



Sponsor Handbook

Welcome to MennoCon19!

Thank you for registering for MennoCon19. We are looking forward to seeing you and your group in Kansas City, July 2-6! You have so much to look forward to: worship, squads, seminars, servant projects, recreation and so many other activities we have planned for you. As you prepare for convention, this handbook contains information you will need to make MennoCon19 a meaningful experience for your youth group.

For our morning and evening worship, the Scripture text will be John 20:19-22 when Jesus appears to the disciples in a locked room after his resurrection. As we observe how Jesus offers peace, confers the Holy Spirit and sends out his disciples, we will put ourselves in the room with the disciples and consider our response to Jesus' invitation. Morning worship will be followed by "squads," where youth will gather for participating in fun competitions, making new friends and talking with the worship speaker.

This handbook is divided into three sections: pre-convention, convention week and post-convention. **The pre-convention section** offers information you need as you prepare to head to Kansas City. Background information about convention gives you a better idea of why we gather. Information about registration, hotels and the airport shuttle are included.

The second section, **convention week**, will cover helpful details for the actual week in Kansas City. It includes important information regarding the schedule, convention center, worship services, special evening events and programming for all ages.

The final **post-convention section** includes a group reflection process designed to help you debrief your experience together. Taking the time for reflection, gratitude and debriefing the significant learning experiences of your group at MennoCon19 will solidify relationships, deepen bonds and form lasting memories.

We know coming to a Mennonite convention takes time, energy and commitment, and we thank you for investing in the lives of your youth. These churchwide experiences are often rich faith formation experiences for youth to see themselves, the church and God in new ways — experiences that will last a lifetime!

Whether you've been bringing youth groups to convention for years or if this is your first time, we hope that this handbook assists you in planning and knowing what to expect at MennoCon19. We wish you a calm and grace-filled convention week, but we also know that no matter how well any of us plan, things will go the way they go! So, don't worry if something doesn't go as intended. Be assured that there are many people at convention who are happy to assist you. In the meantime, check out the convention website (convention.mennoniteusa.org) for detailed information; join the Mennonite Church USA convention Facebook page (www.facebook.com/MCUSA.Convention) for up-to-date announcements; and stay on top of the latest convention happenings with Twitter (@MCUSAConvention). The convention staff emails are also listed in Appendix A for specific questions.

With prayers and gratitude for all that God has in store for us at MennoCon19,

Scott Hartman, Director of Event Planning
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Sarah Chase, Convention Services Coordinator



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Section One: Pre-Convention

This section contains materials that will help orient you and your group to the Mennonite Church USA convention. It contains information regarding the purpose of convention, introduction to worship and information to help you register and prepare your group to travel to Kansas City.

Mennonite Church USA convention purpose statement

The purpose of the biennial Mennonite Church USA Convention is to empower the church to achieve its vision, purpose and mission.

Key objectives

1. To gather representatives of the whole church for worship, fellowship, learning, discernment and decision making.
2. To build Mennonite Church USA vision, identity and capacity to join God's mission in the world.
3. To worship Jesus as the center of our faith; to embody community as the center of our lives; and to embrace reconciliation as the center of our work.
4. To share the biblical story through an Anabaptist lens.
5. To provide resources to help all participants carry out God's mission.
6. To serve as a witness to the host community where we are gathered.
7. To create an opportunity for all parts of Mennonite Church USA to gather regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.

Key components

The adult gathering and Delegate Assembly will:

1. Encourage congregations to call, empower and bless their delegates to participate in the churchwide process of discernment and ministry.
2. Provide a forum for the members of Mennonite Church USA to hear from and give counsel to Mennonite Church USA agencies and ministries.
3. Create an environment for the Delegate Assembly to function effectively and efficiently on behalf of the church.
4. Welcome and interact with representatives of sister churches.
5. Provide opportunities for discipleship and spiritual growth by nurturing a strong Mennonite identity through an understanding of what it means to live out our faith as Mennonite Anabaptists.

The junior youth and youth gatherings will:

1. Invite youth to make and/or strengthen their commitments to Christ.
2. Nurture a strong Mennonite identity through an understanding of what it means to live out our faith as Mennonite Anabaptists.

The young adult gathering will:

1. Provide opportunities for young adults to gather together and get acquainted with one another.
2. Provide opportunities for Mennonite Church USA leaders to learn from and hear the voices of young adults to help the church in its mission.
3. Provide opportunities for young adults to learn about the ministry opportunities and governance structures in Mennonite Church USA.

The children's gathering will:

Foster safe and age-appropriate activities that encourage spiritual and relational growth, while allowing parents to fully engage in the Mennonite Church USA convention.

Expectations for convention attendees

As planners, we want convention to be safe and enjoyable for all of our attendees, and we are counting on everyone who comes to convention to help make this possible. While we may not always agree with one another, we should always treat each other with respect. In order to make convention as positive an experience as possible for everyone, here are some of our **expectations for all convention attendees:**

- Convention attendees should not engage in language or behavior that threatens the safety or personhood of another convention attendee or community member. This includes racist speech, hate speech, threats, sexual harassment or any behavior that could be understood as threatening. We will not tolerate hate speech or harassment based on sexual or gender identity or directed specifically at LGBTQ participants. If you are a victim of language or behaviors like this, please come to the convention office immediately to report the offense.
- Blocking of hallways, fire exits and points of egress is prohibited at all times. Gatherings that in any way violate fire code regulations will be dispersed.
- No literature (fliers, brochures, handouts, books, etc.) may be passed out beyond the exhibit hall area. Seminar and workshop leaders can distribute handouts as necessary during their sessions.
- No promotional materials may be hung on convention center walls without the written approval of Mennonite Church USA convention planning staff. This includes posters, postcards, pictures, etc.
- Disagreements should be resolved peacefully. Trained mediators will be available onsite who will help to facilitate, should conversations become heated. In any and all disagreements, we ask that you treat your conversation partners with the respect they deserve as a beloved child of God.
- Respect the instructions of convention planning staff and volunteers onsite. We are there to serve you and to help make convention a good experience for everyone in attendance. If you have a disagreement or complaint about the behavior of staff or a volunteer, please come to the convention planning office to report it.



Scripture Passage John 20:19-22

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Frequently asked questions: answered!

Q. Where can I get resources and information about MennoCon19?

A: The best way to stay up-to-date with the latest convention news is to check out the convention website and social media. As you prepare for Kansas City, you will find all the information you need on our web site: convention.mennoniteusa.org. New resources and information are being added every week. The block schedule, seminar list and special events are listed on the site. We also regularly highlight information on our Facebook page (www.Facebook.com/MCUSA.convention). Be sure to “Like” this page so you don’t miss out on the latest news! Download the convention app to stay on top of all the happenings in Kansas City. Search the App Store or Google Play for “MennoCon.” You can also follow us on Twitter: @MCUSAConvention.

Q: Tell me more about servant projects. What can I expect?

A: When you registered for convention, you also registered for a servant project, unless you opted out. You will receive a confirmation email in early June with information about your assignment. The confirmation email will tell you which day you are assigned to serve, what agency will host you and any special clothing requirements.

When you arrive at convention, **you will need to check in at the servant project office**, located in room 2211. There you will receive information about any changes that may have occurred since you received your confirmation email and the location for servant project orientation. **If your servant project is on Tuesday morning**, check in at the servant project office between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. on Monday and be in your orientation room by 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday. **If your servant project is on Tuesday afternoon**, check in at the servant project office between 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. and be in your orientation room by 12:30 p.m. **If you are scheduled to serve Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday**, check in at the servant project office no later than the day before you are scheduled to serve. On the day of your servant project, be in your orientation room by 12:30 p.m.

Servant project orientations are an important time to set the tone for your service experience. You will also meet your group leader there. Your group leader will get you on the right bus, to the right agency, and connected with your local hosts when you arrive at your service location. The group leader will also make sure you get back to the convention center on time.

If you are a sponsor whose children will be part of the children's activities, you will likely need to find someone else to drop your child off at their afternoon programming. The children's program takes a break for lunch, and your servant project orientation will overlap with this break.

Q: Will there be any offerings during the worship services?

A: Yes! We will have two worship services where an offering will be received to support ministries of Mennonite Church USA. These offerings will support peace church planting in MC USA and the Peace Academic Center (formerly Hopi Mission School). More information will be included in the program book.

Q: I have a youth with special needs. What resources are available to us?

A: MennoCon19 planners want to make convention as accessible as possible. Anabaptist Disabilities Network is partnering with MennoCon19 planners to offer accessibility options to make all attendees feel welcome and able to participate. They have arranged for volunteers to provide spoken language and sign language interpretation services. Spanish interpretation will be provided during worship and delegate sessions. ASL interpretation and/or English-based signed transliteration will be available upon request.

Please make requests for interpretation in advance. If you did not indicate the need for interpretation when you registered, we will do our best to accommodate last-minute requests, but we cannot guarantee that volunteers will be available at any one time.

Q: What is Step Up? Can my youth participate?

A: At MennoCon19 we are again offering youth representatives ages 16-21 an opportunity to participate in the delegate sessions. The goal of “[Step Up](#)” is to prepare and launch young people into future involvement as denominational delegates and church leaders who are involved with the broader church. One change this convention is that delegates will vote to approve an amendment to the bylaws that would add youth delegates, making these youth representatives official delegates.



Each congregation may select one representative. Each conference and constituency group is invited to nominate two youth representatives. Check with your conference leadership to nominate a youth.

If you have questions or suggestions regarding the Step Up program, [visit the Step Up info sheet](#) or contact Brook Musselman at brookm@atlanticcoastconference.net.

Registration

A link to the registration system can be found on the [Mennonite Church USA convention website](#). If you have any questions regarding the process, call Sarah Chase at 614-370-1120 or email her at sarahc@mennoniteusa.org.

Medical release forms: Medical release forms should be completed for anyone under the age of 18 attending MennoCon19. Forms should be completed and uploaded to the registration forms by May 15, 2019. You can access the form at this link: [MennoCon19 Medical Release Form](#). If you need any assistance with this, please contact Sarah Chase at sarahc@mennoniteusa.org. While these are needed for the overall convention, sponsors have the responsibility to keep track of these for their groups.

Meals: For MennoCon19, we have arranged catering from Brancato's Catering. Lunch on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday is included in everyone's registration. Meals will be served at the convention center in Hall C. You will enter that hall through the Exhibit Hall (Hall D). Dinners were available on your registration for an additional fee. If you didn't include those when you first registered but would like to add them, please contact Sarah Chase, sarahc@mennoniteusa.org, and she will add them to your registration(s).

Freebies included in registration: If you registered by April 30, your registration includes a free convention t-shirt, and the first 2,000 registrants had the opportunity to sign up for a free copy of *Voices Together* when it is available.

Final payments: Make final payments by **June 7, 2019**. You can check your balance by logging in to your registration account. For credit card payments, access your account and submit payment. Send checks to Mennonite Church USA, Attn: Registrar, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 1, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Housing

It is recommended that you **call your hotel a week prior to arrival** to confirm your reservations. Do not call further in advance because the hotels will not have your reservations until that time. When you confirm your rooms, you can provide final information about who will be staying in each room. You can also make any special requests (all our rooms on the same floor, all your rooms on lower floors, etc.).

Hotel phone numbers:

Crowne Plaza	816-474-6664	Sheraton	816-841-1000
Marriott	816-421-6800	Westin	816-474-4400

Arrival Information

Ground transportation: Several ground transportation options are available for those flying into the Kansas City International Airport. We are only listing two options here:

- **Super Shuttle:** This is a shared ride service that provides door-to-door transportation. You will be picked up at the airport and dropped off at your hotel. Reservations may be made directly on their website, www.SuperShuttle.com. Enter the discount code F6QJE to receive a discount on your round-trip reservation.
- **Public Transportation:** RideKC operates to and from KCI daily. For routes, schedules and additional information please visit their website, rideKC.org, or contact RideKC directly at 816-221-0660.

Hotel check-in: The check-in time for all the hotels is 3:00 p.m.

Registration pick-up: Convention registration will be open Tues., July 2, from 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. To avoid congestion in the registration area, send a few sponsors (not your entire youth group) to pick up your materials. Find the registration area in 2200 Lobby. Registration materials will be available under your congregation's name.

Top 20 tips and tricks

We want you to feel prepared and equipped for your week at convention! Below are a few suggestions from leaders who have “been around the convention block” with some wisdom that might help you to prepare.

1. **Read** the sponsor handbook—check!
2. **At the airport:** Travel in “travel teams,” where one adult travels with 3-5 kids and is responsible for getting them from the starting point all the way to the hotel lobby. This makes getting taxis/shuttles and moving through airports so much easier and removes the need to keep a large group together. Pick up a couple headphone splitters. They are great for letting youth share music and killing time while waiting at an airport.
3. **Make sure everyone fills out the medical release and contact info form.** Hopefully you have uploaded medical release forms to the registration system for each youth under the age of 18. If you haven't done that, please be sure to do that as quickly as possible. We encourage you to keep a copy in your hotel room, file a copy with your church secretary AND take a picture of each one on your phone. If there's an emergency, no matter where you are, you have the info at your fingertips.
4. **Ear plugs** are helpful for some adults in worship.
5. **Talk positively** about your youth group. At gatherings like this, it seems very tempting to talk with other sponsors about your youth, and this can often turn into “gripe sessions.” It is most helpful to remain positive and to name things about your group that are affirming.
6. **Make sure you have time for yourself.** Build in some space for quiet and alone time. The Prayer Room is available all week long for just this sort of thing!
7. **Find some time to chat one-on-one** with your youth throughout the week. This can be tough sometimes, but well worth the effort. This is one of the only ways to hear how everyone is really doing.
8. **Don't skip small group time!** If your group is very large, sometimes it can be difficult for youth to be honest and participate. It is much easier to be vulnerable in a small group.

Groups of four to five work well. Make the time meaningful by emphasizing or discussing some key things from the messages.

9. **Be vulnerable** with your youth throughout the week, as much as you feel able and is appropriate. Sharing your feelings with them may empower them to share their feelings.
10. **As much as possible, show your youth you trust them.** If you are always setting up rules to stay ahead of all possible problems or infractions, you and your youth will be miserable! Instead show them your trust and often they respond in kind. Obviously, this is not always the case and some things need to be dealt with firmly. But, in general, remember that love for your youth trumps all rules!
11. **Include large group-building times throughout week.** This is important not only for group dynamics, but to deepen connections, build trust, and share faith with one another.
12. **Be clear about your expectations** for number of seminars to attend, worship participation, meal attendance, etc. Decide ahead of time what to do as a group and what to do individually. It can be fun to go to the Recreation Hall as a group or decide to go to a workshop or two together, while also giving enough freedom to explore individual interests. Always be sure to give a chance to come back together afterward so youth can share about their experiences.
13. **Find another youth group ahead of time** and plan to get to know them at convention. Use [The Gathering Place](#) Facebook page to help make these connections. This can build bridges across Mennonite Church USA, among urban and rural congregations, between people who grew up Mennonites and people who are newer to the church, etc.
14. **Invite members of your congregation to be prayer partners** for the youth and adults who will attend convention. Invite those at home to be in prayer throughout the week for their assigned person. Have them write them a note or card to be opened at convention. Provide cards for the youth to write to their partner at the end of the week. Not only is prayer essential to a successful convention experience, it also keeps those at home and at convention mindful of one another!
15. **Be the adult.** Don't be afraid to send kids to their rooms for bedtime. That is your job. Be proactive and specific about your expectations for hotel conduct.
16. **Fringe youth.** Do you have youth that are sometimes on the fringes of group activities? Talk about it. Don't expect them to blend in or have a positive experience without good communication on your part. Facilitate time for shared experiences, find out what interests them and encourage it.
17. **Food.** Youth love to eat! Kansas City is full of great restaurants. Consider building costs for snacks into your budget. Consider providing an easy snack, such as granola bars. This can encourage healthy eating and spending, and also provide a chance to check in as a group.
18. **Write a covenant together before you come to convention.** Include expectations for travel, participation, dress code, electronics and how people treat one another. Include consequences when expectations are not met. Ask parents, youth and sponsors to sign the covenant before convention. Email ScottH@MennoniteUSA.org to request samples.
19. **Your hotel concierge is a great source of information** about restaurants and businesses in the area. They can tell you where the closest pharmacy or coffee shop is.
20. **Have fun!** Don't forget to have fun as a group.

Section Two: Convention Week

Welcome to convention week! All your planning and attention to details has gotten you to Kansas City. We hope this week is filled with meaningful experiences.

General information

App: For schedules, maps, speaker information and much more **download our convention app**. Search for “MennoCon” in the App Store or Google Play. This is the best way to stay up-to-date with any room and schedule changes.

Accessibility services: Spanish interpretation will be provided during worship and delegate sessions. ASL interpretation and/or English-based signed transliteration will be available upon request. If you did not indicate the need for interpretation when you registered, we will do our best to accommodate last-minute requests, but we cannot guarantee that volunteers will be available at any one time.

Exhibit Hall: Visit the exhibits of Mennonite Church USA agencies, schools and other Mennonite-related organizations in the Exhibit Hall. The Exhibit Hall will be the place to gather with your friends and check out what’s happening with all our churchwide organizations. A list of exhibitors and the floor plan will be posted inside the entrance to Hall D.

Exhibit Hall Hours:

Tuesday, 9 - 11 p.m.

Wednesday, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.; 4 - 7 p.m.; 9 - 11 p.m.

Thursday, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.; 4 - 7 p.m.; 9 - 11 p.m.

Friday, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.; 4 - 7 p.m.

First aid: The first aid room is located in the hallway just outside Exhibit Hall D. Hired first aid staff will be available during normal daytime/evening hours. For a medical emergency, summon help by phoning the security operations center at 816-513-5111 or contacting event security. Report the emergency, giving location, if possible, and other details. House security will call 911. Stay with the injured/ill person until house security arrives. House security will coordinate the arrival of the Kansas City Fire Department and will also guide emergency medical staff to the location of the injured person. The Kansas City Convention Center is equipped with a sufficient number of first aid stations. Event and house security guards are trained and equipped as first responders to medical emergencies and can provide minor first aid. House security guards are certified in administering the automatic external defibrillator.

Parking: If you are commuting to the convention center each day and looking for available parking, there is a garage named the “Auditorium Garage” close to the convention center in the Barney Allis Plaza that will offer the event rate of \$12/day.

Prayer team: Prayer is a vital part of the convention week. Many hours of prayer have been devoted to preparing for this week, and prayer will continue to surround you during the week of convention.

MennoCon19 will have a prayer team with members actively engaged in prayer throughout convention.

Availability: Prayer team members are available to pray with you or your youth, for anointing or counseling following worship services or at other times. If you need a private space to pray or meet with a prayer team member, visit the Prayer Tent outside the worship hall.

Recreation: The Rec Hall is located in Exhibit Hall B. Pickle ball, corn hole, and gaga ball will be available this year! There will also be volleyball and basketball courts, ping-pong, four square, giant Jenga, soccer games, badminton, table games, and an area for younger children. For a complete listing of activities and specific event times, go to the recreation info table in the Rec Hall.

- When you check out a ball, ping-pong paddle or other equipment, be prepared to leave an item as “ransom” until you return the equipment. For example: your cell phone, ID, watch or meal ticket.
- We will hold lost and found items at the info table for the day. At closing each night, we will take all items to lost and found at the information booth.

Recreation Hours:

Tuesday, 9 - 11 p.m.

Wednesday, 12 - 7 p.m. & 9 - 11 p.m.

Thursday, 12 - 11 p.m.

Friday, 12 - 7 p.m.

Servant projects: When you arrive at convention, **you will need to check-in at the servant project office**, located in room 2211. There you will receive information about any changes that may have occurred since you received your confirmation email and location for servant project orientation. **If your servant project is on Tuesday morning**, check in at the servant project office between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. on Monday and be in your orientation room by 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday. **If your servant project is on Tuesday afternoon**, check in at the servant project office between 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. and be in your orientation room by 12:30 p.m. **If you are scheduled to serve Wednesday, Thursday or Friday**, check in at the servant project office no later than the day before you are scheduled to serve. On the day of your servant project, be in your orientation room by 12:30 p.m.

Servant project orientations are an important time to set the tone for your service experience. You will also meet your group leader there. Your group leader will get you on the right bus, to the right agency, and connected with your local hosts when you arrive at your service location. The group leader will also make sure you get back to the convention center on time.

If you are a sponsor whose children will be part of the children’s activities, you may need to find alternative child care at the end of lunch on the day of your servant project. The children’s program takes a break for lunch, and your servant project orientation will overlap with this break. Please be sure that you identify someone to drop off your children at the appropriate time.

Convention & Program Schedules

You can look over the schedule for the week here: [Convention Schedule](#).

The convention schedule is packed full of events for everyone, from worship to delegate sessions to equipping seminars, from special events to receptions to exhibits. Come ready to stay busy and leave inspired and better equipped for your ministry.

Young Adults

We are excited for the growing number of young adults actively participating in convention! Young adults will appreciate intergenerational worship, a great variety of relevant seminars, and many opportunities for learning and networking over meals, at special events and in the Exhibit Hall. We have planned three gatherings specifically for (self-identified) young adults. On Tuesday evening, there will be an opportunity to gather for networking, including an overview of convention week. On Wednesday evening, we have invited MC USA denominational leaders to meet with young adults to talk together about our church. On Thursday evening, there will be an informal social outing.

Youth

Youth will be able to experience a wide variety of activities while at convention. High school youth can expect to have many options to enhance their time at convention. This can be a very meaningful experience for youth to further their walk with Christ, while also meeting and fellowshiping with other youth from the country.

In addition to worship, seminars, servant projects, special events, Recreation Hall, Exhibit Hall, meals, etc., we have two new convention practices: squads and a personal journal.

Squads: This is a new element exclusively for the high school youth! Squads will meet at 8:15 a.m. and again at 1:30 p.m. each day, offering a wide variety of activities for youth to participate in. These will include exciting challenges, group competitions, random acts of kindness, eating together and building relationships with others outside of their normal circle of friends. Part of squad time will be dedicated to digging deeper and continuing discussion from the worship services, reflecting and praying together. Youth will not want to miss squads! Detailed information will be sent closer to convention.

Journal: Another new feature just for youth (and sponsors) this convention is a journal. Each youth and sponsor will get a journal and pen at registration. The intent is to give youth an opportunity to journal about the worship services and seminars they attend. It gives them a place to make notes they can look back on when they get home. Questions will be provided for each worship service, as well as space for additional notes. This journal provides a unique way for youth to remember what they learned when they return home.

Junior Youth

Junior youth activities will take place in Room 2215C on the main level at the convention center. Junior Youth activities will run from Wednesday to Saturday and will have programming planned by a committee that includes Scott Litwiller, Marcos Acosta, AJ Delgadillo, Asia Frye and Abigail Kaser.

The junior youth program will include a variety of activities. The group will meet each morning and spend the day together from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Junior youth will worship with everyone else each morning and evening. The group will travel together and sit together during the morning worship service, as well as have lunch together. During the day, they will dig deeper into Scripture, spend time in small groups, participate in a variety of activities, participate in a servant project, and spend time in both the Rec Hall and Exhibit Hall. During the evening worship services, the junior youth are encouraged to sit with their sponsors and/or parents. Special activities are planned for them throughout the week, including a scavenger hunt. The junior youth participants will have great opportunities to spend time with other junior youth from across the denomination as they grow in their walk with Christ.

Children

Children's program activities will take place in 1501 on the lower level at the convention center. Children's activities will run from Tuesday to Saturday and have been planned by Renee Reimer with help from others.

Programming will be available for all age groups, starting with drop off in the mornings between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. Parents will need to pick up their children by 11:45 a.m. for lunch and can bring them back at 1:15 p.m. for afternoon programming. Regular programming will end at 5 p.m. each day. Infant and toddler care is available in the evenings and should be registered prior to coming to convention. Limited space will be available onsite.

The children's program at MennoCon19 is sure to be one that engages the mind and body as children will be active in their own convention experience. Children can expect to engage in biblical storytelling, music-making, community-building, creation-making and partaking in recreation activities of all sorts. Children will also have an opportunity to do their own service project in Kansas City and take a special field trip around the city.

We have designated Show Office 2501B (just outside the worship hall) as a space for nursing mothers.

Worship

For many youth groups, worship is the highlight of the convention experience. Throughout the convention week, there will be seven worship services. Services will include singing, praying, compelling speakers, scripture, drama and more.

The diverse crowd of Mennonites from across the nation coming together is a wonderful representation of the body of Christ gathering. In preparation for worship, it might be helpful to talk with your youth about the fact that convention worship might feel unique—it's not necessarily like the worship at your home congregation, and it is not supposed to be. Invite your youth to be open and hospitable, even if parts of the service might seem different to them, or if they prefer another mode of music. Remind them that our church is home to diverse people and that the purpose of our worship gathering is to please God, not ourselves. The worship planning committee has been crafting these worship services for over a year, and it is our prayer that each of you will encounter God in a transformational way.

This year, we have the opportunity for intergenerational worship at every worship service. Your approach to this change as youth sponsors will set the tone for the youth in your group. Encourage them (and yourselves!) to have open minds and hearts for this. We have planned worship with the needs and desires of youth in mind, and we don't think you will notice much difference in the worship style from past conventions and this one. In recent years, there has been less and less difference between the worship styles in adult and youth worship services. Also, the leader of the worship band, Seth Crissman, led worship for the youth at Orlando 2017. How you frame this change with your youth will have a big impact on how they experience it. And one more thing—don't forget your inflatables and beach balls!

Worship Schedule: Each worship service will deepen our understanding of our scripture passage of John 20:19-22, and we trust that God will be present! We are thrilled to have Seth Crissman and band leading music again. We are also blessed to have Chris Cox, Madalyn Metzger and Vikki Pruitt-Sorrells serving as worship leaders for our services.

Here are the themes and speakers for each worship service. See our [convention website](#) for more information about the worship leaders and speakers. Discussion questions for each worship service will be included in the app.

Tuesday evening, July 2, 2019

Title: *God Invites Us*

Speaker: Worship Leaders

Wednesday morning, July 3, 2019

Title: *They Were Afraid*

Speaker: Dustin Galyon

Wednesday evening, July 3, 2019

Title: *Peace Be With You*

Speaker: Sue Park-Hur

Thursday morning, July 4, 2019

Title: *They Saw the Lord*

Speaker: Storytellers

Friday morning, July 5, 2019

Title: *He Breathed on Them*

Speaker: Meghan Good

Friday evening, July 5, 2019

Title: *Receive the Holy Spirit*

Speaker: Leonard Dow

Saturday morning, July 6, 2019

Title: *I Also Send You*

Speaker: Glen Guyton

A few notes regarding logistics:

The worship hall for this convention is in the Grand Ballroom on the second level of the convention center. Youth are often eager to get into the worship hall, and while this enthusiasm is welcome, it can also be dangerous. Doors have been ripped off and people have been injured in the past. In 2015, we used a seating system where we rotated seating in the various sections of the worship hall. We received a lot of positive feedback with this seating plan. We will be using a seating system again for worship. Please talk with your youth about appropriate behavior for getting into the worship space. Encourage patience, respect and generosity.

Although generally speaking, the use of cell phones in church/worship is not recommended, there will be a few times in the youth worship services where the worship leaders might ask the youth/leaders to use their phones to interact together in an online poll/text comments that will be shared during worship on the large screen. We do this not to distract from the worship experience, but to enrich and engage the congregation.

Seminars

We have been able to schedule many different seminars on a variety of topics. The [final seminar lists are available on our website](#) and include many specifically for youth. The list will also be included in the program book and on the mobile app.

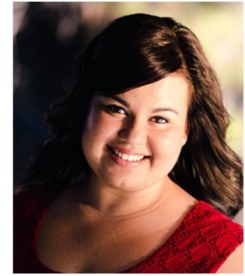
Consider encouraging your youth to go to an agreed-upon number of seminars before the week starts. This can let them know what is expected of them and also give them some freedom to choose the ones they want to attend. There will be a total of ten seminar slots for youth.

Featured Speaker for Sponsors

We're pleased to bring you a special speaker from Fuller Youth Institute, Jennifer Guerra Aldana, director of Multicultural Initiatives, who will provide two seminars. You won't want to miss *Growing Young: 6 Core Commitments Needed to Engage with Young People*, which gives practical strategies to help

young people love their church. Many of our youth groups include youth from different countries or ethnic groups. If this describes your group, don't miss her practical tips on how to understand difference and aim to include everyone.

Jennifer Guerra Aldana serves as a pastor at La Fuente Ministries, a bilingual, intercultural ministry of Pasadena First Church of the Nazarene. Her passions include leadership training, intercultural youth spiritual formation and bilingual ministries.



Here are descriptions of Jen's seminars for sponsors, pastors and parents:

Growing Young: 6 Core Commitments Needed to Engage with Young People

(She will present this seminar in English on Friday, July 5 at 2:45 p.m. and in Spanish on Thursday, July 4 at 4 p.m.) Churches are losing both members and vitality as increasing numbers of young people disengage. Based on groundbreaking research with over 250 of the nation's leading congregations, *Growing Young* provides a strategy any church can use to involve and retain teenagers and young adults. It profiles innovative churches that are engaging 15- to 29-year-olds and as a result are growing--spiritually, emotionally, missionally, and numerically. Packed with both research and practical ideas, *Growing Young* shows pastors and ministry leaders how to position their churches to engage younger generations in a way that breathes vitality, life, and energy into the *whole* church.

Bicultural Youth Ministry: Breaking Down Stereotypes and Building Bridges (Friday morning at 8 a.m.)

Young people from different ethnocultural backgrounds have often been overlooked or lumped into stereotypes that have come to define a generation. This workshop will explore the complex realities that different ethnocultural young people inhabit, as well as practical suggestions to engage, listen and serve with diverse young people in the pursuit of God's reconciling justice among all communities.

Sponsor Seminars

Here is the complete list of seminars prepared especially for sponsors. You are, of course, free to attend any of the seminars prepared for youth and adults. However, these are designed especially to resource youth sponsors (and pastors and parents!) on topics relevant to relating to youth today.

Anxiety and Depression: Understand, Support, Renew Karla Roth, presenter

Jesus' disciples were tasked with building a community of believers, and a large part of their ministry was encouraging oppressed people to change to new ways of thinking and living. How do we encourage youth who are overwhelmed by worries, failures and hopelessness? In this seminar, we will gain insight and understanding about anxiety and depression as experienced by youth. We will identify changes in behaviors, what to listen to and look for indicating anxiety and depression. We'll learn ways to coach, encourage, support and help youth to transform fear and despair into truth by renewing the mind.

Best practices for youth leaders Isaac Landis & Dwight Regier, presenters

Come to this seminar with your questions and suggestions on the best resources to share with other youth leaders. Dwight Regier and Isaac Landis will help facilitate a conversation and share their ideas and experiences. We anticipate covering a wide range of topics, including curriculum, service projects, youth leadership initiatives, worship, etc.

Games that Matter Eric Frey Martin & Kelly Frey Martin, presenters

Do you find it hard to come up with activities for youth group meetings? Are the only people having fun during your activities those who are outgoing or athletic? In this seminar, we will focus on creating games and activities that seek to include everyone despite their level of extroversion and physical capability. We will look at some techniques and guiding principles to create fun and inclusive atmospheres and activities and spend a majority of our time playing and having fun as a way to learn activities and facilitation practices.

I Finally Wanna Be Alive: Teen Suicide and Support JE Misz, presenter

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for teenagers in the U.S., and this is affecting our schools, churches and youth groups. This seminar will use music, poetry and clinical insights to address common mental health myths, the

unique strengths and challenges of today's adolescents and tools for youth and youth sponsors to address adolescent anxiety, depression and suicide.

Reimagining Adolescence Chris Schaffner, presenter

Kids growing up today are living in a world that is fundamentally different than the one their parents grew up in. This poses challenges to even the most adept adult. In this workshop, you will discover the systemic cultural changes that are creating a whole new developmental experience for our kids as they attempt to find out their true identity and place of belonging. Join us as we explore the developmental and spiritual challenges of raising adolescents in contemporary society.

R-Rated Scripture and Youth Ministry Sarah & Benjamin Bixler, presenters

You'd think twice about showing a rated R movie to your youth group, but would you think twice about encouraging them to read their Bible? Whether passages about violence against women, rejection of ethnic groups, or explicit sexual material, there are texts the church may want to restrict for faith formation. But should it do so? This seminar will guide youth sponsors in wrestling with troubling texts that are often ignored in the church, yet they remain part of the biblical story. Sponsors will gain tools for understanding some of these passages in their original context, and consider how to respond when youth raise questions about them.

The Impact of Pornography on the Developing Adolescent Brain Chris Schaffner, presenter

Exploring the impact that pornography has on culture and the individual. Pornography changes the brain and how we experience sex. Compulsive and obsessive consumption of pornography is wrecking the lives of young people everywhere, and they are oblivious to it. This workshop provides details on how pornography impacts brain development and our ability to connect with people the way God intended.

Special Events & Activities

Here is a listing of some of our events and activities. Please check [the convention website](#) for more updated and detailed information.

Special Events:

- Tuesday, July 2
 - Hymn Sing
 - Exhibit Hall Grand Opening
- Wednesday, July 3
 - Family Fun Event
 - Menno Night of Music
 - Faith Formation Leaders Gathering
- Thursday, July 4
 - Team Trivia Night
 - Mennonite Concerto
 - Hymn Sing
- Friday, July 5
 - Improv Night

Activities: Several activities have been planned to help enjoy your week at convention!

- *Zumba:* 7:30 a.m., Join others in the Rec Hall to start your day by getting your blood flowing. Zumba will be led by Jill Schlabach, certified instructor.
- *Prayer:* There will be a prayer tent available in the Grand Ballroom lobby area. Prayers will be led by a variety of volunteers in a different style each day. Stop by the tent to find the schedule.

- *Menno Puzzle Crawl*: There will be a self-led puzzle crawl with fun Mennonite facts inside the convention center. See the program book for more information.

Free Night Possible Activities: If your group is looking for ideas for the free night on Thursday evening, here are some links with local options.

- [Things to do in Kansas City](#)
- [Fun things to do with kids in Kansas City](#)
- [First Timers Guide to Kansas City](#)
- **Fireworks:** If your group is interested in seeing the July 4 fireworks on Thursday night, we have been told that the biggest fireworks display will be in Berkley Riverfront Park, located in the River Market area. You can also view the fireworks from Barney Allis Plaza (the green space by the convention center), as well as from the WWI Memorial across from Union Station on both sides of the Stateline from the plaza terrace. If you are interested in more information, please visit kcriverfest.com.

Community Life

MennoCon19 has recruited several volunteers to serve as connectors between youth groups and the hotels. If you have issues that arise during your stay, feel free to reach out to our Community Life coordinator.

In case of emergency: Call Bryce Short, Community Life Coordinator. 309-208-3155

As you anticipate coming to convention, take some time as a youth group (perhaps invite parents to participate as well) to process how you will “live together” for the week. We encourage youth groups to develop a covenant together. This agreement could cover areas such as technology use, meeting times, seminar expectations, curfew, meals, etc. It should also include clear consequences, should the covenant not be upheld. Consider having youth leaders, youth, and parents sign the covenant for MennoCon19. Sample covenants are available from convention planners. Email ScottH@MennoniteUSA.org.

Section Three: Post-Convention

Evaluations: Evaluations will be done electronically. Watch for a link to the evaluation form in your email. Please complete the form as soon as possible. A link will also be placed on our website. The convention app will include surveys for various seminars and worship services. Your responses can help make the next convention even better.

Videos: Speaker videos will be available for download following convention. More information will be given in the program book and on our website.

Wrap-up: A resource on post-convention reflection and thoughts for helping you and your youth navigate “re-entry” after convention is included in Appendix A. You are encouraged to use this with your youth group after returning home.

**We look forward to seeing you in Cincinnati in 2021!
Mark the dates on your calendar now: July 6-10, 2021.**

Appendix A

Upon re-entry: Some post-convention thoughts for the youth leader

by Emily Peck-McClain

We often think of retreats or conventions as time to get away from our daily lives and focus on our relationship with God. This is true. But our daily lives never really leave us. When our youth come to weeks like this one, although they are physically in a different place than they are when they are at home, they cannot get away from themselves. In some way, the challenges, struggles, tasks, and celebrations of daily life come with them even though their daily life at this convention will be much different than daily life at home.

Your youth have probably been asked while here to think about the things in their lives that get in the way of their relationship with God. They may have been asked to symbolically leave something behind as they prepare to return home and live life differently from the way they lived before. Conventions often spark a spiritual “high,” where we feel close to God and leave the week ready to change the world.

As your group considers their return to daily life after this weekend away, the question changes a bit. Not: “What are you leaving behind?” Instead, have them consider: “What are you taking with you?” This weekend has provided community, celebration, worship, depth of experience of the Holy, spiritual friendship, humor, and fun. As youth return home, many return to families who are fighting; their own struggles with things like drinking, drugs, or other kinds of self-harm; tense relationships; and feelings of desperation or stagnation. Waiting for them on the other side of this convention are real-life challenges that a weekend like this doesn’t rescue them from, but rather prepares them for.

Ask yourself:

- What are my youth struggling with in their daily experiences and in their faith journeys?
- How can the community we have formed this week be a resource of strength and support for them going forward?
- How can God help me to be an adult in their lives who will confront their challenges with them?
- How can I connect with other youth leaders that I have met to support me in my ongoing commitment to the flourishing of these young people in my care?

Upon re-entry: MennoCon19 reflections for youth

Take some time to talk about what the experience of convention meant to the youth, individually and as a group. You may use the following questions as guides, or let the conversation move wherever there is the most energy.

1. What did you learn about yourself during convention? Your youth group? The wider church?
2. What experiences are going to stick with you? Are there things that you think you'll remember five years from now?
3. What stories would you tell to communicate your experience at MennoCon19?
4. What surprised you the most about convention?
5. Who was your favorite speaker, and what was the thing that stuck out the most about what they said?
6. What was the most challenging thing about the week of convention? How did you grow because of this experience?
7. What will you bring back with you from convention, in a spiritual sense?
8. What was your favorite seminar? What was the topic and why was it important to you?
9. What was your favorite part of the worship services?
10. Which of the Exhibit Hall booths were most interesting to you and why?
11. If your group went on a servant project, what did you learn from this experience? Would there be ways of engaging in similar work in your own town?
12. What did you learn about what it means to be part of Mennonite Church USA?
13. What did you learn about Kansas City?
14. How would you explain convention to someone who has never gone and is asking you why they should?

Worship Gatherings

1. What struck you most vividly from the story of Jesus' last encounter with the disciples?
2. Did you identify fears that you can release to Jesus?
3. What did you learn about the peace of Christ?
4. In what ways did you sense the breath of the Holy Spirit?
5. How do you think differently about the movement of the Spirit?
6. To what or whom is Christ sending you now?

Blessing

As you leave convention and return home, may the peace of Christ, the joy of the Lord and the breath of the Holy Spirit be with you. May you release your fears to Jesus. May you receive the Holy Spirit. May you go into the world as a sign of God's great and steadfast love. Amen.

Appendix B

Meet the Convention Planning staff!

The convention planning team is hard at work, collaborating with leaders and church members all across the country, to help ensure that MennoCon19 is a meaningful and formative event. We are all available to speak with you, and we are easily accessible by e-mail should you ever have a question or concern.



Scott Hartman, Director of Event Planning

Scott has been helping plan the church wide convention for over 20 years. He works closely with contracts, schedules, exhibits, recreation and the many logistics that make convention a success. He loves seeing all the parts fall into place as the convention week unfolds.

ScottH@MennoniteUSA.org, MC USA Elkhart office

Phone direct: 574-523-3049, (toll free) 1-866-866-2872, ext. 23049



Sarah Chase, Convention Services Coordinator

Sarah loves God and loves people. She especially enjoys bringing the two together and loves planning for convention! Sarah also wrangles three lively kids and a husband who serves as a pastor.

SarahC@MennoniteUSA.org, Plain City, Ohio

Phone direct: 913-961-3149, (toll free) 1-866-866-2872, ext. 34256



**Shana Peachey Boshart,
Denominational Minister for Faith Formation**

Shana has attended convention most of her adult life and has volunteered there in many capacities, most notably as a youth sponsor, member of several planning committees and co-founder of several programs that introduce youth and young adults to the delegate sessions. She looks forward to this first convention on staff, and especially to seeing youth and sponsors worshipping, learning, growing and having fun together.

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