

Connecting with Jim and Donna Shenk

Donna and Jim reflect on their life that continues to unfold in ways they would not have imagined. Noting the unfolding in perfect timing and rhythm is one way to follow their amazing life together of more than forty years.

It began innocently enough when they were students at Lancaster Mennonite High School. They were seniors getting ready for the trip to Washington D.C. Jim worked up courage to book a date. Let it be the first girl of the group of four friends to walk through the door of the campus center.



Donna Mack entered first and Jim knew it was meant to be, since he had been noticing her for some time. His decision turned out to be one of his best, and the rest is history.

Donna came to LMH from public schools in Montgomery County where she grew up on her father's home farm. She loved farming, gardening, helping Dad in the fields, feeding calves and heifers. Member of the 4-H dairy club, Donna raised a Jersey calf to cow, went to farm shows, winning ribbons.

Family life was happy and simple. Social life was spent with extended family. Both parents loved singing and the family often sang together.

Donna's early school years were spent in Vermont where her family moved from Pottstown where she was born. Her parents, Abram and Lois Mack went with Franconia Mennonite Conference to assist at Bartonsville Mennonite Church, a Franconia Mennonite Conference congregation, where they lived for four years.

Donna has deep-rooted nostalgia for Vermont Mountains, snow, maple sugaring, and this place where they returned annually for family vacation. It was here that she brought Jim after they married.

A lover of outdoors, Donna attended summer camp at Spruce Lake, later becoming a camp counselor in this haven of nature.

Field hockey took Donna's time and energy in junior and senior high school before she transferred to LMH where she joined the first field hockey club and sang in Campus Chorale and Choraleers.

Jim had spent all twelve years in Mennonite schools, the first ten at Kraybills. He grew up on a beef and potato farm near Mount Joy. The eldest of Warren and Arlene's four children, Jim was involved at an early age. He drove tractor at five, began plowing at eight. Farming was year round and even as he enjoyed his role in the family, Jim knew by his teen years that he didn't want to farm.

Jim was nurtured in faith in the Erisman Mennonite congregation where his uncle Norman Shenk was the pastor. Both family and church promoted mission and service and he noted his cousins choosing service.

This influenced Jim's decision to offer a two-year voluntary service assignment with the mission board. Even

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Worship Schedule

Feb. 5	Rachel Nolt
12	James Krabill
19	Karyn Nancarvis
26	Rachel Nolt

though he had a high draft number and had started working for a contractor with his goal of one day becoming a contractor, he chose this alternative route.

Spanish language study in Costa Rica and service in Belize was significant in shaping the direction of Jim's life. He had never considered college during high school, and now the world offered infinite possibility. In addition, his pastor uncle encouraged him to go to EMC after his service time. He never looked back, graduating three years later with a B.S. in Business and Biology/International Development.

Donna meanwhile chose to study nursing, graduating from Montgomery Community College with an associate degree. She kept regular communication with Jim in Belize where he was serving with Phil Rutt. She traveled with Marian Hollinger to Belize to visit Jim and Phil. As fairy tales end, these young couples married after service, and were attendants in each other's wedding. Jim and Donna were married at her home church on October 5, 1974.

During Jim's college years, Donna worked as a nurse and continued her education, graduating with a BS in Psychology.

Jim and Donna had service on their minds and began conversation with MCC and EMM about an overseas assignment. The first one was Swaziland.

They lived in a rural community, building relationships as they helped neighbors build them a house of self-made earthen bricks while they began learning the local language. They lived simply without electricity or running water and gained the respect and love of their Swazi neighbors.

The one concern of neighbors was that there were no children. Could they lay hands on Donna and pray for her? There was joy all around when Charity was born, and named Lindiwe, the long awaited one.

Returning to the states for graduate study at American University (MA in International Affairs, Jim) and University of Maryland, (nutrition courses for Donna), they returned to southern Africa to work with MCC in Mozambique.



Their service was with the Christian Council of Mozambique. The St. Stephens Anglican Church property served as their home in the center of Maputo, along with the local priest and his family and several Anglican Sisters. This became their family since most expatriates left during the Marxist Leninist government rule, and a haven in the midst of devastating war and famine in the country.

In his role as projects officer for the Council, Jim was given responsibility to help the churches become re-engaged in meeting human need. He was honored to work with the church leaders, who were learning how to be church in this context. It sometimes felt like being on holy ground. These most difficult years of their lives as a family were also some of the richest.

During their time there, they entertained visits from Edgar Stoesz and Nancy Heisey, introducing them to travel with military escort.

It was during this time of service that Justin was born in unusual circumstances. He has heard his birth story many times and they are all grateful that he and Donna survived.

Coming home after service is never easy. Navigating the culture of origin is foreign after leaving it for a totally different life. Donna felt isolated, at home with Justin and Charity when Jim began to travel with MCC, first as East Coast director and then as Co-Director for Africa. She provided the children with stability and they found their way in school and made friends.

Donna found her way to seminary as she processed experiences and questions about God in the midst of suffering and war.

She also explored the role of chaplain, wanting a different relationship with the people she cared for in the hospital. Donna followed this course of study, graduating from Lancaster Theological Seminary, followed by two units of Clinical Pastoral Education at Philhaven and a full year of CPE at Hershey Medical Center.

During her seminary years, Donna was minister of pastoral care and worship at Blossom Hill Mennonite, still part of Lancaster Conference. Donna was licensed as a Deaconess, as high as the conference would recognize for a woman. However she was asked to speak at a meeting of Lancaster Conference, just prior to her diagnosis of breast cancer at age thirty-eight.

The meeting was only two weeks after surgery, and Donna was determined to rise to the occasion. She prepared while recovering. She was aware that women were not widely accepted in the sermon role. Donna felt heard and accepted. It was a turning point in the conference and for her.

When Charity was coming into MYF age, and Donna left her role at Blossom Hill, the family found AMC to be a good fit for them. This has been a good home base for them to settle and grow. Later when Justin and Charity were in college, Jim and Donna began biking and it is still a favorite venture for them.



Donna found her path unfolding in 1995, as she began chaplaincy work, first at Ephrata Hospital, next Hospice, and now she is in her sixth year at Landis Homes.

She finds this a good fit for her in her current role as director of pastoral services. Donna's gift is being a listening presence, and she makes a difference in lives every day as she gives focus and attention to those in her care. Donna finds her relationships to be reciprocal as residents offer much to her.

Jim gave many years of service to MCC when they returned from Africa. Was this the plan or another unfolding of their life? Currently he is completing service on the boards of MCC EC and MCC US.

Jim has been at Philhaven as director of development for fourteen years. He defines this as a spiritual role, to be the listening confidant for those making some of the most important decisions of their lives regarding their resources in support of their values. He is also grateful for the opportunity to support a mission that helps transform people's lives.



Timing and rhythm have played the tune all of their lives and affirmed most clearly last year when they decided to share living quarters with Charity, Steve and boys. They moved in days before Donna's surgery for her second cancer.

A year and a half later, they have settled in to this special opportunity to live as a three-generation family under the same roof along Furnace Hills Pike.

Donna thrived on this arrangement during the seven months of treatments, recovery, and healing. Cuddling with Kai, the presence of her family, including Justin who returned from England for two months, were all sustaining.

Donna reached out to AMC friends for support, friends willing to accompany her in the hospital, at chemo treatments and at home, providing healing Reiki, prayers, and cards.

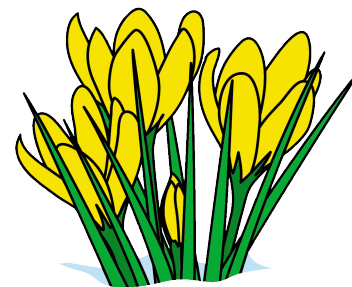
A dozen years earlier, Jim survived triple by-pass surgery and was the recipient of a caring AMC community.

Profoundly grateful for the fruits grown in vulnerability and weakness, Donna and Jim experience community born through shared brokenness and intimacy.

Forward they go into an unknown future, but with the assurance that they do not go alone. ~Priscilla Ziegler



*The deadline for March
newsletter entries is Monday,
February 20. Send to
amc@akronmench.org
Thanks.*



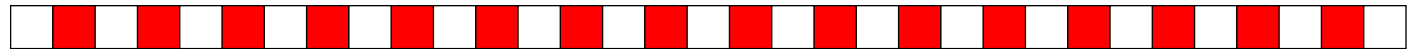
Pastor's Perspective

I play a little game with myself these days. When I enter into a space with members and attenders, I try to say everyone's first name. (I have not ventured into last names yet.) I realize that I can remember an individual's name when I know something about that person's story or if we have had an extended conversation.

Names are important. Knowing a person's name implies some form of relationship. Salespeople will often use my name repeatedly in a conversation to create a sense of relationship and intimacy. Knowing a person's name conveys care and value. Because names are so important to each of us, I worry that I will offend someone when I can't recall their name. I want to reassure each of you that my inability to recall your name does not mean you are less important or valuable to this congregation.

We, as a congregation, want the children of this congregation to know that they are important and a valued part of our congregation. So we want to know their names. I enjoyed a delightful conversation with Bree and Kat Beyer and Anna and Alliah Bontrager at the January 11 Connect! meal. We talked about school and pets. We laughed and were silly. It made me feel about 10 years younger than I am.

So...I invite you to join my game. I invite you to practice learning the names of people in our congregation. I invite you to especially learn the names of our children and youth. To remember their name, engage them in conversation about school, sports, music and hobbies. And I invite you to attend Connect! It's a great place to learn our children's names.
~ Rachel Nolt



Celebration of Birthdays and Accomplishments: On January 22, the birthdays and many accomplishments of the Nzabarinda family were celebrated in the AMC Assembly Room with a pot luck meal and program. The family arrived just over one year ago, and were all given a birthday of January 1.

Photos courtesy of Lloyd Chapman



Our Path

We are in a new year. We have a new AMC pastor. We have a new US president.

Some things, though, aren't new. We are still part of the AMC community. We still need and nourish one another. We still want to share ideas with each other even though we don't always agree. We still want to follow in Jesus' footsteps as we walk through each day.



One question isn't new and is always important. How do we as Jesus' followers listen to each other's viewpoints and share our own when we see things differently? How do we give one another permission to disagree? How do we see our diversity as one of our potential strengths?

"Diversity may be the hardest thing for a community to live with and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a community to be without." William Sloan Coffin

"More than one thing is true." Urbane Peachy

When we come together as a faith community, our diverse daily paths interweave as we follow in Jesus' steps. And because we come together from those different paths, we bring various experiences, diverse perspectives, different convictions. As our paths join, we have the opportunity to strengthen and broaden our common path. We have the possibility of helping one another understand that, indeed, more than one thing is true. We are called as Jesus' followers to share with each other in love, to respect and learn from each other and always to remember that each of us has a truth to tell.

So as we come to 2017 carrying all the uncertainty and fear and mistrust stirred up during the months of political campaigning, let's hold one another accountable to speak to each other in love, to speak up together to counter fear with open hearts, to model together a community built on trust. Let's rejoice in the joy and hope we can share on our path as Jesus' followers. ~ Melody Rupley

Pray For One Another

James 5:16

The purpose of "Pray For One Another" is to help us be aware of and pray for members of AMC who, for whatever reason, are unable to participate in Sunday morning worship services on a regular basis. Scripture admonishes us to pray. It is one of the joys of the Christian life and part of what makes us community. The names of people listed may change from time to time. If you know of someone you would like to be included with those named here, please be in touch with the church office.



Charlotte Biris	Honey (Marilyn) Hernley
Carolyn & John Horst	Becca Martin
Paul & Dorothy Martin	Philip Rutt
	Amela & Randy Puljek-Shank

Keeping up with AMC's Youth

MYF

Upcoming Events:

- February 12: Dessert fundraiser after the Fellowship meal/assembling care packages for the college students
- February 18: Mystery dinner. Meet at AMC @ 5 p.m.
- March 10: "Girls night" sleepover/pajama party at the home of Susan King @ 7 p.m.
- March 18: Auction fundraiser
- Mar. 31-Apr. 2: Girls/guys weekend at Kevin King's cabin
- April 7-8: Lock in @ AMC
- July 4-9: Orlando convention

February Birthdays: Mataya — February 28

Share-A-Life

Janet Stoner provided this description of the January 6 Share-A-Life Game Night:

Share-a-Life partners got together on January 6 to play board games. We brought our favorite games and played in groups of twos and fours for two hours. I personally played four different games with different groups.

We played many games from GO FISH to CHESS. Ezra Smee was the youngest CHESS player. The CHESS game kept busy all evening. We had hot chocolate and snacks later in the evening. We all had a good time. ~ Janet Stoner

F.L.I.P.

Upcoming Event:

Please join us for a church sponsored roller skating afternoon! We will be skating at Mt. Gretna Roller Rink on Sunday, Feb. 12th from 2-4:30. If you would like to come watch and not skate, there are benches to sit on. Any questions, please contact Dawn Nolt-626-9563 or dks965@aol.com. Thanks!



Connect!

Connect! met on January 25 to help with preparations for the Ephrata Community meal on February 9. *Photos courtesy of Karyn Nancarvis*



There are three opportunities to Connect! in February: Feb. 1, 8, and 22. All are welcome!

Community Announcements



CANDLEMAS SERVICE—Candlemas Taize service will be held Thursday, February 2, 7 pm at Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, 328 West Orange Street. CMCL musicians will provide accompaniment for meditative singing and periods of silence in the candle-lit sanctuary. Candlemas is a ritual that reminds us of sustaining warmth and light in the dark weeks before the vernal equinox. Bring your own candles to the service for a special blessing.



Lancaster Interchurch Peace Witness: Upcoming Events & Updates **LIPW Annual Meeting**

Date: February 26, 2017

Time: 3:00-5:00 PM

Location: Church of the Apostles, 1850 Marietta Ave., Lancaster, Pa., 17603

THEME: The North Dakota Access Pipeline. The presentation and discussion will focus on the Native American spiritual grounding surrounding their resistance to the pipeline and their insistence on protecting their water and air.

Surviving Depression

This month's article is taken from the ADNet (Anabaptist Disabilities Network) newsletter. Christine Guth, author of the article, served ADN as program director from 2010 to 2016, after several years of working for ADN as a volunteer. The following story first appeared as an article in Connections in May 2008 and its message is still relevant.



On Ash Wednesday this year, I was struck with the deep familiarity of its atmosphere of intensely introspective, self-critical examination. For decades I was immersed daily in Ash Wednesday penitence and lament. Celebration felt like ashes and death seemed an easy step away. Ash Wednesday provides apt images of living with long-term, untreated clinical depression.

This past May, friends and family celebrated with me my graduation from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary after ten years of part-time study. My joy that day was all the greater because of the adversity I had pressed through to get to this point. Alongside my coursework all those years I had been engaged in a parallel curriculum—learning to survive depression.

My own depression fits into a family deeply affected by depression passed down more faithfully than family heirlooms. We treated depression (though unnamed) as a character flaw, a spiritual failure, a source of shame. No one ever talked about it. When, as a teen, I too began to succumb, I forced myself to keep going and hid my pain from the church, as I saw others doing. I observed the church as a supportive community for others—but not in relation to our family's secret misery.

As I moved into my adult years, I was afraid to set goals, never able to count on emotional stability, always on the receiving end of help. Yet at a critical life juncture eleven years ago, with the encouragement of friends who saw gifts in me I could not claim for myself, I cautiously began taking seminary courses, one at a time, frequently second-guessing my emerging call to ministry. My home congregation began contributing a modest amount to my tuition each semester, their faith an encouragement to persist in my studies.

Midway through my studies I began a pastoral internship. In that role, I helped to form a support group for depression that met monthly for nearly four years. Here at last was a place where those with depression could open up our private suffering to the care of the church. Here we could bring to God the pain that dominated our lives, sharing our stories and receiving the concern of others.

That year my mood began plummeting. The tasks of ministry were getting harder, and I had to force myself to keep at them. Medication that had helped for over a year was now failing me. My doctor held out hope that two particular meds in combination would be the “magic bullet” for me, as it had been for several of his patients. “Oh no!” I thought. “Now I am really sick—to need two antidepressants!”

Despite my sense of shame about it, I followed my psychiatrist's advice. His intuition was right. As spring arrived that year, the sun emerged from the clouds for the first time in many months. After a few weeks, I was feeling better than I ever remembered feeling. It dawned on me that I had been living with depression all my adult life—even from as early as age 12. Until that spring, my life had been a roller coaster of ups and downs, but, I realized, even the best times were colored by depression.

A few months after I began to feel hugely better, depression started afflicting my son, then ten. For three tumultuous years we struggled to find effective treatment while I wrestled with agonizing theological questions, starting with “Why should a child be suffering so?” Mental illness raises theological questions that defy answers. Those of us with mental illness deeply need people who will face the abyss with us without flinching. Are our churches willing to enter such theological struggles with us?

Unfortunately, stigma often keeps the body of Christ from embodying the tangible love of God to those affected by mental illness. Stigma keeps us isolated in our suffering. It keeps us from accessing treatment that could help. Stigma prolongs and intensifies suffering.

Depression is a physical illness of the brain, not a bad habit we bring on ourselves because of character weakness or moral failure. We don't get depression from not trusting God enough. These are truths we need to integrate into the common practices of our congregational life. When someone has the courage to talk about feelings of hopelessness, let us affirm the courage and extend extra care. Churches can make mental illness something we regularly talk about, pray about, and even lament over in our public worship. In these ways, we can embody Christ's love to the many among us who suffer from a mental illness.

~submitted by Marilyn Langeman

February (and beyond) at AMC & In the Community

FEBRUARY UPCOMING EVENTS

- February 1** Library Committee Meeting @ 6:00 pm
1 Connect! @ 6:00 pm
2 Men's breakfast @ Udder Choice @ 7:00 am
 Ed Miller, presenter
5 55+ Meeting @ noon @ AMC
7 Lunch Bunch @ Oregon Dairy @ 11:30 am
8 Connect! @ 6:00 pm
9 AMC to serve Ephrata Community Meal
12 Fellowship meal and MYF dessert fund-raiser
12 FLIP event: Roller-skating at Mt. Gretna Roller Rink 2:00-4:00 pm
18 Men's choir rehearsal 8:00 am; sing for 9 am service
22 Connect! @ 6:00 pm

SAVE THESE DATES

- March 18 MYF Auction and Pig Roast
 April 1 Guess Who Is Coming to Dinner?
 June 9-11 Annual AMC camping weekend at Locust Lake State Park

More pies are needed for the February 9 community meal in Ephrata. If you are willing to donate a pie, please let Jean Buchen know. Thank you to all of you who have offered to help with set-up, meal prep, serving and clean up. If you forget what time you are needed, please contact Jean Buchen at jbuchen@kthighland.com or 396-0025. Pies can be dropped off at Akron Mennonite by 2:00 on Thursday the 9th or brought to Ephrata United Methodist, 68 North Church Street, Ephrata between 3:00 and 5:00.



ON FEBRUARY 12 we will have a pot luck Fellowship Meal following the service. Last names A to L please bring a large salad or side dish. Last names M to Z please bring a large main dish. MYF will provide the desserts as a fund raiser.

55+ WILL MEET next Sunday, February 5 at 12:00 noon in the Assembly Room. Bring your favorite finger food. Beverages will be provided. Edgar Stoesz will present "And Then It Is Winter." Wondering what it's all about? Come and find out!



COLLEGE STUDENT CARE PACKAGE DONATIONS are being accepted now through February 12th! Food items including chocolates, popcorn, snack mixes, and baked goods are always appreciated. *Please store baked goods in smaller zip lock baggies

with 4-6 cookies/bars in each and place on the table in the foyer. Thank you for your generous support of our young adults in this way! Contact Kenton Martin with questions. **(An approximate number of students is 15; a confirmed list will be posted soon).**



Mennonite Disaster Service

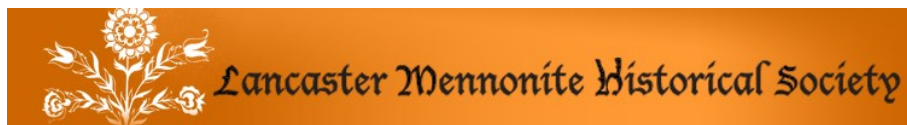
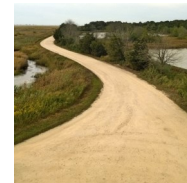
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED by MDS to help restore houses to livable

condition following an October 2016 flood in Princeville, North Carolina. The work will largely involve reinstalling flooring, insulation, wall-board, mudding, and painting. This AMC group of whatever size we can recruit, is scheduled to depart April 2 and return April 8. Let Don Bru-

ALL ARE INVITED to join Rachel Nolt in her office on Monday mornings for the spiritual practice of Lectio Divina, "divine or sacred reading."



Kairos: School of Spiritual Formation will offer a Lenten Journey Day Retreat on Saturday, March 4, 2017 from 9:00 - 4:00 at the Jesuit Center, Wernersville, PA. Join us for a Day of Silence, which includes prayer stations and a labyrinth, as we listen to the call to return to God with all our heart. (Joel 2:12) Early Bird registration by February 6, 2017. For additional information visit the Kairos website <http://www.kairosjourney.org/lenten-journey/>



A Taste for Fraktur

Emily Smucker-Beidler will help you become acquainted with the imagery of fraktur in this folk art class. She will teach it on Saturday, February 4, from 9 a.m. until noon at Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society-2215 Millstream Rd., Lancaster, Pa. The cost is \$70 members/\$80 nonmembers. Materials are included. Register by January 28 at lmhs.org, or by calling (717) 393-9745.

Winter Bookfest

Discover quality used books from the most popular categories of the summer Bookworm Frolic such as children's books, fiction, and history. This sale runs from 3 to 8 p.m. on Thursday February 16; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, February 17; and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 18.

Plush Work Wool Embroidery

Anne Hermes will lead this workshop on Saturday, February 11, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Students will study examples of antique and vintage plush-work and learn how to stitch, trim and sculpt a plush-work design. Cost is \$70 for members/\$80 for nonmembers. Materials are included. Register by February 4 at lmhs.org or by calling (717) 393-9745.

Grain Painting

Jim King, local fancy painter, will teach how to false-grain a small box with ball feet during this folk art class on Saturday, February 18 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society-2215 Millstream Rd., Lancaster, Pa. Cost is \$70 for members/\$80 for nonmembers. Materials are included. Register by February 10 at lmhs.org, or by calling (717) 393-9745.

P E N N S Y L V A N I A

RELIEF SALE

Celebrating Community. CREATING HOPE.

The Pennsylvania Relief Sale is hosting a fundraising banquet on Saturday evening, March 11 at Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland, PA. Doors open at 4:30 pm with the dinner starting at 5:30 pm. A free will offering will be received to help cover the costs of the PA Relief Sale and to benefit Mennonite Central Committee

(MCC). After dinner, the program will feature a singing group from Virginia, *The Churchmen*. **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED!** To reserve a seat, contact Jane at 717-656-8530 or Amos at 717-626-4332 by March 4. We look forward to hearing from you.

February Birthdays

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
			1 Diane Gehman Janet Weber	2 Al Claassen Barb Weaver	3	4
5 Lorri Hardin	6	7	8 Melanie Baer- Drescher	9	10	11 Virginia Ebersole
12	13 Helena Dueck	14 Kai Zook	15 Elaine Brubaker Alverta Martin	16	17	18 Delmar Zimmerman
19 Anna Clemens Lynette Meck Annie Wise	20	21 Ruth Hertzler	22 Viola Weber	23	24 Josh Gingerich	25 Philip Rutt
26	27 Chris Martin Makena Zimmerman	28 Mataya Chap Anna Mae Weaver				

Akron Mennonite Church

1311 Diamond Street
Akron, PA 17501
P: (717) 859-1488
E: amc@akronmench.org

www.akronmench.org

- ◇ *Worship @ 9:00 am*
- ◇ *Coffee/Tea Fellowship from 10:15-10:40 am*
- ◇ *Christian Education & Discipleship Hour from 10:40-11:40 am*

Staff

Rachel Nolt
Pastor
rnolt@akronmench.org

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Rebecca Pereverzoff
Administrator
rpereverzoff@akronmench.org
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Contact Updates

Please note this email correction for Marlene Gentzler:
gentzlerml@gmail.com

New email address for Mary Martin:
maryprmartin@gmail.com

AMC Vision Statement

Akron Mennonite Church will be fully engaged in God's mission in a broken world as we are called, equipped and sent by the Holy Spirit to follow Christ in life. Shaped by the gifts and vision of our members, we will keep Christ and church at the center of our lives as we reach out to neighbors near and far and witness to the world around us through an Anabaptist-Mennonite expression of faith.

Statement on Human Sexuality

We are a community of believers seeking to respond with God's love to all people. We celebrate the strength of our unity in the midst of our diversity of experiences, perspectives and understanding of Scripture. We seek to be a community of grace and reconciliation and so welcome into membership all who confess faith in Jesus Christ, including those in same-gender covenant relationships. We are committed to engaging in God's mission in a broken world through an Anabaptist-Mennonite faith perspective.