

YOUNG CENTER *News*

THE YOUNG CENTER FOR
ANABAPTIST AND PIETIST STUDIES
AT ELIZABETHTOWN COLLEGE



Conference marks 500th anniversary of emergence of Anabaptism

“EARLY ANABAPTISM IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE” TO BE HELD JULY 22-24, 2025

Registration is now open for “Early Anabaptism in Global Perspective: Past, Present, and Future at 500 Years.” Hosted by the Young Center and open to the public, the conference marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of Anabaptism, giving special attention to the global context in which Anabaptism emerged and spread. Presentations will also consider the global reception of Anabaptist history today, particularly in light of the diffusion of Anabaptist traditions around the world. Early Anabaptist history has figured prominently as a resource for global churchly identity through scholarship, teaching, and preaching.

“This conference uniquely connects Anabaptist origins to recent developments in both the church and academic study of history,” said Jamie Pitts, professor of Anabaptist studies at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, and a member of the conference planning committee. “For Anabaptists, the global character of the church means that new narratives about the past and its connections to the present

are proliferating. This is taking place at the same time as historians are reflecting on the global dimensions of the early modern context in which Anabaptism first appeared. The conference will shed exciting new light on what we mean by ‘Anabaptism’—both as a historical and living, global phenomenon.”

Nicholas Terpstra will give the keynote address, “Horizons of Expectation: Space, Sense, and Religious Reform in a Globalizing Age.” Terpstra is professor of history at the University of Toronto and provost of Trinity College in the University of Toronto. He is the author of numerous books, articles, and essay collections, the most recent of which is *Senses of Space in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 2024).

The conference will include three plenary sessions. Author and researcher Kat Hill will deliver “Lost and Living Past: Early Modern Histories and Global Mennonite Belonging,” a presentation exploring the early modern pasts of the Mennonite world seen in the context of the contemporary global Men-

nonite community. Hill is the author of the prize-winning book *Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief: Anabaptism and Lutheranism, 1525–1585* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

In “Constructing a Multi-Textual Anabaptist Theology from an Indonesian Perspective,” Danang Kristiawan will discuss an experimental approach to Anabaptist mystical theology from an Indonesian perspective, where mystical understanding from the sixteenth-century Anabaptist tradition, Javanese mysticism, and interreligious mysticism will be put in a creative conversation to construct an Indonesian Anabaptist peace theology. Kristiawan is a pastor in the Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa, the oldest Mennonite church conference outside Europe and North America. He also teaches Anabaptist history and theology at the Mennonite seminary in Pati.

In “The Future(s) of Anabaptist History: Global Perspectives and Methods,” Elizabeth Miller will discuss the adaptation of the Anabaptist tradition in diverse contexts, the questions and approaches guiding research and the study of Anabaptist history globally, and what the approaches being developed in many global contexts tell us about potential future directions for Anabaptist history. Miller is director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and assistant professor of history at Goshen (IN) College.

The conference will also include more than thirty academic paper presentations, seminars, and roundtable sessions.

An optional pre-conference tour will take conference attendees to Mennonite Life’s
(continued on page 3)



Nicholas Terpstra



Kat Hill



Danang Kristiawan



Elizabeth Miller



From the Director

This year marks an important anniversary for many of the groups linked to the Young Center's work. Five hundred years ago, in 1525, the Anabaptist movement emerged in Switzerland and later in south Germany and the Netherlands. Often called the radical wing of the Reformation, Anabaptism was a movement whose adherents insisted the church included only those voluntarily committed to its mission, and so reserved baptism for those able to make such a choice. They advocated separation of church and state and called for an ethic of peace and discipleship in which religious faithfulness was marked more by how one lived than by adherence to abstract doctrine.

Like any mass movement, Anabaptism was more complicated than the description sketched here. Its shape was all the more complex because it was a grassroots network of like-minded local communities without any single, outstanding leader. Later, the influence of Pietism in some places generated yet more variety, resulting in the array of Amish, Brethren, and Mennonite bodies that exist today. As Anabaptism spread around the world, new contexts shaped its emphasis on discipleship in fresh ways.

The Young Center is pleased to mark this anniversary with an international scholarly conference, described on the first page of this newsletter, that will reexamine the wider social, cultural, and religious landscape of Anabaptism's early years and how that story resonates globally today. Our Durnbaugh Lecture and Seminar, with John D. Roth, will examine the role of the Bible in Anabaptist and Pietist renewal movements. Naomi Kraenbring's lecture on Church of the Brethren refugee resettlement highlights an expression of the discipleship theme that Anabaptists continue to hold.

Join us for these and other events described in this newsletter, as we mark five centuries of Anabaptism.

Steve Nolt
Director

Corey Colyer named Kreider Fellow

Corey Colyer, associate professor of sociology at West Virginia University, has been named the Kreider Fellow for spring 2025.

During his time at the Young Center, Colyer plans to study conflicts between religious communities and the state. Over the past several years, Colyer said, "I've become drawn to many seemingly unreconcilable impasses between specific Plain communities and state governments. These include disputes over vehicle safety emblems, wastewater treatment systems, schooling expectations, child welfare practices, and public health compliance. A close study of selected conflicts should yield insights into the general principles of negotiated order in pluralistic societies. Accordingly, I am preparing a book proposal, making a case for such studies, and presenting a road map for implementing them.

"A prominent theory within the sociology of religion posits that 'strictness' and 'tension' fuel religious vitality. My colleagues and I at West Virginia University have begun compiling evidence suggesting this dynamic also operates within Amish affiliations. I intend to invest significant time during this sabbatical leave in developing a

deeper appreciation for the diversity of Anabaptist worldviews."

"I anticipate a semester as the Kreider Fellow at the Young Center will be of incalculable value to this project," Colyer continued. "First, I am eager to use the center's vast historical materials on Anabaptist and Pietist traditions. I want to identify as many instances of church-state conflict as possible. Second, I believe the personnel affiliated with the Young Center have much to teach me, and I am eager to engage them in discussions. Relatedly, my practical experiences have primarily been limited to encounters in the Holmes County, Ohio, area. I hope to profit from the Young Center's relationships with Plain people in southeastern Pennsylvania to broaden my perspective and networks."

Corey Colyer will present a talk about his work on Tuesday, April 15, at 7 p.m., in the Bucher Meetinghouse.

The generous gift of Ken and Carroll Kreider endowed the Kreider fellowship and lecture. The Young Center invites nominations and applications for its fellows programs. Visit etown.edu/centers/young-center/fellows.aspx for details.

Exhibit in Young Center lobby

In recognition of Elizabethtown College's 125th anniversary, the exhibit space in the Young Center's lobby is featuring a sampling of items from the Hess Archives and Special Collections that illustrate the history of the college.



Items include a pennant from 1928, an early wool athletic sweater, and items from the college's Teachers for West Africa Program, an educational partnership with the nearby Hershey Corporation during the 1960s and '70s. Also included are facsimile reproductions of the original draft of the college alma mater score and a letter to Coach Ira Herr from a student-athlete who had enlisted in the army during World War II, as well as examples of student peace activism during the 1970s and '80s. The exhibit will remain up through the summer.

Visit by Ephrata Cloister Associates

The Young Center and the Hess Archives welcomed 25 members of the Ephrata Cloister Associates on December 4. The group, led by Suzanne Fisher '75, toured the Bowers Interpretive Gallery and viewed rare imprints, manuscripts, and artifacts from the archives' Clarence Spohn Ephrata Collection. At far right, Archivist Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh displays one of two unique manuscript books containing letters and devotional writings by Israel Eckerlin, an early member of Ephrata who later left the community.



John D. Roth to serve as Durnbaugh Lecturer for 2025

LECTURE AND SEMINAR TO FOCUS ON THE ROLE OF THE BIBLE

The Young Center is pleased to announce that John D. Roth will present the 2025 Durnbaugh lecture and seminar on Thursday and Friday, March 20 and 21.

Roth serves as project director for Anabaptism at 500, an initiative of MennoMedia, and as the general editor of the *Anabaptist Community Bible*. He is professor of history emeritus at Goshen (IN) College, where he also served as director of the Mennonite Historical Library and the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism, and as editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. Roth has published widely on topics related to Anabaptist-Mennonite history and church life, and has served with Mennonite World Conference in a variety of roles, including participating in ecumenical dialogues with Lutheran, Catholic, and Reformed church leaders.

On Thursday, March 20, at 7 p.m., in the Susquehanna Room of Myer Hall, Roth will present "The Bible as a Source of Renewal (and Conflict) in Anabaptism and Pietism." Both the Anabaptist and Pietist movements emerged out of a conviction that Scripture was not only authoritative for Christian faith and life but also accessible to ordinary lay people. By challenging inherited assumptions that restricted biblical interpretation to a small group of elites—scholars, ordained clergy, or church-appointed guardians of tra-

dition—Anabaptism and Pietism played a significant role in "democratizing" biblical hermeneutics. But that same impulse, central to the origin and identity of these movements, also provided a resource for later renewal movements to make similar claims, often leading to schisms and ongoing uncertainty about the nature of ecclesial authority. In his lecture, Roth will address the question, What is the role of the Bible today among the heirs of the Anabaptist and Pietist traditions?

On Friday, March 21, from 9:30 a.m. to noon in the Susquehanna Room, Roth will present "Introducing (and Reading!) the *Anabaptist Community Bible*: An Interactive Seminar." The Anabaptist movement emerged in the sixteenth century when a group of young people gathered around Scripture and were transformed as they asked new questions about its relevance for their day. Over the past 500 years, the Bible has continued to sustain and renew Anabaptist faith communities, including the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonites. Rooted in this tradition, the *Anabaptist Community Bible* is an invitation to read Scripture together as a living text that continues to transform lives. This interactive workshop will introduce the *Anabaptist Community Bible* as a unique resource for a fresh encounter with Scripture.

Church of the Brethren ministers who would like CEUs for attendance at the lecture and seminar should contact the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center at KarenHodges@SVMCcob.org or 717-361-1450.

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

Anabaptism conference

(continued from page 1)

Millstream campus, near Lancaster, Pa., to see collection highlights and the museum exhibit "Decorated and Plain." The two post-conference tour options are a visit to Mennonite Life's 1719 Museum in Willow Street, Pa., for a guided tour of its eleven-acre campus, including the Herr House and the Lancaster Longhouse or a visit to Muddy Creek Farm Library in Ephrata, Pa., for a tour of its library and museum.

For more information and to register for the conference, visit etown.edu/anabaptism2025. If you have questions, send an email to anabaptism2025@etown.edu. Register by June 16 to receive a discount.

New High Library IDEA Lab exhibition, “Preserving the Stories of Etown Students and Alumni of Color”

Since the summer of 2024, the Hess Archives has been conducting oral history interviews with alumni of color and researching student experiences represented in Elizabethtown College’s yearbooks, newspapers, and archival collections. The resulting exhibition, “Preserving the Stories of Etown Students and Alumni of Color,” opened on January 16, in the High Library’s IDEA Lab and will be on display through May 16, during library hours.

Visit this new exhibition to view the oral history interviews and learn more about early BIPOC alumni, influential faculty and staff, student clubs, activism, and much more. The exhibition also features the work of the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren Racial Justice Working Group, including research

on Elizabethtown’s history as a “sundown town” that used various methods, including racial covenants, to keep Blacks from living in the borough in the first half of the twentieth century.

The exhibition includes a display of books available for checkout, including titles suggested by the college’s Coalition for Anti-racist Education (CARE), as well as information on Elizabethtown’s Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Campus Center.

This project was made possible with support from the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies; the Office of Civil Rights, Opportunity, and Access; and the Office of Alumni Relations.

The oral history project with alumni of color is ongoing. Interested alumni can contact Archivist Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh at grover@etown.edu to schedule an interview. Visit etownalumniofcolorstories.omeka.net to view completed interviews and transcripts.



Students Kalen Tendo, left, and Jordyn Dutko research the history of students of color at Elizabethtown College

New journal issue published

The [ninth issue of the *Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities*](#) was released in December 2024. It includes an analysis of recent Amish creation of and participation in relief and development work, an update on extinct Amish settlements, the story of an unofficial football team put together by Elizabethtown College students in 1928, and a research note on the rise of Old Order Mennonite schools and their characteristics. This issue also contains profiles of Mennonite Historical Library and the Northern Indiana Amish Library as well as six book reviews.

The *Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities* is a peer-reviewed, open access journal published by the Ohio State University Libraries and cosponsored by the Young Center.

For access to all issues of the journal, an option to subscribe to the mailing list, and detailed information for prospective authors, visit plain-anabaptistjournal.org.



Hess Archives receives NEH grant

The High Library’s [Earl H. and Anita F. Hess Archives and Special Collections](#) recently received a Preservation Assistance Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Funding from the grant will allow Archivist Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh to improve the housing conditions of the college’s rare books.

Through the grant, a professional book conservator from the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts will come to Elizabethtown in March to conduct an on-site needs assessment of the rare books housed in the High Library.

After the conservator makes recommendations, the grant will provide funds for recommended housing supplies for 500 of the more than 4,200 volumes in the Hess Archives. (More than 530 were published before 1850 and more than 600 were published between 1850 and 1900.) Less than 5 percent of the rare books are currently boxed, and fewer are in custom-sized enclosures, which are essential for long-term preservation.

The grant will also cover a rare book workshop for staff at local cultural heritage institutions and the High Library.

Rare books in the Hess Archives’ collection include pamphlets originally published for Old Order Amish readers, notable titles from the Germantown Saur Press, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century printings of works by influential Anabaptist and Pietist writers, and the Clarence Spohn Collection of rare imprints from printers active in Ephrata between 1745 and 1830. As a leading repository on Anabaptist and Pietist groups, the collections contain rare and unique materials.

Constructed in 2014, the Hess Archives and Special Collections include an extensive collection of historical artifacts including a combination of the collections held by the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies and the High Library’s rare holdings. The archives also have a broad online collection that includes digital photographs, newspapers, and historical audio and video.

UPCOMING EVENTS

LECTURE

Welcome to “America’s Refugee Capital”: An Exploration of the Role of Brethren Identity in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

NAOMI KRAENBRING

Tuesday, February 18, 7 p.m.

Bucher Meetinghouse



Naomi Kraenbring will share early thoughts on themes, interpretation, analysis, and conclusions from her dissertation work, still in progress. Important theological tenets of Anabaptist and Radical Pietist theology have emerged, and she will discuss the influence of religious identity on refugee welcome and resettlement activity as well as the influence of this activity on identity.

Kraenbring serves as full-time pastor at Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren and also teaches religious studies and peace studies courses as an adjunct faculty member at Elizabethtown College. She holds an MDiv and MA from Bethany Theological Seminary and is pursuing her PhD from the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University.

LECTURE

Researching and Recording BIPOC Student History at Elizabethtown College

KALEN TENDO & JORDYN DUTKO

Wednesday, February 26, 7 p.m.

Winters Alcove, High Library

Students Kalen Tendo and Jordyn Dutko will share their recent research with Archivist Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh on the history of students of color at Elizabethtown College, research showcased in the spring High Library IDEA Lab exhibit, “Preserving the Stories of Etown Students and Alumni of Color.” (See p. 4 for information about the exhibit.)

Tendo is a sophomore legal studies major. He completed a Summer Creative Arts and Research Program (SCARP) project in the Hess Archives in summer 2024 and continues to work in the archives. Dutko is a history and political science major with a minor in public heritage studies. She joined the project in fall 2024 as the Young Center’s Zeigler Fellow.

YOUNG CENTER BANQUET

Thursday, March 20, 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. A reception for Durnbaugh Lecturer John Roth will precede the dinner.

Cost for the banquet is \$25 and reservations are required by March 6. Call the Young Center at (717) 361-1470 or register online via the [events page](#) of the Young Center website.

DURNBAUGH LECTURE

The Bible as a Source of Renewal (and Conflict) in Anabaptism and Pietism

JOHN D. ROTH

Thursday, March 20, 7 p.m.

Susquehanna Room, Myer Hall



John D. Roth, project director for Anabaptism at 500 and general editor of the *Anabaptist Community Bible*, will discuss the role of the Bible today among the heirs of the Anabaptist and Pietist traditions. (See p. 3 for details about the Durnbaugh Lecture.)

Copies of the [Anabaptist Community Bible](#) will be available for purchase at the lecture and at the seminar.

DURNBAUGH SEMINAR

Introducing (and Reading!) the *Anabaptist Community Bible*: An Interactive Seminar

JOHN D. ROTH

Friday, March 21, 9:30 a.m. to noon

Susquehanna Room, Myer Hall

Led by John Roth, this interactive workshop will introduce the *Anabaptist Community Bible* as a unique resource for a fresh encounter with Scripture. (See p. 3 for details about the Durnbaugh Seminar.)

BROWN BOOK AWARD LECTURE

Debating Sustainability: Mennonite Settlers, NGO Agronomists, and Agribusinessmen

ROYDEN LOEWEN

Thursday, April 3, 7 p.m.

Bucher Meetinghouse



How do farmers think about the sustainability practices they pursue, and where do those ideas come from? In this talk drawing on [Mennonite Farmers: A Global History of Place and Sustainability](#) and on subsequent research that extends beyond the seven communities examined in that book, Royden Loewen will consider transnational flows of agricultural knowledge, as agronomists, agribusinessmen, and ordinary Mennonite farmers debate the merits and methods of sustainability in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Canada, and southern Africa.

Loewen is professor emeritus of history at the University of Winnipeg and the author of ten books, including most recently, *Mennonite Farmers: A Global History of Place and Sustainability* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021). His current research focuses on transnational flows of agricultural knowledge and Canadian farmers in global context.

Copies of *Mennonite Farmers* will be available for sale and signing after the lecture.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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KREIDER LECTURE

Negotiating the Kingdoms: Pluralism, Plain
Communities, and State Power in the Twenty-First
Century

COREY COLYER

Tuesday, April 15, 7 p.m.

Bucher Meetinghouse



Ongoing clashes between state authorities and Plain communities reveal fundamental tensions between religious liberty and civil obligations. Such encounters—including ongoing disputes over slow-moving vehicle emblems and highly publicized conflicts over wastewater treatment technologies—demonstrate how citizens of pluralistic societies negotiate competing imperatives (those rooted in sacred authority against those anchored to the state's sovereign mandates). These conflicts illuminate profound differences among Anabaptist communities. Drawing on his research at the Young Center, Colyer's lecture will explore how different Anabaptist affiliations approach these challenges, suggesting broader insights about religious freedom and state power in modern America.

Corey Colyer is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at West Virginia University. His research examines how individuals and communities negotiate institutional power in modern pluralistic societies. His work explores the dynamic interplay between structural constraint and human freedom, revealing the possibilities and limits of personal agency in institutional settings.

SPRING 2025

YOUNG
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News

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