



LMC *a fellowship of anabaptist churches*
Shalom NEWS

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**Stepping Out of Our
Comfort Zone in Faith**

SAVE THE DATE



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ON THE COVER

Main image: illustration by Adobe Stock

Small photo: Children joining in on mission.

Photo provided by Joshua and Esmeralda Haver

No Other Foundation

Fall Leadership Assembly

September 24–27, 2025

Sept. 24–25: East Petersburg Mennonite Church

Sept. 26–27: Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community



Spanish
translation
provided!

Confession of Faith
in a Mennonite
Perspective

UPCOMING COURSE:

The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (Part 2)

An Anabaptist Faith and Practice Class

A study of articles 13-24 of *A Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995)

Coming this fall!

Liminality: Moving with God in the In-Between

BY JOSHUA HAVER

On a hot summer day in Mexico, I was walking across a dusty field with David Blanchard, the president of the mission organization I had served with for thirteen years. As we walked, I paused and asked him to pray with me. My words were something like, “Something is changing within me; I don’t know what it is exactly, but God is shifting me in a new way.” Little did I know that just over two years later, my family and I would leave the Mexican desert for Kansas’s wide-open plains. We would transition from being missionaries—traveling, encouraging churches, and raising up young leaders—to pastors striving to serve an incredible congregation.

Life is full of transitions—those “liminal spaces,” the in-between moments amid the familiar and the unknown. Sometimes these shifts are monumental, encompassing every aspect of our lives: moving from one country to another, one culture to another, or one ministry to another. Like Abram, we hear God’s call: “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you (Gen. 12:1).”

More often however, God’s transitions are subtle—a nudge from one mindset to another, one small step in maturity, or one gifting unfolding into another. These in-between places, where what has been known is left behind and the destination remains unseen, often become the sacred ground where we encounter God most profoundly.

As followers of Jesus, we readily affirm our desire for him to lead us along the path of life he has prepared for us. We often quote verses like Proverbs 3:5–6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Yet, despite our affirmations, we seem to have a deep need to know the details—the what, how, when, why, and where of it all.

Liminal spaces, where clarity is absent, are uncomfortable because they

challenge our desire for control. Yet, being a Spirit-led movement begins with individuals willing to live Spirit-led lives. While our culture celebrates detailed plans and step-by-step strategies, God calls us to something radically different: to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). We need to ask, “What is he saying to me today?”

We gravitate toward formulas: “Four Steps to Walking Closer to Jesus,” “Three Steps for a Happier Spouse,” “Seven Steps to Financial Freedom,” “Twelve More Rules for Life”—the lists go on. But Jesus, in a conversation with Nicodemus, gave a much less structured and far more challenging description of life in him: “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

Two months after my conversation with David, I was sitting with my wife Esmeralda. I shared a growing sense God was calling us to the United States to serve as pastors. This was not an easy realization. We loved the ministry we were part of, and we shared deep, familial friendships with leaders and pastors throughout Mexico. Leaving it all felt unthinkable. Yet, it seemed as if God was speaking and my heart’s desire was to let him lead, even when the destination was unclear.

As I shared this with Esme, her response was simple: “I know.



Author's daughters helping lead an evangelism street party. Photos provided by the author.

And I think we will be moving someplace cold.” (Of course, compared to Mexico, anywhere north of South Texas is cold!) We agreed God was leading us to something new, although we had no idea what or how it would happen. And so we agreed that while we would hold that “new thing” in prayer, we wouldn’t try to figure it out, but instead remain faithful to what God had placed in our hands today.

Trusting God doesn’t mean having all the answers—it means trusting the One who does. He invites us out of the familiar and into the unknown, promising to show the way. As Hebrews 11:8 says: “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” By faith, he obeyed.



The author’s daughter serves in a medical clinic.

Over the next two years, as God revealed each step of our journey, we experienced some of the most powerful ministry opportunities of our lives. Even as we navigated the personal discomfort of uncertainty, doors opened for our family to minister in profound and unexpected ways across many regions of Mexico. Though we still didn’t know exactly where God was leading us, we trusted his grace to sustain us in the present as he guided us into the future.

To live as Spirit-led followers of Christ is to embrace liminality—the space between heaven and earth—where we partner with God to see his kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. I believe our Father is challenging us not only to walk with him in our “today” while trusting him for tomorrow, but also to become places of liminality ourselves: points of encounter for those desperately seeking hope, truth, and life. Places where those who are lost in darkness encounter light—and the love needed to step into his light.

Liminal spaces, where clarity is absent, are uncomfortable because they challenge our desire for control. Yet, being a Spirit-led movement begins with individuals willing to live Spirit-led lives.

Two and a half years ago, we began living life with a wonderful community of Jesus followers at Journey Mennonite Church in central Kansas. It has been a joy to experience the grace they have poured out on us. Stepping into the national, cultural, linguistic, and culinary differences has been both challenging and enriching, and we have been sustained by God’s ever-present grace. Surrounded by faithful people, we continue

to learn, navigate challenges, and discover new ways of doing things, while offering whatever it is God has given us to share. (And yes, Kansas is indeed much colder than Mexico!)

In the midst of that liminal space where we found ourselves, our new church family was discovering a new relationship with LMC. This relationship has already brought great joy and hope, yet it is also a liminal space—a church-wide transition. But in all, and at all levels and dimensions, we have the daily reminder that his grace is sufficient for today.

Liminality is multi-dimensional. It is both internal and external, personal and communal. It is where God shapes and refines me and the ministry entrusted to me, and it is where I meet those encountering Jesus for the first time. It is choosing to live a life marked by trust, hope, faith, and obedience—utterly dependent on the grace Jesus provides for today, with the confidence that tomorrow rests securely in his hands.

Liminality requires releasing the need to know and control, and instead trusting the One who knows the end from the beginning and promises never to leave or forsake us. It is yielding to his ever-present, empowering Spirit, allowing the wind of the Spirit to move, even when we cannot see where it will take us. It is relying fully on the grace Jesus gives for today while extending that same grace to others.

Liminality means allowing Jesus to reshape my thoughts and perspectives and letting him lead me across the street to share his love with someone who is hurting. It is being comforted by the Spirit while stepping outside of my comfort zone.

It is a continual acknowledgment that Jesus is Lord—I am not. Therefore, whatever he desires to change in me, through me, around me, or even in spite of me, by faith, I obey. I pray, “May we have ears to hear and eyes to see what your grace is doing today.” ■

Josh served as a missionary and Bible school director in Mexico for fifteen years, where he met his wife, Esmeralda, and welcomed three children to their family. Before moving to Mexico, he received a degree from Logos Bible University in Biblical studies and served as a youth pastor in Austin, TX. Joshua is passionate about studying the Scriptures, discovering Jesus, and bringing out practical ways to live out the treasures that are found within.



Liminalidad: moverse con Dios en el medio

ESCRITO POR JOSHUA HAVER

En un caluroso día de verano en México, caminaba por un campo polvoriento con David Blanchard, el presidente de la organización misionera en la que había servido durante trece años. Mientras caminábamos, hice una pausa y le pedí que rezara conmigo. Mis palabras fueron algo así como: “Algo está cambiando dentro de mí; no sé qué es exactamente, pero Dios me está cambiando de una manera nueva”. Poco me imaginaba que poco más de dos años después, mi familia y yo dejaríamos el desierto mexicano por las amplias llanuras de Kansas. Pasaríamos de ser misioneros —viajando, animando a las iglesias y educando a jóvenes líderes— a pastores esforzándonos por servir a una congregación increíble.

La vida está llena de transiciones, esos “espacios liminales”, los momentos intermedios entre lo familiar y lo desconocido. A veces estos cambios son monumentales y abarcan todos los aspectos de nuestra vida: pasar de un país a otro, de una cultura a otra o de un ministerio a otro. Como Abram, oímos la llamada de Dios: “Vete de tu país, de tu pueblo y de la casa de tu padre a la tierra que te mostraré (Gn. 12:1)”.

Sin embargo, con más frecuencia, las transiciones de Dios son sutiles: un impulso de una mentalidad a otra, un pequeño paso en la madurez o un don que se despliega en otro. Estos lugares intermedios, donde lo conocido se deja atrás y el destino permanece invisible, a menudo se convierten en el terreno sagrado donde nos encontramos con Dios más profundamente.

Como seguidores de Jesús, afirmamos fácilmente nuestro deseo de que nos guíe por el camino de la vida que nos ha preparado. A menudo citamos versículos como Proverbios 3:5-6: “Confía en el Señor de todo corazón y no te apoyes en tu propia prudencia; en todos tus caminos sométete a él, y él enderezará tus sendas”. Sin embargo, a pesar de nuestras afirmaciones, parece que tenemos una profunda necesidad de conocer los detalles: el qué, el cómo, el cuándo, el por qué y el dónde de todo ello.

Los espacios liminales, donde la claridad está ausente, son incómodos porque desafían nuestro deseo de control. Sin embargo, ser un movimiento guiado por el Espíritu comienza con individuos dispuestos a vivir vidas guiadas por el Espíritu. Mientras que nuestra cultura celebra los planes detallados y las estrategias paso a paso, Dios nos llama a algo radicalmente distinto: a caminar por la fe, no por la vista (2 Cor. 5:7). Debemos preguntarnos: “¿Qué me está diciendo hoy?”

Gravitamos hacia las fórmulas: “Cuatro pasos para caminar más cerca de Jesús”, “Tres pasos para un cónyuge más feliz”, “Siete pasos para la libertad financiera”, “Doce reglas más para la vida”... y la lista continúa. Pero Jesús, en una conversación con Nicodemo, dio una descripción mucho menos estructurada y mucho más desafiante de la vida en él: “El viento sopla donde quiere. Se oye su sonido, pero no se sabe de dónde viene ni adónde va. Así sucede con todos los nacidos del Espíritu” (Juan 3:8).

Dos meses después de mi conversación con David, estaba sentado con mi esposa Esmeralda. Compartía con ella la creciente sensación de que Dios nos llamaba a Estados Unidos para servir como pastores. No fue una realización fácil. Amábamos el ministerio del que formábamos parte y compartíamos amistades profundas y familiares con líderes y pastores de todo México. Dejarlo todo nos parecía impensable. Sin embargo, parecía como si Dios estuviera hablando y el deseo de mi corazón era dejarle guiar, incluso cuando el destino no estaba claro.

Cuando compartí esto con Esme, su respuesta fue simple: “Lo sé. Y creo que nos mudaremos a un lugar frío”. (Por supuesto, comparado con México, ¡cualquier lugar al norte del sur de Texas es frío!) Estuvimos de acuerdo en que Dios nos estaba guiando hacia algo nuevo, aunque no teníamos ni idea de qué o cómo sucedería. Así que acordamos que aunque mantendríamos esa “cosa nueva” en oración, no trataríamos de descifrarla, sino que permaneceríamos fieles a lo que Dios había puesto hoy en nuestras manos.

Confiar en Dios no significa tener todas las respuestas, sino confiar en Aquel que sí las tiene. Él nos invita a salir de lo familiar y adentrarnos en lo desconocido, prometiéndonos

mostrarnos el camino. Como dice Hebreos 11:8: “Por la fe, Abraham, cuando fue llamado a ir a un lugar que más tarde recibiría como herencia, obedeció y fue, aunque no sabía adónde iba”. Por fe, obedeció.

Durante los dos años siguientes, a medida que Dios revelaba cada paso de nuestro viaje, experimentamos algunas de las oportunidades ministeriales más poderosas de nuestras vidas. Incluso mientras atravesábamos la incomodidad personal de la incertidumbre, se abrieron puertas para que nuestra familia ministrara de maneras profundas e inesperadas en muchas regiones de México. Aunque todavía no sabíamos exactamente adónde nos llevaba Dios, confiamos en su gracia para que nos sostuviera en el presente mientras nos guiaba hacia el futuro.

Vivir como seguidores de Cristo guiados por el Espíritu es abrazar la liminalidad —el espacio entre el cielo y la tierra— donde nos asociamos con Dios para ver llegar su reino y que se haga su voluntad en la tierra como en el cielo. Creo que nuestro Padre nos desafía no solo a caminar con él en nuestro “hoy” mientras confiamos en él para el mañana, sino también a convertirnos nosotros mismos en lugares de liminalidad: puntos de encuentro para quienes buscan desesperadamente esperanza, verdad y vida. Lugares donde los que están perdidos en la oscuridad encuentran la luz, y el amor necesario para entrar en su luz.

Hace dos años y medio, empezamos a vivir la vida con una maravillosa comunidad de seguidores de Jesús en la Iglesia Menonita Journey, en el centro de Kansas. Ha sido una alegría sentir la gracia que han volcado sobre nosotros. Adentrarnos en las diferencias nacionales, culturales, lingüísticas y culinarias ha sido a la vez desafiante y enriquecedor, y nos hemos sostenido gracias a la gracia siempre presente de Dios. Rodeados de gente fiel, seguimos aprendiendo, sorteando retos y descubriendo nuevas formas de hacer las cosas, al tiempo que ofrecemos lo que Dios nos ha dado para compartir. (¡Y sí, Kansas es efectivamente mucho más frío que México!)

En medio de ese espacio liminal en el que nos encontrábamos, nuestra nueva familia eclesial estaba descubriendo una nueva relación con LMC. Esta relación ya nos ha traído gran alegría y esperanza, pero también es un espacio liminal, una transición a nivel de toda la iglesia. Pero en todo, y en todos los niveles y dimensiones, tenemos el recordatorio diario de que su gracia es suficiente para hoy.

La liminalidad es multidimensional. Es tanto interna como externa, personal y comunitaria. Es donde Dios me da forma y me refina a mí y al ministerio que se me ha confiado, y es donde me encuentro con aquellos que se encuentran con Jesús por primera vez. Es elegir vivir una vida marcada por la confianza, la esperanza, la fe y la obediencia, totalmente dependiente de la gracia que Jesús proporciona para hoy, con la confianza de que el mañana descansa seguro en sus manos.

La liminalidad exige renunciar a la necesidad de saber y controlar, y en su lugar confiar en Aquel que conoce el final desde el principio y promete no dejarnos ni abandonarnos nunca. Es ceder a su Espíritu siempre presente y fortalecedor, permitir que el viento del Espíritu se mueva, incluso cuando no podemos ver adónde nos llevará. Es confiar plenamente en la gracia que Jesús nos da para hoy mientras extendemos esa misma gracia a los demás.

Liminalidad significa permitir que Jesús reformule mis pensamientos y perspectivas y dejar que me lleve al otro lado de la calle para compartir su amor con alguien que está sufriendo. Es dejarme consolar por el Espíritu mientras salgo de mi zona de confort.

Es un reconocimiento continuo de que Jesús es el Señor y yo no. Por lo tanto, todo lo que Él desea cambiar en mí, a través de mí, a mi alrededor, o incluso a pesar de mí, por fe, lo obedezco. Rezo: “Que tengamos oídos para oír y ojos para ver lo que tu gracia está haciendo hoy”. ■

Siguiendo el llamado del Señor hacia lo desconocido

BY ESMERALDA HAVER

Cuando tenía 3 años mi padre falleció. A los 6 años emigramos a la frontera de Piedras Negras, Coahuila. Fue en esta ciudad donde mi mamá me puso en una casa hogar cristiana. En ese lugar, mis padres nuevos me trataron como hija amada y me hicieron sentir que yo pertenecía a una familia. Mi padre siempre decía que en el momento que una niña cruzaba el portón, se convertía en una hija hermosa.

Saber que soy amada, que soy Su hija y que mi Padre celestial siempre deseó una hija como yo, es algo que me da seguridad que puedo confiar que El me guiará y que voy a estar bien. Esa seguridad en Él me permite tomar los pasos que me pide, aun cuando no puedo ver el camino completo o el final.

Cuando yo tenía 17 años, al punto de graduarme de la preparatoria, necesitaba dirección. Tenía el potencial de empezar una relación de noviazgo con un chico, y continuar con mis estudios universitarios.

Una noche, después de un día largo de estudios y trabajo, llegué a casa. Me recueste en mi cama, pensando, "Solo necesito dejar descansar mis pies." Un sueño profundo cayó sobre mí. Me encontraba en una congregación con bancas de madera, llena de adultos de pie. En la plataforma de enfrente solamente veía el pastor, y sentía un gran respeto por él. En la parte trasera del edificio sólo había una puerta de entrada, solo el marco, sin puerta. En el marco se asomaba un joven que parecía necesitado. Cuando ese joven y yo nos miramos a los ojos, me desperté.

Despertando me pregunté qué es lo que había visto. Fue entonces cuando escuché, repetidas tres veces: 'Lleva mi Palabra a las naciones.' Eso era todo lo que necesitaba escuchar. El próximo día, me corté toda relación con el chico. Comencé el proceso de inscribirme en una escuela Bíblica, y, cuando me gradué de la preparatoria, me mudé a Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, donde estudié y después serví por 20 años.

Cuando Dios nos habla—ya sea a través de una visión, de una palabra dada por alguien o de las Escrituras—lo reconocemos como Señor y obedecemos.

En el lugar donde estudié y serví conocí a Joshua, con quien luego formé una familia, era una de las zonas más pobres de la ciudad con conflicto diario del narcotráfico. En medio

de todo esto, vivimos en una comunidad donde cada día nos reunimos en alabanza, oración y adoración – y con el enfoque constante de evangelizar nuestros alrededores y la ciudad - y me rompió en el buen sentido de la palabra. Porque aprendí a dejar que la voz suave pero firme del Señor tenga más peso que todo el ruido externo.

No hay nada fuera de Dios – Él llena todo. Estamos aquí por una causa más grande que nosotros mismos. No importa el momento, cada situación es una oportunidad para ver el cielo. Somos vasijas de luz para Su gloria.

Durante los años, en seguida, recordaba la visión que cambió mi dirección, y ahora yo sabía que el pastor que veía era Josh. Cuando Josh me decía que tenía el sentir que íbamos a mudarnos y que iba a ser un pastor, yo conteste, "Yo se." Veinte años antes, Dios me había dicho.

Mientras medito en la idea de liminalidad, y considero lo que yo he vivido – abandonada, adoptada, ministra en medio de violencia, cruzando culturas y transiciones tan distintas – pienso que ese lugar, o esa característica de vivir, no es tan complicada. Las cosas solo se complican cuando intento aferrarme al control en lugar de rendirme a Él.

Dios nos habla, Su Espíritu nos guía, rindamos nuestra voluntad y disfrutamos la aventura. Su gracia es suficiente. Hay paz en medio de Su voluntad. Aunque la tormenta puede gritar a nuestro alrededor, Su paz nos susurra más fuerte. Entonces decidimos estar siempre gozosos, dad gracias en todo, siempre viendo que vivo bajo Su autoridad. Jesús es el Rey de Reyes y el Señor de Señores. ■

Cuando Dios nos habla—ya sea a través de una visión, de una palabra dada por alguien o de las Escrituras—lo reconocemos como Señor y obedecemos.



Esme nació en Michoacán, México, pero creció en un hogar cristiano para niñas en México. Experimentar el amor incondicional de sus nuevos padres espirituales la impactó profundamente, y su hogar se convirtió en un lugar de constante oración, intercesión y ayuda a los necesitados. Esme se formó con esto y se ha convertido en su pasión. Ella está casada con Joshua Haver y son padres de tres maravillosos hijos. Su familia ha viajado mucho por México, enseñando y animando a líderes del cuerpo de Cristo. Actualmente viven en Kansas, donde Joshua dirige una maravillosa congregación.

Following the Lord's Call into the Unknown

BY ESMERALDA HAVER

My father passed away when I was three years old. When I was six, we emigrated to the border city of Piedras Negras, Coahuila. It was in this city where my mother left me in a Christian children's home. There, my new parents treated me as a beloved daughter and made me feel I belonged to a family. My father always said the moment a girl stepped onto the property, she became a beautiful daughter. Knowing I am loved, I am his daughter, and my heavenly Father always desired a daughter like me gives me the confidence to trust he will guide me and I will be okay. It is this security in him that allows me to take the steps he asks of me, even when I cannot see the full path or the destination.

When I was seventeen and just about to graduate from high school, I needed direction. I was considering the possibility of beginning a relationship with a young man and continuing my university studies.

One night, after a long day of studying and working, I arrived home. I laid down on my bed, thinking, "I just need to let my feet rest." A deep sleep fell over me. I found myself in a congregation with wooden pews, filled with standing adults. On the platform in front, I could only see the pastor, and I felt great respect for him. At the back of the building, there was just one entrance—only the frame, with no door. In the doorway stood a young man who seemed to be in need. When that young man and I locked eyes, I woke up.

As I awoke, I wondered what I had just seen. That was when I heard, repeated three times: "Take My Word to the nations." That was all I needed to hear. The next day, I ended my relationship with the young man. I began the process of enrolling in a Bible school, and when I graduated from high school I moved to

Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas where I studied and later served for twenty years.

When God speaks to us—whether through a vision, a word from someone, or through the Scriptures—we should recognize him as Lord and obey.

In the place where I studied and served I met Joshua, and together we started a family. It was one of the poorest areas of the city, marked by the daily conflict of drug cartels. In the midst of it all, we lived in a community where each day we gathered for worship, prayer, and praise—with a constant focus on evangelizing to our surroundings and the city. It broke me, in the best sense of the word. Because I learned to let the gentle but firm voice of the Lord carry more weight than all the external noise.

There is nothing outside of God—he fills everything. We are here for a purpose greater than ourselves. No matter the moment, every situation is an opportunity to glimpse heaven. We are vessels of light for his glory.

Over the years, I continued to remember the vision that changed my life direction, and now I knew the pastor I had seen was Josh.

When Josh told me he felt we were going to move and he was going to be a pastor, I responded, "I know." Twenty years earlier, God had already told me.

As I reflect on the idea of liminality and consider everything I have lived—abandoned, adopted, ministering in the midst of violence, crossing cultures, and distinct life transitions—I realize that this space, or this way of living, is not so complicated. It is only complicated if I am trying to be in control instead of surrendering to him.

God speaks to us, his Spirit guides us, we surrender our will, and we enjoy the adventure. His grace is sufficient. There is peace in the midst of his will. Though the storm may roar around us, his peace whispers louder.

And so, we choose to always rejoice, to give thanks in everything, while always recognizing we live under his authority. Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. ■

Esme was born in Michoacán, Mexico, but grew up in a Christian girls' home in Mexico. Experiencing the unconditional love of her new spiritual parents deeply affected her, and her home was one of constant prayer, intercession, and helping those in need. Esme was shaped by this and it has become her passion in life. She is married to Joshua Haver, and they are the parents of three wonderful children. Their family has traveled extensively in Mexico, teaching and encouraging leaders of the body of Christ. They currently live in Kansas, where Joshua leads a wonderful congregation.

When God speaks to us—whether through a vision, a word from someone, or through the Scriptures—we should recognize him as Lord and obey.





Far left: Making pizza for MCC.

Left: Reading the Christmas Eve story.



CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE:

Chenunda Creek Fellowship

DISTRICT: North Penn

LOCATION: Andover, New York

AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE: 25

WORSHIP SERVICE: Sunday 9:40 a.m.

PASTOR: Stephen Richard

FOUNDED: 1956

LEARN MORE:

chenundacreekfellowship.org

We are a joyful congregation of believers nestled in a valley in the grand hills of Allegany County, NY. In 1956, Seventh Day Baptists (SDBs) who built the meetinghouse we now use asked Mennonites from Lancaster County, who had settled in the area, to run a summer Bible School in the building, as they could no longer staff such a venture. The participating families enjoyed working and worshipping together, so they arranged with the SDBs for the Mennonites to use the meetinghouse on Sundays, while the SDBs continued their gatherings on Saturday (their Sabbath). Eventually, the SDBs numbers dwindled and they ceded the building to the Mennonites and left the valley.

Today, because we all travel a distance to gather, we bring lunch dishes to share every Sunday, thereby extending our fellowship time. Our meetings are informal with participation by everyone, including children. One member calls us a “do-it-yourself” church. Services are available by Zoom, a blessing from the recent pandemic. Outside Sunday mornings, we keep in touch by phone, email, mail, text, and visits. When someone’s birthday falls on a Sunday, we celebrate with a beautiful cake and much merriment. Over about seven years, we will celebrate each person.

We keep a coin jar at the front of the sanctuary, adding to it throughout the year. The contents are weighed and counted and the proceeds are sent to Mennonite Central Committee. We have a competition of who can guess the weight of the jar, and winners are awarded prizes and bragging rights. In 2024 the weight was 66.2 pounds and the total sent to MCC was \$459.05.

Our excellent basement social space is the scene of community meals. We do not fundraise at all, but rather depend on members’ contributions to operate, so these meals are a priceless opportunity to serve our community and enjoy fellowship with many who don’t regularly attend.

A few times a year, Souper Group women meet to produce delicious, nutritious soup meals which we store in the freezer to be taken to those who could use a hug and a welcome meal. We add cookies and rolls to round it out. Two or three times a year, we take a wood-fired pizza oven to a festival and make and sell individual pizzas, the proceeds of which are sent to Mennonite Central Committee.

In many ways, members of Chenunda Creek Fellowship use their diverse gifts to serve the community and one another. ■

Right: Little Disciples Club
Far right: Adult Sunday
School class



CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE: Midway Mennonite Church

Midway Mennonite Church traces its origins back to 1801. Mennonites had migrated from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia and settled in the areas now known as Columbiana and Mahoning counties in northeastern Ohio. Jacob Oberholtzer, a bishop from eastern Pennsylvania, was the first leader to serve the fledgling group of Mennonites scattered over two counties. Meetings were held in various homes until a small log building was erected on the Oberholtzer farm just north of the present location of the Midway meetinghouse in 1815. This building also served as a school.

Due to long distances between members' homes, the poor condition of roads, and horse and wagon transportation, additional meetings were established to the southwest in the Leetonia area of Columbiana County and to the northeast near North Lima in Mahoning County. Midway was the name eventually given to the meeting place roughly "midway" between the two other congregations.

In 1869, the log building used as church and school was deemed inadequate and a new meetinghouse was built. This was completed in 1871, and that building is still the sanctuary today, though updated.

As the three congregations grew, each became more autonomous. In 1948, there was a formal acknowledgement of separation of the group into three distinct churches.

Midway, long a member of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Churches and a part of Mennonite USA, decided over a period of a couple years to leave those relationships and applied to LMC. This change was formally completed in 2024.

Currently, we are without a pastor and our search committee is actively seeking God's will in finding a pastor. We have several small group meetings monthly for fellowship and activities. Midway also offers Sunday School classes for children and adults. We are sponsoring a Ukrainian refugee family living in Columbiana. A number of our folks participate in a joint effort with others from the community in a bi-monthly outreach with a program known as "God's Choice," a gathering for individuals with special needs and their families and caregivers.

We are excited to enter this year of celebration of the 500-year history of our Anabaptist roots. We are planning several special services, as well as static displays.

Our mission statement says it all: "We are a welcoming community nurturing followers of Jesus." ■

Congregational Profile Author: Leroy Keim was born into an Amish family and became a Mennonite in 1970. He has served the church in various capacities, has written Sunday School materials, was a farmer and builder, and still writes occasionally for a couple of magazines. He is a member of Midway Mennonite Church.



DISTRICT: Great Lakes East

LOCATION: Columbiana, Ohio

AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE: 65

WORSHIP SERVICE: Sunday 10:30 a.m.

PASTOR: No local pastor.
John Miller, LMC Bishop

FOUNDED: 1801

LEARN MORE:
midwaymennonite.org

IMA in Europe: An Answer to Prayer

BY TOM ESHLEMAN, LMC'S GLOBAL DELEGATE

International Missions Association (IMA) members from all over the world gathered in Medan, Indonesia in October 2023 for eight days of prayer, intercession, fasting, worship, and mission collaboration.

The 2023 meetings began with the traditional role call of members from Africa, Asia, Central America, and the United States. When they called for Europe, the room fell silent. To the disappointment of the international assembly, there were no representatives from Europe!

The absence of European partners initially elicited disappointment and frustration among IMA participants. As the group spent time together in prayer, this lament turned to vision and excitement. Perhaps the Holy Spirit was prompting IMA to go to Europe to intercede and connect with this continent that is close to God's heart.



A year later, twenty-five IMA participants including representatives from EMM and LMC arrived in Amsterdam for the 2024 European prayer drive. We began with three days of learning and praying under the leadership of EMM worker Bob Phillips. Then our group divided into teams of four which were scattered across the continent to Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Berlin, and Cologne, Germany. We reassembled in Halle, Germany to share our experiences.

What an amazing time of traveling and living together, praying and encountering the activity of God in Europe! We prayed prophetically, encouraged believers, and met passionate people leading renewal and awakening in Europe.

IMA prayer drive participants experienced a powerful kingdom reality in Europe. As Christ's disciples, we are called to so much more than community for the sake of our personal fulfillment. Jesus calls us into a community banded together on the mission of God, in "communitas." Together, we discover anew that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ■

What would happen if LMC was no longer here?

MERCEDES THOMAS, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

That is one of the questions members of LMC's Financial Stewardship team have been asking ourselves this year. Despite our substantial growth—from 176 congregations in 2018 to 309 at the end of 2024—our congregational giving is slowly decreasing. As a team, we need to ask why. And consider how we can better share the ways our leadership and staff support our LMC bishops, pastors, and congregations.

To answer these questions, we listed the activities we are engaged in and discussed their purpose. For each activity we facilitate, we are working to provide a "so that" answer to communicate why we spend our time and resources in those areas. For example, we offer STEP and other biblical and intercultural training so that congregations and leaders can be equipped and empowered to disciple new generations and people groups, as well as grow in their own faith.

This is still an ongoing process for LMC's Financial Stewardship team. We are grateful for the congregations and individuals who invest back into the organization through giving, and we are praying for the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit as we seek to better communicate the heart of worship that fuels generosity. ■

Year	Number of Congregations	Congregational Giving
2018	176	\$449,221
2019	↑ 230	↑ \$510,384
2020	↑ 245	↑ \$549,832
2021	↑ 250	↓ \$507,131
2022	↑ 257	↑ \$526,723
2023	↑ 275	↓ \$495,199
2024	↑ 309	↓ \$416,202



Donate to LMC here:
lmcchurches.org/donate

NEWS NOTES

LMC CREDENTIALING REPORT

In recent months, the following men and women were licensed, ordained, or installed:

Dr. Aristo Yulius (*Stephanie Sunjoto*) was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Maranatha Christian Fellowship in Reseda, Ca.

J. Calvin Bucher (*Rebecca*) was issued an ordination credential as assistant pastor at Crossing Community Church in Manheim, Pa.

Micah Martin (*Briana*) was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Blainsport Mennonite Church in Reinholds, Pa.

Kevin Martin (*Janelle*) was issued an ordination credential as associate pastor at Alive Church Ephrata in Ephrata, Pa.

Nathan Starr (*Marci*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Martinsburg Mennonite Church in Martinsburg, Pa.

Joshua Haver (*Esmeralda*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Journey Mennonite Church - South Hutchinson in South Hutchinson, Ks.

James Oustlund (*Jodi*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Journey Mennonite Church - McPherson Campus in McPherson, Ks.

Timothy Bentch (*Lorri*) was installed as lead pastor at Mount Joy Mennonite Church in Mount Joy, Pa.

Joshua Rivera (*Raquel*) was installed as bishop at Valley-Mountain PA-East District.

Jean Pierre Ngwolo (*Cecile Lbuma*) was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Evangelical Center for Revival in Middletown, Pa.

Brenden Colla (*Sarah*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor of Stony Brook Mennonite Church in York, Pa.

Ron Tinsley (*Janelle*) was issued an ordination credential as pastor of community outreach at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia, Pa.

Carson Stutzman (*Brie*) was issued a license toward ordination as pastor at Journey Mennonite Church - McPherson Campus in McPherson, Ks.

Jesse Blasdel (*Shiloh*) was issued an ordination credential as pastor of discipleship and youth at Journey Mennonite Church - South Hutchinson in South Hutchinson, Ks.

Tim Bistline (*Sharon*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Landis Valley Christian Fellowship in Lancaster, Pa.

Celeo Orosio (*Becca*) was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Lebanon Christian Fellowship in Lebanon, Pa.

Kerry Martin (*Jennifer*) was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Lebanon Christian Fellowship in Lebanon, Pa.

Les Stoner (*Sheena*) was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Lebanon Christian Fellowship in Lebanon, Pa.

NEWLY CREDENTIALLED LEADERS ORIENTATION

On February 1, LMC hosted its annual Newly Credentialed Leaders Orientation. Thirty-one leaders joined in-person and on Zoom for a time of making connections and being resourced. Join us in praying for these new credentialed leaders who are stepping into their calling and living out the mission of LMC—from Pennsylvania, to Virginia, to Kansas, to New York, and beyond.

MOVEMENT WORK WITH MLC

LMC has been working with Movement Leaders Collective (MLC) to navigate and facilitate movement. MLC has been coaching Bishop Elder, Rodney Martin, and Movement Navigator, Glenn Kauffman, who are leading LMC in movement thinking. Recently, eight leaders, including EMM President Marvin Lorenzana completed a movement lab, a six-month training into becoming dynamic, innovative, and reproducing Jesus movements. The second movement lab will start in March and will include eight Bishops and leaders from their districts.

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT



**THE GLOBAL
LEADERSHIP
SUMMIT**

Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community will be a host site for Global Leadership Summit. During this event, individuals and teams will be inspired, encouraged into action, and empowered to lead where you are. This is a great opportunity for credentialed leaders, business leaders, and aspiring and future leaders. Register today at weaverland.org/GLS/

Where: Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community. Host Site

When: August 7-8, 2025



UPCOMING EVENTS

Complete calendar and more details available at LMCchurches.org.

LMC Women's Prayer Gathering

Every first Friday of each month
8:00 a.m.

LMC at 450 N. Prince St. Lancaster, Pa.
717-293-5246 ext. 114 for more information

LMC/EMM Quarterly Prayer Meeting

April 16
3:00 p.m.

West Community Room
Landis Homes, Lititz, Pa.
717-293-5246 ext 102

Friendship Community's Miles for Friendship

Throughout the month of April

More information at
runsignup.com/milesforfriendship

50th Anniversary Community Celebration of the Biblical Tabernacle Experience

Saturday, May 10
9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Mennonite Life Visitors Center

Community Hymn Sing: 500 Years of Anabaptism

Saturday, May 31
7:00 p.m.

Stumptown Mennonite Church

250th Anniversary at Rissers Mennonite Church

June 14–15

Local tours, keynote speakers, worship,
and fellowship at Rissers Mennonite Church

Author Talk: Chain of Title with Christopher Scott

Thursday, June 26
7:00 p.m.

Mennonite Life Community Room

Annual Storyteller Night

Monday, August 4
7:00 p.m.

Landisville Mennonite Church

YOUTH LEADERS,
YOUR YOUTH GROUP CAN SERVE
LOCALLY OR GLOBALLY THIS SUMMER.

EMM's Kingdom Teams expose youth to cross-cultural missions through discipleship and service. This summer we're offering multiple weeks in Lancaster, Pa. and one trip in the Czech Republic!

We're also looking for some awesome young adults to serve with us as paid summer staff. Do you know someone we should talk with? Let us know!



EMM.ORG/KTEAMS



Biblical Tabernacle Experience
Celebrating 50 years in Lancaster!

Journey with God in a full-scale model of the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Now available in Chinese, English, and Spanish.

Scan for information and tickets.



Mennonite Life
2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Friendship Community is a faith-based nonprofit empowering individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism. Volunteer with us to make a positive impact on the community and build memories that last a lifetime.

To learn more or sign up to volunteer, contact the development team at (717) 656-2466 or email development@friendshipcommunity.net

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."
- 1 Peter 4:10



Friendship COMMUNITY



LANDIS ADULT DAY SERVICES - GOLF OUTING
Wednesday, June 4, 2025
Fairview Golf Course

Help support the Landis Adult Day Services Program providing care for aging adults who need daytime assistance with activities, companionship, meals and medicine.

717-381-3580 | jnikoloff@landis.org

Landis Adult Day Services

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

— Joshua 1:9