

# **ANABAPTISM AT 500**

June 28, 2025

Elders Teaching Resource

# SCHEDULE

- 8:30: Singing
- 8:45: Welcome
- 9:00: Bro. Matt Drayer – Anabaptism in the 1500s
- 9:20: Discussion A
- 10:00: Bro. Nathan Rassi – Anabaptism and the Froehlich Tradition
- 10:20: Discussion B
- 11:00: Bro. Fred Witzig – Anabaptism and the Future of the ACCA
- 12:00 Dismissal (Braker's Market in Eureka for lunch?)



# RECORDINGS

- Video record the presentations for possible use on AC Central
- Voice record the discussion groups for later learning
  - they will not be made public

# THANK YOU!

- Planning committee: Bro. Todd Earney, Bro. Matthew Rassi, Bro. Joel Sinn, Sis. Erica Steffen, Bro. Layne Steffen, Sis. Darcy Stoller
- ETR: Bro. Chad Leman
- Washington: Bro. Paul Streitmatter, Bro. Don Hangartner. Bro. Evan Knapp
- And Sis. Nancy Witzig for helping set up!



# ANABAPTISM AT 500

- Anabaptist Anniversary?
  - Like an Anabaptist Museum?
  - Betrayal: point to Jesus for credit and praise
  - Betrayal: point to Jesus for the model
- We are here to remember
- And appreciate: ponder, be provoked, learn from good and bad

# **ANABAPTISM AND THE FUTURE OF THE ACCA**

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# **DOES ANABAPTISM HAVE A FUTURE IN THE ACCA? MY TAKE**

- Some of my thoughts
- Then we'll hear your thoughts

# DOES ANABAPTISM HAVE A FUTURE IN THE ACCA? NO

- We are moving closer and closer to American evangelicalism
- Anabaptism does not have the resources to satisfy the felt needs of Christians in evangelical America:
  - Not sacramental
  - No real Tradition (as opposed to minor traditions)
  - Insufficient grounds for authority
  - The Anabaptist stress of “plain reading” of the Bible minimizes theological depth.
- In reality and in perception, “Anabaptism” is too captive to tired-out “buggies and bonnets.”



# DOES ANABAPTISM HAVE A FUTURE IN THE ACCA? I HOPE

- ACCA evangelicalism needs ACCA Anabaptism.
- ACCA evangelicalism is heart religion.
- ACCA Anabaptism is life religion.
- In the 1800s, this meant authentic Christianity. There is no reason why it cannot mean that today.
- But we need each other to prevent a superficial witness on one hand and a superficial life on the other.

# DOES ANABAPTISM HAVE A FUTURE IN THE ACCA? MAYBE

- It likely will not satisfy the desire for “high church” liturgy.
- But . . . it is more sacramental than we have come to believe.
- Original, 1500s Anabaptism was very Zwinglian in its approach to baptism and communion: “mere symbolism.”
- But . . . Anabaptist sacramentalism of daily life.
- And Froehlich and Anabaptism stressed that adult baptism implies something actually happens in baptism.



# DOES ANABAPTISM HAVE A FUTURE IN THE ACCA? MAYBE

- Anabaptism is not as long-term history-minded as other faith traditions.
- Anabaptism is a faith tradition that honors the Great Tradition.
  - Early Anabaptists quoted and admired early church fathers and sought to demonstrate that they were most faithful to the early church's interpretation of apostolic teaching.
  - Anabaptism has compelling stories, habits of mind and behavior, and even theological wisdom accessible to us today:
    - Dirk Willems
    - Martyrs Mirror

# **DOES ANABAPTISM HAVE A FUTURE IN THE ACCA? YES**

- The Biblical grounds for authority in the ACCA is the presence of the Spirit. There are compelling theological, exegetical grounds for that. Apostolic succession and magisterial power may be overrated.



# DOES ANABAPTISM HAVE A FUTURE IN THE ACCA? MAYBE

- So many voices, so many ideas, so much confusion.
- We have thoroughly adopted the Anabaptist emphasis on a plain reading of the Biblical text.
- Result: strong anti-intellectualism in the ACCA.
- But it needn't be so:
  - Early Anabaptist leaders concerned mainly about sophisticated attempts to get around the plain reading.
  - Early church leaders
  - Froehlich himself
  - ACCA "church fathers"
  - The Elders Teaching Resource
- And "plain-reading" can act as a guardrail against mere data accumulation.

# DOES ANABAPTISM HAVE A FUTURE IN THE ACCA? MAYBE

- The “buggies and bonnets” problem is real, on the ground and in our imagination.
- “The crazy people” is real.
- The abuse of history to fight current battles:
  - Selectively quoting Froehlich and other sources
  - Ignoring historical context
  - A means to glorify us
- We need to get over fear of our own past in order to properly learn from our past



# **BESIDES, EVERYONE EVENTUALLY COMES AROUND TO ANABAPTISM**

- Believer's baptism
- Voluntary church membership
- "Separation of church and state"
- Separation from the world (immorality; consumerism; individualism; social and political media; anger and protest)
- Nonviolence
- Self and Church discipline
- Community vs individualism
- Communal identity vs individual identity: a place in the world
- Anabaptists were there first!