



June 15, 2026

Dear Mercersburg Society Members, Friends, and Inquirers,

It was a great pleasure to see many of you at our recent convocation, “Mercersburg in Glass and Stone.” On behalf of the Society, I offer my heartfelt thanks to Lee Barrett and his planning team for putting together such a rich meeting! We had four plenary presentations, two workshops, two worship services, tasty food and drink, and wonderful conversations. Recordings of the plenaries will soon be available on our website ([MercersburgSociety.com](https://MercersburgSociety.com)).

I gave the first plenary, “Sacred Spaces: Building Theology,” offering seven historical examples to answer the question, “What does a worship space communicate?” Architecture, play of light, decorative materials, and stained glass all convey understandings of God and human beings, what is valued and eschewed, and what is compelling in a given community. The sermons, catechesis, prayers, hymns, and so on used in a context guide visual interpretation. We “visited” the baptistery of Dura Europos (Syria, 3<sup>rd</sup> c), Sant’ Apollinare in Classe (Ravenna, Italy, 6<sup>th</sup> century), Hagia Sophia (Constantinople, 6<sup>th</sup> c), St. Michael’s Church (Fulda, Germany, 9<sup>th</sup> c), St. Denis (Paris, France, 12<sup>th</sup> c), Grossmünster (Zürich, Switzerland, 16<sup>th</sup> c), and New England Meeting Houses (17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> c).

Dr. David Bains (Samford University) picked up the chronological progression in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century and brought us into the present. He analyzed many churches using the categories of spatial dynamics, centering focus, aesthetic impact, and symbolic resonance. Diverse traditions, including Mercersburg, used Gothic and Romanesque revival architecture to affirm the continuity of the church over time. Bains closed with examples of several churches built in contemporary styles that embody such Mercersburg themes as the centrality of the eucharist and the church as the body of Christ.

The Rev. Dr. Peter Schmiechen, President Emeritus of Lancaster Theological Seminary and a long-time champion of the Mercersburg Society, took us on a “tour” of Santee Chapel. This Mercersburg-inspired worship space offers the viewer far more than can be taken in quickly. Its many details evoke the history of the church and remind us that the sacred itself has a history. Schmiechen further discussed the eucharist as a celebration of love that calls the church to mission.

Our final plenary speaker was Caroline Dunleavy, an expert on the stained-glass windows in German Reformed churches in Southeast Pennsylvania. Such windows were popular due to the convergence of several factors – the Mercersburg tradition, Lutherans in union churches, imitation of Roman Catholic churches, the availability of quality local glass makers like William Reith, and even a bit of local ostentation. A focal point for her presentation was the Emmaus window from Ascension UCC in Norristown, with its beautiful portrayal of the eucharist.

In his workshop, the Rev. Dr. Mark Koscinski introduced key elements of Orthodox Christianity through the vehicle of icons. Color, posture, choice of biblical figures and saints all convey theological meanings. The devout pray through icons to their prototypes; thus, the physical becomes a window onto the sacred.

The Rev. Dr. Cam Richesson’s workshop focused on creative visual enhancements for worship spaces to celebrate the liturgical season or other thematic focus, as well as to invite congregational engagement. The room was vibrant with fabrics, candles, and vessels. We got ideas for Maundy Thursday, Pride celebrations, and participatory activities.

As a Society, we continue our collaboration with the newly formed Keystone Conference of the United Church of Christ. At its inaugural annual meeting, held shortly after our convocation, I briefly introduced our Society during one of the “Mission Moments.” Tim Dugan, Chris Rankin, Matt Deal, and I offered a workshop entitled “Preaching the Incarnation, with a little help from Mercersburg.” About a dozen pastors attended this lively and enjoyable opportunity for practical theological reflection. Many conferees came by our vendor table to pick up a copy of the *New Mercersburg Review*, a pen, and a notebook.

The 2026 volume of the *New Mercersburg Review* is now out. Kudos to Bill Evans for pulling together this illuminating set of articles. Bill is also working on getting the journal indexed by ATLA to make its content more accessible to wider audiences. If you’d like to read an article on a particular topic or are willing to review a book of interest, please let us know.

I’m happy to announce that the 2026 Roth Prize has been awarded to Dominic Teja Jasti, a student at Mount St. Mary’s University Seminary for his essay, “Toward Catholicity: The Oxford Movement and Mercersburg Theology as Protestant Recoveries of the Early Christian Tradition.” Dominic will be invited to present his work at an upcoming Mercersburg event. Congratulations, Dominic!

Our website ([MercersburgSociety.com](http://MercersburgSociety.com)) provides information about the Society, links to renew one's membership, opportunities to contribute to the Society, and various Mercersburg-related resources. Additional resources are available on our companion website [mercersburgtoday.net](http://mercersburgtoday.net).

Are you interested in serving on the Society's Board next year? Do you have suggestions for future Convocations or other programs? Would you like to help plan the 2027 Convocation? I'll be happy to hear from you!

Blessings,

Anne Thayer

President

[thayera@moravian.edu](mailto:thayera@moravian.edu)

[mercersburgsociety@gmail.com](mailto:mercersburgsociety@gmail.com)