

Anabaptist Providers Group

Anabaptism for APG Leaders

Anabaptist Providers Group members strive to foster organizational cultures that reflect the principles and teachings of Anabaptist Christianity on which the organizations were founded. The following resource offers a brief explanation of Anabaptism and provides guidance for leaders on how to uphold the values cherished by APG members.

Whether you identify as an Anabaptist or are just beginning to explore the history and beliefs of Anabaptism, we extend a warm welcome to you as part of the APG family. We anticipate a shared journey of learning and personal development ahead.

A brief history of Anabaptism

Anabaptism is a Christian movement that began during the Reformation in the 16th century. It started in Switzerland and spread to other parts of Europe and eventually around the world.

Anabaptists believed that only adults who had chosen to follow Jesus should be baptized, instead of baptizing infants like other churches did. This led to them being persecuted by both Catholic and Protestant authorities.

Despite the persecution, Anabaptism continued to grow, and different groups with different beliefs and practices emerged. Some Anabaptist communities shared everything and didn't believe in owning things individually. Others were more individualistic in their beliefs. Anabaptists were known for their refusal to use violence and their opposition to military service.

The Anabaptist movement gave rise to groups like the Mennonites, Brethren in Christ, Church of the Brethren, United Zion, and Amish. Today, Anabaptism exists as a Christian tradition that focuses on the New Testament teachings of Jesus about community and peacemaking.

APG connection with Anabaptism

Anabaptist Providers Group (APG) members were all founded by Anabaptist churches or individuals. Their current involvement with the church varies, but they share a commitment to living out the values and principles of Anabaptist faith in their organizational culture and practices.

Leading with APG Values

Anabaptist Providers Group has identified seven values that reflect Anabaptist beliefs and teachings. Here are values that APG members are committed to practicing, and specific ways that leaders can carry them out in their organizations:

1. Servanthood (Mark 10:43-45)

Servanthood, also known as servant leadership, is a leadership approach where the leader places the needs and well-being of their team members as a top priority, actively working to serve them instead of expecting them to serve the leader. Here are some ways leaders can practice Anabaptist servanthood:

- **Empower the team:** trust your team members and empower them to make decisions and take ownership of their work. This fosters a sense of engagement within the team, leading to increased productivity and satisfaction.
- **Lead by example:** be a role model by exhibiting the behavior and qualities you expect from your team. This includes demonstrating integrity, accountability, and a strong work ethic, inspiring others to follow suit.
- **Encourage collaboration:** promote a work environment where team members feel comfortable sharing ideas and working together.
- **Value well-being:** pay attention to the well-being of team members. Show empathy and support, recognize and reward achievements, and encourage self-care.

2. Valuing Others (Matthew 22:39)

We believe that each person is created in the image of God and, as such, is inherently valuable and deserving of respect and dignity. We value others by committing to fair and participatory decision-making that sees potential in each person and respects individual choices. Here are some ways leaders practice valuing others:

- **Foster trust:** Create an environment where team members feel safe to share their ideas and opinions without fear of negative consequences or retaliation. Seek to understand their perspectives, concerns, and aspirations.
- **Lead with humility:** Recognize your own limitations and be willing to learn from others. Acknowledge that everyone has valuable insights and knowledge to contribute.
- **Listen and be open to feedback:** Actively listen to the voices and perspectives of all members of the organization. Be receptive to feedback and suggestions from others.
- **Advocate for belonging:** Take steps to empower and support marginalized individuals. Create an environment that prioritizes their well-being and success.
- **Delegate responsibility:** Entrust team members with tasks and responsibilities, allowing them to take ownership and develop their skills and confidence.
- **Encourage a growth mindset:** Cultivate a culture of growth where team members are open to learning and developing new skills.

3. Community (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

Anabaptism places a high value on community and relationships. We seek to build strong, supportive organizations where each person feels included, and where we relate with each other in a cooperative, not competitive, spirit. Here are some ways leaders build community:

- **Cultivate relationships:** invest time and energy in building strong relationships with the people you lead.
- **Communicate shared values:** clearly communicate the purpose, vision, and values of the community to foster a sense of unity and belonging.
- **Involve the community in decision-making:** seek input and feedback from community members on important issues and initiatives.
- **Encourage dialogue:** foster open dialogue and work toward resolving conflicts by understanding the perspectives of all parties involved.
- **Be accountable:** take responsibility for your actions and decisions, and be transparent about your intentions and motivations. Welcome feedback and constructive criticism.

4. Mutual Aid (Galatians 6:2)

Anabaptist mutual aid promotes interdependence and emphasizes sharing resources, including knowledge and time, to foster a stronger organization and community. Here are some ways to practice mutual aid:

- **Promote volunteerism:** encourage team members and residents to participate in volunteer activities that benefit the community, such as mentoring programs or clean-up initiatives.
- **Embrace mutuality:** emphasize the importance of mutual support and the idea that everyone has something valuable to offer.
- **Encourage practical support:** When team members and residents encounter physical, financial, or emotional challenges, promote actions such as sharing paid leave or organizing collections to provide tangible assistance.
- **Collaborate with external organizations:** look for opportunities to collaborate with organizations that align with Anabaptist values. Partner with local community groups to address needs and support marginalized individuals.
- **Engage in disaster relief:** contribute resources, volunteer assistance, or partner with relief organizations such as Mennonite Disaster Service or Mennonite Central Committee to help affected communities.

5. Stewardship (Luke 12:42-44)

Anabaptist stewardship emphasizes the responsible and sustainable use of resources entrusted to them, and a commitment to high standards and accountability. Here are some ways to practice stewardship:

- **Promote environmental responsibility:** adopt sustainable practices such as reducing waste, conserving energy and water, and eco-friendly initiatives.
- **Distribute resources equitably:** consider the needs and priorities of all members of the organization or community. Address disparities and promote fairness in resource allocation.
- **Ensure long-term sustainability:** make decisions and plans with a long-term perspective, taking into account the impact on future generations. Prioritize sustainable practices that ensure the organization and community's viability.
- **Raise Awareness:** promote education and awareness about stewardship principles, emphasizing the interconnectedness of actions and their impact on resources and the environment.

6. Peace and Reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

Anabaptist peace and reconciliation emphasizes nonviolence, forgiveness, and working to build peaceful relationships between individuals and communities. We provide ways for concerns to be heard, avoid coercion and seek to transform conflict into mutual understanding and resolution. Here are some ways a leader can promote peace and reconciliation:

- **Practice active listening:** give full attention to others, seeking to understand their perspective without judgment and reflecting back to ensure clarity.
- **Show empathy:** try to understand the emotions, experiences, and underlying needs of those involved in conflicts. Look at the situation from their point of view.
- **Communicate respectfully:** encourage individuals to express themselves using "I" statements and focus on their own experiences rather than making assumptions or blaming others. Promote thoughtful listening and response without personal attacks or defensiveness.
- **Find common ground:** encourage conflicting parties to identify common goals or shared values. By focusing on areas of agreement, mutual understanding and resolution can be fostered.
- **Seek win-win solutions:** instead of approaching conflicts as win-lose situations, explore creative solutions that meet the needs and interests of all parties involved.
- **Involve a neutral third party:** engage a skilled mediator to facilitate safe and structured dialogue, ensuring everyone's voice is heard and facilitating constructive problem-solving.

- **Reflect and Learn:** encourage individuals to reflect on the conflict resolution process and outcomes, promoting personal growth and applying lessons learned to future conflicts.

7. Dignity for All (James 2:1-4)

Our commitment to social justice calls us to advocate for marginalized seniors and team members and actively work to address inequalities, seeking new ways to serve those with limited financial resources. Here are some ways a leader can promote dignity for all:

- **Ensure representation and inclusion:** engage directly with marginalized seniors and team members to understand their specific needs, challenges, and aspirations. Seek diverse perspectives and provide opportunities for marginalized groups to contribute.
- **Amplify marginalized voices:** Use your platform and influence to lift up the voices of often-overlooked individuals and communities. Create spaces for them to share their stories, expertise, and perspectives.
- **Foster partnerships and collaborations:** work with organizations serving marginalized seniors and team members to identify shared interests and develop joint initiatives.
- **Policy and Advocacy:** support legislative and policy changes that advance the rights and well-being of marginalized seniors and team members. Collaborate with like-minded organizations and individuals to amplify advocacy efforts.

To learn more about Anabaptism

1. Videos

- [Anabaptists and Their Values](#) (5 minutes)
- ["The Radicals"](#), a dramatic depiction of the Anabaptist beginnings

2. Online Articles and Websites

- The Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO) is an extensive resource that covers a wide range of topics related to Anabaptist history, theology, and contemporary issues.
- The [Brethren in Christ journal](#) addresses Brethren in Christ theology and practice.
- The [Jesus Collective](#) is a movement for Jesus-centered life and leadership

3. Lectures and Podcasts

- Anabaptist Perspectives podcast about conservative Anabaptist life and thought.
- The Anabaptist Historians blog provides interviews and articles.
- For a lighter view, Just Plain Wrong podcast by three Mennonite librarians discussing depictions of Amish, Mennonites and other plain groups in media and popular culture.

4. Organizations

- [Mennonite Life](#) (Lancaster, Pa)
- [Mennonite Heritage Center](#) (Harleysville, Pa)
- [Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies](#) (Elizabethtown, Pa)

5. Books

- "Anabaptist History and Theology" by C. Arnold Snyder
- "Reflections of an Hispanic Mennonite" by Jose Oritz
- "The Naked Anabaptist" by Stuart Murray
- "Anabaptist Essentials" by Palmer Becker

6. **Local Anabaptist Communities:** Attend worship services, events, and community gatherings hosted by Anabaptist congregations or groups. Talk with members of the community to learn about their beliefs, practices, and lived experiences of Anabaptism.