



NEWS RELEASE

DATE: October 18, 2022

For Immediate Release

Editorial Contact: Camille Dager, Chief Communication Officer, 574-523-3068,
CamilleD@MennoniteUSA.org

MC USA announces MennoCon23 worship planning committee

ELKHART, Ind. (Mennonite Church USA) — The worship planning committee for the 2023 Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) denominational convention, MennoCon23, has officially begun preparing for the event, which will take place at the Kansas City (Missouri) Convention Center, July 3-8, 2023.

The committee spends the year prior to the event organizing the worship services that make up the MennoCon convention. They design the experience by identifying the themes and Scriptures for each worship service. They, then, outline the service, incorporating all the elements that will be included, and identify speakers. The MennoCon23 committee is made up of eight leaders from diverse backgrounds across MC USA and is led by worship coordinator Becky Degan.

“I’m excited to see the passion for worship and diversity of life and church experiences that each member of the committee brings to this planning process,” said Degan. “My hope is that this will allow the MennoCon23 worship experience to be grounded in Spirit-led expressions of God’s people, while also expressing the breadth of diversity and creativity God has gifted to us. My hope is that the committee would create space in worship that allows people to step outside themselves and into God’s presence, to experience community as God’s people, worshipping together.”

Other members of the worship planning committee include Ana Alicia Hinojosa and Jeff Hochstetler, who are serving as worship leaders; Onan Alvarez, the band leader; Tim Blaum, the technical director; and Deborah Coates, Derek King and Danilo Sanchez, as worship planners.

-more-



MC USA announces MennoCon23/2

Meet the MennoCon23 Worship Planning Committee

Becky Degan, worship coordinator

Becky Degan serves as the associate pastor of worship and Christian education at [Forest Hills Mennonite Church](#) in Leola, Pennsylvania. In her free time, she accompanies a community choir and directs middle and high school plays. Before beginning her current position at Forest Hills in 2006, she worked for 10 years as a music therapist for children with special needs. Degan holds a bachelor's degree in music therapy from Elizabethtown (Pennsylvania) College and is currently working toward a Master of Arts in Christian leadership from [Eastern Mennonite Seminary](#), in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She lives in Ephrata, Pennsylvania.

Ana Alicia Hinojosa, worship leader

Ana Alicia Hinojosa serves as the director of constituent engagement at [Mennonite Mission Network](#). She previously served as the immigration education coordinator for [Mennonite Central Committee](#) Central States. Hinojosa has been a part of the Mennonite denomination all her life, starting at [Iglesia Mennonite del Cordero](#) in Brownsville, Texas, and she currently attends [New Life Christian Center](#) in San Benito, Texas, where she helps lead and teach alongside her father Eduardo "Lalo" Hinojosa. Hinojosa has served in areas of Christian education, children's church, youth and middle school ministry, worship and preaching and teaching. Hinojosa's passion is to build young leaders to continue serving in the church and communities. She graduated from the University of Texas at Brownsville with a Bachelor of Arts and from the University of Phoenix with a Master of Education in organizational leadership. She lives in San Benito.

Jeff Hochstetler, worship leader

Jeff Hochstetler lives in Berlin, Ohio, where serves as lead pastor of [Berlin Mennonite Church](#). He graduated from [Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary](#) in Elkhart, Indiana, with a Master of Divinity and [Goshen \(Indiana\) College](#) with a Bachelor of Arts in business and history. Hochstetler learned to love road cycling on the flat terrain of Northern Indiana. He is the president of the Holmes County (Ohio) Ministerial Association and serves on the board of directors at Lombard Mennonite Peace Center.

Onan Alvarez, band leader

Onan Alvarez is a musician, pastor, and video and sound wizard, based in Houston, Texas. He and his wife, Bavaryl, are leaders in the Evangelical Garifuna Church, which has communities in Houston; New York City, New York; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Miami. Alvarez has extensive touring credentials and musical experience. He said he hopes that his faith and deep desire to serve God will uplift those around him.

-more-



MC USA announces MennoCon23/3

Tim Blaum, technical director

Tim Blaum lives in Goshen, Indiana, and works for [Everence Financial](#) as the IT user support manager. He graduated from [Goshen College](#) in 2010, with a degree in communications. Blaum attends [Restör Church](#) in Goshen. This is Blaum's 11th convention. He says he is carried through convention week by adrenaline, cold brew coffee and the long-term friendships he has built with the convention planning staff, worship team members and the all-star technical crew he's worked with along the way.

Deborah Coates, worship planner

Deborah Coates is a creative entrepreneur, who lives in Brush Prairie, Washington. She received a Bachelor of Arts in sociology and psychology from the University of Oregon and an Associate of Arts from [Heston \(Kansas\) College](#). Coates is currently pursuing a degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. She says she holds hope in the astonishing promise of God's transformative, restorative love. Coates attends [Portland \(Oregon\) Mennonite Church](#).

Derek King, worship planner

Derek King lives in Moundridge, Kansas, where he is the pastor of [Eden Mennonite Church](#). Previously, he lived in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Harrisonburg, Virginia. King received a Bachelor of Arts in justice, peace and conflict studies from [Eastern Mennonite University](#) and a Master of Divinity from [Eastern Mennonite Seminary](#).

Danilo Sanchez, worship planner

Danilo Sanchez lives in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where he is a co-pastor at [Ripple Church](#) and serves as the community chaplain for [Ripple Community Inc.](#), a non-profit that emerged from the work of Ripple Church. Sanchez also is on staff with [Mosaic Mennonite Conference](#) and serves in the areas of youth formation and intercultural work. He graduated from Eastern University in 2010 and received his Master of Divinity from [Eastern Mennonite Seminary](#) in 2013.

MennoCon23 provides the opportunity for MC USA members from across the U.S. to gather for faith formation and fellowship, while offering a variety of options for participants to worship and engage with the work of the church. The theme for MennoCon23, #BeTransformed, is Mennonite Church USA's call for individuals and congregations to fully live into its [Renewed Commitments](#) to follow Jesus, witness to God's peace and experience transformation.

For more information about MennoCon23, click [here](#).

-more-



MC USA announces MennoCon23/4

Mennonite Church USA is the largest Mennonite denomination in the United States with 16 conferences, approximately 540 congregations and 56,000 members. An Anabaptist Christian denomination, MC USA is part of Mennonite World Conference, a global faith family that includes churches in 59 countries. It has offices in Elkhart, Indiana and Newton, Kansas.

mennoniteUSA.org

###