

# MENNONITE BODIES

## GENERAL STATEMENT

### HISTORY

The origin of the denominations classed under the head of Mennonite bodies is traced by some to an early period in the history of the Christian Church. As various changes in doctrine and church organization came about, in both the East and the West, a number of communities, unwilling to accept them and preferring the simplicity of the Apostolic Church, remained more or less distinct through the Middle Ages. These communities received various names in different localities and in different centuries, but from the time of the first General Council at Nicea in the early part of the fourth century to the Conference of Dort, Holland, in 1632, they represented a general protest against ecclesiastical rule and a rigid liturgy, and an appeal for the simpler organization, worship, and faith of the apostolic age.

Present historical authorities, however, see little or no connection between these early independent movements and the present Mennonite Church, since those who founded the body to which present Mennonite bodies trace their origin came out from the Roman Catholic Church.

The first congregation of the church now known as Mennonite was organized in January, 1525, at Zurich, Switzerland, by Conrad Grebel, Felix Mantz, George Blaurock, and others. They called themselves "Brethren" (Swiss Brethren), but were commonly known as "Täufer." Grebel and his friends had been ardent coworkers with Ulrich Zwingli, but had withdrawn from his leadership in 1523, when they had realized that he would consent to a union of the church with the state, and that a church was to be established in which the whole population of the state would be obliged to hold membership. Zwingli's program called for the introduction of certain reforms in the existing Roman Catholic State Church. Grebel and his friends did not recognize infant baptism as scriptural. Hence they baptized again those who had been baptized in their infancy. For this reason they were called Anabaptists (Re-Baptizers). In 1534 the first Anabaptist congregations were organized in Holland by Obbe Philips. Two years later Obbe baptized Menno Simons (1496-1561), a converted Catholic priest. Menno soon became the most prominent leader of the "Obbenites," as the followers of Obbe Philips were called, in Holland and North Germany.

The name "Mennonite" dates from 1550, but would scarcely be recognized in Holland, where the usual name is "Doopsgezinde," or "Dooper," the Dutch equivalent for the English "Baptist." Similarly in parts of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, the German form "Taufgesinnte," or "Täufer," was used to indicate Baptists, although this name was not applied to all Mennonites. It was to some of the Flemish Mennonites, who, upon the invitation of King Henry VIII, settled in England and became the pioneers of the great weaving industry of that country, that the Baptists of England were largely indebted for their organization as a religious body, although it was not as "Mennonites" that they were invited to come to England, since it is known that persons of this faith were severely persecuted in England in the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth along with other nonconformists.

The persecutions of the Mennonites were due to the fact that in all countries, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, church and state were united and dissenters were not tolerated. The number of Mennonites martyred is very great. Their

*Book of Martyrs* (First German Edition, Ephrata, Pa., 1749; English Edition, Elkhart, Ind., 1886) is a ponderous volume. In the Netherlands the persecution was very severe, but by the second decade after Menno Simons' death his followers had increased to respectable numbers, since in many places the authorities had been slow to carry out the decrees against them. The very presence of these numerous Mennonites proved the error of the supposition that the best interest of the state demands the toleration of only one creed within its realms. Holland became the first country to throw this principle overboard and grant religious freedom. After the founder of the Dutch Republic, William of Orange, had embraced the Reformed faith he ordered the cessation of persecution there (in 1577).

In Switzerland the persecution continued well into the seventeenth century. The last martyr was Hans Landis, the most prominent Mennonite bishop of that time, who was beheaded at Zurich in 1614. Thereafter many were imprisoned and some sentenced to the galleys.

After the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) Mennonites were permitted to settle in the Palatinate, in South Germany. Many fled to this province from Switzerland. When William Penn acquired Pennsylvania from the English Crown, he offered a home to all who were persecuted for their faith. The Mennonite pioneers in America were 13 families from Crefeld, Germany, who came on the ship *Concord*, in 1683, and settled at Germantown, now a part of Philadelphia. During the eighteenth century many Swiss Mennonites emigrated to Pennsylvania. They were for the most part poor. Their brethren in Holland formed an organization for the aid of those who did not have the means to go to America and contributed liberally for this purpose. Practically all the so-called Pennsylvania Dutch Mennonites are of Swiss descent. As their numbers increased during the first third of the eighteenth century, the Mennonites spread northward and westward from Germantown into Lancaster, Bucks, Berks, Montgomery, and other counties in Pennsylvania, and from these original settlements they have since spread to western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and farther west, and to Canada. As these early settlers came in contact with the Indians, they often found that their nonresistant principles served as a better protection than the rifles and stockades of most of the settlers, and there are but few records of injury of any kind inflicted upon them by the Indian tribes.

Since their settlement in this country a number of minor divisions have taken place among the Mennonites, occasioned by divergent views on some questions, but of late years the feeling has developed among nearly all branches that closer union and cooperation along certain common lines of gospel work would be desirable.

#### DOCTRINE

At a conference of some of the Mennonite groups in the Netherlands held at Dort, Holland, in 1632, a compilation of previous confessions of faith was made and called "A Declaration of the Chief Articles of our Common Christian Faith." This confession, containing 18 articles, was later accepted by the Alsatian Mennonites and is accepted by the great majority of the American Mennonite churches to-day.

A brief summary of these articles includes the following:

God the Creator of all things; the fall of man, through his disobedience; his restoration through the promise of the coming of Christ; the Advent of Christ, the Son of God; redemption has been purchased by His death on the cross for all mankind, from the time of Adam to the end of the world, who shall have believed on and obeyed Christ.

The law of Christ is contained in the Gospel, by obedience to which alone humanity is saved. Repentance and conversion, or complete change of life, without which no outward obedience to gospel requirements will avail to please God, is necessary to salvation. All who have repented of their sins and believed on Christ as the Saviour, and in heart and life accept His commandments, are born again. As such they obey the command to be baptized with water as a public testimony of their faith, are members of the Church of Jesus Christ, and are incorporated into the communion of the saints on earth. By partaking of the Lord's Supper the members express a common union with one another and a fellowship of love for and faith in Jesus Christ. The washing of the saints' feet is an ordinance instituted, and its perpetual observance commanded, by Christ. The state of matrimony is honorable between those spiritually kindred, and such alone can marry "in the Lord."

The civil government is a part of God's ministry, and members are not permitted to despise, blaspheme, or resist the government, but must be subject to it in all things and obedient to all its commands that do not militate against the will and law of God, and should pray earnestly for the government and its welfare, and in behalf of their country. Christ has forbidden his followers the use of carnal force in resisting evil and the seeking of revenge for evil treatment. Love for enemies can not be shown by acts of hatred and revenge, but by deeds of love and good will. The use of all oaths is forbidden, as contrary to God's will, though simple affirmation is allowed.

Those who willfully sin against God are to be excluded from the rights and privileges of the church, but are to be kindly exhorted to amend their ways, the object of expulsion being the amendment, not the destruction, of the offender, and for the benefit of the church. Those who, on account of their obstinacy, are finally reprovved and expelled from the church, because separated from God, must also be shunned socially, "that the openly obstinate and reprobate one may not defile others in the church," though in case of need they are to be kindly cared for, and admonished as those in need of spiritual help.

At the end of earth and earthly existence, all those who have lived and shall then be living are to be changed in a moment at the sound of the last trump, and are to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, where the good shall be separated from the evil; the good to enter into the heavenly joys prepared for them, the evil to depart forever from God's presence and mercy into the place prepared for the devil and his servants.

To the conviction that some of the requirements of civil law are contrary to the will and law of God is largely due the fact that the Mennonites have suffered so severely in past centuries, and have often been charged with being "clannish."

The Lord's Supper is observed twice a year in nearly all the congregations, and the great majority of them also observe the ordinance of washing the saints' feet in connection with and immediately after the Lord's Supper. In nearly all the Mennonite bodies baptism is by pouring.

#### ORGANIZATION

With two exceptions the form of church government in the different bodies of the Mennonites is the same. The local church is autonomous, deciding all matters affecting itself. District or State conferences are established, in most cases, to which appeals may be made; otherwise the authority of the congregation or of a committee appointed by the congregation is final. All decisions of State or district conferences are presented to the individual congregation for ratification. The divinely appointed offices of the Church of Christ are held to be those of bishop (sometimes called elder and sometimes presbyter), minister (pastor or evangelist), and almoner (deacon). The ministers are generally self-supporting, sharing the farming life of most of the Mennonite communities. Besides these there are teachers, male and female, as coworkers in the administration of the work.

STATISTICS

The denominations grouped as Mennonite bodies in 1926, 1916, and 1906 are listed in the following table, with the principal statistics as reported for the three periods.

As will be noted, there have been a number of changes in the names of the denominations, occasioned partly by changes in the bodies themselves, partly by a better classification. The Bruederhoef Mennonite Church is now known as the Hutterian Brethren, Mennonites; the Central Illinois Conference has dropped the "Illinois"; the Schellenberger Brueder-Gemeinde is now the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America; and the Nebraska and Minnesota Conference of Mennonites is now the Conference of Defenseless Mennonites of North America. The Amish Mennonite Church of 1906 has been consolidated with the Mennonite Church, but in its place has appeared the Conservative Amish Mennonite Church, while the Old Amish Mennonite Church has become the Old Order Amish Mennonite Church. The Stauffer Mennonites constituted a new body in 1916, as did the Kleine Gemeinde, which appears to have been included with the Krimmer Brueder-Gemeinde in 1906. The Unaffiliated Mennonite Congregations, shown for the first time in 1926, comprise various bodies of Mennonites who adhere to the tenets of the Confession of Faith adopted by the Mennonites at Dort in 1632, but have not affiliated themselves with any of the organized conferences.

In view of the influence exerted by the Amish Mennonites in the development of the Mennonite bodies, a preliminary statement of the movement is given following the summary of statistics and preceding the statement of the Mennonite Church, with which the Amish Mennonite Church as an ecclesiastical body has been consolidated.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE MENNONITE BODIES: 1926, 1916, AND 1906

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
1926								
<b>Total for the group</b> .....	826	87,164	680	\$4,453,613	731	\$1,270,067	631	87,897
Mennonite Church.....	295	34,039	264	1,565,800	279	320,151	261	37,788
Hutterian Brethren, Mennonites.....	6	700	5	19,000	3	9,645	3	115
Conservative Amish Mennonite Church.....	7	691	7	16,845	5	2,718	6	871
Old Order Amish Mennonite Church.....	71	6,006	5	20,300	35	8,011	13	898
Church of God in Christ (Mennonite).....	26	1,832	18	78,850	18	7,705	8	436
Old Order Mennonite Church (Wisler).....	19	2,227	18	68,700	12	2,504		
Reformed Mennonite Church.....	31	1,117	28	108,800	27	20,565		
General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America.....	136	21,582	130	1,212,350	131	378,794	130	23,537
Defenseless Mennonites.....	10	1,060	10	87,200	10	37,001	10	1,386
Mennonite Brethren in Christ.....	99	5,882	90	544,643	96	229,803	93	8,560
Mennonite Brethren Church of North America.....	61	6,484	49	318,920	54	118,384	50	7,575
Krimmer Brueder-Gemeinde.....	14	797	14	54,105	14	13,543	14	1,182
Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.....	4	214	4	6,700	4	486	3	150
Central Conference of Mennonites.....	29	3,124	24	263,000	29	100,747	28	3,614
Conference of the Defenseless Mennonites of North America.....	9	818	9	60,900	9	14,680	8	1,415
Stauffer Mennonite Church.....	4	243	2	4,500	1	180		
Unaffiliated Mennonite Congregations.....	5	348	3	23,000	4	5,150	4	370

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE MENNONITE BODIES, 1926, 1916, AND 1906—  
Continued

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
<b>1916</b>								
<b>Total for the group</b> .....	<b>835</b>	<b>79,363</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>\$2,292,424</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>\$503,972</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>79,426</b>
Mennonite Church.....	307	34,965	276	1,014,246	281	156,069	270	37,096
Hutterian Brethren.....	17	982	12	11,100			14	605
Conservative Amish Mennonite Church.....	13	1,066	12	20,060	11	3,517	11	882
Old Order Amish Mennonite Church.....	88	7,665			4	406	5	242
Church of God in Christ (Mennonite).....	21	1,125	14	23,815	17	6,333	10	675
Old Order Mennonite Church (Wisler).....	22	1,608	18	43,900	5	185		
Reformed Mennonite Church.....	29	1,281	29	85,965	27	5,606		
General Conference of Mennonites of North America.....	113	15,407	106	544,560	107	149,237	105	17,594
Defenseless Mennonites.....	11	854	11	33,500	10	10,241	10	1,423
Mennonite Brethren in Christ.....	108	4,737	91	223,648	105	91,317	101	7,755
Mennonite Brethren Church of North America.....	53	5,127	47	131,605	53	38,101	53	7,716
Krimmer Brueder-Gemeinde.....	13	894	12	31,700	13	13,075	13	1,556
Kleine Gemeinde.....	3	171	2	3,200	2	25	4	66
Central Conference of Mennonites.....	17	2,101	16	91,500	17	21,621	16	2,059
Conference of the Defenseless Mennonites of North America.....	15	1,171	12	30,625	12	8,239	14	1,757
Stauffer Mennonites.....	5	209	3	3,000				
<b>1906</b>								
<b>Total for the group</b> .....	<b>604</b>	<b>54,798</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>1,237,134</b>			<b>411</b>	<b>44,922</b>
Mennonite Church.....	220	18,674	202	500,112			156	15,798
Bruederhoef Mennonite Church.....	8	275	8	9,100				
Amish Mennonite Church.....	57	7,640	52	122,275			54	6,367
Old Amish Mennonite Church.....	46	5,043	4	6,700			6	493
Reformed Mennonite Church.....	34	2,079	29	52,650				
General Conference of Mennonites of North America.....	90	11,661	84	303,400			84	12,472
Church of God in Christ (Mennonite).....	18	562	2	1,600				
Old (Wisler) Mennonite Church.....	9	655	9	17,950				
Defenseless Mennonites.....	14	967	13	16,800			13	1,102
Mennonite Brethren in Christ.....	68	2,801	57	140,747			59	3,720
Bundes Conferenz der Mennoniten Brueder-Gemeinde:								
Krimmer Brueder-Gemeinde.....	6	708	6	17,900			6	680
(Schellenberger Brueder-Gemeinde).....	13	1,825	13	13,000			13	2,550
Central Illinois Conference of Mennonites.....	13	1,363	12	25,900			12	968
Nebraska and Minnesota Conference of Mennonites.....	8	545	6	9,000			8	782

## AMISH MENNONITE MOVEMENT

Jacob Ammon, or Amen, whose name gave the term "Amish" to the movement, was a native of Canton Bern, Switzerland; but, probably to escape persecution, he settled in Alsace in 1659. There was a tendency on the part of many of the Mennonites of the time, during the interval of rest from persecution, to become lax in their religious life and discipline. Ammon was the acknowledged leader of those who held to the strict letter of Menno Simons' teachings and the literal interpretation of several points of doctrine presented in the Confession of Faith, adopted at the Conference held at Dort, Holland, in 1632. Maintaining that, because they were not literally and rigorously carried out, some of the articles of the confession were a dead letter with many of the congregations, he traveled extensively, laboring to restore the communities to the spiritual life and condition manifested during Menno's ministry among them. The special point of

divergence between his followers and the other Mennonites was in regard to the exercise of the ban, or excommunication of disobedient members, as taught in I Corinthians v, 9-11; II Thessalonians III, 14; Titus III, 10, and incorporated in the Confession of Faith. The Amish party interpreted these passages as applying to daily life and the daily table; while the others understood them to mean simply the exclusion of expelled members from the communion table.

In 1690 two bishops, Ammon and Blank, acted as a committee to investigate conditions in Switzerland and southern Germany. As those accused of laxity in the particulars mentioned did not appear when called upon to answer the charges preferred against them, the Amish leaders expelled them. They in turn disowned the Amish party, and the separation was completed in 1698. Some time after this, Ammon and his followers made overtures for a reconciliation and union of the two factions, but these were rejected, and it remained for the closing years of the nineteenth century, almost exactly two centuries later, to see the steps taken that virtually reunited the two bodies, or the main part of each, for in the meantime there had been other divisions between the extreme elements of both.

At about the time of the separation, the migration of Mennonites from Europe to the crown lands acquired by William Penn in America began to assume large proportions, and included many of the Amish Mennonites, who settled in what now comprises Lancaster, Mifflin, Somerset, Lawrence, and Union Counties, in Pennsylvania. William Penn himself traveled extensively among the Mennonites in Europe, preaching in their meetings, and rendering them aid in various ways. From Pennsylvania the Amish Mennonites moved with the westward tide of migration into Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Nebraska, and other States. There was also a large exodus from Pennsylvania and from Europe direct to Canada, principally to the section westward of the large tract acquired by the early Mennonite settlers in Waterloo County, Ontario.

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century a growing sentiment in favor of closer relations between the two main bodies of Mennonites became manifest. Many prominent men on both sides, feeling that the division of 1698 was an error for which both sides were more or less to blame, used their influence toward a reconciliation. The establishment in 1864 of a religious periodical, and later the publication of other religious literature, for the benefit of, and supported by, both the Mennonite Church and the Amish Mennonites, naturally drew them into closer relationship. One result was the revival in both branches of direct evangelistic and missionary effort, which had been largely neglected ever since the migration from Europe to America. In this resumption of long neglected activities, denominational lines between the two bodies were disregarded. The establishment also of a common church school, in the closing decade of the last century, brought the most prominent men and ablest thinkers, as well as the young people of both parties, into one working body. Almost simultaneous with this, and as a natural result of it, was the establishment in 1898 of a General Conference, in which each body was accorded equal rights in all things pertaining to conference work. Subsequently, as stated above, the three conferences reported in 1906 as Amish Mennonite became identified with the Mennonite Church,<sup>1</sup> and the term as used at present refers to the two main branches—Conservative and Old Order—which still retain some of the beliefs and practices which were the basis of the separation.

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<sup>1</sup> See Conservative Amish Mennonite Church, p. 860, and Old Order Amish Mennonite Church, p. 864.

# GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

## STATISTICS

**Summary for the United States, with urban-rural classification.**—A general summary of the statistics for the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America for the year 1926 is presented in Table 1, which shows also the distribution of these figures between urban and rural territory.

The membership of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America consists of communicant members of the local congregations, who have made confession of faith and have been baptized.

**TABLE 1.—SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, 1926: GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA**

ITEM	Total	In urban territory <sup>1</sup>	In rural territory <sup>1</sup>	PER CENT OF TOTAL <sup>2</sup>	
				Urban	Rural
<b>Churches</b> (local organizations)-----	136	19	117	14.0	86.0
<b>Members</b> -----	21,582	3,106	18,476	14.4	85.6
Average per church-----	159	163	158		
Membership by sex:					
Male-----	7,805	1,220	6,585	15.6	84.4
Female-----	8,638	1,508	7,130	17.5	82.5
Sex not reported-----	5,139	378	4,761	7.4	92.6
Males per 100 females-----	90.4	80.9	92.4		
Membership by age:					
Under 13 years-----	8	6	2		
13 years and over-----	18,706	2,770	15,936	14.8	85.2
Age not reported-----	2,868	330	2,538	11.5	88.5
Per cent under 13 years <sup>3</sup> -----	( <sup>4</sup> )	0.2	( <sup>4</sup> )		
<b>Church edifices:</b>					
Number-----	131	19	112	14.5	85.5
Value—Churches reporting-----	130	18	112	13.8	86.2
Amount reported-----	\$1,212,350	\$330,600	\$881,750	27.3	72.7
Average per church-----	\$9,326	\$18,367	\$7,873		
Debt—Churches reporting-----	13	5	8		
Amount reported-----	\$20,995	\$15,600	\$5,395	74.3	25.7
Churches reporting "no debt" on church edifice-----	98	10	88		
<b>Parsonages:</b>					
Value—Churches reporting-----	22	4	18		
Amount reported-----	\$112,850	\$32,000	\$80,850	28.4	71.6
Debt—Churches reporting-----	4	1	3		
Amount reported-----	\$6,700	\$2,000	\$4,700	29.9	70.1
Churches reporting "no debt" on parsonage-----	13	2	11		
<b>Expenditures during year:</b>					
Churches reporting-----	131	18	113	13.7	86.3
Amount reported-----	\$378,794	\$65,489	\$313,305	17.3	82.7
Current expenses and improvements-----	\$196,411	\$41,205	\$155,206	21.0	79.0
Benevolences, missions, etc.-----	\$182,383	\$24,284	\$158,099	13.3	86.7
Average expenditure per church-----	\$2,892	\$3,638	\$2,773		
<b>Sunday schools:</b>					
Churches reporting-----	130	18	112	13.8	86.2
Officers and teachers-----	1,923	325	1,598	16.9	83.1
Scholars-----	23,537	3,237	20,300	13.8	86.2

<sup>1</sup> Urban territory includes all cities and other incorporated places which had 2,500 inhabitants or more in 1920, the date of the last Federal census; rural territory comprises the remainder of the country.

<sup>2</sup> Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

<sup>3</sup> Based on membership with age classification reported.

<sup>4</sup> Less than one-tenth of 1 per cent.

The data given for 1926 represent 136 active organizations of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, with 21,582 members. The classification of membership by sex was reported by 98 churches and the classification by age was reported by 121 churches, including, however, only 5 which reported any members under 13 years of age.

**Comparative data, 1890-1926.**—Table 2 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this denomination for the censuses of 1926, 1916, 1906, and 1890. Figures for 1890 include those for the Apostolic Mennonite Church, which united with this denomination between 1890 and 1906.

**TABLE 2.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1890 TO 1926: GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA**

ITEM	1926	1916	1906	<sup>1</sup> 1890
<b>Churches (local organizations)</b> .....	136	113	90	47
Increase over preceding census:				
Number.....	23	23	43	
Per cent <sup>2</sup> .....	20.4			
<b>Members</b> .....	21,582	15,407	11,661	5,879
Increase over preceding census:				
Number.....	6,175	3,746	5,782	
Per cent.....	40.1	32.1	98.4	
Average membership per church.....	159	136	130	125
<b>Church edifices:</b>				
Number.....	131	107	89	44
Value—Churches reporting.....	130	106	84	
Amount reported.....	\$1,212,350	\$544,560	\$303,400	\$120,550
Average per church.....	\$9,326	\$5,137	\$3,612	
Debt—Churches reporting.....	13	14	9	
Amount reported.....	\$20,995	\$15,400	\$5,690	
<b>Parsonages:</b>				
Value—Churches reporting.....	22	11	9	
Amount reported.....	\$112,850	\$22,200	\$19,050	
Debt—Churches reporting.....	4			
Amount reported.....	\$6,700			
<b>Expenditures during year:</b>				
Churches reporting.....	131	107		
Amount reported.....	\$378,794	\$149,237		
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$196,411	\$72,813		
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$182,383	\$76,424		
Average expenditure per church.....	\$2,892	\$1,395		
<b>Sunday schools:</b>				
Churches reporting.....	130	105	84	
Officers and teachers.....	1,923	1,377	1,148	
Scholars.....	23,537	17,594	12,472	

<sup>1</sup> Statistics for 1890 include the Apostolic Mennonite Church, consolidated between 1890 and 1906 with this denomination.  
<sup>2</sup> Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

**State tables.**—Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 present the statistics for the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America by States. Table 3 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches classified according to their location in urban or rural territory and the total membership classified by sex. Table 4 gives for selected States the number and membership of the churches for the three censuses from 1906 to 1926, together with the membership for 1926 classified as under 13 years of age and 13 years of age and over. Table 5 shows the value of church property and the debt on such property, for 1926 alone. Table 6 presents, for 1926, the church expenditures, showing separately the amounts expended for current expenses and improvements, and for benevolences, etc., and also gives the data for Sunday schools. Separate presentation in Tables 5 and 6 is limited to those States in which three or more churches



reported the principal items shown (values or expenditures), in order to avoid disclosing the financial statistics of any individual church. The States omitted from these tables can be determined by referring to the complete list which appears in Table 3.

**Ecclesiastical divisions.**—Table 7 presents, for each district in the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, the more important statistical data shown by States in the earlier tables, including number of churches, membership, value of church edifices, debt on church edifices, expenditures, and Sunday schools.

**TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, AND TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA**

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX			
	Total	Ur- ban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Male	Fe- male	Sex not re- ported	Males per 100 females ( <sup>1</sup> )
United States.....	136	19	117	21,582	3,106	18,476	7,805	8,638	5,139	90.4
Middle Atlantic:										
Pennsylvania.....	25	10	15	2,982	1,494	1,488	843	1,092	1,047	77.2
East North Central:										
Ohio.....	7	1	6	2,002	105	1,897	393	422	1,187	93.1
Indiana.....	3	1	2	1,215	129	1,086	559	656	-----	85.2
Illinois.....	2	1	1	208	50	158	102	106	-----	96.2
West North Central:										
Minnesota.....	7	-----	7	1,092	-----	1,092	424	508	160	83.5
Iowa.....	4	-----	4	1,042	-----	1,042	484	558	-----	86.7
Missouri.....	1	-----	1	160	-----	160	-----	-----	160	-----
North Dakota.....	3	-----	3	239	-----	239	24	21	194	-----
South Dakota.....	6	-----	6	1,263	-----	1,263	629	634	-----	99.2
Nebraska.....	4	1	3	1,010	330	680	499	511	-----	97.7
Kansas.....	35	3	32	6,657	587	6,070	2,360	2,534	1,763	93.1
West South Central:										
Oklahoma.....	19	-----	19	1,595	-----	1,595	486	576	533	84.4
Texas.....	1	-----	1	63	-----	63	35	28	-----	-----
Mountain:										
Montana.....	2	-----	2	212	-----	212	98	84	30	-----
Idaho.....	2	-----	2	221	-----	221	116	105	-----	110.5
Colorado.....	2	-----	2	52	-----	52	24	28	-----	-----
Pacific:										
Washington.....	4	-----	4	336	-----	336	167	169	-----	98.8
Oregon.....	2	-----	2	222	-----	222	87	70	65	-----
California.....	7	2	5	1,011	411	600	475	536	-----	88.6

<sup>1</sup> Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

## HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION <sup>1</sup>

### DENOMINATIONAL HISTORY

In March, 1859, two small Mennonite congregations in Lee County, Iowa, composed of immigrants from southern Germany, held a conference to discuss the possible union of all the Mennonite bodies in America. Until that time, while in a general way the different organizations had held to the same doctrines, they had not cooperated actively, or at least had taken no concerted part in any particular work. The resolutions adopted at this meeting drew the attention of all the Mennonite bodies. Among those especially interested was John Oberholzer, of Bucks County, Pa., who had taken advanced ground in the matter of aggressive work, and, together with 16 other ministers, having been charged with

<sup>1</sup> This statement, which is substantially the same as that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, has been revised by Rev. J. A. Ressler, editor of the Mennonite Year Book, Scottsdale, Pa., and approved by him in its present form.

TABLE 4.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, 1906 TO 1926, AND MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926, BY STATES: GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches in either 1926, 1916, or 1906]

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926			
	1926	1916	1906	1926	1916	1906	Under 13 years	13 years and over	Age not reported	Per cent under 13 <sup>1</sup>
United States.....	136	113	90	21,532	15,407	11,661	8	18,706	2,868	(?)
Pennsylvania.....	25	18	14	2,932	1,992	1,675	2	2,724	256	0.1
Ohio.....	7	8	9	2,002	1,954	1,526	—	2,002	—	—
Indiana.....	3	1	2	1,215	904	920	1	1,214	—	0.1
Minnesota.....	7	6	1	1,092	990	262	—	763	329	—
Iowa.....	4	2	4	1,042	408	767	—	1,042	—	—
North Dakota.....	3	2	—	239	107	—	—	194	45	—
South Dakota.....	6	5	5	1,263	769	562	1	1,047	215	0.1
Nebraska.....	4	6	5	1,010	927	679	—	150	860	—
Kansas.....	35	27	21	6,657	4,937	3,581	1	5,493	1,163	(?)
Oklahoma.....	19	15	18	1,595	915	1,145	—	1,595	—	—
Montana.....	2	4	1	212	111	5	—	212	—	—
Idaho.....	2	3	—	221	257	—	—	221	—	—
Washington.....	4	2	1	336	124	38	—	336	—	—
California.....	7	8	2	1,011	560	100	3	1,008	—	0.3
Other States.....	8	6	7	705	452	401	—	705	—	—

<sup>1</sup> Based on membership with age classification reported.      <sup>2</sup> Less than one-tenth of 1 per cent.

insubordination to the then established form of church government in his conference and having been disowned by that conference, had organized a separate conference in eastern Pennsylvania in October, 1847. The publication by Oberholzer of the *Religiöser Botschafter*, founded in 1852 and later styled *Christliches Volksblatt*, gave wide publicity and strong support to the new union movement, which promised to advance along broader and more liberal lines than his conference had permitted. The Iowa congregations extended a general invitation to all Mennonite congregations and conferences, and in May, 1860, at West Point, Iowa, the first effort was made to hold a general conference of Mennonites in America. While this conference was not completely representative, questions of education, missions, and unity were discussed, and the organization of the General Conference of Mennonites in America was brought about. On the basis of uniting in the support of mission work, other congregations were soon added, and the membership and influence of the body grew rapidly. Many of the congregations whose members had come from Russia and Germany since 1850, and who had become acquainted with the movement before leaving Europe, joined the new organization. Among the Amish Mennonites who came from Europe and settled in Ohio about 1840 were some who favored greater leniency in discipline, and who separated from the Amish body on that account. They were known as the Apostolic Mennonite Church, but since the organization of the General Conference of Mennonites they have affiliated with that body.

The church is well organized and aggressive in the various lines of Christian effort, and is rapidly increasing in numbers in the United States and Canada.

DOCTRINE

In doctrine this body is, with few exceptions, in strict accord with other Mennonites, the main difference being that in most of the congregations the passage in I Corinthians xi, 4-15, is not understood as making obligatory the use of a covering for the head of female members during prayer and worship,

**TABLE 5.—VALUE OF CHURCH PROPERTY, AND CHURCH DEBT, BY STATES, 1926:  
GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA**

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting value of edifices]

STATE	Total number of churches	Number of church edifices	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		DEBT ON CHURCH EDIFICES		VALUE OF PARSONAGES		DEBT ON PARSONAGES	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount
United States.....	136	131	130	\$1, 212, 350	13	\$20, 995	22	\$112, 850	4	\$6, 700
Pennsylvania.....	25	25	25	259, 400	4	8, 300	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Ohio.....	7	7	7	149, 000			(1)	(1)		
Indiana.....	3	3	3	87, 500			(1)	(1)		
Minnesota.....	7	7	7	41, 000						
Iowa.....	4	4	4	46, 000			3	18, 600		
North Dakota.....	3	3	3	14, 500						
South Dakota.....	6	6	6	53, 400	1	1, 620	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Nebraska.....	4	5	4	31, 000						
Kansas.....	35	34	34	296, 100	5	4, 650	4	12, 500		
Oklahoma.....	19	17	17	54, 200			(1)	(1)		
Washington.....	4	4	4	26, 500	1	150				
California.....	7	7	7	92, 700	1	6, 000	(1)	(1)		
Other States <sup>2</sup> .....	12	9	9	61, 050	1	275	15	81, 750	4	6, 700

<sup>1</sup> Amount included in figures shown for "Other States," to avoid disclosing the statistics of individual churches.

<sup>2</sup> The figures for parsonages (value and debt) include data for 9 churches in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and California.

and that the passage in John XIII, 4-15, is not generally believed to command the institution of an ordinance (that of foot washing) to be observed according to the example there described. In the matter of conformity to the world, some congregations adhere less strictly than others to the articles of faith adopted by the body as a whole. Their common ground of union is contained in the following confession:

This conference recognizes and acknowledges the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only and infallible rule of faith and life; for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." In matters of faith it is therefore required of the congregations which unite with the conference that, accepting the above confession, they hold fast to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, baptism on confession of faith, the refusal of all oaths, the Christ-taught doctrine of peace and non-resistance, and the practice of a scriptural church discipline.

#### ORGANIZATION

The local church is autonomous in its government, although appeal may be made to the local and district conferences, which meet annually. The General Conference meets every three years, and is not a legislative, but an advisory body, having no power to act in any way prejudicial to the rights of the individual congregations. Any congregation of any Mennonite body, upon agreeing to and adopting the constitution, may become a member of the General Conference on approval by a majority vote of the conference, every congregation having 1 vote for every 30 communicant members or fraction thereof. This conference elects officers and a board of 9 trustees of which 3 members are chosen at each regular meeting. It also chooses a Board of Home Missions, a Board of Foreign Missions, and a Board of Publication.

TABLE 6.—CHURCH EXPENDITURES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY STATES, 1926:  
GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting expenditures]

STATE	Total number of churches	EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR			SUNDAY SCHOOLS			
		Churches reporting	Total amount	For current expenses and improvements	For benevolences, missions, etc.	Churches reporting	Officers and teachers	Scholars
United States.....	136	131	\$378, 794	\$196, 411	\$182, 383	130	1, 923	23, 537
Pennsylvania.....	25	22	45, 383	32, 888	12, 495	24	300	2, 551
Ohio.....	7	7	36, 448	20, 512	15, 936	7	156	2, 022
Indiana.....	3	3	29, 252	8, 894	20, 358	3	86	1, 599
Minnesota.....	7	6	17, 213	4, 652	12, 561	7	82	1, 166
Iowa.....	4	4	14, 885	9, 267	5, 618	4	120	898
North Dakota.....	3	3	2, 464	1, 125	1, 339	3	23	305
South Dakota.....	6	6	25, 969	12, 860	13, 109	6	107	1, 540
Nebraska.....	4	4	19, 811	8, 070	11, 741	4	74	1, 302
Kansas.....	35	35	111, 082	49, 095	61, 987	32	488	6, 951
Oklahoma.....	19	19	18, 087	10, 590	7, 497	18	146	1, 899
Washington.....	4	4	20, 608	18, 528	2, 080	4	61	431
California.....	7	7	18, 378	9, 074	9, 304	7	107	1, 282
Other States.....	12	11	19, 214	10, 856	8, 358	11	173	1, 591

TABLE 7.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, VALUE OF EDIFICES, DEBT, EXPENDITURES, AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY DISTRICTS, 1926: GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

DISTRICT	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		DEBT ON CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
Total.....	136	21, 582	130	\$1, 212, 350	13	\$20, 995	131	\$378, 794	130	23, 537
Eastern.....	25	2, 982	25	259, 400	4	8, 300	22	45, 383	24	2, 551
Middle.....	17	4, 627	17	326, 500	1	1, 620	17	87, 680	17	5, 074
Northern.....	20	3, 386	19	130, 150	2	6, 150	18	57, 985	20	4, 051
Pacific.....	15	1, 790	14	130, 200	6	4, 925	15	47, 600	15	2, 307
Western.....	59	8, 797	55	366, 100	59	140, 146	59	140, 146	54	9, 554

WORK

Home missionary work is carried on through the agency of the Board of Home Missions, and has for its object the supplying of small and needy congregations with ministers, the sending of evangelists to localities where the gospel is seldom preached, and the conducting of missions in cities. The report for 1926 shows 27 missionaries employed in this work, 7 of these on part time. The contributions amounted to \$26,000. Besides this work of the General Conference the 6 district conferences have also assisted small groups in their respective districts to the extent of about \$10,000.

The work among the Indians of this country is under the care of the Board of Foreign Missions. It is done among the Cheyennes in Oklahoma and Montana, the Arapahoes in Oklahoma, and the Hopis in Arizona. There are 12 churches and 562 members, and the value of the property at 12 stations is \$60,000. The

foreign board also has charge of the work in the Central Provinces, India, and in the province of Chihli, China. The report for 1926 shows 10 stations and 44 outstations and preaching places; 61 American missionaries, 252 native helpers; 12 churches with 1,712 members; 112 schools, with 2,769 pupils and 132 teachers; 7 dispensaries, treating 23,701 patients; a leper home with 500 inmates; 2 orphanages with 214 children; and 55 Sunday schools with 3,783 pupils. The value of the property in these mission fields is \$264,000, and the amount contributed for the work in 1926 was \$120,000.

The educational institutions that receive the major part of their support from the General Conference churches are 2 colleges, 1 academy, and 1 seminary, with a total enrollment of about 1,000. These institutions are at the present time conducting an endowment campaign for \$1,250,000. The value of their real estate, equipment, and present endowment is about \$2,000,000. The enrollment at 9 preparatory schools in 1926 was over 200. The 86 Christian Endeavor societies had a membership of 8,403. The Mennonite Book Concern, Berne, Ind., is Conference property. The church papers are 2 weekly papers, 1 of which is in German; a bilingual monthly; a mission quarterly in both languages; a German and an English yearbook; and German Sunday school quarterlies.

The philanthropic work of the denomination in 1926 included a home for the aged and five hospitals, of which some combine hospital, training school, and home for the aged. Over 3,000 patients received treatment in the last year. The total property value approaches \$750,000. Tons of clothing and thousands of dollars have been sent to over 18,000 coreligionists who have been enabled to escape persecution in Russia and have found welcome asylum in Canada.