

# ***THE MIDWEEK***



## **WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY 9:30 AM**

We are delighted the Hesston College (KS) Bel Canto choir will lead our worship service this Sunday, March 22. We take a special offering during our service for their group. We will also share lunch with them (provided by the Fellowship Committee) before they leave to return to Hesston.

## **After Worship**

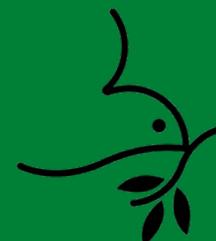
### **Adult CE**

Rooms 5 & 7

### **Children & Youth CE**

Pre-K-5th Grades  
Junior High  
High School

The service will be live streamed on YouTube at this [link](#).  
The bulletins get posted under the Worship tab of our [website](#).



**Mennonite  
Church  
of Normal**

A congregation of  
Mennonite Church USA

# IL Mennonite Relief Sale

## This Friday & Saturday, March 20-21

We are two days away from the 68th annual IL Mennonite Relief Sale! Are you signed up to volunteer? If not, we have openings to wash the dishes from the sausage breakfast. Please let Lauren know if you are able to help with this. Happy baking! See you on Friday and Saturday!



## Bel Canto Choir

## This Sunday, March 22 at 9:30 am

We are delighted the Hesston College (KS) Bel Canto choir will lead our worship service on Sunday, March 22. We will share lunch with them (provided by the Fellowship Committee) before they leave to return to Hesston yet that day. **WHAT WE NEED:** Overnight hosts for the 22 students and 2 faculty on **Saturday night, March 21**. They will arrive at the church at 9pm and will need a place to rest their heads and eat breakfast before returning to MCN by 8:45am Sunday. If you'd like to host, please contact Jill with how many you can accommodate. If you have room for only one, that works too! They ask that each faculty member not be housed with students. Thank you for offering hospitality to these folks as they offer their gifts to us!

*From the Community Life Commission*

## From the Outreach Commission



- **No Kings Rally on Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>** – There will be a No Kings rally in Bloomington in front of the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts (BPCA) from Noon to 1:00 PM on Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup> to peacefully demonstrate opposition to US administration policies and the US war with Iran. **Together, we're going to make March 28 the largest day of protest in American history — and then we're going to keep showing up to defend our neighbors and our democracy.**
- **Meet at 7:00 PM on Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>** at MCN to discuss how we will participate together in the No Kings rally on the following Saturday, and to make signs. Some of us at MCN need encouragement to attend the No Kings Rally. This gathering will help people who are not comfortable attending a protest rally to be encouraged to participate with us. Please bring your sign making materials.

*In Peace, Phil, Chair of Outreach Commission*

The newest edition of Central District Conference's monthly Connector publication is now available to read [here](#). In this issue of the Connector we reflect on partnerships near and far, including a respite housing apartment in Cincinnati and a bi-national companion congregation relationship. We also hear from Conference Minister Amy Zimbelman of Mountain States Conference. If you would like a paper copy, they will be available to take from the Library Table soon.



# Camp Friedenswald Winter Retreat

We have a nearly 50 year tradition of a winter retreat at Camp Friedenswald in southern Michigan. There were times we filled two lodges, slid down the slopes, hiked the woods, played games and prepared meals together. Treasured memories.

Over the years, attendance has declined significantly. Costs have gone up. Our current arrangement is not sustainable and we have chosen to not reserve Lakeview Lodge for January 2027.

We do not take this lightly. This does not end our relationship with the camp, just not a retreat that weekend in that Lodge. We have connections to the camp beyond the retreat weekend. We do not see those diminishing and we want to continue involvement with the camp, finding new ways to engage. Might we have work days there? A summer retreat? Use a different lodge? Volunteer? We welcome your ideas!

Camp Friedenswald is a beautiful and thriving place, stewarded by dedicated folks caring for this piece of the earth. In their ministry, they share it with us. May we continue to share our lives and support with them.

*From the Community Life Commission: Marge (Chair), Connie , Jill, and Kevin Chupp (Pastor)*

## Menno Builders



Feeling handy? Tanya needs help finishing the assembly of her carport.

*From the Congregational Care Committee*

## A week of service – under construction!



*The Service Adventure teams in front of the house they helped construct with Mennonite Disaster Service. Left to right: Christian Stoltzfus (Colorado Springs unit co-leader), Adriana Duerksen, Michael Bergen, Mir Knego (Anchorage unit leader), Ruben Veigel, **Ian Unzicker**, Sam Abrahams.* From March 2-6, Service Adventure participants and unit leaders traveled from the Anchorage, Alaska, and Colorado Springs, Colorado, units to join together in a house construction project with [Mennonite Disaster Service \(MDS\)](#) in San Angelo, Texas. San Angelo, along with wider Tom Greene county, was hit by [torrential rain and flooding on July 4, 2025](#). The house Service Adventure participants worked on was a part of MDS's rebuilding projects in that area. On the last day of their service week, Service Adventure participants started the morning installing insulation and adding a second coat of exterior paint. "Finally, we got a good start of installing drywall as well," recalled Ian Unzicker, participant with the Anchorage, Alaska, Service Adventure unit. Additional work on the house will be completed by future Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers. **See photos and read the rest of Travis Duerksen's blog post for Mennonite Mission Network [here](#).**



# Substitutes Needed



# Spending Plan Update



*Bite-sized pieces of our shared history leading up to our 50th anniversary celebration (September 27, 2026).*

Beginning last Fall, our “companion congregation” across the border in Canada is [Hope Mennonite Church](#) of Winnipeg, Manitoba. While we may imagine our particular experiences are very different, what experiences might we have in common? Well, for one, Normal hosted denominational gatherings in 1989, and Winnipeg hosted a special meeting just 8 years later in 1997. *Do you have a factoid to share? Send it to: [kevin@normalmennonite.org](mailto:kevin@normalmennonite.org)*



# Those Serving This Week





# Sharing of Joys and Concerns



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MCN IS ASKED TO BE IN CONTINUED PRAYER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AT CARLE BROMENN MEDICAL CENTER—OUR PARTNER IN HEALING FOR 2026

## Prayer Requests and Announcements

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Prayer requests can be shared during the Sharing Joys and Concerns portion of our Worship Service. For other announcements, please send them to Lauren Satchwell ([lauren@normalmennonite.org](mailto:lauren@normalmennonite.org)) ahead of time so that these can be shared by the worship leader during the Community Life portion of the service. When sharing, it's helpful if your requests are succinct.



## Birthdays & Anniversaries



CELEBRATING LIFE'S MOMENTS AT MCN

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A BRIEF LOOK AT THE CHURCH CALENDAR:

## Wednesday, March 18

9:30 am Wednesday Morning Book Group

1:00 pm Quilting

## Thursday, March 19

7:00 am Next Man Bible Study

## Friday, March 20

8:00 am Strawberry Pie Assembly

5:00 pm IL Mennonite Relief Sale: Trivia Night with Meat Market & Select Food/Beverage Booths Open

## Saturday, March 21

6:00 am IL Mennonite Relief Sale: Pancakes & Sausage Breakfast

7:00 am IL Mennonite Relief Sale: Dutch Market, Meat Market, & Booths Open

## Sunday, March 22

Noon Meal with Bel Canto Singers

7:00 pm Adult Choir

## Wednesday, March 25

9:30 am Wednesday Morning Book Group

1:00 pm Quilting

3:00 pm Pastoral Team



## Campus events support Minneapolis protests

Acts of solidarity to support the people of Minneapolis and St. Paul took place at Canadian Mennonite University and Goshen College following violent and intimidating strategies used by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers in January. CMU hosted "Singing Resistance" Feb. 2 with a standing-room-only crowd singing songs of protest and resistance in Laudamus Auditorium. "When violence, political chaos and injustice dominate the news, it's easy to feel powerless," said Anneli Loepp Thiessen, assistant professor of music. "When people gather to sing, something changes. We become part of something larger than ourselves. We remember that hope is not something we wait for, it is something we practice together." At Goshen College, the [student newspaper \*The Record\* reported](#) more than 50 students, faculty and staff gathered Jan. 30 to participate in a nationwide strike calling for justice after multiple fatal shootings by ICE agents. **Read the rest of the *Anabaptist World* article [here](#).**

## Everence Toolkit

Read Everence's Spring 2026 edition of their Toolkit [here](#). (Also available [En Español](#).)

## Public statement calling for an end to the violence: Stop U.S. bombing of Iran, work for peace in region

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Click [here](#) to read Mennonite Central Committee's statement lamenting the U.S. military aggression against Iran and mourns our collective failure to stop the endless cycles of violence and the cheapening of human life and recommit to be peacemakers in a time of escalating violent conflict.

## MWC statement on the widening conflict in the Middle East

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Click [here](#) to read Mennonite World Conference's joint ecumenical statement on the widening conflict in the Middle East

## MCC U.S. invites youth to examine convictions about war

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As U.S. military activity increases around the world, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) invites teenagers and young adults to examine their beliefs about participation in war and to record their convictions on a Christian Peacemaker Registration Form. The form, which is available on [MCC's website](#), is one way young men and women can build evidence of their peace witness. If the government were to reinstitute a national draft for military service, the form could be used to support a person's application to be a conscientious objector (CO) to war. A recent change in federal law allows the U.S. Selective Service System to automatically register men, ages 18-25, using government data such as social security numbers. This system will replace a requirement for men to register themselves when they turn 18, which less than 40% did. The law will go into effect in December 2026. "This change makes it more difficult to formally declare yourself a conscientious objector ahead of a draft because you can't refuse to register or note anything on your registration as you could before," says Galen Fitzkee, legislative associate for MCC U.S. National Peace & Justice Ministries. "It makes it much more important that COs record their opposition to military service somewhere." Nathan Toews, MCC's peace education coordinator, believes there's value in young people completing the form as a way to examine their beliefs, even without a draft. **Read the rest of Linda Espenshade's blog post for Mennonite Central Committee [here](#).**

## The architecture of crimmigration

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*A recent shipwreck off the coast of Chios island exposes the way deadly border policies are shaped by fear, militarization, and the convergence of criminal and migration law.* One of the greatest contradictions of our time is that, even though we are among the healthiest and longest-living people in history, we are becoming increasingly fearful. The constant fear of an external threat moulds a defensive society, which in turn manifests as intolerance to other cultures, political structures, and people. **Read CPT Aegean Migrant Solidarity's blog post for Community Peacemaker Teams [here](#).**

## Midrash: giving voice to the voiceless

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*A Jewish tradition shows how to read between the lines.*

I appreciate a mystery, and Proverbs 31:1-9 provides an intriguing one. The chapter opens with “The sayings of King Lemuel of Massa, which his mother taught him.” What follows is a poem in which a mother warns her son against promiscuity and too much strong drink because those will get in the way of his acting justly as king. She tells him to speak on behalf of the voiceless and defend the rights of the poor and needy. Who was this King Lemuel? He’s never mentioned elsewhere. Scholars have theories, but no one knows for sure. And who is his mother? How did she get to be so wise? Rabbis were curious about her, too. Through ancient commentary called Midrash, they gave her a name and a backstory. In a sense, they did what the poem advises: gave voice to the voiceless. According to Midrash, King Lemuel was another name for King Solomon — whose mother was Bathsheba, the beautiful woman King David spied from his palace roof as she took a bath. David arranges for Bathsheba’s husband to be killed in battle so that he can marry her. Regarding Bathsheba and her husband, David does not act justly, does not respect the voiceless. Midrash with a capital “M” refers to such biblical commentary written between A.D. 400 and 1200. The same word with a lowercase “m” refers to similar biblical interpretation, a creative reading between the lines. **Read the rest of Shari Wagner’s article published by the *Anabaptist World* [here](#).**

### My softened heart

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It was snowing, so we moved our Wild Church service to a West Philly backyard and pulled our camping chairs around a fire pit. I said, “This brings back memories of the pandemic.” Believe it or not, Covid-19 first plagued us six years ago. It changed us — not just in how we consider public health but also because, during that time, the world witnessed the brutal killing of George Floyd. All of this happened during the first Trump administration. That trifecta of events politically charged us, polarized congregations and left many of us traumatized. I’m learning more about trauma-informed spiritual care in my class for Eastern Mennonite Seminary’s Doctor of Ministry in Peacemaking and Social Change program. The latest scholarship on trauma explores how the pandemic and the events that surrounded it have impacted us. I’m learning from my pandemic trauma that in order to heal I must soften my hardened heart to see the humanity of those around me. The pandemic drastically affected me personally. It was during that time that I publicly came out as queer, and shortly afterward I left my longtime job as a pastor at Circle of Hope. My departure from Circle of Hope, and all of the trouble that brewed in that Brethren in Christ community, has impacted how I pastor. I’ve learned so much in the years that have followed. With God’s grace, I hope I have grown. The problems we faced in the church were related to ecclesial power, race and gender relations and what it meant to love our neighbor in an age of Covid. There is at least one widely read and reviewed chronicle of the end of Circle of Hope (*Circle of Hope: A Reckoning With Love, Power and Justice in an American Church* by Eliza Griswold, Macmillan, 2024). I have not publicly commented on Griswold’s narrative, but seeing myself reflected in her account offered me a self-awareness I hadn’t had before. Though I might tell a different story, I learned a great deal from her interpretation. **Read the rest of Jonny Rashid’s article published by the *Anabaptist World* [here](#).**

# The work of Community Peacemaker Teams and of funding peace

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Funding war has always been part of how systems of government work. Well before [billions of dollars a day were being spent in munition overseas](#), the Roman empire taxed its people to be able to have a standing army such as the one that was in place during Jesus' time. Yet, unlike war, its counterpart peace has traditionally been grossly underfunded. It would be a misnomer and a complete denial of reality to call what is happening in the Middle East right now anything but war. Yet, many "Christians" in the U.S. and around the world continue to support the current administration, even if not directly intending to. U.S. tax dollars are contributing to the decimation of people abroad while people "at home" lack access to healthcare and reliable subsistence. How does that reflect Christian values that are derived from Jesus' life example and teachings? This may seem like an oxymoronic question; nevertheless it is one that also needs to be asked, given today's politicized religious convictions. Be that as it may, Mennonite Church USA withdrew its official support for CPT in February of 2022. The main reason stated was ["the move away from a Christ-centered organization"](#) due to the name change from Christian Peacemaker Teams to Community Peacemaker Teams. CPT's move towards inclusivity and collaboration in the peace effort was reciprocated with a move to disconnect because of language that has become politicized, despite clarifying: ["We are not leaving our Christian identity behind. In our journey of undoing oppression, we are expanding our identity to acknowledge other spiritual and faith-based peacemaking and acknowledging the harm that Christianity has done in many of our CPT contexts."](#) At the same time, CPT has remained consistent in its mission since its creation: [building partnerships to transform violence and oppression](#). Speaking as a Mennonite minister, I wish the Mennonite Church USA leadership would go back on their decision and keep supporting the work of CPT. We need to invest in the work of peace, particularly at a time such as this, if we want our witness to be named (even though this is not what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:3!), then we need to make significant and sizable contributions to the things that make for peace (despite it looking like we "Christians" really have no idea how to recognize it). With that being said, I invite you to consider donating to the work of CPT, either to their training or teams, of which there are currently five doing work on the ground. **Read the rest of Andrea De Avila's article published by the Anabaptist World [here](#).**

## MDS Executive Director Kevin King announces retirement

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Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Executive Director for MDS U.S. Kevin King has announced his intent to retire by the end of 2026. During more than two decades of leading MDS U.S., King ushered the organization through Hurricane Katrina in 2005, after which MDS U.S. nearly doubled in size; through Hurricane Harvey in 2017, which drew the response of more than 5,000 MDS volunteers; through wildfires in Paradise, Calif., Maui, Hawaii, and many other communities; and through responses ranging from Saipan to Puerto Rico. Over those years, MDS has grown in its service: 6,848 volunteers from across Canada and the U.S. shared their time, skills, and compassion during 2024-25. They built 79 new homes and repaired 460 more; built nine private access bridges; and cleaned up 378 properties. Abiding by MDS U.S. bylaws, the MDS U.S. Board of Directors has appointed a search committee, which is working with the talent search division of North Group Consultants, based in Lititz, Pennsylvania. **Read the rest of Mennonite Disaster Service's statement [here](#).**

## Gingerich reappointed MennoMedia director

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Amy Gingerich has been reappointed MennoMedia executive director and publisher. The MennoMedia Board tapped Gingerich for a third four-year term as leader of the Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada publishing arm. Since 2018, Gingerich has guided MennoMedia through an organizational turnaround. MennoMedia achieved a financial turnaround in her first full fiscal year, strengthened its publishing portfolio and expanded reach. It launched initiatives including the *Anabaptist Community Bible* and the Anabaptism at 500 suite of resources, the new "Shine Everywhere" initiative in partnership with Brethren Press and the *Voices Together* worship and song collection. "It has been a gift to serve MennoMedia during a time of meaningful change and growth," she said. "I am grateful for the trust of our board, staff, authors and donors, and for the opportunity to continue building on the strong foundation we have created together. Our work is rooted in faith, shaped by collaboration, and driven by a desire to make a tangible impact. I look forward to expanding our reach in this next term." This reappointment was affirmed by MennoMedia's two sponsoring denominations. **Read the rest of the *Anabaptist World* article [here](#).**

## Walking together: Anabaptist formation for Hispanic leadership

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In a Menno Snapshot for Mennonite Church USA, Marco Güete highlights how Anabaptist-rooted theological education pathways equip Hispanic and Latino leaders for faithful, contextual ministry without leaving their congregations. **Read Marco Güete's Menno Snapshot for Mennonite Church USA [here](#).**

## A better way than war

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*Let's learn from the past and imagine other options.*

Let's agree that the current Iranian regime represses its own people and supports armed groups in the region. Human Rights Watch's 2026 World Report, which tracks human rights practices in more than 100 countries, says: "Iranian authorities in 2025 carried out executions on a scale unseen since the late 1980s, carried out mass killings in response to protests across the country, conducted mass and arbitrary arrests and ratcheted up repression under the guise of national security." Iran is known to support armed groups in the Middle East. Resistance movements, according to Iran. Terrorist organizations, according to the United States. There is no need to be an apologist for the Iranian government. An Iranian graduate of Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding told me recently that the majority of Iranians do not support their government's actions. Still, there is more to the story. Let's remember the history of this conflict. Iranian and U.S. narratives start at different historical moments. For most U.S. Americans, the problem began in 1979 when Ayatollah Khomeini became the Supreme Leader and Iranian students took hostages at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and held them for 444 days. It was a humiliating experience for the United States. During the past 30 years, I have traveled to Iran a dozen times with Mennonite Central Committee delegations. We met with humanitarian aid workers, students, professors, government officials and ordinary Iranians. We heard a very different history. **Read the rest of J. Daryl Byler's article published by the *Anabaptist World* [here](#).**



## Our Members in Care Facilities

PLEASE REMEMBER THESE MEMBERS IN YOUR PRAYERS.  
SEND A CARD IF THE SPIRIT LEADS YOU!



## Staff Contact and Building Open Hours

- Building Open:     **Standard Hours:**  
Monday-Friday 9AM-11AM & 1:30PM-3PM
- Pastor Kevin designated office hours:** Wednesdays, 8am-12pm  
(or call to plan a visit)
- Lydia Hedberg:     Office Administrator; [church@normalmennonite.org](mailto:church@normalmennonite.org); 309-452-6622
- Rita Munkakusi:    Custodian
- Kevin Chupp:        Pastor for Community Life Commission, Outreach Commission,  
Spiritual Gifts Discernment Team, & Worship Commission;  
[kevin@normalmennonite.org](mailto:kevin@normalmennonite.org)
- Lauren Satchwell:  Pastoral Team Lead & Pastor for Administration Commission,  
Discipling Commission, & Vision Team;  
[lauren@normalmennonite.org](mailto:lauren@normalmennonite.org)

## Past Midweeks

## Items for the Midweek



Please send items to be included in the Midweek to the [Church Office](#) no later than  
**8am on Wednesday.** Thank you!

# Commissions and Teams Contact List

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Facility Use Agreement

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Work Order & Purchase Request Forms

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Item Check-Out Request Form

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Commission, Team, & Committee Members

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Commission Meeting Minutes

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Structure Documents

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