



SVMC Sunday 2026

What is the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center?

The Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center (SVMC) equips leaders for ministry in a Christ-centered, culturally relevant context that bears witness to the beliefs, heritage, and practices of the Church of the Brethren. SVMC partners with districts and the denomination to train and educate those called to ministry as clergy or lay leaders through the Academy Certified Training System (ACTS) and continuing education events. We also support congregations in planting God's kingdom seeds in their communities and beyond.

What is SVMC Sunday?

To support SVMC's mission and to encourage a culture of calling, congregations are encouraged to have an SVMC Sunday in 2026. Although you may choose any date that suits your congregation, a few meaningful possibilities are:

- April 26th (the Sunday before the Spring SVMC Governing Board meeting),
- May 24 (the Sunday after the last class for the 2025-2026 ACTS Academic Year),
- Any Sunday in August, before the new ACTS Academic Year begins, or
- November 8 (the Sunday before the Fall SVMC Governing Board meeting).

This service would fulfill three purposes: 1) to encourage a culture of calling out gifts for ministry, 2) to raise awareness about how SVMC is a resource for ministry, and 3) to allow congregations to support SVMC financially. Below are worship resources for a worship service on this year's theme and scripture:

Theme: Plant mustard seeds of faith and giving, and see how they grow!

Scripture: Matthew 13:31-32

SVMC encourages you to accompany this worship service with a time of discernment: Are there individuals in your congregation who may have gifts for ministry? You may also use this worship as an opportunity to pray for those who are currently in ministry training, instructors who teach, and district leadership who support students in their journey. Additionally, please consider taking up a special offering for the work of SVMC as your partner in ministry training.

For more information about SVMC, visit our website: <https://www.etown.edu/programs/svmc/>

If you would like physical copies of any materials, such as envelopes or brochures, please get in touch with SVMC's office.

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What is the theme of SVMC Sunday?

Scripture Commentary - Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey, Director of SVMC, Oakton Church of the Brethren

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he tells all those who will hear, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17). As he preaches, teaches, and heals, he shows the world what this new kingdom looks like. And yet, some still struggle to see it coming and how it is already taking shape. So, Jesus sets out to explain the kingdom through a series of parables. The kingdom of heaven is like:

- ...good seed planted in a field (Matt 13:24)
- ...a mustard seed (Matt 13:31)
- ...yeast (Matt 13:33)
- ...treasure (Matt 13:44)
- ...a precious pearl (Matt 13:44)
- ...a net full of fish (Matt 13:47)

Through these parables, Jesus hopes we will gain insight and wisdom about God's kingdom through the lens of something familiar: planting, cooking, treasure, and fishing. And yet, in each of these parables, something extraordinary happens in response to something quite ordinary.

In both Luke's and Matthew's gospels, the mustard seed parable is paired with the parable of the yeast. In these short stories, something that begins quite small grows into something amazingly large. Even though much of the growth process happens outside of our observation, what we can see is the outcome and the impact. So it is with the kingdom. Seeds are planted that grow exponentially because God is in them. Much of God's kingdom grows out of our sight, and certainly outside of our control. However, we have a responsibility to plant seeds and then let God do the rest.

What seeds for the kingdom of heaven are you called to plant in your church, in your community, in the world? Are there individuals in your congregation who have the gifts for ministry? How might you call out, support, and encourage their calling? Is God calling your congregation to serve others in a particular way? How might you plant seeds of God's kingdom that God might grow and multiply? How might your congregation be a place where all sorts of people can gather and be nurtured?

Plant mustard seeds of faith and giving and see how they grow!

Companion Scriptures:

- Isaiah 43:18-19
- Luke 17:5-6
- I Corinthians 3:5-9

Worship Materials

Call to Worship – *Britnee Linton, Union Bridge Church of the Brethren*

Leader: Open your ears, dear friends.

People: We are listening, Lord.

Leader: Open your eyes, dear friends.

People: We want to see, Lord.

Leader: Open your hearts, dear friends.

People: We welcome the vulnerability, Lord.

Leader: You are invited to explore and try new things, rooted in the holy scriptures.

People: Let us worship together this day, knowing that God calls us to plant seeds and grow.

Invocation – *Britnee Linton, Union Bridge Church of the Brethren*

Holy Creator of all,

We invite you into this space of worship. As we gather together this day, may your spirit ignite the calling within us. We ask ourselves, Lord, where are you leading us? What seeds have you already planted in us? What seeds are you calling us to plant? As we worship together, celebrating your Kingdom and the beauty it holds, we open our hearts to the path you lay before us. Amen.

Invitation to Give – *Brandy Liepelt, Annville Church of the Brethren*

We are invited to join God in the work of planting seeds. We are invited to share the fruits of the seeds God has planted and nurtured in this place; the fruits of generosity, community, love, service, joy...

Psalm 97:11-12 in the Message says, “Light seeds are planted in the souls of God’s people, Joy seeds are planted in good heart-soil. So, God’s people, shout praise to God, give thanks to our Holy God!” May our giving be an extension of our praise for all that God has given and planted within us. May we graciously share the seeds God has given to us.

Offertory Prayer – *Brandy Liepelt, Annville Church of the Brethren*

Lord God, we give back to you only a small portion of what you have given to us. Receive these fruits we bring and use them to increase the harvest. Use these gifts and offerings to scatter your seeds of faith, hope, mercy, love, and justice both far and wide. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayers for Planting – *Brandy Liepelt, Annville Church of the Brethren*

Prayer Practice: Have a packet of seeds (i.e. A Spring Garden Mix) distributed to each person.

Gather in small groups with those near you in the sanctuary. Name those who planted seeds of faith in your life. Name those who planted seeds for the various ministries in your congregation. Take a few moments to pray as a group, thanking God for those willing to sow seeds and those who nurture seeds. Ask God to help you identify seeds you can sow and how you can nurture what God is doing in those around you.

Prayer of Confession – Brandy Liepelt, Annville Church of the Brethren

Holy Lord and Master Gardener, we confess we often lack the patience to tend to the seeds planted within us and others. We confess we overlook the small and the behind-the-scenes work of your hand. We confess that we'd rather delight in large trees and in shade than nurture the process. Help us, Lord, to see with your eyes, to listen with your ears, to nurture with your hands, and with your voice to call out the gifts we see for ministry in ourselves and in others.

Assurance of Pardon: Jesus assures us that our God of gracious abundance scatters seed far and wide, and even the smallest of seeds has the potential to grow exponentially. The Lord is careful and faithful with the smallest of seeds. You can trust the Lord to be faithful and careful with you as well.

Benediction – Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey, Director of SVMC, Oakton Church of the Brethren

What seeds for the kingdom of heaven are you called to plant? Plant mustard seeds of faith and giving, and see how they grow!

Sending Song – recommended by Kim Witkovsky, York First Church of the Brethren

“Onward, We Go” by Bill Jolliff

A Note from Kim: “You can strum it on the guitar with lots of energy and enthusiasm, loud and exciting, or gently and quietly picking each string in a classical style. Consider using sign language for the main words and use it as a body prayer with arm movements, focusing on the many ways we can grow - in statute, spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and in relationships. And that is what SVMC helps us do - grow holistically in body, mind, and spirit. The possibilities are endless!”

Lyrics and chords on the next page.

Song Suggestions:

- “Seeds” by the Walking Roots Band/The Soil and Seed Project
 - o [Click here for the “Seeds” chord sheet and music \(scroll down\).](#)
- “Let us be known” by The Porter’s Gate
 - o [Click here for the “Let us be known” chord sheet](#)
- “May those who sow” by The Soil and Seed Project
 - o [Click here for the “May those who sow” chord sheet \(scroll down\)](#)
- “Your labor is not in vain” by The Porter’s Gate
 - o [Click here for the “Your labor is not in vain” lead sheet](#)
- “What is the World Like” (Voices Together, #298)
- “Here in this place” (Hymnal: A Worship Book, #6)
- “The kingdom of God” (Hymnal: A Worship Book, #224)
- “You are salt for the earth” (Hymnal: A Worship Book, #226)
- “I love thy kingdom, Lord” (Hymnal: A Worship Book, #308)

ONWARD WE GO

The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp). The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. Chords G, C, and D are indicated above the notes. The lyrics are: 'When dif-frenc-es di - vide our way, on - ward we go! When we can't find the words to pray, on - ward we go! Faith that's like a must-ard seed, grows as big as a - ny tree, so Je - sus said, so we be - lieve, on - ward we go!'.

When dif-frenc-es di - vide our way, on - ward we go!

When we can't find the words to pray, on - ward we go!

Faith that's like a must-ard seed, grows as big as a - ny tree, so

Je - sus said, so we be - lieve, on - ward we go!

v.2 We all have diff'rent points of view, onward...

And each one teaches something new...

v.3 Our load is easier to bear...

Strengthened by the faith we share...

v.4 And when my thoughts turn as black as night...

You come along and hold the light...

Lyrics and Music by Bill Jolliff
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2026