

In Memoriam

David (Titus) Richard Luthy

(December 14, 1941–October 21, 2025)¹

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David Luthy was a gifted writer, archivist, librarian, and mentor to many individuals, both Amish and non-Amish. He will be missed by friends, family, and those interested in research about the Amish.

David Luthy was born in Peoria, Illinois, to Frederick and Ruth (Conron) Luthy and raised in the Roman Catholic faith. He had an interesting and varied educational career. After finishing his freshman year at Villanova University in 1959–1960, Luthy entered the Order of St. Augustine and studied Latin at the seminary. Transferring to the Congregation of the Holy Cross, he continued his college studies at the University of Notre Dame, completing his undergraduate degree in English literature in December 1964. (His diploma was awarded at the start of 1965.) During 1965, he completed some graduate work in English literature at Notre Dame as well as at the University of Illinois. During the summer months of 1965, he worked for a real estate company in the Shipshewana, Indiana, area, selling lake lots. It is here that he became interested in and studied the Amish faith. Being a conscientious objector, he was especially interested in the doctrine of nonresistance as practiced by the Amish. For a time, David lived with the family of Roy and Wilma Miller near Middlebury, Indiana, and after completing the instruction class in the summer of 1966, he was baptized into the Amish church in September. David then became a teacher at Pleasant Ridge Amish School, teaching grades 5 to 8 for the 1966–1967 school year.

David moved to the Aylmer, Ontario, Amish community in September 1967 and accepted a job at Pathway Publishers, a fledgling Amish enterprise at that time. He and two others, Elmo and Joseph Stoll, selected, edited, and wrote materials for Amish readers and workbooks. David personally wrote 55 of the stories found in the 5th–8th grade readers because, as he often said, “We can do better than what is available.” In 1969, David became the business manager for Pathway Publishers.

David married Mary Stoll on March 18, 1971. (She preceded him in death on February 25, 2017.) Ben, the couple’s first child, was born a year later, followed by Miriam, Reuben, Elizabeth, Ezra, Ruth, and Martha. David and Mary eventually also had twenty-eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

David founded the Heritage Historical Library in 1975 and began the process of collecting documents related to the heritage of the Amish, which he stored in an upstairs bedroom of his

¹ The authors acknowledge the contributions to this In Memoriam by Steve Nolt, director, Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College, and Ruth Cain, daughter of David Luthy, who lives in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.



home. In 1980, he started collecting Amish materials in earnest, often visiting Amish communities around North America to collect written documents pertaining to Amish history, including old German Bibles, *Ausbunds*, and *Martyrs Mirrors*. It is here that David's superb organizational skills were very evident as he assembled and catalogued these important historical treasures. David also collected and organized newspaper clippings related to Amish education, communities, migrations, and accidents. As well, he gathered and systematized numerous Amish publications. A building was erected across the driveway from the Luthy home to house the burgeoning assemblage of treasures.

David's expertise and the collection drew many students, researchers, and writers to the library. David and Mary welcomed these individuals with open arms, with many scholars often being invited for the noon meal shared by the family. Those who visited the library will never forget the wonderful aromas emanating from the kitchen as they worked in the library. David's interest in meeting people from around the world, his witty remarks, and his friendly sense of humor made visitors feel welcome.

Mark Dewalt

Joseph F. Donnermeyer

Friends and colleagues in the academic world share their memories of David Luthy:

As a convert, David realized the importance of being true to the values of his community while at the same time surviving in a secular world. He was aware that many people only knew the Amish through printed material, and he labored to correct tourist material that portrayed the Amish inaccurately. David's contribution endures through the publishing house and the documents he collected. I have long considered David and his family to be among my closest personal friends.

— Gertrude Enders Huntington
Retired Lecturer, Anthropology and Environmental Studies
University of Michigan

David Luthy, God bless him, was rooted in his Catholic origins yet understood the Amish world better than most Amish did themselves.

— Donald B. Kraybill
Distinguished College Professor, Senior Fellow, and Professor of Sociology Emeritus
Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College

Over 40 years ago, I made my first trip to the Amish Historical Library that was in the home of David and Mary Luthy. They graciously welcomed me into their home and their community. David was eager to talk about his people. He had a passion for the minutiae of Amish history and had an encyclopedic mind that included things like the specific dates of all of the early editions of the *Ausbund*.

— Tom Meyers

Professor Emeritus and Emeritus Associate Academic Dean
Goshen College

David was an Amish historian, founder, and maintainer of the Heritage Historical Library, and an editor and contributor to *Family Life*, one of the most well-known and influential publications in the Amish and Plain Anabaptist world. Personally, he was one of the people who, through his writings, helped me to understand much about Amish population growth, as well as historical settlements through his excellent book *The Amish in America: Settlements That Failed 1840–1960* and its addendums.

— Erik Wesner

Founder and Editor, Amish America

I don't know what I looked forward to the most when I visited the Luthys in Aylmer: the volumes of information in the Pathway files about the growth and development of new Amish settlements, scrumptious lunches with Dave and Mary, or interesting repartee with Dave about a wide range of issues affecting the Amish and non-Amish alike. I guess it's a three-way tie.

— Joseph F. Donnermeyer

Professor Emeritus/Academy Professor
School of Environment and Natural Resources
The Ohio State University

Working with David in the library taught me about connections in the Amish world in a unique way. Hearing I was heading to Aylmer, an Amish friend asked if she could ride along to visit with an old friend who, like her, had been part of the Amish settlement in Honduras (as had David's wife, Mary). In the end, the trip involved my friend, her daughter, her granddaughter, the end-of-year school picnic at one of the Aylmer Amish schools, and a long discussion with David about settlement history.

— Karen Johnson-Weiner

Distinguished Service Professor Emerita, Linguistic Anthropology
State University of New York, Potsdam

My research on Amish and Old Order Mennonite education was possible because of David's vast knowledge. He gladly shared this knowledge and posed interesting research questions. My trips to the library always included forays with David to visit Amish and Mennonite schools in various communities in Ontario. I will forever cherish the discussions we had while driving to and from our destinations. My favorite memory was a family outing to a zoo with David, Mary, and some of their grandchildren. David's reaction to the roar of a lion made all of us laugh.

— Mark Dewalt
Professor Emeritus
Winthrop University

Last August, I visited David for the last time. David was then living in a tiny house that Bishop John Stoltzfus had built for his use on Stoltzfus's acreage near Wardsville, Ontario. I brought lunch—subs and cherry pie (his favorite dessert). We had an engaging three-hour conversation. We reminisced about many things: our long friendship (since the mid-1970s); the loss of our wives to cancer; and the history of the Pathway Heritage Historical Library. In passing, David mentioned, with self-deprecating humor, that when he joined the Amish he enrolled in the humility course but had not yet graduated.

— Reginald Good
Historical Consultant based in Kitchener, Ontario

David (or "Titus," as he preferred to be known later in life) led a remarkable life. His intellectual curiosity, passion for history, entrepreneurial energy, and colorful personality played a significant—if largely invisible—role in shaping contemporary Amish identity. I will miss his friendship and his passion for collecting books, artifacts, friends, and facts.

— John Roth
Professor of History Emeritus, Goshen College
and former editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*

David's knowledge of Amish history and life was exceeded only by his generosity. My trips to Aylmer were always a pleasure, not only for the insights I gained, but for the conversations and laughter I shared with David, Mary, and their children. The time I spent with them always seemed too short.

— David L. Weaver-Zercher
Assistant Provost and Professor of American Religious History
Messiah University

David Luthy could not have been more helpful when I showed up at Heritage Historical Library in 1991 as a young researcher with nothing but a letter of introduction from our mutual friend Steve Scott. David was a consummate correspondent, answering my countless letters through the years and adding bits of news and trivia alongside answers to questions I had asked. Among my visits to his library in the years after 1991, one that stands out was my family's stay in his *Dawdihaus*. The first night, my daughters wondered if I would ever get the lamps lit or would need to get David to rescue us from the darkness!

— Steve Nolt

Director, Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies
Elizabethtown College

David Luthy, a true pioneer in the preservation of Amish historical and contemporary literature and demographics, will be remembered for his contribution in the field of Amish studies. A visit to the Heritage Historical Library, which was a delight, gave access to worlds formerly inaccessible to scholars and researchers.

— Adam Hershberger

Librarian, Ohio Amish Library
Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center (Behalt)

Like the scribes who responded to the gospel of the Kingdom, David Luthy brought “forth out of his treasure things new and old.” His academic background gave him scholarly tools not typical of most Amish. After joining the Amish church, he brought those abilities to bear on his many articles and books about the Amish. However, his work on Amish piety, kinship connections, and Amish settlements was from a decidedly Amish perspective and reflected the interests that Amish have about their history, in contrast to the questions non-Amish scholars ask.

— Edsel Burdge Jr.

Research Associate, Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies
Elizabethtown College

David played a key role in my early understanding and research on my books on Amish life and adolescence. In my visits to Aylmer, Ontario, I stayed with David and Mary. Attending church there, David and I sat outside the screen door where he simultaneously translated Ben Blank's sermon. Although he ignored my suggestion to provide a written guide to his extensive library, he had a complete card catalog in his brilliant brain.

— Richard Stevick

Professor Emeritus of Psychology
Messiah College