

# Church with 250 members splits into 250 churches

LANCASTER, PA

After a particularly heated membership meeting this past week, the South Lancaster Mennonite Church has decided to split the entire congregation into more manageable units of one.<sup>1</sup>

“At first we decided to just split into two groups: those in favour of buttons on their shirts and those who preferred hooks,” explained Johan Landes, former South Lancaster elder and recently appointed pastor of

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Johan Landes Memorial Church. “But then the button-users started talking amongst themselves and found they had differences of opinion on baptismal water temperature. Those wanting hot and those wanting cold split into their own groups. So then we had pro-button pro-cold, pro-button anti-cold, anti-button pro-cold and anti-button anti-cold groups. I figured it was settled, but upon further discussion, the groups

realized they couldn’t agree on whether to sing five or six hymns each Sunday, and so there was an anti-button anti-cold pro-five group and an anti-button anti-cold pro-six group, and a pro-button anti-cold pro-five group and . . . well, you get the idea. The groups just kept getting tinier and tinier. Eventually we all decided to each form our own churches . . . but there was some opposition to this idea, too.”

The once thriving South Lancaster Church is now 250 (253 to be precise) individual churches, although the division has still not stopped.

“This whole starting-your-own-church thing has got me studying theology,” explained Landes. “And now I keep changing church doctrine every day. I don’t even agree with myself anymore!”

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<sup>1</sup> Editor’s note: This piece was originally published in *The Daily Bonnet* and is reprinted here with permission.

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“Who knows what I might believe this Friday afternoon,” explained Johan Landes. “I always get a little too liberal when the weekend is approaching. Being my own pastor is a lot harder than I thought. You get so much criticism from all sides, and it’s almost impossible to get the people to agree.”

Pastor Johan is arranging an ecumenical reconciliation service between his various selves for Sunday morning . . . although he can’t figure out whether they should use real wine or just Welch’s grape juice.