

# Ready...Set... Grow!



MDS volunteers served  
**53,583 days**  
helping  
**805 households**  
recover from disaster.



**“MDS volunteers are my village—  
heaven sent.”**

That’s how Nicole Gillespie (pictured top left) described the loving hands that built a new home for her family in Crisfield, Maryland, a small town that experienced repeated flooding.

In 2023, MDS volunteers not only got people like Nicole home—they made them safer. With updated construction plans that meet a gold standard for severe weather endurance, MDS made great strides in disaster mitigation.

That means, as Nicole’s husband Eddie put it: “When we walked in that door, when they gave us the key to that house, I could finally rest.”

MDS also nurtured a vibrant group of youth volunteers, bringing an intergenerational wave of response across the US and Canada.

Joel Amstutz, a youth volunteer in Dawson Springs, Kentucky, reflected: “As MDS led us through each day, our faith was able to grow as we worked and talked with each other.”

Volunteering changed countless lives and moved countless hearts toward a deeper commitment to service.

For all those volunteers who taught or learned construction skills, for those who prayed and worked together, for those who gave hours, days, and weeks of their time—**THANK YOU!**



**7,290 volunteers**  
across Canada and the U.S.  
gave their time, skills  
and compassion to build  
**95 new homes,**  
complete  
**402 repairs,**  
finish  
**274 cleanups,**  
and build  
**7 new bridges**  
for households who  
experienced a disaster.

This volunteer labor is a value of  
**\$13.63 million USD/  
\$18.54 million CAD\***

All statistics from 8/1/2022 through 7/31/2023.  
\*Labor value based on a volunteer rate of \$31.80 USD/hour. ([www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org))

## Respond. Rebuild. Restore.



**Mennonite  
Disaster  
Service**

[www.mds.org](http://www.mds.org)

**MDS U.S. Office**  
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PA 17543 USA  
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toll-free: 800-241-8111  
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**MDS Canada Office**  
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[mdscanada@mds.org](mailto:mdscanada@mds.org)

## Report to Mountain States Mennonite Conference

AMBS serves the church as a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world.

Our programs integrate academics, spiritual formation and practice. Join us — in person or at a distance, full time or part time — and deepen your understanding of Scripture, faith and Anabaptist theology!

### Degrees and programs (\* = distance-friendly program)

- Master of Divinity\*
- Master of Arts in Christian Formation
- Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies
- Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism\*
- Doctor of Ministry in Leadership\*
- Graduate Certificate in Spiritual Direction\*
- Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies\* (fully customizable)
- Mennonite Education Agency Hispanic Ministries – AMBS Graduate Certificate in Theology\* (in Spanish)
- Journey Missional Leadership Development Program\* (undergraduate-level, nondegree)

[ambs.edu/degrees-and-programs](https://ambs.edu/degrees-and-programs)

We offer generous need-based financial aid, scholarships and matching grants for both full- and part-time graduate students. You *can* afford seminary!

[ambs.edu/affordability](https://ambs.edu/affordability)

### Leadership and enrichment

Grow your ministry skills and gain Anabaptist approaches to today's leadership challenges through our nondegree offerings. (\* = distance-friendly program)

#### Short-term options

- Practical Leadership Training modules\*
- Online Short Courses\*: six weeks, discussion-based, noncredit (no grades, no papers!)
- Invite AMBS\*: request a speaker (in person or online)
- Pastors & Leaders conference\*: Feb. 17–20, 2025

#### Yearlong offerings

- Spiritual Direction Seminars\*
- Transition to Leadership: program for new pastors
- Integrity Circles\*: reflect theologically on leadership within a group

[ambs.edu/leadership-and-enrichment](https://ambs.edu/leadership-and-enrichment)



### AMBS statistics

- (Above) In April 2024, 13 women and nine men from four countries — Ethiopia, South Africa, Tanzania and the U.S. — graduated from AMBS. Sixteen graduates completed part or all of their studies at a distance.
- In 2023–24, 149 graduate students were enrolled at AMBS: 65 from the U.S., 11 from Canada and 73 international students. Ten students are pursuing the MEA Hispanic Ministries – AMBS Graduate Certificate in Theology.
- The undergraduate-level nondegree Journey program has 40 participants in Canada, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, Uganda and the U.S.

### Want to try out seminary?

- Sign up for an Online Short Course:
  - Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible
  - Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology
  - Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture: What's Different and Why?
  - Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication
  - Resisting Christian Nationalism with the Gospel of Peace

[ambs.edu/online-short-courses](https://ambs.edu/online-short-courses)

- Take a graduate-level course — online or on campus. Nonadmitted students get 50% off tuition for their first three credit hours! [ambs.edu/upcoming-courses](https://ambs.edu/upcoming-courses)
- Schedule a virtual or in-person visit. Talk with students, faculty and staff and learn what AMBS has to offer! [ambs.edu/visit](https://ambs.edu/visit)
- Stay connected: [facebook.com/followAMBS](https://facebook.com/followAMBS) • [instagram.com/ambs\\_seminary](https://instagram.com/ambs_seminary) • [youtube.com/ambsedu](https://youtube.com/ambsedu) • [ambs.edu/subscribe](https://ambs.edu/subscribe)





## Mennonite Church USA equipped, empowered and gathered the church together in many ways in 2023.



The annual [Hope for the Future](#) conference in Atlanta, Georgia, Feb. 3-5, 2023, brought together 70 Black, Indigenous and people of color from across the church to worship, network and honor legacy leaders.

More than 1,400 youth and adults attended [MennoCon23](#), MC USA's leading faith formation event, in Kansas City, Missouri, July 5-8, 2023, where they were invited to "Be Transformed" by the Holy Spirit.

The [Delegate Assembly](#), leading decision-making body, convened in July 2023, voting to clarify the MC USA bylaws and shift Everence and MHS Association from program agencies to ministry partners.

MC USA expanded its Peace & Justice work to include a deeper emphasis on climate justice. Three hundred youth and young adults attended MC USA's [Climate Summit](#) in Kansas City, July 7, 2023, where they put their faith to work, addressing the spiritual and human crisis caused by climate change.



In 2023, MC USA's [Justice Fund](#) provided resources to five congregations who are sharing the reconciling work of Christ by alleviating poverty, dismantling racism, addressing immigration reform or reimagining policing in their communities.

MC USA launched [Safe Church](#), a new abuse prevention ministry to equip and educate conferences and congregations to protect the most vulnerable among us.

MC USA reinforced the church's peace mission by honoring denominational peacemakers Jonathan Kuttab and Sydney Leah Bontrager with the 2023 [Bring the Peace](#) award.

The [Learn, Pray, Join: End Gun Violence](#) initiative called the denomination to understand this crisis through the lens of our Anabaptist faith and to inspire action to bring God's healing to our hurting communities.



MC USA collaborated with Mennonite Church Canada to host the annual Binational [Conference Minister/Regional Pastors Retreat](#) in Banff, Canada, in Nov. 2023, where leaders focused on worship and pastoral wellbeing.

### Our Mission

The mission of the MC USA Executive Board is to equip and empower leaders to share with others the gift of God's peace and transformative love.

### Our Vision

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.

### Our Renewed Commitments

- Follow Jesus
- Witness to God's peace
- Experience transformation

## Church Vitality

MC USA's Church Vitality team empowers and equips the church every day through:

- Pastor salary guidelines
- Wellbeing in ministry resources
- The Corinthian Plan healthcare plan for church workers
- Ministerial Leadership Inquiry process

Learn more here.



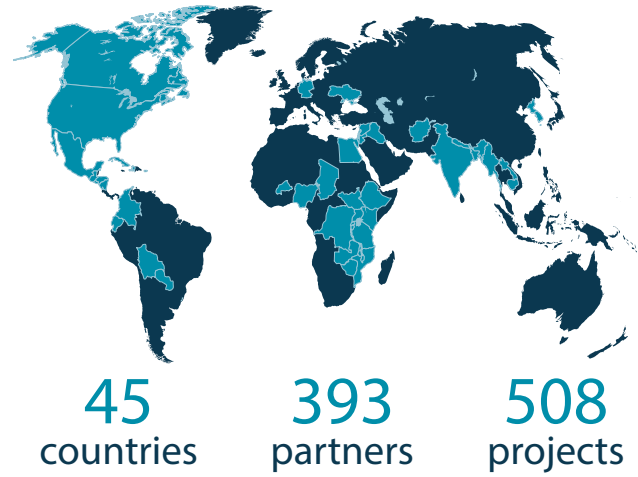
PeaceMail   
Mennonite Church USA



Subscribe to MC USA's weekly email newsletter.

# 2024 report for Mountain States Mennonite Conference

MCC U.S. and MCC Central States  
Toll Free: (888) 563.4676 • CentralStates@mcc.org • mcc.org



In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through MCC-supported Women Situation Room groups, people like Melanie Mafinga are trained to resolve conflicts, mediate and prevent violence. (MCC/Fairpicture photo/Justin Makangara)

## MCC and Mountain States Mennonite Conference connections

- MSMC congregations play important roles in MCC relief sales, Thrift shops, and My Coins Count fundraisers.
- Volunteers making kits, sewing and tying comforters make an enormous impact for MCC!
- Thank you to staff, board members, volunteers & donors at the MCC Thrift shop in La Junta.
- Dorcus Sibanda, Zimbabwe, has been working at the Conflict Center in Denver, CO with the MCC International Volunteer Exchange Program.
- Sign up to receive our monthly digital newsletter called In Touch, find out how to make kits, Sunday School curriculum at [mcc.org](http://mcc.org)!

### MCC's 2024 guiding scripture

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15 (NIV)

MCC Works in 45 countries thanks to strong partnerships, not only with organizations on the ground but also with supporters like you.

You're helping to provide food, bedding and hygiene items to families in Gaza. In Bolivia, your support helps farmers learn new agricultural techniques so they can stay on their land. And in South Texas, you are helping to provide basic school & hygiene supplies to newly arrived people.

We are grateful for each of you and the role that you play. Whether you donate financially, pray for MCC, volunteer at an MCC thrift shop, pack kits, knit comforters, can meat or bid on items at a relief sale, we appreciate you. You are sharing God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ.

With thanksgiving,

Michelle Armster, MCC Central States executive director

Jeni Hiatt Umble, MCC Central States Board representative for Mountain States Mennonite Conference

“ In MCC, building relationships is at the core of how we make peace. Tying knots on a comforter is a great place to start! ”

-Michelle Armster

Tying comforters for MCC is an activity that draws in people of all ages, whether at a comforter blitz, the MCC booth at the Mennonite Church USA gathering (pictured at right), your local church or just in your home with friends and family. Participants work together to combine handmade com-

forter tops, warm batting and backing fabric into warm and beautiful comforters. The hands-on project is one way that MCC supporters are putting their faith into action. Each handmade comforter is unique and provides not only warmth but also a tangible message to people that their needs are not forgotten.





## Report to Mountain States Mennonite Conference – July 2024

Helping Mennonite Church USA fulfill its educational mission

### 2024-25 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

MEA recently awarded the 2024-25 Scholarships for BIPOC Students to 13 students from five schools partnered with MEA. **Thanks to the generosity of donors, we granted \$28,000 in scholarships – more than double the awards of the 2023-24 academic year!** Photos of the 2024-25 scholarship recipients are below.



Awards are based on an applicant's connection with an MEA-partner school, an MC USA congregation, and their leadership on campus and at church. The purpose of the scholarship is to encourage the next generation of church leaders to complete their education and continue serving the church.

**The scholarship recipients are from** Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Bluffton University, Eastern Mennonite University, and Goshen College. To learn about the recipients, read the article from MEA [here](#). You can learn more about the scholarship at [www.MennoniteEducation.org/schools/mea-scholarship-for-bipoc-students](http://www.MennoniteEducation.org/schools/mea-scholarship-for-bipoc-students). If you would like to donate to the scholarship fund, you can do so at [www.MennoniteEducation.org/donate](http://www.MennoniteEducation.org/donate). Applications for the 2025-26 academic year are due by April 1, 2025.

### BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY MERGER

Bluffton University recently announced their intention to merge with the University of Findlay in Ohio. You can find more information about this merger at [www.FindlayBlufftonFuture.com](http://www.FindlayBlufftonFuture.com). If you have questions or concerns, please contact [www.FindlayBlufftonFuture.com/contact-us/](http://www.FindlayBlufftonFuture.com/contact-us/) or email MEA at [info@MennoniteEducation.org](mailto:info@MennoniteEducation.org). **MEA is committed to promoting Anabaptist values in education and strengthening the relationships between Mennonite schools and Mennonite Church USA.**



**MEA'S HISPANIC MINISTRIES** programs are growing and thriving. The first cohort of the [Certificado de Posgrado en Estudios Teológicos](#) (Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies), in partnership with Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), is completing their second semester of study. This historic program is the first graduate certificate program taught in Spanish at an Anabaptist seminary in the United States. We are proud of the vision of our staff to bring this dream to fruition – and in partnership with an MC USA seminary!

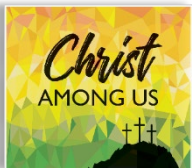
Four students of the [Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano](#) (SeBAH – Hispanic

Anabaptist Biblical Seminary) will be graduating this summer. We uplift these determined students as the next leaders of the Hispanic Mennonite Church!

The [Instituto Bíblico Anabautista](#) (IBA – Anabaptist Bible Institute) program now has 13 study centers across the U.S., including a **new center at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.**, in partnership with Prairie Street Mennonite Church. IBA is also expanding beyond physical centers with **one hybrid** and **one online center**.

MEA is also excited to announce a **new partnership between IBA, Western District Conference of MC USA, and Seminario Anabautista Latinoamericano (SEMILLA – Latin American Anabaptist Seminary)** in Guatemala City. IBA will help to train the leaders of a new church plant in Uspantán, El Quiché, Guatemala, called Iglesia Arca de Salvación (Ark of Salvation Church). The partners are providing the curriculum, instructors, and student scholarships.

## FAITH FORMATION AT HOME



MEA publishes the **Advent- and Lent at Home** worship guides, available for free download in English and Spanish from the MEA website. The [At-Home](#) series is designed to be an accompaniment through the seasons of Advent and Lent. They are intergenerational and can be used by individuals, families, and congregations of

Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. With daily Scriptures, worship rituals, prayers, activities, and background information, these resources enhance the experience of these holy times. **The At Home series is the most downloaded resource of all Mennonite Church USA materials!**

## FAITH FORMATION: MENNONITE EARLY CHILDHOOD NETWORK



**Building Faith** is the online ministry of the **Mennonite Early Childhood Network (MECN)**, a partner ministry of MEA. Each month, Building Faith

creates simple, accessible resources for families to help their children grow in their faith. Families can sign up to receive an email with the month's faith practice, including a verse, activity, and prayer. Each lesson is written in English and Spanish. Visit [www.BuildingFaithFamily.com](http://www.BuildingFaithFamily.com) to learn more about this ministry or to subscribe.

**Whether at home or in the classroom, MEA is committed to equipping teachers and parents as they impact children and young people.**

## 2023-24 ENROLLMENT REPORT

MEA produces the Enrollment Report annually to create a snapshot of enrollment trends across all schools that partner with MEA: from early childhood programs through graduate schools and seminaries. Based on headcount in the fall of 2023, **Mennonite schools are impacting the lives of 8,971 students**, a decrease of 3.4% since the 2022-23 academic year. To view the 23-24 report or previous reports, visit [www.mennoniteeducation.org/resources/enrollment-reports](http://www.mennoniteeducation.org/resources/enrollment-reports).

## SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATORS

The **Mennonite Public Educators** group was formed by teachers to give faculty and staff in public schools a place to talk about some of the unique challenges Mennonites face in public education: what to do about the Pledge of Allegiance, how to respond to wars and violence, and how to (whether to) be a peace witness. The group has met virtually several times this academic year. MEA is helping to promote the group and broaden its reach. **The next virtual meeting is July 25 at 7 pm Eastern.** Participation is free but registration is required. Contact [info@Mennonite Education.org](mailto:info@MennoniteEducation.org) for more information.

**On behalf of the staff and board of directors, thank you for supporting Anabaptist Mennonite education.**

Grace & Peace,

**Michael Danner**  
Executive Director

# Be local. Be global. Be the Gospel.

## When the people of God take Jesus' call to live lives of peace seriously, there is hope.

In the midst of war and strife, God is still at work, and we are committed to joining in that work. Here are some ways you can join in, too:



**Partner** with workers across the street and around the world through financial support. Contact [KarenH@MennoniteMission.net](mailto:KarenH@MennoniteMission.net) to support workers financially.



**Support** Mission Network ministries and workers by becoming a prayer partner. Visit our website to join: [MennoniteMission.net/Prayer](http://MennoniteMission.net/Prayer).



**Explore** what service options are the best fit for adults and youth in your congregation: [MennoniteMission.net/Serve](http://MennoniteMission.net/Serve).



**Learn** about social justice through a spiritual lens by participating in a Just Peace Pilgrimage: [MennoniteMission.net/JustPeace](http://MennoniteMission.net/JustPeace).



## Mountain States Conference partnership

*Note: Underlined words indicate active links.*

### Service participants



#### Service sites

**Mennonite Voluntary Service unit**  
» [Alamosa, Colorado](#)

**Service Adventure unit**  
» [Colorado Springs, Colorado](#)

**SOOP site**  
» [Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp](#)

#### SOOP

**Robert King**, Tiskilwa, Illinois

#### Service Adventure

**Shelby and Travis Clarke**, serving as Service Adventure leaders in Colorado Springs, Colorado

### Prayer partners

15

### Congregational giving to Mission Network



During Mission Networks' past fiscal year, August 1, 2022, through July 31, 2023, Mountain States Conference congregations gave **\$24,081**. **Thank you!**



On behalf of all of us at Mennonite Mission Network, thank you, Mountain States Conference, for your commitment and support! Your prayers, contributions and participation in our programs is a vital part of our partnerships with congregations, organizations and individuals around the world. Like 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, each of us uses our gifts for the good of one another, and we can trust that our service and love for others is guided and strengthened by God. Blessings to you!

*Marisa Smucker*

**Marisa Smucker**, Executive Director



Thank you for your ongoing partnership with Mennonite Mission Network! May we continue to be steadfast in participating in God's mission of shalom within our communities and around the world! Blessings.

*Sara Gurulé*

**Sara Gurulé**  
Constituent Engagement Representative

Thank you for your continued partnership in God's mission!

[www.MennoniteMission.net](http://www.MennoniteMission.net) Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872