ANABAPTIST COMMUNICATORS

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE NOV. 19-20, 2026

FULLY HUMAN

COMMUNICATING JOYFULLY & STRATEGICALLY

REGISTER TODAY!

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Thursday, November 19 (all times EST)

Noon **Welcome and Introductions**

12:15 **Reflection**

12:30 **Keynote with Q & A: Shalom AI: Rebooting the Age of AI with Anabaptist Values**
Ben Sywulka, SoundHound
The momentum of AI is toward concentrated power, short-term gains, and a highly individualistic story of "empowerment." As people lose agency over their work and lives, average levels of shalom, our capacity to thrive together, are likely to fall. Ben Sywulka argues that Anabaptism, with its traditions of communal discernment, cooperativism and collective life, has much to offer in designing an age of AI where shalom increases for large parts of the population. Shaping that future means moving from spectators to participants: not only AI resisters or AI consumers, but AI builders.

1:45 **Break**

2:00 **Workshop 1: Build Your Brand Foundation**
Lori Bower, BowerComm
A lot of organizations have a mission statement, a tagline, and a handful of benefit statements that don't add up to one clear idea of who they are. In this workshop we'll walk through BowerComm's brand foundation framework. You'll choose a brand archetype, write a short purpose statement, and define your organization's personality and values. Then we'll pull those together into a brand promise and essence that can guide how you write, design, hire and serve people. We'll build one member organization's brand foundation live using the Brand Foundation Builder AI tool.

Workshop 2: More Than Just Stories
Duane Stoltzfus, Robert Brenneman and Jen Shenk, Goshen College
More Than Just Stories includes five innovative storytelling projects. Duane Stoltzfus, grant director, will share about the "why" behind the initiative and reflections on the grant process. Dr. Robert Brenneman, podcast host and professor of criminal justice and sociology at Goshen College, will share about the launch of the Just Stories podcast. Jen Shenk, podcast host and campus pastor at Goshen College, will share about The Gratitude Letters podcast. More Than Just Stories is a media organization founded by Goshen College and financed by Lilly Endowment Inc.

Workshop 3: Fundraising as a Ministry of Listening and Communication
Vandersall Collective
Together we will explore fundraising as a pastoral ministry that begins in good listening and healthy communication. Come with your questions and curiosity to explore how we can meet the nexus of our motivations and experiences along with ways to channel our concerns into building healthy futures.

2:50 **Break**

3:00 **Workshop 1: Generative AI Use in Anabaptist Communications: Where to Draw the Line?**
Elina Ciptadi, special project coordinator for communications, Mennonite World Conference
Are we aware of the pervasiveness of AI in our work tools? Is the use of Generative AI (GenAI) all bad? What ethical filters can we apply to determine if the use of GenAI is justified? Using examples from her work in Mennonite World Conference, Elina Ciptadi invites participants to discuss where we can draw the line on AI use.

Workshop 2: Mennos in the Media: Depictions in Pop Culture

Water Cooler Chat
Join a breakout room for networking and discussion with other attendees.

4:00 **Anabaptist Communicators Annual Meeting**

4:30 **Dismissal**

8:00 **Bonus: Evening online screening of the documentary "Under the Peach Trees"**
Watch the film ahead of Friday's session with director Eric Miller. Online only; viewing link will be shared with registered attendees.

Friday, November 20 (all times EST)

Morning **Regional in-person gatherings**
Enjoy breakfast, conversation and connections with other communicators in your area. More information to follow.

Noon **Welcome, Reflection and Affinity Group Time**
Eileen Kinch
A brief reflection, then gather in affinity groups to reflect on questions together.

12:30 **Keynote with Q & A: What Does Love Require of Us?: Being Heralds of Good News in an Era of Rage**
Trey Ferguson, pastor of Raleigh Mennonite Church, author and podcast host
How do followers of Jesus respond when the world around us feels increasingly divided, fearful, and hostile? We show the world the alternative: an ethic of love in a world starved for love. Together, we'll explore what it means to overcome evil with good. There may be no more important time to decide what love looks like, commit ourselves to making it so and share it with the world.

1:45 **Break**

2:00 **Workshop 1: AI and Our Work: A Panel Discussion**
Ben Sywulka, Hannah Heinzekehr and Nathan Isaak
A panel discussion with professionals who are daily discerning about and working with AI.

Workshop 2: Comedy and Commentary in an Age of Chaos
Andrew Unger, The Daily Bonnet
Drawing on lessons from more than a decade of writing satire (mostly) about Mennonites, satirist Andrew Unger will explore both the opportunities and challenges presented by the use of humour in communication. Andrew will raise questions about humour in our current social and political discourse, as well as particular questions that arise within the Anabaptist context.

Workshop 3: Under the Peach Trees and the Hochstetler Cultural Canon
Eric Miller, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
Discuss the documentary film Under the Peach Trees with director Eric Miller. Learn more about the film's behind-the-scenes, and reflect on the story's contribution to the Mennonite cultural canon of peace and sacrifice.

2:50 **Break**

3:00 **Workshop 1: Storytelling Content Lab**
Lori Bower, BowerComm
Most nonprofits choose their stories based on what's handy or what they've always told. They rarely start by asking what their audiences need to hear before they'll give, volunteer or get involved, so people end up knowing the organization only for the few things it talks about most. In this lab we'll start with a member organization's audiences and what each one needs to understand to take the next step. From there we'll build a "Stories of One" calendar with a year's worth of story topics. Then we'll take one of those stories and turn it into a social post, an email, a website story and a conversation starter.

Workshop 2: Testing, Trolling and Reporting on AI: Student Communicators Panel
Mackenzie Miller, Goshen College; Brooke Snyder, Eastern Mennonite University; Adalie Hanefeld, Bluffton University
Hear from students who are navigating college and AI. They will discuss how AI impacts their life as a college student and student journalist. They will also share about their own news diet, media consumption, AI use—or not—and thoughts on media literacy for their generation.

Wisdom of the Room
Bring your current challenge and let's troubleshoot together.

3:50 **Conference Wrap-up**

4:00 **Dismissal**

More information about Anabaptist Communicators - including how you can become a member - at anabaptistcomm.org or AnabaptistCommunicators@gmail.com