

Goshen College again silences national anthem

by [Jack Jenkins](#) in the [July 12, 2011](#) issue

Goshen College will no longer play "The Star-Spangled Banner" at sporting events, school leaders announced, reversing last year's decision to allow the use of the national anthem for the first time in the Mennonite college's history.

Some Mennonites had criticized the anthem's lyrics as glorifying war and offensive to the school's pacifist traditions. Goshen's board of directors said many felt the school's "allegiance should be to Christ rather than to country.

"As a result of a thoughtful, thorough, prayerful period of listening, learning and discerning," the board said in a June 6 statement, "it is the board's judgment that continuing to play the national anthem compromises our ability to advance the vision [of Goshen College] together."

The switch by the Indiana college, which is affiliated with the Mennonite Church USA, upends a February 2010 decision to permit an instrumental version of the song at athletic gatherings after decades of shunning the patriotic anthem.

Supporters of the anthem, who were mostly non-Mennonites, argued that it "honors our country and improves community relations by welcoming and respecting the views of non-Mennonite students."

The board is now seeking an "alternative" to the national anthem "that fits with sports tradition, that honors country, that resonates with our core values and that respects the views of diverse constituencies." —RNS