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Editor:  
Elwood Yoder

# Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

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## Inter-Mennonite Gatherings

During the first week of January 2026, I met with two groups that included Mennonites from a variety of backgrounds.

On January 1, 7-9 PM, I joined 467 singers for the annual Harmonia Sacra singing held at Weavers Mennonite Church. Folks from a handful of countries outside the U.S. attended, about a dozen U.S. states, and 131 joined online. The building was filled to capacity with some standing.

About 35 men from various Mennonite backgrounds got up early for a weekly Tuesday morning Bible Study on January 6, 2026. Harold N. Miller led an enriching discussion of Old Testament texts frequently cited in the New Testament.

I am encouraged when singers from many backgrounds fill Weavers for praise and inspiration. And I am glad to meet with men from several Mennonite backgrounds to study God's Word. May we find ways to meet together in God's Kingdom. *Elwood Yoder, Editor*



The 124th annual New Years Day Harmonia Sacra singing at Weavers Mennonite Church (above), Harrisonburg, Virginia, January 1, 2026. At podium, Andrea Early, and singing hosts Jeremy Nafziger and Norlyn Wenger. Below, a Men's Bible Study met at Park View Mennonite Church, January 6, 2026, 7:00-8:00 AM, led by Harold N. Miller.

Photos by Elwood Yoder



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## Three Mennonite churches in the Shenandoah Valley observed anniversaries in 2025.

Zion Hill (right) celebrated its centennial anniversary.

Springdale (below left) and Pike (below right) celebrated their bicentennial anniversaries.



## Zion Hill Mennonite Church Centennial, 1925–2025

by Robert Wenger

On Sunday, September 14, 2025, 130 persons gathered at Zion Hill Mennonite Church to celebrate the church's 100-year history. Zion Hill is located at the foot of Little North Mountain, just west of the village of Singers Glen, Virginia. Zion Hill began in the early summer of 1925 on a woodpile at the residence of the Lam family.

Charles and Dillie Lam, with their eight children and Grandma Lam, would rise early on Sunday mornings and walk three miles across Little North Mountain to Gospel Hill Mennonite Church, where Pastor Leonard Jones would lead Sunday morning worship. Pastor Jones had a vision to plant a church in the little community where the Lams lived. That first meeting on the woodpile, held at 2:00 Sunday afternoon, led to

the beginning of Zion Hill. In the summer of 1925, construction began on donated land, with funds and labor donated by community members. As soon as the roof was on the building, with loose boards laid on the floor joists and benches created from nail kegs, regular meetings started on Sunday mornings. The building was dedicated in late summer 1925, with Pastor Leonard Jones serving as the new congregation's first pastor.

The celebration started Sunday morning with several people sharing about the congregation's history and how their lives have been impacted through Summer Bible School, Youth Group activities, and congregational life. Former pastor Lowell Haarer delivered the morning message, followed by a fellowship meal. Co-author Elwood Yoder brought *People of Peace*, a new Men-

nonite history book, and sold nine copies. The afternoon service was largely an open mic, with various attendees invited to share stories from their Zion Hill experiences.

During the service, it was noted that Pastor Leonard Jones still has a presence in the Zion Hill congregation. Merlin Harman, a longtime member of the congregation and now living at VMRC, is a grandson of Leonard Jones and served faithfully in many roles over the years. Two of Merlin's children, Keith and Susan, and Susan's two children, Kenan and Michaela, are very active in the congregation. We are blessed that Pastor Leonard's vision and ministry still impact our congregation four generations later.



Former Zion Hill pastor Lowell Haarer

## Springdale And Pike Mennonite Church Bicentennials

by Elwood Yoder

With beginnings in 1825, Springdale Mennonite Church, Augusta County, Va., was called Kendigs for the first 61 years. On November 1-2, 2025, the congregation held a bicentennial celebration. In the twentieth century, Springdale helped to establish three congregations in Augusta County: Mountain View Mennonite Church, Stuarts Draft Fellowship, and Greenmonte Fellowship.

Springdale dedicated a new brick building in 1941. In 1959, the Springdale meetinghouse caught fire and was destroyed, requiring rebuilding. In the early 1990s, the congregation added a foyer, offices, restrooms, classrooms, a kitchen, and a fellowship hall. In the past fifteen years, Springdale helped start Signs of Life Fellowship and Iglesia Cristiana Shalom.

Sharon Shenk, a member of Springdale, invited me (Elwood Yoder) to the 200th anniversary celebration. I attended on Saturday afternoon. The congregation packed 200 school kits for MCC, enjoyed music by the Blue Mountain Sunrise Band, and ate Brunswick Stew for supper.

I was able to sell six copies of *People of Peace: A History of the Virginia Mennonite Conference*, which includes quite a few pages that I wrote about Kendigs and Springdale. The current pastor at Springdale is Beryl Jantzi.

Pike Mennonite Church, in Harrisonburg, Va., also began in 1825. Their bicentennial remembrance day was December 14, 2025. Bishop Ellis Beery led the afternoon sharing time. Nelson Rodes led the singing, including a final rendition of "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow," sung from *Hymns of the Church*, with shaped notes, 2011, compiled by John D. Martin. *Hymns of the Church* is in the Pike bench hymnal racks.

I (Elwood Yoder) contacted Shenandoah Mennonite Historian members Marie and Nelson R. Showalter about attending the afternoon remembrance, and they cordially invited me to attend. The Showalters figured out who I was when I walked in the door at Pike because of my photo in the back of *People of Peace*, which retired Bishop Nelson R. Showalter had used as a resource for his message earlier in the day

at Pike. I was glad to donate a copy of *People of Peace* to the library at Pike Mennonite Church.

Southeastern Mennonite Conference Minister John Swartz, who served on the Pike ministry team from 2013-2017, opened the door the following week for me to review the well-prepared church timeline covering 200 years. A tremendous amount of work went into the photo timeline, including previous and current deacons, ministers, and bishops. The 4-foot-by-10-foot timeline is one of the best I've seen, with many photos of congregational life. Current ministers at Pike include Ellis Beery, Luke Heatwole, Jeff Hobbs, and Evan Showalter.

A highlight of attending the Pike bicentennial event was meeting Ray Shank and his wife. Ray

grew up in the Pike Church, but they moved to Madison County, Virginia, where they helped with the Beachy Amish Mennonite outreach in Aroda, Virginia. Ray much appreciated that in *People of Peace* (pages 222-223; 284) I included the story of the Beachy group in Madison County, Va., who encountered resistance to including African Americans in their church. Ray knew that my father, Elmer S. Yoder, wrote, as Ray described it, "the definitive history of the Beachy Amish Church." Ray Shank also knew that in 1928, my grandfather, Simon L. Yoder, was the first minister ordained in the Beachy Amish Church at the Niverton Amish meetinghouse near Springs, Pa. Simon was twenty-six when ordained and served 51 years in the Beachy Amish ministry.

**Pike Mennonite Church  
20th Century  
Timeline**

Displayed at  
Pike Mennonite  
Church  
Bicentennial

## Green Valley Clinic in Bergton, VA: The Gehman Years

By Karen Whetzel

This article originally appeared in *The Chimney Rock Chronicle*, by Karen Whetzel, and is used by permission.

Dr. Linford Kulp Gehman came to the Green Valley Clinic in the summer of 1970. He and his wife, Becky, a registered nurse, had married on June 6, 1970, and had first lived in the apartment above the Clinic for a few months. As soon as Dr. Kraybill, who had worked for a year at the Clinic after Dr. Hertzler, the Gehmans moved into the house beside the Clinic and began lives of service that lasted many years. They had two children, Kathy and Billy, while at Green Valley Clinic. In 1979, the Gehmans purchased the house and Clinic from Dr. Hertzler for \$119,200.

Dr. Gehman was originally from Pennsylvania and came to Eastern Mennonite University, where he graduated in 1959. He graduated from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia in 1963. From 1965 to 1968, Dr. Gehman served as a doctor in Vietnam through the Mennonite Central Committee and later the Vietnam Christian Service. Dr. Gehman was a doctor on the only medical relief team in eastern Nigeria during the 1969–70 Civil War. He bought the Green Valley Clinic building and house next door from Dr. Charles Hertzler, who had opened the Clinic in 1949.

Some of the staff whom Dr. Hertzler had hired stayed on to work with Dr. Gehman, which led to continuity of service. Mary Stultz Lantz was employed as a secretary right out of high school in 1956 and worked at Green Valley Clinic

for almost 60 years. Eleanor Stultz Heishman, who was hired in 1969 as a receptionist, stayed on to work with Dr. Gehman, logging over 46 years at the Clinic. Both were actually medical assistants, not clerical. And both stayed on to work for almost a year with records after the Clinic closed. Elaine See Dellinger worked on some jobs for Dr. Hertzler while she was still in school, and later was hired full-time by Dr. Gehman.

Kathy Gehman Alderfer, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Gehman, says, “Growing up as the child of a country doctor who lived next to his Clinic, I realize now that I had a unique childhood. I traveled back and forth easily between the Clinic and the house, whether I was delivering mail to the Clinic or just chatting with the nurses on duty. The clinic staff was like a second family to me. Because there was virtually no employee turnover, the same staff who were there when I was born were still there when I left for college! I’m grateful for their influence in my life.” (Kathy provided the photo of Dr. Gehman for this article.)



Dr. Gehman in the Green Valley Clinic

Billy Gehman, son of Dr. and Mrs. Gehman, put it this way: “I would definitely say that I benefited greatly by being the son of a Dr! I lost count of all the times dad sewed me up and all the X-rays taken of my arms, hands, and ankles, although luckily, never a broken bone was found. I have always found it amazing and neat that he and Mom were able to walk to work every day for forty-some years. I really enjoyed the closeness and family atmosphere that was created there as well. The nurses and various PAs who worked there over the years were like family and remain in contact with each other. It was also interesting to see how the times have changed during Dad’s tenure there. I recall, as a child, going with my dad on numerous house calls. I forget the names of the sisters he visited in the lower cove, but I’ll never forget their huge cat! It was the biggest cat I’ve ever seen. I also remember Dad setting medicine on the ledge of the walk-in porch on the south side of the building for people who would be on their way home from work after hours or on weekends. Can you imagine a doctor doing that now? No matter what time of day it was, Dad rarely sent someone to the emergency room unless he felt they were beyond his help, and if so, he often rode along in the ambulance. That’s just a snippet of some of my memories from the Clinic.”

One difference in the Clinic during the Gehman years compared to earlier years was that babies were no longer delivered there. Dr. Hertzler delivered the last baby at Green Valley Clinic in 1967. Dr. Gehman delivered babies at Rockingham Memorial Hospital. The Clinic continued for 35 years under Dr. Gehman’s leadership, in a manner similar to its early years. Yes, Dr. Gehman continued to make house calls for emergencies, to bedridden patients, or to pronounce that a lifelong patient had died in his sleep (as he did for my dad, Owen Guy Stultz).

Some of the doctors and physician assistants

who worked at Green Valley Clinic with Dr. Gehman at times over the years were Dr. Kevin Barco, Dr. Jeanne Snyder, Dr. Samuel Showalter, Lisa Basye, Hanna Reinford, and Dean Woodward.

Dr. Gehman was nominated for Country Doctor of the Year in 2010. Some of the comments written for the nomination summarize the Green Valley Clinic during Dr. Gehman’s tenure.

Elizabeth Moyer Snapp, the first baby born at Green Valley Clinic in 1949, continued to receive care there as an adult. She says, “He (Dr. Gehman) has truly given and given and given of himself and his skills, talents, and educated, experienced practice...he is truly an epitome of a country doctor.”

Aaron Heishman, son of Eleanor Stultz Heishman, stated, “Dr. Gehman is a cornerstone of our community. He has served so thoroughly for such a long period of time that it is easy to lose perspective on how blessed we are to have a doctor who is willing to see people any day of the week and any hour of the day in an emergency.”

Dr. Gehman closed the Green Valley Clinic at the end of January 2015. He had tried to recruit a family physician to take over, but realized that “a country-doctor health facility, such as Green Valley Clinic, may have served its time faithfully and successfully.” The Clinic remained open for most of that year, with Mary Lantz working on closing out records and Eleanor Stultz Heishman helping her part-time. Nearby Highland Retreat purchased the Clinic and renovated it for use as part of its facility.

Dr. Gehman recently made this statement about the Green Valley Clinic from 1970 to 2015: “As I look back and reflect on my 45 years as a family physician at Green Valley Clinic, it was a life fulfilled. It is my nature always to think

I could have done better. Becky and I worked long hours doing what we believed was best for the health of our trusting patients, and we enjoyed almost every bit of it. And we have been overwhelmed by the community's appreciation for our dedicated staff and us. What I miss now is the daily relationship of working closely with staff and our most interesting patients in this beloved community.

Editor's note: Karen Whetzel wrote this article in the October 2021 issue of *The Chimney Rock Chronicle*. Dr. Gehman passed away on August 9, 2023. The Zion Mennonite Church in Broadway, Va., where Dr. Gehman's memorial service took place, was filled to capacity with Dr. Gehman's friends and family. His obituary can be found on the Grandle Funeral Home website: <https://www.grandlefuneralhome.com/obituary/dr-linford-gehman>

## New Book "And They Went Forth"

The story of Hephzibah Mennonite Church - 1958–2024, by Hilda Barnhart

Two families left their homes in Virginia and moved to Hephzibah, Georgia, to start a new Mennonite outreach.

This 275-page hardbound book features over 600 pictures and many interesting happenings. It includes the vision, beginnings, church families, leaders, various ministries, and much, much more!

It's available for \$32.50 from Rocky Cedars, 2156 Country Store Lane, Dayton, VA 22821.



The Burkholder-Myers house, located at the Brethren & Mennonite Heritage Center, Harrisonburg, Va., as seen at sunset on December 13, 2025. In 1854, Bishop Martin Burkholder and his wife Rebecca built the house and it was lived in by Mennonites and Brethren thereafter. It was donated to and moved onto the Heritage Center grounds in 2002.

On January 1, 2026, Elwood Yoder began work as Interim Executive Director of the Heritage Center. Stop by in 2026 and say hello and take a tour of the facility!

Photo by Elwood Yoder, Dec. 20, 2025



In 1825, Pike was the second church in the Shenandoah Valley to build a log meetinghouse. It was torn down in 1878 to build a wood frame building, and the congregation constructed a brick building in 1980. Pike is located in Harrisonburg, Va., and is a member of the Southeastern Mennonite Conference. Photo by Elwood Yoder

Officers of the Historians: Chair, James L. Hershberger; Treasurer, Norman R. Wenger; Secretary, Gary Smucker; Newsletter Circulation, James L. Rush; Gerald R. Brunk; and Editor, Elwood E. Yoder.

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Past issues of the *Historian*, from 1994-2025, can be found at [mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net](http://mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net). This site includes a link to over 1,650 photos related to Mennonites in Virginia.

An annual individual membership fee for the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians is \$10.00 per year, which includes a subscription to the *Historian*. Additional family memberships are \$5 each. Send membership fees to James Rush, e-mail at [jameslrush@comcast.net](mailto:jameslrush@comcast.net), phone 540-421-7890, or U.S. mail to James Rush, 421 Gravels Rd., Rockingham, VA, 22802.