

MENNO CON23

Sponsor Handbook

Welcome to MennoCon23!

We are looking forward to seeing you and your group in Kansas City, July 3-6! We are so excited that you are planning to attend! We continue to plan all your favorite parts as usual --worship, seminars, recreation.



We know you want to make the convention experience meaningful for your group. In this handbook, you will find information specific to leaders of youth groups so you can take full advantage of all the opportunities for spiritual growth and relational connection. You'll also find lots of relevant info on the [convention website](#).

There are three sections in this handbook: pre-convention, convention week and post-convention. The **pre-convention section** offers information you need as you prepare to head to Kansas City. We share the purpose of convention, expectations for participants, and how to plan logistics like meals, lodging and transportation. We end this section with a list of tips and tricks for helping your group get the most out of convention.

The second section, **convention week**, will cover helpful details for the actual week in Kansas City. It includes important information regarding the program, schedule and convention center.

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 MennoCon23 will solidify relationships, deepen bonds and form lasting memories.

We know coming to MennoCon23 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 MennoCon23. 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! 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](#) for detailed information and join the Mennonite Church USA Facebook page for up-to-date announcements.

With prayers and gratitude for all that God has in store for us at MennoCon23,

Your MennoCon23 Planning Team

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Section One: Pre-Convention

Convention Purpose Statement

The purpose of convention is to gather Mennonite Church USA for community, worship, and faith formation.

Expectations for Convention Attendees

As planners, we want convention to be safe and enjoyable for all 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. 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.

Worship Theme

The MennoCon23 worship committee has created six worship services that progress along the theme, Be Transformed. We begin Monday evening with an overview of Be Transformed. Tuesday morning we hear about fear and failure in transformation; Tuesday evening is focused on healing transformation. Wednesday morning is focused on mutual transformation; Thursday morning we learn about generational transformation; Thursday evening, we end with communities of transformation.

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 MennoCon23. Forms should be completed and uploaded to the registration forms before arriving. You can access the form at this link: [MennoCon23 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: Breakfast is on your own. There will be an area at the convention center (the Kitch) that has grab and go type food (muffins, yogurt, warm breakfast sandwiches, juice, coffee, drinks, etc.) available for purchase. There will also be a coffee vendor there with drinks for purchase as well. Lunch will be served in the dining hall (Exhibit Hall D). Lunch is included for everyone who registered (July 4-6 for MennoCon23 and July 7 for those attending the Youth and Young Adult Climate Summit). To help with traffic flow we will ask adults to proceed to lunch right after worship while youth groups spend time in their small groups before going to lunch. There will be plenty of food and we promise getting there later won't mean we have run out! Dinners are on your own. There are numerous restaurants in the area. Please stop by the information booth for some suggestions.

The Kitch will be open from 8am-2pm will have snacks, drinks, ice cream, etc. available for purchase.

Final payments: Make final payments by **before arriving to convention**. 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, 718 N. Main Street, Newton, KS 67114. If you have not paid prior to arriving at convention, please see Sarah Chase in the convention office.

Stay in the know

The best way to stay up-to-date with the latest convention news is with the MennoCon23 mobile app. Use it to get announcements, schedules, maps, speaker information and much more. The app will be available by the end of June. Changes to room locations and schedule will be shared via the app.

As you prepare for convention, you will find all the information you need on our web site: convention.mennoniteusa.org. The schedule, seminar list and worship speakers are listed here. During convention, be sure to “like” the [Mennonite Church USA Facebook page](#) to see posts from convention.

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:

- Marriott Kansas City Downtown
816-421-6800
- Crowne Plaza Kansas City Downtown
816-474-6664

Arrival Information

Ground transportation: A variety of [ground transportation options](#) are available to get you from the airport to your hotel including rental cars, taxicab service, and rideshare services (Lyft and Uber). [RideKC](#) provides free bus service from the airport to the downtown area (not directly to your hotel). [Use this link](#) for SuperShuttle or enter code KHC6Y for a 5% discount. Allow approximately 25 minutes to get to your hotel.

There is a [free streetcar](#) around the downtown area.

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

Hotel parking: The Marriott (\$28/day) and Crowne Plaza (\$25/day) have self-parking. There are also [several parking garages](#) in the downtown area.

Registration pick-up: Convention registration will be open Monday, July 3, from 12:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in the 2200 Lobby of the Kansas City Convention Center. To avoid congestion in the registration area, send a few sponsors (not your entire youth group) to pick up your materials. 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.
3. **Make sure everyone fills out the medical release 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 and the Quiet/Sensory 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. 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! You'll have good restaurant options in Kansas City. 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.
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

Check our [Convention website](#) or the MennoCon23 mobile app (available by late June) for details and specifics on events and information.

Convention Schedule

The schedule for the week will be in the Program Book, which will be printed and made available to each attendee at convention. The Program Book will also be available on the [convention website](#). The schedule will also be in the MennoCon23 mobile app.

Worship

For many youth groups, worship is the highlight of the convention experience. There will be six worship services during convention week—beginning Monday evening through Thursday evening (no service Wednesday evening). Services will include singing, praying, scripture, compelling speakers, video and more.

The diverse crowd of Mennonites from across the nation coming together is a wonderful representation of the body of Christ. In preparation for worship, it might be helpful to talk with your youth about the fact that convention worship is 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.

Special Worship Components:

Anointing/Blessing

On Tuesday evening you will have a chance to come forward to receive a blessing or prayer of healing. As part of the Christian healing tradition, we will be anointing those that come forward with oil. A small amount of oil will be placed on the forehead (if you do not wish to be anointed with oil you are free to say, no oil please.). We all have times in our lives that we need that extra encouragement and words of hope in our lives. We welcome you to come up front after the sermon and allow yourself to be ministered to by our community of faith.

Communion

“We believe that the Lord’s Supper is a sign by which the church thankfully remembers the new covenant which Jesus established by his death.” *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* Article 12 The Lord’s Supper. As we gather as a church for MennoCon23, it is important for us to remember the new covenant which Jesus established by his death by observing the Lord’s supper during worship on Thursday morning.

We also understand that each congregation observes the Lord’s supper differently – both theologically and practically. Theologically, some congregations practice closed communion, meaning only baptized believers in Jesus are allowed to participate. Other congregations welcome anyone to the Lord’s table, trusting they are responding to Jesus’ invitation. Due to the diversity of practice, we ask each youth group to prepare their students to participate in ways that are consistent with the beliefs in your home congregation.

Practically, some congregations pass the bread and cup through the pews, others have people come forward, some dip the bread in the cup, others practice the Lord’s supper in the context of a full meal. There are a variety of ways to practice the Lord’s supper. What all of these ways have in common is Jesus is the center.

“The Lord’s Supper points to Jesus Christ, whose body was given for us and whose shed blood established the new covenant. In sharing the bread and cup, each believer remembers the death of Jesus and God’s act of deliverance in raising Jesus from the dead. As we relive this event with a common meal, we give thanks for all God’s acts of deliverance in the past and present, for the forgiveness of sins, and for God’s continuing grace in our lives.” CoF, Article 12

To aid in your preparation, at MennoCon23, we will observe communion by partaking of pre-packaged, gluten free individual communion elements. Anyone wishing to participate will pick up an element on the way into the worship service.

Deacons are present at every service and can answer any questions your group may have prior to the service.

Worship Schedule: Each worship service will deepen our understanding of our theme, Be Transformed. We trust that God will be glorified and that the presence of the Spirit will be evident. We are pleased to have Onan Alvarez and band leading music. We are also blessed to have Ana Alicia Hinojosa and Jeff Hochstetler serving as worship leaders for our services.

Below are the themes and speakers for each worship service, along with discussion questions based on each message. See our [convention website](#) for more information about the worship leaders and speakers.

A transforming wall will be an interactive piece in the lobby outside of the worship space. You will hear more about this at the first worship service, but all will be encouraged to respond and interact with the wall. Encourage your youth to participate in this, either on their own time, or as part of your youth group time.

Monday, July 3

Evening Worship Theme: Be Transformed

Speaker: Nelson Okanya

Discussion questions:

- What does transformation mean to you?
- Where have you seen transformation?
- Where do you want transformation in your life?

Tuesday, July 4

Morning Worship Theme: Fear and Failure in Transformation

Speaker: Brian Moll

Discussion questions:

- Describe a time when a change wasn't for the best.
- Do you like change?
- What makes change hard?

Evening Worship Theme: Healing Transformation (service includes time for anointing/blessing)

Speaker: Iris de Leon Hartshorn

Discussion questions:

- What strongholds do you have in your life?
- What do you do with problems you can't solve on your own?
- Is there something in your life you are ready to let go and allow God's healing power work through you?
- Where have you seen healing in your own life (spiritual, emotional, physically) that changed (transformed) you in a positive way?
- Did you choose to go for anointing? If so, was it meaningful to you? Why or why not?

Wednesday, July 5

Morning Worship Theme: Mutual Transformation

Speaker: Dianne Garcia

Discussion questions:

- Can you think of a time in your own life when you changed your opinion of someone? What allowed that change to happen? How did that change in opinion affect your life? Their life?
- Can you think of a situation when someone refused to compromise on their beliefs and boundaries? What was the cost to them? To their community?

- In allowing self-transformation so that we can participate in community transformation, where is the line between standing up for what we believe in and participating in the loving openness that leads to transformation? Are those two things mutually exclusive?
- What are ways that we can receive the courage to step across lines of difference and be in community with people who are different than us?
- Who is God inviting you to be in relationship with?
- Is it possible to be a Christian without being part of a community? Why or why not?

Thursday, July 6

Morning Worship Theme: Generational Transformation (service includes a time for communion)

Speakers: Panel – Kaleidoscope of Generations

Discussion questions:

- What are some stereotypes that you feel people have about your generations?
- Who is a person from another generation that has influenced you, in your faith formation?
- What was formational in your church experience during your childhood?
- How have you seen the Holy Spirit working in the church during your lifetime?
- How have you seen the church change during your lifetime?
- How do you think the church will change over the next generation?
- What are the challenges of a multi-generational church?
- What has been your experience working with or interacting with different generations?
- How do we decide what keep and let go of from generation to generation?

Evening Worship Theme: Communities of Transformation

Speaker: Jon Carlson

Discussion questions:

- Why do you think it's so hard to recognize when we're wrong about something?
- Have you encountered differences not just in *what* we know but in *how* we know? How did you respond?
- How have you experienced transformation by being part of this youth group? What do you think about differently because of the relationships we have with each other?
- Is our youth group one that expects conformity? Or are we open to differences? Are there some form of difference that should be off limits?
- What could we do to make it easier to express ourselves in youth group, even when others disagree?
- Would you describe our group as being "us against the world," "us understanding the world," "us experiencing transformation with the world," or something else? Why?
- How is your church community transforming your larger community?
- How is your church community different from the culture you live in?

Guided Conversation Rooms

Worship builds our community. This is an opportunity to gather with other youth to reflect on the worship services in facilitated large groups. Our guided conversation room will allow convention-goers to ask questions, reflect and engage in dialogue related to the worship topics of the day. This is a great opportunity for youth to mingle with youth from other youth groups. Encourage your youth group to split up and sit in small groups of 2 or 3 at different tables.

This guided conversation will be facilitated by Jeff Hochstetler and Lesley Francisco McClendon

Youth Small Groups

Small group time is your time to connect with your group. It's your opportunity to find out what they are hearing in Bible study or worship and guide them to deeper understanding. You know your group—carry forward your best practices from youth group back home, whether that's encouraging conversation in dyads or triads, journaling, drawing, singing—whatever works for your group. Here's where you find out how they're experiencing and responding to what they are learning and help them process for deeper spiritual growth.

Do this together at 12:00 pm after the morning worship service and again in the evening. Some groups like to meet immediately after evening worship in the convention center; other groups gather in the hotel just before curfew. Do what fits your group's habits.

There will be space/rooms specifically reserved for youth groups to meet in. Check the maps and program book for specific location once you arrive.

Leading Small Groups

Here are some tips for leading small group time.

1. Begin by asking, "Name one thing that stood out to you."
2. Ask, "Why do you think that got your attention?"
3. Listen carefully to their answers and *listen for signs of growth or resistance to change*. Think in terms of the major objectives of Christian formation such as image of God, understanding the Bible, following Jesus, or deepening relationship with God.
4. Then ask clarifying questions around those objectives. For example:

"Does that idea challenge your ...?"

"Are you considering a new way to think about...?"

"How might this change your...?"

“What does that mean for your...?”

...image of God

...understanding of the Bible

...sense of what it means to follow Jesus

...desire to grow closer to God

5. Ask, what is difficult/energizing/worrisome/exciting about that?
6. Assure your youth that questions, discomfort, excitement, confusion, etc., are all part of growing in maturity as Christians. Affirm the signs of growth that you see and let them know you are cheering them on as they grow in faith.
7. End your small group time by praying for them as individuals, for your group, your congregation and the broader church.

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 and some that are intergenerational. The list will also be included in the printed Program Book and on the MennoCon23 mobile app.

Consider encouraging your youth to go to an agreed-upon number of seminars before the week starts (ideally one in each time slot!). 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 six seminar slots for youth.

Prayer Room and Quiet/Sensory Room

The prayer room will offer a variety of opportunities for individual and group prayer throughout convention. Come alone, to pray on your own; bring a friend or group, to join in prayer together; or join a prayer team member during staffed hours.

The Quiet/Sensory Room will be open at various times throughout the week, if you need a quiet place to reflect, pray or rest. There will be sensory aids, such as fidgets and weighted blankets, as well as coloring and prayer stations.

Recreation and Exhibit Area

The Recreation Hall is located in Exhibit Hall C and will be open for a few hours in the middle of the day and also in the evenings after worship. Giant checkers, cornhole and gaga ball will be offered. There will also be volleyball and basketball, pingpong, four square, giant Jenga, soccer games, badminton, tabletop games and more.

Visit the Exhibit Area of MC USA agencies, schools and other Mennonite-related organizations in the 2300 Lobby. The exhibit area will be the place to gather with your friends and check out what's happening with all our church-wide organizations. Look for swag and interactive displays.

Special Events

Can't Tell Us Nothing – Tuesday, July 4 at 9pm

This is an improv comedy group based in Houston, Texas. They have performed at numerous improv comedy festivals around the United States and headlined improv comedy shows in New York, New York, and Los Angeles, California. They won the Contest4Improv4Humans in 2018. Can't Tell Us Nothing utilizes audience discussions and opinions to inspire comedic characters and scenes in their fast-paced shows. Come ready for a lot of laughter and audience participation!

Ryan and Friends – Thursday, July 6 at 9pm

Ryan Bomgardner is a full-time ventriloquist and comedian. Each year, he performs over 150 shows throughout North America. Bomgardner's performances range from corporate events, theatres, and resorts to churches, cruises, TV appearances, and a headlining performance for the Walt Disney Company. Bomgardner's show has taken him to six continents, all while making people laugh. Laughter is guaranteed for everyone!

Free Evening

Wednesday evening after 4:45pm is a free evening.

One option you can reserve ahead of time is a trip to [Worlds of Fun/Oceans of Fun](#).

Worlds of Fun/Oceans of Fun is an amusement park with 100 thrill rides, roller coasters, family rides, and attractions open until 10pm. The connected water park features 40 water slides and is open until 7pm. Buses depart Kansas City Convention Center at 4:00pm. One \$20 ticket price for all ages includes bus transportation.

Add on an optional meal voucher for supper at the park for \$16. This includes an entrée, side item, and drink at numerous locations throughout the park. Options include things like burgers, bbq, pizza, burritos, salad, sandwiches, etc. You can also purchase items at the park directly without the meal voucher.

Tickets must be pre-purchased by May 31 through your online MennoCon23 Registration. You can add all tickets for your group onto 1 person's registration. Edit your registration to do this. Contact Sarah Chase (sarahc@mennoniteusa.org) with any questions.

There are plenty of other options of things to do around Kansas City as well. Many of them are free [Learn more](#). There will also be discounted tickets available for the Spider Man Exhibit at [Union Station](#).

Covenant

As you anticipate coming to convention, take some time as a youth group—and 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 MennoCon23. Sample covenants are included at the end of this document.

Section Three: Post-Convention

Evaluations

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 MennoCon23 mobile app will include surveys for various seminars and worship services. Your responses can help make the next convention even better.

Videos

By late August, speaker videos will be available for download at the [convention website](#).

Wrap-up

You are encouraged to use the next two sections, “Upon Re-Entry,” with your youth group after returning home.

Upon Re-entry:

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: 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 MennoCon23?
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 Area booths were most interesting to you and why?

11. What did you learn about what it means to be part of Mennonite Church USA?
12. What did you learn about Kansas City?
13. How would you explain convention to someone who has never gone and is asking you why they should?

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

Sample 1

Youth Group Covenant for MennoCon23

We agree to follow the guidelines as set forth below:

1. Attend all worship sessions and small group gatherings.
2. Meet and sit together for worship sessions.
3. Attend a minimum of 5 seminars.
4. Agree to turn off and put away **ALL** electronic devices during worship sessions, small group and seminars.
5. Obey the established meeting and curfew times. When meeting as a group, a tardy student will be charged \$1.00 per minute late. If the youth is not present in their room at the time of curfew, they will not receive their next day's snack money.
6. Follow all the convention standards of conduct as listed below:
 1. Abide by the laws set forth by the state of Missouri and the city of Kansas City.
 2. Follow the rules and regulations set forth by the hotel in which we are staying.
 3. Show care and respect for the hotel, convention center and city employees and properties.
 4. Agree not to use or possess any controlled substances or items considered illegal.
7. Depending on the incident and the guidelines broken, a youth may be required to contact their parents/guardians and make immediate arrangements to return home at their parents' expense.
8. Agree to make the most of my convention experience by participating in activities, meeting new people, acting as a positive representative of Mennonite Church USA and having lots of fun!

Youth's Signature

Parent's Signature

Sponsor's Signature

COVENANT for MennoCon23

We agree to follow the guidelines as set forth below:

- ◆ Attend all worship sessions.
- ◆ Attend all small group meetings following worship sessions.
- ◆ Attend a minimum of six seminars.

Check-in times are as follows:

- ◆ Every morning at 10:15 a.m. prior to worship (location will be determined after we arrive in Kansas City)
- ◆ Every night at 11:30 p.m. at the hotel.
- ◆ It is important that you are on time for the check-ins. If you are late, you will be assessed a \$3 fine upon your second occurrence. Thereafter, each occurrence will result in a \$3 fine.

- ◆ All convention rules apply. Any youth that breaks convention rules or engages in activities that are illegal, harmful or dangerous to themselves or others will be returned home at his/her parents' expense.
- ◆ Any additional items:

_____ Youth	_____ Date
_____ Youth	_____ Date
_____ Youth	_____ Date
_____ Youth	_____ Date
_____ Youth	_____ Date
_____ Sponsor	_____ Date

_____ Parent	_____ Date
_____ Parent	_____ Date
_____ Parent	_____ Date
_____ Parent	_____ Date
_____ Parent	_____ Date
_____ Sponsor	_____ Date

MennoCon23 Group Covenant July 3-6, 2023

We, the youth and sponsors of the Anyname Mennonite MYF, commit to the Lord, and to each other our intent to allow the following points to guide our attitudes and conduct while living, serving, worshiping and seeking together. We commit to:

1. Abide by convention guidelines
2. Sit together for worship
3. Attend at least 6 seminars
4. All phones must be turned off & stowed during worshipful times
5. Suck It Up!!
6. Respect those in charge
7. Look for opportunities for Spiritual growth
8. Be open to forming new friendships
9. As appreciation to the congregation, look for ways to bring our experience home
10. No guys in girls rooms or girls in guys rooms without an adult present
11. Pray daily for those in our group
12. Be on time!! (penalties may apply)
13. Be flexible
14. No fireworks
15. Have FUN!!

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