

the Mirror

Volume 57, Number 1 • February 2025

Mennonite Life • mennonitelife.org

Fifty Faith-Filled Years

On Easter Sunday 1948, Baptist pastor Hart Baldwin of St. Petersburg, Florida greeted a group of eager visitors beneath the columns of “Moses’ Tabernacle in the Wilderness.” The product of a careful five-year building project, the tabernacle was a full-scale replica of the one described in Exodus 25–31. Wearing a 20-pound robe, Pastor Baldwin invited the crowd to consider the significance of the tabernacle in the wilderness, both to ancient Israel and to people of faith today.

In 1959, First Mennonite Church of St. Petersburg, Florida purchased the tabernacle. A variety of Mennonite workers continued giving tours. The church sold the tabernacle to the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities in 1970, hoping that Lancaster, Pennsylvania’s recent uptick in tourism would invite a wider variety of visitors.



A postcard advertises the tabernacle's first location in St. Petersburg, Florida

The fully refurbished tabernacle opened in Lancaster on May 4, 1975. Over the past fifty years the Mennonite Life Visitors Center has welcomed guests from around the world. While the experience has continued to grow and develop—now a multimedia experience available in English, Spanish, and Chinese, with Korean to come this year—its mission to tell the story of journeying with God has stayed the same.

We hope you'll join us this spring as we celebrate a rich 50-year history, looking back and forward.



Books!

We're a year-round source for book-lovers! Get ready for your next year of research and reading.

► 2025 Rare & Used Book Auctions:

- Friday, March 14
- Friday, July 11
- Friday, November 14

► 2025 Bookworm Frolic

Thursday, September 11 through
Saturday, September 13

Year-round you'll find an ever-changing selection of used books at Mennonite Life.

50th Anniversary

Community Celebration of the Biblical Tabernacle Experience

Saturday, May 10
9:30 am – 4:30 pm

At the Mennonite Life
Visitors Center

We Have a Place for You!

Our volunteers are a vibrant part of our community, helping us serve our guests and share local stories. Whatever your passions, skills, hobbies, and experience, we'd love for you to join us.



Explore History & Lead Tours

Bring history to life at the **1719 Museum**. You can volunteer as a gardener and tend 18th-century crops in our kitchen garden and Indigenous three sisters garden, or as a tour guide, leading engaging tours of the Lancaster Longhouse and Herr House. You can help create unforgettable experiences at our special events.



Guide Guests Through the Tabernacle

Join a great team at the **Visitors Center** welcoming guests to Lancaster County and guiding families, school groups, and church groups through the Biblical Tabernacle Experience. Answer questions about the area's Amish and Mennonite communities.

Support Visitor Research & Catalog Artifacts

Make history hands-on and interactive! At the **Library & Archives** you can catalog archival materials and help guests with research questions. The **Collections** department offers a variety of ways to engage with artifacts, including photography and scanning, managing inventory, and research.



Work Together & Find Community

Find your place volunteering at Mennonite Life at events throughout the year, such as the **Bookworm Frolic**, **Maize & Snitz Fest**, and our **Rare & Used Book Auctions**.



Ready to Get Involved? Reach Out to Us!

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New Online Research Options

► View Artifacts Online

The Mennonite Life collections catalog is online! Our staff and volunteers have been hard at work getting information ready for you to explore. The new format has something for everyone, whether you are a seasoned researcher or a beginner. You'll find new photograph catalog records, genealogical research papers, and items from our object collection, all available to the public for the first time. View information about more than 1,500 pieces of Mennonite art and handiwork, as well as over 450 images. Pincushions, fraktur, quilts, and samplers are among the featured items.

Collections staff and volunteers continue to catalog more artifacts, information, and images. Small updates happen every week, so be sure to check in regularly.

Access the catalog at: mennonitelife.org/research

Collections Catalog



► Online Exhibit: Pincushions



Explore our first online exhibit at: mennonitelife.org/learn

Delve into the world of Amish and Mennonite pincushions, exploring the beauty and creativity beyond their utilitarian purpose.

The interactive online exhibit includes close-up photos and detailed information about several dozen pincushions in the Mennonite Life collection, as well as a recorded presentation from Curator Emily Immel.

Online Catalog Featured Artifact

This year Mennonite Life joins our global community in celebrating the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism. We'll be highlighting objects and stories from our own collections and archives, showing how small pieces of history are woven into the fabric of a centuries-long narrative.

The enduring spirit of Anabaptism can be found in sturdy wooden furniture, delicate needlework samplers, and—in the case of Ralph Palmer—handmade plywood signs. In 1947, after rheumatic fever and a coma instilled in him a renewed calling to serve, Palmer started walking the streets of Newport News, Virginia handing out gospel tracts. At one point, he was distributing more than 600,000 tracts annually.

Palmer took his mission to the roadsides in the early 1950s and began producing distinctive wooden signs—simple pieces with insistent messaging. Christ died for our sins. Prepare to meet thy God. Believe the Gospel. The local project grew into an international ministry, with over 200,000 pieces shipped across the United States and Canada. The striking signs became a hallmark of evangelical Mennonite history, carrying their message far and wide.

Mennonite Life has accepted several pieces donated from local collector Don Ziegler.

You can view more of Ralph Palmer's signs in the new online collection by searching "Ralph Palmer" (including quotes) in the keyword search.



Pennsylvania Dutch Conversations



Begin March 18, 6:30 pm
Community Room

Tabernacle Kit Workshop



March 22, 3:00 pm
Visitors Center

Author Talk: Shirley Showalter



April 10, 7:00 pm
Garden Spot Village Chapel



Mennonite Life

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Research Your Congregation's History

As we anticipate a year of celebrating the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism, we invite you to bring questions about your congregation's history to Mennonite Life. Our library and archives contain decades of church records, photos, and periodicals, and our staff and volunteers are ready to help you start or continue your storytelling journey.

Mennonite Life thanks these generous business sponsors:

