

Mennonites

Some people know Mennonites as “the folks who came into town and helped clean up after the flood that devastated the community.”

Some picture Mennonites as rural folk who wear bonnets and travel in horse-drawn buggies.

But there's much more...

Mennonites have been around for almost 500 years. Early leaders rejected the state church's control over peoples' lives. Mennonite ideas and insistence on separation between church and state are equally important today, when some governments in the global community attempt to suppress the rights of individuals and non-conformist communities.

Today, you won't recognize most Mennonites by how they dress. But you will find vibrant Mennonite congregations scattered throughout rural areas, small towns and large cities across Canada, and throughout the world.

What Mennonites believe

Mennonites believe in Jesus Christ as the One sent by God to bring reconciliation to a broken world, and believe in the Bible as the central source of inspiration for faithful living. Mennonites share essential core beliefs with Christians of Catholic and Protestant communities. We emphasize the connections between faith, words and actions.

We believe baptism should be voluntary and should be accompanied by a lifestyle that reflects the teachings of Jesus. Inside each of us there is a yearning to understand why we are here. Mennonites believe the answer lies in both believing in and following Jesus, and that peace building is an achievable way of life. Mennonites seek to live out Jesus' teachings by being active members of church communities who live out their beliefs in the community at large.

We believe that peace and wholeness are real possibilities. It's how God intends us to live here and now. We use the tools God has given us as we strive for wholeness through our faith in Jesus Christ. Living as peace builders when war comes is not easy because many in our society believe it is foolish to refuse to defend oneself and one's country in the face of aggression.

Walking the talk

Mennonites have become increasingly recognized as leaders in conflict resolution—even on an international scale. Mennonites have been involved in helping differing groups or factions talk to each other in places like East Africa, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and Latin America. Mennonites were also involved in some of the early developments in victim-offender reconciliation organizations in Canada and the United States, and the promotion of restorative justice as a way of responding to criminal and antisocial behaviour.

Mennonites are a global people

In North America and Europe, the majority of Mennonites have been white, rural and middle class—but that's rapidly changing. We are increasingly multicultural; many congregations worship in languages other than English. In the global Mennonite family people from the global south (Asia, Africa, Latin America) now comprise the majority. In Canada, we worship in more than 15 different languages. Our emphasis on being a caring community is a positive response to the indifference of a powerful North American culture of consumerism and ongoing violence.

Mennonites seek community

Mennonites recognize the value in organizing as a wider community of Christians connected through the support of local faith communities. Worshipping together and studying the Bible to hear what God is saying to the church today are very important. We believe the church is called to share the news of Jesus, and to offer a glimpse of what God desires for all of humanity. In community, we seek hope in place of despair, healing instead of suffering, and peace rather than conflict.

For more information...

...spend some time at www.mennonitechurch.ca. Be sure to visit the “Links” page for an overview of Mennonite related activities and additional information sources.

...visit www.youtube.mennonitechurch.ca

You are invited...

We believe that the best response to personal doubt and the uncertainty of the world is to invite both friends and strangers to share the burdens and joys of life together in a caring community.

You're always welcome.

Come and visit at the address on the back of this brochure, or go to www.mennonitechurch.ca/directory to find a listing of Mennonite Church Canada congregations across the country.

“True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute and it serves those who harm it. It binds up that which is wounded. It has become all things to all people.

—Menno Simons, 1539



A brief history of Mennonites

1525

The Mennonite Church began during the Reformation in Northern Europe as part of the Anabaptist (re-baptizers) movement. They refused to recognize a church and governmental system that forced people into a particular religion. "True faith," they said, "is voluntary."

1550-1625

Because they were not part of the state churches (Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed), Mennonites were considered dangerous and were severely persecuted for the first several generations.

1683

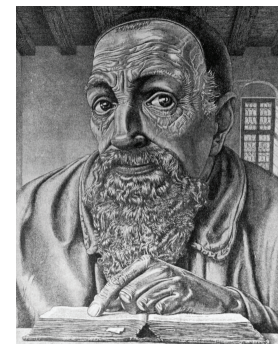
Mennonites first migrated to Pennsylvania at the invitation of William Penn—to live and worship in peace. Subsequent waves of Mennonites came from Germanic regions of Europe and settled in the Great Lakes and Midwest areas of America.

1786

After the American Revolution, Mennonites from Pennsylvania resettled in what is now southern Ontario, in pursuit of peace.

1800s-1900s

Later, groups came from Central and Eastern Europe and Ukraine, settling on the Canadian Prairies and the great plains of the United States.



Menno Simons (1496-1561)

was a Dutch priest who, after becoming an Anabaptist in the 16th century, helped organize and lead scattered groups of reformers. The Mennonite church is named after Simons.

1914-1945

Historically, Mennonites have chosen to live out their ethic of peace. Most Mennonites in Canada refused military service in the First World War citing several provisions in Canadian law for conscientious objection. A few young conscripts were imprisoned for a short time due to technical legal difficulties. During the Second World War, and after lengthy negotiations, a provision for individual conscientious objectors (COs) was created but required some form of alternative service. Almost 11,000 young male COs served in alternative service assignments in mental health hospitals, farms, road construction, fighting forest fires, and other essential services.

1950-2000

Out of the alternative service experience grew a greater awareness of society's needs and a desire to be a creative and positive presence in our culture. Over the past 50 years, thousands of Mennonites have found ways to work as volunteers in community service, disaster cleanup, international development and health-related work.

Today

Though many Mennonites retain deep appreciation and ties to a rural lifestyle, they are also urban and multicultural. They are attuned to society and its needs and committed to carrying forward a vision of Christianity where beliefs and actions are woven together as an expression of a whole faith.



Dirk Willems (died 1569),

was imprisoned for his Anabaptist beliefs. When he escaped across a frozen river, his pursuer broke through the ice. Willems' beliefs led him to rescue the guard from the river. He was among the first of many Anabaptist martyrs.

Vision: Healing & Hope

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

You're invited!

Location/Worship time(s):

Or to find a church visit: www.mennonitechurch.ca/directory



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www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1370

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What makes a MENNONITE



Mennonite Church Canada