Care less for your harvest than for how it is shared and your life will have meaning and your heart will have peace.

- Kent Michael Nerburn
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ABOUT OUR COVER
Kent Michael Nerburn, an American author, has published books of creative non-fiction and essays, focusing on Native American and American culture and general spirituality. Nerburn describes his work as a search for “an authentic American spirituality.”
Like other faith communities around the world, our Lutheran church is finding ways to worship apart from a physical sanctuary. What we watch online has liturgy, prayers, hymns, Scripture readings, and a sermon. But one element is conspicuously absent: the sacrament of Holy Communion, which we haven’t received since a Lenten evening service the Wednesday before large public gatherings in Minnesota were suspended.

In the age of COVID-19, what does it mean that Christians can’t gather in person to participate in the ritual they call Communion, Eucharist, or the Lord’s Supper? Can sacraments, like work and education, take place remotely? While some theologians who specialize in digital issues argue for online communion, others conclude that “in virtual worship, we remain ultimately uncommuned in a full sense.” Warning that sharing masses online as anything more than a temporary measure “would amount to wishing for a kind of ‘disincarnation’ of Christ,” one French Catholic theologian urged his bishop to challenge their government’s restrictions on gathering for worship. Our church’s denomination has formally discouraged the practice of virtual communion, and even suggested that the disruption of “fasting” from that sacrament “gives us the time and space to examine our understanding of and practices around Holy Communion.”

Today’s post is dedicated to such examination. I’m no theologian but as a historian, I thought I’d share the story of a Christian movement whose members didn’t take Communion for some 350 years. It needs to be noted that while Schwenckfeld and the Schwenkfelders did not participate in the outward, physical celebration of communion, they did commune personally and regularly inwardly and spiritually, as this article will affirm.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died (1 Cor 11:27-30)

Our story starts in 1518, in what’s now Poland. An aristocrat and royal counselor named Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig experienced a “visitation of the divine” that led to a profound religious conversion. Though never ordained, Schwenckfeld began a new career as a Protestant reformer in the region of Silesia.

Initially influenced by Martin Luther’s writings, Schwenckfeld began to break with Wittenberg in 1524. He warned local pastors that Luther’s understanding of salvation by grace alone went so far to avoid works righteousness that it minimized the importance of changed lives and changed behavior. Believing “that reformation without reformed lives was meaningless,” explains the late Schwenkfelder pastor Jack Rothenberger, Schwenckfeld hoped that “the personal experience of the living Christ” would bring about a “maturing awareness on the part of a believer that he or she is empowered daily by Christ to live for God and others.”

Schwenckfeld hoped to find a “Middle Way” between Catholic and Lutheran positions on justification and sanctification, but it was his attempt at mediating the debate over Communion that led to his final rupture with Luther.

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1 It needs to be noted that while Schwenckfeld and the Schwenkfelders did not participate in the outward, physical celebration of communion, they did commune personally and regularly inwardly and spiritually, as this article will affirm.
6 While Schwenckfelders did not participate in the outward, physical ritual of communion in the church, they always practiced a personal, inward, spiritual communing with God. It is important to note that for the Schwenkfelders of the 16th through the end of the 19th century, the physical participation in the sacrament happens in community within the church, but the spiritual participation happens individually, within the believer and not in the context of community church worship.
As they read Paul’s description of the Last Supper in 1 Corinthians 11, Schwenckfeld and his colleagues in Silesia decided to re-interpret “This is my body” as “My body is this”: the physical bread was not Jesus’ body, but Jesus’ body was spiritual bread. After the two men discussed the issue in Wittenberg in 1525, Luther held on to his belief in consubstantiation and dismissed Schwenckfeld’s view as a variant on that held by his Swiss rival Ulrich Zwingli: that Christ was spiritually, but not physically, present in the meal. But Schwenckfeld insisted later that there was “a vast difference” between his view and that of Zwingli (or John Calvin): “For although we say in both cases, as is certainly true, that the body and blood of Christ are eaten and drunk only spiritually, nevertheless we are indeed far from one another as to what it means that the body of Christ is spiritually eaten in his Supper, and his blood spiritually drunk.”

While they would later be accused of minimizing the importance of the sacrament, Schwenckfeld’s decision to stop taking Communion actually stemmed from his high view of it. The divine presence of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit is uniquely present when we gather around the table,” preached Schwenkfelder pastor David McKinley in this 2015 sermon.

And that’s why Paul would teach in 1 Corinthians 11 that we ought to take special care in approaching this meal, so as not to do it flippantly or carelessly or in vain. Because if we do that, we could be guilty of partaking the Body and the Blood of the Lord in an unworthy manner.

On April 21, 1526, Schwenckfeld and like-minded pastors issued a circular letter claiming that “the Holy Sacrament or mystery of the body and blood of Christ has not been observed according to the Gospel and command of Christ.” Rather than invite God’s judgment for unworthy participation in the Lord’s Supper, “we admonish men in this critical time to suspend for a time the observance of the highly venerable Sacrament.”

They called it the Stillstand — a sacramental “standing still,” until Christians had demonstrated their worthiness to take Communion.

What could have made 16th century Christians unworthy of the bread and the cup? Beyond their general concern that the Reformation was not reforming lives, Schwenckfeld and followers of his “Middle Way” were particularly agitated that a fracturing church defied Jesus’ and Paul’s exhortations to Christian unity. How could Lutherans and Catholics be worthy to receive what they understood to be Christ’s body when their disagreement on that very sacrament was tearing apart the Body of Christ?

And so, church historian Peter Erb observes, the Schwenfelders became “one of the few movements whose beginnings were the result, in fact, of ecumenical, not sectarian concerns.”

(That from a 2006 article that manages to connect the Schwenkfelder story to The Da Vinci Code. You can also read Erb’s summary of Schwenckfeld’s life and thought in a 1989 issue of Christian History Magazine occasioned by the 500th birthday of that “forgotten reformer.”)

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10 The reference is to Schwenckfeld’s thoughts on the outward, physical, ritual practices of the sacrament in both Catholic and Protestant churches.
13 The outward, physical, ritual practices of the sacrament in both Catholic and Protestant churches, understood both here and in the paragraph above.
From 1526 through his death thirty-five years later, Schwenckfeld abstained from the Lord’s Supper. While he agreed that a sacrament required both spiritual grace and a material sign, he taught that believers could still receive the former without participating in the latter, as in this 1531 argument:

Neither Christ, nor his grace, nor the Spirit is bound to the use of the sacraments, nor attached to any external thing. Through Christ, God effects such a mystery freely in the Spirit where and when he finds the soul prepared through faith that it desires his grace and activity, be it immediately before the use of the sacrament, in the use, after the use, without the use, and with the use. Just as he works before the sermon, in the sermon, without the sermon, and with the sermon, independently in divine spiritual freedom…. Should such use occur apart from the use of the sacraments, it must nevertheless take place to a greater degree and more powerfully where the institution of Christ is followed also externally and practiced in obedience of faith with correct understanding and use. Where these two parts — the correct understanding and use — do not obtain, then it is better to omit [the sacraments] and apprehend the grace of God in other ways, so that the individual does not receive death, punishment, and condemnation where he supposed he would find life and salvation, as was the case in Corinth.

In his book on Schwenckfeld, Paul Maier concluded that “outer communion remained only a theoretical possibility with Schwenckfeld, while the inner observance received the predominating emphasis in his theology. He taught his followers that they were able to partake of Christ spiritually ‘every day, every hour, yes every moment’18 — just as Jesus had enjoyed a “spiritual supper” with his disciples (John 6) and with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). “As often as a man senses divine sweetness in Christ, comfort, joy, love, grace, and mercy,” Schwenckfeld assured his followers, “as often as he has a foretaste of eternal life, he holds with the Lord his Supper.”

After Schwenckfeld’s death in 1561, the movement that took his name maintained what Erb calls “an open conspiracy”: followers met in private and adhered to Schwenckfeld’s teachings, but some continued to attend other churches in public.20 By the 18th century, persecution led the Schwenckfelders to seek new homes. After finding temporary asylum with the Moravians of Herrnhut in 1726 (the 200th year of the Stillstand), forty Schwenckfelder families migrated to Pennsylvania in 1734. By the early 19th century, there were no Schwenckfelders left in Europe.

While Howard W. Kriebel’s history Schwenkelders in Pennsylvania21 states that the community began to discuss ending the Stillstand in the 1840s, discussions actually began as early as the 1760s22, but the first outward, physical, ritual celebration of the Lord’s Supper in a Schwenkelder gathering for worship didn’t happen until 187723. Some waited until the 1890s and even much later.24

Today, the Schwenkelder movement consists of a couple thousand people attending four churches in southeastern Pennsylvania. Those at Central Schwenkelder Church in Lansdale now take Communion several times a year, but Rev. McKinley closed his 2015 sermon on Schwenkelder’s Stillstand with words that all Christians can appreciate:

When we approach the Lord’s Supper, we realize that there is something deeper taking place. God is calling us to a deeper walk, a deeper devotion, a deeper level of faith and dependence on Christ, represented in food: the bread and the cup.

*Christopher Gehrz’s bio and publication list can be found at https://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/christopher.gehrz/

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16 Schwenckfeld abstained from the outward, physical, ritual practices of the sacrament; however, he continued a personal, internal and spiritual communion throughout his life.
17 Chester David Hartman, Editor, Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum, Volume IV, Document 117, “The second General Epistle to all of the four parties concerning the Understanding, Use and Worthiness of the Sacrament of Christ, May 21, 1513,” 1914, 132.
18 Maier, Paul, Caspar Schwenckfeld on the Person and Work of Christ: A study of Schwenckfeldian Theology at its Core, 1959, 21
23 Kriebel, Martha B, Schwenkelders and the Sacraments, 1968, 50.
24 David W. Luz, when serving Palm Schwenkelder Church as Associate Pastor (1982 – 1986), there was at least one elderly lady who had never taken the outward, physical, ritual sacrament.
The word “Stillstand” comes up often in conversations about Caspar Schwenckfeld. What does this German word mean? There are several English words that could be used, but for some reason many people use the German word instead of an English equivalent. You might ask: “Why?” — “I don’t know—it’s just tradition.” Some English possibilities are “standstill,” “suspension,” “cessation,” and “pause.” But those words seem to be just as puzzling as the German word. What is the story behind Stillstand, standstill, or suspension?

The whole explanation or story of this word is long and complicated. It starts in the earliest years of the Protestant Reformation and continues into the twentieth century. When the fledgling Protestant Church separated from the Roman Catholic Church, one major change that took place at that time was a reduction in the number of sacraments. In the Protestant Church there were and still are just two: Baptism and The Lord’s Supper.

Almost immediately after the split, the Protestant Church fragmented into two major groups. These groups are called magisterial and radical. Martin Luther and his followers were in the magisterial camp; Caspar Schwenckfeld and others of his ilk were the radicals. Luther was relatively conservative, and Schwenckfeld thought outside the box. This difference is easily seen in their interpretations of the Lord’s Supper. Luther, located in northern Germany, did not really stray that far from the Roman Catholic interpretation. Both believed in the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the rite. The Catholic Church believed that the body of Christ turned into the sacramental bread and the blood of Christ into the sacramental wine. This interpretation is called transubstantiation (to turn into). Luther’s interpretation, called consubstantiation (con=with) said the substance of the bread and wine coexists with the body and blood of Christ. Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss Protestant reformer, said that the bread and wine were simply symbols without any connection to the body and blood of Christ. Schwenckfeld believed there was a spiritual connection between Christ and the believer.

Schwenckfeld failed, however, to persuade Luther to accept his spiritual approach to the interpretation of the Lord’s Supper. For Luther it was just too far outside the box. With much cajoling, Schwenckfeld did eventually persuade his friend Valentine Crautwald to study his viewpoint. After much prayer and
a visitation from God, Crautwald was convinced that Schwenckfeld’s interpretation was right and wrote a defense of it. Schwenckfeld and Crautwald belonged to a small circle of men in Liegnitz who shared an enthusiasm for Church reform. After a time, Schwenckfeld became aware that his ideas about the Lord’s Supper were being rejected on all sides. This group of men, called the Liegnitz brotherhood, wrote a letter (1526) circulated to all reformers. In this letter Schwenckfeld proposed that there should be a standstill, a suspension of celebrating the Lord’s Supper until there was a general agreement on the interpretation of the Supper by all sides. It was unclear whether this cessation included baptism. Throughout his life Schwenckfeld rarely spoke of baptism. He never denounced it. He felt there was no need for people already baptized to be baptized again when they joined the Protestant Church.

Schwenckfeld continued to write essays in support of his interpretation of the Last Supper, advocating a suspension of the sacrament. These manuscripts were circulated among friends with the plea not to publish them. Nevertheless, the reformers Oecolampadius and Zwingli did publish them in 1527 and 1528. The publications eventually fell into the hands of the Catholic Archduke Ferdinand who ruled over Silesia. Ferdinand had already ordered the execution of the Silesian Protestant minister Johann Reichel for denying the real presence. Now the archduke was threatening Duke Friedrich II (Schwenckfeld’s governor) over Schwenckfeld’s publications on the Lord’s Supper. Consequently, Schwenckfeld left Silesia on May 18, 1529, for refuge in the Free City of Strasburg.

Over the centuries, Schwenkfelders must have had many discussions about the Stillstand. There is an impenetrable vagueness of what Schwenckfeld meant by that term. It appears that Schwenckfeld felt that the Lord’s Supper should not be celebrated in church, but that individuals could and should participate in the sacrament during their own private devotions. The Liegnitz Catechism (1525), the first Protestant catechism, contains instructions on both Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. In fact, all the Schwenckfeld and Schwenkfelder catechisms, in Germany or Pennsylvania, have instructions about Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

But none of these catechisms have a direct or even indirect reference to the Stillstand. Moreover, there is no mention of the Stillstand in the Schwenkfelder Society Constitution nor in Christopher Schultz’s Compendium, a comprehensive presentation of Schwenkfeldianism. In 1719 George Hauptmann answered the question why he did not go to the Lord’s Supper in the Harpersdorf Lutheran church, saying that his understanding of the Supper was not the same as the Lutherans, but he does not use the word Stillstand. The earliest use of the word Stillstand appears to occur in Christopher Schultz’s 1771 book on the vindication of Schwenckfeld (pp. 346–353; pp. 252–257 in the 1942 translation; pp. 355–363 in the 1830 reprint.)

Due to persecutions in Silesia and Germany, the Schwenkfelders rarely came together for worship. Families worshipped in their own homes. Another family might join them on occasion. In Pennsylvania they worshipped at first only as a family in their own home. It was not until the 1760s that a few families started to meet in designated homes. The distances between family farms did not encourage coming together regularly in large groups. By 1782 the Society of Schwenkfelders was formed. That endeavor produced a written document of their organization, but the word Stillstand is not mentioned.

Nevertheless, conversations about the Stillstand must have been taking place. In 1875 the Schwenkfelders published two essays on the sacraments: the first was “Concerning the proper Teaching and Order of the Sacrament” by George Weiss, 1720; the second was authored by Balthasar Hoffman, 1764. Only Hoffman used the word “Stillstand.” At the time these essays were translated and published, the Schwenkfelders were obviously discussing how the sacraments should be celebrated. More records about such discussions emerge in 1840 and 1877. Some Schwenkfelders in the lower part of Montgomery County gradually participated in the Lord’s Supper as a congregation, and by 1895 the more conservative Schwenkfelders in the upper Montgomery and Berks Counties communed in a church setting.

The Stillstand was never interpreted as a termination of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These are Christ’s commandments. The Stillstand was an objection to how the sacraments were practiced and interpreted in the church. At the end of the nineteenth century the Schwenkfelders decided it was time to reinstitute the physical sacraments in the church.
I recently learned that Wikipedia, in realizing that most of their biographies were of men, had begun a focused effort on gathering and adding biographies of women of note. This made me think about noted Schwenkfelder women and two very noted and courageous women who made names for themselves in the 20th century came immediately to mind: Flora Krauss Heebner and Selina Gerhard Schultz. Out of curiosity, I searched Wikipedia for both women and found that neither is listed. It seems to me that it is important for us as The Schwenkfelder Church community to remember both these esteemed individuals and their accomplishments. While much more can and has been written on each woman, here follows a brief synopsis of their lives and work.

Flora Krauss Heebner was born the middle child of seven siblings on the family farm in Worcester on December 26, 1874, to highly respected parents, Henry and Susanna (Krauss) Heebner. Educated in the local schools, she graduated from the Stump Hall Graded School in 1891. After a summer course at the Sumneytown Academy, she spent two years at West Chester State Normal School. In 1894, she transferred to Perkiomen School and for two additional years she was a student teacher, graduating with the class of 1896. For three years she taught in the schools of Montgomery County before entering Oberlin College, Ohio, where she graduated with her brother, Harvey Heebner in 1903. (Brother Harvey, after attending Union Theological Seminary, was called as pastor of First Schwenkfelder Church of Philadelphia in 1906). She was inspired to enter the mission field while still a student at West Chester, but opportunity did not arise until the summer of 1903 when she was a Home Missionary with the American Sabbath School Association in Tennessee. The Schwenkfelder Mission Board hired her that fall to work with Rev. Elmer E. S. Johnson at the First Schwenkfelder Church of Philadelphia.

On August 30, 1904, Flora left for the mission field in China, joining another couple being sent from Oberlin College. Following a year of language studies in Peking (now Beijing) she entered the mission field in Tai Ku Hsien, Shansi, about 400 miles west, where nearly all the western missionaries were killed during the Boxer Rebellion some four years earlier. At the Tai Ku mission, she taught young children and married ladies, as well as assisting in famine relief and recovery of mostly Chinese men from opium addiction. She taught Bible study classes, did hospital visitation, and evangelical outreach to mission stations surrounding Tai Ku. Interspersed with her time in China, she returned home for four furloughs – 1910, 1918, 1926 and 1936 – spending a year at home each time speaking about her work and raising funds for the mission. The Japanese invasion of China during World War II finally caught up with Flora and the missionaries at Tai Ku in spring 1942. After several stress-filled months, she was repatriated, arriving in New York harbor on August 25. During her mission work, Schwenkfeldian issues nearly always contained a letter from Flora Heebner describing her work. After several years in various mission fields in the United States, she died on December 21, 1947, following a two-year illness at the family farm in Worcester, just 5 days short of her 73rd birthday anniversary.
Selina Schultz Gerhard was born September 16, 1880, to Ambrose and Regina (Schultz) Gerhard on their rural farm near Palm. She was the fifth of eight children, attended Palm school through the eighth grade and then on to Perkiomen School where she graduated in 1898. After graduation, she taught in Upper Hanover Township schools until 1908. At that time she was hired by the Board of Publication of The Schwenkfelder Church to travel with the Rev. Elmer E. S. Johnson and his family – his wife Agnes and Selina were sisters – to be secretary to Rev. Dr. Chester David Hartranft in his work on the Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum in Wolfenbüttel, Germany.

In her own words, Dr. Schultz describes her first assignments: “In addition to secretarial duties, my first assignment was to arrange in chronological order and to catalogue the collection of Schwenckfeld’s works; 2) to re-estimate the number and size of the volumes required to contain all his works; 3) to search in the correspondence of his contemporaries for biographical, bibliographical, and historical data pertaining to the life, activity and writings of Schwenckfeld; 4) search in the libraries and archives of Germany for known but unrecovered Schwenckfeld documents; 5) photographing of books and manuscripts for editorial use and for printing; 6) the typing of all manuscript-copy for the printer, and reading of proof.”

In 1925 Dr. Schultz assumed major editorial work on the Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum, being noted as Associate and Managing Editor along with her brother-in-law Rev. Dr. Elmer E. S. Johnson as Editor in Chief on the cover pages of volumes 9 through 14. She became full Editor for volumes 15 through 19. Her work from 1925 included “introductions to the documents, the preface to each volume, the table of contents, index, as well as the proofreading. The two appendices which I prepared are to be found in the last volume.” On November 23, 1961, Dr. Schultz was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Theology by the Evangelical Theological Faculty of the University of Tübingen, Germany, for her work on the Corpus. In addition to her work with the Corpus, she authored a comprehensive biography of Caspar Schwenckfeld, a course of study on Schwenckfeld and the Schwenkfelders and numerous other materials of still noted historical and educational value to the Schwenkfelder churches. She died on July 19, 1969, at the age of 88.

On December 27, 1919, Selina married Eugene S. Schultz and took her maiden surname as her new middle name. Thus Selina Schultz Gerhard became Selina Gerhard Schultz.

New Feature

Schwenkfelder history has a lot of interesting stories to tell. Some revolve around people, some around events and some around actions taken. Too often in today’s world, history is not studied by either young kids or their parents. Dave Luz will be writing about these lost tales that come from the pages of old Schwenkfeldian magazines or reside at The Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center, in upcoming issues.

It is fitting that he begins with the stories of two prominent Schwenkfelder women in this year that is the 100th anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the Right to Vote in national elections.
As the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany in Pennsylvania, and also personally, I would like to congratulate you on the dedication of the renewed and expanded Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center! Having grown up as a Moravian in Herrnhut, Saxony, I feel a connection to the Schwenkfelders, whose spiritual ancestors also found refuge with Count Zinzendorf in the neighboring village of Berthelsdorf. Looking for freedom and religious tolerance, in 1725 the Schwenkfelders moved from Silesia to Saxony, where Zinzendorf gave shelter, despite their differences, in thoughts and beliefs. As the Count of Berthelsdorf, he wanted to enable a community where people could live together in peace and harmony. Almost 300 years ago, he practiced openness and tolerance when he offered his land for religious refugees.

The invitation to join you in celebrating the Center’s reopening has prompted me to delve a little deeper into your history of settling in America. I can see very well why several authorities wanted the Schwenkfelders to settle in their country, despite different religious views: They were hardworking, loyal to the secular authority, pious and led a modest lifestyle while practicing friendly relations with their neighbors. And, they made significant contributions to economic prosperity as farmers, craftsmen and merchants, who earned their livelihood for the most part by spinning, weaving, and in the linen industry. These were the great contributions that the 34 Schwenkfelder families of 200 immigrants offered their new community when they landed in Philadelphia in September 1734 to settle in the Perkiomen Valley.

Pennsylvania is a state of strong German heritage going back to 1683 when the first settlers founded Germantown. Germans have contributed to forming the state’s institutions and legal framework, they founded settlements, towns and cities, and created wealth and culture. This Heritage Center is proof of the importance of immigration in the United States and how Germans, such as the Schwenkfelders, the Mennonites and the Moravians, helped to shape the country. The history of the Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center is a remarkable story of preservation, vision, and expansion.

“Honoring the past... Building for the Future.” This can be taken literally as a very appropriate motto for what you are doing. To keep the past alive, so that future generations can learn from it. This wonderful facility is a milestone in the continuing history and heritage of the Schwenkfelders and of the Upper Perkiomen community. It contains the stories of the early settlers in eastern Pennsylvania. It also tells the story of conviction, righteousness, faith and persecution, refuge and shelter in Silesia and Saxony, how the Schwenkfelders left their homeland and eventually crossed the Atlantic Ocean to seek freedom to worship their Lord as they wanted. The Schwenkfelders were willing to sacrifice everything in their desire to find a place to finally be free. Here in America they found this place.

Three hundred years later, people are still fighting for freedom of conviction and religion and they are forced to flee their homes because they are persecuted due to religious beliefs, race, gender, sexual identity, or political conviction. Growing up in Eastern Germany, I myself experienced abuses of civil rights as well as a societal exclusion for political reasons. I longed for freedom. We all should be well aware, and the story of the Schwenkfelders remind us, how important it is that there are countries and authorities in this world who understand this longing of the millions and who are willing and able to advocate for their rights and offer shelter when it is necessary. I am grateful that I can say that my country is committed to doing this. And we should do it together with our Western allies, foremost with the United States of America.

The relationship between Germans and Americans demonstrates how former enemies can become friends when they embrace the rule of law and democracy and an open and free society. And we Germans know how much we owe the USA for helping us to adopt this stance after the darkest chapter in our history. America opened our eyes to freedom and it trusted us to live in democracy once again and finally to be an ally of the suppressed and disadvantaged.

Today, we can look back on our shared history and at things that will hopefully connect us in the future – things for which we need one another. I firmly believe that we need each other if democracy and freedom are to have a future in this world of rivalry and conflicts and if the West is to remain more than merely a point on the compass. We need the transatlantic partnership for this. Liberal democracy itself is our task, and it truly is a great task. A task that is bigger than ourselves, and most importantly, a task for which we both need partners.
It is my hope that this Center will be a lively venue for discussion and dialogue between young and old, Americans, Germans and others, a place where people – bearing in mind the great history of US-German relations – will work on our planet’s common future. The Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center can proudly be called a quintessential part of our German-American friendship. When this library was founded in 1884, it offered writings about the early settlements and books sharing Schwenckfeld’s beliefs and it has continued to educate and entertain its visitors to this day.

The Heritage Center is a place where people have come together for decades and this has helped so many to broaden their horizons through education, or, as the famous author Doris Lessing put it: “If you read, you can learn to think for yourself.” I would like to thank everybody for their tremendous efforts in preserving this library and heritage center here in Pennsburg. I hope many enjoy this remarkable collection.

Consul General David Gill, German Consulate General New York

Born in 1966, Gill grew up in a protestant minister’s family in Herrnhut, Saxony, in former East Germany. He was denied a higher education by the communist regime for political reasons. Instead, he trained and worked as a plumber before joining a preparatory Protestant school and later the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Church in Berlin-Brandenburg. In 1990, he initially was the chairman of Normannenstrasse Citizens’ Committee which oversaw the dissolution of the Ministry of State Security at the Stasi headquarters and served as the secretary of the Special Committee for the dissolution of the Stasi of the East German Parliament.

After reunification, Gill became spokesman and head of the research division of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi-Files before studying law in Berlin and Philadelphia. After holding positions in the Federal Ministry of the Interior and at the Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information in Berlin, he served as the Deputy Representative of the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany to the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union. During Federal President Joachim Gauck’s term from 2012-2017, he was state secretary and chief of staff of the President. Since August 2017, he has been the German Consul General in New York.

The original plan for the dedication ceremony of the Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center expansion called for having a special guest speaker. Consul General David Gill of the German Consulate in New York graciously accepted the invitation to address the attendees.

Like so many other things that were changed in 2020, his speech was condensed and presented in this article. The actual dedication ceremony became a virtual event that was filmed on August 24, 2020 with Board members and others participating.
Moderator Barry Simpson called the meeting to order at 4:40 pm in the Sanctuary of the Central Schwenkfelder Church on October 20, 2019. Barry opened the meeting by stating that the primary business for today’s meeting was to pass the 2020 Budget for General Conference.

A roll call of attendees was as follows:
- Palm: 3
- Olivet: 6
- Mission Church: 5
- Central: 21
- TOTAL: 35

Barry had the attached draft 2020 budget distributed to all attendees. The proposed 2020 budget, dated October 16, 2019, outlined the various proposed expenditures for the coming year and the expected income generated through the various church participation amounts. The overall budget remains the same as 2019 with a total amount of $74,000. Barry briefly explained the new item contained within the budget for Dock Academy in the amount of $5000.

Barry then opened the floor to questions about the proposed budget and asked Drake Williams to participate in the response to the questions.

**Question 1 – Barbara Colvin – Why was the line item for the Mission Budget decreased by $2500?**

It was explained that the amount budgeted was reduced as the amount allocated for 2019 was not fully utilized and it was thought the total amount could be reduced to better reflect expenditures. The intent is that if additional funds were needed during 2020, the budget could be evaluated to allocate more funds.

**Question 2 – Al Koehler – Why aren’t the total assets of the Conference published in connection with the proposed budget amounts?**

The total assets of the Conference are published and are part of the Spring Conference proceedings. In addition, those figures are published in the *Schwenkfeldian*.

**Question 3 – Trish Simpson – Why are we contributing $5000 to the Dock Academy?**

Dr. Drake Williams provided a further explanation beyond the introductory remarks from Barry on the Budget. Dr. Drake stated that Executive Council had entered a 2-year Agreement of Collaboration with Dock Mennonite Academy to create a partnership between the Schwenkfelders and a private Christian school. In return to our contribution to the school, Schwenkfelder students at the Academy will be eligible for reduced tuition and there will be an interchange of speakers, activities and facilities between both entities for the period of the Agreement.

As there were no further questions, Al Koehler moved, and Ken Kriebel seconded to approve the proposed 2020 Budget.

The vote was as follows:
- Palm: 3 approved, 0 against
- Olivet: 5 approved, 0 against
- Mission Church: 5 approved, 0 against
- Central: 17 approved, 1 against

The budget passed as there were sufficient votes for a quorum.

There was an additional question from Barbara Colvin pertaining to the disposition of the settlement monies from the Perkiomen School litigation. Barry responded that a sub-committee of the Council had prepared a suggested list of ten (10) items, or uses, that the funds could be utilized for. Those alternatives are currently being evaluated and it was suggested that this information be added to a *Schwenkfeldian* article as information.

As there were no other matters for discussion, Rev. Alfred Duncan closed the meeting in prayer.
The purpose of Executive Council is to govern The Schwenkfelder Church in areas of collective interest in accordance with The Schwenkfelder Church By-Laws, approved October 19, 2009. This report covers activities from May 2019 through April 2020. By publishing it in the Schwenkfeldian, we hope it provides better communication from Council to the General Conference.

Executive Council administers monies budgeted for the operation of Missionary Church outreach activities. During 2019, Phyllis and Rev. Alfred Duncan regularly served hot meals to residents of the Germantown community at the Happy Hollow Recreation Center. An individual’s donation will allow them to also provide sandwiches at nearby Vernon Park.

After the last Spring General Conference, Rev. Duncan was named Conference Minister, replacing Rev. Leslie Mamas.

Maintenance of the Yeakel Cemetery in Wyndmoor, near Chestnut Hill, continues to benefit from outside contributions, as well as from General Conference funds. Estimates of $40,000-$80,000 were received for repairing the stone walls at the cemetery. Jerry Heebner is the Schwenkfelder member of the Yeakel Preservation Committee. Jerry reported that the cemetery had been given a Preservation Achievement Award from the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia and a Stewardship Award by Preservation Pennsylvania. While no monies are associated with the awards, it is significant recognition. Regarding the Dresher Cemetery, Jerry reported the local Historical Society has gotten involved in discussions about the possible relocation of the cemetery due to an adjacent PennDOT road project.

Advanced Living Communities, which operates Schwenkfeld Manor and several other senior living apartment complexes, asked Executive Council to provide on-going funding for a new corporate chaplaincy position. We advised that we could not be the sole source of funding for this project and that we would like to see a detailed plan as to how this program would become self-sufficient in the future. Schwenkfelders elected by General Conference to Advanced Living’s Board are listed at the end of this report.

The annual Day of Remembrance was held on September 22, 2019, at Olivet, and the School of Christ was held on October 20, 2019 at the Central Church. We discussed the benefit of volunteer workforces and the projects that the churches are involved with such as Christian Endeavor Mission Works (Work Camp), the Philadelphia Project, Helping Hands and other volunteer efforts by the youth in the churches.

The $400,000 from the Perkiomen School settlement is currently invested in money market funds but is slated to be invested with T.D. Ameritrade in higher yielding mutual funds pending verification of our Employer Identification Number (EIN). The ad-hoc committee which recommended investing made a list of possible uses for a portion of these funds. In no particular order, some of those ideas were: reimbursement obligations, development of a website, exhibitions at the Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center (SLHC), the SLHC itself, creation of a rainy-day fund, donate to the Seminary fund, repair of cemetery grave markers, a van for the Missionary Church, or delay action at this time. Executive Council will continue to consider alternatives.

Executive Council did vote to donate $3,000 per year for five years for expansions at the Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center. Our pledge qualified for a matching gift by an anonymous donor.

The idea of a website gained some traction when Roger Heebner presented concepts for a possible Schwenkfelder website that would be separate and distinct from the SLHC and the individual church websites but would create links and connectivity to those websites. Creation of the website could provide a bigger footprint for Schwenkfelders in social media. There was discussion that such a website might duplicate information already on those other websites. The website proposal was placed on hold pending further discussion. Rev. Jenny Smith and Rev. Alfred Duncan worked on the framework for a website, and subsequently a survey of the Ministerium and Executive Council members was conducted. The ideas generated by the survey were forwarded to Ben Heebner with a request for proposal.

Dr. Drake Williams presented to Council an Agreement of Collaboration between the Dock Mennonite Academy and the General Conference of Schwenkfelder Churches that is now in effect from June 2019 to June 2021. Executive Council provided the Agreement to the various churches’ Board of Ministries, or their equivalent, for concurrence with regard to the speaking duty commitments made to Dock in the Agreement. The Agreement describes a proposed relationship between the two entities that identifies the following responsibilities:
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**General Conference will:**
- Support recruitment of Dock students from the Schwenkfelder churches by distributing literature and providing opportunities for Dock to present their school.
- Contribute $5000/year as long as a Schwenkfelder student attends Dock.
- Present one lecture per year on Mennonite/Schwenkfelder heritage at Dock.
- Offer two pastors per year as chapel speakers at Dock.
- Offer two teachers with doctoral qualifications to teach 3 hours of class per year in the areas of Bible, church history, ancient history or biblical languages at Dock.
- Offer one person from the Schwenkfelder Conference to serve on a Committee at Dock.

**Dock Mennonite Academy will:**
- Welcome Schwenkfelder students at the Congregational Partnership Plan rate.
- Provide literature about the Academy for distribution at the churches of Conference.
- Provide input on the speaker selection for the third bullet point above.
- Offer the Schwenkfelder churches one “free rental” per year of the auditorium, cafeteria or gymnasium at either campus and subject to availability.

**Before the coronavirus hit, the 2020 General Conference Dates were set for:**
- May 3 – Spring General Conference – SLHC
- June 7 – Salford Pilgrimage
- September 27 – Day of Remembrance – Central
- October 18 – School of Christ – Central

As of this writing we have not been able to reschedule these events because of the need for social distancing safety.

**MINISTERIUM**

The ministers’ pleasant chatter in the Anders Conference Room preceding the official start of the Ministerium’s meetings gave evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence. Each ministerium meeting, then, officially starts with prayer, a scripture reading and Pastor Duncan’s comments.

The ministerium had discussions about (and either made or contributed to final decisions on) matters such as:
- A proposal for connecting Dock Mennonite Academy and the General Conference of Schwenkfelder Churches
- Protocol for Accepting New Churches into the Schwenkfelder Church
- Advanced Living Chaplaincy position
- Shepherd’s Heart Church Funding (suggestions and recommendations were made to Executive Council)
- Defining Ministerial Standing in the Schwenkfelder Conference
- Procedures and Requirements for Candidates Seeking:
  - Ordination, Authorization for Ministry, and Licensure within The Schwenkfelder Church
- Wikipedia statements about the Schwenkfelder Church that needed to be amended to reflect current doctrinal position were amended and posted.
- Systematic Theology Classes (to be held at Central Schwenkfelder)
- Cathartic Discussions: Churches Struggle with Mental Health
- Policies/Concerns Relating to Covid19
- Formation of Schwenkfelder Church Statements:
  - Safe Worship Environments
  - Racism (the discussion is ongoing)
- Allocation/Investment of Windfall Funds (The Executive Council’s decisions were reported to the Ministerium by the Conference Minister)

In addition to that, there were repeated discussions about declining attendance at Schwenkfelder Church annual meetings. Eventually Covid19 and the need for social distancing led to a break in the Ministerium’s face to face gatherings and discussions about that matter and other concerns. However, we remained in communication via emails, and limited those emails to essential matters.
The year 2020 has been challenging, to say the least. However, Central Church has been up to the challenge and has continued to offer many programs in various forms—Zoom, YouTube, Facebook and the church’s website. Twitter has also been used to help us keep abreast of what has been happening with our members and the church.

Our children’s and youth programs have continued during these times. Children through 5th grade connect with our Director of Children’s Ministries, Sarah Morabito, via the church’s website, while Awana has continued on Zoom. Sarah has also communicated through her CSC Children’s Connection weekly. For 6th grade and up, the youth have been able to connect with Brian Neuenschwander, Director of Youth Ministries, through our YouTube channel and Facebook page. They have also been able to use Brian’s email to connect with him. They had an in-person youth gathering in August, utilizing the Anders Pavilion and incorporating all safety procedures. Virtual Vacation Bible School was held in August using Zoom.

A number of missionary speakers have been on board for these Zoom discussions. Zoom Sunday School has taken place on Sunday mornings. “Centrally Speaking” is the church’s podcast which presents issues of interest to our society. Tuesday prayer meetings have been ongoing on Zoom as have Wednesday evening “Central Talk.” Various Bible studies for men, young women and Thursday evening studies have also continued throughout this time.

Live church services have started, progressing from a few participants to more, using social distancing and wearing masks. There have been three in-person services each Sunday as well as live streaming on Facebook or on the Central Schwenkfelder church page. Services have also been available on YouTube. We have certainly expanded into the technological age, a good and beneficial thing.

OLIVET

In Spring 2020, Olivet-Schwenkfelder United Church of Christ continued its yearly practice of cooperative ecumenical Lent services with other local congregations. Midway through Lent, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a growing threat to our members and community. OSUCC proactively stopped meeting for in-person worship and closed its Lil Angels Preschool.

Two weeks before Easter, Rev. Leslie Mamas created “Holy Week Bags” which included at-home liturgies for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter morning, as well as palm leaves, candles, consecrated communion, and other meaningful worship items. Church volunteers delivered over 90 “Holy Week Bags” to members’ porches and doorsteps as an Easter gift from the church.

Throughout April, Rev. Mamas posted pastoral message videos and children’s’ book readings on the Olivet-Schwenkfelder UCC Facebook page. The Church Council and church Finance Team continued to work virtually, diligently managing the work of the church.

In the beginning of May, we inaugurated a new no-contact, drive-up “Blessing Box” in the church parking lot. This “Blessing Box” acts as a little free pantry, but also contains at-home worship resources, consecrated communion elements, and hymn CDs created by Tony Godorecci (OSUCC director of music ministries). Anyone is welcome to drive by and either take items as needed or donate...
I do not know just exactly how Nehemiah would have responded to a call – from the government, medical experts or general consensus amid a global pandemic – to suspend his ministry. I do know that his statement, which I borrowed from, characterizes his ministry as a “great project and ceaseless.” He evinces prayerfulness, discernment and decisions amid external (and later on internal) voices that were not attune to God's priority.

As for Schwenkfelder Mission Church (SMC), since our last ministry update, we have encountered, like nearly every other ministry that we are acquainted with, a stipulation or situation that either halted or hindered some aspect of its ministry. Unfortunately, our outreach ministry of food, clothing and literature distribution at Happy Hollow Recreation Center was stopped and supplanted by a City of Philadelphia meals program. We do not know if they will reverse their decision at a later date. Fortunately, our modus operandi for outreach not only involves ministry to the indigent and marginalized inside a facility in which they come to us. It also comprises outdoors and mobile ministry in which we go out and encounter the needy by God's providential blessings. It is this type of outreach that has received admonitions and advice to cease its accessibility. But being the great ministry project that it is, we have not abandoned the church beyond the walls accessibility that God has called us to maintain.

Like Nehemiah, we are carrying on a great and ceaseless ministry. Integral to our ministry of visibility and accessibility are prayerfulness, discernment, decisions and deeds. Since we last wrote to you, we have provided wedding services, interstate ministry and food along with some bleach to clean high traffic eating areas.

The impact of our outreach ministry is that through conversations and models that promote a Christian life style and moral code, two couples have asked us to officiate their weddings. Neither couple has made a profession of faith in Christ. One couple has no religious affiliation. The other professes allegiance to Islam but has never practiced or promoted it. Our impact and their solicitation would likely be non-existent if the ministry was co-joined in likeness to those of who whether intended or not in some form say, “Keep away; don’t come near me, for I am too sacred for you!” and of who, God says, “Such people are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps burning all day.(Is. 63)

Since neither couple would have been unequally yoked when married, I was disappointed that the non-religious couple lost their subsidized apartment (after living together in poverty and addiction for about 15 years – the groom-to-be is not a substance abuser) and began to live on the streets and for all practical purposes have vanished before being wed. The other couple was counselled and married… As an outreach ministry we find ourselves successfully modeling and stipulating that legal biblically based marriage is for all and should be honored by all.

SMC- as community related as it is - does not forego serving our own family members when they need us. A family member residing in Delaware, whose name it would not be prudent to mention, is capable of taking care of the financial needs of his family. However, due to the need for social distancing and the absolute dependence of his immobile wife and daughter on him, he knew that he could not risk even his regular health aides coming to his home so that he could go shopping. Well, when their food supply became critical and his anxiety was getting the best of him, he said that there were two people who could sit with his wife and daughter while he went shopping – my wife and I. We knew the problems that he was going to encounter. So, we did the bulk of the shopping for him at BJ’s. His subsequent trip was shortened, as was his anxiety. While it is true that a neighbor who is near is better than a family member who is far away, in this case (since we were able to) doing just as we had done for some of those in close proximity to us was best for him.

In the middle of March, right in the midst of COVID-19, we found ourselves in the world’s hardest hit area. New York City. Brooklyn! Months earlier, one of our senior members had gone to stay with one of her daughters. However, she got sick due to non- COVID-19 matters. She was hospitalized, and while hospitalized, it became clear that the possibility of her death

Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.” But they were scheming to harm me; so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?” Nehemiah 6 (NIV)
was increasing. Since she was a member of our congregation, her family (SMC members) had two requests. One was that I come and pray with her and discuss her spiritual state, which I did. This was before mandatory masks and social distancing requirements. But not before they were suggested. At the beginning of April, she passed away. The second request was that I return to the epicenter of the pandemic and preach her funeral. The funeral was scheduled for April 13, 2020. However,

**WE ARE CARRYING ON A GREAT MINISTRY; WHY SHOULD THE WORK STOP?**

has taken on theological, social and health concerns that I have to face for myself and her at high-risk family members. I hope to tell you what the decision and outcome was in the next Schwenfeldian.

As far as our local outreach goes, we have continued with the Vernon Park and vicinity ministry as well as feeding and distributing literature in the Happy Hollow-Wayne Ave. vicinity. There are a significant number of individuals and families that have left notes in my door or directly asked us about meals. We responded to those requests with bagged lunches and hot meals. Our desire to meet some of the gravest needs amidst COVID-19 required that we distribute bleach to residents who were not taking the need to sanitize the high traffic areas in their multi-family apartment buildings seriously enough. You cannot sanitize if you do not have something to clean surfaces with. No one turned down the bleach. Everyone said that they would use it. One mother whose daughter works with senior citizens got the virus and was, of course, home bound. She let us know about their need for some bleach and beverages. Well maybe not to others, but to them for sure, we were carrying on a great ministry project consisting of food, beverages and bleach – and why should we stop?

Other individuals in the neighborhood and some churches a few blocks away have been giving out food. That's unusual. But masks, hand sanitizers and other cleaning products have been hard to come by, but not impossible. Regardless of where we have been or the occasion, we didn't make it hard for anyone to receive a lifestyle, written or verbal gospel message. We made it hard for them not to. In March and April our continuing efforts even resulted in two visitors (social distancing adherents) coming to what was supposed to be a time of prayer for just my wife and I at the Aulenbach House (our worship site.)

We appreciate your prayers and support and acknowledge that just as Nehemiah was enabled by the blessings of God, favor of the king and cooperation of some willing associates, amid deterring voices, to continue a crucial ministry, we are enabled to engage in ministry-related “great projects and ceaselessness” by the overall prayers and provisions of the Schwenfelder Church.

**OLIVET continued**

items as able. On Wednesday, May 6th, OSUCC began offering online adult Bible Study classes and prayer meetings over the Zoom platform. The Bible Study theme is “God, the Great Physician,” and examines a different Biblical healing miracle each week.

During the month of July, we began posting full worship service videos every Sunday on both our Facebook page and our new YouTube channel. We couldn’t be more grateful to those that volunteer their time and talents to keep some semblance of continuity in our lives during this time of uncertainty. In addition to the printed worship materials and online worship videos, the church’s first “drive-in” parking lot service is scheduled for August 30th. The congregation looks forward to trying its new FM radio transmitter and worshipping together from the safety of our vehicles.

**PALM**

As with all church congregations, Palm needed to turn to technology to reach out to the members of the church family. Pastor Nick was able to share God’s message via a weekly service shared through Facebook and Palm’s website. To encourage connections and communication opportunities, the diaconate also reached out to the congregation by offering Zoom gatherings. In this way, members were able to visit and catch up with one another and continue the sense of community. In order to continue to assess community guidelines regarding COVID-19 and the ability to gather for worship, a committee was formed in order to keep the congregation updated and informed.
**MARRIAGES**

**BEATRICE – HENRY** – M. Samuel Beatrice to Tori Henry, June 20, 2020 at Providence Presbyterian Church, Quakertown, PA (Central)

**KRUPP – ALLEGREZZA** – Christopher Krupp to Lauren Allegrezza, July 3, 2020 in Line Lexington, PA (Central)

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**BIRTHS**

**DORAN** – Madison, daughter of Jared and Allie (McDonald) Doran, July 9, 2020. (Central)

**FEGLEY** – Emma Louise, daughter of Billy and Kasey (Schultz) Fegley, May 12, 2020. (Palm)

**HEDRICK** – Zoey Payton, daughter of Alex and Samantha (Jandzio) Hedrick, April 14, 2020. (Central)

**HELLER** – Conner James, son of Adam and Catherine Heller, April 20, 2020. (Olivet)

**MILETICH** – Lee James, Jr., son of Lee and Brandy Miletich, May 10, 2020. (Olivet)

**RIVAS** – Lucy Sue, daughter of Rick and Adrienne (Long) Rivas, June 15, 2020. (Palm)

**CORRECTION:**

**KIRCHHEIMER** – Madison Dawn, daughter of Dan and Lori Kirchheimer, February 5, 2020. (Olivet)

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**DEATHS**

**BEAN** – Matthew A., Sr., age 44, of Norristown, husband of Terriann Baker Hare, April 12, 2020. Services will be held later. (Central)

**BOLD** – John Evans, Jr., age 83, of Quakertown, formerly of Palm, husband of Evelyn (Phillips) Bold, April 26, 2020. Services were private. (Palm)

**BOURNE** – Virginia “Ginny” (Middleton), age 94, of Worcester, wife of William M. Bourne, May 20, 2020. Graveside services at Garden of Memories in Worcester were private. (Central)

**CORNER** – Margaret, age 89, of Lansdale, wife of the late William Corner, July 4, 2020. Services were private. (Central)

**FEGELY** – Edward A., age 95, of Macungie, husband of Leilani (Krisko) Fegely, May 13, 2020. Graveside services at Palm Schwenkfelder Cemetery were private. (Palm)

**HELMS** – John B., age 102, of Lansdale, husband of the late Florence (Frost) Helms, May 2, 2020. Graveside services at Garden of Memories in Worcester were private. (Central)

**KRIEBEL** – H. Glenn, age 91, of Lansdale, husband of the late Mildred (Smith) Kriebel, May 14, 2020. Graveside services at Garden of Memories in Worcester were held on May 21, 2020. (Central)

**LONG** – Donald C., age 84, of Fleetwood, husband of the late Jean (Babb) Long, July 7, 2020. Services July 13, 2020; interment at Palm Schwenkfelder Cemetery. (Palm)

**MOYER** – John Paul, age 77, of Gilbertsville, husband of Catherine (Zearfoss) Moyer, April 26, 2020. Services were private. (Palm)

**MUNDY** – Richard, age 88, of Gilbertsville, husband of Nancy (Brunner) Mundy, May 5, 2020. Services were private. (Palm)

**NYCE** – Raymond M., age 79, of Lower Providence, husband of Mary (Glatthorn) Nyce, May 8, 2020. Graveside services at Valley Forge Memorial Garden were held on May 13, 2020. (Olivet)

**SHENKLE** – George A., Jr, age 98, of Phoenixville, formerly of Skippack Township, husband of the late Dolores A. P. (Conver) Shenkle, April 9, 2020. Graveside services at Riverside Cemetery, Norristown, PA were private. (Central)

**SIMON** – Ralf H., age 62, of Lansdale, husband of Nancy (Corner) Simon, April 17, 2020. Services will be held later. (Central)

**TRUMBAUER** – Dorothy (Jenkins), age 94, of Lansdale, wife of the late Harold Trumbauer, July 26, 2020. Graveside services at Garden of Memories in Worcester were private. (Palm)

**YERGER** – Charles S., age 84, of Milford, NH, formerly of Hereford, April 8, 2020. Cremation with no services held. (Palm)

**YETTER** – Brian J., age 57, of Lake Elmo, MN, husband of Cindy Sobiech, March 10, 2020. Memorial service to be held later. (Central)

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Sharing these important life events with our Schwenkfelder family.
50 YEARS AGO (1970)
Central – A major achievement for Central was their implementation of a unified curriculum for Sunday School titled "The Christian Faith and Work Plan" to give unity and direction to the church’s educational ministry.

Lansdale – decided as a church to focus mainly on the needs of the church, their neighbor’s needs and the surrounding community needs. They wrote an inspirational booklet entitled “We Travel Together” to distribute to the local nursing homes.

Norristown – focused on meeting the needs of their changing community. A few of their programs were a month-long art festival, the "1, 2, 3 Club", and the Backyard Vacation Church School.

Philadelphia Church – Philadelphia formed their own Summer School which included reading, math, arts and crafts, field trips and activities for young people. The staff was made up of mostly older teens assisted by adult volunteers.

Palm – Rev. Martha Kriebel was given a surprise 10-year Recognition Service. Effort was made to increase attendance weekly at church. Slogans used for this effort were; “Don't send your children, bring them” and “Don't send your money, bring it!”

Rev. Levi Hoffman died on July 17, 1970, just before reaching his 95th birthday (Oct. 9, 1875). He served as Pastor in the Middle District of the Schwenkfelder Conference for over 50 years. He was instrumental in beginning the Lansdale Schwenkfelder Church. He served as pastor to both the Worcester and Towamencin Schwenkfelder congregations and was the minister in charge at the dedication of the Schwenkfelder Church in 1951. He loved to compose poetry and was the author of books – one being his autobiography – A Carpenter’s Son.

25 YEARS AGO (1995)
Norristown – During the summer, the Norristown church had services at 9:30 in the morning and a Sunday evening service at 7:30. Rally Day was held with special services and then they participated in a continental breakfast. Food was collected for Interfaith and the women of the church sold Bergins candy and hoagies to raise some money.

Philadelphia – Christian Summer Camp was held with 22 campers involved and 9 staff members. The whole church worked together to lead their community in a clean-up of bulk trash. Their efforts were rewarded by the Mayor and City Council of Philadelphia. Prayers were answered when Rev. Edward Winslow was installed as Pastor of First Church.

Palm – The Men of Palm held a Chicken BBQ and baked goods were supplied by the women of the church. A service was held at the Washington Meetinghouse with music provided by the Regal Brass Group. Vacation Bible School was a great success with 50 students and 17 helpers attending. A matchstick model of the Palm Church was put on display at Palm church.

Central – More than 150 children attended Vacation Bible School program “Awesome Adventures” with lessons, arts and crafts, and music. Church members submitted information to create a “yellow pages” for members with a marketable skill or trade. Bonnie Rae joined the staff as the Youth Program Coordinator. The musical duo of George Wesner and Fred Davis returned to entertain members.

Lansdale – Rev. Luz was busy working with the Children’s Choir. A new organist, Mr. Richard Schmidt, was hired. He also worked with the adult choir. The women of the church were busy providing items for the Woman’s Prison Ministry and donating items for the local nursing homes. A committee was formed to create a new mission statement for the church.

10 YEARS AGO (2010)
Central – The Awana program at Central kept families focused toward God throughout the week. K-5 children met to participate in Bible-derived programming. Jr. and Sr. high school students meet in groups now called Wired and Coke. A Night of Music Concert was presented. Ten church members attended the Creation Music Festival in Mt. Union, PA. For the National Day of Prayer, activities included indoor prayer service, breakfast and music by the band 4Giv’N. Patriotic Sunday was held at the end of May with many enjoying the music that honored the military members of our congregation. VBS was again a success with 82 children attending. On July 4, Dr. Drake Williams and family returned and spoke during the Sunday School hour about their time as missionaries. Work campers left for West Virginia. Approximately 60 adults and youth attended the week-long mission trip.

Olivet – Integrity of Creation Sunday was held and the narthex was turned into an art and photography gallery. Both young and not so young women of the church enjoyed a delicious covered-dish dinner during the Mother-Daughter banquet. Olivet collected many hygiene items for the Church World Service. Sara Posen was in charge of the zep sale and the knitters were busy making helmet liners for the Armed Forces. Pastor Leslie visited the East Norriton Township grounds for Once Upon a Time in Montgomery County, where people were able to learn about our Schwenkfelder history.

Palm – welcomed a new church administrator - Leon Edelman. In June, 10 church members traveled to Mississippi to help with disaster relief from Hurricane Katrina. The Vacation Bible School was a great success! Children were turned into heroes and they learned about unlikely heroes in the Bible. They discovered that with God’s power at work, they can make a difference and be heroes themselves.
Come visit the Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center—whether for the first time or as a return to an old friend. After two years of construction and the spring closure for COVID-19, we are now open for touring exhibits and, by appointment, research in the library and archives. Check out the website—schwenkfelder.com—for our hours as they may change depending upon public health guidelines. You also will find a calendar of programs for children and adults—offered both in-person for small groups and virtually.

A special reason to visit, beginning in November, is to enjoy new exhibit galleries and a reconstructed ca. 1826 barn. Made possible by many generous donors, you can experience what it was like to be in a Pennsylvania German bank barn, see the tools and products of farm production, and learn about entrepreneurial Schwenkfelders that created businesses to improve the farm and home life of all in the 1800 and early 1900s.

We look forward to welcoming you!

Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center
105 Seminary Street, Pennsburg PA 18073
215-679-3103 • schwenkfelder.com