

# Questionnaire For Interviews

## I Personal

1. Share a bit about your family back, church experience, significant events, or persons in your life?
2. Do you have any particular memories or feelings about being Amish Mennonite, good, bad, indifferent?
3. How has your mind changed about church, Biblical understandings, and/or church teaching & practices?

## II Congregations

1. What in your opinion are some of the significant changes in our Amish background congregations - style of worship, singing, music, sermons, prayers?
2. How would you evaluate the changes that have occurred in our congregations?
4. Have you noticed any changes in style of preaching, leadership, and pastoral care?
5. Do you think we have lost any significant aspect of our Amish Mennonite heritage?
6. What are your hopes and/or fears for the future of our congregations?
7. What are some contributing factors that have brought about these changes - outside influences in society, other denominations, persons, both lay and ordained.
8. Your thoughts on our inter-Mennonite experiences - NRRD, Conference of Historic Peace Churches, MCC, Rockway, Conrad Gobel College, Inter-denominational?
9. In your estimation are there any significant contributions Amish Mennonites in Ontario have made to the wider Mennonite Church.

## Interview with Elmer Schwartzentruber

Elmer was ordained deacon in the Wilmot Amish Mennonite congregation in 1941 and minister in 1951. Elmer was in his 91st year when this interview was conducted. The interview followed the outline of the questionnaire.

Since Elmer is one of the oldest persons in this series I asked him to share some changes that happened in the '20's and 30's, such as the change from German to English in worship services and how that began. Throughout the interview he talks about how his thinking has changed over the years in many ways, in practical matters as well as biblical understanding.

While Elmer was uneducated (in terms of formal education), his sincerity, Amish humility and inoffensive personality and his very loving and supportive wife endeared them both to many people in the Wilmot congregation and beyond. Like most of us, his strong points sometimes became his weak points; nonetheless, his overall contribution to the changes that occurred during his ministry are tremendous.

Near the end of our conversation Elmer indicates that he appreciates our working together over the years in an amiable way, a testimony I can also affirm. (Elmer and I were ordained as ministers at the same time. Two and a half years later then Bishop Moses Jantzi suggested that one of us be chosen bishop to assume his responsibility, that decision was made by the traditional lot method.) Elmer could not have been a better co-worker.

## Interview with Lorraine Roth

Lorraine grew up in the East Zorra congregation and is one of the historians in the Amish Mennonite tradition. She has written two books and a number of papers on the Amish and Mennonites, but is best known for the numerous genealogies she has helped put together, on which she has done considerable original research in Germany and in France. She also served as a missionary teacher in Honduras for a number of years.

The interview follows the outline of questions specifically written for this series of Oral History. Lorraine was also one of the earliest persons in the Ontario Amish Mennonite community to get a high school education. Her description of home life, being Amish, is quite typical although certainly a little more progressive than some. Her hesitancy about becoming a member and only later becoming a more committed Mennonite is interesting, as is her questioning of church practices. I consider her responses to my questions quite perceptive and well stated, although not necessarily unique. Her account of the women's sewing circle organization given toward the end of the tape is exceptional.

I recommend this tape for a good overall description of our Amish Mennonite experience in Ontario, especially a woman's experience.

## Interview with Erwin Erb

Erwin grew up in the Mapleview congregation in Wellesley Township but lived in Perth County. He was ordained deacon to serve in the Crosshill congregation in 1967. Erwin had a small trucking business, agriculturally related, is now retired and living in New Hamburg.

He related a rather typical Amish Mennonite experience and names some people who had a significant influence in his life. Sunday school teachers as well as Sunday Conferences played an important part in his spiritual development.

The main change in sermons was the switch to English, and although Erwin enjoys some of the new songs (especially small group singing) he likes congregational singing the most. Erwin found it difficult to voice any critical comments in evaluating all the changes that have occurred.

Erwin had an interesting story to tell about his experience during the war -- of getting a letter to be prepared to go to an alternative service camp but then not hearing anything for two years until receiving a registered letter to appear in Hamilton and the consequent episode.

Erwin did express some concern about the present and future of our congregations and people who are very much in the world and not distinguishable from anyone else. Erwin was born in 1917, so grew up at a time when being different from the "world" was stressed.

### Interview with Norman and Vera Helmuth

Both Norman and Vera grew up in the Wilmot congregation when St. Agatha and Steinman's were one congregation. Both were actively involved in youth activities and later as Sunday School teachers with Norman as Superintendent. They are, at this time, seniors and still actively involved in their congregation.

The interview followed the basic outline of the questionnaire with both sharing some family background. Vera was a minister's daughter and in that respect her contribution is unique. Her father was one of the first Amish ministers in the conference to preach in English, the result, primarily, of being asked to preach at funeral services.

Norman and Vera did not find it difficult to recount some of the changes that they lived through as far as church life is concerned. While expressing some concern, generally they felt positive about the future of the church, both locally and country-wide. Norman expressed special appreciation for the *Canadian Mennonite* and its wide coverage of the Mennonite church.

One of the unique features on the tape is their account of the inter-church activities in the St. Agatha area with its large Catholic church and the smaller Lutheran and Mennonite congregations, this comes near the end of the interview.

## Interview with Steve and Edna Gerber

Steve Gerber grew up in the Wilmot congregation but later moved to Welleseley Township where he became involved in the Mapleview and Crosshill congregations. Edna grew up in an Old Order/Beechy Amish home.

One of the unique features in this interview is Steve's experience in going through the lot, a traditional method used in the Amish Church in choosing church leaders, the first time being chosen as a deacon and the second for the ministry. The account comes about fifteen minutes into the interview. Another distinctive aspect on the tape is Steve's favourable comments on the charismatic movement, especially in the life of the Crosshill congregation where he served as pastor for many years.

An important change on this recording is reserving the 3rd question on my questionnaire for the end of the tape. I found it works better at the end, although the person's change of mind often becomes evident as they respond to other questions in the interview; which is certainly the case in this interview.

## Interview with Elmer Erb

Elmer grew up in the Mapleview congregation although when quite young his parents joined the Lichti congregation of a more conservative group. In his later teens he became a member of the Mapleview congregation. Elmer reminisced about his elders telling of things in Europe and their coming to Canada. Elmer told of his experience of working as a farm hand and then being invited to become a partner in a feed mill and his contact with some Old Order Amish.

Elmer admitted his memory is failing him and so had some difficulty in recalling events, etc. He remembered serving as a trustee of the congregation and also serving as a Sunday School teacher and Superintendent. Interestingly, when asked about changes he tends to revert to talking about the Old Order. One story that I had never heard before (appears about 30 minutes into the tape): apparently during his grade school years the teacher read a government letter forbidding anyone to talk German; however, the teacher was also German so never enforced the order.

Elmer served for about forty years on the Fire and Storm Aid Union, twenty years as secretary/treasurer. The unique thing about the organization is that it is still operating today and includes Old Order Amish Mennonites to the most accultured Amish (follows above item on the tape). He relates an incident when the issue of insuring the meeting house of the more accultured group arises.

Elmer's final comments show his pleasure with the fact his family are all members of the church, indicating a positive attitude for the future. After we were finished recording Elmer regretted that he failed to mention that his wife (deceased) did all the book work for him for the Fire and Storm Aid Union and should have most of the credit for his work with the organization. Elmer was in his 89th year when this interview took place.

## Interview with Walter Steinman

Walter is a life member of the Steinman congregation who farmed for most of his life, although after selling his farm and while working in a store he attended university part-time and graduated with a BA degree.

Unfortunately I failed to get the first 15 minutes of the interview on his home life, which was very typical Amish Mennonite, although I reminded him of what I considered unusual: on a Saturday night in town he and his brother asked for money to go to the theatre and their request was granted; Walter indicated that, yes, that is correct, but his father also let them know that this could not happen too often.

About 15 minutes into the tape Walter made an interesting comment that years ago an ordination service was a very solemn occasion whereas now such services are more celebrative. About worship in general he noted that we are returning to a more liturgical type of service, something our fore-fathers rejected.

Another aspect of change in worship, Walter noted, is the music, both the four-part harmony and especially the instrumental music. He felt good about that change basically although a bit concerned about some of the more modern types of music.

Reasons for change, Walter felt sure, were primarily due to education for leaders as well as for lay people. About his alternate service stint in WWII Walter felt it was a good introduction to our more recent conference integration.

## Interview with Earl and Mary Litwiller

The interview starts out with the Litwillers sharing their personal backgrounds, significant events that brought them to faith and church membership. They never felt inferior about being Amish although they did cite other people's experience on such matters.

Readily admitting the tremendous changes that have taken place and mentioning a few specifics, Earl and Mary seemed to have taken these in stride fairly well. Mary made an interesting comment about the women ministers Steinman congregation has had "that if a man had preached the same sermon those not in favour of women in ministry would agree - that was a good sermon."

The Litwillers agreed that the changes were necessary in light of the changing times due to economics, education, etc. They expressed concern for the young people but were grateful for Gail Roth (youth minister) and what she is doing. Earl expressed appreciation for his Alternate Service, Montreal River Camp, experience during the war as well as his concern for more teaching on our doctrine of nonresistance.

## Interview with Lorne and Dora Wagler

Most of the first side of this tape is taken up with the couple's home life and experiences which in both cases were very positive, as well as about their feelings concerning their Amish background. One of the Christmas traditions referred to was that of families taking turns reading a Psalm chosen by sticking a pin into the Book of Psalms.

While acknowledging the tremendous changes in style of worship, the Waglers felt generally positive. Specific changes related to music, especially the use of instruments, and the shorter sermons which are usually very good. Also mentioned was how often only older people still "dress-up" to go to worship service. Lorne and Dora felt that perhaps we have gone to an opposite extreme from a rather rigid dress code. Change in pastoral care was also noted, acknowledging that in paid ministry time is available. Lorne was on the first ministerial committee organized to have regular offerings for ministerial support, so comments on that aspect of change (near the beginning of side two of the tape).

The Waglers also expressed appreciation for our wider Mennonite involvement as well as the broader ecumenical experiences and the greater openness to people of non-Mennonite background. Some concern was mentioned about the loss for our young people of a knowledge of our Amish Mennonite background. Admitting their minds have changed a lot Lorne and Dora have some lingering feelings that young people as well as older ones need to be challenged to give a more distinctive witness.

## Interview with Arthur and Florence Steinman

This couple are life-time members of the Steinman congregation and our conversation followed the outline of the questionnaire. Both shared about their home life and the significant events and people in their lives. Once again they felt no significant feelings about being Amish although Arthur felt a bit of tension in his neighbourhood during the Second World War.

Once again some of the significant changes mentioned were the switch from use of German to English, different types of songs and particularly use of musical instruments in worship services. Sermons were admittedly shorter but possibly more practical. The sharing time and specific prayers for people got positive affirmation. Another very significant change was women's participation in worship with women pastors and the move back to three ministers each with specific areas of responsibility.

Yes, the Steinmans felt we no doubt lost some of our Amish traditions and emphasis, particularly in the area of fellowship, although that is partly sustained with potluck meals.

While admitting to hopes and fears, the hopes outnumber the fears. InterMennonite experience was seen as generally positive. Florence was specifically involved in Women's work and organization.

Arthur and Florence have changed their minds, yes, indeed, but felt good about it for the most part.

## Interview with Anson and Esther Kennel

Esther and Anson are husband and wife, both growing up in the Steinman congregation, although the somewhat different home atmosphere is evident in their responses to the first two questions.

The significant changes in their congregation that they mention are style of worship, with lay participation; music, particularly use of instruments; as well as the participation of women in leading worship and as pastors/preachers.

Their evaluation of the changes was generally positive. They felt the changes in preaching and leadership were essential in the light of the more educated membership and other circumstances. I find most people have a hard time coming up with things we have lost of our heritage. I usually hint at some possibilities to which they generally agree.

The Kennels have no particular fears but hope the congregation keeps the essential spiritual core of our beliefs. They acknowledge that both education and greater affluence are responsible for many of the changes in the church, admitting their own minds have changed significantly in the last fifty years.

Esther gave stronger feminist feelings than any other women interviewed thus far. Those comments came near the end of the interview.

### Interview with Laverne and Marjory Schwartzentruber

Both these people have been members of the Wilmot, Steinmans/St. Agatha congregations all their lives, but have been part of the St. Agatha congregation since it became an independent congregation in 1957.

Both shared about their home background, teaching and practices, which although distinct were quite similar. Being Amish was not a problem, although Marjory did admit that in her teen years she did feel somewhat inferior because of her Amish background.

They referred to some of the significant changes: style of worship, type of songs and, of course, instrumental music -- St. Agatha being the first rural congregation in the conference to have an organ. Leadership also produced some discussion, especially by Laverne who felt that by attempting to get everybody involved leadership has tended to be weakened.

Laverne was particularly concerned about the lack of preaching against such things as tobacco and alcoholic drinks while both expressed some concern for the future of our congregations, particularly our young people. However they also readily admitted that the changes that have occurred were necessary because of the changing times and circumstances.

### Interview with Austin and Helena Zehr

The Zehr's are members of the Steinman congregation although Austin grew up in the East Zorra congregation. They are a rural farming couple, retired and living in a new house built on their farm but not near the farm buildings. The couple are both in their 80s.

I asked them to tell of their becoming members in their respective congregations in the typical Amish Mennonite tradition in the beginning of the tape. They felt no particular feeling about being Amish, although Austin thought that during WWII there seemed to be a bit of tension due to our non-resistant stand.

At their age the couple has experienced tremendous changes in style of worship from German to English, from worship conducted by only ministers to lay leaders and ordained women preacher/pastors, from unaccompanied singing to instrumental music.

One of the most noticeable changes is in dress, especially for the women, from a rather strict code to anything goes! The church as moved from strict discipline to very little or no obvious discipline, although Austin gives testimony to East Zorra's bishop's more lenient practice.

Factors causing change were recognized and generally accepted as necessary.

## Interview with Harold and Ruth Leis

One of the unique feature of this couples' sharing about their home upbringing is Harold's statement about his father being a significant person and also his best friend. Ruth's most significant person was her grandfather on her mother's side.

Both talked at length about the significant changes in style of worship. Harold refers to the fact that their present congregational home is comparatively new and includes all three of the main Mennonite groups (MCEC) and a number of people of other backgrounds. (The Wellesley congregation was organized in 1975 and is an "in-town" church sponsored by the then Western Ontario Conference mission board.) Both are music lovers of both instrumental and choral music. Harold worked hard to have worship and praise groups to lead their worship services.

The couple feel very positive about the changes for the main part although they did express a bit of concern about how some people dress coming to church. They also felt positive about our interMennonite involvements as well as the more openness ecumenically.

Concerning losing aspects of our Amish Mennonite tradition was a more simple life-style and the contribution some of our ministers, or ministers from our tradition, have made to the wider Mennonite church. Their minds have changed largely due to Bible studies and discussion with others who hold other views.

## Interview with Urie Bender

Urie grew up in the Steinman/St. Agatha congregation where his father was very much involved in the Sunday school and his mother in the Ladies Sewing Circle. Urie married a Mennonite girl and consequently became involved in the Mennonite Conference and other Mennonite organizations, at one time acting as editor of the "Youth Christian Companion" published in Scottsdale, PA.

Urie credits his parents and others for influencing the direction his life took. Evidence of his writing career began as a child, as he recounts in the early part of the tape. His mother's nurturing and his parents interest and attendance at evangelistic meetings resulted in his early (9 years old) commitment of his life to Christ and a life of service.

Although he had no particular feeling about being Amish he does recount some denigrating comments from Mennonites at the time of the Amish Mennonite sesquicentennial celebrations in 1972. Urie feels that the Amish have made a contribution to the larger Mennonite brotherhood and expressed some doubt about the wisdom of the integration of the conferences in light of the Amish tendency to be less aggressive than the other Mennonites in MCEC.

The last part of the tape centered around possible loses and the factions responsible for the same and the church's never ending struggle to find ways to remain faithful and at the same time being a vital witness.

## Interview with Earl & Florence Schlegel

Possibly one of the most interesting parts of the interview came in the beginning when the Schlegels talk about their heritage and what made it special for them. It is also one of the better descriptions of traditional Amish Mennonite social cohesiveness.

Considerable time was spent on the changes not only in church, but in the surrounding culture and how that has affected our congregations. The Schlegels saw some very positive things that are happening which gives them hope for the future of our churches. Modern technology came up for discussion, Florence referred to their bishop Henry Yantzi making a statement about television which was up for discussion in the East Zorra congregation.

There was also a fair bit of discussion on education and its influence in our congregations. Florence gave a very positive testimony on the place of Conrad Grebel College as well as Rockway Mennonite Collegiate. Florence served on the Grebel Board for a number of years. She was also a very active member of the Women's organization and comments on the changes in the organization and its programs, as well as the involvement of women in church services etc.

The Schlegels were also quite service oriented, instrumental in building and operating retirement and nursing homes, a fact which isn't specifically mentioned in the interview, but is hinted at by Florence in her hope for our youth vs. the current individualistic emphasis on personal gratification.

## Interview with Alvin and Madeline Roth

One of the interesting features in the first part of this tape is the contrasting home backgrounds of each person plus their own recognition of their personality types. Alvin goes into some detail of his early youth and young adult experience which took a dramatic turn with his conversion experience.

Alvin was one of the earliest Amish Mennonites to attend what was then Eastern Mennonite School (now EMU) for one year. He came back home, got married, and began farming. Under the influence of a Winter Bible School teacher the Roth's became interested in establishing a new settlement in an outlying area. The story of this adventure is recounted largely in the second side of tape.

The Roth's experienced two culture shocks from a German Amish Mennonite to a Scottish Presbyterian one and from a rural to an urban one. On the theological side, Alvin relates in some detail his "mood change" from very conservative evangelical/fundamentalistic stance to a much broader understanding of how God works in our world and the struggles he went through in that process. On the other hand the Roth's express their appreciation for their background and its relevance to their work in London.

Tape number two (1st side) recounts the start of a Sunday school at the Rescue Mission to another location and the beginning of a worship service which developed in the early sixties into Valleyview Mennonite congregation. The Roths also expressed their desire and hope that our congregations develop ecumenical approaches in their individual and congregational life.

## Interview with Lavin Jantzi

Lavina was the wife of David Jantzi; both of them grew up in the Old Order Amish community in the Milverton area and were members of the Amish Mennonite congregation there until some years after their marriage. David was sent to an alternate Service Camp in British Columbia during World War II. Sometime during this experience he came to a more personal experience of the assurance of forgiveness through faith in Christ.

Lavina tells of his desire to help his people to experience the same kind of assurance. She also shares her experience of a happy contended childhood and then later, through her husband, the assurance of salvation. After a few years they were told they could no longer be members of their congregation unless they admitted their mistake. Consequently they became members of the Riverdale Amish Mennonite congregation in Millbank which had opened only a few years previously.

In 1958 David was ordained as a minister in the Riverdale congregation where he served until his retirement. Both David and Lavina became involved in the outreach of the congregation in a prison ministry, in a year of service among native Canadians in Northern Ontario, in using a model of the Old Testament as a teaching device which he helped to make in his carpenter shop.

Lavina shares her own experience and convictions and generally feels positive about the church in all of its changes.

## Interview with Glenn and Mary Ellen Zehr

The beginning of this tape centers around family background of the interviewees and is quite typical of people in the 1930s-40s, with quite positive feelings about church, home, and community. Glenn's father was a deacon and his grandfather a minister and Mary Ellen's grandfather on her mother's side was also a minister and bishop in the congregation she grew up in.

Changes in leadership took up a fair bit of discussion, especially, in Glenn's case, one of current ministers who did not have any formal training for his work, one of the last farmer ministers among the Amish Mennonites in Ontario. The Zehrs also describe significant changes in styles of worship, including singing, instrumental music, praise team leading in worship as well as lay persons doing the same. The congregation has also had students serving during the summer for a number of years, including women ministers.

Possibly a first was the congregations participation in an ecumenical service (January 2000) including several area Mennonite, Presbyterian, United, Lutheran and Anglican congregations and concluded with a communion service. On the other hand the Riverdale congregation is surrounded by Old Order Amish and conservative Mennonite congregations with whom they attempt to relate. Glenn has operated an information centre at the church about the Amish for a number of years. The Zehrs, like most of the people interviewed, feel positive about the changes that have occurred during their lifetime.

Unfortunately, I failed to record the last or second side of the tape -- probably accidentally pressed the pause button.

## Interview with Oliver Steckle

Quite a different interview with an 85 year old man of Old Order Mennonite background who became part of the Amish Mennonite congregation in Blake in the Zurich area.

Oliver has not been attending church for a number of years. He goes to lengths about some of his unhappy family experiences. So while this tape does not reveal too much about church life it does reveal how, unfortunately, family experiences can affect one's relationship with the church family.

However, he does also reveal some of the problems and inconsistencies in days past as well as in the present. On the other hand, Oliver also expresses a heart-felt faith in Christ. While the interview does not follow my usual outline, it does reveal an experience that was not uncommon in the Amish Mennonite brotherhood. Like many of the interviews, the newer attitudes of ecumenicity were affirmed.

## Interview with Ephraim Gingerich

Ephraim has many good memories of his early childhood and relations with his parents and siblings. He also relates an interesting event involving his grandfather. Another interesting episode centered on an exchange with an older brother re: attending church. Ephraim has never had any negative feelings about being Amish.

Sharing about changes in our congregational life and worship services in its various aspects, Ephraim feels generally positive, although some changes he grins and bears while others get a very good response. Relating to prayers, he recalled that years ago there was always a petition for our government which has been largely lost until recently, since now a member of the Zurich congregation is a member of Parliament. I should point out that during Ephraim's ministry the Blake Amish Mennonite congregation united with the Mennonite congregation in Zurich. One of the fears for our congregations was the possibility of losing some of our Anabaptist distinctions.

Ephraim feels good about the changes in leadership patterns that have happened, especially allowing all ordained leaders the privileges reserved formally for bishops only. He with three other bishops in the early sixties was responsible for fostering this change; consequently no other bishops were ordained since that time.

Another concern expressed was the lack of accountability to each other as expressed in our Amish tradition.

Once again I failed to record the second side of the tape.

## Interview with Carl and Fern Erb

Carl grew up on the farm and did not have a high school education. After the farm was sold, a member of the Steinman congregation who had an oil and fuel business employed Carl. Later Carl and a brother-in-law became owners of the business that they eventually sold, again to former employees. Fern was a graduate of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate and assisted with the bookwork of her husband's business.

Their home backgrounds were quite similar with some differences. Carl felt affirmed, especially after becoming a song leader in the St. Agatha congregation. He especially remembers a man who was a lover of music and gave a sum of money to the congregation for the purchase of an organ. Consequently, the congregation was the first to have an organ in our Amish Mennonite churches.

Except for Fern's having to dress very traditionally since her father was a minister, the Erbs both felt very positive about their background. Both also felt very good about the changes in worship, leadership, prayers, etc. Their main concern relates to the church remaining grounded in the Scripture. Outside influence largely responsible for changes included more interactions in daily life, inter-Mennonite and inter-denomination experiences. An unusual such experience mentioned involved an anointing service with a Lutheran and Catholic churches conducted by the ministers of the three congregations in the St. Agatha neighbourhood.

## Interview with Erwin and Erma Steimann

The Steinmanns each shared some of their home background, persons and events that shaped their outlook. As usual they had no unpleasant experiences about being Amish, except that Erma mentioned she never felt comfortable inviting her friends to church whereas her Lutheran neighbours invited her to their services which she felt free to accept. Quite a change from today, when they feel good about inviting any of their non-Mennonite neighbours or friends to worship at their church (Steimann's).

Style of worship has changed tremendously all for the better. Sermons were mentioned particularly and also the use of musical instruments. Pastoral care as well as leadership also received favourable comments, especially since more lay people are involved in both areas.

Concerning losing any significant aspect of our tradition, Erwin refers to the loss of responsibility for each other as members, due, probably, to the current emphasis of individualism in our society. No outstanding fears were mentioned with the hope that we deep the core of the faith. While readily admitting the many outside influence the Steinmanns were mainly positive, not only about congregational life, but also their own change of mind. They also feel good about our inter-Mennonite involvement as well as the broader ecumenical experiences and also the same about the contribution to the broader Mennonite fellowship. Erwin made a rather significant statement about opposition to change not coming primarily from older people.

## Interview with ken and Grace Schwartzentruber

Considerable time was spent in the early part of the tape on family background typical ways, parents allowed independent decision-making quite early in their youth, a good window to home life and attitudes toward the outside" world as being not as strict as outward appearances may indicate.

While following the questionnaire outline, there is probably considerably more overlapping than usual and also many comments about significant changes in style of worship and leadership. They noted particularly, the quite different style of worship versus the typical Latin American forms. On the other hand, some of the Brazilian aspects of worship reminded them of their own Amish Mennonite background. Later in the tape, regarding hopes and fears for our congregations, they wondered where our more recent trend for a more liturgical style of worship will lead us as well as what our very time conscious and rigid order of service is doing to our youth in particular. Another of their concerns relates to their experiences of deputation work as missionaries and the apparent lack of interest among young people for missions.

A fairly recent trip to Israel raised some real concerns for Ken regarding the political, messianic and Milleniumism both in Israel and America, and where the Mennonite church stands on these issues,

## Interview with Victor and Viola Dorsch

One of the interesting features of this tape is the contrasting home backgrounds of the couple. Victor is of a non-Amish Mennonite church, having been brought up in a very committed Evangelical church family, whereas Viola grew up in a very traditional Amish Mennonite home but not on a farm. Victor's first impressions of the Amish were not very good. The fact that Amish Mennonites drank alcoholic beverages was a shock to his Evangelical church teaching.

There is Victor's story of his meeting Viola and becoming acquainted with others through the Literary Society Meetings held, at the time, by the young people of the Wilmot congregation and, his ultimate baptism (or rebaptism) and his commitment to missionary service in a revival meeting in the St. Agatha Amish Mennonite church. This was followed by graduating from Eastern Mennonite College in Virginia, their appointment as missionaries to Africa under the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Mission Board, where they served for over thirty years. Since their retirement from Mission Service they served as pastoral couple in the Mapleview congregation, the most conservative church in the former Western Ontario Conference.

As former missionaries, they were in a unique position to help that congregation make needed changes to bring it into the main stream of current trends. Of interest is also their assessment of the changes here in Ontario, a little more in line with their experience of the church in Africa, particularly in style of worship, women in leadership, and ecumenical issues.

Although expressing some concerns for the future, Victor and Viola have positive feelings about most of the changes that have occurred and are confident about future possibilities.

## Interview Summary

Ralph Lebold, Herb Schultz, and Fred Lichti

These two tapes record a roundtable discussion including three ordained ministers who grew up in three different congregations in what was then the Ontario Amish Mennonite Conference. Almost the entire first side of tape one is taken up as Herb Schultz, Ralph Lebold and Fred Lichti talk about their family and church backgrounds and in the process also reveal much of the influences that shaped their lives and our congregations.

The rest of the tapes revolve around changes in our churches since the 1940s to the present. Probably the most significant aspect of these tapes is their insight into the reasons, influences, etc., for these changes which I found most ordinary laymen have not thought about much.

Our Amish identity comes in for a fair bit of discussion and that any feelings of inferiority were our problem rather the other's. Leadership Amish style and changes are also discussed as well as the current lack of pastoral candidates. Inter-Mennonite issues and how they have, and will, affect our churches in the future, plus the many cultural and other religious influences are shaped us were mentioned. The discussion concludes about one third way through the second side of tape number two.

## Interview with Florence Roes

Florence's early life was in more the conservative Beechy Amish and a little later part of Mapleview (conference congregation). Family devotions consisted of morning prayer after breakfast.

Florence later attendance at Bible Institute (Kitchener) helped her to do more independent thinking. Young people's literary society meetings were helpful for social life, an opportunity for planning their own activities. Young people's Sunday evening meetings and being able to participate in "special singing" groups were important to her. Florence felt a bit of inferiority about being Amish.

Florence comments on music/singing in earlier years versus more recent types of hymns. Regular sermons were not necessarily helpful -- too repetitious -- especially guest/conference preachers. Florence comments on more recent forms of off-the-wall praise songs and also questions musical instruments. Worship services are more planned with visual helps because of worship committee plans. Generally Florence feels good about changes, both past and the future; while some concerns remain she is confident the Holy Spirit plus the counsel of the brother/sisterhood will be sufficient to keep the church faithful.

Yes, Amish Mennonites have made a significant contribution to the wider Mennonite church, it is becoming more difficult to separate "different" Mennonite groups. Revival meetings gave a boost but need not necessarily continue. (End of side1)

The inter-Mennonite involvement was seen as good, MCC very much appreciated. Florence tells of her experience with MCC as a volunteer and also of her volunteer work with the Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkart. Florence went on to get nurses training, serving as the head nurse at Nithview Home in New Hamburg. She also tells of an ecumenical service held in January 2000 and her appreciation of the broader Christian fellowship. Finally, Florence tells of her amazement and thankfulness for the opportunities and blessings she has been allowed to experience.

### Interview with Ken & Margaret Ruby

The Ruby's shared about their early childhood and youth; like typical Amish families, their families had no daily devotions, only on special occasions. Apparently summer Bible school as well as winter Bible school play a significant role in their coming to personal faith.

Ken talked about church music coming from a family that was noted for its involvement in singing. Interestingly, Ken refers to the fact that they had a piano in their home and would gather around the piano and sing as a family. Another interesting fact referred to was the earlier song leaders were not appointed, anyone in the congregation could announce and lead in a congregational hymn. Reference is also made to prayers and sermons, the differences in weddings and funerals, and other special events such as Christmas, Easter and Lent.

Almost invariably reference is made to the individualism that has had an affect on our fellowship plus the fact that our people are much more involved in other things beside the church. No particular hopes or fears were expressed, and generally both felt good about the changes and the future. They expressed positive feelings about our inter-Mennonite involvement and felt we have made a contribution to the wider Mennonite church.

In closing, Ken expressed his appreciation for Bishop Henry Yantzi and the contribution he made to Ken's own life.

## Interview with Harold &amp; Marie Bender

Harold talked in considerable length about both of his parents and their European background. He also indicated his father's interest in education and debating the later which was further encouraged by the literary society. Harold's father experienced a spiritual conversion at a revival meeting by another denomination which made quite a difference in their home. He also emphasized the contribution the Sunday school made in the Amish Church.

On worship services Harold made an interesting confession of his dislike for German in church whereas he now likes very much the same German songs sung back then. Young peoples Bible meetings played a significant role in the spiritual life of people, young and older. Winter as well as summer Bible schools also contributed much to the life of the church, as did singing schools.

Changes in congregational life brought mention of various things. Harold particularly mentioned their present pastor who is of non-Mennonite background but is very strong on non-resistance. He is also happy with the greater interdenominational participation, but also thinks Amish Mennonites are currently making a significant contribution to the larger Mennonite Church. Once again, the introduction of musical instruments did not cause any major problems in the Cassel congregation.

Harold is an older brother of Ross Bender, a former principal of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, dean and professor at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

## Interview with Glenn Schwartzentruber

In sharing about his early childhood Glenn referred to his being born prematurely and how he was kept alive before mothers went to the hospital and there were incubators. Glenn never felt singled out because he was Amish in or community and always participated in elementary school or community events.

Changes in church and worship: Glenn missed the variety of preaching since going to one pastor systems versus the earlier rotation of ministers between three congregations which included the two daughter congregations of the East Zorra congregation. Currently the lead minister is a male assisted by a female youth pastor who recently handed in her resignation, a cause for "lots of tears" (this woman was well received from the beginning). Glenn also mentioned the introduction of a piano and organ in the worship service.

Glenn's most critical comments were about "cut and dried" worship services and other congregational meetings, a topic continued onto side two of the tape, and more particularly, about not taking the Bible seriously. He did feel good about evangelistic meetings, Bible school and other youth activities, i.e. literary and Sunday evening young people's Bible meetings.

Glenn's father was a deacon and later minister who, after World War II volunteered with the United Nations Relief organization to assist in servicing Ford tractors sent to previously Poland . A year or two later both Glenn's father and mother went back to Poland under MCC, staying until the communists took over.

Claiming we have lost more than our Amish heritage, Glenn felt that generally the changes in the last fifty years were for the good.

## Interview with Glen and Lydia Schumm

The Schumms shared their early experiences which were typically home and church centred. One of the special home Bible readings happened on Christmas eve and included sticking a needle in the book of Psalms (referred to as "Psalms schticking"); Lydia indicated this was not part of her experience. One yearly experience for her was going on a picnic to the beach, but no bathing at the beach. Sunday school teachers played an important role in each of their lives. Henry Yantzi was mentioned by both as a hero who showed interest in young people. Henry eventually became a bishop of the East Zorro congregation.

Change in worship was mentioned first as the change to singing accompanied by piano and more recently other instruments. Sermons are shorter and no testimonies by others afterward. Change in posture for congregational prayer, which previously was always kneeling, was mentioned. Church bulletins and lay participation in almost all aspects of the worship services is a significant change, as was the organization of a church council as well as one pastor ministry and thence to appointing lay ministers. Of special significance was/is the apparent smooth transition to a husband /wife minister of Russian Mennonite background in the East Zorro congregation. Changes in attire seemed to evolve without very much problem. Funerals have changed from an emphasis on death to a celebration of life.

Some concerns were expressed, like people not staying for Sunday school following the church service and the lack of discernment in the distinction between church and world. In relation to the new conference, some concern was expressed by the fact that so few people are actually involved and therefore more distant and perhaps not very relevant. Very positive expression on the whole aspect of the inter-Mennonite and the inter-denominational involvement. Changes, especially in the last thirty years, in Biblical interpretation and practice were discussed near the close of the interview.

## Interview with Audrey and Harold Bender

The Benders spent considerable time relating their childhood and teenage years. These were generally typical of Amish Mennonite homes and churches in their times, such as literary and Sunday evening Bible study meetings. Winter Bible school and some revival meetings were significant events.

On changes in worship and congregational life, the Benders noted many changes since their childhood and youth; most particularly: greater lay participation in worship tending toward more so-called liturgical forms and, of course, the participation of women in leadership roles, the use of instruments etc. They felt "fears" for the future of our churches was too strong a word, but they did express some concerns, particularly about outside influences drawing young people away. On the other hand they felt positive about young people's participation.

Generally our inter-Mennonite involvements were for the good, as they helped us recognize there were people in other denominations just as committed as we were. Audrey made some significant comments about each generation having to deal with an issue that becomes the main focus when such issues are often peripheral -- the current one being homosexuality. These comments come in the first part of the second tape, in the discussion on changes of Biblical interpretation and practice. In conclusion the Benders made note of the individualism of today versus our traditional very community-oriented life. Harold mentioned also the change in our funeral services.

## Interview with Wilmer and Katie Wagler

The distinguishing feature of their early experiences relates to the difference between Wilmer and Katie, primarily because Katie's father was a minister; generally, however, both were typical of the Amish Mennonite tradition.

Katie made some comments, some critical, others complimentary, about changes in worship in our congregations, including more people of non-Mennonite background; music being quite different with musical instruments, more lively with a concern about four part harmony. Women in worship leading is a new phenomenon but did not create any significant problem. Written/read sermons and prayers were viewed a bit critically. Pastoral care was seen as an improvement. Funerals being more celebrated was also considered appropriate. The changes are cause both for concern and for hope.

Church and Sunday school conferences and revival meetings played a significant role in earlier times, whereas now people are more influenced by other "outside" movements. The larger integrated conference was viewed with a bit of concern because primarily only delegates become involved. Interdenominational involvements were seen as a positive development.

New understandings, interpretations and practices were generally viewed as positive although there is some possibilities for leading people astray. While changes are obvious whether these are good or not is not so easily discerned. One of our losses is the former hospitality. Wilmer concludes by affirming his appreciation of his Amish Mennonite heritage.

## Interview with Ken and Alma Yantzi

The Yantzis' experiences were typical of their time, with the father doing the reading and prayer for devotions. Ken refers to the fact that they were poor and lost their farm during the 30's depression, whereas he remembers his wife's parents always drove a new car; gratefully, his wife was thrifty. A few instances of being Amish were noticed but it was never a big problem.

Changes in worship that the couple mentioned include greater involvement by lay people, including women; the many young people involved in the worship services was especially mentioned; musical instruments; sermons are much shorter. It was noted that leadership used to be for life, but now pastors retire and serve other congregations on an interim basis. Pastoral care was spoken of as greatly improved, referring to their current pastoral couple, who do a lot of such care. One of the losses is the lack of Sunday visitation among the members.

Once again the change in funerals from very sad and an emphasis on death to the greater emphasis on celebrating a person's life was noted. More emphasis on Christmas in our congregations was felt to be good, especially for children's and young people's involvement. Families sitting together were given a positive response. Concern was expressed for continuing emphasizing New Testament truth, noting the ever-present possibility of losing out on our Biblical heritage.

Large change in conferences, where only delegates are involved rather than many lay people as it used to be. Inter-Mennonite as well as inter-denominational involvement was approved. Our church schools were also given support.

## Interview with Leander Wagler

As Leander admits, there were no family devotions in their home; his father had a drinking problem and did not participate in church or instruction in the home. However, their mother made up for the father's lack. The Waglers were a large family and despite, or maybe because of the home situation, all the children have made lasting contributions to the church and larger community. No significant feelings or experiences about being Amish were noted except a bit during the Second World War.

The biggest obvious change in worship was the change from German to English. Other obvious changes are shorter sermons and prayers, the introduction of musical instruments, yet Leander was also heartened by the strong four-part harmony he hears from the younger part of the congregation. The change in funeral services from an emphasis on death to a celebration of life was noted. Leander expressed some concern about strong drink and dances at weddings. In church leadership he expressed some nostalgia for our traditional bench of preachers who provided more variety and presented a united front. On the other hand, Leander noted that we are returning to former patterns of leadership in that the congregation has a number of lay ministers and elders, and also a greater lay participation in the worship service.

Another concern was the importance of sports, which takes young people and families away from Sunday morning worship and consequently what that says about our priorities. The broader involvement in inter-Mennonite as well as inter-denominational events was generally approved with an added concern about the "bigness" of our integrated conference which leaves the majority of people unconnected. Our changes in Biblical interpretation and practice did not elicit any negative response nor did the loss of any significant aspect of our Amish heritage, although appreciation for that heritage was expressed.

## Interview with Raymond &amp; Norma Ruby

Re: early childhood experience, Raymond was an only child, Norma came from a large family and always felt loved. Family worship typically came later as in other Amish Mennonite homes, with father doing reading and prayer except for Easter time for Norma. Summer Bible School, Winter Bible School and Young Peoples Bible meetings (Sunday evenings) played significant roles as did families and extended families. Being Amish was not of any great significance although at times felt.

Many changes in worship were mentioned with more lay involvement particularly noticeable. The Rubys mostly felt positive about changes. Comments were made re: changes from Gospel songs to praise in congregational singing, also true in funeral services. Instrumental music a more recent development but that does not seem to have caused any real problems. Prayers not as long or as repetitive, "we have learned to pray," is another change. The same can also be said about sermons. Many good memories were shared about earlier conferences, both church and Sunday school.

Concerns expressed centered around several issues, i.e. church and Sunday school attendance not taken as seriously, less or no memory work in children's curriculum; the practice of having dances and liquor at weddings. On the positive side, the Rubys appreciated our greater involvement in the wider Mennonite as well as the ecumenical services with other denominations and also greater community participation, increased appreciation for others and their faith; the Amish are no longer the quiet in the land.

## Interview with Wilfred &amp; Jean Roth

The Roths' childhood and early youth experiences were quite typical of Amish homes and community in the nineteen-thirties and forties, which centered on family and congregation.

The same goes for changes in worship and other changes in congregational life. Of particular significance in this interview is that Jean had the actual dates for some of the changes and when they were approved by the Castle congregations. All this is recorded about half way through the first side of the tape. While the Roths did not say this, another significant fact this illustrates is that these changes were congregational, not conference decisions typical of the Amish emphasis on congregational life and authority. Also of interest is the fact that Ephraim Gingerich, one of the last bishops in the Amish conference, encouraged couples/families to sit together in the worship services in the Castle church. The only fear about the changes was the fact that there is considerable inter-marriage with non-Mennonites who tend to bring other changes, although hopes seem to overshadow the fears. The same feelings were expressed for both our inter-Mennonite and ecumenical involvements, expressed particularly in Summer Bible Schools, joint worship services, and participation in local ministerial organizations.

## Interview with Clare and Marie Jantzi, Grace and Del Zehr

Side one of this tape is taken up primarily with the four participants sharing the early home life, church and community life from the middle forties to the early sixties, a time of accelerating changes in our Amish Mennonite congregations. Perhaps of special interest in the experiences of these couples relates to their experience of being Amish Mennonite, in particular, the negative comments, and attitudes coming from their Swiss (Old) Mennonite school mates and even in more recent years, occasionally from peers in our inter-Mennonite settings.

Changes in worship and congregational life received typical response from a period of slow but steady changes characteristic of the post World War II era to the present. A fair number of specifics were referred to which varied somewhat between the four participants in this interview.

Both wider inter-Mennonite as well as ecumenical interaction received mainly positive responses, partly because both couples are members of the first inter-Mennonite congregation sponsored by the Amish Mennonite conference. In fact, Valleyview was the first official inter-Mennonite congregation in Ontario.