



# Mennonite Life



**Two campuses**

**Annual budget: approx. \$1 million**

**Staff: 20 FT & PT**

**Volunteers: approx. 65 annually**

**Membership: 825 households  
(62% in Pennsylvania)**



**Over 35,000 books in research library**

**Over 1,300 archival collections and  
thousands of museum artifacts**

**1719 Herr House listed on  
the National Register of Historic Places**

***The Mirror* newsletter published 3x/year  
*Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 4x/year**



## MENNONITE LIFE LOCATIONS

### **Mennonite Life Campus** 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA

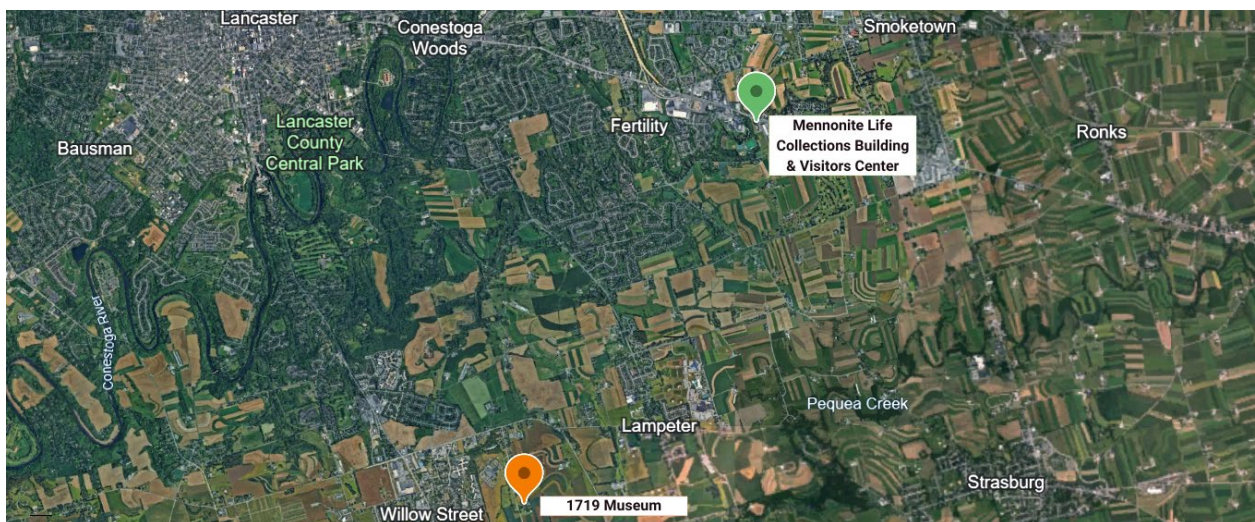
Consists of two side-by-side buildings that serve the public by offering a range of experiences. The **Collections** building hosts an internationally recognized archives and library, an artifacts collection including a museum gallery exhibit, and retail focused on Lancaster Mennonite history and local history and art. The **Visitors Center** building features a movie about Mennonites and Amish, the Biblical Tabernacle Experience, and a retail featuring Christian books and bibles, as well as fair-trade artisan made items from Ten Thousand Villages.

The audiences who engage with each building are typically different, though we've had some success in bridging the gap and interesting visitors in what else Mennonite Life has to offer (another goal from our strategic marketing plan). *By far*, the Visitors Center, and the Biblical Tabernacle Experience specifically, draw the most visitors to our campuses at approximately 20,000 last year.

### **1719 Museum** 1849 Hans Herr Dr, Willow Street, PA

This museum serves approximately 2,500 people annually. The 1719 home built for Christian and Anna Herr and their seven children is the central gem of the museum. In 2013, the organization built a replica of an Indigenous longhouse, with the collaboration of a key Native partner organization, Circle Legacy. The 1719 Museum visitor experience offers the unique opportunity for learning stories of early America through the lenses and interactions of Indigenous people, Conestoga-Susquehannock, Shawnee, Lenape, and other tribes, and Swiss German Mennonite immigrants.

From April through October, the museum is open to walk-in and online pre-reserved guests on Fridays and Saturdays. Other weekdays accommodate school groups for field trips. The 1719 Museum trains and relies on a group of 15-20 volunteer tour guides to assist with historic interpretation.



## OUR VISION, MISSION, & CORE VALUES

### VISION

Our vision is diverse communities connecting across boundaries by knowing and valuing their own and each other's stories of life, faith, cultures, and histories.

#### Vision Illumination

- We understand ourselves to be conservers of the historical and ongoing stories of diverse Anabaptists with connections to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.
  - We understand ourselves to be learners, actively pursuing new information and mutually beneficial relationships across boundaries.
  - We understand ourselves to be communicators, interpreting Lancaster Anabaptist-connected stories for interested audiences.
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### MISSION

Our mission is to hold, honor, and share items and stories featuring the lived experiences and faith values of Lancaster Mennonites and interrelated communities.

#### Mission Illumination

- We recognize and value cultural diversity within Lancaster Mennonite-connected communities.
  - We recognize and value important relationships with interrelated communities, especially, but not limited to, those with Native American partners and African American partners.
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### CORE VALUES

- **Education:** We encourage exploration of diverse, Mennonite-related historical backgrounds, cultures, stories.
- **Preservation:** We keep and care for documents and artifacts.
- **Accessibility:** We proactively make our collections and educational experiences broadly available.
- **Intentional Health:** We nurture personal and organizational health, living with integrity and accountability.
- **Relationships:** We seek to be connected and to connect others.
- **Faith:** As communities we seek to follow Christ in daily life.



## **SHARED EMPHASES IN OUR STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **A dynamic place for Mennonite and Anabaptist stories**

As a recognized collecting and educational organization, Mennonite Life is committed to welcoming, preserving, and providing public access to historically significant materials related to a variety of Anabaptist and interrelated communities. We find ways, in the flow of our planning and work, to inspire, document, and share stories and information that serves Mennonite and other communities, now and in the future.

### **Collections stewardship**

In order to properly manage our holdings for users today and for generations to come, Mennonite Life prioritizes responsible collecting, preservation, appropriate collections housing facilities, and community access. Coordinated and forward-thinking stewardship across all artifact, library, and archival collections enables us to offer robust access and be seen as a vibrant and growing information hub.

### **Working across traditional boundaries**

Mennonite Life prioritizes strategies and resources that bridge a variety of diverse perspectives and deepen intergenerational dialogue. By doing so, we add new levels of discovery to our work and to our visitors' experiences. As a learning organization, we seek to learn from partners who have been overlooked as rich resources of talent and insight in the past.

### **Belonging for people of every background and ability**

Mennonite Life is committed to a conscious, sustained effort to instill the values of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion throughout the fabric of the organization. Anabaptists believe everyone has something to contribute, and, as such, the organization is committed to taking thoughtful and decisive action to create conditions in which everyone feels they can engage as full and valued participants in Mennonite Life's vision and mission.

### **Strategic partnerships and collaborations**

Creative, intentional partnerships and collaborations are essential to leveraging Mennonite Life's opportunities and addressing its challenges. We cultivate strategic partnerships with educational and cultural institutions, as well as with local governments and community-based groups. Innovative partnerships add value and diversity to Mennonite Life's public programming as well as inform our internal thinking and practices.

### **Organizational Excellence**

We hold ourselves to high standards of effectiveness in everything we do. Intentions matter, and measurable results matter most.

## **BRIEF ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY**

Mennonite Life began in 1958 as the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Historical Society with a focus on preserving and collecting archival and library materials related to the Lancaster Mennonite Conference and its congregations. Its mission expanded to include Lancaster-area Mennonites, their geographic spread, and the Atlantic Coast Conference of the Mennonite Church. To reflect that change, the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Historical Society was shortened to “Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society” (LMHS).

LMHS further expanded its mission in 1969 when the organization purchased the historic property containing what was then known as the Hans Herr House. In 1971, the house was added to the National Register of Historic Places. To reflect the ambiguity of who built and lived in the house, the name was officially changed to the “1719 Herr House.” Until 2017, the Herr House was under the management of a special administrative committee before it eventually entered the care of the LMHS Board of Directors. In 2013, the Lancaster Longhouse was built. To reflect this change, the name of the organization changed in 2021 from the 1719 Herr House and Lancaster Longhouse to the 1719 Museum.

For years, LMHS worked alongside the Mennonite Information Center, a ministry to tourists under the supervision of Eastern Mennonite Missions. The Mennonite Information Center, also founded in 1958, initially shared a building with LMHS before moving to its own building next door. In 1975, the Information Center acquired the Biblical Tabernacle replica, and it became part of the Information Center’s programming. In 2016 a special committee was formed to explore common missions, purposes, and governance of LMHS, the 1719 Herr House and Lancaster Longhouse, and the Mennonite Information Center. Two years later, LMHS developed a vision and mission statement affirming that the three organizations would operate as one body.

In October 2021, the organization rebranded as Mennonite Life. The building formerly known as the Historical Society came to be known as the Collections Building, the Information Center became the Mennonite Life Visitors Center, and the 1719 Herr House and Lancaster Longhouse became the 1719 Museum.

Mennonite Life’s rebrand addressed a number of issues that had been identified a decade or more before the 2021 rebrand. The goals were to freshen the brand and significantly improve communication to connect with newer generations; create names and logos that would play well in digital spaces; make clear that we are an organization open to all (“society” had come to mean closed and for history buffs only) and that we value and actively engage Mennonite cultures; and to improve both simplicity and accuracy in naming certain parts of what we offer the world.