

# the Mirror

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## At the intersection of politics and Mennonite faith

*Dear Mom and Dad,*

*It would mean a great deal to me if you voted against Reagan this year even though you've never voted before in your life.*

So begins ["An Open Letter to my Parents on the Presidential Election,"](#) by Phil Baker-Shenk, published in *D.C. MennoNews* in 1984.\* In his letter, Baker-Shenk makes a case for Mondale/Ferraro 1984 by criticizing Reagan's recent decisions to "kill legal aid to the poor," and "shut off loans to Mennonite students who are conscientious nonregistrants." Baker-Shenk confronts controversial issues of the day, walking his parents through his views on social revolution in Central America, nuclear threat, and what it means to be pro-life ("Nothing is more pro-life than feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and being peacemakers," he writes.).

The letter is forty years old, but Baker-Shenk's description of a fraught and polarized political climate is familiar, and his plea to Mom and Dad to use their vote wisely might be as well. "This is one of those years when the choice is clearer and easier than usual," he writes.

In *"The Menonists, the Tinkers, the Quakers," and the Presidential Election of 1800*, published in the January 2014 *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*,\* David L. Holmes details another polarized election from almost two centuries earlier. "In the 1800 election," Holmes writes, "both parties believed that the very fate of the American experiment hung in balance." The tension led several impassioned citizens to address "the Freeman of Lancaster County" in their own open letter, addressing "Menonists" and others opposed to bearing arms.

"You are called upon to exercise a duty, which no friend to his country ought to neglect; particularly at this awful crisis, when we are threatened by a party who are known to be inimical to the Government of the United States," the letter says.

An unavoidably dramatic election year looms over the United States. Studying history through documents like Baker-Shenk's letter and Holmes' lecture show that Mennonite faith constantly intersects with political discussion, and has often lent itself to carefully deliberated political participation or abstention. Whether or not our political choices feel as "clear and easy," as they did to Baker-Shenk and the Concerned Lancaster Citizens of 1800, we can find comfort in knowing that the discussion has been happening for centuries.

*\*Both of these documents are available at the Mennonite Life Library*



### Saturday Open Libraries at Mennonite Life

Cold weather offers the perfect opportunity to pursue the indoor projects we've been putting off. If the past few months have sparked curiosity about family stories, and you want to make research and exploration your winter project, we are happy to help.

To better serve our members and others who are interested, the Mennonite Life Library will be open to the public 10 a.m.–3 p.m. on Saturday, February 17 and Saturday, March 16. Use of the library's research materials is complimentary for Mennonite Life members, and \$7 per day for non-members. Not sure where to start? Our staff and volunteers will be on hand to assist you. The Mennonite Life Museum and museum store will be open as well. We'd love to walk the research journey with you!

### Looking forward to Spring?



**The 1719 Museum  
reopens on April 5!**

## March 2024 Rare & Used Book Auction Highlights

Our first Rare & Used Book Auction of 2024 takes place on March 8, at 6:30 p.m. in the Mennonite Life Community Room. Our Used Books team has curated a list of rare and historically valuable lots to add to your collection. Highlights include a 1685 Dutch *Martyrs Mirror* rebound in the Netherlands (#309), *Evangelischer Kranken-Trost* by Johann Andreä, 1774 (#109), and *Annals of the Conestoga* by Mast and Simpson (#7).

You'll also have the chance to bid on two bound volumes of the *Mennonite Research Journal*, comprising 1960–1977 (#354), John L. Ruth's *The Earth is the Lord's* (#377), Christian Burkholder's *Nützliche und erbauliche Anrede an die Jugend*, 1829 (#104), an *Ausbund* that belonged to Ephraim Stoltzfus, c. 1949 (#299), and *Das kleine Davidische Psalter-spiel*, 1781, that belonged to Adam Bowers (#95).

Other valuable lots include an 1867 *Der Christliche Sängler*, formerly belonging to David Funk of Norristown (#56), *The Landis Family Book* volumes 1–4 (#337, #338, #339, #340), *The Wenger Book* (#335), Albert H. Gerberich's *The Brenneman History* (#249), and *History of a John Graybill Family in America*, 1854–1976, signed by both authors (#250).

See the full catalog at [mennonitelife.org/shop/used-books](https://mennonitelife.org/shop/used-books).



Above: Used Books Manager Kevin Bradford, right, and volunteer Charles Bauman carefully curate lots for each auction. Right: 1685 Dutch Martyrs Mirror title page.

The Mirror is a newsletter published by Mennonite Life, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602; Abby Hershberger, editor. Phone: 717.393.9745; fax: 717.393.8751; e-mail: [storyteller@mennonitelife.org](mailto:storyteller@mennonitelife.org). Please send address changes to The Mirror, Mennonite Life, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602-1499.

## RETAIL HIGHLIGHT

## Updated Edition of Lancaster County Favorite



Allan Garber's *To God Alone the Honor: The Pioneer Mennonite Families of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Third Edition* is available for purchase at Mennonite Life. The book profiles the history of Lancaster County Mennonites through stories, images, and genealogical records.

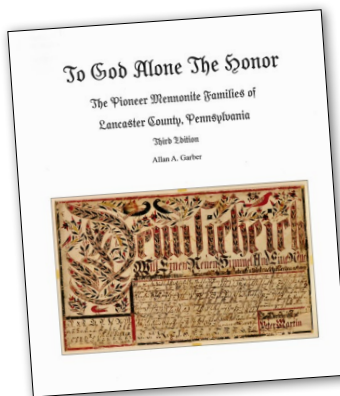
Garber's interest in historical storytelling began when he was just eight years old, after he picked up *Coals of Fire*, a children's book with examples of nonresistant faith. A familial connection with one of the stories prompted a lifelong dedication to exploring genealogy.

While he now has a wealth of online information at his fingertips, Garber has also had to be creative in his research, as straightforward data can be difficult to find. "Many families didn't leave much of a written record," Garber says. "Maybe in the flyleaves of their *Martyrs Mirror*, or a note or two in the Bible. The record is slim, unfortunately."

Still, stories emerge from these scant sources, illuminating the lives of those in the pages. An account on page 92 details the shared life of Jacob and Susanna Brubaker, who married in 1749. Listed birth and death dates reveal that the couple had six children together, only one of whom lived into adulthood. Susanna died the day after giving birth to their sixth child. Jacob later remarried a woman named Maria Martin, who gave birth to a daughter. In Jacob's *Martyrs Mirror* he wrote, originally in German, "1770 there was born to us a daughter, May 8. With all my might I pray that God would send his strength to us and the child, and indeed also upon all men through Christ's name."

"Here is a man who, except for his faith, had lost everything," Garber says.

Faith converges with history and memory in *To God Alone the Honor*. "History is what we choose to remember," Garber says. "We remember this so we can understand who we are, so we can understand our faith."



*To God Alone the Honor, Third Edition* is available for purchase at Mennonite Life, and through the [Mennonite Life online store](https://mennonitelife.org).



# Mennonite Life 2024 Events

## Winter Workshop: Intro to German Script

February 9, 10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.  
Mennonite Life Library  
Cost: \$45

## Saturday Open Library

February 17, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.  
Mennonite Life Library

## Winter Workshop: Easter Rabbit Fraktur

February 23, 12:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m.  
*See details at right.*

## Rare & Used Book Auction

March 8, 6:30 p.m.  
Mennonite Life Community Room

## Saturday Open Library

March 16, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.  
Mennonite Life Library

## Members-Only 1719 Museum Season Preview

March 23, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.  
*See details at right.*

## Tabernacle Kit Workshop

April 20, 9:30–11:00 a.m.  
*See details at right.*

## Author Talk: The Mennonite and Brethren Music of Peggy's War

May 9, 6:30 p.m.  
Mennonite Life Community Room

## Members-Only Film Screening

June 13, 6:30 p.m.  
Visitors Center Theater

## Rare & Used Book Auction

July 12, 6:30 p.m.  
Mennonite Life Community Room

## Author Talk: Amish Gardens of Lancaster County

July 25, 6:30 p.m.  
Mennonite Life Community Room

## Annual Storytelling Night

August 5, 7:00 p.m.  
Mellinger Mennonite Church

This year is packed with opportunities to explore local history and culture. Get these dates on your calendar, and be sure to periodically check [mennonitelife.org/events](https://mennonitelife.org/events) for registration details, updated information, and additional events.

## Winter Workshop: Easter Rabbit Fraktur

Friday, February 23, 12:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m.  
Mennonite Life Community Room  
Cost: \$110

Paint an 18th century fraktur rabbit in a 6" x 8" grain painted frame with the guidance of artists Lynn Sommer and Jim King. The piece will be ready to hang in your home by the end of the class! All supplies will be provided for this workshop. No experience is necessary. Please register for this workshop by February 16.



## Members-Only 1719 Museum Season Preview

Saturday, March 23, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.  
1719 Museum  
Cost: Complimentary for Mennonite Life members

Mennonite Life members are invited to explore the grounds of the 1719 Museum and learn about the Herr House and Lancaster Longhouse from our tour guides at an exclusive season preview. Children's activities and games will be provided.

*Not a member yet? Membership information on page 4.*

## Tabernacle Kit Workshop

Saturday, April 20, 9:30–11:00 a.m.  
Mennonite Life Visitors Center  
Cost: register as group, \$10/person + \$20 kit

At this hands-on and interactive activity for families and small groups, a guest speaker will explain the significance of the Tabernacle as your group assembles a small model of the structure. We'll read scripture together, and will provide time for questions and conversation. The 90-minute workshop will be followed by a complimentary viewing of the Biblical Tabernacle Experience.





## New perk for Mennonite Life members!

In 2024, members receive unlimited complimentary admission to our two museums and the Biblical Tabernacle Experience, with pre-reservation. When you become a member of Mennonite Life, you benefit and so does the broader community.

**To join us or renew your membership, visit**

<https://mennonitelife.org/get-involved/become-a-member/>.

### **Mennonite Life**

2215 Millstream Road  
Lancaster, PA 17602-1499

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