

**THE MENNONITE-POLISH FRIENDSHIP
ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER
December 2009**

Dear Members and Friends,

It is indeed a pleasure to see that the “recovery of the Mennonite story in Poland” continues, even though our association did not sponsor a tour during 2009. One is on the horizon, however, for 2010 (please see below). Let me share with you some activities that have enriched Mennonite awareness in Poland during the past year.

I. The Year in Perspective

1. Respect paid to Mennonite cemeteries in Poland

Bolek Klein, our long-time friend and Polish leader in Nowy Dwór reported that on November 1, a day of special remembrance in Poland, candles were lit in all Mennonite cemeteries in the region. Bolek and his associates have been doing this for a number of years.

2. High school studies Mennonite story

During the past year the high school in Elbląg sponsored student research and writing on facets of Mennonite life. The MPFA provided some funds for translating prize-winning essays into English.

3. Possible restoration of former Wymysle Mennonite Church

Krzysztof Jadczyk, mayor of Gąbin and nearby villages, including Wymysle, has established a committee to research the possibility of restoring the church, possibly with funds from the European Union. The building would become a Mennonite museum for the region.

4. Return of Danzig Mennonite Church documents

Some of you are aware that following World War II, Mennonites and Brethren in North America, through organizations such as MCC and UNRRA, provided substantial help to assist in rebuilding selected areas of Poland. One group, while visiting the devastated Mennonite church in Gdańsk, found some important church documents, including church records of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths from 1667-1807. These records were taken to America and preserved in Bethel College. After prolonged negotiations, these records were returned to Germany; during a solemn ceremony in the Mennoheim in Berlin on June 27, 2009, these historic documents were transferred, and now are housed in the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle Weierhof. Our compliments to respective leaders in Germany and United States for this transfer of treasured historical documents.

II. On the Horizon

1. Mennonite Historical Study Tour of Poland

Under the sponsorship of the California Mennonite Historical Society there will again be an opportunity for interested persons to visit places of historic interest in today's Poland. As in previous tours, emphasis is placed on former Mennonite communities in the Vistula Delta, although major centers such as Warsaw, Torun, Malbork (Marienburg) and Elbing are also included. An optional visit to Krakow is also available. This year's tour leader will be the well-known genealogist and historian Alan Peters; Beverly Reimer is coordinator. Tour brochures and further details are available from lnptrs@comcast.net or bvreimer@yahoo.com Dates for the tour are June 12-20, 2010.

2. Dedication of Marker at Former Mennonite church in Elblag

On June 26, 2010, a historic marker will be unveiled at the first Mennonite church in Danzig. This structure, now a business and apartment complex, served the congregation from 1590-1900; in the latter year, a new church building was dedicated. The inscription will be in four languages; the English version reads: "Church of the Mennonite congregation in Elbing 1590-1900."

3. Presentation of High School Students' Mennonite Research

Also on June 26, students in the "Gymnasium" in Elblag will present papers on their research on a variety of Mennonite-related topics.

The Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association, founded in 1988, is open to all who share the association's goals. Its Advisory Board has members from Poland, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada and United States. Checks, designated for the MPFA, should be made payable to, and sent to the following agencies:

In Canada:
Mennonite Heritage Centre
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

In the United States:
Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies
1717 S. Chestnut Ave.
Fresno, CA 93702

If you wish, you may check, detach and return:

___ Annual dues (\$20.00)

___ Support for () cemetery maintenance
() school projects
() other (please designate)

Designated funds are distributed according to expressed wishes. Other fund disbursements are made by the executive committee.

For the MPFA:
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Previous reports, including our 15th anniversary booklet, are available at calmenno.org/mpfa