



LMC *a fellowship of anabaptist churches*  
**Shalom NEWS**

APRIL–JUNE 2026



**Delighting in God**  
*LMC's Core Value #1*



# ASSEMBLY '26 YOUTHCON '26

Sowing Seeds of a Jesus Movement

## Register for Assembly '26 & YouthCon Today!

**June 18–21 at Millersville University in Millersville, PA**  
Assembly '26 is a new, conference-wide gathering for EVERYONE who is a part of LMC!

**Prices Will Increase After May 15!**

### Full Conference

Adult/YouthCon Full Conference Package: \$350

Elementary Child Registration: \$290

Baby/Toddler (age 4 and younger): \$80

*Cost includes lodging for 3 nights and 3 meals/day; for elementary children and baby/toddler, cost includes childcare*

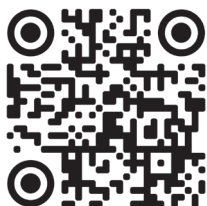
### Day Pass

Adult One Day Pass: \$60

Adult Two Day Pass: \$125

*Cost includes one meal per day*

Regular registration ends May 15, with late registration going into effect May 16.



**Save your spot and register today!**

If you have any questions, please email [assembly@lmcchurches.org](mailto:assembly@lmcchurches.org).

**Register here: [lmcchurches.org/assembly-26/](https://lmcchurches.org/assembly-26/)**



**April–June 2026**

Issue 2 / Volume 46

### Executive Bishop Team

Keith Blank

Rodney Martin

Marcia Mylin

Tuyen Nguyen

### Shalom News Team

Mercedes Thomas, Executive Contributing Editor

Sherri Martin, Managing Editor

Rosita N'Dikwe, Copy Editor

Felixa V. de Kunkle, Spanish Translation

Magazine design by Yoder Design Co.

*Shalom News* is published quarterly by LMC.

PO Box 1635

Lancaster, PA 17608-1635

717-293-5246 / 800-216-7249

[www.LMCchurches.org](http://www.LMCchurches.org)

*Shalom News* (ISSN 0747-2706) is published by LMC, PO Box 1635, Lancaster, PA 17608-1635, quarterly for free distribution to all congregations in the Conference. Individual subscriptions are \$15 per year. Periodicals postage paid at Lancaster, PA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Shalom News*, LMC, PO Box 1635, Lancaster, PA 17608-1635.

© 2026 LMC, all rights reserved.

**Questions or comments can be directed to [smartin@lmcchurches.org](mailto:smartin@lmcchurches.org)**

 [facebook.com/LMCchurches](https://facebook.com/LMCchurches)

### ON THE COVER

Main photo: Adults worshipping at East Gate. Photo provided by East Gate.

Small photo: Ryan and Celia leading worship together at the 2025 Fall Leadership Assembly. Photo provided by Ryan Horst.

# Delighting in God

## Discovering the fullness of God's presence

BY JOHN AND CHERYL DROUILLARD

### Delighting in God, oh my! How could we not? But what does it truly mean to delight in God?

Let us go to First John 4:19: "We love because he first loved us." Is it possible the same principle applies to delight? We delight because he first delighted in us? Quite possibly! For "every good and perfect gift is from above" (Jas. 1:17, Holman Christian Standard Bible). Even our ability to delight in God comes from him.

Therefore, delighting in God is all about his very essence. To delight in God is a celebration of his being—of him being the great "I Am." There is a completeness about him that brings us gladness in heart and rich contentment of spirit when we come to understand more fully the one who has loved us with his everything! The very essence of this love is evidenced by him saving us. Redeeming us. Protecting us. Keeping us. Rescuing us. Calling us. Equipping us. Adopting us. Choosing us. All because of who he is. There is no other response more fitting to all that God has done, to all that he has been, to all that he is, than to delight ourselves in him!

Once we know more fully the very essence of his being, we cannot get enough of his presence. We take great pleasure in being with him, and he with us. His name, Immanuel, lingers long past Christmas and into our every day, as we commune with him and find in him a fullness unlike any other. Psalm 16:11 declares "You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy." What a delight, just to be with him!

Similarly, as we pursue spending time with people we love, we do so out of desire, knowing how life-giving and joy-filled it

is to be together. Let us value the life of God's presence above all else! Our desire to delight in God cannot be circumstantial. It is not something we do just when we feel like it or when life is going well. God is worthy, always! He is unchanging and his presence is entirely faithful. Our delight in him simply cannot be dependent on how life is going or how we feel on any given day! For when we delight in him, regardless of life's circumstances, we bear evidence of a maturing relationship. Obedience becomes less about duty and more about love. Worship becomes less about routine and more about response. Delight becomes less about obligation and more about being enthralled with our loving Papa through all of life's highs and lows.

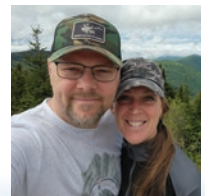
Oh, that we would know God's delight in us first, and hear his shouts of joy! Then, and only then, will we discover the fullness of his presence and delight in him more fully.

**There is no other response more fitting to all that God has done, to all that he has been, to all that he is, than to delight ourselves in him!**

***"Yahweh your God is among you, a warrior who saves. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will bring you quietness with His love. He will delight in you with shouts of joy."***

—Zephaniah 3:17 (HCSB) ■

*John and Cheryl are a couple of Jesus-lovers with a bunch of Jesus-loving kids. They have been homeschooling for two decades and have been business owners for a decade. John serves as bishop to the Willow Street-Strasburg district and enjoys reading, hunting, and a good road trip. Cheryl mentors, counsels, and coaches cross country. They have been married for thirty years and remain best friends who are increasing in love for one another and for their first love, Jesus.*



The Drouillard's enjoy being out in nature, delighting in God's creation. Here they are pictured in Sedona, Arizona. Photos provided by the authors.

# Dismissal to Delight

BY SUSAN SIMKINS

**As the daughter of an alcoholic father who was mentally ill, I felt like an inconvenience. When my dad often offered no word or glance to acknowledge my entry into the room, I came to believe my absence was preferable to my presence.**

Without realizing it, I projected my dad's behavior onto my heavenly Father. I approached God cautiously, bracing for indifference or dismissal. I kept my prayers small, hoping I wouldn't ask for more than the acceptable limit. I feared being "too much" for God. I believed divine attention had to be earned by doing something exemplary.

**"For the LORD delights in you"** — (Isaiah 62:4 NKJV).

This verse leaped off the page during my Bible reading. My soul simultaneously stirred with deep yearning and hope long deferred. But doubt soon



Above: Susan delighting in God. Above/right: Susan and her grandson Micah. Photos provided by the author.

followed. Really? Me? This verse contradicted my semi-conscious beliefs of an emotionally distant God who tolerated me as an imposition.

As I immersed myself in the Scriptures, I encountered a God who rescues us, not out of obligation, but instead because he delights in us (Ps. 18:19). His motivation for showing us mercy is not begrudging pity, but delight (Mic. 7:18). He takes immense pleasure in his people (Ps. 149:4) and delights in the little details of their lives (Ps. 37:23 NLT).

I struggled to grasp the wonder of a heavenly Father who exults over us with singing (Zeph. 3:17 AMPC) and has renamed us his delight (Isa. 62:4). Over months and years, I re-read, meditated upon, and memorized these verses, marveling that they could possibly apply to me.

Yet, Scripture is unequivocal that faith pleases God (Heb. 11:6). We delight the heart of our heavenly Father by trusting his Word.

When I have fallen prey to the same temptation for the umpteenth time, how do I envision God's response? A face tight with disgust and turned away in disappointment and cold withdrawal? Or an expression firm with love and soft with compassion that communicates he knows all about my sin and delights in showing me grace?

Little by little, I am choosing to believe the truth of God's Word instead of the troubled voices from my dysfunctional upbringing. I am learning to stand in awe before a Father who calls me by name and claims me as his own, even at my worst.

On a recent trip to visit my two-year-old grandson, Micah's face lit up when I entered the room, and he jumped up and down with sheer elation. My eyes tear up at the realization

that my heavenly Father is redeeming my dad's dismissal of me through my grandson's delight upon my arrival.

Micah's exuberance is but a small taste of God's ecstatic welcome when I come into his presence. And delighting in God is loving him back with the faith of a child and Micah-sized joy when he rescues me, shows me mercy, and takes pleasure in me.

Will you take this moment to delight in God for delighting in you? ■

*Dr. Susan Joy Simkins is a professor at Penn State University and the award-winning author of *Divine Reversal*, her life story of devastation to restoration. She attends Elizabethtown Mennonite Church. Connect with Susan at [susanjoysimkins.com](http://susanjoysimkins.com).*

*All Scripture references are taken from the NIV unless otherwise noted.*

## Deleitándose en Dios

POR JOHN Y CHERYL DROUILLARD

**¡Deleitarse en Dios! ¿Cómo no hacerlo?**

**Pero ¿qué significa realmente deleitarse en Dios?**

Leamos 1 Juan 4:19: «Nosotros amamos, porque él nos amó primero». ¿Es posible que el mismo principio se aplique al deleite? ¿Nos deleitamos porque él se deleitó primero con nosotros? ¡Es muy posible! Porque «toda buena dádiva y todo don perfecto descende de lo alto» (Santiago 1:17, Biblia Holman Christian Standard). Incluso nuestra capacidad de deleitarnos en Dios proviene de él.

Por lo tanto, deleitarse en Dios se trata de su esencia misma. Deleitarse en Dios es celebrar su ser, su ser como el gran "Yo Soy". Hay una plenitud en él que nos llena de alegría y un profundo contentamiento espiritual cuando comprendemos más plenamente a quien nos ha amado con todo su ser. La esencia misma de este amor se evidencia en él al salvarnos. Redimernos. Protegernos. Guardarnos. Rescatarnos. Llamarnos. Equiparnos. Adoptarnos. Elegirnos. Todo por ser quien es. No hay respuesta más adecuada a todo lo que Dios ha hecho, a todo lo que ha sido, a todo lo que es, que deleitarnos en él.

Una vez que conocemos más plenamente la esencia misma de su ser, no nos cansamos de su presencia. Nos deleitamos enormemente al estar con él, y él con nosotros. Su nombre, Emanuel, perdura mucho más allá de Navidad y en nuestro día a día, al comulgar con él y encontrar en él una plenitud sin igual. El Salmo 16:11 declara: "Me darás a conocer la senda de la vida; en tu presencia hay plenitud de gozo". ¡Qué deleite, simplemente estar con él!

De igual manera, al pasar tiempo con quienes amamos, lo hacemos por deseo, sabiendo lo vivificante y gozoso que es estar juntos. ¡Valoremos la vida en la presen-

cia de Dios por encima de todo! Nuestro deseo de deleitarnos en Dios no puede ser circunstancial. No es algo que hacemos solo cuando nos apetece o cuando la vida nos va bien. ¡Dios es digno, siempre! Él es inmutable y su presencia es completamente fiel. Nuestro deleite en él simplemente no puede depender de cómo nos vaya la vida ni de cómo nos sintamos en un día cualquiera. Porque cuando nos deleitamos en él, sin importar las circunstancias, damos evidencia de una relación madura. La obediencia se vuelve menos un deber y más un amor. La adoración se vuelve menos una rutina y más una respuesta. El deleite se vuelve menos una obligación y más una conexión con nuestro amoroso Padre a través de todos los altibajos de la vida.

¡Oh, si conociéramos primero el deleite de Dios en nosotros y escucháramos sus gritos de alegría! Entonces, y solo entonces, descubriremos la plenitud de su presencia y nos deleitaremos más plenamente en él.

"El Señor tu Dios está en medio de ti, un guerrero que salva.

Se regocijará por ti con alegría.

Te traerá tranquilidad con su amor.

Se deleitará en ti con gritos de alegría."

— Sofonías 3:17 (HCSB) ■

*Somos una pareja que ama a Jesús y tenemos hijos que también lo aman. Llevamos dos décadas educando a nuestros hijos en casa y una década como dueños de un negocio. John es obispo del distrito de Willow Street-Strasburg y disfruta de la lectura, la caza y los buenos viajes por carretera. Cheryl es mentora, consejera y entrenadora en rutas de larga distancia. Tras treinta años de matrimonio, seguimos siendo mejores amigos y nuestro amor por nuestro primer amor, Jesús, crece.*



## Despido para deleitar

POR SUSAN SIMKINS

Como hija de un padre alcohólico con problemas mentales, me sentía una molestia. Como mi padre a menudo no me decía ni una palabra para reconocer mi entrada en la habitación, llegué a creer que mi ausencia era preferible a mi presencia.

Sin darme cuenta, proyectaba el comportamiento de mi padre en mi Padre celestial. Me acercaba a Dios con cautela, preparándome para la indiferencia o el rechazo. Mis oraciones eran breves, con la esperanza de no pedir más de lo aceptable. Temía ser demasiado para Dios. Creía que la atención divina debía ganarse haciendo algo ejemplar.

"Porque Jehová se deleita en ti" (Isaías 62:4 NVI).

Este versículo me impactó profundamente durante mi lectura bíblica. Mi alma se conmovió simultáneamente con un profundo anhelo y una esperanza largamente postergada. Pero pronto me asaltó la duda. ¿En serio? ¿Yo? Este versículo contradecía mi creencia, semiconsciente, de un Dios emocionalmente distante que me toleraba como una imposición.

Al sumergirme en las Escrituras, encontré a un Dios que nos rescata, no por obligación, sino porque se deleita en nosotros (Salmo 18:19). Su motivación para mostrarnos misericordia no es una compasión a regañadientes, sino deleite (Miqueas 7:18). Se complace inmensamente en su pueblo (Salmo 149:4) y se deleita en los pequeños detalles de su vida (Salmo 37:23 NTV).

Me costaba comprender la maravilla de un Padre celestial que se regocija por nosotros con cánticos (Sof. 3:17 AMPC) y nos ha convertido en su deleite (Isa. 62:4). Durante meses y años, leí, medité y memoricé estos versículos, maravillándome de que pudieran aplicarse a mí.

Sin embargo, la Escritura es inequívoca en cuanto a que la fe agrada a Dios (Heb. 11:6). Deleitamos el corazón de nuestro Padre celestial al confiar en su Palabra.

Cuando he caído en la misma tentación por enésima vez, ¿cómo imagino la respuesta de Dios? ¿Un rostro tenso por el disgusto, decepcionado y con un frío retraimiento? ¿O una expresión firme de amor y tierna de compasión que comunica que El conoce todo sobre mi pecado y se deleita en mostrarme Su gracia?

Poco a poco, estoy eligiendo creer en la verdad de la Palabra de Dios en lugar de las voces inquietas de mi infancia disfuncional. Estoy aprendiendo a admirar a un Padre que me llama por mi nombre y me reconoce como suyo, incluso en mis peores momentos.

En un viaje reciente para visitar a mi nieto de dos años, el rostro de Micah se iluminó al entrar en la habitación y saltó de alegría. Se me llenan los ojos de lágrimas al darme cuenta de que mi Padre celestial está redimiendo la despedida de mi padre con la alegría de mi nieto al llegar.

La exuberancia de Micah es solo una pequeña muestra de la bienvenida extática de Dios cuando llegó a su presencia. Y deleitarse en Dios es corresponderle con la fe de un niño y con la alegría de Micah cuando me rescata, me muestra misericordia y se complace en mí.

¿Aprovecharás este momento para deleitarte en Dios por deleitarte en ti? ■



*La Dra. Susan Joy Simkins es profesora de la Universidad Estatal de Pensilvania y autora galardonada de "Divine Reversal", su historia de vida, desde la devastación hasta la restauración. Asiste a la Iglesia Menonita de Elizabethtown. Conéctese con Susan en [susanjoysimkins.com](http://susanjoysimkins.com).*



Ryan Horst (with guitar), plays with the worship team during Fall Leadership Assembly in 2025. Photo by Mercedes Thomas.

SPANISH TRANSLATION

## Adoración conjunta en la Asamblea de Liderazgo de Otoño de 2025

POR RYAN HORST

Me sentí muy emocionado, y bastante intimidado, por la oportunidad de participar en la planificación y ejecución del tiempo de adoración para la Asamblea de Liderazgo de Otoño de 2025, celebrada en mi iglesia, la Comunidad de Fe Anabautista Weaverland.

La visión de no solo unir dos equipos de adoración (Weaverland y Ministerios Peniel Internacional), sino también cantar canciones tanto en inglés como en español, ¡parecía, como mínimo, un poco ambiciosa! Me sentí muy bendecido por el tiempo que pasé con el grupo de planificación (Felixa V. de Kunkle, Keith Blank, Joshua Bender y Reggie, Celia y Andrea Hill) para preparar el culto. Dedicamos gran parte de nuestro tiempo a buscar en oración la guía y la voluntad del Señor para nuestro tiempo de adoración.

La camaradería y la unidad de nuestro equipo, sentidas tras tan solo unas pocas reuniones presenciales, sólo se pueden atribuir a la presencia del Espíritu Santo. Fue una gran alegría adorarlo junto al equipo de Peniel. Mis temores ante el desafío de integrar dos equipos de alabanza que no se conocían, así como intentar adorar en dos idiomas diferentes, se desvanecieron rápidamente durante nuestra primera sesión de práctica. El equipo de Peniel no solo tiene un talento musical excepcional, sino que también se conecta fácilmente con nuestro equipo de Weaverland a nivel personal y musical. Pude adorar libremente con el equipo sin preocuparme demasiado por los detalles y mantener a todos unidos. Esta libertad en la adoración fue claramente percibida por todo el equipo y dio lugar a un momento poderoso y auténtico de adoración a Dios como hermanos y hermanas durante la Asamblea de Liderazgo de Otoño.

A Dios sea la gloria, pues verdaderamente ha hecho, y sigue haciendo, grandes cosas. ■

*Ryan Horst es el Director de Artes de Adoración en la Comunidad de Fe Anabautista de Weaverland. Ha asistido a Weaverland toda su vida y ha servido como líder de alabanza por más de 15 años. Ryan también es Gerente de Planta en una empresa manufacturera local. Él y su*



*esposa Rachel están casados desde 2008 y tienen tres hijos. En su tiempo libre, Ryan disfruta de la música, los deportes, las actividades al aire libre y pasar tiempo con su familia.*

## Worshipping Together at Fall Leadership Assembly 2025

BY RYAN HORST

**I was very excited—and more than a bit intimidated—by the opportunity to be a part of the planning and execution of the worship time for the Fall Leadership Assembly 2025, held at my home church, Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community.**

The vision put forward to not only blend two worship teams (Weaverland and Ministerios Peniel Internacional), but also to sing songs in both English and Spanish, seemed a bit ambitious to say the least! I was so blessed by the time spent with the planning group—Felixa V. de Kunkle, Keith Blank, Joshua Bender, and Reggie, Celia, and Andrea Hill—to prepare for worship. We spent much of our time prayerfully seeking the Lord’s leading and will for our worship time.

The camaraderie and unity of our team—felt after only a few times of meeting together in person—can only be credited to the presence of the Holy Spirit. It was such a joy to worship alongside the team from Peniel. My fears of the challenge of incorporating two worship teams who didn’t know each other, as well as attempting to worship in two different languages, quickly fell away during our first practice session. The Peniel team is extremely gifted musically, and they easily bonded with our team at Weaverland on both a personal and musical level. I found myself able to worship freely with the team without being overly concerned with details and keeping everyone together. This freedom in worship was clearly felt by the whole team and led to what was a powerful and authentic time of worshipping God as brothers and sisters during Fall Leadership Assembly.

To God be the glory, for he has truly done, and continues to do, great things! ■

*Ryan Horst is the Director of Worship Arts at Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community. He’s attended Weaverland his whole life and has been serving as a worship leader for over 15 years. Ryan is also a Plant Manager for a local manufacturing company. He and his wife Rachel have been married since 2008 and have three children. In his spare time, Ryan enjoys music, sports, all things outdoors, and spending time with his family.*

# Listening for God in the Late Hour

BY CELIA CARDOZA-HILL

**I have learned to understand worship as a practice of paying attention to God. In the midst of our fast paced lives and many distractions, worship gives us a space to stop and remember who God is and who we are.**

When I help lead worship, whether at my church or other special celebrations, I try to hold this truth closely: Worship is not something we produce; God is already present. Our songs, prayers, Scripture, and special moments simply help us recognize and respond to his presence.

A moment of worship that impacted me deeply by God's presence was on the Friday night worship service at Fall Leadership Assembly 2025. We were commemorating 500 years of Anabaptism and declaring Jesus as the center of everything.

While we were singing together, I felt the Holy Spirit invite us to listen to the voice of God through our worship, trusting that he delights in us. However, as time lengthened, surrounded by an Anabaptist community known for order and punctuality, I felt an honest tension. In the back of my mind, there was a familiar question I've heard from congregations before: When are we going to finish?

Yet, I was also reminded to stay open and attentive. Time was not the significant thing; rather, it was the intercultural beauty of what God was doing among us. As we sang together, the Holy Spirit encouraged us to pay attention not only to our history, but also to what God wants to continue doing in the present. We felt the call to bless each other, remembering that we are sowers and planters, and God is the one who gives growth (1 Cor. 3:6)

For me, this moment became an invitation to discernment: to listen deeply, step forward in faith, and walk through an open door without fully knowing where it leads. At LMC, I feel that God calls us beyond cultures and languages to honor our history as we walk together with faith, becoming a Spirit-led movement. ■

*Born in Honduras, Celia Cardoza-Hill now serves as a bilingual pastor at Ministerios Peniel Internacional in Ephrata alongside her husband, Reginaldo Hill. They have two daughters, Andrea and Sophia. Celia serves as a worship leader alongside her daughters and has a passion for intercultural worship, spiritual formation, and an attentiveness to God's presence.*



## SPANISH TRANSLATION

# Escuchando a Dios en la hora tardía

POR CELIA CARDOZA-HILL

**H**e aprendido a entender la adoración como una práctica de prestar atención a Dios. En medio de nuestro ritmo acelerado y tantas distracciones, la adoración nos da un espacio para detenernos y recordar quién es Dios y quiénes somos nosotros.

Cuando ayudo a dirigir la adoración, ya sea en mi iglesia o en otras celebraciones especiales, trato de aferrarme a esta verdad: La adoración no es algo que producimos; Dios ya está presente. Nuestras canciones, oraciones, lecturas bíblicas y momentos especiales simplemente nos ayudan a reconocer y responder a su presencia.

Un momento de adoración que me impactó profundamente por la presencia de Dios fue el servicio de adoración del viernes por la noche en la Asamblea de Liderazgo de Otoño 2025. Conmemoramos 500 años del anabautismo y declaramos a Jesús como el centro de todo.

Mientras cantábamos juntos, sentí que el Espíritu Santo nos invitaba a escuchar la voz de Dios a través de nuestra adoración, confiando en que él se deleita en nosotros. Sin embargo, a medida que transcurría el tiempo, rodeado de una comunidad anabautista marcada por el orden y la puntualidad, sentí una tensión sincera. En el fondo de mi mente, rondaba una pregunta familiar que he escuchado antes en las congregaciones: ¿Cuándo terminaremos?



Sin embargo, también me recordaron que debía mantenerme abierto y atento. El tiempo no era lo importante; más bien, lo importante era la belleza intercultural de lo que Dios estaba haciendo entre nosotros. Mientras cantábamos juntos, el Espíritu Santo nos animó a prestar atención no solo a nuestra historia, sino también a lo que Dios quiere seguir haciendo en el presente. Sentimos el llamado a bendecirnos mutuamente, recordando que somos sembradores y plantadores, y que Dios es quien da el crecimiento (1 Cor. 3:6).

Para mí, este momento se convirtió en una invitación al discernimiento: a escuchar con atención, avanzar con fe y cruzar una puerta abierta sin saber adónde conduce. Como LMC, siento que Dios nos llama, más allá de las culturas y los idiomas, a honrar nuestra historia mientras caminamos juntos con fe, convirtiéndonos en un movimiento guiado por el Espíritu. ■

*Nacida en Honduras, Celia Cardoza-Hill ahora sirve como pastora bilingüe en Ministerios Peniel Internacional en Ephrata junto a su esposo, Reginaldo Hill. Tienen dos hijas, Andrea y Sophia. Celia sirve como líder de alabanza junto a sus hijas y siente pasión por la adoración intercultural, la formación espiritual y la atención a la presencia de Dios.*

# GROWING THE LMC FAMILY: Blue Ridge and South Central Districts

BY MERCEDES THOMAS, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PETER EBERLY, KURT HORST, JIM OSTLUND, AND JASON RHODES-SHOWALTER

**If you've been around LMC for the past few years, you've likely heard that we are growing in size with more congregations joining us! And much of that growth can be attributed to two new districts that each made the decision to affiliate with LMC as a group: Blue Ridge and South Central.**

The nine congregations in the Blue Ridge district are located in the Shenandoah Valley, VA. Their congregations and leaders are tight-knit; the pastors and leaders started meeting around ten years ago for monthly times of encouragement through worship, prayer for each other, and teaching from Scripture. Shifts in the broader church led to a process of discerning a new spiritual home, and in 2023 the group reached out to LMC leaders. Today, these leaders continue to have deep and meaningful relationships with one another, including with those who individually decided not to join LMC.

South Central district's twenty-four congregations span six states—Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas—making them the second largest district geographically (first being the Shalom Council, which spans six countries and four US states). Leaders of the then South Central Conference also took several years to discern next steps, and knew

they desired to remain in fellowship with other Anabaptist congregations with a shared vision and purpose for the Church. They formally decided to affiliate with LMC in July of 2024.

When asked why they chose to affiliate with LMC, bishops from both districts cited LMC's commitment to Anabaptist theology and our desire to be an intercultural body of churches. Both districts are multiethnic and have congregations that are non-English speaking, making them right at home in LMC's multicultural body that worships in seventeen languages.

However, joining LMC has also come with its challenges. The distance between all of South Central's congregations is vast. This makes it difficult for the four bishops to bring together their pastors and leaders. Also, South Central was previously in a congregational delegate model, so LMC's leader-centered culture has been an adjustment. Finally, LMC is still learning and changing from being "Lancaster-centric." Our office and staff, as well as much of our leadership, reside in or close to Lancaster, PA, making communication and connection with those further away more challenging. We are still on a journey of figuring out how to be a nimble network of districts and congregations across twenty-six states and six countries. LMC would appreciate prayer as we continue to discern how to meet this challenge.

**When asked why they chose to affiliate with LMC, bishops from both districts cited LMC's commitment to Anabaptist theology and our desire to be an intercultural body of churches.**

Interestingly, both districts have a history of church planting. The Blue Ridge district contains two of the oldest churches in Virginia and seven churches that have been planted within the last twenty years. Bishop Peter Eberly planted and is the lead pastor of Eastside Church, and Bishop Jason Rhodes-Showalter was a part of the church-planting team for Mosaic of Grace. Meanwhile, the South Central district has a history of local churches partnering together to plant new churches, including congregations of African immigrants, Spanish-speaking churches that meet in homes and garages, and a multisite congregation.

Every time I've had the opportunity to talk to one of the bishops from South Central or Blue Ridge, I am struck by their excitement and clarity for the future of LMC. These districts became a part of LMC after moderator Keith Weaver retired, the Executive Bishop Team (Keith Blank, Rodney Martin, Marcia Mylin, and Tuyen Nguyen) was created, and we established our current mission statement: *To be a Spirit-led movement to make*

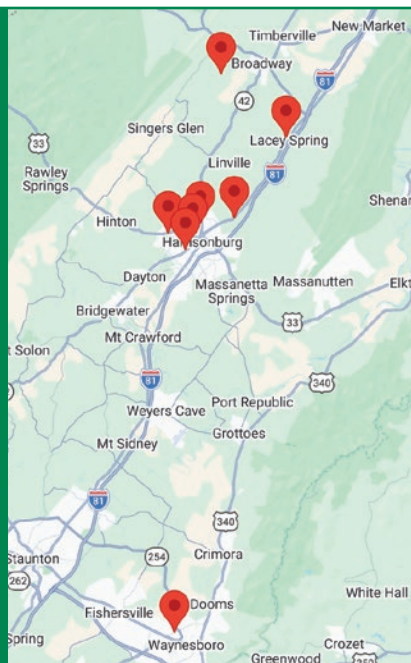
## BLUE RIDGE DISTRICT

CONGREGATIONS: 9

WORSHIP LANGUAGES:  
English and Spanish



BISHOPS: Peter Eberly and Jason Rhodes-Showalter



disciples of Jesus, mobilize every member as a missionary, and to multiply faith communities locally and beyond! Who LMC is now is all they've ever known; they're excited with this vision and they've chosen to be a part of it.

Jason Rhodes-Showalter said, "I'm excited to be part of what God will do. We're due for another awakening. We're due for another movement of sending people out into new neighborhoods and new communities." These two districts are all-in on this mission and vision and are eager to see the fullness of Christ activated and released by the Spirit across LMC.

Bishop Jim Ostlund agreed succinctly, stating, "Jesus is on the move!"



**United States**

**SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT**

**CONGREGATIONS: 24**

**WORSHIP LANGUAGES:**  
Amharic, English, Navajo, Spanish, and Swahili



**BISHOPS:** Kurt Horst, Jim Ostlund, David W. Roth, and Kevin Santiago

**SPANISH TRANSLATION**

## Creciendo la familia LMC: Distritos de Blue Ridge y Centro Sur

Si has estado en LMC durante los últimos años, probablemente hayas oído que estamos creciendo con la incorporación de más congregaciones. Gran parte de ese crecimiento se debe a dos nuevos distritos que decidieron afiliarse a LMC como grupo: Blue Ridge y South Central.

Las nueve congregaciones del distrito Blue Ridge se encuentran en el Valle de Shenandoah, Virginia. Sus congregaciones y líderes son muy unidos; los pastores y líderes comenzaron a reunirse hace unos diez años para momentos mensuales de ánimo mediante la adoración, la oración mutua y la enseñanza de las Escrituras. Los cambios en la iglesia en general llevaron a un proceso de discernimiento de un nuevo hogar espiritual, y en 2023 el grupo contactó a los líderes de LMC. Hoy en día, estos líderes continúan manteniendo relaciones profundas y significativas entre sí, incluso con aquellos que individualmente decidieron no unirse a LMC.

Las veinticuatro congregaciones del Distrito Centro Sur abarcan seis estados: Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nuevo México y Texas, lo que lo convierte en el segundo distrito más grande a nivel geográfico (el primero fue el Consejo Shalom, que abarca seis países y cuatro estados de EE. UU.). Los líderes de la entonces Conferencia Centro Sur también tardaron varios años en discernir los próximos pasos y sabían que deseaban permanecer en comunión con otras congregaciones anabautistas con una visión y un propósito compartidos para la Iglesia. Decidieron formalmente afiliarse a LMC en julio de 2024.

Al preguntarles por qué decidieron afiliarse a LMC, los obispos de ambos distritos mencionaron el compromiso de LMC con la teología anabautista y nuestro deseo de ser un cuerpo de iglesias intercultural. Ambos distritos son multiétnicos y cuentan con congregaciones que no hablan inglés, lo que los hace sentir como en casa en el cuerpo multicultural de LMC, que celebra sus reuniones en diecisiete idiomas.

Sin embargo, unirse a LMC también ha conllevado desafíos. La distancia entre todas las congregaciones de South Central es enorme. Esto dificulta que los cuatro obispos reúnan a sus pastores y líderes. Además, South Central se basaba anteriormente en un modelo de delegados congregacionales, por lo que la cultura centrada

en el líder de LMC ha supuesto un cambio. Finalmente, LMC aún está aprendiendo y cambiando su enfoque centrado en Lancaster. Nuestra oficina y personal, así como gran parte de nuestro liderazgo, residen en Lancaster, Pensilvania, o cerca de allí, lo que dificulta la comunicación y la conexión con quienes viven más lejos. Seguimos buscando la manera de convertirnos en una red ágil de distritos y congregaciones en veintiséis estados y seis países.

Curiosamente, ambos distritos tienen un historial de plantación de iglesias. El distrito Blue Ridge alberga dos de las iglesias más antiguas de Virginia y siete iglesias plantadas en los últimos veinte años. El obispo Peter Eberly plantó y es el pastor principal de la Iglesia Eastside, y el obispo Jason Rhodes-Showalter formó parte del equipo de plantación de iglesias de Mosaic of Grace. Mientras tanto, el distrito Central Sur tiene una historia de iglesias locales que se asocian para plantar nuevas iglesias, incluidas congregaciones de inmigrantes africanos, iglesias de habla hispana en hogares y garajes, y una congregación de varios sitios.

Cada vez que he tenido la oportunidad de hablar con alguno de los obispos de South Central o Blue Ridge, me impresiona su entusiasmo y claridad sobre el futuro de LMC. Estos distritos se unieron a LMC tras la jubilación del moderador Keith Weaver y la creación del Equipo Ejecutivo de Obispos (Keith Blank, Rodney Martin, Marcia Mylin y Tuyen Nguyen), además de nuestra declaración de misión actual: ¡Ser un movimiento guiado por el Espíritu para hacer discípulos de Jesús, movilizar a cada miembro como misionero y multiplicar las comunidades de fe a nivel local y más allá! LMC es lo que siempre han conocido; están entusiasmados con esta visión y han decidido formar parte de ella.

Jason Rhodes-Showalter dijo: «Estoy emocionado de ser parte de lo que Dios hará. Nos espera otro despertar. Nos espera otro movimiento para enviar gente a nuevos vecindarios y nuevas comunidades». Estos dos distritos están totalmente comprometidos con esta misión y visión, y anhelan ver la plenitud de Cristo activada y liberada en LMC.

A Dios sea la gloria, pues verdaderamente ha hecho, y sigue haciendo, grandes cosas. ■



Photos from left to right:  
Pastor Joshua Rivera praising during worship.  
Exterior shot of East Gate's building.  
Pastor Raquel Rivera preaching.  
Below: Baptism service at East Gate.  
Photos provided by East Gate.

## CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE

# East Gate

BY SAMMI WHITE

*East Gate exists to elevate and empower sons and daughters to be the place where heaven touches Earth. We are committed to teaching you how to hear God's voice, connect with him daily, and walk with him in obedience.*

Everything we do as a ministry flows from this vision. To elevate and empower sons and daughters to bring the culture of heaven everywhere they go. From our oldest members to newcomers and our youngest children, all the teams within East Gate are committed to teaching them how they can best hear God's voice, connect with his heart, and walk with him in obedience.

As a community, we are delighting in God's presence first in the Secret Place. This is a set-apart time and place with the expectation to meet with God. That connection and intimacy have been overflowing into our corporate assembly. God has encountered us in worship by stirring our hearts through the Word and calling us to respond together. At times, these ministry moments have looked like an invitation to repentance, thanksgiving, undignified praise, outreach, or generosity.

We are seeing God raise up many leaders from within the congregation. We value empowerment where we model and invite. Humility is the key to empowerment, as seen modeled in the life of Jesus. Over the years, many leaders have been raised up as pastors, or serve as team leads or members, speakers, directors, and admins. We are watching disciples of Jesus grow and make disciples within our congregation and in our broader community.

This past May, our congregation was equipped to evangelize differently through the evangelists from the 33rd Company. From that day, the Belong ministry was formed. Belong is made up of three components: prayer, outreach, and discipleship. Since May of 2025, the team has been sent on outreach for one hour per week. In that time, the gospel has been presented 128 times within our community, and over seventy people responded in prayer for salvation! Several new believers are walking through the discipleship class. The harvest is truly ready.



This year, we are praying from 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, that the God of peace would make us holy in every way. That we would be wholly his. ■

*Sammi White, her husband Daniel, and their three children are members of East Gate. She serves as the Connect Director, where she loves teaching people how they uniquely connect with God.*



**DISTRICT:** Valley Mountain PA East

**LOCATION:** Bethlehem, PA

**AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE:** 75

**WORSHIP SERVICE:**  
Sundays at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

**PASTORS:** Joshua and Raquel Rivera

**FOUNDED:** 1989

**LEARN MORE:** [weareeastgate.com](http://weareeastgate.com)

# Celebrations

Here are some of the things we're celebrating in LMC over the last several months!

## LMC CREDENTIALING REPORT

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

**Krista Snader** (*Brian*) was issued an ordination credential as associate pastor at Groffdale Mennonite Church in Leola, Pa.

**Giovanni Castañeda** (*Tomí*) was issued a license toward ordination as lead pastor at Iglesia Cristiana Enciende Una Luz in Harrisonburg, Va.

**Edmundo Ramos Davila** (*Claudia Elena*) was issued a license toward ordination as lead pastor at Iglesia Buenas Nuevas (Good News) in San Juan, Tx.

**Paul Williams** (*Michelle*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Mechanic Grove Mennonite Church in Quarryville, Pa.

**Bradley Roth** (*Alicia*) was issued an ordination credential as interim pastor at Greensburg Mennonite Church in Greensburg, Ks.

**Jedidiah Cassel** (*Marcia*) was issued an ordination credential as associate pastor at Metzler Mennonite Church in Ephrata, Pa.

**Scott Garman** (*Jodi*) was issued an ordination credential as associate pastor at Metzler Mennonite Church in Ephrata, Pa.

**Nathan Good** (*Dana*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Swamp Mennonite Church in Quakertown, Pa., and affirmed as interim bishop.

**Felix Rocha** (*Denia*) was affirmed as bishop of the Evangelical Garífuna Mission Network District, with an installation service scheduled for March 2026.

**Darlene Calix** was issued a license for ordination as an associate pastor at Iglesia Christiana Muros de Fuego in Bronx, Ny.

**Anthony Garcia** (*Nori Miranda*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Iglesia Menonita de New Holland Jesucristo es el Señor in New Holland, Pa.

**Dustin Martin** (*Janelle*) was issued an ordination credential as lead pastor at Hammer Creek Mennonite Church in Lititz, Pa.

**Jason Hoover** (*Crystal*) was issued a license for ordination as an associate pastor at Hammer Creek Mennonite Church in Lititz, Pa.

**Andre Hoover** (*Shirene*) was issued a license for ordination as an associate pastor at Hammer Creek Mennonite Church in Lititz, Pa.

## SEVENTEEN NEW CONGREGATIONS IN 2025

We welcomed seventeen new congregations to our LMC family in 2025! These congregations can be found in Colorado, Kansas, Texas, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. Please join us in welcoming these congregations, and praying for them and their leaders!

- ▶ Argentine Mennonite – South Central District
- ▶ Cornerstone Fellowship – South Central District
- ▶ East Holbrook Mennonite Church – South Central District
- ▶ Emma Creek Mennonite Church – South Central District
- ▶ Greensburg Mennonite Church – South Central District
- ▶ Hope for the Broken – South Central District
- ▶ Iglesia Alfa y Omega – South Central District
- ▶ Iglesia Esperanza de Vida – South Central District
- ▶ Iglesia Menonita Buenas Nuevas – South Central District
- ▶ Iglesia Nuevo Amanecer – South Central District
- ▶ Iglesia Rey de Gloria – South Central District
- ▶ Peace Mennonite Community Church – South Central District
- ▶ Perkiomenville Mennonite Church – District TBD
- ▶ Shalom Nuevo Comienzo – Blue Ridge District
- ▶ Spring Valley Mennonite Church – South Central District
- ▶ Weavers Mennonite Church – Blue Ridge District
- ▶ Western Mennonite – District TBD

# 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

## EMM/LMC Virtual Prayer Gathering

Every first Monday of the month,  
Zoom only; 8:00 – 9:00 a.m.

Contact Felixa at  
[fvdekunkle@lmchurches.org](mailto:fvdekunkle@lmchurches.org)  
for more information.

## Tiempo de oración de Líderes Hispanos de LMC en español

Todos los primeros lunes de cada mes,  
Solo por Zoom; De 12:00 a 12:30 p.m.

Envíe un correo a Felixa al  
[fvdekunkle@lmchurches.org](mailto:fvdekunkle@lmchurches.org) para  
más información.

## LMC/EMM Quarterly Prayer Meeting

April 16, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

Landis Homes  
1001 East Oregon Rd. Lititz, Pa.  
717-293-5246 ext. 102

## EMM - Church as a Movement

April 23 at 8:00 AM – April 24  
at 4:00 PM

Hub 450, 450 N Prince St, Lancaster, PA

Training designed to equip pastors, lead-  
ers, and believers. More information and  
to register: [emm.org/events/](http://emm.org/events/)

## Assembly '26 & YouthCon

June 18–21

Millersville University in Millersville, PA

Assembly '26 is a new, conference-wide  
gathering for EVERYONE who is a part of  
LMC! [lmchurches.org/assembly-26/](http://lmchurches.org/assembly-26/)

Your life will never be the *SAME*

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

**EMM ADVANCE**

**Heart Gallery & Market**  
118 N. Water St., Suite 102, Lancaster, PA 17603

Shop Handcrafted Goods Created by Individuals with  
Intellectual Disabilities and Autism.

View volunteer,  
donation and  
employment  
opportunities  
at [MDS.org](http://MDS.org)!

— LANDIS ADULT DAY SERVICES —  
**GOLF OUTING**  
Wednesday, June 3, 2026  
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](mailto:jnikoloff@landis.org)

Your **health.**  
Your **medicare.**

### Make Medicare an easy step

Everence can help you gain  
confidence and clarity

Find a seminar near you!

[everence.com/centralpenn](http://everence.com/centralpenn)



Become a  
**Mennonite Life member!**

Membership includes free  
admission at the Biblical  
Tabernacle Experience,  
the 1719 Museum, and the  
Mennonite Life Museum.

Visit [mennonitelife.org](http://mennonitelife.org)  
or call 717.393.9745