



History of Allentown Mennonite Church

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[Hope Mennonite Fellowship](#) (HMF) had been conducting services in the [Lehigh County](#) Prison for 14 years until that ministry gave birth to the Allentown Mennonite Mission. The first Sunday afternoon [Sunday schools](#) were held in the homes of former inmates until the first Sunday school in the church building at 701 St. John Street in [Allentown, Pennsylvania](#) rented from God's Missionary Church was held November 11, 2007. HMF purchased and completely renovated this building in 2009 and demolished the parsonage on the property to make room for more parking spaces. J. Elvin Horst was assigned by HMF to give bishop oversight in 2007.

The Allentown congregation has held an adult Bible study every Tuesday evening since 2009. There had been an Overcoming Addictions class on Friday evenings from 2010 to 2013. Since 2008, [Vacation Bible School](#) has been held for one week in the summer with a normal attendance of about 200.

The mission purchased two used school buses and several maxivans to bring 80 to 100 city children to Bible studies each Thursday evening since April 2008. Teachers, mostly unmarried youth, have been supplied from several HMF congregations. A committee of four members from Allentown, [Rehlersburg](#), [Schaefferstown](#), and [Muddy Creek](#) supervised the Thursday evening classes. Most of the finances for the children's classes and the cost of buildings and vehicles came from the HMF home missions fund to which all HMF congregations contribute. Vehicles owned by the mission fund were also used to provide transportation for attendees of all church services and Bible classes.

Allentown Mennonite Mission became Allentown Mennonite Church when David G. Martin was installed as the first deacon in August of 2009, services were moved from Sunday afternoons to Sunday mornings, and the congregation was established with membership. The first Sunday morning service was held on July 12, 2009. Lester M. Burkholder was given charge as the first minister on March 20, 2010. On April 13, 2012, Shawn Martin was ordained to serve as the first resident deacon for the Allentown congregation. As Lester Burkholder reached retirement age, Gary Horst was ordained as a minister on August 19, 2016. In the summer of 2018, Gary Horst became the lead pastor.