears in Alfred Nuefeld's book, *What We Believe Together*, Good Books.



Discussion Starter Questions

1. What kinds of diversity do you see in the Acts 15 passage?
2. Describe how Spirit, community, and individual work together in a complex way in Acts 15 and in the two video clips.
3. If Jesus is the lens through which we view Scripture with the aid of Spirit and community, how does your congregation integrate faith formation and doctrinal teaching that embraces unity in diversity and disagreement in love?

Action

Choose an action your group will take and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how to draw on historic declarations of faith and contemporary expressions of diversity.



5. Reconciliation and Baptism

As people of Christ's peace, congregations send baptized disciples into God's mission.

Core Values:

Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value God's mission of reconciliation to the world and participate as sent disciples by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ through worship, witness, and service.

Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value believers baptism as a sign of new life in Christ that includes a vital commitment to a local congregation.

Objective: Link with clarity God's mission of reconciliation, our personal salvation, baptism as "a sign of new life," congregational life, and being sent into God's mission as a disciple.

Core Text: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: Olepolos is a Maasai village in Southern Kenya. The video, "[Olepolos](#)," describes how this tribe found reconciliation with God. Their faith finds expression in the public form of baptism, a host of service ministries in the community, and a vision for mission.

The Dilemma: **Is God's mission to the world a job for specialists in foreign places or are all disciples sent into God's mission where ever they find themselves?**

Other Video: [We Are at Our Best Jubilee Ministries](#)



Background Reading: Marlin Birkey, "[Baptism as Necessity](#)" in *The Mennonite*, p. 14-15.

Ched Myers and Elaine Enns "[Ambassadors of Reconciliation](#)"

Discussion Questions:

1. **Who is an ambassador for God's message of reconciliation and how does one do the work of an ambassador according to 2 Corinthians 5:18-20?**
2. How many different levels of reconciliation do you see at work in Olepolos?
3. **What is the relationship between baptism and God's work of reconciliation at Olepolos? Between baptism and sending?**
4. What is the relationship between reconciliation with God and baptism within a community context?

Action

Choose an action your group will take and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider where reconciliation is active in your life.



6. Peace

As people of Christ's peace, we live the gospel of peace.

Core Value: Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value peace as a way of living that is deeply rooted in the Gospel and expresses Christ's love in all human relationships, even with our enemies.

Objective: Expand our understanding of peace by exploring the implications of *shalom*.

Core Text: Ephesians 2:11-22 **He [Jesus] is our peace...**

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: "[Shalom Has Many Facets](#)" describes the Hebrew origins of the English word peace and encourages the **need to define "peace" with these biblical origins in mind.**

The Dilemma: Where does the gospel of peace and a way of peace have a place in our contemporary sense of human reality or is **"peace on earth" a religious myth or a postponed spiritual reality?**

Background Reading: Kreider, "[Peace Church, Mission Church,](#)"
Paul Zehr, "[Shalom or Peace?](#)" at *Shalom News.net*.

Randy Keener, "[Shalom Has Many Facets,](#)" at *Shalom News.net*.

Other Video: Paul Zehr, "**Shalom or Peace?**"

"What Would You Do?" in *Sowing Shalom* curriculum at www.youtube.com.

U2, "[Peace on Earth.](#)"

Claiborne, "[Effects of Just War.](#)"

Walzer, "[Just War Theory.](#)"



Discussion Starter Questions

1. From the Bible Study worksheet, what do you conclude these passages say about *shalom*?
2. **What is significant to you about the “multi-faceted nature of *shalom*?”**
3. How do you resolve the dilemma between *shalom* as a religious concept that may or may not take concrete form and *shalom* as a way of life for those who follow Jesus?
4. Why do you think a tension between mission and peace exists in many churches? How could such a tension be resolved in a healthy manner?

Action

Choose an action your group will take and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how to live a life of *shalom*.



7. Contrast Community

As people of Christ's peace, we live as communities of disciples.

Core Value: Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value a congregation of disciples who live intentionally as a culturally-relevant contrast to the world where mutual care, accountability and discernment are Christ-centered and Spirit-led.

Objective: Wrestle with what it means to be a missional church in our present, changed context.

Core Text: Galatians 5:19-26

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: "[Missional Community – Simple](#)," asks how congregations help each other to stay connected to the local community through natural, existing relationships.

The Dilemma: Can the body of Christian believers be both culturally relevant and socially a contrast?

Background Reading: Nelson Okanya, "[Anabaptist Discipleship](#)," David Dyck, "[Why Not Just Live Together?](#)"

Other Video: Tim Keller, "[Missional vs. Evangelistic](#),"

Alan Hirsch, "[Disciple-Making](#),"

Scot McKnight, "[Missional Communities](#),"

EMM, "[Only With God](#)."



Discussion Starter Questions

1. How would you summarize the contrast between the deeds of the flesh and the gifts of the Spirit?
2. How can discipleship both train new Christians and help them maintain connections with their unbelieving friends?
3. What examples does your congregation have of church people having active ministry among unbelievers?
4. What changes in how your congregation functions would be necessary for its members to have greater involvement in the community?

Action

Choose an action your group will take and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how you can present an attractive, relevant, God-honoring contrast to the surrounding society.



8. Simplicity, Integrity, Justice

As people of Christ's peace, we live a kingdom lifestyle.

Core Value: Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value simplicity, integrity, justice, and personal and global stewardship that reflect Christ and honor God.

Objective: Discover that one creative Christian can make a big difference and that the difference can powerfully impact an ever-expanding circle of people.

Core Text: Matthew 5: 1-12 The Beatitudes describe a kingdom ethic for how Christians live a *shalom* way of life and the future rewards for that way of living.

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: "[Coffee for Peace](#)" examines a third-way solution in a violent conflict between Christians and Muslims in Mindanao, Philippines that has surprising and far-reaching results. Note the creation of a third space that is neither church nor community.

The Dilemma: Can limited actions of one individual actually make a difference or is social transformation limited to governments and corporations who have access to vast resources?

Background Reading: MCC, "[What is Food Insecurity?](#)"
"[Greatest Social Need](#)"

Philips, "[Fair Trade](#)"

Wachsmuth, "[In Pursuit of Economic Shalom.](#)"

Other Video: MCC, "[Coffee, Corn and Globalization.](#)"



Discussion Starter Questions

1. How does Matthew 5:9 (*You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight*) in *The Message* relate to the *Coffee for Peace* video clip?
2. In **"Coffee for Peace,"** how are economics and a gospel of peace interwoven?
3. In a complex world fraught with unintended consequences, how can an individual or a small group become knowledgeable enough to make just economic decisions and keep personal integrity and do so with a simple lifestyle?
4. **How might your congregation create a "third space"** environment that provides a safe environment for discussion and discipleship that is neither church nor community?

Action

Choose an action your group will take and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how you can best live out simplicity, integrity, and justice, which in real-world examples, are often are found in tension with one another.



9. Personal and Global Stewardship

As people of Christ's peace, we spend personal resources with a global perspective.

Core Value: Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value simplicity, integrity, justice, and personal and global stewardship that reflect Christ and honor God.

Objective: Consider actions to exercise better stewardship personally, in your community, and in the environment.

Core Text: Luke 12:15-23 tells the disciple should guard against greed and then provides a negative example.

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: "[The Story of Electronics](#)," describes a consumer-driven, linear process that cannot be sustained indefinitely. The video presents an alternative approach.

Dilemma: What is enough and when is too much toxic?

Background Reading: "[Reduce, Reuse, Recycle](#)"

"[Stewardship of the Earth](#),"

Other Video: "[What Happens When We Eat?](#);" This video draws on the farming experiences of LMC farmer Bob Fox in the Weaverland District and aired on *Earth Echoes*.

"[Story of Stuff](#)" (21 minutes 16 seconds)



Discussion Starter Questions

1. If the parable in Luke 12:15-23 is a negative example, what would a positive example look like? What stories do you have where your journey with God had positive economic implications for others?
2. **In the “Story of Electronics,” how are personal economics and global stewardship interwoven?**
3. In a complex world fraught with unintended consequences, can an individual or a small group become knowledgeable and responsible enough to make a difference spiritually or economically? How can we avoid the toxins of consumerism?
4. What third-way economic options are available to Christians in their personal finances besides surrendering to the dominant Corporate power or attempting to overthrow the dominant powers with violence?

Action

Choose an action your group will take and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how you might reduce your personal impact on the global ecosystem.



10. Christian Home

As people of Christ's peace, the Christian home nurtures faith.

Core Value: Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value the Christian home as a primary setting for nurturing faith and healthy relationships.

Objective: Consider the missional church and family dynamics.

Core Text: Ephesians 6:1-4 ; Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: **In the video “[Children and Simple Church](#),” the speaker wonders if Sunday morning programs are answers to the right questions. A missional church may have to address these deeper questions.**

The Dilemma: Is the primary place for spiritual nurture of children in weekly church programs or in the home under the guidance of parents?

Background Reading: Rich Robinson, “[Lessons in Mission ... Families](#)”

Lila Balisky, “[An Ordinary Family in Mission](#)”

GAMEO article, “[Family](#)”

Other Video: Gareth Brandt, “[Families Under Construction](#)”
Marilyn Kurtz, “[Christian Home](#),”



Discussion Starter Questions

1. In Ephesians 6:1-4, what family dynamics do you see Paul addressing?
2. How would you describe the potential partnership between spiritual nurture in the home and the nurture that occurs in Sunday School?
3. What benefits do parents, and particularly fathers, have in leading the spiritual nurture of their children compared to a church program? Challenges?
4. What missional challenges are created by bringing families with critical dysfunction into close church community?

Action

Choose an action your group will take and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how children and missional church interact.



11. We Can Tell Our Story

As people of Christ's peace, we tell the gospel story.

Core Value: Because our faith and life are centered in Jesus, we value a missional Anabaptist identity.

Objective: Wrestle with the implications of a God who is like us and God's call to us to be sent as Jesus was sent.

Core Text: John 1:1-14

Lesson Plans and Bible Studies: [LessonPlan/BibleStudy](#)

Orientation to the Video: **Alan Hirsch, in "[Missional-Incarnational Impulse](#)," provides both challenge and encouragement. If the early disciples could do what they did, we can too.**

The Dilemma: Is Jesus an object for Sunday worship or an example for incarnational involvement in the world?

Background Reading: **Read again Palmer Becker, "[What Is An Anabaptist Christian?](#)"**

Stuart Murray, [Decade of Experimentation](#),

Lyrics for "We See New Life."

Other Video: **Rich Winey, "We See New Life." link "[Best Christmas Pageant Ever](#)" (48 minutes)**



Discussion Starter Questions

1. How does John 1:1-14 explain the incarnation? How do you relate this passage to missional church?
2. Why does a missional church also need an incarnational theology?
3. **If it is true that Jesus was “30 years in the neighborhood before anyone noticed,” what does that say about what our incarnation into our communities should look like?**
4. **If it is true that the first disciples “didn’t get it,” what does that indicate for us when we also struggle to “get it?”**

Action

Choose an action your group will take and write it out here:

Things to do

1. As a group prepare one or more posts to the [Facebook page](#) in order to start a conversation with others about a missional Anabaptist identity.
2. On the [LMC YouTube Channel](#), post a comment about each of the videos you watched.
3. In prayer and reflection consider how you can make a spiritual connection with a friend who does not know Jesus and proclaim the gospel in word and deed.



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Lancaster

Mennonite Conference

a conference of Mennonite Church USA

We are people of Christ's peace

Lancaster Mennonite Conference

2160 Lincoln Highway East, #5

Lancaster, PA 17602

717-293-5246

information@lancasterconference.org

www.lancasterconference.org

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