

Devotions for SHMCA Sunday March 11, 2007

Parts of my childhood years were spent on the Krehbiel family farm, which was located along the Turkey Creek. Parallel to the creek up north through the pasture was a path cut years earlier by herds of cows. Even many years later, that path was quite visible. Many summer afternoons were spent walking that path. There was a sense of security in following the path because it led to green pastures and it led home.

I am reminded of that path in the reading of one of my favorite verses in Scripture; Jeremiah 6:16. "Thus says the Lord, Stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies, and walk in it, and find rest for your souls." This verse serves to remind me of the importance of seeking guidance before choosing any path I might take. It suggests that there are multiple paths, but there is an old path, tried and true, where the good way lies, and that leads home. It also suggests that the ancient paths may not be clear, and I need to ask.

All the moments of our lives are the juncture of past and future, and regardless of our age, it is important that we stand at the crossroads where we are and look. We cannot go back and start over, and we do not just plunge ahead without asking for the right path. Rather, we stand at the crossroads and look. Perhaps looking for the ancient paths means asking those who went before what the good paths were. Even those who are long gone from our midst. What do they say to us about where the good way lies? And we ask for the ancient paths from the same God who directed the paths of our forefathers. This does not mean we can assume that all the paths they chose were the right paths, but in the asking for the right paths of the God who knows the way, we stand a much better chance of walking where the good way lies.

Perhaps part of standing at the crossroads is re-imagining the past; finding as a way of understanding who we are and from where we have come, which were the good ways that were taken then. Where does the good way lie that we need to take now that is a continuation of the ancient paths?

In examining the recorded history of our Anabaptist forefathers we get a clearer understanding of the ancient path where the good way lies as they saw and understood and followed it. We carry in our hearts the words that have impacted our lives. We choose then the ancient paths, which led to the good way and we learn

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from the paths that led away from home. Our path as Swiss Anabaptist Mennonites has been to follow Christ, a path that one of our forebears, Menno Simons also took, so we understand these words of his. And I quote, "For true evangelical faith is of such a nature that it cannot lie dormant, but manifests itself in all righteousness and works of love; it dies unto the flesh and blood; it destroys all forbidden lusts and desires; it seeks and serves and fears God; it clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; it comforts the sorrowful; it shelters the destitute; it aids and consoles the sad; it returns good for evil; it serves those that harm it; it prays for those that persecute it; teaches, admonishes, and reproveth with the Word of the Lord; it seeks that which is lost; it binds up that which is wounded; it heals that which is diseased and it saves that which is sound; it has become all things to all men." These are the words of the ancient path that we too have tried to follow. They are a great influence for our path, yet we each as individuals and together as community need to choose for ourselves.

Our Swiss Anabaptist forebears chose paths that impact our lives and it is important for us to continue to stand at the crossroads, ask for the ancient paths and walk in it, so that those who follow us will know where the good way lies.

Prayer: Dear God of history, You have called us as Your people, as You called the Israelites. The paths our ancestors chose have influenced us, and we always stand at the crossroads to choose the paths of our futures. We pray to You, Dear God, for direction to the ancient paths where the good way lies, and that leads to home where there is rest for our souls. Guide by Your Holy Spirit the work done here today. Bless those who have gathered here because they care about following You as a people. Grant courage to continue the journey our forefathers began with new faith and vision. Bless this meeting with Your presence and guidance. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.