

# YOUNG CENTER

## News

THE YOUNG CENTER FOR  
ANABAPTIST AND PIETIST STUDIES  
AT ELIZABETHTOWN COLLEGE



## Brethren World Assembly marks 300 years of Brethren in America

“BRETHREN FAITHFULNESS: PRIORITIES IN PERSPECTIVE” TO BE HELD JULY 26-29, 2023

Registration is now open for the seventh [Brethren World Assembly](#), July 26–29, 2023. Sponsored by the Brethren Encyclopedia Board and held at Elizabethtown College July 26–28 and at the Germantown Church of the Brethren in Philadelphia July 29, the gathering is open to the public.

The assembly marks 300 years of the Brethren in America and the 300th anniversary of the Germantown Church of the Brethren. It also marks the centennial of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN), the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria. The assembly sessions relate to the history and developments of the Brethren in America from 1723 up to the Civil War, with an additional session about EYN.

The gathering opens Wednesday afternoon, and sessions and worship services continue through Friday evening. Buses depart the college on Saturday morning for the concluding celebration at Germantown.

The theme of the assembly is “Brethren Faithfulness: Priorities in Perspective.” After opening devotions on July 26, Dale Stoffer, retired professor and dean of Ashland Theological Seminary (Brethren Church), presents the keynote address, “What Led the Brethren to America?” Denise Kettering Lane, associate professor of Brethren studies at Bethany Theological Seminary (Church of the Brethren), then discusses circumstances surrounding the organization of the Brethren in Germantown in 1723.

The topics on July 27 include developments among the Brethren in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Stephen Longenecker, retired professor of history at



Attendees at the Sixth Brethren World Assembly, held in Indiana in August 2018.  
(Photo by Frank Ramirez / Church of the Brethren)

Bridgewater College, discusses Christopher Sauer II, colonial Brethren minister and printer. Jeff Bach, director emeritus of the Young Center, speaks on the Ephrata division. Samuel Funkhouser, director of the Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and a member of the Old German Baptist Brethren (New Conference) church, and Robert Matthews, an elder in the Old German Baptist Brethren (Original Conference) church, address geographical expansion and the roles of elders and Annual Meeting in the subsequent decades.

The sessions on July 28 include a lecture on the ministry of Alexander Mack Jr. by Jared Burkholder, professor of history at Grace

College and a member of Charis Fellowship (also known as Grace Brethren Fellowship, International). The day also includes two panel discussions. The first panel addresses Brethren attitudes toward slavery. Sheilah Elwardani, adjunct faculty at Virginia Western Community College, presents new research on Brethren and slavery in southern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. Jack Lowe, a retired Church of the Brethren minister, and Jeff Bach will contribute comments to the discussion. The second panel discussion focuses on the significance of ordinances and practices among the Brethren. Members of the assembly’s planning com-

*(continued on page 4)*



## From the Director

In 1899, a group of Church of the Brethren members founded Elizabethtown College as a school that would be guided by Brethren values but open to all. Setting out an educational vision that included commitments to peace, service, and human dignity, they also pledged to admit students of all backgrounds. This mixture of commitment and diversity launched an exchange of ideas among students and faculty, and between campus and community, that continues to this day.

Although Brethren control of the college formally ended in 1993, the values bequeathed by the founders still animate the school's mission of "educate for service," while the college's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies fosters reflection of the implications of those values for our world.

The Young Center is thus delighted to host the Seventh Brethren World Assembly in July 2023, as detailed elsewhere in this issue of *Young Center News*. Eight groups, all stemming from the Radical Pietist movement that began near Schwarzenau, Germany, in 1708, will gather on the Elizabethtown College campus and in Germantown, Pennsylvania, to consider their shared priorities and differing practices, demonstrating the way historic traditions remain sources of dynamic discussion.

Similarly, our 2023 Durnbaugh Lecture and Seminar will focus on differing understandings of political order and the common good. Speakers will consider Anabaptists' role in American civic life and their relationship to the political order, past and present. Such questions, of course, are important to many people and hold the prospect of cultivating conversations that extend well beyond our campus and the traditions on which it has drawn, all of which seems like the sort of vigorous discussion the college's founders hoped to see flourish.

We invite everyone to join us this spring and summer!

Steve Nolt  
Director

## Translation project to be published

A newly completed translation project involving Young Center research associate Edsel Burdge Jr. makes hundreds of primary sources related to eighteenth-century Anabaptist faith, life, and migration available to English-speaking readers, and brings to conclusion a long-running, multivolume research project.

Twenty-five years ago, an ad hoc committee of Amish, Old Order Mennonites, and conservative Mennonites initiated a project to transcribe, translate, edit, and publish documents from the Dutch Mennonite Committee for Foreign Needs that pertained to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Swiss Anabaptists. The original documents are housed in the Amsterdam City Archives.

The committee engaged Mennonite scholar James W. Lowry to select the relevant documents and then transcribe and translate them. Under Lowry's editorship, two volumes were published: *Documents of Brotherly Love: Dutch Mennonite Aid to Swiss Anabaptists, Volume I, 1635-1709* (2007) and *Documents of Brotherly Love: Dutch Mennonite Aid to Swiss Anabaptists, Volume II, 1710-1711* (2015).

After the publication of the second volume, Lowry asked to be released from the project. Burdge of the Young Center and Lydia Penner, retired minister in the Dutch Mennonite Church and a freelance translator, were asked to edit the third and concluding volume, *Documents of Brotherly Love: Dutch Mennonite Aid to Swiss Anabaptists, Volume III (1712-1784)*.

Scheduled for release this spring, the third volume contains 239 primary sources. The first set continues the story of Dutch Mennonite aid to Swiss Anabaptists as the latter faced the hostile political and religious climate in Canton Bern in the eighteenth century. The focus then shifts to the Electoral Palatinate in southern Germany, where successive generations of Swiss refugees were navigating an uncertain toleration due to electoral attempts to increase the Anabaptists' tax burdens constricting their growth. The sources describe the vicissitudes common to all Palatines when their homes were

overrun and pillaged by invading armies, as well as the hardships caused by environmental disasters. Simultaneously, the documents provide windows into the motives and experiences of Swiss and Palatine Anabaptists migrating to and settling in British colonial North America. All these experiences are framed by the persistent commitment of the Dutch Mennonites to assist their fellow Anabaptists in their times of need.

The new volume includes three appendices focusing on the imprisonment of Anabaptists in Bern during the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The first is a *Sendbrief* written by an anonymous Swiss Brother imprisoned in Bern in 1715, exhorting its readers to faithfulness and arguing for freedom of conscience. The second is an account by radical Swiss Pietist Samuel de Treytorrens of his visit to 40 Anabaptists incarcerated in 1715. The third is a twenty-stanza song composed in prison in 1709 by Anabaptist leader Bendicht Brechtbühl.

With texts in the original languages and side-by-side English translation with annotations, this volume provides a broad view of the social, political, and religious values that prevailed in this era. It provides a reliable base for further theological, historical, genealogical, and linguistic interpretation.

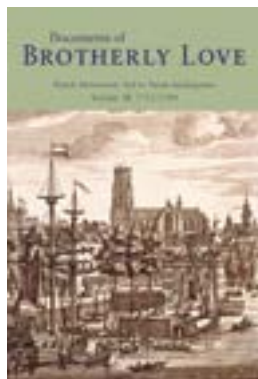
Burdge and Penner, along with historian John L. Ruth, will present a seminar about the archives project on Tuesday, March 28, at 2 p.m. That evening at 7 p.m., Penner discusses the help given by Dutch Mennonites to their fellow believers and the limitations of their generosity. See page 5 for details.

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## Spohn Collection guide available

Fifty-nine rare Ephrata books and pamphlets have been digitized recently and are available online as part of a new Hess Archives and Special Collections guide to the Clarence Spohn Collection of Ephrata materials: <https://libraryguides.etown.edu/spohn>.

In 2019, the Young Center acquired Clarence Spohn's remarkable collection of 195 books, broadsides, and manuscripts, including nearly 70 Ephrata imprints that date from 1745 to 1868, as well as a number of Ephrata artifacts. [The Hess Archives](#) sponsored the digitization, which makes these items freely available for researchers around the world.



# National Resources Conservation Service trainings

The Young Center, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), held two three-day training sessions for NRCS employees in 2022, one in August and one in September.

Titled "Working Effectively with Plain Communities," the trainings presented the demographics, values, cultural characteristics, and decision-making processes of the Amish and other Plain communities. Visits to Amish farms and a Plain farm machinery shop, a panel discussion with Plain farmers, and outreach case studies broadened the educational experience.



## Curtis R. Berry named Durnbaugh Lecturer for 2023

### LECTURE AND SEMINAR TO CONSIDER ANABAPTISTS AND POLITICS

In 1932, reform-minded Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren pastor H. K. Ober ran for state senator, challenging another candidate many saw as representing a corrupt political machine. Ober was then called before his church council and asked to repent of having entered a political campaign, which he did. (He also lost the election, to the disappointment of his supporters.)

Ober's experience represents some of the conflicted claims, commitments, assumptions, and actions that have marked Anabaptists' relationship to politics. Brethren, Mennonites, and Amish have not always agreed on what to make of the political order, disagreement which in turn has sometimes been a source of conflict even within their own circles.

On Tuesday, April 18, at 7:00 p.m., Shippensburg University professor emeritus of political science [Curtis R. Berry](#) will present "Anabaptists and Secular Politics: Reflections on the Shifting Paradigm over Seven Decades." Berry will consider how developments in American politics, including partisanship, polarization, and the rise of talk radio and cable news, have shaped the context in which contemporary Anabaptists engage the political order and think about their place in society.

Berry sees Anabaptists' shifting views of national symbols, such as the American flag,

as revealing. "The flag and reverence of the 'Star Spangled Banner' is striking," Berry notes, "when you consider that earlier many [Anabaptists] sought—and were granted—conscientious objector status under the Selective Service Act of 1948 and subsequent legislation." Berry will consider such signs of possible political acculturation and ask what such developments imply for Anabaptist witness and the church's ability to be salt of the earth, as described in Matthew 5:13.

A professor of political science at Shippensburg University for over thirty years, Berry received his Ph.D. in political science from Syracuse University and has focused on topics including state government, public sector labor law, and healthcare policy. Involved with campus governance committees and in the community, he has also served on numerous boards, including those of Menno Haven Retirement Village and Eastern Mennonite University. He is actively involved in Mercersburg (PA) Mennonite Church.

On Wednesday morning at 10 a.m., the Durnbaugh seminar will continue the conversation with a panel discussion exploring how Anabaptists should assess political issues and opportunities; the connections between local, national, and international policy choices; and the ways in which Anabaptist values might motivate authentic engagement and principled dissent. Additionally, panel-

ists will consider how Anabaptists can talk across lines of political difference, including within their own churches.

Panel members include Curtis Berry; Nathan Hosler, the director of the Church of the Brethren's Office of Peacebuilding and Policy based in Washington, DC, and a pastor of the Washington City Church of the Brethren; Heather Wolf, an experienced political campaign advisor and mentor with the Women's Campaign School at Yale, and active in Lititz (PA) Church of the Brethren; and Nathan Zook, a professor of political science at Montgomery College, Rockville (MD) Campus, and the pastor of Hampden Mennonite Church, a congregation in Baltimore affiliated with Keystone Mennonite Fellowship.

Young Center director Steve Nolt hopes the 2023 Durnbaugh lecture and seminar will encourage thoughtful conversation around Anabaptist values in a time often marked by political polarization.

The Durnbaugh lecture series was established in 1993 to commemorate the scholarship of Don and Hedda Durnbaugh. It brings noted scholars of Anabaptist or Pietist studies to campus annually.

# German journalists visit the Young Center

[RIAS Berlin Commission](#) is a German-American exchange program for broadcast journalists that was created jointly by the U.S. and German governments in 1992 to “keep alive the spirit of the legendary U.S.-backed Radio in American Sector (RIAS) that kept millions in Communist East Ger-

many informed about world and German news and entertained with American music during the Cold War.”

Four times each year, RIAS sends about 60 American journalists to Germany and about 60 German journalists to the United States for one- to three-week fellowships.



Last October, a group of about 40 German journalists, all senior editors, came to the United States for a special one-week program, primarily to learn more about and report on the U.S. midterm elections. After spending about four days in Washington, DC, the group traveled to Pennsylvania .

Their first stop was the Young Center, where they learned about groups in eastern Pennsylvania with German lineage. Emeritus professor Don Kraybill introduced the center’s work and defined Anabaptism and Pietism, and research associate Edsel Burdge Jr. described the different Amish and Mennonite groups in eastern Pennsylvania. Then Kraybill briefly interviewed Amishman Ben Riehl, and Riehl did a Q&A with the journalists about Amish beliefs and practices, including voting.

“The journalists were energized by all the presentations. Typically there were a half dozen hands in the air of people wanting to ask questions,” Kraybill said. “I don’t recall an event where there was such intense interest by the audience. And the journalists had high praise for the Young Center’s program overall.”

RIAS Berlin Commission plans to bring another group of German journalists to the Young Center in March.

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## Brethren World Assembly *(continued from page 1)*

mittee will speak, and Samuel Dali will lead a celebration of the centennial of EYN.

A worship service will conclude each of the first three days of the assembly. On July 26, Dave Guiles, former executive director

of Encompass World Partners and a member of Charis Fellowship (also known as Grace Brethren Fellowship, International) speaks on the topic of faithfulness. On July 27, Samuel Dali (EYN, Church of the Brethren) preaches on the theme of Brethren. And on July 28, Michael Miller, a minister in the Old German Baptist Brethren (New Conference) church, speaks on the theme of priorities.

The final day of the assembly, July 29, will take place in Germantown, where activities begin at 10 a.m. Attendees can learn about the past and present ministry of the Germantown congregation, take tours of the cemetery, and visit the site of the first Brethren baptisms in America at the Wissahickon Creek in Fairmount Park. A worship service will be held at 11 a.m.: Richard Kyerematen, pastor of the Germantown congregation, will preach and Germantown members will provide special music. An afternoon devotional service marks the conclusion of the assembly.

For more information or to register, visit [www.etown.edu/bwa23](http://www.etown.edu/bwa23), call 717-327-8188, or send an email to [bwa23@etown.edu](mailto:bwa23@etown.edu). Register by May 15 to receive a discount.

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## Fifth journal issue

The fifth issue of the [Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities](#), a peer-reviewed Open Access journal published by The Ohio State University Libraries and cosponsored by the Young Center, was released in November. The issue contains articles that highlight geographic diversity—Holmes County populations, northern Indiana populations, and the Michigan circle of churches—as well as seven book reviews.

For access to the journal, visit <https://plainanabaptistjournal.org>.



Dauda Gava, International Scholar in Residence at Bethany Theological Seminary, and professor at Kulp Theological Seminary, presented “Peacemaking Beyond the Boundary: Lessons from EYN” on November 14, at the Young Center. In his talk, Gava discussed how Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN), the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria, held its stand as a peaceful church as it faced crises of leadership, tribalism, and Boko Haram insurgency during the past 15 years.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## LECTURE

Holy Cow: Religion, Race, and Milk in Lancaster County, PA

**RACHEL Z. FELDMAN**

**AYALA FADER**

**Thursday, March 2, 7 p.m.**

**Bucher Meetinghouse**



In the past fifteen years, Lancaster County has increasingly become a thriving hub for Orthodox Jewish tourists seeking out “kosher” leisure activities, including encounters with the Amish tourist industry. The expanding Orthodox Jewish tourist infrastructure has developed in tandem with an unexpected economic collaboration between some ultra-Orthodox Jews and local Amish and Mennonite farmers to produce unpasteurized kosher dairy products. Based on anthropological research with Orthodox Jewish tourists, dairy entrepreneurs, and local Amish/Mennonite farmers, Feldman and Fader show that kosher collaborations around milk in particular offer a lens to think through contemporary American racialized politics and minority religious identities in our post-COVID and post-Trump realities.

[Rachel Feldman](#) is a cultural anthropologist and assistant professor of religious studies/Judaic studies at Franklin and Marshall College. Her book *Messianic Zionism in the Digital Age: Noahides, Jews and the Third Temple Imaginary* is forthcoming with Rutgers University Press. [Ayala Fader](#) is professor of anthropology at Fordham University. She is the author of two award-winning books, *Mitzvah Girls* (2009) and *Hidden Heretics* (2020).



## KREIDER SEMINAR

**JOHN L. RUTH, EDESEL BURDGE JR., & LYDIA PENNER**

**Tuesday, March 28, 2 to 4:30 p.m.**

**Bucher Meetinghouse**

Presentations include “‘Eine besondere Liebe’: The Story of the Amsterdam Archives Project” by John L. Ruth, “Anabaptist Strategies for Survival in Eighteenth Century Switzerland, the Rhineland, and North America” by Edsel Burdge Jr., and “The Challenge of Translation: Eighteenth-Century Dutch and German in Modern American English” by Lydia Penner. A time for discussion will follow the presentations.

## KREIDER LECTURE

Dilemmas of Generosity: Dutch Mennonite Aid to Fellow Believers

**LYDIA PENNER**

**Tuesday, March 28, 7 p.m.**

**Bucher Meetinghouse**



In the eighteenth century, the Dutch Doopsgezinden (Mennonites) were moved to compassion and generosity by the persecution of their fellow believers in the Canton of Bern in Switzerland and the troubles of the Prussian and Palatine brothers and sisters. They pursued various means to help them. Yet when the demand became too great in the flow of immigrants through Rotterdam to Pennsylvania via England, they had to limit their generosity.

Lydia Penner grew up on a farm near Steinbach, Manitoba, a community originally settled by Plautdietsch-speaking Mennonites from South Russia (Ukraine) in 1874. She has done various kinds of work, including journalism, ministry in Dutch Mennonite congregations, and translating. She is a naturalized Dutch citizen and lives in The Hague, Netherlands.

## YOUNG CENTER BANQUET

**Tuesday, April 18, 6 p.m. (Reception at 5:30)**

**Susquehanna Room, Myer Hall**

The annual dinner gives friends of the Young Center an opportunity to socialize and learn about the Center’s activities and programs. Cost for the banquet is \$20; reservations are required by April 4. Call the Young Center at (717) 361-1470 or register online via the [events page](#) of the Young Center website.

## DURNBAUGH LECTURE

Anabaptists and Secular Politics: Reflections on the Shifting Paradigm over Seven Decades

**CURTIS R. BERRY**

**Tuesday, April 18, 7 p.m.**

**Susquehanna Room, Myer Hall**



During the 49 years since his baptism into the Mennonite Church, Berry has closely followed changes in American politics and its impact on American Christians. He will consider these developments, including the effect of single-issue voting or the influence of talk radio and cable news, and will reflect on how social and political changes have impacted contemporary Anabaptists, perhaps resulting in the church losing some of its ability to be salt of the earth, as described in Matthew 5:13.

[Curtis R. Berry](#) is professor emeritus of political science at Shippensburg University, where he taught for 32 years. A founding board member of [Work Team Partners, Inc.](#), Berry was active in the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties local and statewide organizations during his professional career.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### DURNBAUGH SEMINAR

**CURTIS BERRY, NATHAN HOSLER, HEATHER WOLF, & NATHAN ZOOK**

**Wednesday, April 19, 10 a.m. to noon**

**Bucher Meetinghouse**

This panel discussion explores how Anabaptists should assess political issues and opportunities; the connections between local, national, and international policy choices; and the ways in which Anabaptist values might motivate authentic engagement and principled dissent. Panelists also consider how Anabaptists can talk across lines of political difference, including within their own churches.

Panel members include Curtis Berry, professor emeritus of political science at Shippensburg University; Nathan Hosler, director of the Church of the Brethren's Office of Peacebuilding and Policy based in Washington, DC; Heather Wolf, experienced political campaign advisor and mentor with the Women's Campaign School at Yale; and Nathan Zook, professor of political science at Montgomery College, Rockville (MD) Campus.

SPRING 2023

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*News*

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