The Congregation: A Triptych by Sylvia Gross Bubalo, 1983 (Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College). Photo by Phil Ruth.

Pilgrims on a Journey: Exploring Mennonite Spirituality Past and Present

Franconia Mennonite Church Fellowship Hall
613 Harleysville Pike, Telford, Pa.
Saturday, May 31, 2008, 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Spirituality…Life of the Spirit…Faith…Devotion….

Mennonites, as Christians, have journeyed with these ideas and experiences in some unique ways. One generation after another of Mennonites in eastern Pennsylvania have been inspired to love and serve God and humanity, to maintain personal devotion, to practice a fellowship of deep caring and accountability and to witness for peace. This symposium will explore how Pennsylvania Mennonites have understood and expressed their spiritual life over the centuries.

Presentations will include:

European Roots of Mennonite Spirituality: How Did Our Ancestors Pray?

Dr. John Rempel, Assistant Professor of Theology and Anabaptist Studies, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary

The day begins with an exploration of what and how Anabaptists and early Mennonites believed and prayed. First, we will look at samples of devotional writing by people who had put their lives on the line for the Gospel and were persecuted. Then we will look at how faith and practice changed when Mennonites developed a settled existence. We are not called to mimic them, but our forebears can be a cloud of witnesses the Spirit uses to help us live joyful and faithful lives today.

Early Pennsylvania Mennonite Spirituality: Hymns, Fraktur and Bishop Jacob Gottschall (1769-1845)

Dr. John L. Ruth, Historian, author and former Associate Pastor, Salford Mennonite Church

Bishop Jacob Gottschall was a historically representative figure of his era and people, having grown up, taught school, and served as a main spiritual leader in the eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite community. As a young man, he was a sensitive fraktur artist, and his son Samuel was one of the best such artists. The evident seriousness of their art and its explicit verbal expressions are a revealing window into the soul-feelings of this oldest of American Mennonite communities.

Becoming Like Christ: Two 20th Century Examples

Dr. Dawn Ruth Nelson, Pastor, Methacton Mennonite Church

Dr. Nelson will look at how Mennonite spirituality was lived out in one eastern Pennsylvania woman's life, Susan Ruth (1909-2005), in complement with the story of several twentieth century Mennonite teachers and the development of a spiritual formation curriculum at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (1982-present). In these stories, we see Mennonite spiritual formation changing from spiritual formation by just living in community to more intentional spiritual formation by contemplative and communal disciplines.

My Journey with Mennonite Spirituality

Mary Lou Weaver Houser, Lancaster, Pa.
Mary Lou is a certified spiritual director, gardener, artist, teacher, parent of two adult children, and grandmother. She and her husband Rod operate Herrbrook Farm Retreat, a facility for personal or small group spiritual renewal. Mary Lou has undergraduate certification in English and Art education and a Master's in Holistic Spirituality and Spiritual Direction from Chestnut Hill College, Chestnut Hill, Pa.

Caleb J. Franks, Souderton, Pa.
Caleb was raised in Franconia Township, Pa., where he attended Indian Creek (Conservative) Mennonite Day School and graduated from Christopher Dock Mennonite High School. At 29 years old, he enjoys living in different places and getting to know people from a variety of walks of life. His desire to learn how different people live and think has taken him to China, Chile and Lancaster County.

Yvonne Platts, Norristown, Pa.
Yvonne is Minister of Youth and Community Outreach at Nueva Vida Norristown New Life Mennonite Church. Having been raised in that congregation, she works there today as a spiritual warrior serving the Kingdom of God, promoting peace, justice and prosperity in the city of Norristown.

Conversation with Presenters

7:00 p.m. – Worship in Historic Mode at Klein's Meetinghouse, Harleysville

located on the campus of Peter Becker Community

One of the main sources of spiritual growth for Mennonites of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the community's gathering for worship. Not many of us today have access to the modes of worship that former generations experienced and that provided a framework for their understanding of faith and community. This service will explore and interpret some aspects of historic local Mennonite worship in ritual, song and the spoken word. The service will be open to the public as well as symposium participants.

Pilgrims on a Journey Symposium

Registration fee of $40 includes lunch.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please send registration and fee to:
Mennonite Heritage Center, 565 Yoder Road, Harleysville, PA 19438; (215) 256-3020; www.mhep.org

The facility is handicapped accessible. Registration deadline: May 15, 2008

Scholarships Available
Franconia Mennonite Conference has generously agreed to sponsor five scholarships for symposium attendees. Persons must meet at least one of these three criteria: in a current academic track toward congregational leadership, under the age of forty, or a person from non-traditionally Mennonite background. To apply, please send a letter to Forrest Moyer, Mennonite Heritage Center, 565 Yoder Road, Harleysville, PA 19438 stating how you meet the scholarship requirements.

Sponsored by Mennonite Heritage Center, Harleysville, Pa.