

# Welcome to Assembly Mennonite Church!

Assembly is a congregation of Anabaptist-Mennonite Christians who have covenanted together as a worshipping community. Begun in 1974 with the coming together of a number of small fellowship groups and house churches, Assembly today has about 180 covenanted members, and includes a few hundred participants of all ages in congregational life—including over 100 children and youth. Small groups continue to be an integral part of Assembly life; currently, about 200 adults participate in 24 small groups.

Our meetinghouse, located at 727 New York Street, is shared with Faith Mennonite Church, which meets on Sunday evenings. We are members of Central District Conference, a regional conference of the Mennonite Church USA denomination.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been gathering for worship on Sunday mornings in a variety of creative ways, including virtual worship via Zoom, small outdoor “cluster” gatherings in backyards, and occasional outdoor parking lot services. In recent months, roughly 200 people have been joining us for live Zoom worship weekly.

We place a high value on shared leadership, participatory worship, inclusive language, and justice and peacemaking. We have ministry teams focusing on welcoming immigrants and on hospitality. We are an inclusive congregation that welcomes our sisters and brothers who are LGBTQ+. We have a strong global awareness with many members having spent time abroad in study or service. Locally, members are involved with organizations such as [Center for Healing and Hope](#), [LaCasa](#), [Interfaith Hospitality Network](#), [ADEC](#), [the Window](#), as well as many Mennonite institutions and service organizations.

Our pastoral team consists of Lora Nafziger (Faith Formation), Karl Shelly (Community Building & Mission), and Anna Yoder Schlabach (Worship & Pastoral Care), and Scott Coulter (Congregational Life & Hospitality). You can read more about our pastors and their roles at Assembly [on our website](#). Our administrator is Jane Litwiller.



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# ASSEMBLY COVENANT

*Members of Assembly make a covenant with God and each other to be church together. The words of the covenant are read aloud each time someone becomes a newly covenanted member of the congregation, and also each year on Pentecost. A copy of this covenant can also be found on a blue sheet in the back pocket of the hymnals in the Worship Space.*

As a community of God's people, we receive with joy God's gracious love.  
In response, we join in worship and praise  
and make this covenant with God and with each other.

We affirm our faith in God, the source of life and love,  
the Sovereign of the world.

We commit ourselves to follow Jesus Christ,  
who redeems, reconciles, and reveals God to us.

We invite God's Spirit to transform, empower and guide us,  
as together we discern and follow God's word.

We pledge to nurture and care for each other  
and call out the gifts of each person.

We repent of sin, both private and social, and join God's plan  
for healing the earth and bringing peace and justice to its people.

We accept God's call to share the good news of redeeming love,  
and invite others to faith in Christ and membership in his church.

We encourage and pray for each other as we live out this covenant  
in hope for the time when God brings all of creation to its fullness in Christ.

Adopted March 1993

# ASSEMBLY PRACTICES

We believe our Covenant calls us to the following practices in this time and context:

## 1. Active participation in congregational life

- a. **Worship** – God calls us to be the church; not an audience. We encourage participants to nurture gifts for teaching, preaching, leading and otherwise contributing to our corporate worship.
- b. **Discernment** – members share responsibility for discerning the direction of the congregation in congregational meetings and in other discernment venues.
- c. **Community building** – small group participation is one important way we build community and invite others into the life of the congregation.

## 2. Ongoing spiritual formation

- a. **Spiritual practices** – in addition to participation in Sunday worship, we engage other avenues of spiritual growth such as practicing spiritual disciplines; attending spiritual retreats; meeting with a spiritual director; and regularly reviewing our stewardship of time, money, gifts, and other facets of faithful living.
- b. **Nurturing children** – we seek to lead children to faith by the Christ-like love, care, and model we offer the young among us.
- c. **Spiritual journey** – we encourage each other to publicly claim and proclaim faith in God, and we also grant each other the freedom necessary for real searching and questioning.
- d. **Giving and receiving counsel** – we believe we are not an island unto ourselves but need the larger body of Christ for our mutual growth.

## 3. Acting on our commitment to biblical peace, nonviolence, and justice

1. **Relationships** – our commitment to peace begins with fostering healthy relationships. We commit to practicing Christian love and faithfulness in our primary relationships, supporting healthy marriages and families, and seeking reconciliation in situations of brokenness.
2. **Economics** – we seek to follow God by growing in grace and generosity, releasing more of our financial resources, and contributing an extra 2 % of our income as partial restitution to the exploited people of the world.
3. **Creation care** – we commit to better understanding our impact on God’s creation and acting to reduce the adverse effects of our actions.
4. **Justice for oppressed people** – we advocate for concerns local and global, act on our biblical convictions against war/militarism, and are a congregation which seeks inclusion for our LGBTQ siblings.

*The points listed under each practice are not meant to define the totality of how we engage a particular practice. They are meant to highlight key aspects of that practice to which members are committed. Also, we intend for this list of practices to be periodically reviewed and for changes to be made as we discern new ways in which God is calling us to faithful discipleship.*

Adopted April 2010

## MISSION STATEMENT

Assembly Mennonite Church seeks to be a dynamic Christian community by together meeting God who draws us beyond ourselves into nurturing, sharing, and living the good news of God's love as known in Jesus Christ.

Adopted June 1997

## WELCOME STATEMENT

As a reconciling faith community, Assembly Mennonite Church seeks to follow Jesus' example by welcoming all who come our way, regardless of age, economic or social circumstances, ethnic background, gender, marital status, physical ability, race, or sexual orientation.

Adopted Dec 1999

## THE PRIVILEGES OF THE CHILD IN ASSEMBLY

1. To be in the midst of the congregation, not on the sidelines.
2. To wander among us during worship, being the responsibility of each of us.
3. To give answers during children's time without being laughed at.
4. To be called by name by each adult.
5. To be a valued person in the congregation.
6. To be led to faith by the Christlike love, care, and model of each adult.
7. To be an active participant in worship.

Updated February 1992

Given the preciousness of our children and youth and their potential vulnerability to abuse, we covenant for their safety and full participation in our community. Out of our commitment to love and care for all of God's creation we make a covenant to our children, youth, adults, families and community. [This Covenant, along with Assembly's "Digital Communications Policy" and "How to Report Suspect Abuse" can be found on our website here.](#)

## SMALL GROUPS AT ASSEMBLY

Small groups play a key and multi-faceted role at Assembly (we are, after all, the "Assembly of small groups"). Assembly small groups are a place to share about your life, build community, provide and receive support, grow spiritually, participate in congregational discernment, and have a good time. Over 90% of members and many participants are a part of a small group.

No one will assign you to a group, but Karl Shelly ([karlss@assemblymennonite.org](mailto:karlss@assemblymennonite.org)) can help you find your way by providing information about existing groups and connecting you with people forming a new group. September is the easiest time to do this, but it can be done throughout the year.

Every September there is opportunity for individuals to "shuffle" (change small groups). Entire groups also periodically shuffle at this time, especially those that have been largely intact for three or more years.

# Assembly terminology

## **2% offering**

On the first Sunday of the month we have two baskets for offerings: one for our regular tithes and offerings, and the other for our 2% offering — 2% of our income which is disbursed to impoverished people locally and in the 2/3rds world. We do this as an act of restitution for injustices in economic distribution. The 2% committee determines how to distribute the funds. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we contribute to the 2% fund by mailing a check to the church office or [giving through the church website](#).

## **Announcements**

An opportunity for anyone to make oral announcements at the end of worship. Brevity is valued. We also have a weekly newsletter called the Assemblyline where announcements are shared. Assemblyline announcements should be emailed to [assemblyline@assemblymennonite.org](mailto:assemblyline@assemblymennonite.org) by 11 p.m. on Thursdays.

## **AssemblyLine**

Weekly announcements; available by email, online, or on paper by request. You can subscribe to receive the Assemblyline via email by clicking [here](#).

## **Birthday ice cream visit**

Assembly children up through middle school are celebrated during first hour on a Sunday close to the child's birthday, along with a few sentences about the child in that week's Assemblyline. Children ages 3 through grade 8 get taken out for ice cream by a member of the pastoral team each year for the child's birthday. To ensure your children can participate in this tradition, give your children's names and birthdates to the Administrator by filling out the [Contact Form](#).

## **CDC or Central District Conference**

Assembly is a member of [Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA](#).

## **Congregational meeting**

Assembly does not have a traditional church council or church board. Instead, there are monthly gatherings of all interested adults to discuss congregational business and make decisions.

## **Faith**

When used with a capital F, "Faith" refers to [Faith Mennonite Church](#), our sister congregation that shares our meetinghouse on New York Street.

## **Fellowship time**

A time to visit informally with 3-4 other households at a time, in an 8-minute "breakout room" on Zoom, following the "first hour" of online worship. Bring your own coffee, tea, and snacks!

## **First hour**

The first portion of the morning worship service, from about 10:00-11:00 AM on Zoom.

## **Gathering space**

The area just outside the worship space with the mailboxes. Also called the lobby or the narthex.

## **Junior youth**

Grades 6-8

## **Labyrinth**

The labyrinth in our memorial garden (on the south side of the meetinghouse) was recently built (in November 2020) and is open for your use, although the garden is an ongoing project. For general information about labyrinths, you may visit this webpage: <https://emu.edu/seminary/labyrinth>.

## **Leadership Group**

The closest Assembly equivalent to a church council or church board. Six elders, 1-2 apprentice elders, and the pastoral team, who meet at least once a month to provide support for the pastoral team and do initial processing of church business to prepare for congregational meetings.

## **LGBT or LGBTQ or GLBT**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer/Questioning. Assembly is a “welcoming” congregation, meaning that all people who are LGBTQ are welcome to worship with us and be fully part of the congregation.

## **Library of Care**

We recently began to introduce our Library of Care to the congregation, during our Epiphany worship series in January 2021. This is a collection of items crafted by artists and artisans in the congregation that you may “check out”. Each item represents a place where you might be on your spiritual/life journey. For example: “Barren Space” or “Waiting” or “New Beginnings”. Each person’s path is different—each will have their own moments of achievement, transition, and sorrow. We know God shows love for each of us at every point in our lives.

## **Listserv**

An electronic mailing list to which we send Orders of Worship and Sharing & Prayer emails each week, as well as information about other events. This is separate from the list of Assemblyline subscribers. We also have a separate listserv for parents, which we use to send appropriate resources and information related to children’s activities at Assembly. To sign up for any of these email lists, email

[office@assemblymennonite.org](mailto:office@assemblymennonite.org) or fill out the information sheet at the end of the Assembly Survival Kit.

## **Meetinghouse**

Our building at 727 New York St. While we are not gathering for Sunday morning worship at this location (except for occasional outdoor services in the parking lot in fair weather), we continue to experiment with ways to use our space to help support our community life. [Small groups are welcome to reserve space in the meetinghouse for an in-person gathering with appropriate precautions](#). Contact the church office for more information and to request a reservation.

## **MCC**

[Mennonite Central Committee](#), a relief and development agency supported by a broad constituency of Anabaptist groups, including Mennonites.

## **Ministry Team** (as compared to *committee* and *task force*)

A group of people who wish to give focused attention to a specific faith- and/or justice-related issue. Two current examples are the Prayer Ministry Team and the Safety Networks Ministry Team. Ministry teams vary from Assembly committees and task forces by having voluntary membership and a life span determined by the members. Committees and task forces are appointed by leadership group and/or congregational discernment. Committees renew annually through the leader selection process. Task forces end when their task is completed.

## **Multipurpose space**

Also sometimes called the “old worship space”. This space has typically been used for in-person fellowship break, fellowship meals, congregational meetings, and elective classrooms.

## **MYF**

Mennonite Youth Fellowship, grades 9-12.

## **Pastoral team**

Assembly’s team of four co-pastors functions as a support/guide for the congregation, with an intentionally non-hierarchical structure. The pastors work with the rest of the Leadership Group to provide congregational leadership, and pastors share the responsibility of providing pastoral care with small groups. Each pastor preaches only a few times a year; small groups and other participants contribute their gifts to preaching and worship leading on Sundays. Assembly thinks of leadership a bit differently than many churches, so you don’t have to be officially welcomed by the pastor to become a part of the congregation. Still, they’d very much like to meet you, so don’t hesitate to reach out to one of them. Email is a great way to contact the pastors. To contact one of the pastors, or the church office, fill out the [Contact Form](#).

## **Phone list**

The Assembly phone list is updated several times a year and is therefore the most up-to-date version of an Assembly directory at any given time. You can find it on the church website [here](#). (You will need the username and password; to get that information, contact the church office or one of the pastors).

## **Privileges of the Child**

A long-cherished document for Assembly; it can be found on the church website [here](#). For information about how we seek to include children and their parents in our church life during the COVID-19 pandemic, [please contact Lora Nafziger](#), Pastor of Faith Formation.

Given the preciousness of our children and youth and their potential vulnerability to abuse, we covenant for their safety and full participation in our community. Out of our commitment to love and care for all of God's creation we make a covenant to our children, youth, adults, families and community. This Covenant, along with Assembly's "Digital Communications Policy" and "How to Report Suspect Abuse" [can be found here](#).

## **Reps**

Short for "Small group representatives." Small groups are the building block of Assembly life, pastoral care and general functioning. Each small group has a rep, and reps meet monthly during the school year to share and process congregational needs. Small group reps also select congregational elders (who serve on Leadership Group) on behalf of their groups. Small groups take turns planning and leading worship services in certain seasons of the year, and also assist with tasks such as fall and spring workdays at the meetinghouse. Small groups also do some processing of congregational business.

## **Second hour and electives**

"Second hour" refers to activities that follow the "first hour" of worship on Sunday mornings. Sometimes "second hour" involves worship, fellowship, and/or sharing. Other times "second hour" involves "Sunday school"-like discussion for adults. We often use the term "electives" rather than "Sunday school" because we do not have classes with a fixed membership; instead you can "elect" (choose) to join a second hour discussion based on your interest in the topic.

## **Small group shuffle**

An annual opportunity for people to join or change small groups. Shuffling is not mandated, but most groups shift in some way about every three years, with the goal of several new groups forming each fall. Small groups are an important part of the life of Assembly. Contact Karl Shelly via the [Contact Form](#) to learn more about joining a small group.

## **Supportive Communities Network or SCN**

A network of churches and other groups who support and welcome Christians who are LGBTQ+ (see above). Assembly is a member of SCN, which is associated with BMC, the Brethren-Mennonite Council for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Interests. <https://www.bmclgbt.org/scn>

## **"Third Hour" Facebook Group**

An unofficial private group on Facebook where current & recent Assembly participants can share personal or important information that affects our lives. Think of it as a social media version of the "sharing time" that is often part of our worship services. "Third Hour" is moderated by volunteer admins, and is not monitored by the pastors or church staff. This private Facebook group is separate from the public Assembly Mennonite Church Facebook page. You can visit and request to join the group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AMC3rdHour>.

## **"Worship nook"**

This is a small "house" next to the entrance to the labyrinth. (It looks something like a little free library). This is a place where you are invited to come, read, and pray. You can expect to find weekly psalms, seasonal prayers and poems, and prayer rocks. We are just beginning to house worship resources here for the use of visitors to our labyrinth. [View photos of the worship nook here](#).

## **Worship space**

Often called a "sanctuary" in other church buildings.

## **Zoom**

An online platform we are using for online worship, congregational meetings, small group meetings, etc. during the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to experiment with how we can use technology to enhance and support a participatory style of worship, and to connect with one another in meaningful ways while being responsible in our care for one another, especially those most at-risk in the current pandemic. Many of us suffer from "Zoom fatigue," but we are also grateful for the opportunity to connect and "see" one another in this way. You can join our regular Zoom meetings using this link: <https://zoom.us/j/9995275153>.

## Assembly Survival Kit response sheet

If you would like to deepen your connection to Assembly, or have more questions, please return this sheet to Jane Litwiller in the church office: [office@assemblymennonite.org](mailto:office@assemblymennonite.org).

Name(s)

Email and/or phone number:

Ages of children, if applicable:

Two sentences about you/your household (Ex/ I just moved to Goshen from Chicago because I accepted a job at Goshen Hospital. My children will be attending Waterford Elementary):

Please check any that apply:

- Add me to the church listserv (to receive weekly emails about worship and other events).
- I would like a directory of church participants' phone numbers & email addresses.
- I would like a username and password to access the church website.
- Add my email address to the church participants' email directory. Email address(es):
- Add my phone number & mailing address to the phone directory. Address and phone number(s):
- I'd like my photo included in the next photo directory update. (Please attach photo)
- Add my children to the Sunday school list. Birthdays:
- I would like information about joining a small group
- I would like to complete a worship gifts form
- I would like to complete a Hospitality and Childcare tasks volunteer form
- I'd like to ask someone about \_\_\_\_\_ at Assembly.
- Other: