

EUROPEAN PROJECT

Sponsored by the
BEACHY AMISH
CHURCHES
OF
AMERICA

1982

EUROPEAN PROJECT

JAMES YODER 1982

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Acknowledgment

My gratitude to Bro. Leroy Beachy for his help in the final preparations and printing of this booklet.

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Dedicated to my dear companion, my children and to all who labor in Love for the preservation and promotion of the Church in the "more perfect way."

My Desire

This is my only joy and heart's desire: to extend the Kingdom of God, reveal the truth, reprove sin, teach righteousness, feed hungry souls with the Word of the Lord, lead the straying sheep into the right path, and gain many souls to the Lord through His Spirit, power, and grace.

Menno Simons

Alsace, France

1982

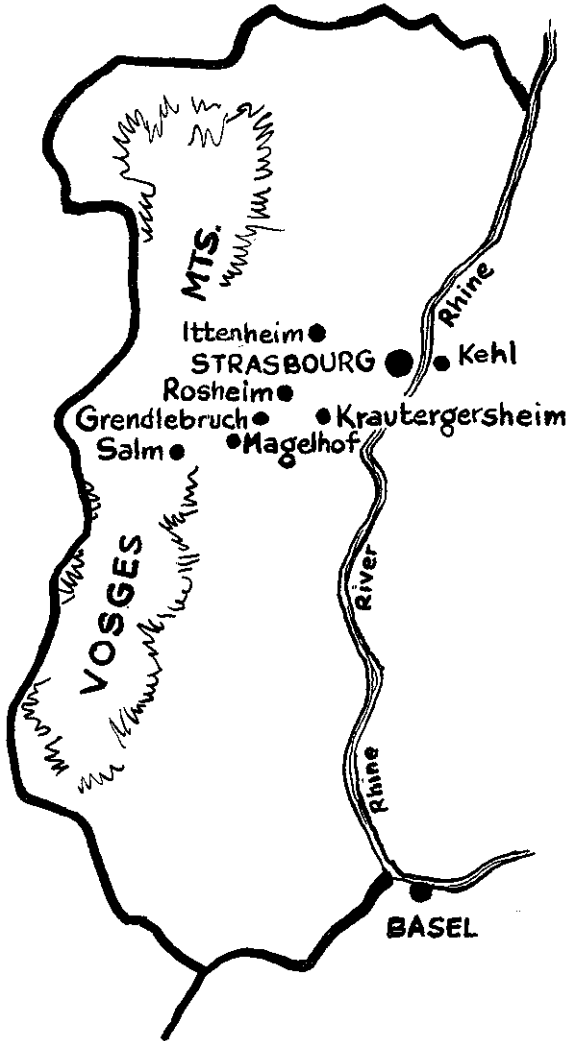
MAP OF FRANCE

ALSACE 



MAP OF ALSACE

Showing place names mentioned on the following pages



BURDEN FOR NONCONFORMED WITNESS IN EUROPE

Because of increasing differences in beliefs and convictions the mission church in Berlin, Germany (Friedensheim) requested independence, to be self-supporting and self-existing. After several delegated visits and much pleading for them to remain a part of the Beachy Amish Fellowship proved fruitless, their request was granted. A few non-delegated ministering brethren had also visited the Friedensheim Church to urge and encourage their continuance with the Fellowship.

The inflow from other church backgrounds and the lack of disciplinary convictions on the part of the mission staff and the ministerial leadership in the Berlin church, necessitated the parting of ways, but there still remained an element of strong feeling and conviction for a non-conformed witness in Europe.

In Dec. 1979 a group of five non-delegated brethren travelled to Germany, France and Switzerland to visit and make contacts in the interest of establishing such a witness.

Before leaving on this trip, historian Leroy Beachy mentioned the name of Fritz Plancke a forrester, living in Alsace, France as a man of like convictions. Plancke, then living in Grenedelbruch, was contacted on this trip.

1979 VISIT WITH FRITZ PLANCKE

This visit was in the dead of winter which made it almost impossible for the group to go to Grendelbruch which lies high in the Vosges Mountains.

Planche offered to come to Strasbourg on a Sunday morning and take the group to the Michael Sattler Mennonite Church. The group met him at the University of Strasbourg and walked to the church nearby.

The preaching was in German and translated into French. The group was well received and was invited to a fellowship dinner after the service. There was also a discussion - question - answer period in the afternoon. There was much discussion concerning the doctrinal and practical aspects of the faith.

After a number of contacts in Germany and Switzerland the group again met with Fritz and his wife-to-be, Elisabeth, along with two other couples in Kehl, Germany at a hotel to further discuss matters of the faith.

From these visits there followed a strong flow of letter correspondence with the French brother in which he expressed great dissatisfaction with the European Mennonite Churches and a heart's desire to be directed further in the "Plain Way".

The brethren that shared the above trip were Moses Stoltzfus, Jacob Lantz, ministers Wilmar Stoltzfus, William McGrath and James Yoder.

SHARING AND DISCUSSIONS

The five brethren discussed ways and possibilities of further nurturing the convictions already found in Europe. More visits were recommended. Since three of the touring brethren were from the Eastern Fellowship it was offered that they take the initiative in further developments. They did not feel capable at the time and therefore declined.

The burden was further shared with churches, individuals, ministers and mission committees. The concern was also shared at the 1980 Annual Beachy Amish Ministers Fellowship in Arthur, Ill. where a proposal was made that someone visit the former contacts again within the year.

At the 1980 Minister's Fellowship the M.I.C. committee committed themselves to give counsel and financial assistance for the furtherance of this program.

It was also decided at the above meeting to sponsor two minister couples to again visit the European contacts, namely: Raymond and Clara Barkman and James and Ruth Yoder. Much prayer and counseling was made in the preparation for the oncoming trip.

Leroy Beachy and sons Timothy and Leroy II from Holmes Co. also prepared to share in this trip which took place in October 1980.

THE VISIT OF OCTOBER, 1980

In the meantime Fritz and Elizabeth had been married and greeted their visitors in the warm and relaxed atmosphere of their cozy home in Grendlebruch, a village high in the Vosges Mountains.

The group again visited the Michael Sattler Mennonite Church in Strasbourg. The service was all in French. Communion services were held with a fellowship meal following. There was again a lengthy discussion period but it seemed more strained and defensive than in the earlier visit.

By this time there were others that took a keen interest in "the narrow way". They were the Gerard Notter family and Alfred Anstaedt. These were also at the Strasbourg meeting and took an active part in it. The Notters live in Ittenheim and Anstaedt in Strasbourg.

The group made other contacts during the following week and returned again to help the local Mennonites clean the old Amish Mennonite Cemetery at Salm. The group's intention was to again attend a Mennonite worship service at Schirmeck but when strong opposition was sensed, that was decided against.

Beachy and his sons then left for Switzerland for the weekend and the Barkmans and Yoders for Berlin, Germany.

On the group's departure for America the Planckes and Anstaedt came to see them off. The farewell was very touching and emotional. There was a strong sense of spiritual "belonging" though there would soon be many miles of separation, bodily.

OCTOBER, 1980 — JANUARY, 1982

THE REQUEST

For some over a year there was only letter correspondence. In the meantime Anstaedt had dropped out as an active participant because of his family, while the Planckes and Notters continued to meet for further discussion.

About the middle of 1981 a request came from the two families for baptism. The request was addressed to the Churches of America and included various conservative minded groups including the Amish.

The qualifications requested from the European families for whichever group would help them were as follows:

- 1; That they believe and practice the seven ordinances as stated in the Schleithem Confession of Faith, and
- 2; That they believe in the dual principles of Nonresistance and Nonconformity.

Two churches responded to the request; the group at Altimont, Tenn. under Raymond Horst and the Beachy Amish. The group from Tenn. found difficulties in working together with the Beachy Amish in this endeavor. It was then decided that the Beachy Amish would further pursue the request.

1982 DELEGATION AND DECISION

In Nov. 1981 at the annual meeting at the Hillcrest Nursing Home the M.I.C. committee in consultation with Barkman planned for a ministerial delegation to visit the European families concerning their request. The delegation chosen was Bishops Raymond Barkman and John Mast, M.I.C. members Deacon Mahlon Wagler and wife Mary and Minister James Yoder and wife Ruth.

This investigation took place in Jan. 1982. The delegation spent about two weeks with many long hours in discussion on points of doctrine and the practical faith.

The decision for or against baptism at this time lay heavy upon the delegation. There were two practical points that Mr. Notter found difficulty in submitting to: the restrictions against the use of the radio, and alcoholic beverages.

There was also evidence of a lack of fellowship and cooperation between the two families. The Planckes held to the congregational concept of the church whereas the Notters had a strong spiritualistic view. The decision was made to postpone baptism until further unity could be established.

The delegation also discussed the possibilities of providing ministerial assistance for the families.

MINISTERIAL ASSISTANCE

The delegation brought their findings home in consultation with M.I.C. and local ministries which thought it necessary to provide ministerial assistance to further establish the group.

In Feb. 1982 the M.I.C. board asked the James Yoder family to consider this call. The Yoders then consulted their home ministry and the local membership. There seemed to be a unified conviction for them to answer this call on a short term.

The Yoder family submitted to the local fellowship conviction to accept the challenge. This decision was shared at Beachy Amish Minister's Fellowship in Lancaster, Pa. and plans were made for the move.

In preparation for this move Barkman and Yoder made a trip to France in June to counsel the families and find lodging for the minister family.

At the time of this visit the conflicting concepts of the spiritualistic and congregational views seemed to have intensified.

During this trip the brethren helped the Plancke family move to their temporary home at Rosheim until their house at Magelhof is completed. No house was found on this trip for the minister's family.

THE MOVE

The Yoder family left their home in Holmes Co., Ohio Sept. 1, 1982 and arrived in Europe the following day.

An upstairs apartment was temporarily rented at the Fischhutte, a motel near Grendelbruch, until a house could be located. On Sept. 18 a house was rented in the farm village of Krautergersheim and on Sept. 24 the family moved into their house which would be their residence and also meeting house.

Soon after their arrival in France the Notters indicated their decision to discontinue their further involvement with the church, even though they do attend services frequently and enjoy the social contact.

Services are held at the Yoder home on Sunday mornings and Bible studies on Tuesday evenings.

The Yoder children are taking C.L.E home school studies under the direction of their parents.

CONTACTS AND INVOLVEMENT

Fritz Plancke is a dedicated historian and came to know about the "Plain" churches through his studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite Church History. He is presently involved in producing historical documentations for the 1984 Mennonite World Conference. This puts him in touch with many of the Mennonite Church leaders.

Many of the European Mennonite Churches have lost out on the Biblicist concept of their Anabaptist forefathers, and have been overtaken in the mainstream of modern Protestantism.

The corporate work of the Yoder's and Plancke's could be titled: "Amish Mennonite Church Aid to Europe." The aim is to restore the historical concept of the Mennonite Church. This involves establishing a Church based on the Holy Scriptures as taught by the "Plain" nonresistant and nonconformed Churches. It also involves preaching and teaching in various churches at regular services and Bible conferences.

There is some resentment from some of the European church leaders but as a whole there seems to be an openness. Many of the older folk have memories of practices still strongly upheld in the plain churches of America and bemoan the loss of these disciplinary standards among themselves.

MISSIONS

- Mt. 28:19 The command of Jesus to "Go . . . and teach all nations" is not some abstract command for certain by-gone generations but is valid for all of God's people until Jesus comes again. The words of Jesus, "look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest."
- Mt. 9:37 And "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." are as true today as when they were spoken.

A person often does not realize his need of a Saviour until he comes face to face with the Word of God. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?"

- Mt. 9:38 Jesus also had an urgent prayer request for willing workers in the great harvest of souls. Those
- Mt. 28:18 GOING can claim the power and resources of heaven
- Acts 1:8 to fulfill the task.
- Mt. 28:20 There is also the promise of His ever abiding presence, the promise of souls and eternal life.
- Mt. 19:29
- Eph. 4: 11-13 There is a great need for solid church establishments, providing an atmosphere conducive to Christian growth in preparation for service. For this, there needs to be strong Bible conviction on the part of the missionary. "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded."
- Mt. 28:20

DETAILS

Mission:

Amish Mennonite Church Aid to Europe

Bulletin: The Morning Star

Address: 6 Rue du Maréchal Foch
67880 Krautergersheim
Alsace, France
Tel. (88) 957842

| The Yoder family: | | Birthdates | Age |
|-------------------|---------|--------------|-----|
| Father | James | 12 - 24 - 41 | 40 |
| Mother | Ruth | 11 - 20 - 43 | 39 |
| Son | Nathan | 7 - 16 - 66 | 16 |
| Dau. | Martha | 12 - 12 - 67 | 15 |
| Son | Timothy | 8 - 4 - 69 | 13 |
| Dau. | Dorcas | 8 - 7 - 77 | 5 |
| Son | Linus | 6 - 16 - 80 | 2 |

This mission project is supported by free will contributions through Mission Interests Committee.

Sec. Ben F. Lapp
Rt. 1, Box 359
Christiana, Pa. 17509

The success of God's work rests upon the Blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and the dedication and faithfulness of His servants, flooded by the prayers of the saints.

by James Yoder 1982