

Plain Politics: Assessing Old Order Amish Voter Participation in the 2004, 2016, and 2020 Presidential Elections¹

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For this presentation, let's begin with a brief background on civic participation and political involvement among the Amish. Also, I want to provide an overview of some of the recruitment efforts that have occurred in recent presidential elections. I'll discuss preliminary results of the data analysis on voter registration and turnout by the Amish in recent presidential elections. Finally, I'll conclude by offering some thoughts on the implications of these findings.

Let me start by briefly discussing the two-kingdom theology. Many of you are familiar with this and the idea of having a separation between church and state within the Anabaptist faith. Much of this theology stems from a number of Bible verses, but I think that two are really worth pointing out: John 18:36 and Matthew 22:22. John 18:36 states, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were from this world, would my followers be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews? But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." This verse emphasizes that there is a distinction between the godly realm—what good church members should be doing—and Caesar's realm.

And Matthew 22:22, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's." Or "render unto Caesar" in other translations of the Bible. These passages underpin a philosophy in which Anabaptists and Plain groups should honor and obey governments. They should pay their taxes. But there is a distinction between being part of the secular world and the holy kingdom of God. That has, in many ways, influenced Anabaptist behavior toward political involvement, particularly voting, for many generations.

I am a political scientist, not a theologian. I'm not an expert on Anabaptist groups. I tend to look at questions regarding Anabaptist political behavior from a social psychology and political psychology viewpoint. Much of my examination flows from a theory called social identity theory. What is social identity theory? It is a theory about how we think about ourselves; that is, what is our self-conception? So, if we fully embrace this Anabaptist theology, this two-kingdom theology,

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it should have implications for how we behave as individuals. And in some of my other research, aside from Old Order communities, I've found empirical evidence for this to be the case. I'll give a very brief example: in an analysis of members of the Mennonite Church USA, those who held stronger Mennonite identity and had a stronger Anabaptist identity were less likely to be engaged in political activity, particularly voting. Thus, identity should also influence, to some degree, a worldview on how one should engage with political actors, with voting, with members of government, and so on (Kopko, 2012).

This is not to say that the Amish are disconnected. That's very much not the case. Historically, it's true that members of the Plain community have been involved in local affairs, particularly in township or municipal matters. The late Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Tip O'Neill was famous for saying "All politics is local." And he was right: that's the level where individuals are going to have the greatest impact on day-to-day community operations—issues like zoning and questions of what you can do with your property. There have been anecdotes about some members of the Amish community, historically, serving on supervisory boards or something like that, which is a local matter. However, this type of participation hasn't occurred in recent years.

Amish members are very clearly part of our local communities. An excellent example is volunteering with local fire departments here in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. That is a form of civic engagement. Amish will also help with disaster relief efforts. These are all things that the Amish do on a regular basis, and we are all, generally, familiar with these efforts.

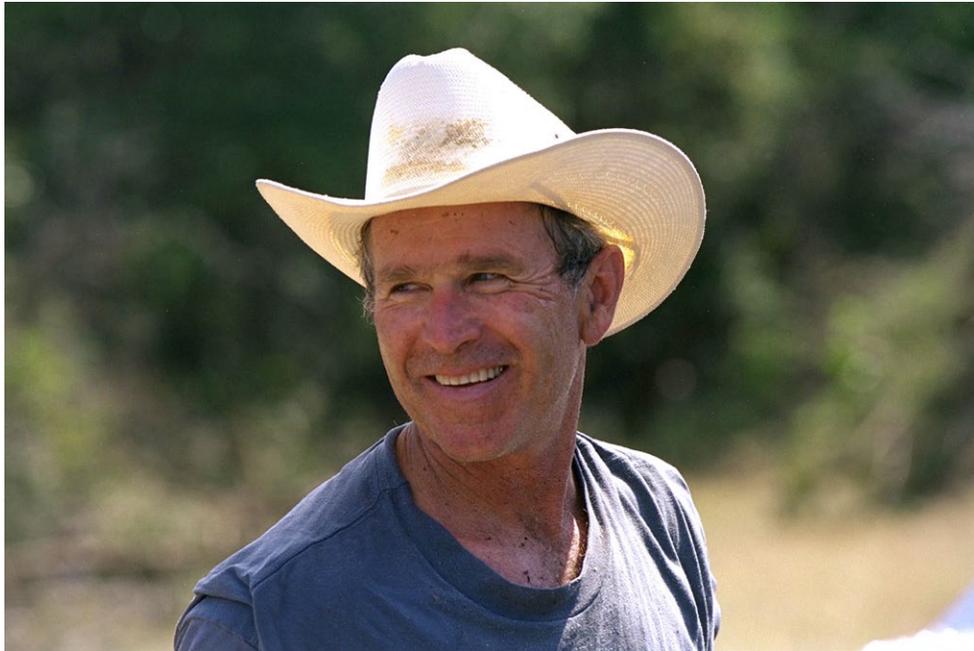
The Amish are interacting with non-Amish members of their communities in many different ways and quite frequently. They are civically engaged—maybe not politically engaged, maybe not in terms of voting or things of that nature—but there is that tradition of civic engagement. At least among some members of the community, though, there has been a steady stream of voters—among some settlements and among some church districts—but it is a minority viewpoint.

Overview of Recent Outreach

By some estimates, through the 1990s, maybe a few hundred Amish individuals registered to vote within central Pennsylvania, primarily in the Lancaster settlement. We started to see a shift in outreach to Amish voters, or potential Amish voters, I should say, during the 2004 presidential election. Some of you may remember the political climate back in 2004. For those who do not, let me give a brief refresher. We had a disaster of an election in 2000. There were a lot of election snafus in the state of Florida. Officially, the Florida count was decided by 537 votes, and that state was the decisive state in the Electoral College. And, because of that state's outcome in favor of President Bush, he won the 2000 presidential election. The dispute over the Florida results went all the way to the United States Supreme Court and was resolved in the controversial case of *Bush v. Gore*. At the time of the 2004 election, that competitiveness from 2000 was still on the minds of many political operatives—not just in Pennsylvania, but throughout the entire country. Combine that with a number of social issues that were bubbling to the surface, especially same-sex marriage and concerns over abortion, that helped to energize a lot of conservative organizations to try to find new groups of individuals who would support the Bush-Cheney ticket on Election Day.

Pennsylvania was still viewed as a swing state in 2004. Even though it hadn't voted Republican in several presidential elections, it was still viewed as being in play during that time. In Lancaster County in particular, we saw an interesting series of events. A man by the name of Chet Beiler, who previously served as the chairman of the Republican Committee of Lancaster County, was instrumental in registering Amish voters. Beiler ran for Congress several times, in recent years against Lloyd Smucker, the current congressman for the district that includes Lancaster County. Beiler was born Amish. He was never baptized into the church, but his extended family members were still members of the church and he had good relations with them. He spoke fluent Pennsylvania Dutch and was able to personally make inroads with the Amish community—through a grassroots, one-on-one outreach effort.

In addition, President Bush was a candidate that, I think in many ways, was attractive to the Amish community. Bush was open about his religious beliefs. He openly talked about the value of his evangelical faith. He had a rural persona, as you can see from this picture from the George W. Bush Presidential Library. At least publicly, the image that the Bush administration liked to project was this: when President Bush had down time, he liked to go back to his ranch in Crawford, Texas, and clear brush.



*President George W. Bush at work clearing brush, August 28, 2002,
at Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford, Texas*

(Image courtesy of the George W. Bush Presidential Library,
<https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/media/4950>)

This plain, simple, rural persona and Bush's openness about the importance of religion and faith—I think all those factors came together in the 2004 presidential election. And there was some

intentionality, too, on the part of the Bush campaign and other political operatives, particularly with regard to their focus on Pennsylvania.

I think there was a real concern, at the time of the 2004 election, that 2000 could repeat itself. And Pennsylvania potentially could have been the Florida of the 2004 presidential election. Let me add some additional context: after Texas, President Bush visited Pennsylvania more than any other state since taking office in 2001.

His visits weren't always campaign visits. Sometimes they were official White House visits to tout some sort of policy matter or accomplishment. But President Bush visited Pennsylvania 44 times since taking the presidential oath of office. Again, second only to Texas. Now, of those visits, 11 were either to Lancaster County or one of the surrounding counties. And he had two campaign visits to Lancaster County specifically during the fall of 2004. The first one was to Lapp Electric in the eastern part of the county on July 9, 2004, and, later, to the Lancaster airport in Lititz on October 27.

In addition, Vice President Dick Cheney visited Pennsylvania 19 times since taking office. So, again, there's a strong emphasis here, a strong desire to carry Pennsylvania in the Electoral College, because it could be decisive.

During the trip to Lapp Electric on July 9, as the story goes, the presidential motorcade was driving along, and President Bush saw some Amish people working in a field not far away. Bush asked the Secret Service to pull over and make arrangements to meet with the Amish. So, they did. They had a quiet meeting, secluded, away from reporters; it was an opportunity for President Bush to meet with members of the Lancaster County Amish community for the first time during this campaign visit.

At the meeting, a member of the Amish community gave Bush the straw hat he had been wearing. They were talking about religious faith and farming, and basically, the Amish had a positive interaction during that meeting with President Bush. And as one Amish member who was in attendance noted, anecdotes about the encounter spread like wildfire. There was a "Bush fever," as they put it, among the Lancaster Amish community after this visit.

That was the impetus for the title of the article that Don Kraybill and I wrote in 2007, "Bush Fever" (Kraybill & Kopko, 2007). That article first documented Amish voting patterns in Lancaster County and also in Holmes County, Ohio.

Again, this wasn't the only stop in Pennsylvania, particularly in Lancaster County. I mentioned there was a stop at the Lancaster airport in late October. I was there for that event, and I was able to observe a number of enthusiastic Amish, clapping and cheering for George Bush's arrival. It was a very interesting and exciting day, because Air Force One landed at the Lancaster airport. If you've not been there, it is not a large airport. I think a lot of folks were skeptical that a plane that size could land there.

But, sure enough, they made the landing work, and it was very exciting to see. And so that got everyone's enthusiasm quite high, as you might imagine. However, after the 2004 election, there really was not much of a formal outreach effort to the Amish community during the presidential elections in 2008 and 2012. But then something different happened in 2016, something that we

had not seen before. Pennsylvania was still viewed as a swing state. It was a state that would've been very helpful either to the Donald Trump campaign or the Hillary Clinton campaign. Pennsylvania had not voted Republican since 1988 but despite that, it was viewed as a state that could be in play. And a political action committee was formed specifically to reach out to Amish voters.

This political action committee had its headquarters in northern Virginia, just outside of Washington, DC. They were aided by a former member of the Amish community here in Lancaster County with these outreach efforts. And they sent a number of mailings, published a number of advertisements, and held some town hall-style meetings at fire departments in eastern Lancaster County. This came about because one of the men in charge of this political action committee had close connections to Newt Gingrich. You might remember that Gingrich is the former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, also former presidential candidate, and he, himself, had some Pennsylvania connections, spending time in Hummelstown while growing up. Hummelstown is located in Dauphin County, which borders Lancaster County on the west and north, and within its border is the state capital of Harrisburg.

The Amish PAC staff had also previously done significant work for Ben Carson's presidential campaign. You may remember that Carson was the former HUD Secretary in the Trump administration. Carson had coauthored the book *Gifted Hands* (Carson & Murphey, 1990). And it turns out that a number of Amish individuals had read that book, which is an autobiographical account of Carson's years growing up and his life as a neurosurgeon. Some of those individuals who read the book and who were sympathetic to Carson's campaign became engaged with a separate political action committee, which provided a linkage to Amish throughout the country. And then the political staffers began to connect the dots: maybe there's an opportunity to mobilize Amish voters. That's why the Amish PAC was started.



Amish PAC logo
(Image courtesy of Amish PAC)

I think that a number of political observers did not know what to make of the Amish PAC. Would it be effective? Certainly, we had very different candidates in 2016 than what we did in 2004. It was one of the most aggressive campaigns that we've seen in quite some time. Both candidates had abysmal approval ratings. It really didn't matter which side of the political aisle you were on. The poll ratings were down for both candidates. It got very ugly, very aggressive, and, obviously, there were concerns about ethical behavior; that is, the morality of both candidates.

The question was: how would this play out with members of the Amish community? It was an open question. But there were some interesting ways of trying to bridge this divide that we've never seen before in terms of outreach to members of the Amish community. Here is one of the billboards that was sponsored by the Amish PAC. It appeared along Route 30 in Lancaster County, and there were other billboards throughout Lancaster County as well.

But this is a pretty typical example. The sign says "Vote Trump. Register by Oct. 11." And it might be a little hard to see, but in the bottom portion here it says, "Hardworking, pro-life, family dedicated...just like you." And then there's a picture of a horse and buggy, there's the orange triangle, and right above that is an "I Voted" sticker.



*Amish PAC billboard advertisement from the 2016 presidential election
(Photo courtesy of Amish PAC)*

There were variations on this billboard, focusing on the voter registration deadline, when Election Day was—things of that nature. But it wasn't limited to just billboard advertisements.

There was also an advertisement that was placed in *The Budget*, a weekly newspaper that is widely read within Amish communities throughout the country. This advertisement appeared in the July 13, 2016, issue. It features a picture of Donald Trump and says, “Did you know? The 2016 presidential election will be on Tuesday, November 8, 2016.” This was accompanied by a checklist of items: “Trump has never been a politician or held elected office. Trump is considered one of the most accomplished businessmen in the world. Trump’s business is truly family-run. He has tasked his adult children with running his business while he runs for President. Trump is known for his strong work ethic. Trump will appoint pro-life Supreme Court justices who protect religious liberty and individual freedom. Trump abstains from alcohol. He has said, ‘I never had a drink. I never had a glass of alcohol.’ He says he’s seen what happens when people ‘lose control.’”

Did You Know

The 2016 presidential election will be on Tuesday, November 8, 2016.



The Republican nominee for President is businessman Donald Trump.

Here's what you need to know about him:

- ✓ Trump has never been a politician or held elected office.
- ✓ Trump is considered one of the most accomplished businessmen in the world.
- ✓ Trump's business is truly family-run. He has tasked his adult children with running his business while he runs for President.
- ✓ Trump is known for his strong work ethic.
- ✓ Trump will appoint pro-life Supreme Court Justices who protect religious liberty and individual freedom.
- ✓ Trump abstains from alcohol. He has said "I never had a drink, I never had a glass of alcohol." He says he's seen what happens when people "lose control."



Paid for by AMISH PAC. Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee

*Amish PAC advertisement in the July 13, 2016, issue of The Budget
(Photo courtesy of Amish PAC)*

This advertisement created some controversy in *The Budget*. The newspaper received letters and phone calls asking why this ad was placed. The Amish PAC had plans to run several other advertisements after this one, but some Amish readers expressed real concerns about this. That is a topic for another time, but I think that the responses from some members of the Amish community after seeing this advertisement also emphasized a sense of collective ownership, if you will, of *The Budget*. They felt like it was part of who they were and their community, and they wanted to make sure that something like this did not happen again. This advertisement was an anomaly, to say the least, relative to other advertisements that would appear in it. As a result, *The Budget* did not run the subsequent Amish PAC advertisements.

The Budget refunded the monies back to the Amish PAC because they did not print the subsequent advertisements. The staff of Amish PAC fully understood, and they didn't press the issue. But this wasn't the only print advertisement placed by the Amish PAC. Here's an example of one that was in *The Advertiser* and also in *Lancaster Farming*. *Lancaster Farming* is a periodical that many Amish individuals, particularly those in the agricultural community, read with some regularity. And it's a similar type of advertisement as the one that appeared in *The Budget*. Here, the photograph, though, features both Donald Trump and soon-to-be Vice President Mike Pence, and it includes several voting-related reminders. It says: "Voting in Pennsylvania is easy. To vote you must be a citizen of the United States, be a resident of Pennsylvania, and be at least 18 years of age on the day of the election." At the bottom is a fascinating note: "Bring ID to your polling place on Election Day. Photo and non-photo IDs are acceptable."

THE PLAIN VOTER PROJECT

VOTE TRUMP/PENCE



AMISH PAC
Plain Voters Project

Deadline to Register to Vote: Oct. 11

For Voter Registration Form, Please Contact:

Voter Registration
150 North Queen St Ste 117
Lancaster, PA 17603
717-299-8293
(Lancaster County Residents)

You will receive a Voter ID Card within 14 days of the date you submit your voter registration form.

For questions or if you do not receive your voter ID card, call 1-877-VOTESPA

This November, Your Country Needs Your Prayers... AND Your Vote.

In that order.

Voting in Pennsylvania is EASY. To Vote, You Must:

- Be a citizen of the United States
- Be a resident of Pennsylvania
- Be at least 18 years of age on the day of the election

Note: Bring ID to your polling place on election day. Photo AND non-photo IDs are acceptable. Accepted Non-photo IDs include utility bill, firearm permit, current pay stub, current bank statement, or voter ID card issued by voter registration office.

S943167 Paid for by AMISH PAC. Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.

*Advertisement in The Advertiser, Pennysaver, and Lancaster Farming, August 31, 2016
(Photo courtesy of Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies)*

Underscoring that, it informs the reader, “Accepted non-photo IDs include a utility bill, firearm permit, current pay stub, current bank statement, or voter ID card issued by the voter registration office.”

In Pennsylvania, the current law is you only need to show that identification the first time that you vote at a polling location, but not in subsequent elections. So, Amish PAC assumed that many members of the Amish community would be first-time voters and they would have to meet that legal ID requirement in order to cast a ballot. Realizing that photo ID may be an issue for some

members of the Plain community, they informed readers of some alternative forms of identification.

There also were subsequent outreach efforts. In the 2018 midterm elections, we saw a variation of the billboard from 2016. Instead of endorsing a particular candidate, it just says, “Don’t Forget to Vote.” That’s it. And it has, again, the picture of the Amish buggy with the “I Voted” sticker on the back, and a reminder of the registration deadline.



*Amish PAC billboard advertisement from the 2018 midterm election
(Photo courtesy of Kyle Kopko)*

And then, in 2020, we saw more systematic outreach, not only by the Amish PAC but by other political operative groups. This photo shows a buggy along Route 8, which spans territory basically from Pittsburgh up towards Erie, in the western part of Pennsylvania. And it appears to be a buggy flying a Trump 2020 flag. It is not exactly clear if the individual photographed in this buggy is a member of the Amish community. It might be a little difficult to see, but it appears that they’re wearing blue jeans and sneakers and a rather casual shirt and a hat. Also, the Trump 2020 flag says, “No More Bull---.” I’ll let you fill in the blank.



Twitter social media image of a purported Amish buggy flying a Trump 2020 campaign flag
 (Author unknown, <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EfpgkCoXoAA9tO6?format=jpg&name=medium>)

Then we have the case of the parade in Fredericksburg, Ohio, located in the middle of the Greater Holmes County settlement, which is nearly as large as the Lancaster settlement. Allegedly, the parade included several members of the Amish community in horse-drawn buggies flying flags. This was organized in part by Bikers for Trump. A man named Christopher Cox, who would later run for Congress in South Carolina, helped with outreach efforts in Fredericksburg, Ohio, trying to mobilize the Amish there in addition to the efforts of the Amish PAC.



Parade in Fredericksburg in September for the 2020 presidential election
 © Mike Schenk – USA TODAY NETWORK

Let's briefly discuss how much money was spent on outreach efforts. Based upon Federal Election Commission filings, starting in 2015–2016 election cycle—so this would have been the 2016 presidential election—the Amish PAC spent some \$139,000 on advertisements and other outreach efforts. Again, this was mainly geared toward the Plain community, although these billboards would have been seen by the general public. In the midterm elections, a little over \$80,000 was spent. But then, for the 2020 election, we see a significant uptick in spending to just over \$200,000 spent by the Amish PAC alone. And these donations came from dozens of states throughout the country as well. So, these donations were not necessarily only coming from individuals residing in Amish communities. And, I think something else that made 2020's outreach efforts a little different is Congressman Lloyd Smucker's influence.

As many of you may know, Congressman Smucker represents the 11th congressional district, which encompasses Lancaster County, and he too was born Amish. Actually, he is a distant cousin with Chet Beiler, interestingly enough. And this is a photograph that also appeared in the *LNP* paper, our local newspaper here in Lancaster County. Here, Congressman Smucker showed members of the Lancaster Amish community the Capitol building in Washington, DC. This is, I believe, actually a photograph that was taken on the Speaker's balcony at the Capitol building, overlooking the mall, and you can see the Washington Monument there in the distance.



Congressman Smucker with Amish at the Capitol Building

(Photo courtesy of LNP | LancasterOnline, https://lancasteronline.com/news/politics/meet-lloyd-smucker-amish-born-congressman-seeking-a-second-term-on-tax-cuts-and-conservative/article_af30edb0-d3e1-11e8-ad23-7f83602bfde8.html)

This photograph was taken in September of 2018. Also, there is this Facebook post from Congressman Smucker. It's dated December 26, 2019. "I was thrilled to have two Amish men from the 11th congressional district at this historic meeting with President Donald J. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence. Being born Amish, I know how important it is that we address the critical issues facing these communities." The quote links to a newspaper story from the *Washington Times* online. Congressman Smucker also sent out letters specifically to members of the Amish community asking for their vote in 2020. And I know that there were other efforts by the local Republican Party in Lancaster County.



*Facebook post by Congressman Lloyd Smucker, December 26, 2019
(Courtesy of Congressman Lloyd Smucker's Campaign Facebook page)*

Data Analysis

That provides a brief overview of some of the outreach efforts that we've seen in recent presidential elections. Now, let's talk about the data analysis. This was a very time-consuming task because what we are doing is downloading the voter registration rolls from multiple jurisdictions and then cross-referencing them with the Amish church directories to try to identify those members of the Amish community who are registered voters and who actually turned out to vote.

This analysis is still a work in progress. We have not conducted any qualitative interviews yet with regard to the 2020 election. We're just wrapping up the 2020 data now. But we have data from Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana for 2016 and 2020. Plus, we have data from Holmes County, Ohio, for 2004 and 2016. We're going to finish up 2020 this summer, including Pennsylvania data from both Mercer/Lawrence Counties and Lancaster County, for 2004, 2016, and 2020.

A complication is that each state is a little different in terms of how they provide voter information. Sometimes they provide information on whether or not the individual turned out to vote. Sometimes they only tell you if someone is registered to vote. Sometimes party affiliation is not provided and sometimes it is.

With all these complications in mind, let's start with Wisconsin (Table 1). The counties that we focused on in Wisconsin were Columbia, Green Lake, Taylor, and Vernon Counties, all with relatively large Amish communities. So, by our estimates, there were slightly over 2,900 Amish of voting age in those three counties of Wisconsin in 2016—that is, Amish who are 18 years of age or older—and nearly 3,200 voting-age Amish by 2020. There were six registered Amish in 2016 and four in 2020, so either two moved out of these settlements in Wisconsin or they were inactive. But, as you can see, Amish turnout was 100% even though the numbers are very, very small.

Table 1*Voter Registration and Voter Turnout from Selected Amish Localities*

Location	Eligible Amish voters	Registered Amish voters	Voter turnout among registered Amish voters
Wisconsin (Columbus, Green Lake, Taylor, and Vernon Counties)			
2016	2,920	6 (0.21%)	6 (100.0%)
2020	3,184	4 (0.13%)	4 (100.0%)
Michigan (Branch, Hillsdale, St. Joseph, and Osceola)			
2016	2,445	157 (6.42%)	Unknown
2020	2,682	161 (6.0%)	Unknown
Indiana (Nappanee settlement: Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties)			
2016	2,955	83 (2.81%)	Unknown
2020	3,042	61 (2.0%)	Unknown
Ohio (Holmes County only)			
2004	7,715	3,297 (42.73%)	971 (29.45%)
2016	10,000	3,596 (35.96%)	861 (23.94%)
Pennsylvania (New Wilmington settlement: Lawrence/Mercer Counties)			
2016	1,080	703 (65.09%)	113 (16.07%)
2020	1,315	715 (54.37%)	478 (66.85%)
Pennsylvania (Lancaster County only)			
2004	10,350	2,134 (20.62%)	1,384 (62.88%)
2016	15,055	2,062 (13.70%)	1,019 (49.42%)
2020	16,925	4,125 (24.37%)	2,940 (71.27%)

In Michigan, we see small numbers as well. Nearly 2,500 individuals would have been of voting age in 2016, and approximately 2,700 in 2020. These figures are for Branch, Hillsdale, St. Joseph, and Osceola Counties. Like in Wisconsin, these counties play host to the larger settlements in the Wolverine State, which is why they were selected. We do not have turnout information for Michigan, unfortunately. So, we're a little bit at a disadvantage to see how many of those actually decided to go to the polls. However, we can at least say that, of the eligible Amish adults, it appears about 6% were registered to vote. Again, it's probably unlikely that all of these individuals turned out to vote. But at least that gives you a ceiling for possible Amish voter turnout in Michigan.

Turning to the large Nappanee settlement in northern Indiana—comprising Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties—2,955 Amish individuals could be registered voters, but only 83 were actually registered. That number decreased to 61 in 2020, so again, the numbers are very small.

We're still in the process of coding for 2020 in Holmes County, but you can at least see in Table 1 the comparison of what Don Kraybill and I were able to do in 2004 and the estimates for

2016 that Steve Nolt and I worked on, which was covered in a news article in *LNP/Lancaster Online* (Janesch, 2018). We have seen an increase in the overall Amish population, but not quite as proportionate of an increase in registered voters. There has been an increase between 2004 and 2016 from 3,297 to 3,596. However, overall, as a percentage of the population, registration decreased, going from 42% to about 35%. And turnout was lower. So, of the registered voters, 29.45% turned out to vote in 2004, compared to almost 24% of the registered voters who turned out to vote in 2016.

I think Pennsylvania is an interesting case for a number of reasons—because of the number of Amish who live in the Keystone State and given the history of outreach efforts there. In Table 1, for the New Wilmington settlement, out in the western part of Pennsylvania (Lawrence and Mercer Counties), a little over a thousand Amish could have registered to vote in 2016 and 1,315 individuals by 2020. What I find so fascinating here is the percentage of registered Amish, which strikes me as a very high percentage. Of the Amish in 2016 who were of voting age, 65% were registered to vote. Not only that, but 16% then actually voted. Further, in 2020, of those who were registered to vote, about two-thirds voted.

I will not get into all the details, but there's a really fascinating backstory to this. Before the pandemic started, Steve Nolt and I had the chance to travel to Duquesne University and meet with a man by the name of Francis Caiazza, who is a retired Court of Common Pleas judge and was a federal magistrate in the western district of Pennsylvania. Caiazza teaches occasionally at Duquesne University. It appears that his work as an attorney influenced political activity in the New Wilmington settlement. He argued, free of charge, on behalf of the Amish community during a United States Supreme Court case called *United States v. Lee* in 1981. The dispute was over whether or not Amish employers were required to pay Social Security taxes for Amish employees. Both the Social Security Administration and the IRS were in the process of prosecuting Lee for this. Members of the community viewed this dispute as a First Amendment free exercise issue, and, through a number of back channels, Caiazza learned about the case and offered his services to the Amish community. Ultimately, he argued the case for the Amish to the United States Supreme Court. He lost that case, but it was the impetus for Congress to later revise the statute to provide that flexibility for members of the Amish community. And what was so fascinating was, in this conversation, Caiazza also credited his wife with helping to meet with members of the Amish community and emphasizing that if they are not willing to engage and vote, something like this legal scenario could happen again in the future.

Interestingly enough, Caiazza was also running for judge at the exact same time. If memory serves me, he missed much of Election Day because he was in Washington, DC, the previous day for the oral arguments in the United States Supreme Court. Regardless, he won that election as a Democrat. Local political operatives in the western part of the state really do credit Caiazza's victory in large part to the New Wilmington Amish settlement.

Finally, we get to Lancaster County. This is the county where we have data for three presidential elections: 2004, 2016, and 2020. I'll start with 2004. Again, this is the Bush-Cheney reelection bid. So, there's somewhere around 10,000 Amish who could have voted if they had

registered, as of the 2004 election in Lancaster County. This doesn't include neighboring counties that are also part of the large, multi-county settlement (Table 1). So, at that time, a little over 2,000 Amish were actually registered to vote. But, fewer turned out. We saw only about 60% actually turned out to vote in the 2004 election. And there's a long back story to this, and Don Kraybill and I (2007) discussed this in our *Mennonite Quarterly Review* article, where there was some pushback by Amish bishops, in particular. There were letters to the editor in *The Budget* and *The Diary* and other periodicals, emphasizing that voting creates a slippery slope for members of the Amish community. So, even though a large number of Amish registered to vote in the lead-up to the presidential election, many of them ultimately stayed home on Election Day. Then, in 2016, we see this growth in terms of the Amish population. The population increased from about 10,000 who could have voted in 2004 to about 15,000 who could have voted in 2016. But if you look at the percentages regarding turnout, they actually dropped between those elections. Now, one of the flaws here is we do not have data for the elections in between 2004 and 2016. So we can't really determine if rates plummeted after the 2004 election and have now increased.

It's difficult to assess all of this in a vacuum, but we can say that the 2016 numbers clearly were not as high as the voter registration rates and turnout rates relative to 2004. In fact, just about a thousand Amish voters turned out in Lancaster County in the 2016 presidential election. So, why is that? Is it because of the candidates? Is it because outreach efforts had failed? Is it the fact that there is a steep drop-off after 2004, and they're slowly working their way up? It's very difficult to say. But then that leads us to 2020. And I'll be honest. I was very surprised by these data. About 16,000—almost 17,000—Amish individuals could have been registered voters in 2020. Around 4,100 Amish, however, were registered voters. So, the number of registered voters who are Amish in Lancaster County essentially doubled between 2016 and 2020. And we had about a 71% turnout of those registered voters. Just to put this in perspective, the statewide turnout for registered voters was about 75% in the 2020 election, which is awfully close to 71%. That turnout dwarfs the turnout from the 2004 and 2016 presidential elections.

What I would like to do now is show you three maps, so you can see where registration and turnout was most pronounced in Lancaster County. Figure 1 is a map of the county, and you can see the eastern part is where the shades are the darkest, indicating higher levels of voter registration. The largest registrations occurred in Salisbury Township, with 747 registered Amish. Then Leacock Township, 646; Paradise Township, 396; Upper Leacock, 320; and Strasburg Township, 279. And if we look at turnout (Figure 2), it looks almost identical. These are the Amish who actually turned out to vote in 2020.

Figure 1

Amish Voter Registration, 2020

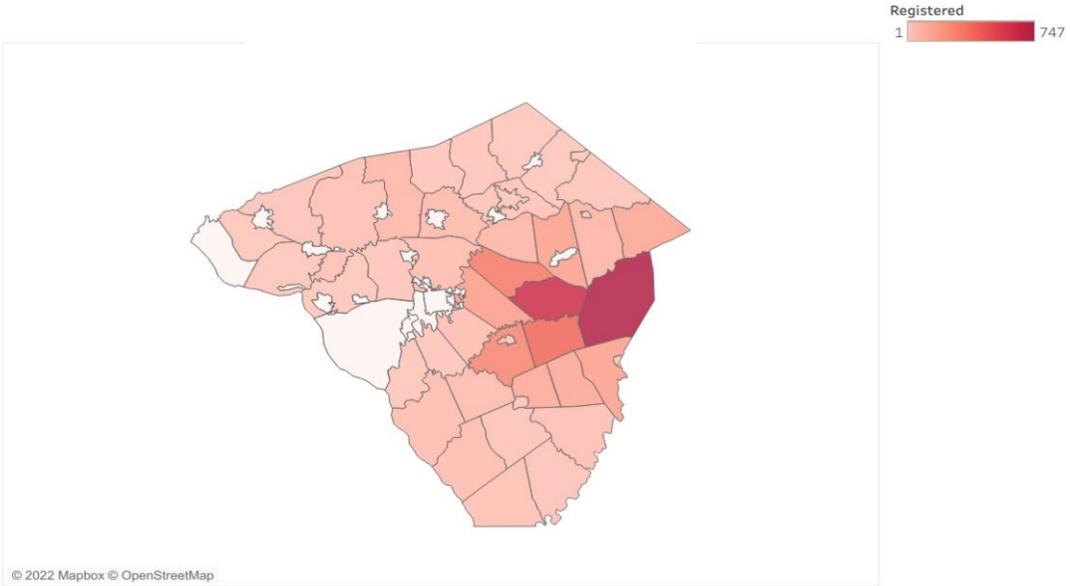


Figure 2

Amish Voter Turnout, 2020

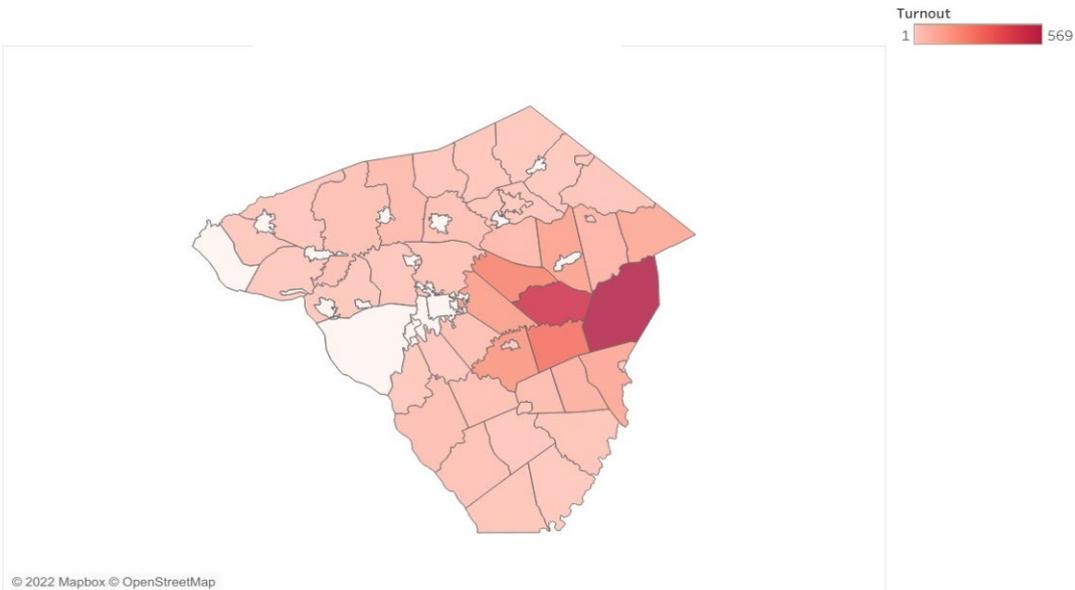
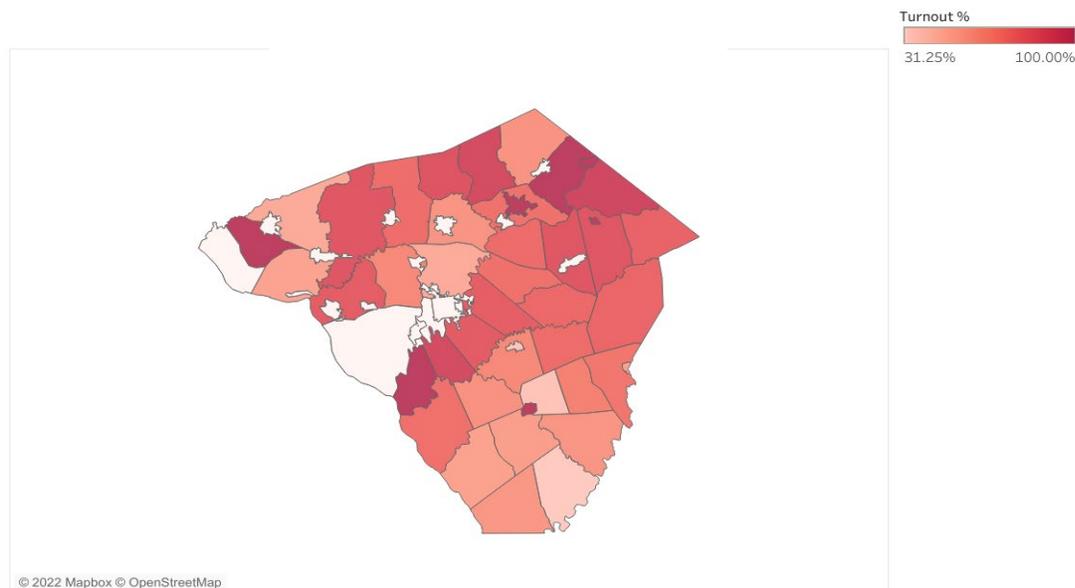


Figure 3*Percent Amish Voter Turnout, 2022*

The townships with the largest Amish voter turnout in the 2020 election are Salisbury Township, 569; Leacock Township, 485; Paradise, 291; Upper Leacock, 229; and Strasburg Township, 172.

Another way of assessing Amish voting is to measure what percentage of registered Amish turned out to vote. In municipalities that have small registration numbers, the percentages can be deceiving. Remember Wisconsin, where we documented 100% turnout. But there were a mere four and six registered voters there. So, we have to take such statistics with a grain of salt. You can see in the third map (Figure 3) that turnout was highest in the central and northern parts of Lancaster County. Generally speaking, in the southern part of the county, turnout rates were lower. That comports with what we would expect in terms of the religiously conservative nature of the settlement within Lancaster County. Generally speaking, there are more conservative members—not politically conservative but religiously conservative—in the southern end. The closer you get to Route 30 in the north, the greater the interaction Amish have with members of the non-Amish community. They are more likely to be progressive, relatively speaking, at least compared with Amish in the southern end of the county.

When you look at the voter registration breakdown by gender (Table 2), overwhelmingly registered Amish voters are male. (Note that we cannot ascertain the gender of voters in Wisconsin.) For example, Amish voters in Michigan—and this is true in other settlements as well—are mostly male. More than 60% in 2016 and basically three quarters of Amish voters in 2020 in Michigan were men. In Nappanee, the breakdown by gender shows about 7 in 10 were male. In Holmes County, Ohio, more than three quarters were men in 2004, and the gap narrowed slightly in 2016 to about 69%. The same is true for Lancaster. However, in the New Wilmington settlement of western Pennsylvania (Lawrence and Mercer Counties), over 40% of registered

voters were female. So, in short, it appears that something very interesting is going on in western Pennsylvania.

Table 2

Voter Registration by Gender for Selected Localities

Location	Male	Female
Michigan (Branch, Hillsdale, St. Joseph, and Osceola)		
2016	63.06%	36.94%
2020	75.16%	24.84%
Indiana (Nappanee settlement: Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties)		
2016	68.67%	31.33%
2020	70.49%	29.51%
Ohio (Holmes County)		
2004	76.60%	23.40%
2016	69.45%	30.55%
Pennsylvania (New Wilmington settlement: Lawrence/Mercer Counties)		
2016	56.3%	57.5%
2020	43.7%	42.5%
Pennsylvania (Lancaster County)		
2004	72.10%	27.90%
2016	77.63%	22.37%
2020	68.70%	31.30%

Table 3 shows party affiliation of Amish registered voters, which is only available for Holmes County, Ohio, and the New Wilmington settlement plus Lancaster County, both in Pennsylvania. We do not have the party registration for years with presidential elections because of the way party identification works in some areas, particularly in Ohio. Normally, whenever a voter shows up for a primary election, that's how they determine their party identification. But if you never voted in a primary, you would not necessarily be affiliated with a political party in that state. Regardless of locality, the Amish who were registered voters were overwhelmingly Republican. There were very few Democrats and even fewer registered to third parties.

Table 3*Party Affiliation of Registered Amish Voters*

Location	Republican	Democrat
Ohio (Holmes County)		
2004	98.50%	1.50%
2016	99.57%	0.43%
Pennsylvania (New Wilmington settlement: Lawrence/Mercer Counties) ^a		
2016	97.00%	0.70%
2020	98.75%	0.00%
Pennsylvania (Lancaster County) ^a		
2004	92.60%	0.30%
2016	90.02%	0.97%
2020	94.38%	0.39%

^a The remainder were registered to a third party.

Closing Remarks

One thing that we've heard repeatedly throughout this conference is that the Amish are not monolithic. There is great variation across the country. I think the data bear that out here. What's happening in one state, or in one settlement, is not necessarily happening in another. But what we're also seeing is greater intentionality by political operatives to mobilize members of the Amish community. And, at least within the Lancaster settlement and the New Wilmington settlement, there appears to be data to support the conclusion that such efforts may be having an effect. And I think that raises a number of important questions about what this means for Old Order communities in terms of assimilation. What does it mean for a greater political or civic engagement? What does this mean for a two-kingdom theology? Are the Amish moving away from their past values? Are they reinterpreting what the two-kingdom theology means? How do they view political participation now? We have not yet had the opportunity to do any sort of interviews or in-depth conversations on this topic. And I'm not taking a normative stance on this one way or another, but I think that there are some important questions that these data raise for the Amish community. It will be fascinating to continue this conversation in the coming years.

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- Kraybill, D., & Kopko, K. (2007). Bush fever: Amish and Old Order Mennonites in the 2004 presidential election. *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 81(2), 165–205.

Suggested Readings

Kopko, K., Nolt, S., Yost, B., & Redman, J. (2021). If you play in the mud, you get dirty: The appropriation of Amish group identity during a negative campaign. *Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities*, 1(2): 42–56. <https://doi.org/10.18061/jpac.v1i2.7950>

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