Frequently Asked Questions about the Amish

source: Amish Studies by the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College

Q: How many Amish live in North America?
A: About 318,500 adults and children. This is an increase of approximately 10,360 since 2016, a growth rate of 3.36 percent. In most communities, over half of the population is under 18 years of age. Thus, the number of baptized adult church members is likely about 143,300.

Q: When did the Amish begin?
A: They trace their roots to the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland in 1525 at the time of the Protestant Reformation. The Anabaptists emphasized voluntary adult baptism and a church that was free from state control. Because most had been baptized as infants, they were nicknamed rebaptizers or Anabaptists. The Amish were part of this movement until 1693 when they formed their own group in Switzerland and the Alsatian region of present-day France. Their first leader was Jakob Ammann; hence, they became known as Amish.

Q: Is the Amish population growing?
A: Yes. The population has doubled over the past 20 years due to sizable families (5 or more children on average) and high retention rates (on average about 85 percent of Amish youth eventually join the church).

Q: When are Amish youth baptized?
A: Typically between the ages of 18 and 21. As Anabaptists, the Amish church emphasizes the importance of making a voluntary adult decision to become a Christian and join the church.

Q: Where do Amish youth go to school?
A: About 90 percent attend one or two-room private Amish schools; the others go to rural public schools.
Frequently Asked Questions (cont. from front)

In Amish schools, an Amish teacher is typically responsible to teach all eight grades, or in the case of a two-room school, half of the grades. Amish children typically end their formal schooling at the end of eighth grade.

Q: What language do the Amish speak?
A: Regardless of where they live, the Amish speak the Pennsylvania German dialect (popularly known as Pennsylvania Dutch), except in a few communities where they speak a Swiss dialect. English, typically learned in school, is their second language. Most Amish are fluent in both English and the dialect, but very few can speak standard German. Some learn to read old German script so they can read their religious books and publications. Amish people often refer to non-Amish as “English,” because they speak the English language.

Q: Are there different kinds of Amish?
A: Yes. There are many different affiliations of Amish, each of which has its own dress styles, carriages, occupations, and rules about technology. The enormous cultural diversity among Amish groups and church districts makes it risky to generalize about “the Amish.”

Q: Do the different groups have anything in common?
A: Yes, most Amish groups share certain practices: use of horse and buggy for local transportation, rejection of electricity from public utility lines, prohibition against televisions and computers, some type of distinctive dress, beards for men, ending of formal education at the eighth grade, meeting in homes for worship every other Sunday, lay religious leaders, and living in rural areas.

Q: Are all Amish farmers?
A: No. In the past most families farmed, but now many Amish earn their living from various types of Amish-owned establishments—small shops, businesses, carpentry, construction, retail stores, roadside stands—as well as employment in “English-owned” factories, restaurants, and shops.

Q: May outsiders join the Amish?
A: Yes. Although the Amish do not actively evangelize, several dozen “outside” people have joined the Amish. Potential members must be willing to learn the dialect and accept the rules of the church in order to be baptized and become members of the church. Some outsiders have become well accepted and respected members of the Amish community.

Q: Do the Amish reject all modern technology?
A: No. They selectively use technology—choosing the types that serve their community rather than debilitate it. The rules for what is accepted are largely determined by the local church, so there is a wide variation on what is permitted. In general, the Amish accept some new technology such as chain saws and inline skates, and reject computers and television. Most groups modify technology to fit their cultural values. Some, for example, place steel wheels on tractors and put electric turn signals on their carriages.

Q: Do the Amish pay taxes?
A: Yes. They pay all the taxes—income, property, sales, estate, corporate, school—that other people do. In fact many of them pay school taxes twice—for both public and private Amish schools. The US Congress exempted the Amish from participating in Social Security in 1965 because the Amish viewed it as a form of commercial insurance, which they opposed. They believe that members of the church should care for each others’ physical and material

---

Amish by the numbers
12 Largest Amish Settlements (2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Est. population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lancaster County Area</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>36,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes County Area</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>35,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elkhart/LaGrange Area</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>24,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geauga County Area</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>18,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams County Area</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>8,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nappanee County Area</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daviess County Area</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Area</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin County Area</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen County Area</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana County Area</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seymour County Area</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2,665</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Amish Studies by the Young Center for Anabaptist & Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown (Pa) College
Wish List

- high pressure washer for maintenance
- 36” flat screen TV

Perspectives (cont. from front)
each year! To give you an idea of the impact, here are the countries listed in our guest register during a two-week period this year: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Columbia, Denmark, France, Germany, Guatemala, Japan, Macedonia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. Twenty-two states, as well as Washington D.C., were also represented. Of these people, we had Amish, Seventh Day Adventists, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Mennonite, Mormon, Non-Denominational, Pentecostal, Jewish, Atheist, Agnostic and Reformed. Menno-Hof invites visitors to think over their walk of faith seriously. Truly a local mission doing global ministry!

I also had the opportunity this year to take part in a prayer vigil in front of an abortion clinic. Several weeks after that I helped at World Missionary Press, a local printing place for Scripture booklets. I was reminded again of the fact that there is much to do right around home. I think God purposely propelled me to these places in order to make me more aware of His work right here in Northern Indiana. I love being a part of Menno-Hof and I do believe I will stick around here for the time being!

Are you looking for a way to serve while sharing your faith?

Menno-Hof needs individuals and couples in agreement with Anabaptist values and beliefs to serve as host and/or hostess during May, July and August 2018. A minimum of 30 days is preferred. Responsibilities include conducting tours and some light housekeeping. Two furnished apartments are available on-site.

Local volunteers are also needed! Menno-Hof is looking for persons living in close proximity to Shipshewana, Ind., that are interested in helping conduct tours or welcome visitors at the cash register. Schedules are flexible.

For more information contact Susan Miller, managing director 260-768-4117 or smiller@mennohof.org

PLAINSPOKEN: real-life stories of Amish & Mennonites
Books available in the Menno-Hof bookstore:

1. Chasing the Amish Dream: My Life as a Young Amish Bachelor by Loren Beachy
2. Called to Be Amish: My Journey from Head Majorette to the Old Order by Marlene Miller
3. Hutterite Diaries: Wisdom from My Prairie Community by Linda Maendel
4. Simple Pleasures: Stories from My Life as an Amish Mother by Marianne Jantzi
5. Anything But Simple: My Life as a Mennonite by Lucinda J. Miller

Published by Herald Press

Frequently Asked Questions (cont. from pg.2)

Q: Do the Amish use modern medicine?
A: It all depends. Many Amish use modern medicine and the services of doctors and hospitals, and many prefer going to chiropractors. Members of some of the more traditional communities prefer homeopathic or alternative forms of medical treatment. In general, the Amish are less likely to select high-risk or expensive medical interventions than mainstream society. There are no explicit religious prohibitions against certain types of medicine. The use of modern medicine varies greatly from family to family and group to group.

Contributions are tax-deductible and can be sent to: Menno-Hof, PO Box 701, Shipshewana, Ind., 46565
I hope you don’t object to me sharing a personal praise with you this edition. In October I had the privilege of having my younger and only biological brother visit my wife, Ruth, and me. When we heard that Larry and his wife, Janet, were coming, we began planning our time together.

Our pastor at First Mennonite, Middlebury, Kent Miller, and I discussed the possibility of Larry and Kent doing special music together during the worship service on the Sunday they would be in town. Both Kent and Larry have lots of musical talents. Larry immediately agreed and what a meaningful experience it was to have him here worshipping with us and participating in the service. Our children and their families also attended the service that morning and at the last moment I was invited to be scripture reader. I think this was Larry and Janet’s first opportunity to worship in a Mennonite church and certainly to participate in a worship service. What a joyful experience for Ruth and me!

We are so grateful that Larry and Janet share our desire to follow Jesus as we journey through life. The whole visit felt like a “miracle.” To be sure, we kept them busy while they were here but we did make time to visit Menno-Hof.

Reunion is published quarterly to keep our friends informed of happenings at Menno-Hof. Send questions or comments to director at info@mennohof.org

Menno-Hof Amish-Mennonite Visitors’ Center
P.O. Box 701
Shipshewana, Indiana 46565

See and Hear the Amish-Mennonite Story

Menno-Hof staff:
Jerry Beasley, executive director
Susan Miller, managing director
Charlotte Long, program and communication associate
Bill Yoder, facility and grounds associate

Board of Directors:
Larry Chupp, president, Shipshewana, Ind.
Lovina Rutt, vice-president, Goshen, Ind.
Donna Jones, Shipshewana, Ind.
Orie E. Lehman, Shipshewana, Ind.
Daniel B. Miller, Goshen, Ind.
Steve Miller, Goshen, Ind.
Jim Nof, Goshen, Ind.
Wayne Schrock, Millersburg, Ind.
Don Stauffer, Union, Mich.
Alvin J. Yoder, Shipshewana, Ind.
Fern Yoder, Millersburg, Ind.
Norman Yoder, Shipshewana, Ind.

Bless you!

Beginnings & endings
hosts & hostess

Frederick & Sandra Gingerich

“How can we THANK God enough for YOU in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?”
—I Thessalonians 3:9