



LMC *a fellowship of anabaptist churches*

# Shalom NEWS

JULY–SEPTEMBER 2025



**Taking Steps to Prepare for the Future**  
*The Importance of Raising Up New and Young Leaders in the Church*





**July–September 2025**

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**ON THE COVER**

STEP 2025 Graduates. Photo by Mercedes Thomas.

# LMC resource partner organization EXPO

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# The Impact of STEP

## *A Conversation with Graduates from Slate Hill*

BY MERCEDES THOMAS

**“The STEP Program is best begun without an end in mind.”**

That’s what Joy Fasick, Associate Pastor of Slate Hill Mennonite Church, shared when asked about the STEP Program. Joy was a graduate of STEP in 2012—Slate Hill’s first graduate—and now serves as an instructor in the program.

I had the opportunity to conduct a few interviews with individuals from Slate Hill who have been involved in STEP. Lynn Shertzer serves as the lead pastor there and advocates for STEP both as an instructor and a pastor. With his support, Slate Hill consistently sends students to the three-year program, which has produced a robust leadership pipeline within the church.

In addition to Lynn and Joy, I recorded a Zoom interview with Khan Bounma, Dan Ryder, Johnny Zook, and Ben Simcox—all of whom were sent to STEP from Slate Hill and have since graduated. In our interview, they affirmed Joy’s thought that it is best to begin STEP without having an end goal in mind.



Above: Praying a prayer of blessing. Right: Joy Fasick and Lynn Shertzer holding baptism at Yellow Breeches Creek. Photos provided by Slate Hill Mennonite Church.



For Khan, Dan, Johnny, and Ben, personal and spiritual growth was the driving factor for joining the program. Khan—who is a leader with the Laos Fellowship out of Slate Hill—says, “I was at the point of my life where I wanted to go deeper with Christ, and I figured, why not? What is it going to hurt to try it?”

And if growth is the draw, then STEP helps students accomplish this. “My desire to be part of the STEP program was to learn more, to learn more deeply, and to gain more skills to help me in working with the youth. And I feel it’s done all of that,” says Johnny. Johnny currently serves as the Jr. High Director at Slate Hill.

**“Though not always possible, I believe it is most ideal when students can begin STEP for true exploration and simply see where the Lord leads as the years progress. This was my experience—and, I would add, blessing.”**

So why should students begin with a growth mindset, rather than having an end goal in mind? Ben, who serves in a variety of ways at Slate Hill, including being a member of the board, says, “There have been people who have gone through STEP and have had end goals in mind, and it hasn’t gone well for them. And the reason for that is because it’s not that kind of program.”

Joy agrees: “Though not always possible, I believe it is most ideal when students can begin STEP for true exploration and simply see where the Lord leads as the years progress. This was my experience—and, I would add, blessing.”

STEP facilitates hands-on learning, where students hone skills in preaching, teaching, pastoral skills, leading meetings, etc. and practice them in their home congregations. But it also promotes biblical and spiritual learning. The classes on preparing a sermon and the Old and New Testament have helped Dan in his preaching—but he’s only on the preaching rotation at Slate Hill a few times a year. However, he notes that it is the spiritual disciplines that have really stuck for him: “At the end of year one, a big part of the year was developing a rule of life, and there was a prayer we had to write as part of that. And it’s crazy because, six years later, I’m still saying that prayer every morning.”

It’s clear—from the graduates’ perspectives—STEP has been crucial in equipping them as leaders and shaping them to do ministry wherever the Lord may send them. “I believe that my life is a ministry field. It’s not just certain things that are ministry; everything I do is ministry,” says Ben.



Above: Johnny Zook speaking at his STEP Graduation, 2025. Photo by Mercedes Thomas.  
Below: Exterior shot of Slate Hill Mennonite Church. Photo provided by Slate Hill Mennonite Church.



So, how do congregations identify and raise up leaders in their own churches to send to STEP?

“Commit to a Kingdom mindset,” says Joy. “Be willing to support the growth of this individual, even though it’s possible that when this education is finished, they may be called to another church. God’s Kingdom will be blessed by your giving.”

To start the process to identify potential future leaders, Dan suggests starting with prayer. “Put it before God and say, ‘Hey, this is the direction we want to go, give us the people with the desire, or give us the wisdom and discernment to see who we think the next person should be or who would be a good fit.’ And then from there, let the Holy Spirit do the work.”

Everyone also agreed to look for those who are hungry and ready to grow and learn. Consider looking for those who are already leading in different capacities at the church, perhaps as worship leaders, Sunday school teachers, powerful prayer warriors, etc. And don’t be afraid to ask them questions to try to gauge what they want and whether they’d be interested in additional training.

Once those leaders are identified and the congregation has discerned they’re a good fit for the STEP program, be ready to invest in those leaders for the duration of the three years. Encourage them, pray for them, and help them monetarily with the tuition.

Slate Hill budgets for STEP and sets aside money to pay their students’ tuition in full. While this may not be a reality for all congregations, those interviewed agreed that some level of monetary support is incredibly important. Ben says, “Churches can be allocating funds to STEP because investing in your own people is one of the best investments you can make.”

Lynn sums it up like this: “It’s a cost when we aren’t sending people and have people on the bench. That’s a cost, and



Khan Bounma leading a multicultural service at Slate Hill with Laos Fellowship. Photo provided by Slate Hill Mennonite Church.

**“Churches can be allocating funds to STEP because investing in your own people is one of the best investments you can make.”**

sometimes that cost is even more expensive or more difficult. So everything we do in life has a cost. When it comes to this, there’s a financial cost. But there’s also a cost if we aren’t raising up leaders in the church.”

Supporting the congregation’s STEP student/s recognizes they are a future leader and have a crucial role in leading the church into the next generation. Khan says, “Churches should be prepping for the next generation, prepping for the next upcoming leaders. You’re going to need somebody, so you need to identify who that is ... For a smaller congregation, it is really important to have the next generation of people lined up so that your church is able to continue growing fresh new ideas.”

At the end of the day, the investment made into STEP and future leaders will pour out over the rest of the church. Throughout the program, these leaders are learning new skills that can help the congregation in areas that haven’t been explored before. And afterwards, these leaders may remain in the congregation, continuing to be a blessing there, or they may go somewhere else, being a blessing to the Kingdom wherever they go.

For Johnny, who has continued to be involved at Slate Hill, the blessing is visible. “I can see from when I first started [attending in 1998] to where we are now, something’s different. There’s a richer experience at church. And it’s either richer because we’ve built more people up in the church, or it’s richer because I’ve become more attuned to the Spirit. Either way, I’m feeling that the experience at church is closer to God than it was ... and now having gone through STEP, I can see it’s likely played a part in it.” ■

*I had the opportunity to sit down with Lynn Shertzer to talk about the STEP Program for this article. You can watch the full video—as well as the full interview with Khan, Dan, Johnny, and Ben—on our YouTube page: [youtube.com/@2160LMC](https://youtube.com/@2160LMC).*

## More About STEP

**What:** STEP (Study, Transform, Engage, and Prepare) is a three-year non-traditional ministry leadership training program that operates on a cohort model. Students complete online assignments and meet for class one Saturday a month for nine months, for three years. The program functions as a guided practicum in ministry leadership based primarily on an action/reflection model of learning.

**When:** Apply by August 1, 2025

**How:** Apply at [lmcchurches.org/ministries/step/step-application](https://lmcchurches.org/ministries/step/step-application)

**More Information:** [lmcchurches.org/ministries/step](https://lmcchurches.org/ministries/step), or email Marcia Mylin at [mmylin@lmcchurches.org](mailto:mmylin@lmcchurches.org).





# Reflecting on the STEP Program

***“How has STEP impacted your faith and praxis?”*** That’s the question we asked our STEP year two students as they get ready to enter into their third and final year of the program. Soon, these students will be creating and implementing a missional experiment, where they will put what they’ve learned into practice.

The year two cohort (soon to be year three) consists of eight students: Sarah Giordano, Sandra Granthon-Roman, Hien Minh Huyn (Jules), Jessica Kindon, Tania Madymba, Gordon Reason, Alexis Roman, and Jermaine Shannon. Read below for reflections from a few of them on how the STEP program is helping shape and prepare them for the future.



## Sarah Giordano

When I enrolled in STEP, I was transitioning from a position with a national-level touring ministry to something more local. I had accepted an internship with Capital Christian Fellowship (CCF) and figured STEP would prepare me for whatever God had for me, even though I wasn’t sure what that was. Since beginning, I have finished my internship and joined staff as the Discipleship Connection Coordinator. STEP has fostered a sense of intentionality as I continue to develop my personal relationship with God. It has also been an invaluable resource for many aspects of ministry as I have explored my calling. Perhaps the most meaningful part of the experience, though, has been the relationships formed within my cohort. It’s so special to be learning and growing with other up-and-coming leaders, sharing in the joys and struggles of ministry, and praying for and supporting one another.



## Jessica Kindon

STEP has been a life-giving source of beneficial and quality opportunities for theological and spiritual self-reflection as well as a reflection on Church and its function. Readings and assignments—like those from Survey of the Old and New Testaments and Church history—have pushed me to grow my thinking and understanding. Pastoral care, teaching, and preaching classes have taught me specific skills to listen and communicate with others. Even more so, many assignments push me deeper into study and spiritual practices, providing me with tools for my own spiritual development that will nourish me far beyond STEP. As I apply what I’ve learned and think forward about where I may find myself leading, I am thankful for the ways STEP has prepared me to disciple and equip others to grow as followers of Jesus. Though I am unsure about where I will find myself in church leadership and ministry service, STEP is providing tools and practices I will need to continue to grow spiritually, engage more deeply with the Bride of Christ, and fulfill God’s reconciling mission in my community and beyond.



## Gordon Reason

My journey into STEP was a rocky one, met with hesitation. Having gone through a pastoral and biblical education program at a different church and denomination, I wasn’t quite sure if I wanted to embark on another academic ministry adventure. It has also been fifteen years since I’ve set foot in a classroom. My family and I had just transitioned to a new church under the Mennonite umbrella, and it was a refreshing time of getting to know new people and serving together. It was out of this community that I was encouraged by the leaders to pursue STEP. Not just to further my education and learn the history of the Mennonite church, but also to put myself in a position alongside others to see what the Lord is up to in my life and calling. My time so far has been a wonderful challenge—experiencing a learning curve and a life-giving cohort. To tarry with others as we balance our busy lives, learn what the Lord has done, and discern what He wants to do has been rewarding. There has been growth in my praxis of preaching and in my practical spiritual disciplines. I am learning how to listen better and to love more.



## Jermaine Shannon

The STEP program has challenged me to be bold and courageous in my relationship with Jesus and to redefine what I consider to be community. Community has no bounds—only people do—but with God, the impossible becomes possible. I have grown a lot in the pulpit, challenging the traditional outlook on the Word and allowing my experiences to help bridge the gap of who and what God’s people can be. I have gained the confidence to step more into my leadership role and embrace the leader God has called me to be. STEP has allowed me to build deep and meaningful relationships with my cohort, and we have walked closely with each other through life’s adversities and successes. I am thankful for the program and all the instructors who have a passion to instruct us on our journey. ■

# Reflexionando sobre el Programa STEP

**“¿Cómo ha impactado STEP tu fe y tu práctica de tus conocimientos?”** Esa es la pregunta que les hicimos a nuestros estudiantes de segundo año de STEP mientras se preparan para comenzar su tercer y último año del programa. Pronto, estos estudiantes crearán e implementarán un experimento misional donde pondrán en práctica lo aprendido.

El cohorte de segundo año (próximamente de tercer año) está formada por ocho estudiantes: Sarah Giordano, Sandra Granthon-Roman, Hien Minh Huyn (Jules), Jessica Kindon, Tania Madymba, Gordon Reason, Alexis Roman y Jermaine Shannon. A continuación, las reflexiones de algunos de ellos sobre cómo el programa STEP les ayuda a formarse y prepararse para el futuro.

## Sarah Giordano

Cuando me inscribí en STEP, estaba en transición de un puesto en un ministerio de gira nacional a algo más local. Acepté una pasantía en Capital Christian Fellowship (CCF) y pensé que STEP me prepararía para lo que Dios tuviera preparado para mí, aunque no estaba seguro de qué era. Desde el principio, terminé mi pasantía y me uní al equipo de CCF como Coordinador de Conexión de Discipulado. STEP ha fomentado un sentido de intencionalidad a medida que sigo desarrollando mi relación personal con Dios. También ha sido un recurso invaluable para muchos aspectos del ministerio a medida que he explorado mi llamado. Sin embargo, quizás lo más significativo de la experiencia hayan sido las relaciones que he forjado dentro de mi grupo. Es muy especial aprender y crecer con otros líderes prometedores, compartir las alegrías y las dificultades del ministerio, y orar y apoyarnos mutuamente.

## Jessica Kindon

STEP ha sido una fuente vivificante de oportunidades beneficiosas y de calidad para la autorreflexión teológica y espiritual, así como para reflexionar sobre la Iglesia y su función. Las lecturas y tareas, especialmente las de temas como el Estudio del Antiguo y el Nuevo Testamento y la Historia de la Iglesia, me han impulsado a profundizar mi pensamiento y comprensión. Las clases de cuidado pastoral, enseñanza y predicación me han enseñado habilidades específicas para escuchar y comunicarme con los demás. Sin embargo, aún más, muchas tareas me impulsan a profundizar en el estudio y las prácticas espirituales, brindándome herramientas para mi propio desarrollo espiritual que me nutrirán mucho más allá de STEP. Al aplicar lo aprendido y pensar en las oportunidades y situaciones en las que podría encontrarme liderando, agradezco las maneras en que STEP me ha preparado para discipular y equipar a otros para que crezcan espiritualmente como seguidores de Jesús. Aunque no estoy seguro de dónde me encontraré en el liderazgo de la iglesia y el servicio ministerial, STEP me proporciona las herramientas y prácticas que necesitaré para seguir creciendo espiritualmente, conectarme más profundamente con la Esposa de Cristo y cumplir la misión reconciliadora de Dios en mi comunidad y más allá.

## Gordon Reason

Mi camino hacia STEP fue accidentado y lleno de dudas. Tras haber cursado un programa de educación pastoral y bíblica en una iglesia y denominación diferente, no estaba muy seguro de querer embarcarme en otra aventura ministerial académica. Además, hacía quince años que no pisaba un aula. Mi familia y yo acabábamos de mudarnos a una nueva iglesia bajo la tutela menonita, y fue una época refrescante conocer gente nueva y servir juntos. Fue en esta comunidad donde los líderes me animaron a seguir STEP. No solo para profundizar en mi formación y la historia de la iglesia menonita, sino también para ponerme en la misma posición que otros y ver qué está haciendo el Señor en mi vida y mi llamado. Mi tiempo hasta ahora ha sido un reto maravilloso: he experimentado una curva de aprendizaje y una experiencia vivificante. Acompañar a otros mientras equilibramos nuestras ocupadas vidas, aprendemos lo que el Señor ha hecho y discernimos lo que Él quiere hacer ha sido gratificante. He crecido en mi práctica de predicación y en mis disciplinas espirituales prácticas. Estoy aprendiendo a escuchar mejor y a amar más.

## Jermaine Shannon

El programa STEP me ha retado a ser audaz y valiente en mi relación con Jesús y a redefinir lo que considero comunidad. La comunidad no tiene límites, solo las personas los tienen, pero con Dios lo imposible se hace posible. He crecido mucho en el púlpito, desafiando la perspectiva tradicional de la Palabra y permitiendo que mis experiencias ayuden a cerrar la brecha de quién y qué puede ser el pueblo de Dios. He ganado la confianza para asumir más a fondo mi rol de liderazgo y abrazar al líder que Dios me ha llamado a ser. STEP me ha permitido forjar relaciones profundas y significativas con mi grupo, y hemos caminado juntos a través de las adversidades y los éxitos de la vida. Estoy agradecido por el programa y por todos los instructores que tienen la pasión de guiarnos en nuestro camino. ■



Es muy especial aprender y crecer con otros líderes prometedores, compartir las alegrías y las dificultades del ministerio, y orar y apoyarnos mutuamente.

## DISTRICT PROFILE:

# Shalom Council of Churches

**SUPERVISORS:** Samuel López, Adalberto Santiago, Hugo García

The Shalom Council of Churches, formerly known as the Spanish Mennonite Council of Churches, is a district of LMC with twenty-five churches in the US and thirty-five international churches located in eight Latin American Countries. The Spanish Mennonite Churches are the fruit of the evangelism of LMC and Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) that began in 1953. Shalom Council started in May 1970 when three Spanish Mennonite congregations in Pennsylvania decided to organize in a Council. The original vision was, and remains, to reach out to the Latin American people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the 1980s the Shalom Council started to grow, sending church planters to Washington, New York, Florida, California, Virginia, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. When the Mennonite Church reorganized, the Spanish Churches of Shalom Council were transferred to the regional Conferences of the Mennonite Church; only the churches of Pennsylvania and New Jersey remained part of the Concilio Iglesias Menonitas Hispanas. In 2017, Concilio Iglesias Menonitas Hispanas changed the name to Shalom Council or Concilio Iglesias Evangélicas Shalom (CIES).

Four key words have been clear in the mind and hearts of the Shalom leaders in the development of our vision: (1) **identity** as children of God and rooted in Anabaptist theology, (2) **unity** of the CIES family to work together and support each other, (3) **grow** and multiply as a body of believers, planting new churches, (4) and **accountability** to be a healthy body and care for each other. These catalytic words have provided a base on which to build a sound and healthy organization to carry out the mission of God in the US and Latin America.

The Shalom Council has been on a faith adventure since its beginnings. Challenges of language, finances, and facing racism and discrimination could not hold captive the evangelistic flame in the hearts of the CIES members. Missions moved beyond the US into Mexico, and then to Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Uruguay, the

Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Cuba, and Colombia. The family grew into places where no one imagined God would call us to go. In the US, Shalom Council has leadership training programs such as the Christian Church Workers Program and Kyrios Bible Institute. In Mexico, leaders are trained at the Center of Biblical Studies. Additionally, the Council develops and supports leadership and discipleship programs for all age groups.

The Shalom Council has always operated by faith. Examples include sending missionaries by faith (without a guaranteed budget!), starting churches in unknown places, building worship places with limited finances, and so on! After all, we have always believed that God is leading the way, and the Shalom Council needs to move when the Spirit moves. Faith operates by obedience. Shalom Council has gone only to places where God has opened the door and showed us the way! Our next challenge is to overcome ethnocentrism and cross the cultural barrier to go all over the world. Our members have a deep evangelistic spirit summarized in the words of Peter and John in Acts 4:20, *"Porque no Podemos dejar de decir lo que hemos visto y hemos oído."* ("As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.")

Finally, the Shalom Council is excited to be part of a global family, working within and alongside other districts of LMC and EMM as an international body of believers, strengthening our Christian Anabaptist faith and helping us to unite, grow, and multiply as God is calling us to do. God has not finished with us! Shalom Council has the faith to cross new challenges and barriers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Matthew 28:19 "Go and make disciples of all nations..." The faith adventure continues ... Amén! ■

*District Profile Author: Samuel López, member Jesucristo es el Señor New Holland Spanish Church and President of CIES.*



Below: Recent baptism at Pital de Megua, Colombia. Right: CIES pastors in Colombia experiencing footwashing for the first time. Far right: Graduates of the Instituto Biblio Kyrios, Camden NJ, February 2025. Photos provided by Samuel López.







Far left: Youth at Friday Night Live. Left: Gathering for prayer and fasting at Oxford Circle. Above: Coming together for a leadership gathering.

## CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE:

# Oxford Circle Mennonite Church

Oxford Circle Mennonite Church (OCMC) is an urban congregation in Philadelphia, dedicated to sharing in word and action Christ's message of love that reconciles us to God and neighbor. Since COVID, we have asked, "How do we bridge the gap between our congregation and our neighborhood?" Through our annual month of fasting and prayer each January, we seek to hear what God is speaking to us and inviting us towards.

One way we bridge the gap has been through Friday Night Live (FNL), a bi-monthly outreach event for middle schoolers, led by high school youth and young adult interns under the leadership of Pastor Tee (Ron Tinsley), our Pastor of Outreach. This space provides a safe, fun place for middle schoolers to build relationships, learn about faith and life, and grow. Our high schoolers are developing leadership skills and putting their faith into practice as they lead games, share devotions, and engage in conversations. Pastor Tee and others from OCMC build relationships with parents, and a prayer team is on site praying throughout each event. Neighborhood parents value this space for their kids, and a few have visited the church. One parent has become a member and is now being mentored in prayer team leadership.

Discipleship Team is another space we created for leadership development, equipping, and outreach. Pastor JoEl Rohrer was instrumental in developing this. While FNL provides space for young and new leaders to practice ministry, Discipleship Team provides these same leaders space for community and equipping. The group included five long-term leaders and twelve newer or younger Christians. As we shared meals every week for seven months, we became family. After the meal, we had discussions and prayer centered around Scripture and tools for knowing God, living in community, loving our neighbors, and sharing Christ. In these conversations, mentoring happened, and newer leaders grew in their confidence in hearing and following Scripture and the Spirit.

As we engage in the neighborhood barbecues and in FNL, we see skills modeled, practice new tools we learned, and debrief together. While in the past, we had done small group Bible-study, this pilot program convinced us that providing space for our ministry teams to have community and equipping is a powerful model for discipleship and leadership development. This has evolved into a monthly leadership development space that is beginning to dream of more ways to bridge the gap between the congregation and the neighborhood. ■

*Congregational Profile Authors: Lynn Parks has been Lead Pastor at OCMC since 2019. She and her husband Vandy have one daughter and two grandchildren. Pastor Ron Tinsley has been Pastor of Outreach since 2021. He and his wife Janelle have four adult children and one grandchild. Lyllian Velazquez has been part of the pastoral team since 2019, bringing strengths in evangelism, prayer, and discipleship. She has three adult children. JoEl Rohrer has also been part of the pastoral team since 2019, bringing strengths in leadership development and discipleship. She and her husband Richard have three children.*

**DISTRICT:** New York City

**LOCATION:** Oxford Circle, Philadelphia, PA

**AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE:** 75

**WORSHIP SERVICE:** Sunday 11:00 a.m.

**PASTORAL TEAM:** JoEl Rohrer, Lynn Parks, Ron Tinsley, and Lyllian Velazquez

**FOUNDED:** 1949

**LEARN MORE:**  
[ocmcp Philly.org](http://ocmcp Philly.org)



Pastoral Team (from left to right): JoEl Rohrer, Lynn Parks, Ron Tinsley, Lyllian Velazquez. Photos provided by Oxford Circle Mennonite Church.

# Supporting and Connecting Youth and Their Leaders

BY ROSITA N'DIKWE

**S**ince I began working at LMC over two years ago, one of my tasks has been to focus on LMC youth and those leading them. Leading youth has always been hard, yet rewarding work, and somehow it seems to be getting harder—COVID-19, social media, etc. Statements like “the youth are the future of the church,” and “we need to be reaching the youth,” are commonly heard in churches, denominational meetings, Christian media, and in conversations among Christians.

LMC is a Spirit-led movement, which means we need to wait for the Spirit to lead—quite possibly in new directions. Seeking the Spirit’s guidance, a small group gathered for prayer and sought direction on “next steps.” The above statements were among those used as a starting point to guide our prayer and discussion. Together, we sought to form a vision on how LMC can move forward to help support those leading the youth who may feel alone, are unsure where to turn for support, or are looking for new approaches for their youth group. Additionally, we asked what opportunities are being facilitated by LMC to help build connections between youth



Youth Leaders Retreat, February 2025. Photo by Mercedes Thomas.

across congregations and the wider church?

In February of this year, the first step was taken when over thirty individuals from around LMC who work with youth gathered for a weekend retreat—a time of resourcing, restoration, connection, and collaboration—at the MCC Welcoming Place in Akron, PA. The feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive. There is a vision to provide future opportunities (both in person and virtually) for equipping those leading the youth. Additionally, in conjunction with the Assembly next year and every year it is held, there will be a conference-wide youth gathering. (Please stay tuned for more details!) I look forward to the other opportunities that will occur as we continue to be faithful, seek the Spirit’s guidance, and respond in faith. ■

## Investing in Innovative Leaders

ROBERT BRODY, PASTOR OF NEW DANVILLE MENNONITE CHURCH & LMC BISHOP

**W**hen I started my position as Pastor at New Danville Church, I was given a book with the 300-year history of the church. It contained a list of Bishops and Pastors through the years. As I looked at the list I felt the weight of responsibility for what would be my chapter at the church.

I’ve come to realize that my chapter, if done well, should be a launching point for other chapters of the church. Just as the Bible says David served in his generation and then rested with his ancestors, each of us as a leader should realize our time is limited, and we should always be working to empower and see ourselves replaced by the next generation. But it’s not just about time, it’s about influence. If we try to lead everything directly, our influence will be limited. However, when we raise up other leaders and invest in



them, ministry can spread exponentially.

In my role as Bishop at LMC, I am creating a network of leaders who are exploring new expressions of church, not to replace what exists, but instead to enhance and expand it. One example is Mercedes Thomas, who has been featured here before, running a missional community called The Gaming Grounds.

We continue to look for and network with those who have a passion to create a fresh community for Christ. We hope our network will be a place where leaders can grow, dream, plan, and explore their gifts and ideas in a very tangible and practical way.

Keep an eye out for more about what we’re doing! Our hope is to soon have a way to connect to other leaders with a vision for a new expression of church. ■



# NEWS NOTES

## LMC CREDENTIALING REPORT

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

**Cesar Norales** (*Zayda*) was issued an ordination credential as associate pastor at Evangelical Garifuna Church in New Orleans, La.

**Felix Rocha** (*Denia*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Evangelical Garifuna Church in New Orleans, La.

**Burt Hey** (*Tana*) was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Welsh Mountain Christian Fellowship (formerly Meadville Mennonite Church) in Gap, Pa.

**Tana Hey** (*Burt*) was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Welsh Mountain Christian Fellowship (formerly Meadville Mennonite Church) in Gap, Pa.

**Alvin Horning** (*Roberta*) was issued an ordination credential as preaching pastor at Oley Valley Mennonite Church in Oley, Pa.

**Elbert B. Johnson** (*Yvette*) was issued a license toward ordination as elder/minister of evangelism at Norma Mennonite Church in Elmer, Nj.

**Ryan Burkholder** (*Emily*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Millport Mennonite Church in Leola, Pa.

**R. Keith Nyce** (*Yvonne*) was installed as bishop of the Conestoga River District.

**Joshua McCollough** (*Becca*) was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Mount Joy Mennonite Church in Mount Joy, Pa.

**Shawn Connatser** (*Danielle*) was issued a license toward ordination as assistant pastor at Freedom in Christ Fellowship in Lebanon, Pa.

**Judy Miller** (*Stanton*) was issued an ordination credential as associate pastor at Journey Mennonite Church—South Hutchinson in South Hutchinson, Ks.

**Jason Wagner** (*Jennifer*) was issued a license toward ordination as pastor of revitalization sent from Early Church in Harrisonburg, Va. and the Blue Ridge District.

**Sandford Yoder** (*Barb*) was issued an ordination credential as discipleship coach at Mosaic of Grace in Harrisonburg, Va.

**Philip Bollinger** (*Sarah*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor of Gingrichs Mennonite Church in Lebanon, Pa.

**Lylian Velazquez** was issued a license toward ordination as associate pastor at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia, Pa.

**Sam Miller** (*Issa*) was issued an ordination credential as youth and family life minister at Arthur Mennonite Church in Arthur, Il.

**Nelson L. Rutt** (*Andrea*) was installed as associate pastor at Green Terrace Mennonite Church in Wernersville, Pa.

## NEW!

**Save the Date for Assembly 2026!** Held from July 2–5, 2026 at



Millersville University in Millersville, PA. Assembly is a new conference-wide event for *everyone* in LMC. Together we will celebrate the work of God among us and mobilize for God's mission beyond us. For the whole family and youth groups! Stay tuned for more information.

## CONGRATULATIONS STEP GRADUATES!

On Saturday, May 17, we celebrated ten students who graduated from the three-year STEP program. Thank you to all the friends and family who came out to celebrate this significant achievement for these students. Join us in congratulating and praying for Scott Breneman, Scott Garman, Janelle Horst, Elvin Kennel, Dean Kunkle, Kevin Martin, Paul Swanger, Pham Dinh Ton, and Johnny Zook.

## CAPITAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

On October 24–26, Capital Christian Fellowship (Lanham, MD) is hosting a Homecoming Weekend to celebrate its 100th Anniversary! Capital Christian (formerly Cottage City Mennonite Church) is excited to host this celebration filled with reunions, food, worship, and other activities. Are you or do you know someone with a connection to Capital Christian's 100-year history? Invite them to join the festivities! For more information, visit the event's Facebook page: [bit.ly/ccf100th](https://bit.ly/ccf100th).

## CORRECTION – CHENUNDA CREEK FELLOWSHIP

In our previous issue of *Shalom News*, a few items were missing from Chenunda Creek Fellowship's congregational profile. One was a photo of Chenunda Creek's entryway sign with their mission statement—a vital component of their identity. The profile also didn't include the bio and photo of Sherry Volk, who wrote the profile. Sherry is the joyful grandmother of six, who cherishes daily walks in the wide, wonderful, outdoor world, encountering and celebrating God's magnificent creation. Thank you, Chenunda Creek, for contacting us about the missing information so we could correct it!



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Complete calendar and more details available at [LMCchurches.org](http://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

July 17

3:00 p.m.

Landis Homes, Lititz, Pa.

Crossings Meeting Room

717-293-5246 ext 102

## Mennonite Life: Rare & Used Book Auction

July 11

6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Mennonite Life Community Room

## Mennonite Life: Annual Storytelling Night

August 4, 2025

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Landisville Mennonite Church

## Mennonite Life: Behind the Scenes – A Look into Mennonite Life's Museum Collection Care

August 22

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Mennonite Life Collections Building

## Mennonite Life: Bookworm Frolic

September 11–13

Opens at 9:00 a.m.

Mennonite Life Collections Building

Your life will never be the same.

[EMM.ORG/ADVANCE](http://EMM.ORG/ADVANCE)



**EMM ADVANCE**

## Explore your congregation's history!

The Mennonite Life library & archives contain decades of church records, photos, and periodicals. Start or continue your research with the help of staff and volunteers.



**Mennonite Life**

717.393.9745 | [mennonitelife.org](http://mennonitelife.org)  
2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA

**September 8-13, 2025**

Events support our Caring Fund which assists residents whose cost of care exceeds their personal finances.



Live Quilt & Online Auction



Chicken BBQ & More



Yard Sale, Family Fun

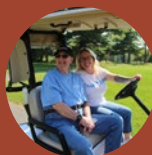


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Sept. 23-25

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**UPCOMING COURSE:**

## The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective

(Articles 13–24)

The same class will be offered at two times each week for seven weeks:

► **Tuesday evenings 6:30–8:05, starting September 9th**

► **Thursday mornings 10:30–12:05, starting September 11th**

You can attend by Zoom or in-person at Hub 450, 450 N. Prince St., Lancaster PA.  
For more information, contact William Higgins at [whiggins@lmchurches.org](mailto:whiggins@lmchurches.org).

Confession of Faith  
in a Mennonite  
Perspective

