

# On the Road to Nashville

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Youth sponsor Minnie Knight looked at the old church van that had traveled to many Mennonite Youth Conventions. The church name was starting to fade, and the seats were a bit tattered, but the engine purred like a kitten. She wondered if this old van could make yet another Youth Convention trip? As she sat there in the driver's seat her mind began to reminisce. Well, she thought, twenty-four years ago this brand new van went "On the Way" to Estes Park 77. Twenty years ago it took us to be "Called to One Hope" in Bowling Green 81. Eighteen years ago it helped us to make "Christ the Cornerstone" in Bethlehem 83. Sixteen years ago it made us realize "To Know Christ is to Serve" in Ames 85. Fourteen years ago it showed us that "In Christ We Grow" at Purdue 87. Ten years ago while experiencing some slight engine problems it took us to find comfort while "Dying to Live" in Oregon 91. Nine years ago it took us on a reality trip to "Do Justice, Loving Kindness, and Walking Humbly" in Sioux Falls 92. Eight years ago it led us on a journey to be "Called to Freedom in Christ" at Philadelphia 93. Six years ago we were fortunate to travel "With Jesus on the Road" to Wichita 95. Four years ago it led us on an adventure "Staking (our) Your Claim" in Winnipeg 97. Also four years ago it took us past the Magical Kingdom into "God's Kingdom: Beyond Illusion" in Orlando 97. Finally, two years ago this old van carried us to an invitation to "Come to the River" in St. Louis 99.

Can this old van do it again? Minnie Knight thought about the anticipation and expectancy of those youth looking forward to their first Youth Convention. She thought about the excitement of those that were ready to do it again. Minnie looked at the old van with its faded letters and tattered seats and said, "Surely this old van must be willing to take us to "Get it together in Christ" in Nashville 2001."

I encourage you to do whatever it takes to come to Nashville, Tennessee, July 2-7, 2001. Plans are being made right now to make this Youth Convention an experience of a lifetime. Nashville 2001 will give you the opportunity to "Get it Together" with other Mennonite teens and sponsors, dynamic speakers, meaningful worship, awesome praise, drama, fun, fellowship, and much more.

If you are confident that you've got it going on, or if you are not sure about where your life is headed, the bi-national Mennonite Youth Convention in Nashville, Tennessee is the place for you to be in July of 2001. Blessings to you as you make plans to attend the first Mennonite Youth Convention of the new millennium!

Getting it Together,



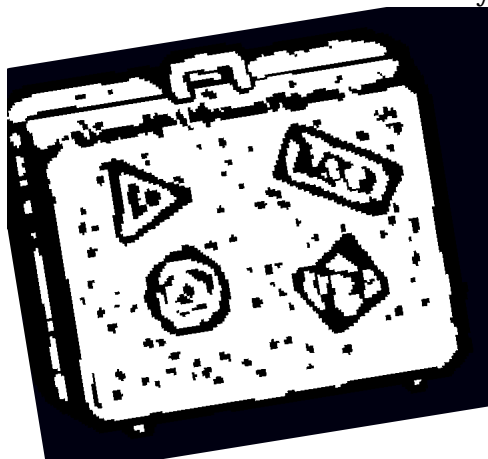
Steven Francisco  
Youth Convention Director



## On the Road to Nashville 2001

The first Mennonite Youth Convention of the new millennium happens July 2-7, in Nashville, Tennessee. The convention activities begin Monday evening and conclude Saturday at noon. We are returning to the traditional convention schedule of 10 worship services and 13 meals, rather than the 9 worship sessions and 11 meals that were the case at *St. Louis 99* and *Orlando 97*.

The Opryland Hotel will be the site for the 2001 convention. This beautiful facility is five different buildings all covered by one glass roof. Each of the five buildings is five stories tall, and the spaces between these buildings are filled with gardens, fountains, and restaurants. The convention center attached to these facilities will easily accommodate both the Youth Convention and the Adult Assembly, which will be



## Purpose of Youth Convention

With tremendous changes occurring in the Mennonite Church in both Canada and the USA, planners for the 2001 event hope that this gathering will be an occasion when the church is drawn together. Of course, the central purpose of Youth Convention remains the same: *To invite youth to make a commitment, or recommitment to Christ.* Toward that end, the theme will also help youth who have not made such a commitment understand how they might "get it together."

Get it  
together  
in  
Christ

## Convention Theme

The Youth Convention Planning Committee and the Adult Assembly Planning Committee have agreed that both gatherings will focus on a theme which calls the church to unity. The Youth Convention Planning Committee has selected the theme, "Get it together in Christ"

## Convention Staff

Steven Francisco, in Virginia, is the Conventions Director and the chair of the Youth Convention Planning Committee. Steven is also serving as staff person for the Youth Convention Worship Planning Committee which is chaired by Mark Vincent, one of the worship leaders for *St. Louis 99*.

Other staff members whose names will become important to you over the next year are: Yvonne Diaz Keeler, who is the Conventions Manager. Yvonne lives in Goshen, Indiana, and is full time out of the Elkhart office providing administration for this huge event. Helping Yvonne in the office is veteran Louise Showalter, who has worked on the staff of six conventions, and newcomer Rita Dooley.

These folks are available by phone at the Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries, which sponsors Youth Convention on behalf of Mennonite Church USA. You may call the Youth Convention office at: 219 294-7523, or email at: [mennyc@juno.com](mailto:mennyc@juno.com). The mailing address is: PO Box 1245, Elkhart, IN 46515-1245.

## A Bi-National Event

The *Nashville 2001* Youth Convention is open to youth and sponsors from Canada, the United States, and Puerto Rico. Although the Adult Conventions will be meeting separately in Canada and in the USA in 2001, Youth Ministry leaders agreed that youth events will be bi-national in each location. That means that youth and sponsors from Canada are welcome to participate at *Nashville 2001*, and youth from the USA and Puerto Rico are welcome to participate in the youth event in British Columbia, Canada, in 2001.

For more information about the event in Canada, contact Abe Bergen, Director of Youth Ministry for the General Conference Mennonite Church. His phone number is: 204 888-6781. His email is: [ABergen@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:ABergen@mennonitechurch.ca). You can also send a letter to Abe at: 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4.

## Projected Costs For 2001 Convention

Because the entire program is not yet put together, the budget cannot be finalized for *Nashville 2001*, however, we project that the cost for registration, room and board will range from \$380- \$410 per person. Please note that this amount includes a Youth Convention program that is one night longer and includes two more meals than was the case at our last two conventions.

We are sharing this projected cost per person at this time so that you will know how to plan for *Nashville 2001*. Please note that this is our projected cost per person for the event, and a final cost will be set in the fall. This amount does not include, of course, the cost of transportation to and from Nashville.

## Opryland Facts

One of the unique experiences we will have at the Opryland Hotel is that we will all be under one roof! This huge complex includes the following:

- Beautiful gardens – totaling nine acres – and elaborate waterfalls highlighting the three indoor gardens
- Flatboat cruises along the quarter mile Delta River
- Largest combined hotel and convention center under one roof anywhere
- And much more!!!

## A Word about Nashville

Nashville, Tennessee is also known as the *Music Capital of the World*. It certainly is an important center for Christian recording artists, and we hope to be able to develop a convention experience that relates to these important ministries. Youth Convention staff are considering the possibility of a concert by a well-known Christian music artist.

Other items of interest about Nashville:

- A canal system will take you by water taxi from the Opryland Hotel to downtown Nashville.
- It was settled in 1779.
- The 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> presidents lived in this area. Do you know who they are?
- You can see Athena in the Parthenon here.

## Auditions for the Worship Band

The worship band leads the *Nashville 2001* Youth Convention worship and will be formed from individuals from across the church. For more information on how to audition for this band, contact Yvonne Diaz Keeler for an application.



## What about the 4th of July?

For the first time in decades, Mennonite Youth Convention will be held over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Holiday observed by many citizens in the United States. In fact, it was because of this holiday falling midweek, that the Opryland was available at the reduced prices we have been able to negotiate.

At first, we considered this holiday a problem to plan around. However, convention planners have now found a way to make lemonade out of the lemons! Planners are considering how to take this date on which the United States celebrates its birthday, and focus on the relationship between Anabaptist Mennonites and this great country in which we will hold the convention. Indeed, at the beginning of a new millennium, the United States is the lone remaining superpower. A faithful church must seriously consider what it means to be prophetic and faithful in such a place.

## Scholarship Challenge

One of the primary goals of Youth Convention is to insure its accessibility to all youth groups, regardless of costs. To that end, the budget will include more than \$50,000 in financial aid. However, past experience shows this will not be enough to cover all needs. Consequently, we are again challenging youth groups to raise additional funds to help others less fortunate to be able to attend.

As your youth group is raising funds for your expenses, we also invite you to raise additional funds and send them to the Youth Convention office to help with the costs of others attending. For more information about the scholarship challenge, contact the Youth Convention office.



## Activities During the Week

As noted earlier, the program has not yet been finalized for the week except that we will begin Monday evening and conclude at noon on Saturday. Planners are proceeding on several traditions from past conventions. First, we understand that the worship services are the centerpiece of the convention experience. Since the central purpose of Youth Convention is to invite youth to make a commitment or a recommitment to Christ, a great deal of time, energy, and resources are flowing into the planning for worship services. We hope to announce the speakers for all of the sessions in the next newsletter.

One change from tradition is that the Nashville 2001 Youth Convention worship band will not be a group that already exists. Planners have decided to hold auditions for musicians from across the church and create a worship band for this event. If you or someone you know is interested in auditioning, please have them contact the Youth Convention office for an application.

In addition to worship sessions, Youth Convention activities will consist of: service projects, recreation, late night activities, small group discussion times for youth groups, and much more.

## Fundraising Ideas

Raising thousands of dollars needed to attend Youth Convention can be a monumental task. It also can be an important way to build teamwork and unity in your youth group and congregation.

How has your youth group worked at raising funds? We invite you to share your ideas with others. Send your fundraising ideas to the Youth Convention office.

## Meet the Planners

The Youth Convention Planning Committee has been busy at work for nearly a year planning the events for *Nashville 2001*. Members of the Planning Committee are as follows:

Steven Francisco, chair; Hampton, VA  
Yvonne Diaz Keeler, staff; Goshen, IN  
Abe Bergen, staff; Winnipeg, MB

Gina Bixler, Antioch, TN  
Brad Carlson, Freeman, SD  
Marlene Frankenfield, Landsdale, PA  
Glen Guyton, Hampton, VA  
Dan Hess, Indianapolis, IN  
Anna Newburn, Goshen, IN  
Jennifer Rohrer, Lititz, PA  
Steve Ropp, Bloomington, IL  
Krista Shue, Dalton, OH  
Merv Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA  
Jorge Vallejos, Goshen, IN

As has been our practice, a special committee has been constructed to plan the worship sessions. The committee that is planning the worship sessions includes the following people:

Mark Vincent, chair; Elkhart, IN  
Marisa Cantú, Goshen, IN  
José Elizalde, East Chicago, IN  
Tiffany Francisco, Hampton, VA  
Ritch Hochstetler, North Newton, KS  
Wendy Janzen, Leamington, ON  
David King, Lancaster, PA  
Lana Miller, Goshen, IN  
Angel Rivas, Barranquitas, PR  
Stan Shantz, Glendale, AZ  
Karie Smucker, Oregon City, OR  
Benjamin Stevens, Bronx, NY  
Curt Weaver, Lancaster, PA  
LaTasha Wilson, Detroit, MI

Yvonne Diaz Keeler, staff; Goshen, IN  
Steven Francisco, staff; Hampton, VA

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## Hopes and Dreams

The biennial youth convention is one of the highest and holiest moments in the life of the church. It's during these days that our youth see first hand what the Mennonite Church looks like. At each convention when youth enter the worship hall for the first time and see thousands of other youth their age, an important understanding is shaped. Youth discover what their Mennonite Church looks like.

It is our hope and dream that all youth and sponsors who attend *Nashville 2001*, will be inspired to a life of greater faithfulness and greater commitment to the Mennonite Church. Toward that end, we hope that sponsors and youth who will work so hard to earn their way to the 2001 convention will take this effort as a pilgrimage. This pilgrimage is not only to the 2001 convention, but is also a pilgrimage on which our entire church is journeying. Please pray with us that on this journey, we will indeed "get it together" in Christ.

## Volunteer Staff Needed

One of the ways that we can keep costs down is to have adult volunteers staffing the convention. Each convention requires more than 200 such volunteer staff, and we are once again, asking for your help. If you are an adult over 21 and available to serve in this volunteer capacity, please contact the Youth Convention office. Volunteer staff are needed for the following areas:

- Service projects
- Community life
- Deacons
- Ushers
- Special events
- Recreation
- Miscellaneous office activities

## Memories from St. Louis 99

The memories of the 1999 youth convention in St. Louis are slowly fading, but still serve to excite us to the next event. Following are some memorable quotes from youth and sponsors who attended *St. Louis 99*.

“It is awesome to have more than 6,000 people praising God together!”

“What I will remember most is that I recommitted my life to Christ and I gave it all to God.”

“At times of peer pressure or trials that may get in my way, I sit back and remind myself of those 6,000 teens and adults who stood in that one auditorium with me to worship the one same, glorious God, and then I remember why it is that I can stand, not alone, but with the help of God!”

“The speakers really touched my heart. The things they said were really inspirational to me...”

“My life has been 10x better than I ever thought it could be now that I have accepted Jesus into my heart, and I’m also planning on getting baptized real soon. So, I just wanted to say thank you for putting on the St. Louis 99 Convention, and I also wanted to tell you about how it changed me.”

“St. Louis taught me that even though I had been baptized, it didn’t mean that life was going to be peachy from then on. I learned that it was OK to stumble, to doubt, and to make mistakes just as long as I turn to God for guidance and for the hand that will help me through it all.”

“The one night where people went up to get anointed with oil, my friend went up to get prayer for her broken family...it was really amazing. I can’t wait until next time.”



**Mennonite Youth Convention**  
**Box 1245**  
**Elkhart, IN 46515-1245**

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