

# The Diffusion of Beachy Amish Mennonite Congregations in the US South

## **A Regional Chronicle and Spatial Analysis**

by

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*Second Draft*

(additional revisions pending)

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>The Beachy Amish Mennonites in the US South</b> .....	4
<b>Background of the Beachy Amish Mennonites</b> .....	4
<b>Other Contemporary Amish Mennonite Groups</b> .....	7
<i>Maranatha Amish Mennonite</i> .....	7
<i>Mennonite Christian Fellowship</i> .....	8
<i>Conservative (Amish) Mennonite Conference</i> .....	8
<i>Biblical Mennonite Alliance</i> .....	9
<i>Unaffiliated Amish Mennonite</i> .....	9
<b>Distribution of Beachy Congregations</b> .....	10
<b>Part I: History and Diffusion of the Beachy Congregations in the US South</b> .....	12
<b>Introduction</b> .....	12
<b>Section One: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia</b> .....	15
<b>Section Two: South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama</b> .....	29
<b>Section Three: Kentucky and Tennessee, and Churches in Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas Pertaining to the Beachys in the South</b> .....	38
<b>Part II: Analysis of Historical and Geographic Trends of the Beachy Congregations in the US South</b> .....	49
<b>Introduction</b> .....	49
<b>Relocating: Regional Analysis for Church Site Selection</b> .....	50
<b>Relocation Diffusion: Pennsylvania Dutch Culture</b> .....	53
<b>Beachy Subgroups: Spatial Analysis and Core/Peripheries</b> .....	54
<b>Parting Peacefully or Sourly: A Geographic Determinant</b> .....	57
<i>Alienation in Stuarts Draft, VA</i> .....	58
<i>Alienation in Paris, TN</i> .....	59
<i>Alienation in Franklin/Auburn, KY</i> .....	60
<b>Long-Distance Courtship: Networking Young People from Different Communities</b> .....	62
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	64
Appendix 1: Chronological Listing of Beachy and Related Churches in the US South.....	66
Works Cited .....	68
Interviews and Letters.....	71

# **Introduction**

## **The Beachy Amish Mennonites in the US South**

Beachys, one of several Anabaptist groups, had their primary origins in Old Order Amish settlements, as early Beachy groups often came out of the Amish. This would almost exclusively place early Beachy congregations in Pennsylvania and the Midwest, especially in Ohio and Indiana. Therefore, Beachy churches were often established in well-settled Anabaptist communities with other Anabaptist groups, mostly Mennonite and various Brethren affiliations. However, because there were very few Amish in the US South, most Beachy churches did not reach fruition within well-established Anabaptist communities. Rather, many new Beachy churches found themselves around locals who may not be familiar with the peculiar practices. Beachy churches often gave birth to new Beachy churches, and the size of Beachy congregations in the South has usually remained smaller than Pennsylvania and Midwestern churches. This paper will examine the historical spread of Beachy congregations throughout the South and analyze the regionally distinctive spatial relationships of the congregations and adherents.

## **Background of the Beachy Amish Mennonites**

The Beachy Amish Mennonites (Beachys) derive their title from three Anabaptist leaders: Moses Beachy, Jacob Amman, and Menno Simons. Anabaptists are neither Catholic nor Protestant in practice and theology. Other Anabaptist groups include the Hutterites and various Brethren groups. The Beachys are correctly called “Amish Mennonite.” Like other Amish Mennonite groups today and historically, influences from both the Old Order Amish and the conservative Mennonites are present in the church and culture.

The leadership of Moses Beachy distinguishes this affiliation from Amish and Mennonites. Beachy, an Amish bishop, led his Somerset County congregation in the 1910s and 1920s. Theological conflicts between Beachy and his co-ministers resulted in the ministers withdrawing from Beachy's leadership. After the split, Beachy made allowance for modern conveniences, such as electricity and motor vehicles (Mast 1950; Beachy 1955). During the 1940s and 1950s, Amish factions from various states affiliated with Beachy's congregation. Unlike preceding Amish factions, such as the Stuckey and other Amish Mennonite groups, the Beachy churches thus far have avoided absorption into the mainstream Mennonites (Lehman 1998). Amish distinction is still evident in church standards. For example, Beachys typically require married men to wear a beard, a traditional Amish practice, whereas historically many conservative Mennonite churches request men to be clean-shaven. Also, Beachy women, like the Amish, wear solid-colored dresses, opposed to prints worn on conservative Mennonite dresses.

Conspicuous differences also exist between Mennonite and Amish/Beachy church polity, the Beachys and Amish having a stronger sense of congregational autonomy (Yoder 1989). Mennonite churches, however, are governed by their affiliation, or conference. The ordained men of Mennonite churches collectively govern the churches. This body of leaders sees to the harmony within and among churches. Amish and Beachy churches remain autonomous. While the Beachy affiliation is recognized as a legitimate Anabaptist group, individual churches are self-managed. Conservative Mennonite influence is apparent in the flexibility of technology acceptance. It is also evident through the stronger evangelical emphasis: scheduled summer Bible schools for children, revival meetings, and evening services during the week (Yoder 1989).

Amish, Mennonite, and Beachy bishops have the most governing power, ministers and deacons second, and laymen last. However, the ordained men try to work as a team rather than a

hierarchy. This is possible because most Beachy churches have their own bishop. Mennonite conferences, though, have one bishop looking after several churches, so the 'team' concept is lost. It is not the intention of Anabaptist congregations to be a hierarchy of power like the structure in Catholic and Episcopalian churches. Rather, the ordained men are seen as fulfilling a position of leadership while being sensitive to congregational needs (Gingerich 1987).

However, Beachy churches do not always achieve this ideal. The lack of a strong affiliation and conference structure reduces the number of checks on ordained leaders. If a bishop or minister is running a congregation inappropriately, an investigation committee made up of bishops can only offer remedies; they cannot dress the wounds (*Bishop Committee* 2000). Concerns must be dealt with from within. Conference structure affords other church leaders the power to enforce their recommendations. A lack of conference has allowed Beachy churches to develop independently in their own setting while maintaining an association with other churches. However, because of the autonomy, there is great variation in practice from church to church, so much so that there are subgroups and church cliques among Beachys.

Beachy churches, as well as other conservative Anabaptist groups, have an internal intimacy foreign to many Protestant and Catholic groups. The Beachy constituency and local members comprise most of individuals' social lives. Beachy communities support one another socially, spiritually, and monetarily (though none are collectivists). Children attend the local private church school, young adults meet weekly for activities, groups of adult men work together in construction or farming, and adult women commune frequently in 'sewing circles' and for domestic duties like food preparation and shopping trips. While such a strong interconnectedness exists, social relationships with non-Beachys in the community are limited. For individuals and families in mainstream society, the town or region is the community,

including church, school, government, the workplace, etc... Beachy life focuses on the church community primarily, which provides for most social and spiritual needs, and on the surrounding community secondly. Interaction between Beachys and the local community occur through opportunities such as business dealings, public land usage (ex. parks, roads, libraries), and casual neighbor acquaintance. According to Johnson-Weiner (2001), men typically have closer acquaintance with community members than women do because of men's burgeoning employment in steady-salary occupations in contrast to farming.

### **Other Contemporary Amish Mennonite Groups**

Numerous Beachy congregations in the US South have been affected by other Amish Mennonite groups, whether it is friendly associations, membership swapping, or a change of affiliation. An "Amish Mennonite" church or affiliation are here defined as groups that have either emerged directly from the Old Order Amish and have resisted absorption into an already established Mennonite conference or an Amish Mennonite group or individual church that broke from an Amish Mennonite church. The early bodies of Amish are also sometimes referred to as "Amish Mennonite," but are here addressed as the Old Order Amish. Several historical groups of Amish Mennonites have since merged with Mennonite conferences, including the Indiana-Michigan A.M. conference (merged in 1916), Western District A.M. conference (1921), and the Eastern A.M. conference (1927) (Lehman 1998).

#### *Maranatha Amish Mennonite*

The Maranatha congregations are not an independent affiliation, but are rather a subgroup of the Beachy Amish Mennonites. The group was born in 1997 when concerned leaders from several Beachy congregations met together. They were worried about the direction of the Beachy

church and wanted more interchurch accountability. The men perceived there to be an “inability to address and correct problems” and a “casual way church divisions are handled” (Leroy E. Lapp, letter to author, 5/7/05). Since the congregations have not requested release from the Beachy affiliation, they are still associated. However, they hold separate ministers’ meetings. The Maranatha churches recruit member churches through personal invitations and the evaluation of requests (Ivan R. Beachy, letter to author, 5/16/05). When a non-Beachy congregation joins Maranatha, they inadvertently become a Beachy church.

#### *Mennonite Christian Fellowship*

The Mennonite Christian Fellowship churches, or just Fellowship churches, originated from a number of congregations separating from the Old Order Amish. The congregations resembled the Beachy Amish Mennonites at that time. The two groups shared fellowship to the extent that these churches were incorporated into the Beachy affiliation. In 1977, however, some of the ordained men in these churches expressed concern about perceived worldly trends among the Beachys. They met with other ordained Beachy men. Some concerns included members baptized without a true Christian conversion, worldly fads in clothing and lifestyle, and churches conglomerating in communities instead of spreading out. After this meeting, the concerned men decided to withdraw from the Beachys and organize the Mennonite Christian Fellowship. In 1978, these churches started holding their own annual Minister’s Meetings (Miller 2004). In 2005, the Fellowship churches had about 1,400 members in 31 congregations (Mennonite Church Directory 2005).

#### *Conservative (Amish) Mennonite Conference*

In 1910, leaders from three unaffiliated Amish Mennonite congregations met in Michigan to discuss the formation of a conference that allowed for congregational autonomy yet would be



able to assist individual churches with problems. This conference was to be more conservative than the main Amish Mennonite conferences of the day: Ohio and Eastern, Indiana-Michigan, and Western (Yoder 1987). During its almost 100-year history, the church has moved closer towards many mainstream Mennonite groups. In 1954, a majority vote called for the removal of the “Amish” part of the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference (CMC) name, which was implemented in the 1957 constitution revision. Proponents suggested that “Amish Mennonite” conferences were obsolete. During the 1960s, concern rose among some about the lax practice on issues such as the women’s head veiling and cut hair, television, and clothing items. Individual churches began to differ greatly in practice. Since the concerns in the 1960s, conference has abandoned a stand on the aforementioned practices (Miller 1985). Today, the conference has 113 churches with about 11,000 members (*Map of CMC* 2006).

#### *Biblical Mennonite Alliance*

The Biblical Mennonite Alliance, or BMA, resulted from a split with the Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC). In a 1999 meeting, CMC took a vote that failed to uphold the required practice of the woman’s veiling. This was the final straw in a series of issues. A number of churches broke from CMC and formed BMA (D.L. Miller 1999). In the 2005 BMA Directory, the membership was calculated to be at 1,669. BMA retains a governmental body similar to CMC and individual congregational practice still varies widely.

#### *Unaffiliated Amish Mennonite*

Several congregations have found themselves excluded from fellowship from the Beachys or one of the above groups. These congregations have remained unaffiliated, though some like-minded congregations will hold fellowship with one another or with other unaffiliated conservative Mennonite congregations. The unaffiliated Amish Mennonites have a wide range of

conservatism, and many still participate in functions of organized Amish Mennonite bodies, such as Bible School.

### **Distribution of Beachy Congregations**

In 2005, the Mennonite Church Directory reported 108 Beachy congregations in the US and 159 churches around the world. Pennsylvania and Ohio have the heaviest concentrations of Beachy churches. Many of these churches are 1940s and 50s outgrowths of Amish congregations. Churches from Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, and Oklahoma also mostly came from Amish congregations (Yoder 1987).

Unlike Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern Beachys, most Southern congregations are not direct products of an Amish church, but rather an offshoot of another Beachy congregation. Only four congregations emerged directly from the Amish: Kempsville Amish Mennonite in Virginia Beach, VA [1940]; Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite in Stuarts Draft, VA [1955]; the Pine Grove Mennonite in Catlett, VA [1955]; and Calvary Fellowship in Blackville, SC [1968]. The original four Amish congregations either moved away or dissolved; with the exception of Calvary, the congregations can trace their nuclei roots back to Dover, DE, within one to three relocations (Yoder 2002; Miller and Zook 1995; Schrock, forthcoming; Rumph 1992). This sort of root tracing characterizes most Beachy churches in the South. Thus, this region provides not only the opportunity to plot the location of Beachy churches, but also to track the historical geographic spread of churches, much like playing a game of connect-the-dots.

About half of the US Beachy congregations are in the South; this includes churches not covered in this project in Missouri, Arkansas, Florida, and Texas and does not include churches originally from the South but now in Illinois, congregations tracked because of their Southern

roots. Kentucky has the greatest number of Beachy churches in the South while Virginia has the second greatest. There are currently no Beachy churches in North Carolina, Mississippi, Delaware, and Louisiana (Miller 2005; Christian Light Publications 2005) though the Christian Fellowship of Minerva, OH, is expecting to start an outreach near Hickory, NC, later this year (2006).

# Part I: History and Diffusion of the Beachy Congregations in the US South

## Introduction

Beachy Amish Mennonite congregations (or just Beachys), once mostly limited to Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, have spread throughout much of the US South<sup>1</sup> during the twentieth century. Unlike many Mid-Atlantic and Midwest Beachy churches that broke with the Amish, almost all Beachy churches in the South were started by other Beachy churches. Therefore, the spread of the Beachy churches in the South may be traced graphically. The maps, constructed by the author, trace church movements and establishments in three classifications:

- 1) A peaceful “move” (sometimes a product of “alienation,” a term discussed on p. 56)
- 2) An “outreach” (with the goal of proselytizing),
- 3) A “split.”

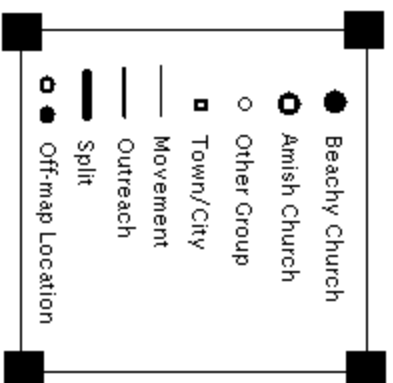
Accompanying maps are included in this section. Congregations listed in each region may be located on their respective maps by finding the year established.

Beachy churches are plotted on four different maps: Figure 1- Maryland, West Virginia, and Virginia; Figure 2- South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama; and Figures 3a and 3b- Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Churches are labeled with the year established. Inserts for each of the regions and a key is included on the following page. Because of complicated meetinghouse swapping in Paris, TN, the 3a and 3b inserts use a separate key, instead identifying the year groups started occupying each meetinghouse. Therefore, the years 1993 and 2000 do not have a corresponding entry, as no new churches were born out of these moves.

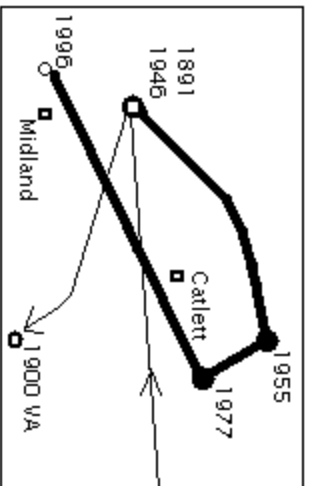
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<sup>1</sup> The US South is here defined as those states south of the Mason-Dixon Line and the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi, exclusive of Florida.

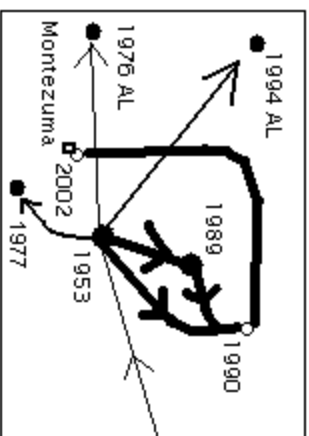
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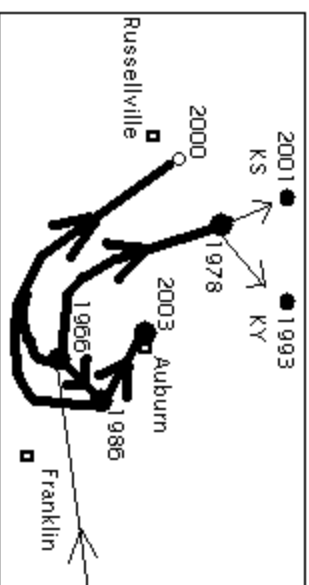
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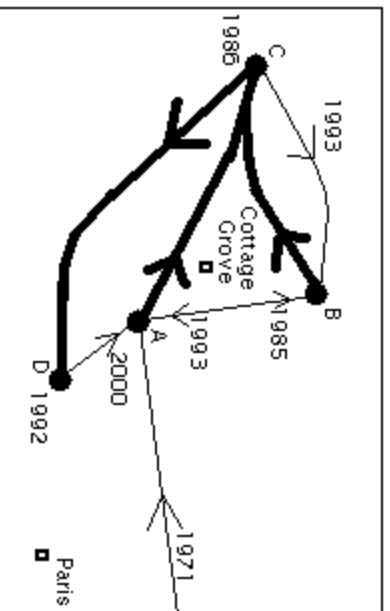
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Insert 3b

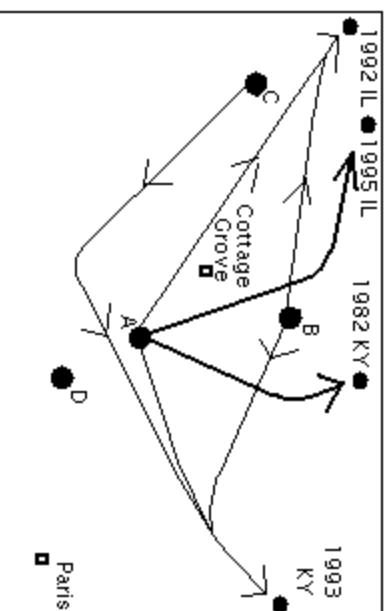


Insert 3a Internal Movement



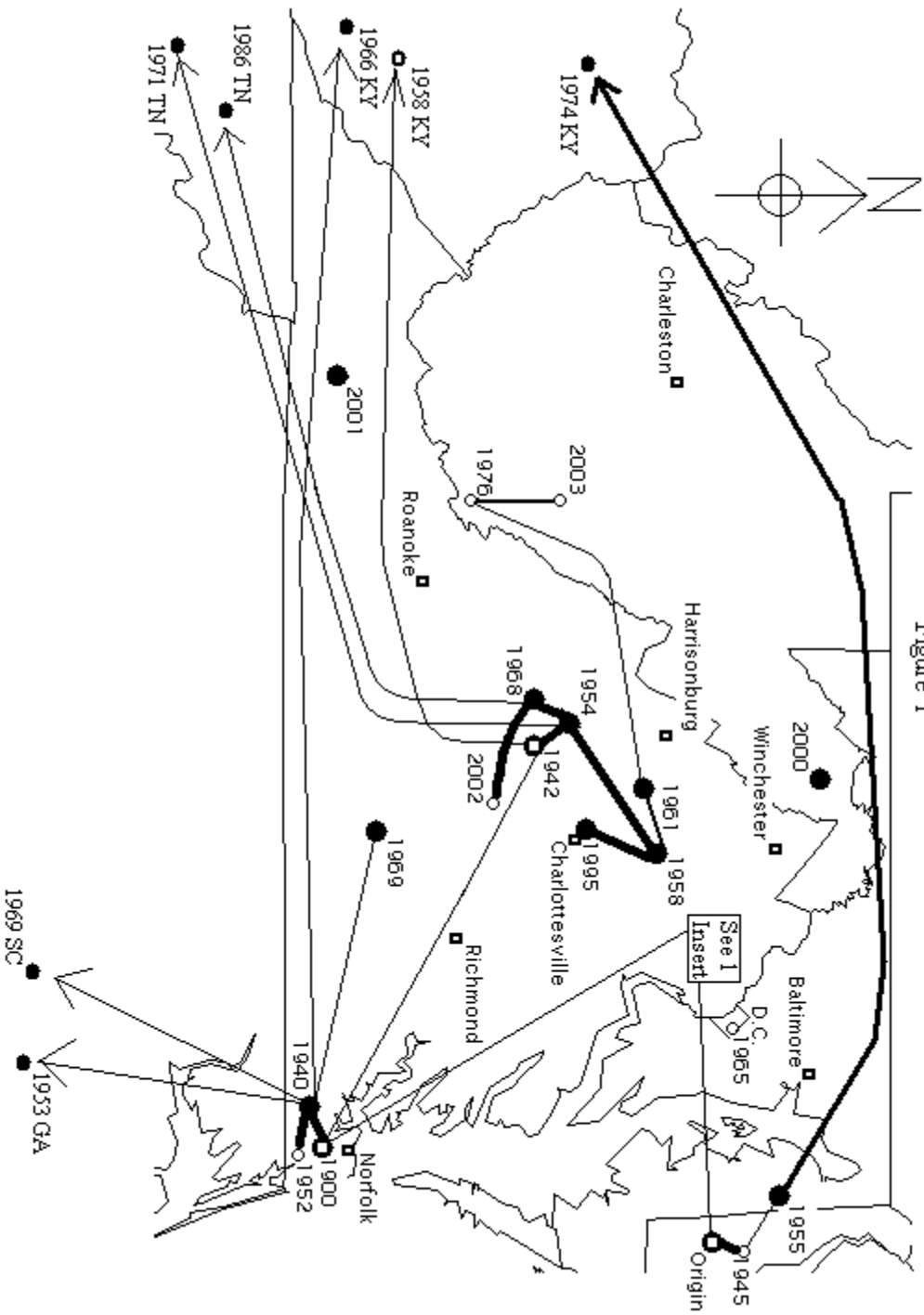
- A: New Boston  
1971-2000  
Calvary
- B: Locust Grove  
1985-1993  
Bethel
- C: Bethel  
1985-1993
- D: Calvary  
1992-2000

Insert 3a External Movement



Diffusion of Beachy Churches in Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia

Figure 1



## Section One: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia

Group: Old Order Amish, Midland VA

Affiliation: Old Order Amish

Established: 1891

Disbanded: 1901

Origin: Old Order Amish: Dover DE

Cause: Move

Sources: Landing 1970, Miller and Zook 1995, Rumph 1992, Yoder 1987

The Amish attempted a settlement in Midland, VA. At least six lived there in 1895. According to Yoder, the attempt ended in 1901, and the families departed ways. Landing notes that there was still an Amish directory listing for the community in 1901 as well as 1903, but not thereafter. Rumph (1992, 5) cites several possible reasons the church disbanded: "...the hot summers, muddy roads in spring, heavy soil, lack of refrigerated train cars for shipping milk to Washington, D.C., and a possible church controversy..."

Group: Old Order Amish, Kempsville VA

Affiliation: Old Order Amish

Established: 1900

Disbanded: Moved to Stuarts Draft in 1942

Origin: Old Order Amish, Midland VA

Cause: Move

Sources: Landing 1970, Miller 2005, Miller and Zook 1995, Schrock (forthcoming)

When the Midland congregation disbanded, three families (Hershbergers, Smokers, and Glicks) moved to Kempsville, VA, upon hearing about cheap land and a promising produce market. In the next few years, other Amish families moved to Kempsville from various Old Order Amish communities, including Salisbury and Belleville, increasing the congregation's size. The first minister settled permanently in Kempsville in 1907. The group constructed a meetinghouse in 1913 under the encouragement of the settlers from Salisbury, PA. During the 1910s and 1920s, the congregation allowed tractors, limited usage of electricity (first for cooling milk and later for household lights and refrigeration), and Sunday School. Concurrently, the congregation discouraged tobacco and alcohol usage and bed courtship, practices prevalent in many other Old Order congregations at the time. By 1922 there were eighteen families at Kempsville. As the colony continued to grow, a few families moved to the nearby town of Portsmouth in 1936, but all had returned or left by 1943.

Group: Flag Run Amish Church/Mountain View Fellowship, Salisbury PA

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1927

Origin: Old Order Amish, Salisbury PA

Cause: Split

Sources: Beachy 1955, Mast 1950, Miller and Zook 1995, Yoder 1987

With the Flag Run Amish Church's establishment, the Beachy church is officially formed under the leadership of Bishop Moses M. Beachy. The primary issue was the extent to which the

church should shun members who change their membership to conservative Mennonite churches. Other issues include Sunday School and the desire for electricity and vehicles. Even though out of the geographic area of analysis, this church split is included in the timeline to provide a point of reference. The Mountain View Fellowship name for the church was not selected until 1953.

Group: Kempsville Amish Mennonite, Kempsville/Virginia Beach VA

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1940

Origin: Old Order Amish: Kempsville VA

Cause: Split

Sources: Miller 2005, Miller and Zook 1995, Yoder 2002, Yoder 1987

The main issue in the 1940 Amish-Beachy split was the usage of automobiles. There had been several years of unrest prior to 1940, and communion had not been held. The Beachy faction (which constituted a majority of members) reasoned that since Yoder's Dairy used delivery trucks and rubber tired were allowed on tractors, the congregation should allow automobile ownership. In addition, the Beachy faction argued that with increasing urbanization, buggy travel was not safe anymore.

Minister Simon L Yoder joined the Beachy group while Bishop Simon Schrock and Minister Eli M. Yoder stayed with the Amish. Moses M. Beachy, whose daughter was married to E.M. Yoder, came to assist the group in forming a Beachy church. Beachy hoped that Yoder, who took a relatively evangelical and redemptive approach to his ministry, would join the faction, but Beachy encouraged him to remain true to his convictions. The two remained on good terms during and after the incident.

Moses M. Beachy had bishop oversight through 1942 when Jonas H. Hershberger was ordained as bishop. The Beachys and Amish shared the meetinghouse until all Amish had left by 1944. It was common for members of each group to attend the other's meetings. German was retained in services until 1961.

Group: Old Order Amish, Stuarts Draft VA

Affiliation: Old Order Amish

Established: 1942

Disbanded: 1986

Origin: Old Order Amish, Kempsville VA

Cause: Move, alienation

Sources: Elmer S. Schrock 4/7/05, Schrock (forthcoming), Yoder 2002

After the formation of the Kempsville Amish Mennonite congregation in 1940, the Old Order Amish moved to Stuarts Draft, VA, from 1942 to 1944. They had also considered Chase City, Wytheville, and Pulaski. When they were about to settle on Wytheville, one of the members received a comment that they should look into the Shenandoah Valley. The Old Order Amish were drawn there for the good farmland and the leniency of the Waynesboro draft board, as some young men faced the draft. The board's leniency was a result of working with the many Virginia Conference Mennonites in the area.

The Amish group was joined by a few families from Dover, DE; Belleville, PA; and other states. Those moving in were attracted to the absence of the "moral and social difficulties



found in some other Amish communities” (Schrock, forthcoming, 13-14) the church taking a stand against tobacco, alcohol, and bed courtship. In 1943, the group constructed a meetinghouse.

The congregation suffered severe membership losses with the formation of Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite and Pilgrim Christian Fellowship Beachy churches in the Stuarts Draft community as well as the movement of many families to Guthrie, KY. In 1980, Minister Eli Yoder passed away, and the church allowed vehicles soon after, but remained Amish. Yoder had offered to move away to accommodate the church’s desire for vehicles (he desired to remain faithful to his baptismal vow to never own a vehicle), but the church would hear nothing of it. Since the allowance of vehicles severed ties with other Old Order Amish churches, it wasn’t long until the congregation disbanded. In 1986, at the death of Minister Milton N. Kinsinger, the church dissolved; members either joined the Beachy churches or moved away.

Group: Unidentified Amish-Mennonite congregation, Dover DE

Affiliation: Unaffiliated Amish Mennonite

Established: 1945

Disbanded: 1955

Origin: Old Order Amish, Dover DE

Cause: Split

Sources: Miller 2005, Yoder 1987

A group left the Amish settlement, with a leaning towards becoming Beachy. However, the church was unstable, and many began to rejoin the Old Order Amish. The church dissolved in 1955. The ministers, Arthur Beachy and Rudy Yoder, eventually moved to the newly established Harmony Christian Fellowship in Kennedyville, MD.

Group: Old Order Amish, Catlett/Midland VA

Affiliation: Old Order Amish

Established: 1946

Disbanded: Around 1960

Origin: Old Order Amish, Dover DE

Cause: Move, alienation

Sources: Landing 1970, Yoder 1987

Some of the Old Order Amish were alienated by the new Amish-Mennonite congregation in Dover. Many left, including three ordained men, and resettled in Catlett and Midland, where an earlier group of Old Order Amish had once settled and later moved out. Bishop William Byler and Ministers Rudy W. Byler and Simon W. Byler led the congregation. The new colony had 26 families by 1948, only two years later. Daniel J. Nissley was ordained bishop in 1952.

Group: Providence Conservative Mennonite Church, Kempsville/Virginia Beach VA  
Affiliation: Conservative Mennonite Conference  
Established: 1952  
Origin: Kempsville Amish Mennonite, Virginia Beach VA  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Miller 1985, Miller and Zook 1995

The faction requested that English be used in services when non-German-speaking visitors were present. Since the majority did not agree with and/or support this change, six families appealed to the Conservative Mennonite Conference's executive committee for assistance. The committee helped form Providence Conservative Mennonite Church. The church was at once active in local evangelism. Ordained men from various Conservative churches moved in during successive years. The first minister, Simon Coblentz, joined the congregation in 1953.

By 1971, two of the ministers, Coblentz, Solomon Beiler, and Joseph Hershberger were at odds with the mainstream direction of the Conservative conference and thus moved to other churches. Coblentz moved back to Hartville, OH, Beiler moved to the Nationwide church in Pantego, NC, and Hershberger joined the new Beachy church in Abbeville, SC. The conference dropped the church from its list of members in 1973. After much membership and ministry swapping and gutting, the congregation rejoined the conference in 1981.

Group: Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite, Stuarts Draft VA  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1954-1955  
Origin: Old Order Amish, Stuarts Draft VA  
Cause: Split

Sources: Miller 2005, Elmer S. Schrock 4/7/05, Schrock (forthcoming), Yoder 1987

Simon Schrock, who was bishop until his death in 1949, was lenient in church discipline, though not negligent. After his passing, Simon Yoder was ordained bishop. His stricter discipline and leadership brought several issues to a head that eventually led to a split:

- 1) Because the Old Order Amish in Stuarts Draft allowed tractors, some of the members used this piece of farm equipment as transportation on the roads. When they did use buggies for transportation, the horses were stubborn because they were not utilized for farm work like in other Old Order settlements. And with increasing urbanization, buggy travel became unsafe (one member had been killed in a buggy accident). So some members pushed for the allowance of automobiles.

- 2) Some desired a more evangelical approach to witnessing to the world, and the first step to doing this was to drop the usage of German in services.

- 3) Questions arose as to whether the Old Order Amish church was what the New Testament church was supposed to be.

- 4) Some members simply wanted more freedoms.

- 5) Some felt it inconsistent to use neighbors' phones and get rides with them to town.

Several attempts were made by members to approach the bishop in these matters, but were met with resistance. A bishop committee was brought in that supported Schrock. One member was excommunicated and eventually moved out of the community with his wife.

In the November and December 1954 counsel and communion meetings, members of the faction expressed unity with the church, but started meeting separately later that month. The faction's first separate meeting was not announced publicly. It came as a surprise to the Amish when they first discovered what had happened at the service Sunday morning.

The faction of about nine families appealed for help and received assistance from Bishops Eli D. Tice and John A. Stoltzfus. At that time, Minister Noah Keim joined the new church. Alvin D. Miller, who was a minister with the Stuarts Draft Amish, was ordained bishop in 1957. The church engaged in evangelical activities such as tract distribution. However, Mt. Zion retained German in services until 1985, a move that resulted in two later splits. Since then, the church has stepped up evangelization efforts, but still remains more conservative than either Pilgrim Christian Fellowship or Oak Grove Mennonite. Mt. Zion A.M. today has at least one family from non-Anabaptist background in their membership.

Group: Harmony Christian Fellowship, Millington MD

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1955

Origin: Amish-Mennonites and Old Order Amish, Dover DE

Cause: Move

Sources: Miller 2005, Yoder 1987

Five families from Lancaster County, PA and several more from the Amish-Mennonite and Old Order Amish congregations of Dover, DE, moved to Millington, MD, having a "desire for a more spiritual church" (Miller 2005, 220). Deacon Sam Beachy from the Dover Old Order Amish and ministers Rudy Yoder and Arthur Martin from the Dover Amish-Mennonite congregation joined the church. Daniel Nissley of Catlett, VA, provided bishop oversight.

The three ministers operated in a way that dissatisfied most members, so the majority faction withdrew from their leadership in 1963-1964. The three ministers held onto the meetinghouse briefly, but the faction was soon able to obtain legal ownership. Once the meetinghouse was regained, the congregation sought new bishop oversight with Elam Kauffman of Weavertown Amish Mennonite in Lancaster County; ordinations followed in 1965. In time, the three ministers left: Arthur Martin returned to the Dover Old Order Amish, Sam Beachy joined an Old Order Amish congregation in Missouri in 1970, and Rudy Yoder joined the Central Conservative Mennonite church in Dover in 1972.

Group: Pine Grove Mennonite, Catlett VA

Affiliation: Beachy/Unaffiliated Amish Mennonite

Established: 1955

Origin: Old Order Amish, Catlett/Midland VA

Cause: Split

Sources: Landing 1970, James E. Martin 4/5/05, Simon N. Schrock 4/1/05, J.C. Yoder 2005, J.C. Yoder 2004, J.L. Yoder 2 002, Yoder 1987

Since the beginning of the settlement, the Catlett/Midland Old Order Amish community was not in good standing among other Old Order Amish churches. When newly ordained Bishop Daniel J. Nissley bought an automobile for his dairy business, this exacerbated the problem. This move prompted the formation of a Beachy congregation with Nissley as bishop. Uria M. Shetler

was ordained as a minister in 1956 to assist Nissley in the ministry. The remaining Old Order Amish who did not join the Beachys went separate ways within a few years.

While the church grew, a later split in the 1970s left the church almost empty. The church was removed from official fellowship in the Beachy constituency after the split and is today a fringe congregation. Two patriarchal lines stayed with Pine Grove, with Daniel J. Nissley as bishop (and the late Joe Bender as the other patriarch). Unofficial relationship with the Beachy church continues, as the church has young people involved in Calvary Bible School (as evidenced by the student index in recent CBS yearbooks), AMA missions and other voluntary service units such as Mountain View Nursing Home and Faith Mission Home.

Group: Oak Grove Mennonite, Aroda VA

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1957

Origin: Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite, Stuarts Draft VA

Cause: Split/Outreach

Sources: Beachy 1958, Miller 2005, Yoder 1987

When Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite started, nine families joined from the Old Order Amish. They had contrasting goals for the new church. Bishop Alvin D. Miller and some members desired to maintain Mt. Zion's strict standard of practice to demonstrate to the Amish in the community that they can drop certain Old Order practice and yet resist complete absorption into the world. Others, including Minister Noah Keim, wanted to have an aggressive evangelization program, which included dropping the German language from services, which A.D. Miller was not willing to allow. The two groups attempted to compromise, but the attempts were futile.

The faction looked for a new place to start a church in the Madison County area and decided on Aroda, VA. The site had to meet three criteria agreed upon by the family heads: "a) there should be an open and needy field for the gospel, b) it should be a place where there is not already a Mennonite witness, c) and it should be a place where they can be self-supporting" (Beachy 1958, 1). Three young families were in the initial move: Minister Noah Keim, Sanford Yoder, and Enos Schrock. Perry Nisly from Kansas also joined them. Keim and Yoder had been to a mission-focused colonization meeting in Kansas in 1956, which helped fuel their interest. These meetings were through a primitive version of today's Mission Interest Committee (MIC).

While some from Mt. Zion had hard feelings against those who left, others from Mt. Zion assisted the group with constructing a meetinghouse. In the first few years, Oak Grove was actively involved in local evangelism of both blacks and whites. Several missions in the area were established, the only one remaining today being Faith Mission Home. The church also operates Mountain View Nursing Home, one of the Beachy church's most well known voluntary service units. It was begun in 1962 by Harvey Yoder, and soon thereafter turned over to the administration of the church.

Oak Grove requested a bishop committee investigation of their new church. The committee was reluctant to grant Beachy status because of Mt. Zion's stand against the church and its looser practice. Some of the new practices, such as mixed seating in services and acceptance of the frock coat, were given up to meet the bishop committee's requirements. In the end, Beachy status was granted to the new congregation, the first church to try the Beachy admissions process, a process that has not survived to today.

Group: Mission Home Christian Fellowship, Mission Home VA

Affiliation: Mennonite Christian Fellowship

Established: 1961

Disbanded: 1976, relocated to Gap Mills WV

Origin: Oak Grove Mennonite, Aroda VA

Cause: Outreach

Sources: Ivan R. Beachy 3/19/05 and 3/20/05, Gingerich, et al. 1972, Miller 2004, Yoder, et al. 1991, Sanford Yoder 2004

A visitor to the Oak Grove Mennonite congregation suggested that they look into the Nortonsville/Mission Home, VA, area for a possible outreach. Sanford Yoder followed through with this request and visited the area. While looking for a site to establish Oak Grove Mennonite, Yoder had already been through Nortonsville and met with one of the locals, who invited Yoder to come and hold services for them. After an investigation, Yoder started services with the support of the Oak Grove congregation. The congregation received official recognition in 1966, having received assistance from the Pine Grove Bible Fellowship in PA, a Fellowship church that has since disbanded. Mission Home Christian Fellowship sought bishop oversight from Eli Tice, but in deference to Oak Grove, requested Noah Keim serve the first communion. The congregation were using an abandoned church house for services since 1961, but moved to the stone chapel next to Mission Home in 1968.

Almost simultaneously with the initial mission work, consideration was given to buying St. Anne's Preventorium to start a handicapped children's home. In 1964, AMA and MIC made a joint offer on the Home, and it was accepted. The Home opened in 1965 under Beachy auspice. The church began to serve the staff as well as locals, but the congregation's move to the stone chapel soon deterred locals from attending services.

Group: Fellowship Haven, Washington DC

Affiliation: Beachy/Unaffiliated Amish Mennonite

Established: 1965

Origin: Amish Mennonite Aid (AMA) and Missions Interest Committee (MIC) sponsored outreach

Cause: Outreach

Sources: Biblical Mennonite Alliance Annual Directory 2005, Hershberger 1980, Denika Mason 5/23/06 and 5/24/06, Petersheim 2005

In 1964, a number of men felt a need to start a mission church in Washington, DC. Ervin Hershberger and Sanford Yoder were appointed by MIC to make an investigation trip. (AMA also became involved in the work later.) The two men were astonished at the physical and spiritual state in which people were living. Several more trips were made, and a house was soon purchased. In 1965, Elmer Lapp moved into the house and Fellowship Haven was born. In the years following, the church targeted children and youth through summer Bible school, youth group gatherings, and "club classes" in addition to open-air meetings and morning prayer meetings. In 1974, the congregation built a chapel. Overall, the response was large. Many attended and some were converted, joining the church.

In 1980, some of the men at Fellowship Haven, including Elmer Lapp, were pushing to be released from MIC's and AMA's oversight. After discussion, the mission boards granted the request. Simon Schrock of Faith Christian Fellowship in Catlett, VA, provided bishop oversight.

In the late 1980s, Fellowship Haven broke from Beachy affiliation and received assistance from Central Mennonite in Dover, DE, which was at that time affiliated with the Conservative Mennonite Conference. However, Fellowship Haven remained unaffiliated. The issues in the switch were about cape dresses, coverings, neckties, and beards. Some of the men and voluntary service personnel claimed that they should not have to require converts to adopt these practices. (Of note is that today, all of these men have left this congregation and have joined more liberal groups.) Lapp was soon barred from preaching in many of the churches he visited.

Today, the church has dwindled down to a handful of members and attendees, all women: Gertie Troyer, Pat Roy, Cindy Sharpe, Racine Miller, Juanita Marner and Denika Mason. Troyer (long-time voluntary service personnel), Roy, and Sharpe are the elders. Jesse Yoder, associate pastor at Central Mennonite, still offers assistance, though he is retiring. Central Mennonite has since joined BMA, but Fellowship Haven remains unaffiliated. The church has leanings towards re-affiliating with the Beachys, but may also turn towards BMA for assistance. The membership is afraid that if they do get assistance, that they do not want Fellowship Haven to once again attract young people from that affiliation who want to get away from their own church rules and authority and “buck authority,” and thus once again bring Fellowship Haven into a position where it is offending its sister churches. There is also a bit of hesitation about meeting some of the Beachy’s dress practices if they joined.

Group: Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, Stuarts Draft VA

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1968

Origin: Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite, Stuarts Draft VA

Cause: Split

Sources: Mennonite Church Directory 2005, Miller 2005, Elmer S. Schrock 4/7/05, Yoder 1987

Even though the Oak Grove Mennonite faction had broken from Mt. Zion to pursue active community proselytizing, some were sympathetic with their cause. About ten years later, there was again a strong push for Mt. Zion to engage in more aggressive evangelization. One of the recommended changes by the faction was to change the language used in services from German to English. The ministry responded to the challenges by making stricter standards. The faction, consisting of three families and several young people, soon began holding their own services. A bishop committee came in to investigate. They asked the faction to return, which they didn’t. However, unbeknownst to the faction at the time, they had also requested Mt. Zion make some changes to accommodate the group, such as the language change. Mt. Zion refused to heed the recommendation either. Thus, the committee left, and the new Pilgrim Christian Fellowship was formed. Allen Slabaugh, bishop of Berea Christian Fellowship of Nappanee, IN, provided bishop oversight until Bennie W. Byler was ordained bishop in 1973. (Berea was started by members from Maple Lawn A.M. who were dissatisfied with disciplinary actions. Slabaugh was later silenced by a bishop committee; he then left the Beachy circles.) The congregation has since grown to be one of the largest Beachy churches in the South but has few members of non-Anabaptist background.

Group: Farmville Christian Fellowship, Farmville VA  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1969  
Origin: Kempsville Amish Mennonite, Kempsville/Virginia Beach VA  
Cause: Move  
Sources: Uria M. Shetler 4/6/05, Yoder 1987

Because of rapid urbanization and the new military base in Norfolk, as well as the desire to do mission work, a small group moved out of Kempsville. Farmville appealed to the group's mission interest because of the regional poverty. The group affiliated with the Fellowship churches at first.

In 1983, Bishop Uria M. Shetler responded to the church's request for a bishop and thus moved to the community from Paraguay, Farmville being the sixth church he had served. When Shetler acquired Parkinson's disease, the church needed to select a new bishop. Three bishops were considered for oversight: two men from Fellowship churches and a third from Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, a Beachy church in Stuarts Draft, VA. Bennie Byler of Pilgrim received the highest number of votes. Thus, by default, the Farmville congregation became Beachy. There was no resistance put up by the Fellowship churches to the switch. Ironically, Shetler had provided bishop oversight for Mt. Zion in Stuarts Draft at one point, the church from which Pilgrim had broken.

Group: Gap Mills Christian Fellowship, Gap Mills WV  
Affiliation: Mennonite Christian Fellowship  
Established: 1976  
Origin: Mission Home Christian Fellowship, Mission Home VA  
Cause: Move  
Sources: Ivan R. Beachy 3/19/05, Miller 2005, Miller 2004

The Mission Home Christian Fellowship became increasingly at odds with the theology and practice of the Beachy churches that supported Faith Mission Home. The church felt that their associations with the Fellowship constituency and vicinity to Faith Mission Home were incompatible. Since Faith Mission Home was under two Beachy mission boards, the congregation felt it best to relocate where the Beachy influence would not be present. West Virginia was chosen for several reasons: cheap land and low taxes, few building codes and other state interventions, and a population open to evangelism. Thus, the "Christian Fellowship" relocated from Mission Home to Gap Mills.

Group: Faith Mission Fellowship, Mission Home/Free Union VA  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1977  
Origin: Faith Mission Home staff, Mission Home VA  
Cause: N/A  
Sources: Ivan R. Beachy 3/19/05, Yoder, et al. 1991

After the departure of the Christian Fellowship, the remaining Faith Mission Home administration and personnel reorganized and formed Faith Mission Fellowship. The church continues to operate separately from Faith Mission Home, though both facilities are on the same

property. The group immediately affiliated with the Beachy church. Roman Mullet moved in and served as minister until 1980. Ivan R. Beachy was ordained minister in 1980 and later bishop in 1993. Bishop oversight until then was provided by Bennie W. Byler of Pilgrim Christian Fellowship in Stuarts Draft, VA.

Group: Faith Christian Fellowship, Catlett VA

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1977

Origin: Pine Grove Mennonite, Catlett VA

Cause: Split

Sources: Simon N. Schrock 4/1/05, Yoder 1987

The majority of Pine Grove members were dissatisfied with Daniel J. Nissley's leadership. Voiced concerns include: he adopted the "Jesus only" theology, which identifies the Trinity as one, not three separate personalities, and thus only baptized in the name of Jesus; he used German extensively in the services; he drove his milk truck on Sunday; the church's fellowship with the broader Beachy constituency was eroding.

Bishop Lewis J. Tice of Mountain View Fellowship in Salisbury, PA, responded to appeals for assistance. Tice called in twenty-three Beachy ministers to analyze the situation and make a recommendation. The ministers unanimously agreed that the faction should start a new congregation. Faith Christian Fellowship was thus established with Alvin D. Byler as minister, who had been ordained at Pine Grove in 1961. L.J. Tice provided bishop oversight. Simon N. Schrock of a Washington, DC, Lancaster Conference mission was invited to join the church in the spring of 1977 and was ordained as a minister that fall and bishop in 1981.

Group: Gospel Light Mennonite, Charlottesville VA

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1995

Origin: Oak Grove Mennonite, Aroda VA

Cause: Split/Outreach

Sources: Eldon Hochstetler 1/17 and 1/27/08, Miller 2005, Tim D. Miller 4/2/05, J. Stephen Schrock 4/6/05

Oak Grove Mennonite Church had been considering an outreach for sometime. The goal was to find at least five families that agreed to the same place and conditions, preferably at least 50 miles distant so as not to have a two church community. This plan was not forthcoming in part because there were not enough families ready to make the move under the same conditions. Simultaneously, the Oak Grove leadership felt some issues of dress, etc., were being overlooked by some of the membership. Their desire was to bring everyone into compliance on these issues. A position statement was drawn up by the ministry with a list of the items in question. The congregation was then asked to sign this statement showing support and a willingness to uphold the practices; those not signing would forfeit membership. Some members did not feel comfortable with this approach, and desired more allowances in specifics of practice (such as allowing buttons on suit coats).

At this juncture, five families decided to withdraw from Oak Grove to start an outreach in Charlottesville, about 30 miles away. The families withdrew in "good standing" at Oak Grove,



and those members who worked at Mountain View Nursing Home (an operation of Oak Grove Mennonite) continued to do so. The new group requested that if there were any outstanding issues at Oak Grove by anyone wishing to join the Gospel Light group, these should be acknowledged and corrected before leaving. All of those involved in the outreach continued to reside in the Aroda area while attending church in Charlottesville. The group rented a community center in a Charlottesville neighborhood that had a high level of minorities and university students in the area. The Oak Grove ministry declined to provide bishop oversight, so Gospel Light received oversight from Lake Grace Mennonite in Jesup, GA. The Oak Grove leadership provided a minister to preach one Sunday a month in Charlottesville until Eldon Hochstetler was ordained minister in 1998.

In the summer of 2007, the community center rent increased substantially and there was no affordable, suitable property to purchase in the area. The congregation wanted a new location more central and accessible to those regularly attending from outside the city. The group purchased an undeveloped property in Gordonsville, VA, about 20 miles from Aroda, and is planning to construct a meetinghouse in 2008. Gospel Light describes the property as being located in a low income section of town and offering opportunity for ministry in the neighborhood, describes the membership as having a significant attendance of those from non-Mennonite background, and describes the church vision as having an outreach focus.

Group: Dayspring Mennonite Church, Midland VA

Affiliation: Conservative Mennonite Conference

Established: 1996

Origin: Faith Christian Fellowship, Catlett VA

Cause: Split

Sources: Simon N. Schrock 4/1/05, Bob Yoder 5/23/06 and 5/24/06

Within Faith Christian Fellowship, a faction wanted sundry changes that they felt constituted the establishment of a new congregation. The changes included 1) administering baptism without also requiring church membership, 2) serving communion to non-members, 3) dropping the standard of practice, 4) having a different leadership structure where the church leader answers to a board of elders, and 5) applying a more lenient practice of excommunication and shunning.

The faction, consisting of 14 families (about 1/3 of the church), submitted a written statement to the Faith Christian leadership regarding their interest in establishing a separate congregation due to irreconcilable goals. The faction stayed at Faith Christian Fellowship for six months as nonvoting members, adhering to the standards, in an attempt to convey an attitude of non-hostility. The first meeting of the new Dayspring congregation was in February 1996. The Conservative Mennonite Conference, by request, assisted in the formation and establishment of the church. The congregation asked Robert Yoder, minister at Faith Christian, if he would serve as pastor. While originally requesting noninvolvement with the faction, though sympathetic with their vision, he later accepted the request once the faction had come under the conference's control and transferred membership to Dayspring. His initial ordination was in the Lancaster Conference, so the Conservative Mennonite Conference worked with the Lancaster Conference to transfer his ministerial credentials. The Dayspring congregation notified the Faith Christian congregation that they would not try to win over any of Faith Christian's members, despite the close vicinity the churches are to each other.

Group: Slanesville Community Mennonite, Slanesville WV  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 2000  
Origin: Mine Road Amish Mennonite, Kinzers PA  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Lapp 2003, Miller 2005

The Mine Road church in Lancaster County became aware of a few non-Mennonite couples in Slanesville, WV, who wanted to fellowship with a conservative Christian church. The fact that the area had no conservative Anabaptist church appealed to those considering the area. Several families from Mine Road A.M., including Minister Elmer Glick, moved into the area in 2000 to minister to these needs and evangelize the community. Other families joined the group from Faith Mission Fellowship (Free Union, VA), Harmony Christian Fellowship (Swanton, MD), and New York state.

Group: Light of Hope Christian Fellowship, Wytheville VA  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 2001  
Origin: Shady Grove Christian Fellowship, Mifflinburg PA  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Miller 2005, Celena E. Yoder 3/19/05

The Shady Grove church started an outreach in southwestern Virginia where there were no other Beachy churches. Members moved to the church voluntarily. Minister Ray Miller from Shady Grove was one of the first to move to Wytheville and now serves with two other ordained men, Deacon S. Wayne Yoder and Minister Jake Bender. Most families moved from Shady Grove but a few came from other areas. They originally met in a Seventh Day Adventist church but now have their own meetinghouse.

Group: Dayspring Christian Fellowship, Amherst VA  
Affiliation: Charity  
Established: 2002  
Origin: Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, Stuarts Draft VA  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Jacob M. Beachy 5/9/06, Elmer S. Schrock 4/7/05

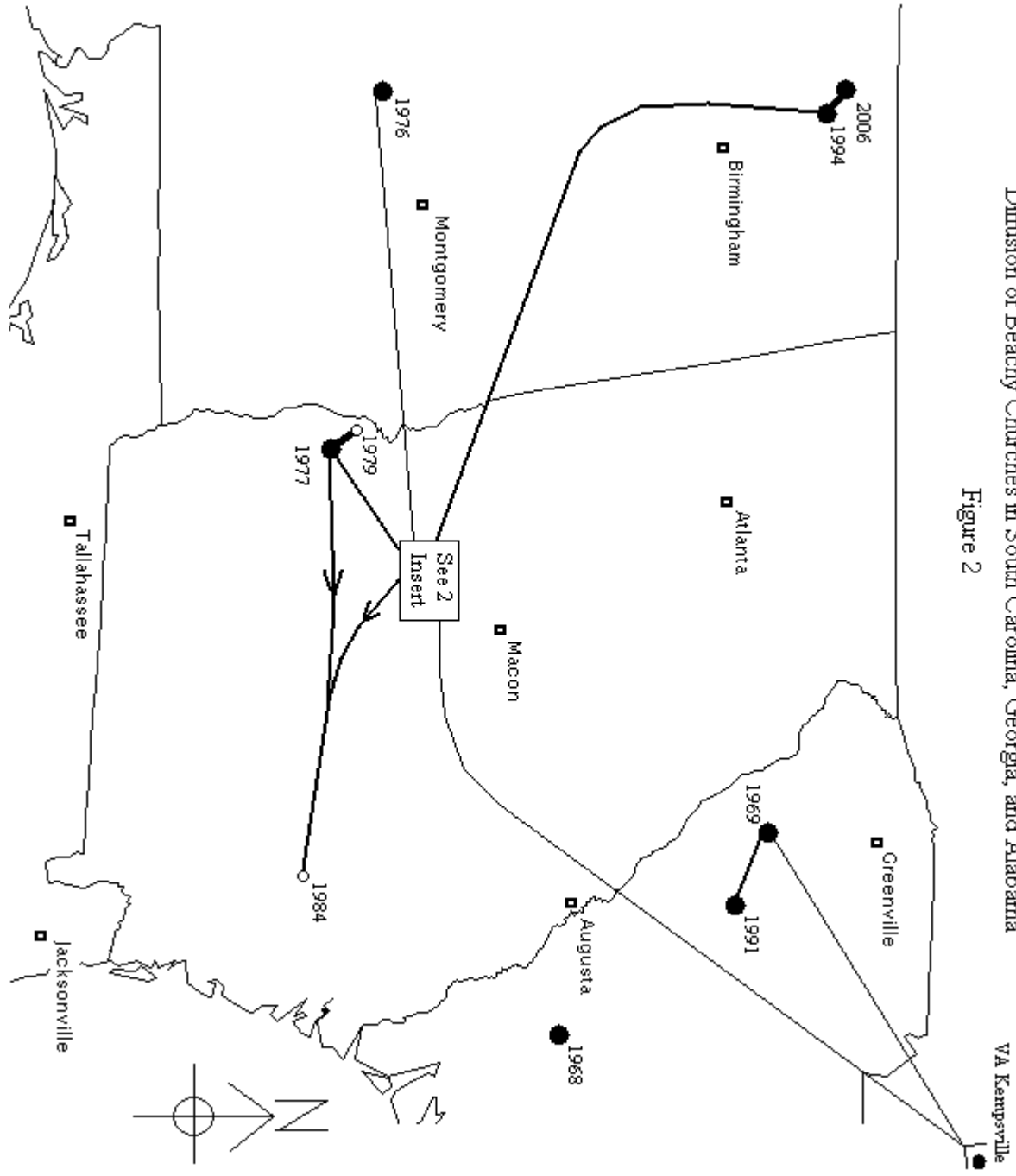
A faction at Pilgrim was dissatisfied for several reasons: lack of accountability, relationship problems, too much perceived tradition in practice, and the fact that "Pilgrim wasn't what it should be." Six families left. A bishop committee made up of Virginian bishops came in, but differences were not reconciled. The group appealed to several Charity congregations for assistance, which was provided. The new Dayspring Christian Fellowship elected their own leaders and affiliated with the Charity movement. The church has already attracted a number of non-Mennonite locals and several have become members.

Group: Renick Christian Fellowship, Renick WV  
Affiliation: Mennonite Christian Fellowship  
Established: 2003  
Origin: Gap Mills Christian Fellowship, Gap Mills WV  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Miller 2004

The Gap Mills Christian Fellowship became large enough to start an outreach. With church input, they looked for a location in West Virginia one and a half to three hours away. They found an opportunity to get land at a site an hour north of the church, though moving farther away would have been ideal. Six families and two ministers volunteered to go. The church has bishop oversight from Gap Mills and retains the same standard and good social ties.

Diffusion of Beachy Churches in South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama

Figure 2



## **Section Two: South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama**

Group: Montezuma Amish Mennonite, Montezuma GA

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1953

Origin: Kempsville Amish Mennonite, Kempsville/Virginia Beach VA

Cause: Move

Sources: Miller and Zook 1995, Elmer S. Yoder 3/21/05, Yoder 1987, Yoder 1981

The Montezuma Amish Mennonite congregation was the first Beachy church that came from Kempsville. Like all the subsequent exoduses, the main issue was urbanization pressure coming from the expansion of Virginia Beach. Because of financial pressures, the Beachy farmers sold their farms, which were then turned into housing development. In addition, the Montezuma group began searching for a new home because they did not care for the direction they felt the church was going.

During the time the group was looking for a new home, six families split from Kempsville A.M. and started a Conservative Mennonite Conference church nearby. This may have expedited the searching process in order to prevent losing youth to that church, though this is unconfirmed. The group leaving was more conservative and they remained conservative longer than Kempsville A.M. did on practices such as the use of German in services (which was changed in 1974 with English preaching and 1979 with the purchase of English hymnals).

Between 1951 and 1953, the group scouted for a new area in Southern states, driving about 28,000 miles in approximately 18 trips. They did not investigate south of Albany, GA, which was reportedly the limit to healthy grain growth. Before settling on Montezuma, GA, the party almost chose Franklin, KY. This area was settled later by another group from Kempsville.

Upon purchasing farms on the last investigative trip, a group of eleven families, including Bishop Jonas H. Hershberger and Minister Simon L. Yoder moved to Montezuma, GA, the first Beachy settlement in the Deep South. During the first six years, most new families moving to Montezuma were from Virginia. After those initial years, in-migration shrunk, though a few families came from Ohio during the rest of the 1950s and into the 1960s. Montezuma has since directly and indirectly given birth to numerous Beachy, Amish-Mennonite, and non-Amish-Mennonite congregations throughout Georgia (especially in the Montezuma area), yet today is the largest Beachy congregation in the South.

Group: Calvary Fellowship Mennonite, Blackville SC

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1968

Origin: Blackville Old Order Amish

Cause: Change of affiliation

Sources: Portion of account written by James D. Hershberger, edited by author, James D. Hershberger 6/12/06

“There were some Amish families in Florida mostly Sarasota from several northern states who enjoyed each other’s Christian fellowship while there. They enjoyed the South and wanted to start a church in a rural Southern setting. They discovered a rather large farm for sale at Blackville, South Carolina. At first, the owner and some of the inhabitants were a bit skeptical of these people. This area, after all, harbored the "good old boy, white southerners." Later with a bit

of perseverance the love and goodness of these humble Amish people won them over enough to complete the sale. The farm was then subdivided into four farm homesteads.

“The locals discovered these people were Christians who lived their faith. For instance, Abe Weaver would do his farming during the day then sit up all night with a non-Amish neighbor who was on his deathbed. This made a tremendous impression with the locals.

“Amish families from Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania purchased farms in the community. One Amishman purchased a “bargain farm” farther west only to have the banker lean back and prop his feet on the desk when asked for the loan, saying, “Well, you have gotten some of the poorest land in the state. The rabbits have to pack their lunches when hopping across it.” He later sold his acreage of sand. Prospective northern Amish settlers would return north saying, “It's the land of sand, pine trees, and sand spurs.” But in spite of this, the Amish families found good farm spots, and they loved the climate and the friendly Southern atmosphere.

“They had a problem, however; they had no resident minister. Minister Dan Mast from Indiana would come live there during the winter, serving as minister during his stay, then go back to Indiana for the summer. Finally, the Amish decided they needed to have an ordination. Then one especially well liked young Amish father told the group he needed to share something with them. His horse balked when he attempted to have his horse pull the family laden surrey (two-seated buggy) through their long sandy lane. He felt horses were not practical in this sandy land. Rather than get an automobile and live there, his family would move back to Indiana. The rest of the church group was taken aback, considered the dilemma for a number of days, and then decided they would permit cars and join the Beachy Amish Mennonites. The brother then stayed. However, they lost another well-loved pioneer Amish family who relocated to another Old Order Amish church community.”

Yost Miller from Ohio came to help the church. He brought along Jonas E. Miller, a minister from a neighboring church. A few miles away from the Amish settlement, a group of conservative Mennonites was meeting. They had not been there long, and had come from a variety of states. Y. Miller and J. Miller suggested that the two groups merge. This suggestion was at first met with hesitancy. However, the families agreed to meet. They decided at the meeting that there was an urgent need for a minister, so they asked J. Miller, “How soon can you move?” J. Miller was surprised at the request but accepted the offer. The group also wrote a standard. Each family was put on ‘proving membership’ for six months. A few families left during this time. Within a few years, the church had a deacon and minister ordination and then later had a bishop ordination. Upon the bishop ordination, J. Miller moved back to Ohio. While the church has had no splits or outreaches, some members have left to join other new Mennonite or Charity churches in the area.

**From:** Scott, Stephen E [mailto:scottse@etown.edu]

**Sent:** Monday, March 08, 2010 3:20 PM

**To:** 'Cory'

**Subject:** RE: Church in SC

Hi Cory,

I did a little checking on this in old Mennonite Yearbooks. The Pilgrims Mennonite Church was listed in the 1966 MYB with Ira J. Headings as bishop and Menno J. Schrock as minister and 20 members. In 1967 Menno Schrock is at a new church called Williston A. M. at Williston, SC and 17 members (the church as well as Schrock do not appear in the 1970 MYB). Headings is still at Pilgrims with 20 members. The 1975 MYB still lists Ira J. Headings at Pilgrims but the 1976

MYB has Pilgrims with no ministry. Ira J. Headings is in the ministerial directory with a Purdy, MO address but not listed with a church. In 1978 Pilgrims is no longer listed. In the 1980 MYB Pilgrims shows up again at Purdy, MO with Ira Headings as bishop and 22 members. The church disappears the next year, but Ira Headings continues to be listed in the ministerial directory until 1984. He was born in 1908. So, it appears that the Pilgrims church does not exist in South Carolina, but a present Kauffman A. M. church may descend from it. A Kauffmanite historian could probably give the authoritative answer.

Group: Cold Spring Mennonite, Abbeville SC

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1969

Origin: Kempsville Amish Mennonite, Kempsville/Virginia Beach VA

Cause: Movement

Sources: Miller 2005, Overholt and Hochstetler 1995

Some Kempsville families were wary of the rapid urbanization, with its increasing land prices, tax hikes, and social problems. Farmland was threatened, and the group wanted to keep this as their occupation. The eight-family group searched for a rural alternative and found it in Abbeville. During one of the ten to twenty some surveys of various communities, four of the men wrecked not long after leaving Kempsville. Prominent bishop, Budget columnist, and AMA secretary/treasurer Jake Hershberger was killed in this accident.

The group had one minister moving in with them: Norman Swartzentruber. Because there was no resident bishop at Kempsville A.M. at the time, Ernest Graber of Kokomo, IN, assisted the group with bishop oversight. Graber, due to age, handed the duty over to Lester Gingerich of Sarasota, FL, in 1977, but Gingerich recommended a bishop ordination. In 1978, Andrew Hershberger was ordained bishop. The other man in the lot at the time, Ernest Hochstetler, was later ordained bishop in 1991.

Group: Orrville Amish Mennonite, Orrville AL

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1976

Origin: Montezuma Amish Mennonite, Montezuma GA

Cause: Movement

Sources: Mennonite Church Directory 2005, Miller 2005, Miller 2004, Miller 1993, Eli M. Weaver 4/5/05, Yoder 1981, Yoder 1987

Because of overcrowding, the Montezuma church selected a site in Alabama to start another church. In 1976, five families moved to the location. They left at a time that Montezuma A.M. was switching from German to English, but Orrville A.M. kept German until 1986. Ministers from Montezuma visited regularly until the church ordained their own minister. Eli M. Weaver was ordained in 1977 and Wayne C. Yoder in 1982 as ministers. Bishop Noah Wengerd from Paris, TN provided oversight until 1984 when a local bishop, Eli D. Kauffman (different bishop than Eli Kauffman at Montezuma A.M.) who had been ordained as minister in 1982, was ordained.

In 1999, Kauffman expressed interest in changing the congregation's affiliation from Beachy to Fellowship. His fellow ministers expressed hesitation, even prompting one to leave the church. However, the congregation generally backed the bishop's desire, and an appeal was made to the Fellowship churches. Several Fellowship bishops came to the church, but their way of handling the change was too authoritarian for many. After two days of being in the area, the bishops gave the congregation 30 minutes to decide which way they were going to go. After those 30 minutes, the church was still undecided. The bishops left but returned two weeks later, when they required the church to accept bishop oversight from a Fellowship bishop. Eli M. Weaver was silenced, or "recessed" as they said, while the bishops trained Kauffman. Kauffman became dissatisfied with the process and left the church. Finally, after six months, the Fellowship bishops relinquished control of the congregation, and it remained Beachy. Weaver has since been restored as minister. As for bishop leadership, Weaver reports that Kauffman returned. The Mennonite Church Directory 2005 (assumably not containing updated information) still reported Kauffman's address in Orrville, apparently confirming his return, but the Amish Mennonite Directory 2005 lists his current residence in Tennessee with the Berea Mennonite Fellowship, a Fellowship church outreach in Rutherford, TN.

Group: Trinity Christian Fellowship

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1977

Disbanded: About 1983

Origin: Montezuma Amish Mennonite, Montezuma GA, AND others

Cause: Outreach

Sources: Eli Kauffman 5/16/06, Miller 1985, Yoder 1987, Yoder 1981

Families from various communities decided to start an outreach in Cuthbert, GA. While the congregation did not have its nucleus origin in Montezuma A.M., the one of the founders and only ordained man in the church, Samuel Nisly, came from Montezuma in 1977. Three other families moved from Montezuma A.M. to Trinity Christian Fellowship through 1980, and other families came from Beachy churches in states such as Florida and Kansas. The church had a high of twelve families at one point. The congregation used an old building, which was owned by a local Methodist church, for meetings. Samuel Hochstetler of Oak Grove Mennonite in Aroda, VA, had bishop oversight for four years and Andrew Hershberger of Cold Spring Mennonite in Abbeville, SC, had bishop oversight for the last three years. In 1978, Earl Nissley was ordained deacon.

After a split in 1979, the congregation's membership dwindled, the faction taking a few members while other members began to move away. Samuel Nissley returned to Montezuma A.M. Earl Nissley was the last member remaining in Cuthbert. He moved to Ohio in 1985 and joined a Nationwide conference church.

Group: Faith Mennonite Mission, Cuthbert GA

Affiliation: Conservative Mennonite Conference



Established: 1979

Origin: Trinity Christian Fellowship, Cuthbert GA

Cause: Split

Sources: Eli Kauffman 5/16/06, Miller 1985, Yoder 1987, Yoder 1981

In 1979, disagreements were evident among the members of Trinity Christian Fellowship in Cuthbert, GA. Some of the cited disagreements include “the Scriptural marital status of one of the members” (Yoder 1987, 315) and “questions of discipline and church policy” (Miller 1985, 91). The faction began meeting separately and appealed to the Conservative Mennonite Conference for assistance, as the faction had no ordained men. The conference helped establish them as Faith Mennonite Mission, and they were officially affiliated with the conference in 1980. The group remained in the Cuthbert community. Ernest M. Yoder, originally from Trinity Christian Fellowship and Montezuma A.M., was ordained in 1981 as minister.

Group: Lake Grace Mennonite Church, Jesup GA

Affiliation: Unaffiliated Amish Mennonite

Established: 1984

Origin: Trinity Christian Fellowship, Cuthbert GA AND Montezuma Amish Mennonite, Montezuma GA

Cause: Outreach

Sources: Ruth Hershberger 6/3/06 and 6/9/06, Miller 1993

Lake Grace Mennonite church was started as an outreach effort in eastern Georgia. It was not sponsored by either Trinity Christian Fellowship or Montezuma A-M, but rather begun by two families from those churches. Though officially organized in 1984 upon the arrival of Deacon Walter Overholt, services were held as early as 1982. The first families, the heads being Joe Overholt and John L. Hershberger, came from Cuthbert and Montezuma, GA, respectively.

The Jesup area was chosen in part because of the high rainfall and thus good potential for farming. J. Overholt initially purchased a large tract of land, expecting to subdivide and sell parcels for farming when other families moved in. However, new families did not express an interest in farming. Most were employed in the construction trade by the businesses of W. Overholt and J. Overholt.

In the next few years, families moved in from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri, and Oregon. The first five families to settle, including J. Overholt and Hershberger, wrote a standard of practice based on standards of the Beachy congregations from which they came. W. Overholt from Christian Fellowship in Minerva, OH, joined the group in 1984 as a resident deacon. Raymond Kauffman of Haven Fellowship, OH, provided bishop oversight until Melvin Yoder was ordained to that position in 1992.

Because there was no resident minister at first, services were held in J. Overholt's house and later in other members' homes. In 1986, a meetinghouse was built. Before W. Overholt joined the outreach, services consisted of Sunday School and a devotional by laymen.

Though having Beachy origins, the congregation is unaffiliated. Certain practices, such as the allowance of skirts and blouses for ladies and radio usage, would restrict Lake Grace from direct fellowship with the Beachys. However, the church supports Beachy missions like MIC and sends youth to volunteer at Hillcrest Home.

Group: Clearview Mennonite, Montezuma GA  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1989  
Origin: Montezuma Amish Mennonite, Montezuma GA  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Eli Kauffman 3/19/05

Because of overcrowding, Montezuma Amish Mennonite began erecting another meetinghouse in the community and making plans on who would meet at which building. However, around that time some members expressed dissatisfaction with the standards. In addition, there were relationship problems that exacerbated the problem. A bishop committee came in and examined the situation, making recommendations. The recommendations were neither accepted nor followed by the faction. They therefore announced their intent to withdraw and seek ministerial assistance elsewhere, as there were no ordained men in the group. The faction began to meet in the new meetinghouse, receiving assistance from unspecified Beachy churches in the north. Noah Yoder was ordained minister in 1992 and bishop in 1997; Dennis Swartzendruber was ordained minister in 1993. Some reconciliation was later made between the leaders of both churches.

Group: Gospel Light Mennonite  
Affiliation: Unaffiliated Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1990  
Origin: Montezuma Amish Mennonite AND Clearview Mennonite; Montezuma GA  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Eli Kauffman 3/19/05 and 3/20/05, Mennonite Church Directory 2005

A second split occurred almost simultaneously with the Montezuma A.M.-Clearview split. Some thought that Clearview's standard was still too rigid, so they started an additional church, the members coming from both churches. There were no ordained men with the nucleus. The congregation received help from non-Beachy churches and ministers and remains unaffiliated today.

Group: Cross Hill Mennonite, Cross Hill SC  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1991  
Origin: Cold Spring Mennonite, Abbeville SC  
Cause: Outreach

Sources: Miller 2005, Overholt and Hochstetler 1995

The Cross Hill church is an outreach 45 minutes from the Cold Spring church. It was started in part because of overcrowding at Cold Spring. Services were held in a garage until 1994 when a church house was built. During that time, nine Cold Spring families took turns commuting to the outreach until enough members had moved permanently into the area. About half of the families came from other churches as well. Bishop oversight is currently provided by Cold Springs.

Group: Emmanuel Mennonite, Hartselle AL

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1994

Origin: Montezuma Amish Mennonite, Montezuma GA

Cause: Outreach

Sources: Eli Kauffman 5/16/06, Miller 2005, Leonard E. Weaver 4/5/05

This church was started as an outreach by Montezuma Amish Mennonite. A minister was chosen by lot to go and six families moved to the area on a voluntary basis. The seven families and several community members attended the first meeting. The Montezuma A.M. standard book was adopted and bishop oversight was provided by Montezuma A.M. Minister Samuel Nisly, who had been with the Trinity Christian Fellowship in Cuthbert, GA, before returning to Montezuma A.M., went with the outreach.

Group: Word of Life, Montezuma GA

Affiliation: Unaffiliated

Established: 2002

Origin: Gospel Light Mennonite, Montezuma GA

Cause: Split

Sources: Eli Kauffman 3/20/05

The faction argued that standards are not necessary. Since the faction could not convince the bishop and other members to disavow a written standard, the faction held separate services. The faction included two ministers.

Group: Unknown, Hartselle AL

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 2006

Origin: Emmanuel Mennonite, Hartselle AL

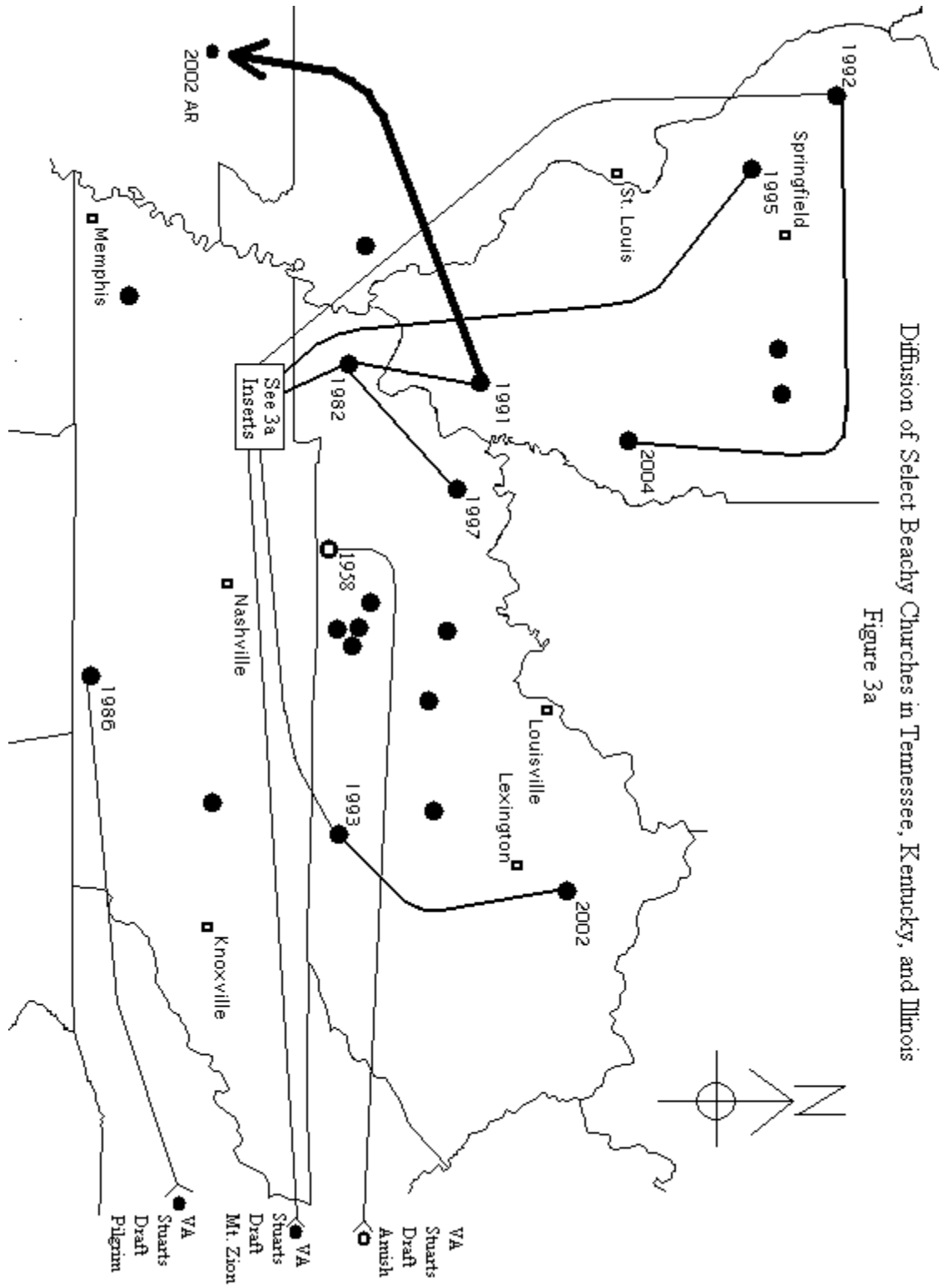
Cause: Split

Sources: Eli Kauffman 5/16/06, Leonard E. Weaver 4/5/05

After over a year of disagreements, a faction consisting of three families broke from the Emmanuel Mennonite congregation. A bishop committee was called in, but was unable to reconcile the differences. The faction is currently holding services in the Hartselle area. They are receiving bishop oversight from Noah Yoder of Clearview Mennonite in Montezuma, GA.

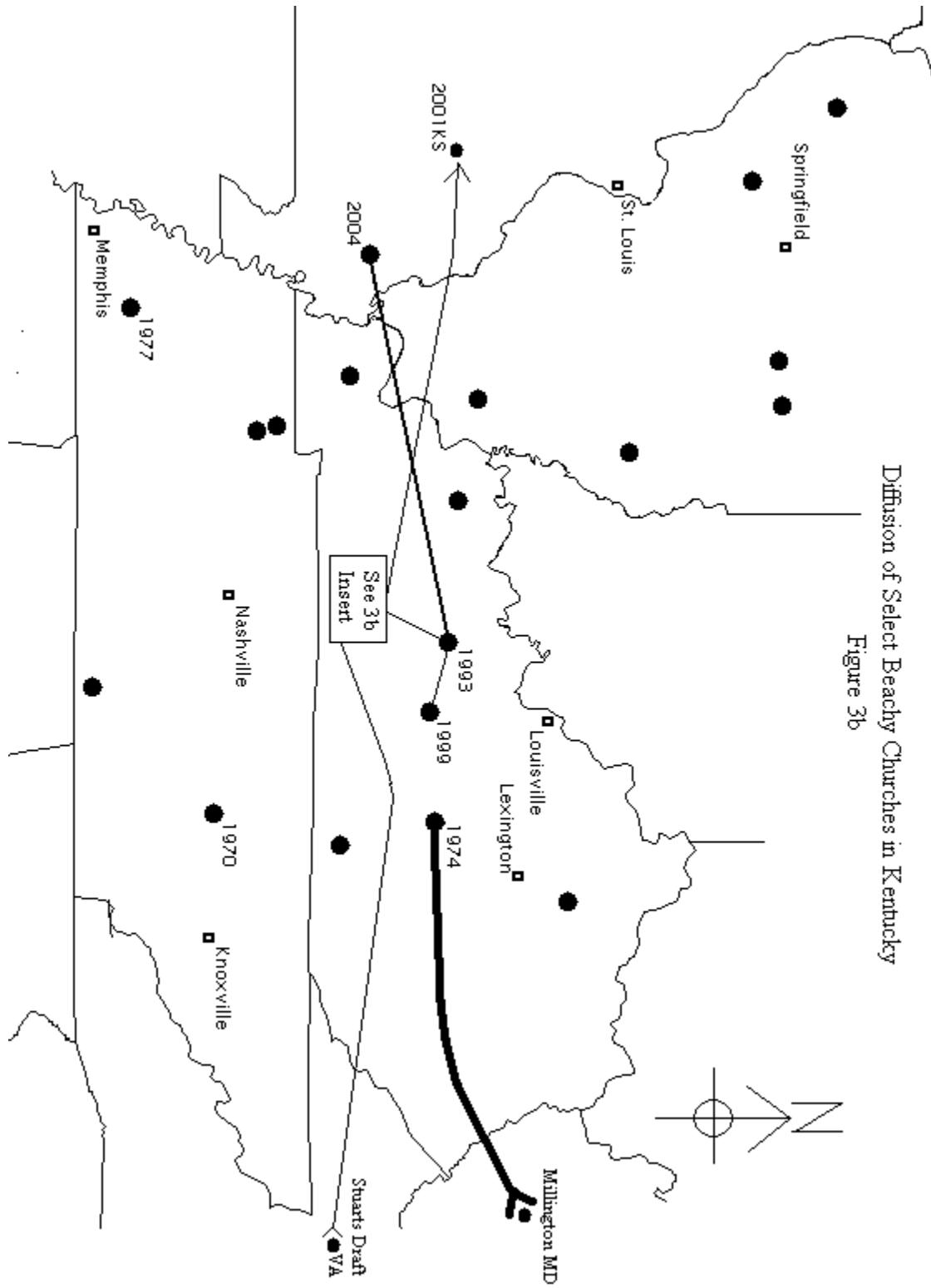
Diffusion of Select Beachy Churches in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Illinois

Figure 3a



Diffusion of Select Beachy Churches in Kentucky

Figure 3b



### **Section Three: Kentucky and Tennessee, and Churches in Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas Pertaining to the Beachys in the South**

Group: Old Order Amish, Guthrie KY

Established: 1958

Origin: Old Order Amish, Stuarts Draft VA

Cause: Move, alienation

Sources: Anonymous interview 6/24/05, Schrock (forthcoming)

Because of the local presence of the Mt. Zion church, four Amish families moved to Kentucky, believing they could not pass on Amish values to their young people in the same community as a Beachy church. Eleven families moved. The Guthrie Amish today are a thriving, growing community. However, in the late 1990s there was a mass exodus of Amish out of the Guthrie community, going separate ways. A number of them began attending services at Beachy churches in the Franklin/Auburn, KY, community.

Group: Franklin Amish Mennonite, Franklin KY

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1966

Origin: Kempsville Amish Mennonite, Kempsville/Virginia Beach VA

Cause: Move

Sources: Hershberger 1980, Fannie Overholt 4/15/05, Overholt 1996

During the second half of the 1960s, members from Kempsville Amish Mennonite were actively looking for a place to start a new community. Urbanization was pressuring many members to sell their farms to development. They wanted to escape the pressures of city life. On September 14, 1965, the four men in the expedition had an automobile accident while on their way to Alabama on an investigation trip. Jacob J. Hershberger, Kempsville's bishop and prominent personality in the broader Beachy church, was killed instantly upon impact. The other three survived, though one died six months later.

The passing of Hershberger expedited the search process because, as Abner Overholt, one of the family heads that eventually moved, wrote, "...with the passing of these men, the Kempsville Church really seemed to have a great emptiness," and after this incident, he "was ready to relocate." Another expedition consisting of Overholt and three other men took them to the Franklin, KY, area. They investigated this area because of favorable impressions an earlier party had. That group settled in Montezuma, GA, in 1953. The land was good for farming and the market was thriving. Before the men left, all had made down payments on farms.

Deacon Joe Mast moved with the group. Eli Beachy, a minister from Hartville, OH, also joined the group. The group first met in members' houses, but soon built a meetinghouse on Beachy's land. The new congregation adopted the standard of practice from Kempsville Amish Mennonite. In 1995, Brad Groff was ordained as bishop in Franklin A.M. to replace Eli Beachy, who at that point retire, but remained in the church.

A visit to the community by the author in 2005 revealed struggles Providence and Franklin A.M. are having with grave immoralities. Gossip within the Beachy constituency appears to confirm this, though no specifics have been confirmed. Also, there may currently be a committee of ministers and/or Beachys investigating and providing assistance. Several contacts

were attempted with a couple ordained men from these two churches, but no replies were ever received.

Group: Mount Moriah Mennonite, Crossville TN  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite (Maranatha)  
Established: 1970  
Origin: Various  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Mennonite Church Directory 2005, Yoder 1987

Crossville began as an outreach of the Shiloh and Bethel churches in Ohio. Also, ordained men from Paraguay settled in the community. While originally Beachy, the congregation also joined the Maranatha movement.

Group: New Boston Amish Mennonite, Paris TN  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1971  
Disbanded: 2000  
Origin: Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite, Stuarts Draft VA  
Cause: Move, alienation  
Sources: Miller 1993, Miller 1996, Everett E. Yoder 6/12/05, Yoder 1987

Members at Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite were alienated by the newly formed Pilgrim Christian Fellowship split in the Stuarts Draft community. Most members and all but one of the ministers left. Bishop Noah Wengerd of Pennsylvania helped organize the New Boston Amish Mennonite congregation and then presided as bishop. During its almost 30 years history, New Boston served as the patriarchal church for a number of new congregations in Illinois and Kentucky. These churches are relatively more conservative compared to most other Beachy congregations, some even retaining German in services to this day.

New Boston A.M. (and later also Locust Grove A.M.) kept house more like the Old Order Amish than other Beachys churches did. In order to maintain their level of nonconformity, they took a strict stand on some practices that many Beachys congregations had since abandoned. For example, New Boston (and later the sister Locust Grove A.M. congregation) required members to use the German language for teaching and preaching in services. Hats were to be worn outside of services.

New Boston Amish Mennonite stopped holding services in 2000 due to sparse membership. This was because of two less conservative Beachy churches in the community, Bethel Fellowship and Calvary Christian Fellowship, both products of local splits. Many members of New Boston A.M. and Locust Grove A.M. did not see a future of co-existing in the same community with Bethel and Calvary. This attitude is similar to the way Mt. Zion A.M. in Stuarts Draft, VA, New Boston A.M.'s mother church, was once alienated by the Pilgrim Christian Fellowship split, a faction that resided in the same community as Mt. Zion A.M. Former New Boston A.M. members had either gone with these groups or had left and joined new Beachy churches in Illinois and Kentucky, churches which the New Boston A.M. congregation had mothered. Members still with New Boston A.M. at the time of closure mostly went to the Bethel or Calvary. Calvary Christian Fellowship assumed responsibility for the New Boston

A.M. meetinghouse (New Boston A.M. having donated the facilities to them) and moved services to this location.

Group: Casey Amish, Liberty KY  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1974  
Origin: Harmony Christian Fellowship, Millington MD  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Everett E. Yoder 6/16/05

The Casey Amish congregation is one of the most conservative Beachy churches in practice. A small faction at Harmony Christian Fellowship was not satisfied with the direction the church was going. They withdrew and eventually made their way to Kentucky. The church retains German.

Group: Whiteville Mennonite, Whiteville TN  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1977  
Origin: Various  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Lloyd J. Helmuth 8/8/05, Everett E. Yoder 6/25/05, Yoder 1987

Whiteville started by members from Pilgrim Christian Fellowship in Stuarts Draft, VA; Leon Salem Mennonite Church in Leon, IA; and Montezuma Amish Mennonite Church in Montezuma, GA. Lloyd J. Helmuth was ordained deacon in 1978 and is today serving the church as bishop. While the church has leanings towards the Maranatha movement, it has not joined officially.

Group: Plainview Mennonite, Auburn KY  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1978  
Origin: Franklin Amish Mennonite, Franklin KY  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Fannie Overholt 4/15/05, Yoder 1987

As the Franklin Amish Mennonite church membership grew, several ideological and personality conflicts emerged. This led to a division. The faction started a church about 20 minutes away from Franklin Amish Mennonite. One minister, Simon Overholt, was in the faction. Bishop oversight was initially given by David A. Miller of Zion Mennonite, a Beachy congregation in Oklahoma until Rudy Overholt was ordained bishop in 1983. Today, Plainview Mennonite has good relations with the Franklin Amish Mennonite.



Group: Hickory Amish Mennonite, Mayfield KY  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1982  
Origin: New Boston Amish Mennonite, Paris TN  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Everett E. Yoder 6/14/05, Yoder 1987

The group moved from a few locations, but mostly from New Boston. New Boston had gotten so full, that an outreach was considered. Many of the conservative members moved to the outreach. The first minister, Eli R. Yoder, came from Montezuma, GA. Bishop oversight was filled by Noah Wengerd of New Boston until Yoder was ordained in that capacity in 1984. The congregation retained German in services.

Group: Locust Grove Amish Mennonite, Paris TN  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1985  
Disbanded: 1993, merged with New Boston Amish Mennonite  
Origin: New Boston Amish Mennonite, Paris TN  
Cause: Local growth  
Sources: Everett E. Yoder 6/12/05 and 6/14/05, Yoder 1987

New Boston's membership had grown quickly in its 14 years of existence, with over 70 families attending by 1985. The congregation decided to start a second district in the community, similar to Old Order Amish districts. A committee worked out the details of the new meetinghouse. To create the two districts, they drew a line through the region. Families living on the north side would go to the new Locust Grove meetinghouse and families living on the south side stayed at the New Boston meetinghouse. Both parties were involved in building the church house. New Boston A.M. and Locust Grove A.M. shared the same standard and bishop, so were as one church.

From 1991 to 1992, a massive wave of members from Locust Grove A.M. and New Boston A.M. moved to daughter churches in Kentucky and Illinois. Therefore, in 1993, due to dwindling membership numbers in Locust Grove A.M. and New Boston A.M., the two groups merged, meeting in the New Boston meetinghouse from thenceforth. Loss was due to members moving to various daughter churches in Kentucky and Illinois, the Locust Grove A.M. and New Boston A.M. membership having been alienated by the less conservative Calvary Christian Fellowship and Bethel Fellowship in the same community. The Locust Grove meetinghouse and facilities were given to Bethel Fellowship.

Group: Bethel Fellowship, Paris TN  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite (Maranatha)  
Established: 1986  
Origin: New Boston Amish Mennonite AND Locust Grove Amish Mennonite, Paris TN  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Everett E. Yoder 6/12/05

In 1986, about 22 families split with the New Boston and Locust Grove churches. The new church was called Bethel Fellowship. Three committees came in to establish Bethel. The

committees all recommended Bethel move away from Paris and find a new home. After several small attempts to scout for land, the faction decided not to move. They reasoned that nowhere in scripture does it say a group needs to move out of the area when breaking away from a church for scriptural reasons. So the Bethel congregation was established locally. They used an old church about 15 minutes from New Boston and Locust Grove for services. Noah Wengerd, bishop of New Boston and Locust Grove, went with the Bethel faction. In 1999, shortly before Wengerd's death, the congregation asked John Mast of Mt. Moriah Mennonite in Crossville, TN, to have bishop oversight. Mast still has oversight to this day. Bethel has since joined the Maranatha movement, as did Mt. Moriah.

Bethel Fellowship suffered a significant membership loss when the Calvary Christian Fellowship started. While only a few members joined the Calvary church, many at Bethel were alienated by the presence of this less conservative Beachy church in the same community, similar to how New Boston A.M. and Locust Grove A.M. members were alienated by Bethel's presence. Many members of Bethel left the Paris community and moved to sundry churches, many of them with the Mennonite Christian Fellowship denomination.

Group: Providence Fellowship, Auburn KY  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1986  
Origin: Franklin Amish Mennonite, Franklin KY  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Fannie Overholt 4/15/05

A faction emerged out of Franklin, but had no minister or leader to assist. They received bishop oversight from Pleasant View in Illinois. The group initially met in a rented building with the intentions of moving out of the community. However, the faction never left and eventually built a church house. David J Yoder was ordained minister for the community in 1987 and bishop in 1994. Providence now has good relations with the Franklin and Plainview churches.

A visit to the community by the author in 2005 revealed struggles Providence and Franklin A.M. are having with sundry immoralities, especially among the young people. Gossip within the Beachy constituency appears to allude to this, though no specifics have been confirmed. Also, there may currently be a committee of ministers and/or Beachys investigating and providing assistance. Several contacts were attempted with a couple ordained men from these two churches, but no replies were ever received.

Group: Belvidere Christian Fellowship, Belvidere TN  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1986  
Origin: Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, Stuarts Draft VA  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Miller 2005, Miller 1996

The church began as an outreach from Pilgrim with families from other churches also joining. Bennie Byler maintained bishop oversight until Minister Stephen Beachy was ordained bishop in 2000.

Group: Carrier Mills Amish Mennonite, Carrier Mills IL

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1991

Origin: Hickory Amish Mennonite, Mayfield KY

Cause: Outreach

Sources: Mennonite Church Directory 2005, Everett E. Yoder 6/12/05

A group from Hickory started an outreach in southern Illinois. The outreach was more mission-minded than the Hickory church. A few families from New Boston A.M. and Locust Grove also joined the group early on. John Milton Yoder, a minister from Hickory, was with the original group. He was ordained as bishop in 1993 for the Carrier Mills church. This church was established during a large exodus wave from New Boston A.M. and Locust Grove A.M. in Paris, TN, and many from the Paris community who supported Carrier Mills A.M.'s vision over the new Siloam Springs A.M. congregation came to this church.

Group: Siloam Springs Amish Mennonite, Clayton IL

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1991-1992

Origin: New Boston Amish Mennonite AND Locust Grove Amish Mennonite, Paris TN

Cause: Move, alienation

Sources: Everett E. Yoder 6/12/05, 6/14/05, and 6/15/05

The more conservative members of New Boston A.M. and Locust Grove A.M. were alienated by the proximity of the less conservative Bethel Fellowship (and soon, Calvary Christian Fellowship). A large wave of New Boston A.M. and Locust Grove A.M.'s membership left the community and moved to Illinois. While some started the new church near Clayton, others joined the new outreach of Hickory A.M.: Carrier Mills A.M. The two groups in the massive wave leaving Paris had different visions of the church, especially in relation to outreach, with the Siloam Springs A.M. group being more conservative. However, both agreed that they did not want to be in the community with Bethel and Calvary. Today, Siloam Springs A.M. retains the usage of German in services unless there is a visitor who does not understand German. They have Sunday School every other Sunday and dress similar to the New Order Amish.

Group: Calvary Christian Fellowship, Paris TN

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1992

Origin: Bethel Fellowship

Cause: Split

Sources: Everett E. Yoder 6/12/05 and 6/14/05

Bethel Fellowship encountered problems among the membership that resulted in a split. Two families from Bethel and one from New Boston started Calvary Christian Fellowship. Within six weeks, five more families joined from Bethel. Others from Bethel were alienated by Calvary's presence, and thus moved out of the community. Danny Diener at Trinity Christian Fellowship in Arthur, IL, had bishop oversight at Calvary until the church had an ordination for

Henry Nissley in 2001. The group met in Bethel's old schoolhouse. In 2000, the New Boston group gave their meetinghouse to the Calvary group when the New Boston group disbanded.

Group: Pleasant Ridge Amish Mennonite, Monticello KY

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1993-1994

Origin: New Boston Amish Mennonite AND Locust Grove Amish Mennonite AND Bethel Fellowship, Paris TN

Cause: Move

Sources: Everett E. Yoder 6/17/05

At least seven families from Bethel, Locust Grove, and New Boston as well as some families from Indiana moved to Monticello, KY, and started Pleasant Ridge Amish Mennonite. The families were not rebelling against the New Boston A.M./Locust Grove A.M. authority, but wanted some changes, such as services in English. However, at the same time, they still wanted to maintain a resistance against liberal trends they saw in mainstream Beachy churches.

Group: Cedar Springs Amish Mennonite, Leitchfield KY

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1993

Origin: Plainview Mennonite, Auburn KY

Cause: Outreach

Sources: Mennonite Church Directory 2005, Miller 2005, Miller 2000, Miller 1996, Miller 1993, Fannie Overholt 4/15/05

Because of overpopulation at Plainview, a group decided to move away from the Franklin/Auburn community. They selected Leitchfield for their new community, a town about an hour away from Plainview Mennonite. Bishop oversight was maintained by Rudy Overholt of Plainview Mennonite until Melvin Troyer was ordained bishop in 1997. In 2004, James L. Yoder was ordained as bishop when Troyer went to Cedar Spring A.M.'s outreach: Crowley's Ridge Mennonite in Missouri.

Group: Rehoboth Amish Mennonite, Roodhouse IL

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite

Established: 1995

Origin: New Boston Amish Mennonite, Paris TN

Cause: Outreach

Sources: Miller 2005, Everett E. Yoder 6/12/05

Four families from New Boston A.M. in Paris, TN, moved to Roodhouse, IL, and started Rehoboth Amish Mennonite, a church planting/outreach, but with a different vision than the New Boston A.M. They asked David Borntrager from Pleasant Ridge A.M. in Monticello, KY, to have bishop oversight. Marvin L. Yoder was ordained as bishop in 1996. They have English in their services and are active in local evangelism, such as prison ministries.

Group: Deer Creek Amish Mennonite, Sebree KY  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1997  
Origin: Hickory Amish Mennonite, Mayfield KY  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Miller 2005, Everett E. Yoder 6/12/05 and 6/16/05

Deer Creek A.M. is an outreach from Hickory A.M. Bishop Eli R Yoder of Hickory was chosen by lot to go with the outreach. Minister Joseph Bontrager was ordained as bishop to replace Eli Yoder at Hickory A.M.

Group: Summersville Mennonite, Greensburg KY  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 1999  
Origin: Cedar Springs Amish Mennonite, Leitchfield KY  
Cause: Move  
Sources: Miller 2000, Miller 2005, Fannie Overholt 4/15/05

Due to overcrowding in the Cedar Springs A.M. congregation, some members moved east about an hour and started a new congregation near Greensburg. The move was peaceful, as Melvin Troyer of Cedar Springs A.M. maintained bishop oversight until James Hershberger was ordained to that position in 2004. Minister Darrel Stoll joined the group moving.

Group: Willow Creek Mennonite, Russellville KY  
Affiliation: Unaffiliated Mennonite (conservative)  
Established: 2000  
Origin: Providence Fellowship, Auburn KY, AND Franklin Amish Mennonite, Franklin KY  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Mennonite Church Information 2003, Anonymous interview 6/19/05, 6/24/05, 6/25/05

In 1987, Lester Gingerich, the bishop at Sunnyside Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, FL, published, "The Church: A Theocracy." The book prescribes a form of church government, dubbed "theocracy," that gives church leaders increased governing power over individual members as an alternative to popular vote. Various applications have been made of this system in Beachy churches. During the 1990s, the three Beachy churches in Franklin/Auburn, KY, subscribed to this church setup. The adoption started with Rudy Overholt, bishop of Plainview Mennonite. The Providence Fellowship and Franklin A.M. churches also supported the arrangement.

However, theocracy was not accepted by some in Providence and Franklin A.M. The faction felt that the leadership was making decisions without adequately consulting the membership. Shortly before the troubles, in 1995, Brad Groff had been ordained as bishop in Franklin A.M. to replace Eli Beachy, who at that point retired, but stayed on in the church.

After the ministry made several unilateral changes, dissatisfied members withdrew their membership. The faction chose to stay in the area, and the Willow Creek Mennonite church was born on the outskirts of Russellville, a town just west of Auburn and Franklin. A three-person bishop committee assisted them, as there were no ordained men in the group. Committee members were Abe Knepp of Fresh Start Chapel (Midwest Mennonite Fellowship) in

Montgomery, Indiana; Levi A. Mast of Gospel Light Mennonite Church (Unaffiliated Mennonite) in Montezuma, Georgia; and Joe Hershberger of Whispering Pines Conservative Mennonite (Unaffiliated Mennonite) in Honea Path, South Carolina. The committee met with the ministers of Providence Fellowship and Franklin A.M. After several meetings, the ministers gave their “okay” for the committee to assist the faction in starting a church.

Elwood Yoder came from Illinois to preach regularly, eventually moving there and becoming minister. Oliver Hess, also from Illinois, joined the group as bishop. The church decided against affiliating with the Beachys. This would provide an increased variety of local conservative churches from which to choose. It would also decrease the Beachy control in the community, especially the control of theocracy churches. While the church has a less conservative standard, it is still conservative enough to be listed in Christian Light Publication’s Mennonite Church Information, yet remains unaffiliated.

Group: Lyndon Amish Mennonite, Lyndon KS

Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite (Maranatha)

Established: 2001

Origin: Plainview Mennonite, Auburn KY

Cause: Move, alienation

Sources: Mennonite Church Directory 2005, Miller 2005, Fannie Overholt 4/15/05, Anonymous interview 6/24/05 and 6/25/05

Prior to the upheaval in the Franklin/Auburn, KY, community, the idea of colonizing elsewhere was on the minds of members at Plainview Mennonite, similar to a church planting like the earlier Cedar Springs A.M. in Leitchfield, KY. The local disturbance was due to the application of Lester Gingerich’s “theocracy” ideas about church government. Rudy J. Overholt, bishop of Plainview Mennonite, helped usher the idea into the Franklin/Auburn Beachy churches. Some dissatisfied members left the Plainview Mennonite congregation when theocracy was instated, going to the Providence Fellowship or Franklin A.M. churches. However, theocracy was soon applied in those two congregations. The three churches ran into conflict over the application of theocracy, ultimately resulting in the development of two new churches. One of the factions started Willow Creek Mennonite, an unaffiliated conservative Mennonite congregation in the same community.

Some of the members in the Plainview Mennonite congregation felt threatened by the presence of Willow Creek Mennonite. The group did not want to be in the same community and have their youth won over by that church’s looser standards. The church was also, “born out of a desire to spread out to different areas (every community should benefit from a Godly, plain church in its midst) and also the vision of a one-church setting...” (Miller 2005, 262). It is also possible that the perceived increasing immorality of Beachy young people in the community contributed to the move.

Originally, most members of Plainview Mennonite were planning to move to Lyndon, KS, but “as time went on different ones felt a certain allegiance to keep the home fires burning” (Miller 2005, 262). Ten families left for Kansas leaving eight families at Plainview. Overholt went with the group and retained bishop oversight of Plainview. The Plainview congregation, once the largest Beachy church of the three in Franklin/Auburn, is now by far the smallest. The Lyndon Amish Mennonite congregation has since joined the Maranatha movement, though Plainview Mennonite has not.

Group: Belleville Amish Mennonite, Belleville AR  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 2001  
Origin: Carrier Mills Amish Mennonite, Carrier Mills IL  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Everett E. Yoder 6/14/05 and 6/18/05

Difficulties arose at Carrier Mills A.M. The faction had different church ideals, many of these having leanings that are more conservative. Initially, the faction held separate services in the community but eventually left, moving to Arkansas. All of the faction was placed under the ban by the remaining members at Carrier Mills A.M. The faction could not find any church willing to assist that supported their ideals, so they finally appealed to the Peniel Christian Fellowship in Ohio for help. Some of the faction's vision was changed through Peniel's influence. The faction then asked Rehoboth A.M. and other churches for assistance, churches slightly less conservative than Carrier Mills A.M., but many being daughter churches of New Boston A.M. in Paris, TN. Assistance and recognition was granted by these churches. Once assistance was given by these churches, Carrier Mills A.M. lifted the ban.

Group: Pleasant Hill Mennonite, Cynthiana KY  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 2002  
Origin: Pleasant Ridge Amish Mennonite, Monticello KY  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Miller 2005, Miller 2000

Pleasant Ridge A.M. began an outreach a couple hours north in Cynthiana, KY. The outreach has bishop oversight from David Borntreger of Pleasant Ridge A.M. Ministers Wayne Yoder and Willie Borntreger went with the outreach group. Robert Burkholder was ordained deacon in 2003.

Group: Living Rock Mennonite, Auburn KY  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 2003 - 2007  
Origin: Providence Fellowship, Auburn KY  
Cause: Split  
Sources: Miller 2005, Anonymous interview 6/24/05

For similar reasons as Willow Creek Mennonite's break from Providence Fellowship and Franklin A.M., a faction from Providence Fellowship broke and began a small church in the nearby town of Auburn. However, unlike Willow Creek Mennonite, the congregation wanted to remain Beachy but without the theocracy influence. One of the church's goals is outreach, especially reaching the young people in the town of Auburn. As there were no ordained men in the faction, bishop oversight was provided by Loren R. Graber of Fairview A.M. in Etna Green, IN. Minister Lotus D. Kuhns joined the congregation from Mt. Olive Beachy in Montgomery, IN. By 2007, the congregation dissolved in part because the congregation wasn't growing.

Group: Claremont Amish Mennonite, Olney IL  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 2004  
Origin: Siloam Springs Amish Mennonite, Clayton IL  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Miller 2005, Everett E. Yoder 6/12/05

Siloam Springs A.M. started an outreach in eastern Illinois: Claremont Amish Mennonite. Bishop Norman A Yoder went to the outreach and retained oversight of Siloam Springs Amish Mennonite. Services are held in a member's residence, as no meetinghouse has been constructed.

Group: Crowley's Ridge Mennonite, Bell City MO  
Affiliation: Beachy Amish Mennonite  
Established: 2004  
Origin: Cedar Springs Amish Mennonite, Leitchfield KY  
Cause: Outreach  
Sources: Miller 2005

Cedar Springs A.M. began an outreach near Bloomfield, Missouri to "plant a plain witness in a community where there is none." Seven families, including the bishop, were chosen by the home congregation to go with the outreach. One of the ministers at Cedar Springs A.M., James L Yoder, was then ordained as bishop at Cedar Springs A.M.



# **Part II: Analysis of Historical and Geographic Trends of the Beachy Congregations in the US South**

## **Introduction**

The data presented in Part I of this paper suggests certain trends and patterns evident in the Beachy churches in the US South and perhaps elsewhere. Unlike previous studies, such as Landing's (1975) analysis of Beachy and Amish historical geography in the Nappanee, IN, settlement, most congregations in the South are not in tightly knit communities. Such settlements are more characteristic of older Mennonite and Amish clustering in Pennsylvania (ex. Lancaster County), Ohio (ex. Holmes County), Indiana, Illinois (ex. Arthur area), Iowa (Kalona area), and Kansas (Hutchinson area). Therefore, geographic patterns can be expected to vary somewhat.

This section will address some of the patterns evident in the spread of Beachy churches across the South. These include:

- 1) Similar processes used by churches to select a new community in which to settle...
- 2) ...and the subsequent spread of the Beachy culture when a group resettles.
- 3) Various Beachy subgroups, their vision, and their geographic nucleus.
- 4) The backlash effects geography and community clustering has on relationships between congregations of different subgroups.
- 5) Methods in which Beachy young adults network with one another over long distances as it pertains to courtship and marriage.

Churches discussed in this section are followed with the foundation year in brackets to assist in locating the congregation on the maps in Part I.

## **Relocating: Regional Analysis for Church Site Selection**

Locating a suitable site for a new community is an intricate process. While internal church conflicts serve as push factors in many cases, external social pressures also weigh in significantly. One of the earliest and prime examples of an external push factor is the change in Princess Anne County, Virginia, (currently the City of Virginia Beach) during the second half of the twentieth century.

Kempsville Amish Mennonite [1940], from which most Beachy churches in the South trace their church's nucleus origin, was shaken up by the urbanization after World War II. The original Amish [1900] families that moved to the Virginia Beach area were attracted by cheap land prices and a nearby, lively produce market in Norfolk (Miller and Zook 1995).

While the vicinity of a market to farmland cuts transportation costs, the "lively market" encroached upon the neighboring rural communities. Adjacent cities annexed sections of Princess Anne County until the entire district allied with the city (Yoder 1987). Soaring land prices and taxes put pressure on the Beachys' financial capabilities. Consequently, developers made offers to the farm owners (Overholt and Hochstetler 1995). Older members feared that their children would not be able to start their own farm (Yoder 1980); there were also wary of urbanization's negative social influence (Overholt and Hochstetler 1995). In addition, the continually expanding naval military base in Norfolk alienated the nonresistant church (Yoder 1980).

Most Kempsville Amish Mennonite members emigrated in four waves. The first wave went to Montezuma in central Georgia [1953]; the second relocated to Franklin in south-central Kentucky [1966]; the third group went to Abbeville in west-central South Carolina [1969]; and the last group moved to Farmville in south-central Virginia [1969].

The first wave of settlers to Montezuma, GA, blazed the trail of early criterion for site selection, which later emigrants from Kempsville and elsewhere referenced. By far, this group spent the most time scouting for land. Various members made extensive trips throughout the South for two years, covering more than 25,000 miles of road travel. The primary pull factor to various scouted regions was good farming land. For this reason, trips were made no farther south than Albany, Georgia, the limit of grain growth (Yoder 1981). Specifically, the investigators examined “the lay of the land, color of soil, type and condition of crops, price of land, and the type and condition of farm buildings” (Yoder 1981, 27). While several trips were made to the Franklin, KY, area, the group ultimately settled on Montezuma, Georgia.

Further urbanization and the death of several key personalities in the Kempsville church prompted a second wave of emigration. The earlier settler’s interest in Franklin prompted an investigative trip there. The prospectors found the land good for farming, selling for about \$400/acre, and thus decided to settle there in 1966. On the first trip, the men in the group made down payments on farms (Overholt 1996). Others from Kempsville continued searching for another location. They found good farming land and an ideal rural community in Abbeville, South Carolina, and they began moving there in 1969 (Overholt and Hochstetler 1995).

The search for good farming land is but a subcategory of a more general pull factor. The umbrella of economic opportunity also covers those employed in construction and general sales. The 2005 Amish Mennonite Directory (of which listings the Beachy church makes up a generous majority) cited 887 household heads engaged in farming and 821 engaged in general construction, with other professions lingering far below these. Regions with good opportunities in either field are candidates for a new Beachy community. For example, one goal for the colonization in Slanesville, WV [2000], was “to provide opportunity for family life in an

economically feasible environment” (Lapp 2003, 243). Job opportunities were limited in Slanesville, so members started their own businesses in plumbing, carpentry, construction, and shop keeping. These original companies provide needed economic opportunity for new families moving into the community (Lapp 2003; Miller 2005).

While economic opportunity is an important criterion, some groups also seek to evangelize the community and thereby base their location in such opportunistic regions. Under a program of evangelization by colonization, several new churches were started in the late 1950s and 1960s. The first of these was in Aroda, Virginia [1958], a congregation born out of a split with Mt. Zion [1955] in Stuarts Draft, VA. The Mt. Zion faction ran into conflict with the leaders on methodology of reaching the community. The faction wanted to end the usage of German in services. Because an agreement could not be reached, the faction sought out a community with a perceived spiritual need (Elmer S. Schrock, personal interview with author, 7 April 2005). In addition, the group established the colonization prerequisite that there be no other Mennonite church in the region (Yoder 1987). The joint split/outreach was the first Beachy church to establish this second precedent, evangelization by colonization, when selecting a new community site. Poverty and rural isolation are frequently equated with an evangelization need, as was the case with Faith Mission Fellowship [1961] in the hollows of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia (Gingerich, et al. 1970; Yoder, 1990) and with Farmville Christian Fellowship in the poverty-stricken town of Farmville, VA (Uria M. Shetler, personal interview with author, 6 April 2005). Urban poverty has also attracted limited evangelization, such as with the Fellowship Haven project in Washington, DC (a church no longer affiliated with the Beachys) (Petersheim 2005), and the Gospel Light church [1995] in a lower class African

American neighborhood in Charlottesville, VA (J. Stephen Schrock, personal interview with author, 6 April 2005; Miller 2005).

### **Relocation Diffusion: Pennsylvania Dutch Culture**

Beachys have a strong subculture. However, to an extent, they do mold to prevalent local cultural influences. Many Beachys have a southern accent and cooking is influenced by both local and traditional Pennsylvanian culture (Garvey 2004, 38-41). But Beachys maintain much of their own traditions rooted in the German culture, reminiscent of eastern Pennsylvania. Farming practices and landscapes are noted to be German in style (Garvey 2004, 14-21). Beachy entrepreneurs make samplings of this culture available to the surrounding community through restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and other commercial establishments.

The Montezuma Amish Mennonite community [1953] has several enterprises that bring German culture to Georgia. One example is Yoder's Deitsch House, a family establishment opened to supplement an inadequate dairy farming income (Simpson 1995; Garvey 2004, 14-21). Adjacent to Yoder's is a general store selling local and out-of-state Beachy, Mennonite, and Amish quilts, dolls, books, and foods such as jellies and preserves. A local family runs a bed and breakfast in their home, where visitors can sample what life would be like as one of the 'plain people' (Kennedy 2004).

Similar establishments are present in most southern Beachy communities. Examples include Miller's Bread-Basket restaurant in Blackville, SC [1968], which features a "Dutch menu" (Norton 1999) and the Cheese Shop in Stuarts Draft, VA. These establishments have helped connect the community to the Beachy people and culture and vice versa.

## **Beachy Subgroups: Spatial Analysis and Core/Peripheries**

Beachys are quite mobile. Traveling long distances to other churches is both convenient and affordable. Convenient, because most men are either farmers, self-employed, or employed by a member of the church. Affordably, because when a family or group visits a church, a host family provides lodging and meals, leaving the travelers with only a transportation tab and any voluntary gratuity. Therefore, Beachy subgroups are willing and able to travel long distances to fellowship with one another. To hold fellowship with another church is to, for example, work together on spiritual matters or allow visiting ministers from fellow churches to preach on Sunday.

Two Beachy churches within a stone throw may not share fellowship if practices differ substantially. While there are generally accepted conservative standards shared by all Beachy churches (such as the absence of television and the cape dress and head covering for women), issues like private musical instrument usage, variations to the plain garb, recreational activities, mixed vs. gender-separated church seating, and even the language used in services (traditional German versus English) serve as barriers between subgroups. Fellowship levels are here divided into four categories: orthodox, conservative, Maranatha, and outcasts. Even within these subgroups, some churches may fellowship with different congregations both within their categorization and among other categories.

Most conservative congregations have their core origin in the Kempsville Amish Mennonite church [1940] whereas most orthodox congregations descend from the Amish that left Virginia Beach when the Kempsville church started. Maranatha is an officially organized subgroup that falls between conservatives and orthodox in conservatism. Outcasts are various remaining churches, most having an inferior influence in the Beachy constituency. Other

subgroups exist within the framework of all Beachy churches, but do not have a representation in the South. Except for the outcasts, the Beachy subgroups have a community core; numerous like-minded periphery churches come from this core.

The core for the most conservative “orthodox” group has moved throughout the century. It went from the Kempsville/Virginia Beach Amish [1900] to the Stuarts Draft Amish [1942]. Then the core went Beachy with the formation of Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite [1955] in Stuarts Draft, and when a number of people from Mt. Zion A.M. moved, the core ended up in the Paris, TN, community with the establishment of the New Boston Amish Mennonite [1971] church and later the Locust Grove Amish Mennonites [1985] congregation. These two congregations have since disbanded. The Paris core had the greatest influence in disseminating peripheral churches, directly and indirectly starting settlements in Kentucky and Illinois as well as one in Arkansas. Some of these congregations retain Pennsylvania German in services and/or at home. Family sizes are larger than other Beachy churches (Miller 2005). They usually do not participate in Bible School (Yoder 2004, Yoder 2005), the main Youth Fellowship and Minister’s Meetings (*Renewing the Vision* 2005, *...Be in Health...* 2006), or volunteer service units (*Faith Mission Home* 2006, *Hillcrest Home* 2006). Some congregations, such as Mt. Zion A.M. (1955), have joined with similar Beachy churches in Kentucky, Illinois, and other US regions for Minister’s Meetings separate from the main Beachy Minister’s Meetings (Elmer S. Schrock, interview with author, 29 December 2005, Everett E. Yoder, letter to author, 17 June 2005). Almost all of these churches are united by the common “Amish Mennonite” tag in their church name, an identification left out of the name of many new non-orthodox Beachy churches.

The majority of Beachy churches fall into a group here dubbed “conservative.” Since there are many Beachy churches of this nature in the South, these congregations are more

familiar with conservative churches closer to them than similar ones farther away. An example is the fellowship of churches in central Virginia: Pilgrim Christian Fellowship in Stuarts Draft [1968], Faith Mission Fellowship in Free Union [1961], and Oak Grove Mennonite in Aroda [1958]. Another example includes the Franklin Amish Mennonite [1966], Plainview Mennonite [1978], and Providence [1986] congregations near Franklin and Auburn, Kentucky.

A third group of Beachy churches is an officially organized subgroup of Beachys known as the “Maranatha Amish Mennonite” group. Maranatha churches are somewhat more conservative than the standard conservative Beachy churches. Church structure sets them apart from other groups. In these churches, more power is granted to the larger Maranatha body to take discipline against individual congregations (*Constitution and Bylaws* 1997) and manage conflicts or potential splits within individual churches (Leroy E. Lapp, letter to author, 7 May 2005). Unofficially, Maranatha churches also have more invested power in the ordained leadership. The original Maranatha church, the ideological core more so than the geographic core, is in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. This church is led by Leroy E. Lapp who has contributed substantially to the movement. The geographic core, however, appears to be emerging in Tennessee. All Maranatha churches (including current churches leaning towards joining Maranatha) that have emerged in the South are from Tennessee, including Bethel Fellowship in Paris [1986], Greene County Mennonite in Chuckey (not originally a Beachy church), Mt. Moriah Mennonite in Crossville [1970], and Whiteville Mennonite in Whiteville [1977] (Christian Light Publications 2005; Lloyd J Helmuth, personal interview with author, 8 August 2005).

Congregations that do not fall into one of the above subgroups are loosely scattered throughout the South and usually hold fellowship with unaffiliated Mennonite congregations. These congregations usually become Beachy “outcasts” because they have split from a more



prominent, accepted Beachy church. This was the case in Virginia with Gospel Light Mennonite [1995] when it split from Oak Grove Mennonite [1961] (J. Stephen Schrock, personal interview with author, 6 April 2005); in Georgia with Clearview Mennonite Fellowship [1989] when it split from Montezuma Amish Mennonite [1953]; and in Kentucky with Living Rock Mennonite [2003] when it split from Providence [1986]. A fourth congregation, Pine Grove Mennonite in Virginia [1955], lost broader Beachy support to the Faith Christian Fellowship [1977] faction because of Bishop Daniel J. Nissley's perceived doctrinal fallacies (Simon N. Schrock, personal interview with author, 1 April 2005). A few remaining churches are more mainstream than the conservative group and fellowship primarily with subgroups from Pennsylvania, including Faith Christian [1977] (Steve M. Russell, interview with author, 18 Feb 2006), Slanesville Community Mennonite [2000], and Light of Hope Christian Fellowship [2001].

### **Parting Peacefully or Sourly: A Geographic Determinant**

In the tight-knit congregations of the Beachys and Amish, there may be disagreements and conflicts of personalities. While some contentions are overcome, others blossom to full fruition. The point comes when one or more polarized groups must leave the body. A spatial analysis of the Beachy church diffusion in the South shows that, in addition to sociological and theological explanations, spatial relationships plays a functional role in church splits.

When it is evident that a faction will have to separate from a congregation, the church is confronted with two ways of handling the scenario: a friendly or an aggravated parting of ways. In most cases, the less conservative group establishes the new congregation. For almost all churches studied, the distant relocation of one group is paramount to a peaceful separation; otherwise, a faction's permanent local presence creates an aggravated split. If the lenient group

stays in the community, the conservative group perceives this as a threat and, within a few years, will often leave the community. Perhaps they look on the frequent church jumping in the dense Anabaptist settlements of Pennsylvania and the Midwest as a scenario they do not wish to replicate. They echo the ideals of one Beachy outreach in Missouri: “A big community really can’t be as effective in witnessing. Also we felt a one church setting more ideal in family raising and less danger of drift with no other liberal elements next door...” (Yoder 1987, 333).

Conservative congregations in the South are ‘alienated’ when a “liberal element” (often the faction) retires to the same community and the conservative congregation does not want to loose youth to the other church. Major examples of alienation will be examined in three communities: Stuarts Draft, VA; Paris, TN; and Franklin/Auburn, KY. Though various small-scale examples exist in other communities, these three settlements will be used as case studies.

#### *Alienation in Stuarts Draft, VA*

The Stuarts Draft Amish/Beachy split was handled in such a way that promised future splits. The Beachy faction wanted to allow technologies such as telephones and cars. Some additionally wanted a vigorous community evangelization program. However, the faction leaders maintained the German language, which some felt hindered the outreach program. Thus, at the birth of the Mt. Zion Amish Mennonite [1955], there were already two polarized groups. The faction split three years later. They started the Oak Grove Mennonite [1958] congregation in Aroda, VA, 60 miles away. This was a comfortable distance for Mt. Zion A.M. The second group broke from Mt. Zion A.M. for similar reasons as the Aroda group: they wanted to use English in services and evangelize the community. However, unlike the previous group, the faction built the meetinghouse, Pilgrim Christian Fellowship [1968], a mile from the Mt. Zion A.M. meetinghouse (Elmer S. Schrock, interview with author, 4 April 2005).

With an Amish church, a German-speaking Beachy church, and an English-speaking Beachy church all in the same community, membership shifted. The younger families and singles gradually moved from the more conservative Amish to Mt. Zion A.M. and from the Mt. Zion A.M. congregation to Pilgrim Christian Fellowship. In 1955, the Amish were alienated by Mt. Zion A.M., and in 1968, Mt. Zion A.M. was alienated by Pilgrim. The more conservative groups viewed the others as a threat to their young adults and children. In response, many Amish moved to Guthrie, KY, in 1958 and many Mt. Zion A.M. members relocated to Paris, TN, in 1971. A minority from each group stayed in Stuarts Draft. Due to a dwindling membership, the Amish church eventually closed its doors in 1986, its remaining members either moving out or joining the Beachy churches (Schrock, forthcoming; Elmer S. Schrock, interview with author, 29 December 2005). Today, Mt. Zion A.M. is a small congregation of 25 members, many of them elderly, while Pilgrim has grown to 130 members (Miller 2005).

#### *Alienation in Paris, TN*

Similar geographic quandaries followed the Mt. Zion A.M. movement to Tennessee. The group settled outside of Paris [1971]. In 14 years, New Boston Amish Mennonite had overgrown the facilities (even after sending some families to an outreach in Kentucky). To alleviate the overcrowding, the group erected a second meetinghouse. A line was drawn through the community; those on the north side went to the new Locust Grove Amish Mennonite [1985] meetinghouse while those on the south side remained in the New Boston A.M. building.

The next year, a faction arose in the New Boston A.M./Locust Grove A.M. churches. The dissenters were more lenient in practice. After scouting for a new place to establish a community, the faction decided to stay in the area. They started Bethel Fellowship [1986] a few miles from New Boston A.M. and Locust Grove A.M. In six years, an even more lenient group

broke from Bethel. The faction followed Bethel's precedent and started a new church, Calvary Christian Fellowship [1992], in the area. New Boston A.M. and Locust Grove A.M. members felt increasingly estranged by Bethel and Calvary. This prompted a mass exodus, most heavily between late 1991 and 1995. During that time, three new churches started in Illinois and Kentucky from New Boston A.M./Locust Grove A.M. Other members moved to the earlier outreach of Hickory Amish Mennonite [1982] in Mayfield, KY, and Hickory's new outreach Carrier Mills Amish Mennonite in Carrier Mills, IL [1991]. In 1993, the membership had shrunk enough for the two congregations to remerge as the New Boston A.M. congregation. By 2000, so many members had moved out or joined Bethel or Calvary that New Boston A.M. ceased operation. Bethel and Calvary moved into the vacated meetinghouses after each successive congregation closed (Everett E. Yoder, letters to author, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 25 June 2005).

The decision of Bethel and Calvary to remain in the Paris area was pivotal to the New Boston A.M./Locust Grove A.M. geographic future. As was the case in Stuarts Draft, the vicinity of more lenient congregations attracted the young people in the orthodox churches (Everett E. Yoder, letter to author, 12 June 2005). This perceived threat provoked the dissemination of Beachy churches in Kentucky, Illinois, and Arkansas. Had Bethel and Calvary moved elsewhere, the New Boston A.M./Locust Grove A.M. churches may have been reluctant to move, opting instead to build more area meetinghouses whenever the population stressed the current facilities (as happened in several Old Order Amish "meetinghouse" communities, such as in Somerset County, PA both before and after the Beachy split).

#### *Alienation in Franklin/Auburn, KY*

The proximity of the three Franklin and Auburn, KY, churches—Franklin Amish Mennonite [1966], Plainview Mennonite [1978], and Providence [1986]—led to fellowship in

the 1990s, a tri-Beachy church community from what had once been two church splits from Franklin. The churches still had minor differences in practice but worked together despite this (Fannie Overholt, personal interview with author, 15 April 2005). In the late 1990s, the Plainview church subscribed to an interpretation of Lester Gingerich's book, *The Church, A Theocracy*. The 'theocracy' interpretation conferred more control to the bishop and church leaders. A few members transferred with geographic convenience to Providence and Franklin A.M. to escape the movement. However, with equal geographic ease, the theocracy doctrine spread to these two churches. After repeatedly making standard changes without consultation of the congregation, the Franklin A.M. and Providence congregation lost some of the membership. The unified faction from the two churches established an unaffiliated conservative Mennonite congregation, Willow Creek Mennonite [2000], in nearby Russellville. The emergence of this less conservative, anti-theocracy church chagrined the Plainview congregation. They worried about membership loss (Kris K. Schmucker, letter to author, 24 June 2005). The bishop led ten of the eighteen families to establish a new congregation, Lyndon Amish Mennonite [2001] in Kansas. The Plainview congregation is still governed by the same bishop, though he resides in Kansas (Fannie Overholt, personal interview with author, 15 April 2005). Membership at Plainview has been shrinking ever since the exodus. A second joint break with Providence and Franklin brought about the formation of a fourth Beachy church in the community, Living Rock Mennonite [2002]. The congregation broke for similar reasons the Willow Creek faction did, but is not as loose in standard (Kris K. Schmucker, letter to author, 24 June 2005).

## **Long-Distance Courtship: Networking Young People from Different Communities**

Numerous splits, immigrations, and outreaches have scattered the Beachy church across the United States, including the Southern region. For some of the more distant churches, fellowship with other Beachy churches is difficult. And for outcast churches, the young people may not know anyone from other churches because of a lack of fellowship. This has potential repercussions for a generation of young people that want to marry. Successive generations find it increasingly difficult to wed due to genetic limitations, especially in churches where a grove of family trees has been deforested due to intermarriage among a handful of families. Examples would include the geographically isolated Orrville Amish Mennonite of Orrville, AL [1976] and Pine Grove Mennonite in Catlett, VA [1955], which has limited fellowship within the Beachy constituency. The existence of service units, a Bible school, and other social and religious youth gatherings have helped network the Beachy young adults. This interconnectedness across long distances has prevented most communities from sharing the same gene pool. For groups like Orville, which, for one reason or another, do not participate in Beachy-functions, the young people find it difficult to marry (Eli M. Weaver, personal interview with author, 5 April 2005). The young people from Pine Grove go to Bible school or voluntary service (Yoder 2006, *Faith Mission Home* 2006).

The three primary domestic Beachy service units are in the South: Hillcrest Nursing Home in Boone County, Arkansas; Mountain View Nursing Home in Aroda, Virginia; and Faith Mission Home in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Albemarle County and Greene County, Virginia. The first two are elderly care homes while the latter is a residential facility for mentally handicapped children. The operation of the three units depends on a continual rotation of young adult volunteers. Though policies govern courtship within these service units, it is no deterrent to

individuals finding a spouse. From 1965 to 1988, 34.5% of single staff at Faith Mission Home married another staff member (Yoder et al. 1991); from 1953 to 1976, 33% at Hillcrest (Hershberger and Hochstetler 1978); and from 1962 to 1984, 30% at Mountain View (Yoder et al. 1987). This parallels each unit's courtship policy: currently Faith Mission Home requires three months of service before starting courtship with a fellow staff member, Hillcrest requires ten months, and Mountain View requires fifteen months (*Guidelines for Voluntary* 2004, *Handbook for Voluntary* 2004, *Guidelines for Voluntary* 2001)

Like the service units, Calvary Bible School in Calico Rock, Arkansas, indirectly helps individuals meet courtship partners from other communities, as do annual weekend Youth Fellowship Meetings to a lesser extent. Weddings with two communities involved also further this purpose. Communities that engage in active socialization with other communities have a smaller number of young adults that marry within the church, such as with Faith Mission Fellowship [1961], the local church of Faith Mission Home, where no youth have yet to marry within the church. Some youth find marital partners from the service unit while many others meet when participating in voluntary service of their own, such as at volunteering at Hillcrest Home, teaching school, or working with AMA abroad (Anderson 2004).

## Conclusion

This paper has detailed the history of individual Beachy and related Amish Mennonite congregations in the US South. Churches in this region have provided a unique opportunity not found in other states to track the dissemination of churches. Churches have generally followed a connect-the-dots pattern in contrast to Beachy churches in other regions that have historically been characterized by emergences from the Old Order Amish and clustering within well-established Anabaptist communities. The histories of each church were based on numerous first-hand accounts and written records. Even with the numerous sources utilized, there has been a less-than-full assessment of events in many communities, for which many times one can only compensate by one's actual presence in these churches. Much about these churches have been left unsaid, as those conveying the history are frequently unwilling to discuss painful moments in much detail.

The second section analyzed trends prevalent in the congregational histories. Prior to the 1950s, Southern communities had little experience with the Beachy culture. With the dissemination of churches, mostly out of Kempsville, the Beachys began to feel the effects of geographical diffusion. As time passed, the increasing variation of practice among the churches led to both unofficial and official subgroups with a geographic church core and an accompanying periphery of likeminded churches. In developing these fellowship groupings, the churches had to travel greater distances to visit similar congregations, bypassing Beachy churches that may even be in the same community but have relatively substantial differences. Historically, when a church split occurred and the faction stayed local, the older church became alienated and eventually moved out. However, if the faction moved away from the community, the older church rarely has hard feelings over differences, geographically avoiding a split. In addition to



church matters, the Beachys have counteracted the effects of being distant from one another through interchurch meetings and voluntary service units, such as the need for young people to marry. Thus, the consequences of spatial relationships have helped developed the character, policies, and social experience of the Beachy Amish Mennonite churches in the US South.

Appendix 1: Chronological Listing of Beachy and Related Churches in the US South

A.M.=Amish Mennonite

CMC=Conservative Mennonite Conference

Year established: Address (Current or last affiliation) Church name, if applicable

1891-1903: Midland, VA (Amish)  
1900-1942: Kempsville, VA (Amish)  
1940: Kempsville, VA (Beachy) Kempsville A.M.  
1942-1986: Stuarts Draft, VA (Amish)  
1945-1955: Dover, DE (Unaffiliated A.M.)  
1946-1960: Midland, VA (Amish)  
1952: Virginia Beach, VA (CMC) Providence Conservative Mennonite  
1953: Montezuma, GA (Beachy) Montezuma A.M.  
1955: Catlett, VA (Beachy) Pine Grove Mennonite  
1955: Millington, MD (Beachy) Harmony Christian Fellowship  
1955: Stuarts Draft, VA (Beachy) Mt. Zion A.M.  
1958: Aroda, VA (Beachy) Oak Grove Mennonite  
1958: Guthrie, KY (Amish)  
1961-1976: Mission Home, VA (Fellowship) Mission Home Christian Fellowship  
1965: Washington, DC (Unaffiliated A.M.) Fellowship Haven  
1966: Franklin, KY (Beachy) Franklin A.M.  
1968: Stuarts Draft, VA (Beachy) Pilgrim Christian Fellowship  
1968: Blackville, SC (Beachy) Calvary Fellowship Mennonite  
1969: Abbeville, SC (Beachy) Cold Spring Mennonite  
1969: Farmville, VA (Beachy) Farmville Christian Fellowship  
1970: Crossville, TN (Beachy) Mount Moriah Mennonite  
1971-2000: Paris, TN (Beachy) New Boston A.M.  
1974: Liberty, KY (Beachy) Casey Amish  
1976: Gap Mills, WV (Fellowship) Gap Mills Christian Fellowship  
1976: Orrville, AL (Beachy) Orrville A.M.  
1977: Catlett, VA (Beachy) Faith Christian Fellowship  
1977: Whiteville, TN (Beachy) Whiteville Mennonite  
1977-1982: Cuthbert, GA (Beachy) Trinity Christian Fellowship  
1978: Auburn, KY (Beachy) Plainview Mennonite  
1979: Cuthbert, GA (Conservative) Faith Mennonite Mission  
1982: Mayfield, KY (Beachy) Hickory A.M.  
1984: Jesup, GA (Unaffiliated Amish Mennonite) Lake Grace Mennonite Church  
1985-1993: Paris, TN (Beachy) Locust Grove  
1986: Paris, TN (Beachy) Bethel  
1986: Auburn, KY (Beachy) Providence  
1986: Belvidere, TN (Beachy) Belvidere Mennonite  
1989: Montezuma, GA (Beachy) Clearview Mennonite  
1990: Montezuma, GA (Unaffiliated) Gospel Light Mennonite  
1990: Cross Hill, SC (Beachy) Cross Hill Mennonite

1991: Carrier Mills, IL (Beachy) Carrier Mills A.M.  
1991: Clayton, IL (Beachy) Siloam Springs A.M.  
1992: Paris, TN (Beachy) Calvary Christian Fellowship  
1993: Leitchfield, KY (Beachy) Cedar Springs A.M.  
1993: Monticello, KY (Beachy) Pleasant Ridge A.M.  
1994: Hartselle, AL (Beachy) Emmanuel Mennonite  
1995: Charlottesville, VA (Beachy) Gospel Light Mennonite  
1995: Midland, VA (Conservative) Dayspring Mennonite  
1995: Roodhouse, IL (Beachy) Rehoboth A.M.  
1997: Sebree, KY (Beachy) Deer Creek A.M.  
1999: Greensburg, KY (Beachy) Summersville Mennonite  
2000: Russellville, KY (Unaffiliated Mennonite) Willow Creek Mennonite  
2000: Slanesville, WV (Beachy) Slanesville Community Mennonite  
2001: Wytheville, VA (Beachy) Light of Hope Christian Fellowship  
2001: Lyndon, KS (Beachy) Lyndon A.M.  
2002: Cynthiana, KY (Beachy) Pleasant Hill Mennonite  
2002: Montezuma, GA (Unaffiliated Mennonite) Word of Life  
2002: Amherst, VA (Charity) Dayspring Christian Fellowship  
2002: Belleville, AR (Beachy) Belleville A.M.  
2003: Auburn, KY (Beachy) Living Rock Mennonite  
2003: Renick, WV (Fellowship) Renick Christian Fellowship  
2004: Olney, IL (Beachy) Claremont A.M.  
2004: Bell City, MO (Beachy) Crowley's Ridge Mennonite  
2006: Hartselle, AL (Beachy) Unknown

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