



Discover Anabaptism in Switzerland

A guide to discover places and people that formed the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement in Switzerland from the early beginnings until today.

Markus Rediger / Erwin R othlisberger

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As every effort is made to provide accurate information in this publication, readers are invited to submit their added corrections and/or questions continuously to m.rediger@bluewin.ch or info@menno.ch.

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This guide is an invitation to discover the history of the Anabaptist Movement and the communities that formed the Anabaptists (current day Mennonites) from the early beginnings until today.

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Introduction

This booklet contains a collection of condensed information about the origin of the Anabaptist Movement and can be used as a guide to the respective historical sites. May it be of assistance to all those who are interested in learning more about the Anabaptists, their history and their current situation.

In our present time there is a great hunger for truth and freedom. Issues that were significant in the time of the Reformation and during the time of the first Anabaptists are just as relevant today. This became evident during the year of the Anabaptists in 2007 in the Emmental, the European Mennonite Regional Conference in 2012 in Sumiswald, and the celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. The places mentioned in this booklet are an invitation to rediscover the message of the Bible in the context of the Anabaptists.

The history of the Anabaptists is extensive. Present day research continues to reveal new places and people who were part of the Anabaptist Movement. Former tour guides in German on the history of the Anabaptist Movement are out of print. The detailed book which was to be published by the Association of Swiss Anabaptist History is not available. Therefore, we are happy to offer this booklet to give the public some basic information. It is clearly incomplete, and additional information will be added in the next edition. Nevertheless, it provides impulses for personal investigation.

A special word of thanks goes to the following people, who have generously made resources available, which were either used one to one or were originally contributed for the German publication: Walter Frei, Hanspeter Jecker, David Rediger and Peter H. Uhlmann (see foot-notes and references on page 73. We thank Beat Moser and Dora Matzinger who translated the first edition of “Discover Anabaptism in Switzerland”. They dropped in at short notice to help make the booklet available for the year of the Anabaptists in 2007. We also thank our proof readers John Engle, David Rempel Smucker, Paul Zehr, Don & Joanne Siegrist, Art Funkhouser, Ralph Wischnewski and David Habegger.

Thank you for your interest. We wish you much joy and valuable encounters as you explore the roots of the Anabaptist Movement in Switzerland.

Markus Rediger and Erwin Röthlisberger

Bern, Switzerland

March 2007 and November 2017

From The Year of the Anabaptist Movement in 2007 to Renewal 2027

The guiding statement of The Year of the Anabaptists (2007) was: The truth shall be proclaimed. It was a year of encounters in the region of the Emmental and beyond. At that time the reason for conducting the Year of the Anabaptist Movement was not a historical jubilee like 2027 but the conviction that it was time to think about the Anabaptist Movement in depth. More than 200 events showed that the Anabaptists of the Emmental had suffered persecution and expulsion and had been forced to migrate to different parts of the world. The descendants of the dispersed Anabaptists have formed an international network, and the Emmental, their place of origin, has remained very important to this day. In view of this fact, we are compiling trustworthy sources of information with lists of places worth visiting, so that the region of the Emmental may again welcome the people interested in the Anabaptist Movement.

Every six years the European Mennonite Regional Conference (MERK) takes place in a different European country. It provides mutual inspiration and encouragement and serves as a place where ideas and experiences can be exchanged. In 2012 this Conference took place in Sumiswald, Emmental, for the very first time in history. Some 1200 people of all generations attended the conference in the heart of the Emmental region, where Anabaptists have had a long and perseverant history. Participants from some 36 countries visited MERK 2012 and the Emmental, the place

of their ancestors, before attending the gathering of the Mennonite World Conference General Council in St. Chrischona, near Basel. The theme of this significant gathering was “Hands Reaching Across Borders”. Following the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, MERK 2012 aimed to take a stand against segregation and exclusion in their various forms, opposing the destructive mainstream in society.

In 2017 Swiss Mennonites joined Protestant churches in commemorating 500 years of Reformation. Further events are planned from 2017 to 2027 under the theme “Renewal 2027” to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist Movement. “Transformed by the Word: Reading the Bible from Anabaptist Perspectives” was the opening event in Augsburg, Germany. Mennonites from all corners of the earth met and had fellowship on this historical site. 500 years after Luther’s famous appeal to sola scriptura launching the Reformation, the Anabaptist-Mennonite gathering examined the significance of Scripture in the past – and how Scripture continues to be relevant in the global community today.

Other gatherings will be held in 2018 Kisumu, Kenya and in 2021 in Indonesia. The gatherings will examine how Anabaptist-Mennonites around the world have understood the Holy Spirit in the past, and how the Holy Spirit animates the global community today. The 10 year-period will culminate at MWC Assembly 18 in 2027.

Voices of Mennonites on Anabaptism

Elisabeth Kunjam, India:

“Why am I an Anabaptist? While I live and worship in an interdenominational setting, I love the fact that Anabaptism challenges me to be a radical follower of Jesus Christ: to serve, not to be served; to seek reconciliation, not retaliation; to love; and to witness.

Richard Showalter, USA:

“I am an Anabaptist because those who led me to Jesus and disciplined me were Anabaptists and I am convinced that Anabaptism is essentially a faithful expression of New Testament Christianity. In short, Peter, Paul, and Lydia were ‘Anabaptists’ of the first century.”

Adi Walujo, Indonesia:

“I’m an Anabaptist because it’s the way as a Jesus follower. In my understanding Anabaptists live as Jesus lived.”

Francisca Ibanda, Democratic Republic of Congo:

“I am an Anabaptist because I was touched by their Bible teachings and their doctrinal principles.”

Marc Pasqués, Spain / Australia:

“I’m an Anabaptist because it is a church committed to peacemaking, love and dialogue. And also because it is a church proud of its history, but that doesn’t close itself with traditions because of its radical nature.

Danisa Ndlovu, Zimbabwe:

“I am an Anabaptist because Scripture is foundational for my faith and conduct. Christ was and is the model for my spiritual journey in this life.”



*Year of the Anabaptist Movement 2007
The truth shall be proclaimed*

Concepts

Anabaptists

The term Anabaptist is used for the movements that began in the 16th century Reformation. Some groups of people desired to have a church made up of persons who were committed to following Jesus Christ above all other commitments. This movement has also been called the Radical Reformation to identify it as a specific movement among other Reformation traditions. A distinctive and visible characteristic of this movement was the practice of “believers baptism” meaning baptism upon confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Their belief led to the rejection of infant baptism as practiced by the Roman Catholic Church and by subsequent church groups, such as the Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican churches. Today the term Anabaptist refers to descendants of the early Anabaptists, such as Mennonites, Amish, Hutterites, sometimes Baptists and the Apostolic Christian Church. The latter group is known in Switzerland as Neutäufer or Evangelische Täufergemeinden (ETG).

In the German speaking part of Canton Bern, the Greek and Latin term Anabaptist and its German equivalent “Wiedertäufer” is no longer used. It has been replaced by the name Mennonite. This shift in names was done with some reluctance, as the Swiss do not see themselves as descendants of the Dutch Anabaptist Movement, whose main leader was Menno Simons. Furthermore, the groups in North America and in some parts of Europe that use the name Mennonite are seen by some as

representatives of a common ethnic group who have compromised their forebearers’ radical call to discipleship.

The name Mennonite has become the collective name used by both older ethnic groups as well as by more recent members in many countries. At the same time, the term Anabaptist is used to refer to the original radical orientation of the Anabaptist Movement. It is a way of life that still challenges Mennonites and calls them to be committed to the way of life demonstrated and taught by Jesus.

Wiedertäufer / Re-baptisers

The Greek and Latin word Anabaptist, which is Wiedertäufer in German and Rebaptiser in English, was often used in a disparaging manner in reference to several different groups within the Anabaptist Movement. In the early part of the 16th century, the term referred to those who were convinced that infant baptism had not been the practice of the early Christian Church, and who practiced the believer’s baptism. Baptism, for them, was a sign of their desire and commitment to be earnest followers of Jesus Christ. Considering their baptism as infants invalid, the first members of the movement were indeed re-baptized.

Both the Roman Catholic Church and the newly established Reformed Church looked upon these Anabaptist groups as dissidents who were weakening and undermining the true church, which had developed over the centuries since

its inception. Thus, they took strong action to halt the growth of these new offshoots. The Lutheran Church within its Augsburg creed referred to them as the “damned Anabaptists.”

Historians did not limit the word “Anabaptist” to the peaceful followers of Christ. Thomas Müntzer, a dynamic speaker who advocated the violent overthrow of government and who was involved in the widespread Peasants War of 1525, was mistakenly considered one of the founders of the Anabaptist Movement. In 1534 Münster, the capitol of Westphalia, Germany, became a haven for various reformist elements who espoused the use of the sword to establish the kingdom of God. Their rebellion was defeated and the leaders put to death. Opponents of the Anabaptists as well as contemporary writers and novelists have found the stories about the leaders and the events of those years a fertile field. The intention of the early writers was to discredit the Anabaptist Movement as rebellious, fanatical and pathological, and a danger to the State.

Due to continuing research and writing, the history of the Anabaptist Movement has become clearer and has gained new respect. More recently, in both the French and English language the term Anabaptist has a positive connotation.

Mennonites

The name Mennonite is derived from a profiled leader of the Dutch Anabaptists, Menno Simons. He was able to avoid capture by the governmental authorities, and through his widespread ministry and

many writings, his followers were identified with his name. For a time, it was a protective pseudonym, since being identified as an Anabaptist resulted in the death penalty throughout Europe in the 1520s.

The name Mennonite also helped to have an identity distinct from other groups, such as those at Münster. Menno developed a large following not only in the Netherlands but also in North Germany where he settled at Oldesloe in the province of Holstein in the summer of 1554. Here he wrote and printed several influential books. Communities associated with his name were established on an evangelical pacifist foundation that produced a strong and growing following in many countries of the world.

Thirteen Swiss Anabaptist ministers in Alsace, France signed the Dutch Dordrecht Confession of faith on February 4, 1660. In 1671, when about 700 people were expelled from Switzerland into Germany, the Dutch Mennonites provided substantial financial assistance and intervened diplomatically on behalf of the refugees. These activities brought the two groups closer together so that the descendants of the refugees eventually adopted the name Mennonite.

The Mennonites together with the Society of Friends (Quakers), which originated in the 17th century in England, and the Church of the Brethren, which emerged in the 18th century in Germany, have become known as the three Historic Peace Churches.

Alttäufer (Old Anabaptists)

At the beginning of the Anabaptist Movement in Switzerland the Reformed Church leaders referred to those who were adherents as Täufer, that is “Baptizers”. Reformed pastors frequently used that term in reference to them in the church records. The name Alttäufer was applied to the group continuing the previous practice of baptism by sprinkling after a split in 1835. Several Täufer had agreed to be re-baptized by immersion because they were told that it was the Biblical form. At the present time the name Alttäufer is used primarily in the Emmental where both groups have continued up to the present time. The name Alttäufer or Anabaptist is also used by the Swiss Mennonite Conference and by some French speaking congregations.

Neutäufer (New Anabaptists)

Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich, a Reformed Church minister with evangelistic fervor, was re-baptized by missionaries from London in 1832 following his dismissal by his church the previous year. He made missionary trips in Switzerland on his own, in which he emphasized baptism upon confession of faith, as did the initial Anabaptist Movement. Some members of the Langnau Anabaptist congregation appreciated his evangelical emphasis and began to hold separate meetings. This resulted in a schism in which his followers became known as Neutäufer (New Baptists). Those who did not accept him became known as the Alttäufer (Old Baptists). Both groups have much in common, for instance in their refusal to participate in military service.

The Neutäufer took on the name “Evangelische Täufergemeinden” (ETG), which is the “Evangelical Baptists Congregation”. Those who came to the United States took on the name “Apostolic Christian Church”. Others in Hungary call themselves “Nazarene” or “Disciples of Christ”.

The tensions that used to exist between the two groups in Switzerland have diminished and have been transformed into a spirit of cooperative partnership.

Baptists

The Baptist Church originated in England during the latter part of the 16th century under the influence of Anabaptists in the Netherlands. Two groups that had formed fled to Amsterdam in 1608 and had significant contact with the Anabaptists there.

One group united with the Mennonites while the other, led by John Smyth, returned to England and formed the first Baptist congregation. After two centuries of growth, mainly in the Anglo-Saxon world, the Baptists grew rapidly during the 19th century Revival Movement. The Baptist Church spread from England to North America and also onto the European continent. In German speaking countries the main pioneer was Gerhard Oncken.

Because of their distinctive beliefs, the Baptists and Mennonites have remained separate. The Baptists hold that government is a divine institution and that Christians are permitted to take part in it. Thus they are also willing to swear the oath of allegiance and participate in warfare.

Mennonite churches today

The Mennonite churches in Switzerland are Christian communities with roots dating back to the Anabaptists of the 16th century. These biblically based congregations with unique distinctives now see themselves as members of the world-wide Christian Church. Currently there are fourteen congregations located in the Jura (Cantons of Neuchatel, Jura and Bern), the Emmental and in the Basel area. Together they form the Swiss Mennonite Conference (Konferenz der Mennoniten der Schweiz) with some 2,500 members.

This church tradition was born during a period of history that did not tolerate

change. The result was persecution during three centuries, with harassment, condemnations and expulsion. This painful heritage has been recorded and processed, and acts of reconciliation have taken place at various times and places over a period of several decades. The spirit of conflict and tension of the past has been resolved to the extent that both the persecutors and the persecuted have been able to move from conflict to tolerance and to mutual respect. Today, this new attitude is enabling them to live together peacefully. Several Reformed and Mennonite communities are engaged in cooperative efforts.



A young Mennonite (in traditional garb) at the Bluturm (blood-tower) in Bern, Switzerland.

A Conference to Support Churches

The Swiss Mennonite Conference through its program committees is seeking to embody the New Testament model. Living together as a Christian family of faith, there are programs for all age groups. It engages in mission activities that are designed to bring peaceful solutions to places of conflict, both in Switzerland and in other countries.

The Conference is making resources available to the churches in the area of counseling and care. In addition, the Conference represents its churches in various federations and associations.

The individual congregations are autonomous, setting their own agenda and developing priorities according to their needs and circumstances. They appoint their leadership (male and female). Most of the leadership roles are unpaid positions while some are either full time or part-time paid positions. All church members are encouraged to use their gifts to support the church and further the kingdom of God.

The World Wide Church

Due to the migration of many Mennonites from Europe to North and South America in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as subsequent missionary activities, Mennonite Churches can be found on all continents. These are now united in the Mennonite World Conference which celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2015.

Mennonite World Conference is a communion (Koinonia) of Anabaptist-related

churches linked to one another in a worldwide community of faith for fellowship, worship, service, and witness.

Self-understanding

The foundation of faith of the Anabaptists-Mennonites refers to the Apostle Paul's confession: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1Cor. 3:11). Their main concern is to live as disciples of Jesus. Anyone who confesses the triune God and Christ's work of salvation can ask to be baptized as a sign of his or her faith. Baptism may be by immersion or by sprinkling.

The Church celebrates the Lord's Supper as a symbol of fellowship in Christ and in remembrance of Jesus Christ and his redemptive work.

Through faith and guidance by the Holy Spirit, new dimensions of insight emerge, which bear fruit in one's daily life. For instance, peace and social witness and hospitality are important aspects.

The Mennonites in Figures

Switzerland

13 congregations with
2,500 members

Europe

About 400 congregations in
15 countries with about
52,000 members

Worldwide

On all continents, in 75 countries
with about 1.5 million members

Map of Switzerland



Directory of Mennonite Churches in Switzerland

Church Services are usually held on Sundays at 10:00 a.m., in the Emmental at 9:30 a.m. Further information can be obtained on the internet at www.menno.ch

- Bern** Established: 1959. Language: German. Worship Services, please check the website: www.mennoniten-bern.ch
- Brügg (near Biel)** Established: 1966. Language: German. Worship Services held: Poststrasse 3, 2550 Brügg www.bruegg-menno.ch
- Emmental** Established: before 1527. Language: German. The Meeting House of the Mennonites is adjacent to the official town cemetery, which is situated beside the stream “Frittenbach”, at Kehrstrasse 12, 3550 Langnau. Further places of worship are in Bowil and Bomatt, Zollbrück. www.emmental.menno.ch
- Bowil** Aebnit, 3533 Bowil
- Bomatt** Langnaustrasse 65, 3436 Zollbrück
- Vallon de St-Imier in Cormoret** Established: 1983. Language: French. The village is situated between Courtelary and Saint-Imier. The place of worship can be found in a former Coop building on the main road. Rue Principal 13, 2612 Cormoret. www.eemvs.ch
- Les Bulles** This chapel is situated near La Chaux-de-Fonds. At the entrance of the town go in the direction of Biaufond/Hospital. Turn right after 2 km. 200 m further on, there is a farmhouse on the left with a chapel. It was established in 1894. The



The first Meeting Place of the Mennonite Church in Bern after 431 years (in 1959).



The Chapel of the Evangelical Mennonite Church in the valley of Delémont at Bassecourt.

services are held in French. The place of worship is called Chapelle des Bulles, 2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds.

www.mennobulles.blogspot.ch

La Chaux-d'Abel

Between Les Breuleux and La Ferrière is a brown road sign on the north side of the main road pointing to "Chapelle". Established: 1968. Language: German/French. Place of worship: Chapelle La Chaux-d'Abel, 2333 La Chaux-d'Abel

www.chaux-dabel.ch

Sonnenberg

The Sonnenberg Church has 4 different places of worship: Established in about 1720. Language: German/French.

www.menno-sonnenberg.ch

Rue des Prés 21, 2720 Tramelan:

The place of worship in Tramelan is in a small former factory.

Les Mottes, 2877 Le Bémont:

In Tramelan drive towards Saignelégier. After about 2 km beyond the crossroads drive in the direction of Les Reussilles. Turn right at the sign "Restaurant des Voyageurs Le Bois – Derrière". The chapel is situated 2.3 km from there, on the left-hand side.

Jeanguisboden, 2720 Tramelan:

From Sonceboz to Corgémont turn right when you get to the Restaurant de l'Etoile, continue 2.75 km and turn right again towards Le Jeangui.

Fürstenberg, 2723 Mont-Tramelan:

Head west out of Tramelan in the direction of Les Breuleux. You will find the Assembly Hall in the farmhouse at the top of the hill south of the road.



Logo of the Swiss Mennonite Conference



The Chapel in La Chaux-d'Abel between Les Breuleux and La Ferrière.

Tavannes

Established in 1989. Language: French.
Worship Services, check the website: www.eemt.ch

Kleintal / Petit-Val

Established: 1892. Language: German/French. The Congregation of Kleintal has three meeting places: Moron, Moutier and Perceux.

Moron, 2712 Le Fuet:

Travelling from Bellelay towards Tavannes, follow the Moron road sign at the cemetery. After 1 km, you will arrive at the hamlet Moron.

Moutier, Rue Neuve, 2740 Moutier.

Perceux, 2748 Les Ecorcheresses:

You will find the hamlet Les Ecorcheresses between Moutier and Sonceboz. From Moutier turn right in the hamlet, follow the road up the hill and after 2,3 km along the flat stretch of road, you will come to the former school house which is used as our meeting place.

Vallée de Delémont in Bassecourt Established in 1960/1976. Language: French. The meeting place of the Evangelical Church of the Mennonites in the Valley of Delémont is on the northern side of the main road at Fenatte 2, in 2854 Bassecourt. The room was dedicated in 1976. There is an impressive stained glass window by Marguerite Gerber that is worth seeing.



*The Mennonite Church Basel-Holee
in the city of Basel.*



*The Mennonite Church Schänzli in Muttensz.
Founded in 1850 with about 30 members.*

Courgenay

Established: about 1890 /1939. Language: French. In order to reach the chapel, go as far as the village church, turn left and keep going until you reach the south-west exit of the village. The chapel is located in Le Borbet, 2950 Courgenay.

www.menno-courgenay.ch

Basel-Holee

Established in the 1770s. The first chapel was built in 1847. Language: German/French. The congregation of Basel Holee is a member of both the Swiss and French Mennonite Conferences. The Meeting Hall is situated at the Holeestrasse 141, 4054 Basel.

www.mennoniten-basel.ch

Schänzli, MuttENZ

The chapel was built in 1977. The church was established around 1790. Language: German. The Meeting Place: St. Jakobsstrasse 132, 4132 MuttENZ.

www.menno-schaenzli.ch



Läuferbrunnen in the city of Bern. The legend tells us that when Haslibacher was beheaded in 1571, red water flowed out of this fountain.

The Evangelical Anabaptist Congregations

Evangelische Täufergemeinden, ETG (Neutäufer)

Where they came from

In the 19th century there was a spiritual awakening in some parts of the country which resulted in a revival. Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich, a Reformed Church pastor, was one of the revival preachers and one of the pastor-administrators in Leutwil, Canton Aargau. Because of his revival preaching, the Reformed Church dismissed him in 1831. He successfully continued preaching his view of the Christian faith on his own, which resulted in the establishment of a new Free Church under his leadership.

In his head and heart, he developed views about Christianity and the Christian church that were very similar to those of the Anabaptists. He taught that people should be called to repentance and to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Whoever believed and had the desire to be baptized, was baptized. The congregations he established consisted of people who believed and were baptized, independent of the State.

Fröhlich came to Langnau in the Emmental to hold meetings. Some of the Anabaptists heard him and liked what they heard. So he was invited to speak at one of their meetings. Two of the Anabaptist ministers appreciated what they heard with one exception. In his sermons Fröhlich had not mentioned non-retaliation to violence and a loving response to enemies. When this issue was explained to him from the Bible, he agreed to make that a part of his message in the future. In spite of this change

in his message, half of the congregation did not appreciate his evangelical fervor emphasising the need to be converted. So they no longer met with him. After Fröhlich left, those who accepted his message began to meet secretly and observed communion together. Four ministers from the Jura made an effort to reconcile the splitting congregation but were unsuccessful.

The two groups finally separated in 1835 when George Steiger, an emissary of Fröhlich, arrived and announced that unless the Christians were baptized by immersion they were still spiritually dead. Everyone who wanted to follow this new teaching was re-baptized, including the two ministers. This newly formed congregation began meeting at Giebel, near Bärau (Emmental). They called themselves “Neutäufer” (New Anabaptists) while the rest of the Anabaptists became known as “Alttäufer” (Old Anabaptists). The two separate congregations in Langnau have much in common, and today there is a spirit of cooperative partnership.

The Evangelische Täufergemeinden (ETG) founded by Fröhlich became a network of churches in Switzerland, the Alsace, and Germany. Subsequently new congregations were also formed in Eastern Europe and North America.

Instead of One – Two Movements

The new congregation (Neutäufer) was not free of inner tension. The separation experience and new emphasis developed

into a legalism that created more distance to other congregations and denominations. In addition, there were other internal conflicts that led to another division within the Langnau congregation shortly after 1900. Both groups retained the name “Evangelische Täufergemeinde”. However, one became a conservative, separatist group with strict rules, and the other a more open evangelical Free Church within the Evangelical Alliance and the Federation of Evangelical Free Churches.

The Federation of the ETG

20 local congregations with about 2,000 members have been part of the Federation of Evangelical Anabaptist Churches in Switzerland since 1984 (www.etg.ch). This Federation (ETG) supports, motivates and coordinates the evangelistic and service activities of the congregations within their communities and world-wide. The Evangelical Anabaptists consider themselves a part of the historic Anabaptist Movement.

The ETG Churches today

The ETG congregations are independent in their organization so are free to participate in quite different activities. Also, there is very little uniformity in their theological outlook and they vary in their spiritual expression. The leaders of the ETG have described their mission in the following manner:

We are united in our faith for we believe that God reveals himself to humankind and gives answers to questions of faith and practice.

We want to be or to become churches ...
 ... with overlapping generational groups;
 ... in which love, acceptance and forgiveness are practised according to the model of Jesus;
 ... where people get to know Jesus through words and deeds;
 ... where everyone is accepted and each one can participate according to his or her gifts and abilities;
 ... where people are baptized upon request, as a personal testimony and an act of faith;
 ... which are eager to care for children, teenagers and young people in general;
 ... in which fellowship means more than just meeting at church services.



The Aare river in Bern, where Anabaptists were drowned or loaded onto boats to be expelled from the country.

ETG-Churches in Switzerland (www.etg.ch)

ETG Au	Gemeinschaftshaus, Schellerstr. 8, 8804 Au, www.etg-au.ch
ETG Bachenbülach	Niederglatterstrasse 3, 8184 Bachenbülach www.etgbachenbuelach.ch
ETG Basel	Missionsstrasse 37, 4055 Basel, www.etgbasel.ch
ETG Bern	Konsumstrasse 21, 3007 Bern, www.etg-bern.ch
ETG Bischofszell Nord	Ibergstr. 6, 9220 Bischofszell, www.etg.ch/bischofszell
ETG Chaindon	Chaindon 38, 2732 Reconvilier
ETG Diessbach	Dorfstrasse 59, 3264 Diessbach, www.etg-diessbach.ch
ETG Erlen	Buchwiesenstrasse 3, 8586 Erlen, www.etg-buchwiesen.ch
ETG Erlenbach	Schulhausstrasse 23, 8703 Erlenbach (Gottesdienstlokal) www.etg-erlenbach.ch
ETG Grub	Gemeinschaftshaus "Linde", Riemen, 9035 Grub AR www.etg-grub.info
ETG Hombrechtikon	Gemeindehaus, Aberenstrasse 80, 8712 Stäfa www.etg.ch/hombrechtikon
ETG Langnau-Giebel	Gemeinschaftshaus Giebelfeld, 3552 Bärâu www.etg-giebel.ch
ETG Mettmenstetten	Gemeinschaftshaus "Im Erspach", Weidstrasse 20 8932 Mettmenstetten, www.etg-mettmenstetten.ch
ETG Pfäffikon	Neuhof, Hittnauerstrasse 34, 8330 Pfäffikon www.etg-pfaeffikon.ch
ETG Rümlang	Steinfeldstrasse 6, 8153 Rümlang, www.etg-ruemlang.ch
ETG Rüti	Gemeinschaftshaus, Weinbergstrasse 22, 8630 Rüti www.etg.ch/rueti
ETG Schlieren	Versammlungshaus "Bethel", Lachernweg 2a 8952 Schlieren, www.etg-schlieren.ch
ETG Stäfa / Hombrechtikon	Wiesengrund, Etzelstr. 44, 8712 Stäfa, www.etgstaefa.ch
ETG Zurich	Freiestrasse 83, 8032 Zurich, www.etg-zueri.ch

What Anabaptists believe

Repeatedly official representatives of the State Church have noticed that, because of the common roots in the Reformation, there are scarcely any major differences between the State Church and the Anabaptists, as far as the main articles of faith are concerned.

So, what exactly were the specific convictions, challenges, and behaviors held by the relatively small number of Anabaptist men and women that the Swiss political and church leaders for hundreds of years would not accept?



Baptism Service of the Mennonite Church Schänzli at the Birs River near Basel.

- **The freely chosen church membership** of the Anabaptists posed the question of freedom of faith and conscience. According to the State Church, church membership and attendance were indispensable civic duties which were placed upon a child by baptism shortly after birth. For the Anabaptists, church membership was based on a personal and free decision and the commitment to express this in one's daily life.
- Anabaptists were convinced that something of this **life in Christ** should be visible among the believers. The Spirit of the Lord, they said, is a power which can indeed bring about new life. One's personal life should, in spite of all failings, express what one believes. This courage not to conform seems to have impressed and convinced people outside the Anabaptist community that they were trustworthy people.
- The **congregation** played a key role in the practice of this new type of life. As Anabaptists met together to make decisions, differences were settled, encouragement was offered, and personal failings were corrected and forgiven. As they lived out their convictions their neighbors were able to observe what love, mercy, righteousness and peace meant in practice. These were God given gifts for all people.
- The Anabaptists believed that **all persons are called to be ministers** of God's grace (the priesthood of believers) in order to uplift the lives of all believers.
- The model of a Free Church, a church free from the constraints of the government, created fundamental tension between the State Church and the Anabaptists. The State Church had been closely tied to political governments over the centuries. This relationship was rejected by the Anabaptists who refused to pledge the oath of allegiance to the State. They held that absolute obedience belonged to God and not any human institution.

There was also a strong conviction that no member of the congregation should be elevated above another, as each member has gifts. Only when all the gifts are accepted and honoured is it possible for the church of God to grow and become what God intended.

- Brothers and sisters in faith are part of God's family, which is the Church. To show **solidarity in the Christian community** the Anabaptist-Mennonite church has always found traditional

and new ways of supporting the needy, no matter where they are from.

- One conviction which frequently resulted in persecution was the **refusal to participate in military service**. While other Christian churches have been uncritical of the military service demanded by their respective governments, the Anabaptists believed in and kept alive the fact that Jesus Christ preferred to give his own life rather than use power and violence to defeat his enemies.



26 *Fellowship, an essential Mennonite activity (A day of church fellowship).*

Short Historical Overview

The Anabaptists – For some contemporaries Anabaptists were pious weirdos. For the State Church they were dangerous heretics, and for the State authorities at the time, Anabaptists were mutinous rebels. Therefore, throughout Europe, they were discriminated against, persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, disinherited, expelled and executed. However, they were also respected by a minority, who appreciated them as sincere Christians and good, reliable neighbors who practiced what they believed.

Who were these Anabaptists who refused to attend the official State Church services, who did not pledge oaths, would not do military service, and who were prepared to pay a high price for all this?

The beginning of the Anabaptist Movement goes back to the time of the Reformation in the 16th century. Instead of a State Church based on coercion, they envisioned a church which functioned on a voluntary basis, independent of the State, with voluntary membership. It was 1525, when former co-workers of Zwingli started to baptize adults, who freely confessed their faith in baptism.

Because Anabaptists criticized the unfortunate **alliance of Church and State**, they soon had the anger of the influential men of the State directed toward them. Despite increasing persecution in many places, Mennonites, who were named after the Dutch Anabaptist leader Menno Simons (1496-1561), spread across Europe in the



Ruins of the Anabaptist bridge in the Bernese Jura, earlier a meeting place of Anabaptists.

Anabaptist Movement. They systematically suffered severe repression which drove them more and more into isolation. This separated them from society and narrowed their theological outlook which resulted in some painful mistakes. It also led to some conflicts among themselves, one of which led to the establishment of the Amish in 1693.

Harsh Persecution – By the early 1700s Switzerland had almost completely eradicated the Anabaptists from the country. It was only in the Emmental that this persecuted church stood its ground and survived. Despite continuous opposition during a whole century, the church slowly grew. The Swiss Anabaptists who had been driven out of the country into the Palatinate, Alsace and then the Jura were able to establish themselves and continued to develop despite restrictions on evangelistic outreach, on the number of people attending any particular worship gathering, and even on places where the dead were to be buried. From these groups of exiles, families began to migrate to North America where they thrived and multiplied to several hundred thousand.

The pressure on the Anabaptists in Europe began to decrease during **the Enlightenment and the French Revolution**. The Mennonite Churches were revived and started to grow in the 18th and 19th centuries due to the influence of the Holiness Movement, as well as Pietism and Revivalism. From 1830 on new Alttäufer congregations, influenced by the older

Anabaptist Movements, came into being and spread again in Switzerland. This was true also of the ETG-Churches (Evangelische Neutäufergemeinden).

A new friendly spirit of cooperation is developing between State Churches and Anabaptist Churches. Only gradually did the antagonistic conflict give way to new understanding and relationships. Already in the 19th century, there were some attempts at dialogue between State Churches and Anabaptist Churches. Evidence of this are the discussions resulting in special meetings of reconciliation.

Light and Shadows mark the history of the Anabaptists in Switzerland. Some of the troubling questions raised many years ago are still very current and delicate today. Many questions have found a variety of answers. However, if each of us admitted that all our knowledge was only piecemeal – then mutual differences would no longer be seen as a threat but a complement and helpful addition. This, then, is our invitation to seek an exchange so that together we might reconsider and reevaluate our position.

Zurich

Reformation in Zurich / Birth-place of Anabaptism

The origin of the Swiss Anabaptist Movement dates back to the year 1525. Six years earlier in 1519 the famous Reformer Huldrych Zwingli became the preacher at the Cathedral Grossmünster in Zurich. His teaching was very popular among the people. He was inspired by Erasmus von Rotterdam. He preached directly from the Bible and the traditions of the Church did not matter to him. He conducted a campaign against the teaching of justification by works, against the worship of images and saints, against the power of the Pope and the selling of indulgences. Because of his new method of interpreting the Bible, Zwingli won friends and many new followers. However, a number of people, in particular supporters of the Catholic faith, did not agree with Zwingli.

Zwingli often discussed matters concerning the interpretation of the Bible with scholars and members of various Bible study groups. Conrad Grebel, a student of humanism, and Felix Manz were among the members. These two men later became leaders of the Anabaptist Movement. Various issues like infant baptism and carrying the sword were important topics in the discussions. On January 27, 1525, the council of the City of Zurich called for a meeting (disputation) where the new ideas were discussed. Zwingli managed to convince the council of his New Doctrine of Faith, which led to the Reformation in Zurich.

Conrad Grebel was very disappointed by the program of the Zwingli Reformation. He wished that Zwingli had taken a more radical approach. Grebel felt that Zwingli should have started a new church to which only true Christians would belong. This new church was supposed to be completely separate from the State, made up of those who freely chose to be members. It meant a total break-away from the traditional system of the Catholic State Churches. This vision of a new church and other issues led to a second disputation followed by the splitting up of the Reformation into a moderate circle of Zwingli friends and into a more radical group made up of Grebel's supporters.

Grebel and his contemporaries tried to convince Zwingli to accept their idea of a Free Church, with a voluntary membership. But Zwingli wanted to build a new Swiss Church for the people and did not go along with Grebel. The Anabaptists were also convinced that baptism and the personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ should be an act of free will. Thus, the admission into the church



The statue of Huldrych Zwingli in Zurich.

through infant baptism was put in question. Later, there was a third disputation of faith with the State Council. The exclusive issue of the discussion was baptism. The members of the Council and Zwingli wanted to adhere to infant baptism, while Grebel and his friends preferred baptism of faith. These insurmountable differences of opinion led to a final split between the two groups.

Some days later, Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz and Georg Blaurock, a Pastor from Chur, who had confessed to belonging to the Grebel friends since 1524, met to discuss the current situation and further proceedings. At the end of the meeting they baptized each other. This baptism on January 21, 1525 is the birthday of the Anabaptists. In commemoration, the member churches of the Mennonite World Conference celebrate an international day of fellowship (Information: www.mwc-cmm.org).

The first Anabaptist Martyrs in Zurich

The first death sentences were pronounced in Lachen, located on the upper part of the lake of Zurich. Bolt Eberli and an acquainted priest were burned to death. Conrad Grebel fled to the eastern part of Switzerland. In Zurich, Felix Manz was drowned on January 5, 1527. Within only five years, five other men suffered the same fate.

Further Historical Development in Zurich

Within only a few years, the Anabaptists were exterminated and chased away from the City of Zurich and its surrounding areas. At the end of 1520 the last Anabaptists renounced their faith causing the collapse

of the first Anabaptist Church in Zollikon (page 34), just as it happened elsewhere. Anabaptist theologians were executed. Due to this, the movement kept spreading only in the rural areas. In the State of Zurich, Anabaptists survived only in the regions of Wädenswil, Knonau and Grüningen. At the beginning of the 17th century the plight of the Anabaptists became even more problematic as the State officials took additional steps. They passed new decrees, or mandates, against the few remaining Anabaptists. In 1614 one of the leaders, Hans Landis, from Horgerberg, was executed in Zurich. He was the last Anabaptist martyr in the State of Zurich, but not in Switzerland.

During the years after the execution of Hans Landis, Zurich ordered the confiscation of Anabaptist property and sent spies to the homes of Anabaptists to carry out some of the most unconventional house searches. Food in cellars and pantries was demolished and furnishings were destroyed. Many men and women were arrested. In the years 1635 to 1644, more than 20 people died in prisons, due to bad treatment and torture.

In 1660 people in the Netherlands, who loved freedom, protested against the sanctions taken in Zurich and Bern. Unfortunately, the two Reformed States did not change their policy. Due to political and financial factors, they attempted to unify and strengthen the State Church. Thus no free churches were tolerated. Zurich allowed the Anabaptists to migrate. But before they could do so, their property was confiscated by force, and their private assets were put into a separate account in the

State treasury for Anabaptist goods. The uplands of the State of Zurich were particularly known for dispersing the Anabaptists. From historical records and remembered traditions we know that two caves were used by Anabaptists for refuge: the

“Hagheerenloch” above Bauma and the “Hohlenstein”, the Cave of the Anabaptists on the Allmen, above Bäretswil. Both regions are in remote and rugged parts of Switzerland. At that time, they were not easily accessible.

The Portal of Zwingli on the western side of the “Grossmünster” is a door made of bronze with pictures of the time of Reformation in Zurich, made by Otto Münch between 1935-39. The placement of the descriptions (see table) is according to the pattern of individual squares. None of these inscriptions mention the Anabaptist Movement.

The emblems of the City of Zurich	19. Bullinger and Leo Jud are engaged before the State Council on behalf of the Reformation	20. Bullinger welcomes the Protestant refugees from Locarno in the year 1555	The emblem of the Church Council of the Canton of Zurich (with sword)
15. The Prot. Pastor Jakob Kaiser from Schwarzenbach was burned at the stake in Schwyz in 1529	16. The Swiss Reformers Joh. Comander in Chur, Berthold Haller in Bern, Ambrosius Blarer in Konstanz	17. Huldr. Zwingli in Zurich, Joachim Vadian in St. Gallen, Johannes Oekolompad in Basel	18. Zwingli's death in Kappel am Albis on October 11, 1531
11. Social welfare during the Reformation: bread and soup for the poor.	12. Zwingli rides with Mayor Röist to the deputation in Bern in 1528	13. Kappeler Milk-soup between Protest. and Catholics, June 1529	14. Luther and Zwingli disagree about the Lord's Supper in Marburg in 1529
7. Zwingli's secret messenger Thomas Platter disguised as salesman of chickens during the deputation of Baden, 1526	8. Zwingli with his family	9. Jud, Bibliander and Zwingli work on the Swiss German translation of the Bible	10. The humanist Ulrich von Hutten as a refugee on the Island of Ufenau, where he died for his opposition towards the Pope.
3. Zwingli preaches in the Grossmünster from 1526 onwards	4. The monastery Ittingen near Frauenfeld was attacked and set on fire in 1524	5. The Protestant, Hans Wirth, bailiff of Stammheim, was beheaded in 1524	6. The first Lord's Supper in the Grossmünster after the abolition of the mass, Easter 1525
The three martyrs about whom many legends were written. (3rd century) and the city patrons Felix, Regula and Exuperantius	1. The fourteen year old Zwingli playing music	2. Zwingli preaches to the Swiss Mercenaries in Italy prior to the Battle of Marignano in 1515	Cesar Karl the Great the probable founder of the Grossmünster

Historical Buildings and Places in Zurich

Grossmünster (Cathedral)

The Grossmünster is situated south of the main railway station, within Zwingli Square, where the streets Münstergasse and the Kirchgasse lead to.

This Church is constructed according to high and late Romanesque architecture. It was here that the German-speaking Reformation began under the leadership of Ulrich Zwingli and his replacement Heinrich Bullinger. Bullinger, who continued the Reformation after the early death of Zwingli on the battle field, wrote a remarkable sentence about the Anabaptists: “The people are running after the Anabaptists, as if they were living saints.” He also persecuted the Anabaptists very severely.

During the Reformation, the images on the wall behind the altar were removed. In the 18th and 19th century, parts of the interior of the church were renovated several times.

Neustadtgasse

The Anabaptist leader Felix Mantz and his mother lived in Neustadtgasse, the street just a short distance behind the Grossmünster. The Kirchgasse leads into the Neustadtgasse.

On the evening of January 21, 1525, a meeting took place in the home of Felix Mantz. Present were Conrad Grebel and George Blaurock. It was at this meeting that Blaurock asked Grebel to baptize him on his confession of faith. Grebel complied. Then Blaurock baptized others



The Grossmünster in Zurich. The commencement of the Swiss-German Reformation.

present, both men and women. This event is considered as the birthday of the Anabaptist Movement.

Rathaus (City Hall)

The City Hall is situated near the Rathausbrücke (City Hall Bridge) on Limmatquai 58. The building is very skillfully designed in late Renaissance style with elements of the early Baroque. It was built shortly before 1700. The big and the small Church Council were seated in this house even before that time and here decisions were made against the Anabaptists. Today the State Council and the City Council meet in this house.

Rathausbrücke (City Hall Bridge)

The City Hall Bridge starts at the “Weinplatz/Schipfe” and ends at the Limmatquai.

This is the place where the verdict against Blaurock and Manz was read. Manz was then taken into a boat and thrown overboard a few meters farther down, where he drowned. After a meeting of reconciliation on June 26, 2004, a memorial plaque was placed in a small park with a few trees, in remembrance of the drowning of the Anabaptists. The following is written on this plaque: “Here, from a fishing platform, Felix Manz and five other Anabaptists were drowned in the Limmat during the Reformation between 1527 and 1532. The last Anabaptist to be executed in Zurich in 1614 was Hans Landis.”

In 1566 Heinrich Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli, wrote in the second Helvetic Declaration: “We are not Anabaptists and have nothing in common with them.” In 2004 the Evangelical Protestant Church of the State of Zurich and the Swiss Mennonite Conference realized that the moment had come to invite representatives



The “Schipfe” in Zurich. A memorial plaque was erected in 2004 in remembrance of the persecution of Anabaptists.

of the two churches to a Conference of Reconciliation.

Newmarket

The “Haus zur Eintracht” (the House of Unity) is situated at No. 5, Theater at the Newmarket, between the Predigergasse and the Forschaugasse.

It was built in 1742 in Baroque style and belonged to Conrad Grebel’s parents. The memorial plaque reads: “Conrad Grebel, who, together with Felix Manz founded the Anabaptist Movement lived in this house 1508-1541 and 1520-1525.”

Niederdorfstrasse

The Niederdorfstrasse runs parallel to the Limmatquai. On the day of execution Blaurock was chased along this street and then out of the city.

Places of Interest in Zurich

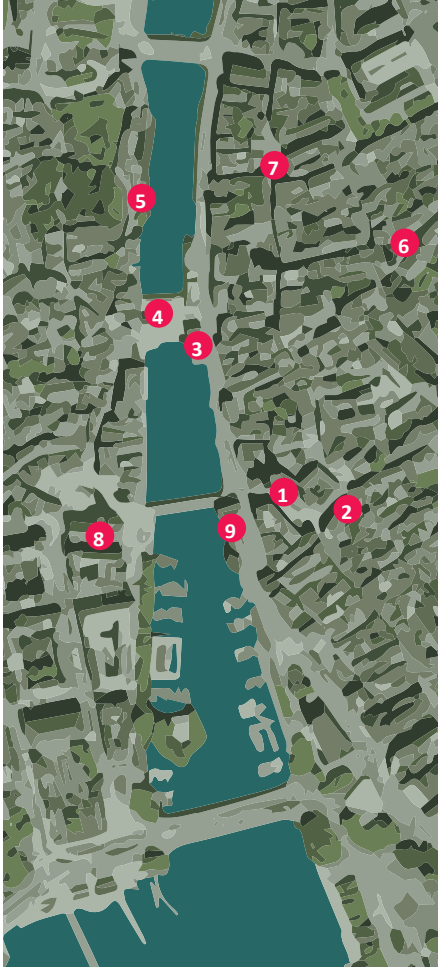
The Swiss National Museum, the House of Art, the Cathedral “Fraumünster”, the Church “Wasserkirche” and the “Rathaus” (City Hall).

Infos: www.zuerich.com



*Zurich Neumarkt 5:
This memorial inscription was placed on the house in which Konrad Grebel lived.*

Map of the City of Zurich



- 1 *Grossmünster (Cathedral)*
- 2 *Neustadtgasse*
- 3 *Rathaus (City Hall)*
- 4 *Rathausbrücke (the bridge of the City Hall)*
- 5 *Schipfe*
- 6 *Neumarkt*
- 7 *Niederdorfstrasse*
- 8 *Fraumünster (Church)*
- 9 *Wasserkirche*

Zollikon

Zollikon is situated on the right hand side of the Lake of Zurich and can be reached by bus or train.

The church of Zollikon, built in 1499, experienced very turbulent days. The Mennonites put up a memorial plaque at house No. 23-25 on the “Gstaadstrasse” (Gstaad Street) north of the railway station reading: “The idea of a free-church was realised through the Anabaptists in this house in Zollikon. On January 25, 1525, one of the first meetings took place here.”

In fact, the meetings had taken place in an older house. The present house was built in 1620. The Anabaptists also met in other houses like “Rütistrasse 43” and “Bahnhofstrasse 3”. At that time, Zollikon was a small farming village. Here, the Anabaptists took the Lord’s Supper for the first time.

These first Anabaptist meetings showed that the heartbeat of the “young movement was very intense”. A spiritual awakening was visible within the group and towards the end of the week 30 people wanted to be baptized.

On a Sunday morning, Blaurock tried to claim the pulpit of the church in Zollikon with the intention of advancing Anabaptism more rapidly. He started an argument with the pastor in charge. The deputy bailiff, who was also present, was unable to restore order. On the following Monday the officials of the city appeared in Zollikon and arrested 27 people including Blaurock, Manz and all those farmers who had been baptized within the past few weeks. The Anabaptists were in for a trying period of

persecution and self-sacrifice. Repeatedly, there were very fierce discussions between Zwingli and those arrested.

In Zollikon, another Anabaptist minister, Johannes Brötli, was very eager in his attempts to combat the practice of infant baptism in the State Church. He had close connections to Blaurock and Manz. Later on, he was expelled from Switzerland. The leader of the early Anabaptist congregation in Zollikon was Jacob Hottinger, who was imprisoned on several occasions.



“The Anabaptist House” at Zollikon. One of the first Anabaptist worship services took place here.



The Church of Zollikon experienced turbulent days with the Anabaptists.

Grüningen

Drive along the main road from Zollikon up the hill towards Forch to Grüningen.

The old township house of the former bailiffs is situated on top of the hill.

The village was founded in the 13th century by the free masters of Regensburg. To a large extent the medieval character of the village has been preserved. The houses are still arranged according to the old construction plan. The bailiffs’ house in Grüningen is interwoven with the history of the Anabaptists. Jacob Grebel, Conrad’s father, was a bailiff who carried out his duty as a ruler. But much more significant is the fact that already in early days, Anabaptists were arrested and put in jail. In 1525 Ulrich von Waldshut was imprisoned and expelled. Because all the decrees, disputations and reprimands from official side had no effect, all the Anabaptists were called to attend a legislative assembly of the Swiss State, made up of representatives of the great and the small Council of Zurich. At this disputation in the castle on December 26, 1525, the Anabaptists were told that heavy fines would follow. In May 1527, the bailiff Jörg Berger tracked down an Anabaptist assembly in a forest near Gossau and jailed 15 Anabaptists in the tower of the castle. All of them were later released except the leader Heini Reimann and Jacob Falk. After another meeting of the legislative Council and further questioning, they were taken to Zurich in the summer of 1528 to be drowned in September. The bailiffs of the counties wrote many letters to each other complaining about the big problems and additional workload because of the Anabaptists.



The Cave of the Anabaptists near Bäretswil



The Anabaptists' Cave: A plaque to commemorate a former meeting place.

Hinwil

Hinwil is near Wetzikon and Rüti. From Zurich you will reach Hinwil via Autobahn A52 in the direction of Rapperswil Jona. There is an exit of the Autobahn at Hinwil.

Blaurock had suffered defeat in Zollikon but later got another chance to speak in Hinwil. One Sunday morning on October 8, 1525, he met with believers in the church. Before the appointed Pastor Brennwald appeared, Blaurock went to the pulpit and said: "Whose place is this? Is it God's place where His word is to be preached? If so, then I am an ambassador sent by the Father to preach the word of God." When Brennwald entered the church, he was unable to chase away the rebel so he called the bailiff for help.

Bäretswil Anabaptists' Cave

Coming from Zürich follow the Forchstrasse (highway 52) towards Rapperswil/

Jona. Take the exit Ottikon. Via Wetzikon/Kempton drive to Bäretswil.

Upon entering the village Bäretswil turn right towards Wappenswil/Hinwil (Höhenstrasse).

Follow the road to the TCS parking lot.

If you come from Hinwil you can follow the Höhenstrasse straight to the TCS parking lot.

There is no parking available at the Anabaptists' Cave. So it is better to leave your car or bus at the TCS parking lot and walk the rest of the way. It takes 20 mins. (1.5 km).

Coming from the parking lot walk along the road on the opposite side to Wappenswil and turn right almost at the end of the village when you see the sign Täuferhöhle (Anabaptists' Cave). After about 700 m turn slightly right, cross the creek and follow the hiking path up along the edge of the forest. After a 10 min. ascent you come to a fireplace and the path turns right into the forest, leading you to the cave.

In earlier centuries this cave made of conglomerate rock was considerably larger. At the back there were several side shafts which are now blocked. At one point in the 19th century a small summer restaurant was set up in the cave, and the excavations revealed knives, forks, spoons, rings, thimbles of prepared wood and tiles for stoves. Similar items were found some years later. Unfortunately these objects were not stored, so that they could never be dated. According to the local tradition of the people, it is believed that Anabaptists used this cave as a hiding place but then suddenly had to leave. It is said that they shoed their horses the wrong way round, so that the tracks would lead the persecutors in the opposite direction. In this way they were able to escape to the Toggenburg area in eastern Switzerland.

Schaffhausen

The Swiss Anabaptist Movement started with the Reformation of Zurich. Some of the exiled leaders found temporary refuge in the area of Schaffhausen. It was here that the Schleithem Confession originated, still known by Mennonites and Amish people. When the Reformation started, the City Council took severe measures against Anabaptist insubordination and threatened them with fines, imprisonment and even the death sentence. Nevertheless, Anabaptists continued to stay in Schleithem. So, the Schaffhausen authorities forbade them to let their cattle graze on common land and to pick fruit from the trees or harvest the fields of the commune. The village people were not allowed to speak to them or give them food or offer them shelter. Despite this, the pastor, the bailiff and governor occasionally took sides with the Anabaptists, risking heavy fines. Finally, the Anabaptists were exiled, immigrating as far away as Moravia, and later to the Palatinate region and to the Kraichgau.

Anabaptist Trail over the Randen

The Anabaptist trail connects the municipalities of Hemmental, Merishausen and Schleithem, and has 5 plaques showing the history of the Anabaptists who were persecuted in this region for over 100 years. The Anabaptists met in secret places such as the Baptist Source in Merishausen or the Challe in Schleithem. The steep “Tuferstieg” in Hemmental was a path used by faithful Anabaptists to get from the city to the meetings. In the Schleithemertal Museum one of the rare

printed copies of the 1527 Schleithem Confession can be viewed.

In the midst of all the persecution, a group of Swiss, Austrian and South German representatives of Anabaptists met for an Anabaptist synod in Schleithem, on the outskirts of the Canton of Schaffhausen. The congregations were to be spiritually strengthened by the 7 statements of Schleithem. Unanimously, they testified that they believed in baptism upon confession of faith (after repentance and conversion), in practicing church unity (if members sinned they were to be admonished up to three times and then banned as a final recourse), in taking the Lord’s Supper together after being reconciled, in refusing to participate in evil structures, in providing for the minister through donations, in non-violence and in refusing to take an oath of allegiance.

Schleithem (Anabaptist room, Challe)

Take bus 21 from Schaffhausen to Schleithem, stop at Adlerstrasse. Or park at the Museum Schleithemertal, Kirchgasse 8, 8226 Schleithem.

The Anabaptists coming from Merishausen and Hemmental reached Schleithem using two narrow passes: the “Grund” and the “Challe” Gorge. They had secret meetings in the “Challe” forest. Some of them lived in huts which were demolished by the authorities in 1560. A short time later, the Pastor of Schleithem



Schleithem Confession in the Anabaptist room of the Schleithemertal Museum



Place for secret gatherings in the Châlle near Schleithem

once again reported 2 families who had settled in the Châlle: A certain Thomas and a Hans Peter, nicknamed Randenhans who came from Uhwiesen.

Long before the Reformation took place, Martin Weninger defended evangelical teaching in Schleithem. On February 24, 1527, a synod took place here during which Anabaptist leaders and Michael Sattler defined the Schleithem Confession. Inspired by the Reformation Michael Sattler, previously Prior at the Abbey of St. Peter in the Black Forest, left the Roman Catholic Church to become one of the early Anabaptist leaders. He married Margret Beguine and inaugurated the first Anabaptist community in Zurich. He was burned at the stake in Rottenburg on May 21, 1527, and his wife was drowned in the Neckar river two days later. One of only four existing copies worldwide of the Schleithem Confession can be viewed in the museum. The oldest manuscript is kept in the State Archive of the Canton of Bern. The life and death of Michael Sattler is portrayed in the film “The Radicals” (www.affox.ch).

Since autumn 2004, a permanent exhibit about the Anabaptists has been displayed in the Schleithemertal Museum. For further information, contact: Willi Bächtold, Phone +41 52 680 13 47, e-mail: info@museum-schleithem.ch, website: www.museum-schleithem.ch. The text of the Schleithem Confession in German with commentary: Urs B. Leu and Christian Scheidegger: *Das Schleithemer Bekenntnis 1527*, Zug: Achius 2004.

Hemmental (Täuferstieg, Anabaptist Stone)

Take bus 22 from Schaffhausen to 8231 Hemmental, Dorfplatz. You can reach the Anabaptist Stone on foot in about one and a half hours over the steep ascent “Täuferstieg”. By car you can go over the Randen crossing towards Beggingen and park at Mäserich (where the paved road begins). Walk to the Anabaptist Stone and the Zelgli.

During the Reformation, the Anabaptists moved undetected on pathways along the Randen valleys and gorges. They met in secret places via “Täuferstieg”, “Grund” or

“Chälle” Gorge. In the spring of 1642, six Schleithemer Anabaptists escaped from the Anabaptist hospital jail in Schaffhausen. They fled up to the Munot, iron chains round their ankles, and further over the Randen to Schleithem. During the day they remained safely on the other side of the border until they were tracked down, arrested and forced to emigrate to the Palatinate. Above the “Täuferstieg”, the Anabaptist Stone was laid in 2004 in commemoration of past suffering and as a sign of reconciliation.



*Anabaptist Stone above the steep ascent “Täuferstieg” of Hemmental.
See www.natourpark.ch*

Merishausen (Täuferweg, Baptist Source)

Take bus 23 from Schaffhausen station north to 8232 Merishausen, Gemeindehaus. By car, park beneath the church.

Clear, cool water flows from the Baptist Source in Merishausen all year round. There is a protected baptism pool in the bushes by the stream. The upper pathway is called the “Täuferweg” (Anabaptist path) and can be reached directly from the village. The “Talweg” in the Dostental valley leads past the source onto the Randen. In the event of being pursued, this would have served as an escape route. In 1532, a Merishausen pastor Alexander Krayler sided with the Anabaptists and was thus replaced by Konrad Hainimann, who was a strong opponent of the Anabaptists.



*Baptist Source in Merishausen.
See www.natourpark.ch*

For a map, hiking instructions and pictures look up www.natourpark.ch.

For information on history and events see www.taefuerweg.ch.

The City of Bern

History of Anabaptism

The first Anabaptists emerged in the summer of 1525. Heinrich Bullinger, Reformer in Zurich, sent a letter to his friend, Heinrich Simler, where he writes of his worries and fears about the growth of Anabaptism. He is also worried that Simler might join the Anabaptists. According to a second letter by Berchtold Haller, the Principal Pastor, it can be assumed that Anabaptists were living in Bern as early as 1525. At that time Bern was still a catholic canton. This letter was written to Zwingli describing the growth of the Anabaptists and expressing concern that Lienhard Tremp, Zwingli's brother in law, might join the Anabaptists.

The rapid spread of the Anabaptist Movement, which began in Zurich, caused the Government of Switzerland a lot of



A view of the City of Bern. From 1528 until 1959 there was no Anabaptist or Mennonite church here.

worries. The doctrine of the Anabaptists was passed on through word of mouth and increased rapidly so that a few months after the Anabaptists had been established in Zurich, the movement already emerged in Bern. The first court session with Anabaptists in the area of Bern concerned a woman who was re-baptized in Zofingen in 1525. The government officials only took action, when the Anabaptist Movement seemed to become a threat to the State. As the Anabaptists in the city of Bern gained more followers, the authorities became increasingly anxious. They were losing more and more members to the Anabaptists.

In May 1527 the first disputation of the faith took place. On the one side were the officials of the City Church, who were still Catholics, and on the other side were the Anabaptists. There were nine Anabaptists present. One of them was Blaurock, who was a leading figure in the emergence of the Anabaptist Movement. (See chapter Zurich, page 29).

Historical Buildings and Places in Bern

The Heiliggeistkirche (The Church of the Holy Spirit)

The Church of the Holy Spirit is west of the main railway station, at the beginning of the Spitalgasse.

The "Obere Spital" (the upper hospital) used to be situated where the Heiliggeistkirche is today. At that time, there was a

room in this building for weaving cloth. Here, disobedient citizens were to be re-trained to become obedient citizens. Among the prisoners kept in this building were many Anabaptists who had to work with wool. It is also said that the preachers from the hospital gave them instructions to bring them back to common sense.

The Penitentiary and Orphanage

In the 17th century the Penitentiary and Orphanage were situated in the west wing of the former parsonage at the “Zeughausgasse” near the French Church. There was also a room for forced labour. People who were found guilty before the court, including Anabaptists, had to serve sentences there. The buildings of the former Orphanage have all been demolished. They used to be located at Predigergasse 5. Several documents have been found which mention that Anabaptists had spent time in the Penitentiary.

One comment: The officials all came to the Penitentiary on Friday, January 20, 1660, to learn more about the Anabaptists. The Anabaptist leaders who had traveled to Bern to attend the disputation were detained in this place. They were only allowed to talk to the council at a later time, and this in absence of their sympathizers.

Bluturm (Blood Tower)

The city of Bern had several infamous interrogation and torture towers. One of them was most probably the “Bluturm” (Blood Tower) situated alongside the “Aare” beneath the “Lorraine” Bridge. The interrogations of that time were documented in great detail. Today it is possible



The Blood-Tower along the Aare River in Bern.

to look into these so-called tower books to discover what kind of interrogation methods were used at the time.

Hans Tschantz from Kiesen was interrogated in one of these towers on May 1, 1567. He confessed that he had been baptized by Niklaus Zedo. After the interrogation, he was left in the tower for eight days, in order to reconsider his decision. Afterwards he was taken to the “Marzili” to be questioned under torture. Now, he admitted that he had been wrong in some points and was ready to go back to the State Church and to commit himself with an oath.

This interrogation is documented in the tower book No.8, pages 150 and 167. Other Anabaptists were also interrogated under torture and this was continued until they admitted that they had gone wrong in their beliefs.

Käfigturm (Prison Tower)

The “Käfigturm” (Prison Tower) is situated at the intersection of Bärenplatz and Spitalgasse.

The original “Prison Tower” was used from 1256 to 1344. The tower was built in the years 1641 to 1643 and was used as a prison until 1897. It was part of the “Westtor” (the West Gate) and still exists today. Along with other prisoners, Anabaptists were interrogated, detained and tortured here. Quite often they were kept in the cells with little food and under very severe conditions. It is said that murderers and other criminals were released in order to make room in the jail for Anabaptists. This again indicates the type of battle the officials led against the defenceless Anabaptists in Bern.



The “Käfigturm” (Prison Tower), formerly a prison, today a cultural centre.

Kreuzgasse/Gerechtigkeitsgasse (Cross Street/Street of Justice)

The “Pole of Disgrace” and the “Iron-Neck” were located on one side of the “Kreuzgasse” and the “Gerechtigkeitsgasse”, in the lower part of the old city.

There the sentenced people (murderers, thieves and also the Anabaptists) were put on display to be humiliated by the public. The exact criminal acts of each person put on display were documented in great detail. If there was a death sentence, the type of execution was also described. Others were put in iron chains and endured humiliation, scoffing and ridicule. Sometimes rocks were thrown at them. The intersection of the two streets marks the place where the accused were interrogated and executed. The street was named Street of Justice since it was believed that all injustice had to be eradicated from this world.

In the year 1529 three Anabaptists – Seckler, Treyer and Aurow – were led to the “Kreuzgasse”, where they were expected to deny their Anabaptist faith. The three remained firm and were drowned near the “Untertorbrücke” (Bridge of the Lower Gate) later on. They were the first Anabaptist martyrs in Bern.

Läuferbrunnen (Messenger Fountain)

The “Läuferbrunnen” is situated near the “Untertorbrücke” at the lower part of the old city.

There is a legend about the “Läuferbrunnen”, formerly called the “Staldenbrunnen”. It is said that when Hans Haslibacher, the Anabaptist leader from Sumiswald, was

executed, the colour of the fountain turned red. According to the legend, Haslibacher's head rolled with a smile into his hat, and also the sun turned red. Haslibacher is said to have foretold all these details prior to his execution. This legend is printed as the "Haslibacher Hymn" in the *Ausbund* hymn book, which the Amish in the USA still sing in their worship services.

Old Harbor of Bern

In former times the old Harbor of Bern was situated between the "Aareschwelle" near the "Matte-Quartier" and the "Untertorbrücke" (Bridge of the Lower Gate). The "Aare" River had different functions in the 1500s. It was used as a means to transport goods. Also, Anabaptists were loaded onto boats to be expelled from the country. The destinations of this forced migration were the Alsace (France), the Palatinate (Germany) and in particular the Netherlands, where they were allowed to practise their faith without persecution. On today's city map, the location of the wharf was in the "Matte-Quartier". Anabaptists also endured death by drowning in the "Aare". The spectators watched the executions and deportations from the old harbor near the "Aare-Schwelle" (Barrier of Aare River), along the "Aarestrasse" (Street of the Aare River) and from the Platform of the Cathedral. By allowing this, the government officials tried to intimidate and frighten the public against joining the Anabaptists.

Münster (Cathedral)

The Cathedral in Bern is primarily a construction of the Later Gothic period. Construction started in 1421 and lasted several centuries. The size of the building was planned in such a way that half of the



*The Münster of Bern (Cathedral):
A place of reconciliation.*

population of Bern could celebrate worship together. It was not until 1889-1893 that the tower was raised from 61 m to 100 m. The bell in the tower, weighing ten tons, is the largest bell in Switzerland. The oldest bell, called the silver-bell, was cast before 1300. The Cathedral was originally built of natural sandstone, but because the material is sensitive to temperatures, artificial stones were used more and more to replace the natural material. The windows of the choir were built in 1441. The chairs of the choir were added in 1523. Of the seven master builders of the Cathedral, Erhard Küng is the best known. Among other things, he created the "Day of Judgement" scene in 1495. It is to be found above the main entrance at the west side and is the latest example of a medieval portrayal of the "Day of Judgement". At that time the people were not literate and such pictures

made of timber, stone or glass, served to pass on the message of the church to them.

In January 1528 the officials in Bern discussed whether their city should remain Catholic or should become Protestant. A little later, a debate took place between Zwingli and eight Anabaptists. One of these eight admitted that he had been wrong and recanted. The other seven (Blaurock was one of them) were expelled. Despite the ban, three of them later returned without permission and were sentenced to death.

On April 10, 2005, the leadership of the Reformed Church of Bern invited the Anabaptist Churches to a celebration of the Lord's Supper to be held in the Cathedral. At the same time, a conference of reconciliation took place in Pennsylvania, United States, where members of the Swiss Reformed Church again asked for forgiveness for the historical injustice which had been committed.

"Reconciliation is in the air." – This is a statement by John Ruth, a well-known Pennsylvanian Mennonite author and retired pastor. It was made at the Petra Conference in New Holland, Pennsylvania, and this portrays the feelings of a group of Anabaptists and Protestants after a 480 year period of separation. Reformed pastors who were present as guests expressed their connectedness with the Anabaptists.

Rathaus (City Hall)

This building situated at the lower end of the Rathausgasse with a double barrelled flight of stairs, is one of the most profound and beautiful Gothic constructions in Switzerland.



The Bernese City Hall, Seat of the Government since 1414. 1528-1743: Place of Condemnation. 2017: Place of Forgiveness.

The building was built between 1406 and 1416. After several building alterations, the facade and the hall were restored to their original shape in 1940-1942.

The City Hall was and is the headquarters, the place of meetings, of both the executive and the legislative chambers of the Canton of Bern. At the time of the persecution of the Anabaptists, this building held an important strategic position because here many issues concerning the Anabaptists were discussed. It was in this place that mandates and edicts were given, and the fate of Anabaptists was decided. Among other matters, it was in this City Hall that a Catholic-Anabaptist disputation took place in 1527. Later, the Protestant-Anabaptist disputation

between Zwingli and the Anabaptists was held here on January 22, 1528. The result of this debate was the expulsion of the Anabaptists from the region of Bern.

In 2007, a member of the Bernese Parliament made a motion that specific commemorative plaques should be placed in historic locations in remembrance of the persecution of the Anabaptists. This had already been done in the State of Zurich some time ago.

Apology after 350 years

On November 11, 2017, during the Night of Religions, Christoph Neuhaus, Government Councilor (Regierungsrat), held a speech asking the Mennonites on behalf of the State for forgiveness for the suffering that the Bernese authorities had caused the Anabaptists over the centuries. This was in the same building where it is confirmed that Anabaptists had been condemned some 350 (-490) years ago (pages 78-79).

“Every day, we seven Government Councilors do our best for the population of our Canton, and yet we sometimes make decisions that turn out to be a mistake,” said Governor Christoph Neuhaus and pointed out many examples from the Bible and from the present day where man lost his innocence as soon as he got involved and took on responsibility. “The longer the river flows through human history, the more sand, gravel and debris is mixed into the originally pure water.” The theme of the gathering was “Time of Persecution – Time of Reconciliation – Time for Peace”.

In the same year the Mennonite Church in cooperation with other partners planned

to create an Anabaptist walking trail. For further information check: www.mennoniten-bern.ch

Marzili

The quarter of the “Marzili” has the same name as the public bath “Marzili” and is located just below the House of the Federal Government, alongside the Aare river.

In the “Marzili” and the surrounding area, there are supposed to have been several towers used as prisons and places of torture. The Aare near the “Marzili” was also used as a place of execution, similar to the “Untertorbrücke”. It is believed that the first Anabaptist martyrs were drowned in this place.

A most courageous Anabaptist, Melchior Aeberli, was taken to the Marzili on January 7, 1569, after he had been interrogated several times. It was intended to bring this man back to his senses by dunking. However, he did not show any interest in withdrawing from his Anabaptist view. Every time he was pulled up out of the water, he claimed that he would be faithful to the State Church. As soon as he stood on firm ground, he denied that he had made such a statement. Only after he was pulled up with 75 pounds of weight did he show any readiness to convert back to the State Church.

Zeughausgasse

The Mennonite Congregation in Bern was officially established in the year 1959 at Zeughausgasse No. 39. For more than 430 years, since the expulsion of the Anabaptists in 1528, there had been no official meeting place in the city of Bern.

Today, the Free Evangelical Church, Bern (FEG) meets in this house.

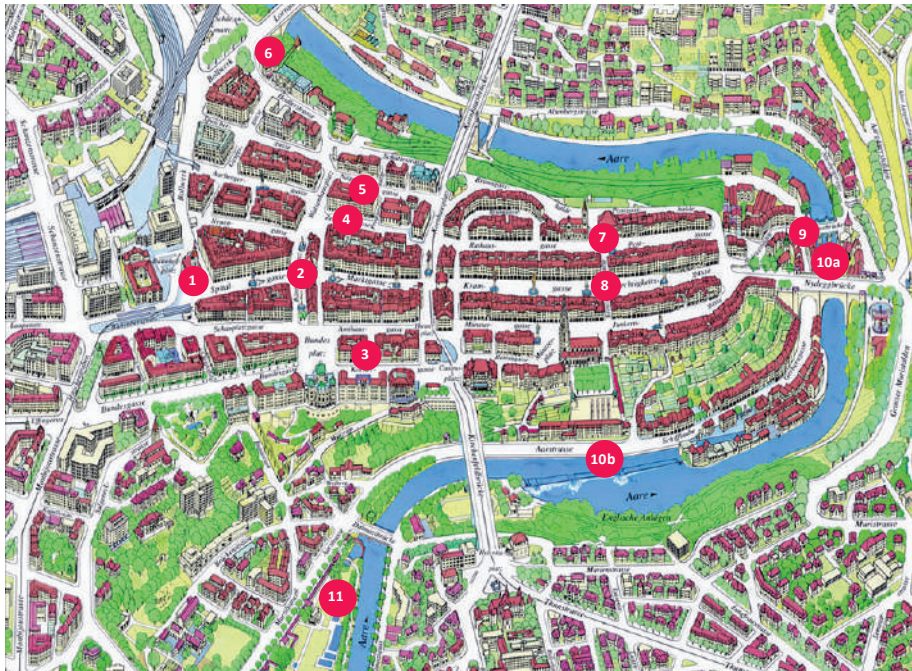
Places of interest in Bern

The old city, the Place of the Federal House of Parliament, the Rosengarten, (the garden of roses), the tower with a special clock

called Zytglogge (Clock Tower), the Animal Park Dählhölzli, the Paul Klee Exhibition Centre, the French Church, the Kornhaus (House of Wheat), and the Gurten, a hill with a panoramic view.

Infos: www.bern.com

Map of Bern



- 1 Heiligeistkirche
(The Church of the Holy Spirit)
- 2 Käfigturm (the Prison Tower)
- 3 Insel (Hospital Island)
- 4 Zeughausgasse 39
- 5 Zucht- und Waisenhaus
(Penitentiary and Orphanage)

- 6 Blutturn (The Tower of Blood)
- 7 Rathaus (The City Hall)
- 8 Kreuzgasse /Gerechtigkeitsgasse
- 9 Läuferbrunnen
(The Fountain of the Messengers)
- 10 Alter Hafen, Old Harbor of Bern
- 11 Marzili

Emmental

The Emmental is a region with many small and large villages, dark green forests, rich meadows and sparkling creeks, offering many hiking and walking trails. Typical are the clusters of houses throughout the region of the Emmental, which characterize this valley of the small river Emme. Handicrafts, manual work and farming are still deeply rooted in the society of the people there. The original cheese recipe is still used to manufacture the famous Emmental Cheese in many village dairies which you can visit. Many villages have attractive churches, which have already been mentioned in connection with Anabaptism, e.g. the village of Schwarzenegg. There are over two dozen essential wooden bridges, which connect the Emmental to the rest of Switzerland. In early days the region was inaccessible and to a great extent closed to the outside world.

Mennonite Churches of the Emmental

Address: Kehrstrasse 12, 3550 Langnau, The Church Center is located in the “Frittenbach”, opposite the public cemetery. Driving from Bern towards Luzern, the first round-about is called “Ilfis”. Take the road towards Burgdorf, which leads under the bridge. After about 500 m there is a road-stop where you can see the Church Center of the Anabaptists.

This is one of the oldest Anabaptist Churches of the “Emmental” still in existence. From the beginning of the 16th right up to the 19th century Anabaptists had to meet in secret places. It was only after freedom of faith and religion was included in the Act of the Swiss Federation in 1874, that Anabaptists were able to meet freely in farmhouses. Swiss records log at least



The Emmental: In early days it provided many hiding places of Anabaptists.

38 early Anabaptist meeting places which existed before 1874.

Haueterhaus

In the farmhouse called “Haueterhaus”, meetings are held in the living room. These meetings are conducted by preachers belonging to the Langnau Congregation in the “Kehr”. Attached to the farmhouse, there is a small saw-mill, located alongside the road.

Bowil Aebnit

Bowil is a village between Grosshöchstetten and Signau. At Bowil, a road sign points towards “Bowil Dorf” and “Chuderhüsi”. When following this road which has a slight turn to the right, you will get to a farmhouse. On the left hand side of this house is a chapel built in the 19th century.

For many years there was a Sunday school here which was much like an ordinary church service. The mixed choir of Aebnit has been active here for many years. Over the years the number of people attending church services and Sunday school has decreased. It was only in 1990 that youth work was resumed and today there is a young growing congregation.



The Assembly Hall “Kehr” of the Anabaptists in the Emmental.

Friedersmatt

The Friedersmatt is situated south of the village Bowil. Friedersmatt was one of the first local Anabaptist congregations of the Emmental. Here, Emmental church elders met with Jacob Ammann and several of his followers in 1693. Jacob Ammann insisted on keeping strict rules, regulations and practices, which resulted in a division in the Anabaptist Movement reaching as far as the Alsace and the Palatinate. It is uncertain, in which house this meeting took place. The “Amish People” as they are called today, rejected the fashionable practice of wearing buttons, which was very popular at that time. They believed a Christian should not wear buttons – only “hooks and eyes”. About 1720, most of the people wearing hooks and eyes emigrated to Pennsylvania.

Fankhaus

The farmhouse “Hinterhütten” has a secret Anabaptist hiding place. Traveling from Langnau to Trubschachen, follow the road-sign to Trub. Shortly before arriving in Trub, follow the road-sign towards Fankhaus and later on Hüttengraben. Continue the journey by car for another



Meeting place in the Haueter house in Gohl.

500 m, until you reach a bridge with a turning place. From this point on, walk up the steep ascent along the forest. Follow the grassland and pass the farmhouse on your left hand side until you reach the farmhouse Hinterhütten. This walk takes about 10 minutes and the path is well marked.

The Fankhauser family has been living at Hinterhütten for many centuries. There is a timber plaque above the front door with the year 1608 engraved into it showing the date of construction. Here you will find the one and only hiding place of the Anabaptists which has been preserved to this day. Many other places of refuge were removed during renovations.

The following story was passed on from generation to generation and was told by Hans Fankhauser, the father of the present owner of this farmhouse: “Whenever a person came to this farm to interrogate an Anabaptist, the wanted person would run up into the place where the hay was stored and suddenly disappear. Although the hunters looked through the whole house, they were not able to find anybody. One of the hunters decided to lie in wait on the floor of the stored hay to see where the Anabaptist went. One day he caught the Anabaptist jumping on top of a balanced



Secret hiding place in the farmhouse Hinterhütten east of Trub.

movable piece of timber and disappearing by sliding into the hiding place. This hidden cubby hole is about 2 m long and 1 m wide. The piece of timber that had been on the beam was replaced by a board, and one of the beams was cut apart to make the hiding place.

Today Simon and Regula Fankhauser-Jungi live in the Hinterhütten. They have quite a large collection of things on display from “the secret place of refuge”.

Please register and let them know in advance when you want to visit them or when you want a guided tour or a meal.

*Simon & Regula Fankhauser
Hinter Hütten, 3557 Fankhaus/Trub
www.taeuferversteck.ch*

Phone +41 34 495 54 14

mail: taeuferverteck@bluewin.ch

Trachselwald

The Castle of Trachselwald

Coming either from Burgdorf or Langnau, take the road towards Sumiswald.

The Castle of Trachselwald was enlarged and renovated over a period of several years. The older part, with the section called Bergfried, originated in the 12th century. In the 18th century, the castle was rebuilt in the shape it has today. The administrative Centre of the District of Trachselwald, the District Court and the Prison are still based in the castle. The Castle of Trachselwald is currently offered for sale. The part of the castle called Bergfried was not only a prison for criminals but also a temporary jail where Anabaptists were kept until they were transported to Bern. One of the best known Anabaptist martyrs



*Castle of Trachselwald – once a prison for Anabaptists – 2017 a meeting place.
Address: Schloss 8, 3456 Trachselwald*



*The Haslibacher house today – built in 1893.
Address: Haslenbach, 3454 Sumiswald*

was Hans Haslibacher who lived nearby. Another well-known leader of the “Täufer” (Anabaptists) was Niklaus Leuenberger, who was imprisoned in the Castle. The cell in which he was kept still exists today.

The Church of Trachselwald

The church, built in the middle of the 16th century is worth seeing. At the time of its reconstruction, a considerable amount of money had been generated from selling Anabaptist property that had been acquired by force. In addition, fines imposed upon Anabaptists were used to build the church.

Haslenbach

Traveling from Trachselwald to Grünen-Wasen (Forum, Pflegeheim in the Castle), cross the railway and continue toward Heimsibach. There, take the small road to the left (just before the Spittelweier). Take notice of the white road sign Wasen Kleinegg, which only residents are permitted to use. After a small valley, there is a cluster of houses typical of the region Emmental. The house of the Haslibachers is situated on the left hand side of the

road. It is accessible by car or bus. Group tours or individual visitors must inform the Haslibachers before arriving. The entry-fee to the exhibit is 3 Francs.

E-mail: info@haslebacher-hof.ch.

This is the place where the last Anabaptist martyr, Hans Haslibacher, lived and was executed by state officials in Bern in the year 1571. Before he was executed, heavy fines were imposed upon him.

It is most probable that all of Haslibacher’s possessions were confiscated. The Hymn book called “Ausbund” contains a song that describes the life and tragic death of Hans Haslibacher. It is hymn number 140, which has 32 verses. The current house of



Plaque of timber in memory of the martyr Hans Haslibacher.

the Haslibachers was built in 1873. The occupants of the house at present are descendants of Hans Haslibacher. There is a plaque of timber fastened under the veranda in memory of this martyr.

Heimiswilgraben

Traveling from Langnau towards Burgdorf, take the the road towards Heimiswil – Lueg, or else choose the other route through Affoltern – Lueg – Heimiswil.

Historical Aspects

The “Heimiswilgraben” is a most attractive area in a remote part of Switzerland, with scattered farmhouses here and there. In the 18th century the region was called the valley of the Anabaptists. It was in this region where the Anabaptist elder Hans Reist lived. He opposed Jacob Ammann over the question of excommunication. Hans Reist’s farm and possessions were seized and put up for public sale. The house in which he lived no longer exists.

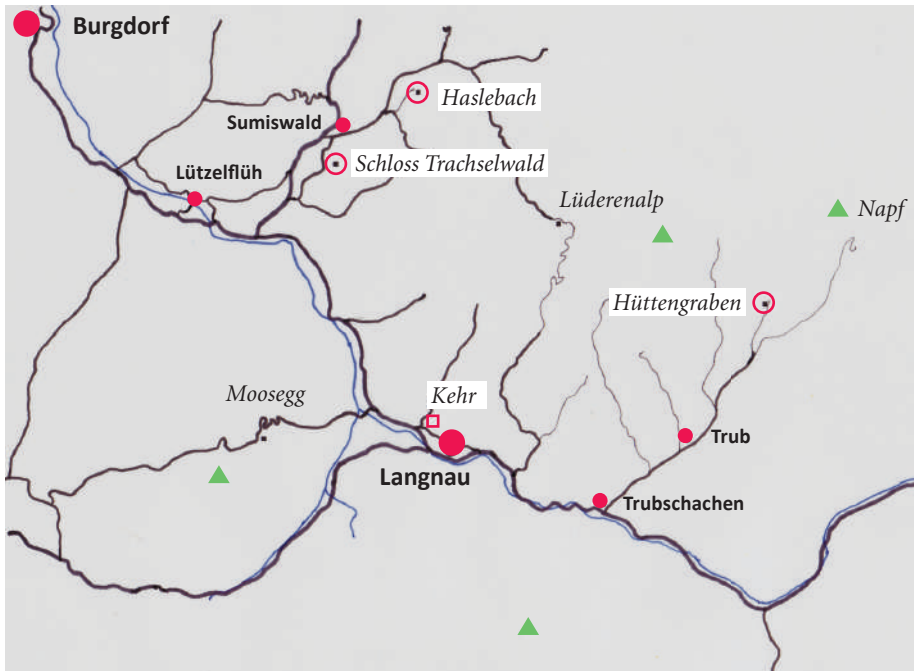
Places of interest in the Emmental

- *The country museum “Chüechlihaus” in Langnau, built in 1530, is close to the Reformed Church.*
- *The church at Würzbrunnen was built in 1530. Traveling from Bowil towards Chuderhüsi, pass the Restaurant Chuderhüsi and continue another 2 km towards Röthenbach. The Panorama-Tower Chuderhüsi offers an impressive panoramic view. It takes about 5 minutes to reach the tower on foot.*
- *The Exhibition cheese factory in Affoltern i/E*
- *The Pottery Kohler in Schüpbach*

- *The Country Museum “Aebi” in Trubschachen*
- *The Mill in Lützelflüh*
- *The many farmhouses and timber-bridges across the river Emme.*
- *Moosegg: Travel from Grosshöchstetten – Biglen, Arni towards the Moosegg, where you have a beautiful view of the hills of the Upper “Emmental” and the Bernese Alps behind the hills. A panoramic map is available at the Restaurants Moosegg and Walhäusen. In summer 2005, an Open Air Theatre was enacted at the Moosegg. The play was called the “Chasing of the Anabaptists”. A DVD of the Open Air Play is available under: info@mosaic-records.ch. The exhibition shows that many farms in the region of Moosegg were run by Anabaptist families.*
- *Kemmeriboden: Traveling from Langnau – Trubschachen – Wiggen – Marbach – Schangnau – you reach Kemmeriboden. You will find the Restaurant Kemmeriboden-Bad at the foot of the mountain “Schrattenfluh” and “Hohgant” (Furgge). The names of people mentioned in the novel “Furgge” by Katharina Zimmermann can be found in this area. Many hiking trails lead through this landscape of valleys and mountains.*
- *Lüderalp: Going from Langnau via the Kohlgraben, you reach the Lüderalp. From here you can enjoy a wonderful view of the hills of the Emmental and behind them the Bernese Alps. A panoramic map is available at the restaurant. From here, the journey can be continued towards Wasen, Sumiswald and Trachselwald.*

Infos: www.emmental.ch

Map of the Region of the Emmental



52 *View from Schlosswil (Emmental) towards the city of Bern and the Jura (Chasseral).*

Region of Schwarzenburg

The village of Schwarzenburg is situated southwest of Bern inside the triangle marked by the cities Bern, Thun and Fribourg. It is easily accessible by car or S-train from Bern.

Hidden away, the remote area of Schwarzenburg is dotted with lonely settlements. These proved to be as ideal a hideout for the Anabaptists as the Emmental and the Jura. Over many years this remote area was governed by a number of different rulers, alternatively by the governors of Bern and Fribourg who resided in the castle. The Reformation was carried through with reluctance.

Despite imprisonment, confiscation and expatriation the Anabaptist heritage continued to be passed on from one generation to the next in these settlements. The Anabaptist Movement seemed to spread because the local population stood in opposition to the governors and government. However, the pastors of the Swiss Protestant church in this area did not get along with the Anabaptist farmers because they would not take part in the Lord's Supper. The Anabaptists preferred to live their faith in their own community.

Probably because of periodic persecution, there was no collaboration between the two groups. Then, without any obvious cause, the Anabaptists were suddenly brought into focus again in the years 1581-1652. This resulted in their exodus to the Alsace and Germany (Palatinate, Rhineland) which began in 1646. The emigrants kept

in touch with their relatives and friends in their homeland through an active exchange. From 1652-1692 the Anabaptists spread throughout the whole area.

In the years after 1693 the Anabaptists from the area of Schwarzenburg seem to have been influenced by the separation of Amish and Reistish, although no trace of this has been found in documents of that time. The strict, unyielding attitude of the Amish encouraged people to emigrate. This movement was at its peak with the emigration to America in 1737.

Those left behind decided to adapt but continued their resistance towards the government. Although the Anabaptists were granted more freedom after 1750 they disappeared from this area leaving no trace of their whereabouts.

Tourist information:
www.schwarzenburgerland.ch

Bernese Oberland

Schwarzenegg

The village of Schwarzenegg is situated between the Emmental and the Bernese Oberland, along the road from Thun-Steffisburg to Schallenberg.



The Church of Schwarzenegg built in 1693.

The Reformed Church in Schwarzenegg (BE) was built with money taken from Anabaptists. According to the judicial system of that time, the possessions of criminals automatically fell to the government. Because Anabaptists were considered to be criminals, their property was seized. Nevertheless, there was an orderly procedure and in certain cases the property could be recovered. However, because emigrant Anabaptists hardly ever made claims, the government accumulated considerable wealth. This money was donated to the “Chamber for Anabaptist Affairs” (Täuferkammer), which was a magisterial committee that dealt with issues concerning the Anabaptists, normally through procedures within the Reformed Church. The money was used for church programs, schools and the poor. In 1693 some funds were also invested in building churches, such as the Reformed Church

of Schwarzenegg (see the brochure: “300 Jahre Kirche Schwarzenegg”, 1993). A quote: “The fines paid by the Anabaptist families who emigrated in 1693 amounted to 1495 pounds.”

In 1993, on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of this Church, a delegation of Mennonites was invited to attend the celebrations. At the beginning of his speech Isaac Gerber, a representative of the Mennonites, quoted 1 Corinthians 3:11: “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” He mentioned that the Mennonites were part of this anniversary in the sense that the Reformed Church had been built with Anabaptist funds. He went on to say that the Anabaptists of today had no intention of taking revenge and would not insist on reparation payments. He emphasized that the Reformed Church and the Mennonites were on good terms because both had the same foundation: Jesus Christ.

Thun

Thun is called the “City of the Alps” as it is situated on the lower end of Lake Thun, at the entrance to the Bernese Oberland. Thun is accessible by train and car.



From 1530 to 1800 many Anabaptists lived in and around Thun.

From 1530 to 1800 many Anabaptists lived in and around Thun. Research has shown that this area, including places in the south of the Simmental and Steffisburg, Oberdiessbach, Kurzenberg near Linden and Sigriswil, was a center of intense Anabaptist activity. In the early days members of the Anabaptist families Brönimann and Joder, among others, were known to have been imprisoned in the Thun Castle.

Places of interest

Castle Thun and the old part of town, Lake Thun, a boat ride on the lake of Thun.

Oberhofen

Coming from Thun, Oberhofen is located along the northern lakeside. It is easy to find by car along the main road or by bus or boat.

Jacob Amman from Erlenbach, in the Simmental, the founder of the Amish, lived and worked as a tailor in Oberhofen for a number of years. In 1679 he joined the Anabaptists. Even before this became known, he sold his house in the village of Oberhofen to his younger brother Ulrich, who was a tailor as well. In 1680 the governor of Oberhofen wrote to the Bernese law-court that Jacob Amman had “been infected by the diabolical Anabaptist sect”. The law-court answered saying:



Mountain area in Sigriswil in the Bernese Alps being well taken care of by Swiss farmers.

“Examine and instruct him, and in case of stubbornness, excommunicate him...” There was no chance to carry this out as Amman went into hiding and fled to Heidsenheim in the Alsace and later on to Markirch (Sainte Marie-aux-Mines). Anabaptists who left Oberhofen around 1700 and later, have been tracked down to the area of Neuenburg (which was then under German government), to the Bishopric of Basel (governed by the Bishop of Basel), to Alsace, to the area of Montbéliard, to the Canton of Basel and above all to North America. To sum it up: Hilterfingen-Oberhofen played an important part in the history of the Amish and Anabaptists (with more than 200,000 members worldwide). These connections have only recently been discovered by the research of Hanspeter Jecker.

Erlenbach

The Simmental is accessible from Thun by taking the freeway A6 towards Spiez. Exit to Zweisimmen before Spiez. The main road leads through the valley to the village of Erlenbach.

Jacob Ammann, who was born in Erlenbach, was responsible for the schism that separated his followers, the Amish, from the other Swiss Anabaptists. In 1644 Jacob Ammann, son of Michael Ammann and Anna Rupp, was baptised in the Reformed Church of Erlenbach. The family moved to Oberhofen before 1662.

Things to do

Hike along the Simmen valley, ride the cable car up to the Stockhorn.

Tourist information: www.lenk.ch

Region of the Jura

Historical Summary of Anabaptism in the Jura

Many Anabaptist families were able to avoid persecution only by fleeing. As early as the mid 1500s the first Anabaptists fled to Basel, at that time a part of the Bishopric of Basel. Most of the Anabaptists, however, emigrated later, at the beginning of the 18th century.

In the hills of the Jura the Anabaptists were offered the so-called *Métairies* (farmland) for lease. Life on these farms, most of which were situated at an altitude above 1000 meters, was strenuous. But the Anabaptists proved themselves to be capable farmers. They cleared the rocky and infertile ground and used it for agriculture and stock-farming. Around 1730, five communities from the Jura raised vehement protest against the Anabaptists. They demanded from the governing bishop that these Anabaptists should be driven away. Not only were the people worried about the different religious convictions, they also feared economic competition. However, the governing bishop and the landowners, also for economic reasons, were not keen on getting rid of these diligent farmers.

Because they feared a new wave of persecution, the Anabaptists held their gatherings in hidden places like caves or gorges and at irregular intervals, mostly at night. Later, at the beginning of the 19th century they started to meet in remote farmhouses refurbished for that purpose. After religious freedom was granted (at the end of the

18th century) they started private schools in those farmhouses and built chapels with classrooms, as well as stables for the horses. Examples of these can be found in Moron (1892) and Jeanguisboden (1900). In the course of the 20th century they started to settle in the villages close by. Old workshops or deserted business places were cleared and refurbished for church services.

Jeanguisboden and Archives

Coming from Sonceboz-Corgémont: turn right before the Restaurant de l'Etoile, turn right again in the forest after 2.75 km, and drive to Le Jeangui.

Address: 2720 Le Jean Gui

Coming from Tramelan: Take the narrow road left towards La Tanne at the entrance of the village, after the furniture shop Geiser and wine dealer Paratte. At La Tanne turn right towards Jeanguisboden. There is a school on the left about 200 m before the chapel. Large buses can reach this place only via Tavannes. Drive in the direction of the pass Pierre-Pertuis, turn right in the sharp left bend, towards La Tanne.



The Chapel of Jeanguisboden with archives.

This chapel of the Sonnenberg congregation was built in 1900 with school classrooms in the basement. These are not used for that purpose any more.

Archives of the Swiss Mennonite Conference

The archives of the Swiss Mennonite Conference are saved in the basement of the chapel at Jeanguisboden. Many historic documents concerning the Anabaptists are preserved here and some are on exhibit. There are a number of Froschauer Bibles (the oldest one is dated 1534), some copies of the Martyrs Mirror, old song books (the Ausbund) and family trees with well-known Anabaptist family names.

These archives may be visited only with a guide. Price: 5 Francs per person. Contact: Michel Ummel Tel. +41 32 487 64 33 Email: mmummel@bluewin.ch

Bridge of the Anabaptists (Pont des Anabaptistes)

Going from Biel to Sonceboz, drive towards La Chaux-de-Fonds till Corgémont. At the crossing in the village centre there is a fountain on the left. There, on the left, cross the railway lines and the river “La Suze” and follow the road “Rue de l’Envers” up the hill, through cow pastures and some woods. Always stay on the paved road. After 4 km there is a sign “Pont des Anabaptistes” leading to the Bridge of the Anabaptists about 2.5 km farther.

Big buses can get to this place via Cortébert. At the village fountain in Cortébert there is a signpost on the left signaling Près de Cortébert. Follow it, cross the railway lines, turn left and drive up the paved road past



Ruins of the Anabaptist Bridge, 2007.

pastures, fields and a forest. After 6 km there is a restaurant “La Cuisinière”, after which you turn left. After another 1.5 km you will find the Bridge of the Anabaptists.

*Restaurant La Cuisinière
Les Prés-de-Cortébert 220, 2608 Cortébert*

Pont des Anabaptistes, 2606 Corgemont

One of the traditional areas of settlement by the Anabaptists is the terraced landscape on the north flank of the Chasseral range, above Corgémont and Cortébert in the valley of St. Imier. Situated at an altitude of 1100 to 1300 meters this settlement is separated into two parts by the Combe de Bez, a deep gorge also known as the Anabaptist Gorge. Because the “métairies” (farmland) spreads out on both sides of the gorge, it is assumed that during the 17th and 18th century the Anabaptists held their church services in the gorge. The earliest mention of the Bridge of the Anabaptists goes back to the year 1755. The first bridge was built of wood and had to be rebuilt every 15-20 years. The stone bridge, completed in 1835, was made in teamwork by farmers and landowners living “within

a distance of three to four hours.” Because the bridge was not repaired, it finally fell apart in 1924. Later, a dam was built 100 meters farther up to make a passageway for vehicles with heavier loads.

Every two years on the first Sunday in August a memorial service is held at the site of the bridge. The verse from 1 Corinthians 3:11 can be found on the commemorative tablet: “No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Le Chable (Lars)

Drive from the Bridge of the Anabaptists towards Cortébert, past the restaurant “La Cuisinière”. Turn left after about 540m, before the forest edge, near a small hut on the left. You will find the farmhouse “Le Chable” 700m farther on.

Next to the farmhouse “Le Chable” there is a tiny, forgotten chapel built in the 19th century. The Bible verses on the walls of the chapel (e.g. 1 John 1:7b: The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, purifies us from all sin) are well preserved and written in calligraphy. This place is open to the public.

Geisskirchlein (Little Church of the Goats) and Cave of the Anabaptists

The ascent (walk) begins above the gorge of Le Pichoux, between the villages of Sornetan and Souboz (municipality of Petit-Val). (The footpath begins at the farmhouse in the curve).



“Geisskirchlein” (Church of the goats) cave of Anabaptists.

White signposts with a green logo signalize the way from this place. Distance: approx. 900 m; Altitude difference about 100 m.

Address: Le Pichoux 25B 2716 Petit Val.

Follow the hiking trail towards the east. After about 300m there is a gravel pit with a signpost pointing to “Chapelle des Chèvres” (Church of the Goats). The path is steep and rocky. After a hike of about 20 minutes there is another sign “Chapelle des Chèvres”. Follow this sign, turn right on the narrow path and you will find the spacious cave hidden in the Jurassic limestone.

It is said that the Anabaptists gathered here for church meetings in the 17th and 18th centuries. At the back of the cave there is a commemorative tablet with the verse from Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” Every two years (alternating with the service at the Bridge of the Anabaptists) a memorial service is held here. The name “Geisskirchlein” (Little Church of the Goats) is derived from the name of the farm “Geiss” situated above the nearby village Les Ecorcheresses.



Courgenay

The village of Courgenay in the area of Ajoie (Elsgau) can be reached from Grosslützel via Charmoille-Miécourt, or from Delémont via Develier-Cornol. To visit this chapel drive to the village church, turn left there and drive to the south-western end of the village. The chapel is situated at the place called "Le Borbet".

The Mennonite church in Porrentruy (Pruntrut) was founded in 1895. Previously, the church services were held in different farm houses. A private Mennonite school was held in a farm house. The chapel Courgenay was built in 1938 and was attended by the members from the community of Porrentruy (Pruntrut).

Lucelle

The chapel is near the old Cistercian Abbey (today European Meeting Center Saint-Bernard), on the Alsatian border, about 20 km from Laufen towards Porrentruy. An alternative route is from Laufen through Delémont towards Bourrignon-Lucelle, which is about the same distance. The parking spaces are located in the center near the restaurant. From here you can see the chapel above the park. The walk takes about 10 minutes. Inform yourself at the restaurant.

Address: Maison Saint-Bernard, Lucelle.

This chapel used to be an inn with stables that provided shelter and rest for the stage-coach riders of old. When the railway was built, this service was no longer needed. Towards the end of the 19th century it was purchased by the Anabaptists who converted it into a chapel in 1901.

Chapel and Community Hall at Moron

Coming from Bellelay towards Tavannes, follow the sign at the cemetery and find the hamlet Moron after about 1 km.

This chapel was built in 1892 along with a classroom in the basement. There is a community hall next door which was formerly a house for the poor. It is now used by the congregation for special events. Currently, this hamlet is primarily inhabited by Mennonites. Only a few kilometers farther on in Montbautier, situated above Le Fuet, the Anabaptists used to have a school for many years.

Le Cernil

Coming from Tramelan towards Saignelégier there is a crossing after Les Reusilles. Turn right towards Lajoux, Les Genevez. After about 1 km there is an impressive farmhouse on the left hand side (Métairie du Cernil).

The first Anabaptist chapel in the Jura was built in 1883 and it was a place of worship until 1928. It is located right beside the farmhouse. The present owner of the place totally converted the chapel into a residence. It can only be viewed from the outside.

Les Mottes

Coming from Tramelan towards Saignelégier there is a crossing in Les Reusilles. Go straight ahead, drive 2 km then turn right towards "Restaurant des Voyageurs Le Bois Derrière". By mid 2007 there should be a sign there pointing to "Les Mottes" The chapel is situated about 2.3 km farther on.



The Chapel “Les Mottes” with a Meeting and Youth Center in the background.



Traditional wood furnishings in the Chapel of La Chaux-d’Abel.

The nearby farmhouse, La Pâturatte, was enlarged to accommodate a school with the same name. It is a testimony to the openness and self-sacrificing attitude of the Anabaptists in the Jura regarding the education of their children.

The chapel at Les Mottes was built after the chapel at Le Cernil in 1928. It was renovated in 1967. Then in 2003 the holiday camp extension was made. About 600 people can be seated in the church hall, and it is used by the congregations of Sonnenberg: Jeanguisboden, Mont-Tramelan and Tramelan.

Today the buildings are a modern meeting facility and youth center used for conventions, holiday camps, retreats and seminars. See info on www.lesmottes.ch.

The main road leading on towards Saignelégier goes past the “Etang de La Gruère”. This quaint natural lake is visited by tourists from all over the world.

La Chaux-d’Abel

The town of La Chaux-d’Abel is situated between Les Breuleux and La Ferrière. To find the chapel north of the main road,

follow a brown sign “Chapelle” at the junction.

As was customary at the time, the schoolhouse built in 1863 and the chapel built in 1904 were next to each other. The wood furnishings inside the buildings are of intricate design.

Les Bulles

This chapel is situated near La Chaux-de-Fonds. At the entrance of the town towards Biaufond/Hopital, turn right after about 2 km and drive for another 200 m. You will see a farm and the chapel on the left.

The chapel was built in 1863, according to the style of that time, with the meeting place being upstairs. Before that, the congregation met in Les Bessels on a farm between La Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle.

Places of Interest in the Jura

- *The medieval town of St-Ursanne on the banks of the river Doubs. Besides an ancient bridge there is an impressive Romanic church.*
- *The grounds and building of the former monastery of the Benedictine order in*

Bellelay. The monastery was established in 1136. Of special interest is the chapel (one of the largest in the Canton of Bern), parts of which were built during the Renaissance and partly during the Baroque period. It is said that the monks of Bellelay were the first to have produced the famous cheese of Bellelay, the “Tete de Moine” (Monk’s Head Cheese).

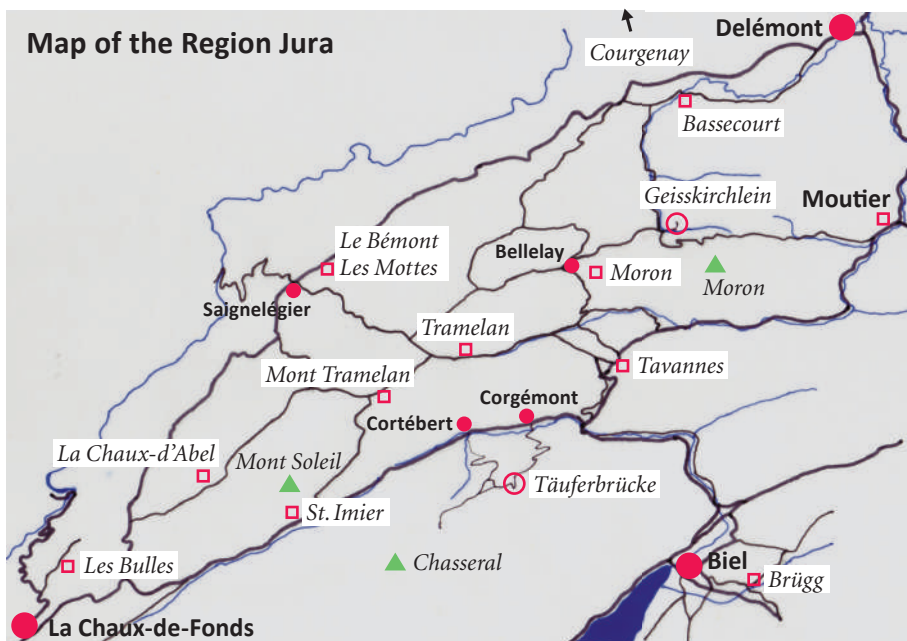
- Many church windows of stained glass, designed by contemporary artists, can be found all over the Jura. Some of them are unique masterpieces. The Bernese art historian Prof. Max Huggler maintains that the church windows in Bissière are the most beautiful in all of Europe.
- The International Museum of Clocks and Watches in La Chaux-de-Fonds displays the past and present history of the watch industry.

- La Tour de Moron (Tower of Moron) was designed by the reknown Mario Botta and is worth a visit. There is a beautiful view from the tower, which is accessible by foot from different directions.
- Naturally the Chasseral is one of the most popular destinations for an excursion in the Jura. Here you can enjoy a great view of the Alps from the Sântis to Mont Blanc, the Vosges Mountains and the Black Forest.

Info at www.jurabernois.ch and www.juratourisme.ch



Settlements were allowed only at an altitude of 1000 m or higher (see page 86).



Region of Basel

As early as 1525, four years before the Reformation actually began in Basel, an Anabaptist congregation existed in the city of Basel. Many people throughout this region were pleased to find answers to their questions in this growing movement, although efforts were made to suppress it. When the Reformation began in 1529, dissenters were systematically executed. Because of this the Anabaptist Movement in the urban area was stifled and driven into more rural areas.

17th and 18th Centuries

In the middle of the 16th century there was a new awakening of the Anabaptist Movement. A relatively peaceful time ended in the 17th century with repressive measures being taken in Basel, among other places. Meetings and sermons were prohibited. Lengthy imprisonment and torture, confiscation of private property,

excommunication and expulsion forced a great number of Anabaptists into exile. They resettled in Moravia, Alsace, the Palatinate and North America. Prior to 1700, many significant Anabaptist centers could be found in Leimental, Blauen, Riehen, Lörrach and Grenach, and also in the villages of rural Basel: in Buus, Maisprach and Tecknau, and above all in Thürnen and Rothenfluh.

Around 1700 the stronghold of local Anabaptism seemed to have crumbled. Although there were pockets of Anabaptist revival during the time of Radical Pietism at the beginning of the 18th century, the Anabaptist church in Basel was not able to make a new beginning. Only after 1750 was Anabaptism re-established in this area with the help of immigrants from the Emmental, the Jura and Alsace. The growing influence of Pietism and the

No Place to Stay

Many Anabaptist families were able to avoid persecution only by fleeing. As early as the mid 1500s the first Anabaptists fled to Basel, at that time a part of the Bishopric of Basel. Most of the Anabaptists, however, emigrated later, at the beginning of the 18th century.

Because the Anabaptists were considered enemies of the State, the government of Bern during three centuries, made repeated attempts to evict these

dissenters from the country. Anabaptists did not voluntarily choose to pack up and flee from the State as they were very attached to their farms and home communities. Thus the State repeatedly sent out orders to the local authorities to arrest the Anabaptists who were subsequently taken to the border, beaten and told to never return upon pain of death. History traces evicted Anabaptists in Basel to the mid 1500s. In the early 1700s, due to continuing mandates, many more were evicted into the Bishopric of Basel.

Enlightenment made way for more tolerance and new beginnings. Because most of the Anabaptists were professional farmers they settled on farmland at higher altitudes, e.g. at St. Romai, Arxhof, Wildenstein, Dietisberg, Witwald, Schillingsrain and Alt-Schauenburg. Later, they began to farm in the vicinity of towns such as Brülingen, St. Jakob, Rothaus, Schlossgut Binningen and Wenkenhof.

19th and 20th Centuries

In the course of the 19th century, economic problems, and above all the gradual introduction of compulsory military service in Switzerland, led to the emigration of a great number of Anabaptists to North America – including many from the area of Basel. This continuing exodus broke up the ranks of the Anabaptist church, as it was often people of leadership and stature who turned their backs on their homeland. Consequently the spiritual life of the church declined and theology grew cold. It was through the influence of the late Pietistic Movement of fellowship and sanctification, which occurred at the Conference of the Evangelische Täufer Gemeinden (ETG) churches in Switzerland that new beginnings took place about 1900. Increasing contact and interactivity with North American fellow-believers after 1920 led to a new discovery and acceptance of the specific Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. The churches in Basel especially profited from this relationship and hosted two plenary assemblies of the Mennonite World Conference in their city, in 1925 and in 1952. Also significant was the European office of the Mennonite Central Committee with its relief activities centered in Basel (1946). These contacts

provided the impetus to establish the first European Mennonite Bible School in Basel in 1950 (later Bienenberg near Liestal).

Anabaptist Places and People

Here is a description of places and people from the early years of the Anabaptist Movement to provide insight into the background and life of the Anabaptists. These references also serve as examples for other areas and people. All the places mentioned can easily be found on a map.

Weisse Gasse (White Lane) near the Bärfusserplatz, Basel

The earliest traces of Anabaptist gatherings were found here even before the Reformation. The movement gained momentum in other places as well as in the area of Basel. The year 1529 marked the beginning of the Reformation in Basel, which resulted in more and more persecution of the Anabaptists in this area.



“Weisse Gasse” (White Lane). The first group of Anabaptists was traced to this location.

Spalentor, Basel

The Spalentor and other sites were known as places where Anabaptists were imprisoned and questioned. Many Anabaptists from the area of Basel were imprisoned, among whom were Heini and Verena Müller Rohrer from Tschoppenhof in Waldenburg.



“Spalentor” in Basel – on repeated occasions a place where Anabaptists were kept imprisoned over long periods of time.

Rathaus, (City Hall) Basel

This was the seat of the governing authorities in Basel. In 1595 they were the ones who issued one of the most severe mandates against the Anabaptists in their territory. Prior to this there had been a great dispute with the Anabaptist teacher Markus Lützelmann and his wife Anna Sutter, as well as an increase in the number of church meetings in the area. The conversion of a certain obstinate mercenary created a sensation, as he refused to continue his military service.

A quote from the mandate: “But because such people obstinately insist on their



“Rathaus” (City Hall) of Basel. Here, a mandate against the Anabaptists was issued in 1595.

wicked and false opinions and ideas and do not let themselves be conformed, they are to be expatriated and all their private property confiscated and entrusted to the government...” In addition to expatriation, this mandate called for the confiscation of private property. This proved to be effective because there were quite a number of wealthy Anabaptists in this area. The fact is that many of them submitted to this punishment rather than give up their convictions. The mandates, at the end of the 16th century, were the last focussed efforts to exterminate the Anabaptists in this area for the time being.

Holeestrasse 141 Basel, and Schänzli Muttenz

Apart from the buildings of the National Churches, the chapel at the Holeestrasse 141, is the oldest church building. It was built by the Mennonites in 1847 as the meeting place of the “Untere Gemeinde”, which was a congregation with Amish tradition. The other congregation, which met at the Schänzli in Muttenz, was known as the “Obere Gemeinde”. This local church was established around 1790 as a result of the Anabaptists who had settled on numerous farms nearby. Both of these local churches are active to this day.

David-Joris-Strasse, Binningen

David Joris (1501-1556) from the Netherlands joined the Anabaptists in 1535 and became a leader and one of the most dazzling figures in the history of the Anabaptists in his homeland of Holland. Due to differences in opinion with Menno Simons, he and his whole family and his relatives emigrated to Basel. He referred to himself as a converted religious refugee, however, he was wealthy and generous. The people in Basel welcomed him under the name of Johann von Brügge.

Although he and his family were spiritually Anabaptist-minded they kept their faith a private matter while outwardly conforming to the customs of the society. His correspondence with Anabaptist fellow-believers in his homeland as well as his career as an author and artist were carefully concealed. Being wealthy, the family took the opportunity of purchasing a number of houses in the area: the Spiesshof in Heuberg, the Weiher Schloss in Binningen (castle) with the adjoining

church and farm estate, the house near the Schweizerhalle and the farm Hinter-Birtis in the valley of Beinwil at Passwang. Only after his death, after a family feud, was the true story about David Joris revealed. The people of Basel were greatly shocked to have accommodated such a heretic in their town. His body was exhumed from the cemetery of the Leonhard church some two and a half years after his burial and brought to the “Richtstätte” (place of judgement, near the present zoo), where it was burned along with his books and paintings.

Veronica Salathe from Seltisberg

Again and again, Anabaptism proved to be a place of refuge for men and women who were unhappy and insecure and looking for new meaning in their faith and life. The people who found their way to Anabaptism were ready to break their ties and relationships to worldly commitments in order to follow nothing but their own conscience as they relied upon God and the counsel of their fellow-believers. Although the Anabaptist Movement took shape under the influence of strong male leaders, the women actively participated in the formation and organisation of the Anabaptist community.

One of these influential women was Veronica Salathe. Born in 1577 into the Meier family in Seltisberg, she married Werlin Buser, a weaver from Liestal in 1597. They had 7 children who were all baptized in the State Church. There was no hint of any Anabaptist background. In 1609 they sold all their possessions and, like many others, emigrated to Moravia. There Veronica was converted. She returned to Liestal two

years later as a widow with 4 children. Here she was given the right of residence, provided she give up her Anabaptist faith. She declined, preferring to move away.

In 1616 she was captured in Basel during a police raid. Apparently she had been living in Böckten in Canton Basel, where she had married a weak and elderly man from Baden. She managed to escape to Laufenburg in Canton Aargau, where she was captured and imprisoned again. The authorities wanted to confiscate her belongings, but they found nothing as she had been living in extreme poverty.

During her trial it became clear that Veronica had played an important part in spreading Anabaptism. Therefore she was sentenced to be deported. But again and again she managed to escape from her punishment, even with the help of a bailiff who risked losing his own job. Veronica is considered one of the main figures in the Anabaptist community in the area of Basel from 1615-1630. She had contact with people who were interested in the Anabaptist faith and who, when converted, became pillars of the Anabaptist Movement in the area.

Among the Anabaptists were people with names such as Hersberger and Berchtold, whose family names are quite common in North America today.

Waldenburg

For many years the resident bailiff had proudly announced to the authorities in Basel that no Anabaptists were to be found in Waldenburg. But towards the end of the 16th century it was a different story.

An Anabaptist couple by the name of Heini and Verena Müller-Rohrer from Tschoppenhof near Liedertswil was tracked down. They were imprisoned, put in the pillory, flogged, and while the husband recanted, his wife stood firm.

Anabaptist Community in Thürnen

For decades the village of Thürnen had been a center of Anabaptist activity in the Basel region. Two men from Thürnen named Jacob Matter and Hans Hersberger were put on trial in 1585. Both admitted having joined the Anabaptists two years previously at an Anabaptist meeting in Blauen (situated on the hills south of Basel).

Jacob Matter was a charcoal-burner and came from a poor family. He married Elisabeth Boni who shared his faith, and together they had six children. Anabaptist Hans Hersperger and his wife Anna Oetlin, who was not a member of the Anabaptists, lived on a small farm with their five children. After eight weeks of imprisonment both men were set free and allowed to go back home on condition that they “change their mind”. Soon both of them turned up in Thürnen. It seems that they were two of many Anabaptist men who refused to be exiled, quoting Psalm 24,1 in defense: “The earth is the Lord’s (and not the government’s) and everything in it.”

Bad Bubendorf

Today Bad Bubendorf is a popular restaurant, but it all started with an Anabaptist doctor. A number of Anabaptists at that time were experienced in medical science. The people, in general, were often at the mercy of epidemics like the plague, as well



Bad Bubendorf- everything started with an Anabaptist General Medical Practitioner.

as other illnesses. Thus, it is no wonder that people kept their eyes open for all kinds of remedies like liquids and baths, or treatments and therapies. Although the 17th century was known for people who played fast and loose with the art of medical science, there is no record of any Anabaptist healers who were accused of this. On the contrary, they seemed to be appreciated so much that no one dared lift a finger against them, despite their faith. Their motto was: “Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile” (Jeremiah 29,7).

Frenkendorf, Liestal, Röserental

The Bienenberg has played an important role in the more recent history of European Mennonites. It was only recently discovered that many neighboring villages and places were also interwoven in the history of the Mennonites.

Since the late 18th century almost all the farms in the Röserental (valley of Röseren) were cultivated by Anabaptist families for a time. The Schillingrain farm is

significant because baptismal ceremonies took place there until 1890.

Andreas Boni from Frenkendorf

Andreas was a professional weaver of linen and lived at the foot of the Bienenberg. Born and baptized in 1673, he was confirmed in the State Church in 1690 as his parents were Reformed. In order to improve his profession he moved to the area of Heidelberg, where he married and came in contact with exiled Swiss Anabaptists and radical Pietists. He was converted and returned to Switzerland after the death of his young wife in 1704. Here he was noticed for his non-conformist attitude (not taking part in the Lord's Supper and refusing to take oaths or carry weapons). The pastor of the Reformed Church denounced him before the authorities so he was arrested, put on trial and imprisoned. Traces of him were later found abroad, but he returned in 1706. For a while his home was the meeting place for those who held some kind of grudge against the government, until he was again imprisoned. In 1706 the authorities sent him into exile, but he had made no promise not to return. All he said was that he would commit it to the Lord. Shortly afterwards, he promptly turned up in the territory of Waldenburg. The authorities captured him, chained his neck and sent him away again. One year later Andreas Boni turned up in Schwarzenau, north of Frankfurt, and joined the founding circle of a movement inside Anabaptism, which later developed into the Church of Brethren. Today this church has about 200,000 members and is regarded as one of the historic “peace churches” (Friedenskirche) along with the Mennonites and Quakers.

Theological Seminary and Conference Center, Bienenberg

The Bienenberg is situated above Liestal. It can be reached by car via Frenkendorf or Liestal. For more information see: www.bienenberg.ch

The European Mennonite Bible School was established in Basel in 1950 and was moved to the Bienenberg near Liestal in 1957. Since then, many significant initiatives have been set in motion from there. The local Mennonite churches, as well as other churches and Centers of Education have profited from this. Today the Bible School is called the Theological Seminary and Conference Center of Bienenberg or Theological Seminary Bienenberg. While it was established as a Theological Seminary, the Bienenberg facility meets a lot of different needs. Besides being a conference center for churches and other groups and institutions, there is also a café-restaurant and lodging for tourists and vacationers.



Theological Seminary and Conference Center Bienenberg near Liestal/Basel (established in 1957).

Because it is well situated geographically, the Bienenberg is a useful base for doing research into the history of Anabaptism in Zurich, Bern, and Basel as well as the Emmental, the Jura and the Alsace. (www.bienenberg.ch)

Places of interest in Basel

The Münster (Cathedral), the five ferries across the Rhine, the City Hall at the market place, the Spalentor, the Mittlere Brücke (middle bridge), the Basel Zoo, a walk along the Rhine, the Tinguely Museum, and the Museum of Art.

Infos at: www.basel.com

Hanspeter Jecker researched the history of Anabaptism in Basel. The result of his work was published under the title: “Ketzer-Rebellen-Heilige”. See list of resources on page 73. You will find a chronological table of Anabaptist development in the area of Basel on page 88.



Restaurant and Guesthouse

Region of St. Gallen and Appenzell

The Swiss Reformation began in Zurich with Zwingli in 1523. His friend Vadian from St. Gallen, who was the town doctor and mayor, was a strong supporter of his and began “Lesinen” (Bible study groups) in his own home. This Bible movement spread out over a large area and was also supported by the State Church.

In February 1525, Wolfgang Ulimann from St. Gallen was baptized in the Rhine by the Anabaptist leader Conrad Grebel from Zurich, Vadian’s brother-in-law, who excitedly reported on this in St. Gallen. Witnessed by a great crowd of people on March 18, Ulimann renounced his membership in the Reformed Church, which was now referred to as the “Place of Lies”. On April 9, Palm Sunday, the charismatic preacher Conrad Grebel himself came to St. Gallen. The sermons on repentance and a new beginning led to a mass baptism in the Sitter River near Bruggen, where 500 to 800 people were baptized. In May Zwingli published a pamphlet against the Anabaptists, dedicating it to the faithful in St. Gallen. From June 4 to 6, the local Municipal Council opened a public debate on the subject which resulted in the surprisingly mild resolution to allow the Anabaptist Bible reading groups to continue but to prohibit the act of baptism in order to stop the development of congregations.

The weaver Hans Krüsi from St. Georgen, one of the most well-known Anabaptist leaders of that area, was officially nominated to serve as a minister by the people of Tablat on June 6, 1525. However, only a



View of the City of St. Gallen in the east of Switzerland.

few weeks later he already became a martyr. One of the main accusations against him was that he had “preached to the common uneducated folk that they were not obliged to be obedient to any government, furthermore that all people were equal and that those who had possessions were to share them with others.” This particular execution had no negative impact on the Anabaptist Movement. On the contrary: the martyrs’ enthusiasm, their lack of possessions, their refusal to do military service and their touching, ecstatic church meetings were the reason that this area temporarily became one of the largest centers of Anabaptism in all of Switzerland. There were said to be three meeting places with 2200 members in the region of Appenzell. At the Anabaptist meeting in December 1528, 100 participants were counted and in October 1529 as many as 400 Anabaptists took part at the big Anabaptist disputation in Teufen, Appenzell.

Memorials of Anabaptism in St. Gallen

Memorial of Vadian at the Market Place

This statue, designed by Kissling in 1904, shows Vadian the town doctor, mayor and reformer of St. Gallen as an educated, self-confident humanist, holding a book (the Bible) in his left hand and raising his right hand in speech. His sword hangs almost invisible at his side. According to Vadian, no one was to be executed in St. Gallen for their convictions, neither Anabaptists nor witches. To the right of the memorial there used to be a house, where the weavers worked. Here Wolfgang Ulimann, who originally came from the Grisons and was now a citizen of the town, gave a speech on March 18, 1525. He had been baptized naked in the Rhine by Conrad Grebel and now spoke of the new insights he had won through this experience: “Never at any time has the State Church spoken the truth, nor will it ever speak the truth” (all quotes by Johannes Kessler). In this way the Anabaptists from St. Gallen separated from the State Church which reported: “They held their gatherings in private homes, on hills and in fields. They regarded us as heathen and themselves as the Christian Church.” The Anabaptist’s preaching of repentance led to their separation from the State Church in St. Gallen.

Behind the Memorial of Vadian there used to be a butchery with spacious halls. It was here that a farmer by the name of Eberli Bolt from Lachen, in the Canton of Schwyz, preached for a whole week on the “great and wonderful powers, which the Anabaptists were receiving. Following this message a great number of town

citizens and local farmers joined his teaching” (quote according to Kessler). On April 21, 1525 this “expatriate” was arrested by the authorities and burned at the stake in Schwyz.

Hinterlauben 8 and 10

Follow the Marktgasse uphill and turn right before the first junction to find Hinterlauben 8 (a new building) where Joachim von Watt was born.

Joachim von Watt (also known as Vadianus) studied and taught in Vienna for 17 years. He lived in the same house as Conrad Grebel from Zurich who was five years younger and who introduced him to his sister Martha. The two got married and later returned to St. Gallen. They lived and worked at Hinterlauben 10. Due to the influence of reformators like Zwingli the couple separated from the State Church and had to face the resulting consequences, including tension in their relationship with Conrad Grebel (Martha’s brother).

Go back to the Marktgasse, go right and find the Evangelical Church St. Laurenzen.

Evangelical Church St. Laurenzen

This is where the town authorities opened a public debate about Anabaptist teaching on Pentecost in 1525. The major question in the people’s minds was whether the Anabaptists or the town authorities would win. The debate concluded with the decision that church meetings would be allowed to continue but that the rites of baptism and the Lord’s Supper were prohibited. Offenders were to be punished with a fine.

Both parties felt they had won the debate. But the Anabaptists soon moved to areas where they were under less scrutiny, such as the town's suburbs: Linsebühl and St. Leonhard, and especially the countryside of Appenzell. There were never any executions of Anabaptists in this vicinity. Once in a while someone was exiled, but this did not stop the Anabaptist congregations from attracting attention – in fact it led to the development of three congregations.

From the entrance of the church cross over to the other side to Gallusstreet 4, to what is now called "Restaurant zur Alten Post".

Restaurant zur Alten Post (since 1835 "One-Story-Pub")

The inscription on the house honors the popular theologically-minded master of saddlery, Johannes Kessler, friend and co-worker of Vadian. He became a teacher, later a lay-preacher, and finally the main pastor. He built this house as a parsonage in 1551, and lived here during the last 22 years of his life.

Kessler's diary "Sabbata", which contains a lot of information about the Anabaptists in St. Gallen, documents his heartfelt attitude to all people.

Klosterplatz

The advocate of the monastic Abbey, Dr. Winkler was regarded as a symbol of monastic feudal power. For this reason he was kidnapped and imprisoned by rebellious farmers who understood the gospel to have social and political meaning. While the "Buss- und Taufbewegung" (movement of repentance and baptism) was reluctantly accepted in the Protestant part

of the town, the Catholic Abbey of St. Gallen fought vehemently against it.

In revenge for the kidnapping of Dr. Winkler, officials from the Abbey illegally kidnapped the Anabaptist leader Hans Krüsi in St. Georgen in 1525. They later executed him in Lucerne in 1529. The Anabaptist Hans Feusi was drowned in Toggenburg in 1530. Another Anabaptist leader was beheaded in Gossau, and in 1550 Hans Wick, also an Anabaptist, was executed in Rorschach.

"Steinachschlucht" (Gorge of Steinach), which is a romantic place in summer, is on the other side of the monastery and leads from Mühlegg up a steep slope to St. Georgen. Anabaptist meetings took place there in the private home of the widely respected Schugger family. One winter night, on February 8, 1526, a terrible thing happened: Leonhard Schugger who had expressed his desire to really "die like Jesus", was beheaded with his small dagger by his brother Thomas Schugger, while the congregation sang and prayed. In court Thomas stated that "he had not committed the crime for personal reasons but by the command and power of God." For this reason (but not because he was an Anabaptist) he deserved the death sentence, according to the law of that time. Before he was beheaded he said he not only believed that his sins were forgiven, but that he also positively knew it. So he "happily gave up his neck to the hangman" (all quotes by Kessler). This fratricide (murder by a brother) was harmful not only to the reputation of Protestantism in general, but especially to the Anabaptist Movement. It was one of the reasons

why the more liberal Anabaptist circles met almost a year later in Schleithelm in Randen (see page 37ff) to hold a new council. The “Seven Articles”, which were recorded there on February 24, 1527 set a more sober and clear standard for European Anabaptism as it continued, distinct and independent from the State Church.



Farmhouse in the Canton of Appenzell.

Places of interest

- *Near the market place: the Gothic Cloister in the nunnery St. Katharinen, which was forcibly closed during the Reformation.*
- *The Baroque church, belonging to the monastery, containing the world famous church library and lapidarium (presentation of the monastery's history); Unesco Heritage of World Culture.*
- *The New-Gothic church of St. Laurenzen with a view of the city from the tower.*

City map: www.stadt.sg.ch

info: www.stgallen.ch

www.stgaller-geschichten.org

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Mennonite World Conference
www.mwc-cmm.org

Appendix: History in Context

Bernese Anabaptist History: A Chronological Outline

- 1525ff** Throughout Europe: Emergence of various Anabaptist groups from a radical reform context. Gradual diversification and development in different directions: Swiss Brethren (Switzerland, Germany, France, Austria), Hutterites (Moravia), Mennonites [Doopsgezinde] (Netherlands, Northern Germany), etc. First appearance of Anabaptists in Bern soon after 1525. Anabaptists emphasized:
- Freedom of choice concerning beliefs and church membership: Rejection of infant baptism, and practice of “believers baptism” (baptism upon confession of faith)
 - Founding of congregations independent of civil authority
 - Refusal to swear oaths and rejection of military service
 - “Fruits of repentance” – visible evidence of beliefs
- 1528** Coinciding with the establishment of the Reformation in Bern, a systematic persecution of Anabaptists begins, which leads to their migration into rural areas. Immediate execution ordered for re-baptized Anabaptists who will not recant (Jan. 1528).
- 1529** First executions in Bern (Hans Seckler and Hans Treyer from Lausen [Basel] and Heini Seiler from Aarau)
- 1530** First execution of a native Bernese Anabaptist: Konrad Eichacher of Steffisburg.
- 1531** Well-known and successful Anabaptist minister Hans Pfistermeyer recants after a 3-day discussion with Bernese theologians. New mandate moderates punishment to banishment rather than immediate execution. An expelled person who returns faces first dunking, and if returning a second time, death by drowning.
- 1532** Anabaptist and Reformed theologians meet for several days in Zofingen. Both sides declare a victory.
- 1533** Further temporary moderation of anti-Anabaptist measures: Anabaptists who keep quiet are tolerated, and even if they do not they no longer face banishment, dunking or execution, but are imprisoned for life at their own expense. Shortly thereafter it is clarified that “quiet Anabaptists” (stille Täufer) will only be tolerated if they attend Reformed Church services and have their children baptized.

- 1534** New Reformation regulations requires Anabaptists to be registered in lists.
- 1535** Renewed intensification of punishment measures: whoever refuses to swear to the 1534 regulations and stubbornly adheres to Anabaptist thinking will be banished and executed upon return: women by drowning, men by the sword; later, remorseful Anabaptists are allowed to use a recantation form (Täuferbrief) to avoid execution at the last hour.
- 1538** Many Anabaptists from the Emme River valley (Emmental), where the movement has become increasingly strong, participate in a disputation in Bern lasting several days. Further intensification of repression: Immediate execution of ministers (Redliführer), systematic use of torture and paid “Anabaptist hunters” (Täuferjäger), confiscation of Anabaptist property, etc. However, measures are not applied consistently and are eventually moderated in part.
- 1566** New Anabaptist mandate requires sworn affirmation of 1534 regulations at special meetings. Resisters must be reported and have three months to sell their property and leave the territory permanently (but Anabaptist leaders are to be arrested immediately). Those who return shall be executed. Those who swear affirmation and become backsliders will be harshly punished (left to the judgment of the government, but always with confiscation of property). Anabaptist property is to benefit, among other things, the alms fund of the municipality concerned and to reward denouncers.
- 1571** Last official execution of a Bernese Anabaptist: Hans Haslibacher from Sumiswald. About 40 executions of Bernese Anabaptists have been documented to date, although actual numbers might be much higher. Over the centuries, many more Anabaptists fell victim to illness or exhaustion as a result of harsh prison sentences, while fleeing, or while serving as galley slaves – though none of these appear in any magistrate’s execution statistics.
- 1579** New Anabaptist mandate: Repeal of provision allowing Anabaptists to depart without punishment taking proceeds of their property with them. General confiscation of Anabaptist property. Pastors make lists of Anabaptists during mandatory annual home visits.
- 1585** New comprehensive Anabaptist mandate. Explicitly named among reasons for a renewed increase in Anabaptism are unsatisfactory conditions within the Reformed Church itself. Renewed intensification of measures against Anabaptists, though without apparent lasting success in hindering their growth.

1644 New comprehensive Anabaptist mandate renews and clarifies earlier measures.

1648ff End of the 30-Year-War in Europe

- Increased immigration by Anabaptists from the Bern, Zurich, and Basel regions to Alsace (France) and Palatinate (Germany) – in part due to massive Dutch Mennonite support.
- These new congregations begin over time to assimilate into their new, more tolerant surroundings. This development bears marks of biblical-theological, ecclesiastical and cultural openness, as well as a spiritual ebb and loss of Anabaptist identity.
- Later Anabaptist immigrants and refugees from Switzerland are sometimes shocked at such developments among the brothers and sisters of their faith who arrived before them. They detect worrisome signs of spiritual decay against which they must be on guard. (Note later emergence of the Amish in 1693.)

1650ff Growth in the number of Anabaptists and sympathizers (Halbtäufer i.e. “half-Anabaptists”) in the Bern region, especially after the defeat of the Peasants’ Revolt in 1653, leads to increased repression by Bernese authorities.

- Bans on Anabaptist meetings and any sheltering of Anabaptists. Also arrests, heavy fines, expulsions, deportations, lifelong banishment, confiscation of property, and sentencing to the galleys.
- In spite of this, Anabaptism continues to grow, especially in the regions of Ob- and Nidwalden, Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, and the area around Thun/Oberland.

Among various explanations why parts of the local population from time to time demonstrated considerable sympathy toward the Anabaptists:

- Dissatisfaction with their own church conditions coupled with a yearning for spiritual renewal allow them, in the context of the early Pietist movement (1680ff), to view Anabaptism from a more favorable perspective.
- Others consider solidarity with and advocacy for the Anabaptists primarily as a means to counter an unpopular, aristocratic-urban authority whose thirst for power is extending noticeably even into rural areas.

1659ff To combat the continued growth in local Anabaptism, Bern creates a special commission called the “Delegates for Anabaptist Affairs” (Commitierten zum Täufer-Geschäft, later called the Täufer-Kammer or “Anabaptist Chamber”).

- New extensive Anabaptist mandates (1659, 1670f, 1693).
- Numerous petitions on behalf of the Bernese Anabaptists come from the Netherlands – from Mennonites, representatives of the Dutch Reformed church and the government. These vex and unsettle Bernese authorities.

- 1669** Bernese government issues a secret directive for the recruitment of informers and “Anabaptist-hunters” (Täuferjäger), including a bounty for each captured Anabaptist.
- 1671** According to a new mandate, every Bernese village with resident Anabaptists must bear the costs of sending respected inhabitants to Bern as “hostages” until the Anabaptists have been captured. As a result expulsion and flight of some 700 Bernese Anabaptists to the Palatinate, which had a tolerance law since 1664. Dutch Mennonites provide generous financial and logistical help.
- 1693** The Pietist-minded pastor from Lützelflüh, Georg Thormann, publishes a moderately anti-Anabaptist writing, “Touchstone of Anabaptism” (Proberstein des Täuferturns) to warn Reformed sympathizers about the dangers of converting to Anabaptism and to encourage active involvement in their own church.
- 1693** Self-critical report by the Bernese clergy, including complaint from pastors that can hardly say anything critical about the Anabaptists because “almost everyone is so well-disposed towards them, that nobody wants to listen if we preach against them”.
- 1693ff** Amish-Reist Schism
- The Anabaptist elder Jakob Amman (born 1644, from Erlenbach in the Simme River valley (Simmental), later lived in Oberhofen on the Lake of Thun and, since approximately 1680, a resident in Alsace) makes a pastoral tour through Swiss Anabaptist congregations in 1693 to promote a return to more consistent practice of faith and congregational discipline.
 - This results in serious differences of opinion (especially with elder Hans Reist), which during a meeting in Emmental in the summer of 1693 led to a rupture and schism within Swiss Anabaptism, and soon thereafter also within related groups in Alsace and southern Germany.
- 1698ff** Amish leaders admit their own guilt and mistakes (acting all too hastily and without consultation), however, their attempts at reconciliation are rejected by non-Amish Anabaptist leaders.
- 1699** Bern wants to deport native Anabaptists to the East Indies.
- 1699** Great Bern Pietist Trial: Results in expulsion of several radical Bernese Pietists, including Samuel König.

- 1710** Over 50 Bernese Anabaptists deported and sent down the Rhine River. Once they cross the Dutch border they are released by authorities.
- 1711** Bernese authorities grant a temporary “amnesty” due to massive pressure from the Netherlands:
- Anabaptists may depart without punishment within a certain time period, and are permitted to take their possessions, but lose citizenship (Heimatrecht).
 - Mass exodus of about 350 Anabaptists (Amish and non-Amish) on four ships down the Aare River, primarily towards the Netherlands.
- Due to similarity of beliefs the Anabaptists of Swiss heritage are also sometimes called Mennists or Mennoniten.
- 1712**
- Expulsion of Anabaptists from Alsace by edict of French King Louis XIV creates fear among Bernese authorities that Anabaptists will return.
 - The stream of Bernese Anabaptist migration now heads towards the bishopric of Basel (well into the 19th century), and the regions of Neuchâtel and Montbéliard, and later increasingly to North America (Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Ontario).
 - In the following decades essentially all Amish Anabaptists (primarily from the regions of Thun, and Oberland) leave the Bern area. A number of non-Amish Anabaptists remain, primarily in Emmental.
- 1718** New, strict Anabaptist mandate (already in 1714, 5 Bernese Anabaptists were again sent to the galleys in Sicily).
- 1719** Founding of schools and parishes to combat Anabaptism in Trub, Langnau, Lützelflüh, Sumiswald, etc. (This occurred earlier in Eggiwil [1631], Schwarzenegg [1693] and Heimiswil [1704])
- 1743** Täuferkammer dissolved. (See 1659)
- 1798f** Collapse of “old” Bern. Constitution of new Helvetic Republic provides freedom of religion and conscience and a tolerance law, which lifts all “penal laws of previous governments against religious persuasions and sects.”
- 1810ff** Power of restorational tendencies grows leading to fresh repression of Anabaptism: Administration of mandatory baptisms in Langnau; plans for a special “Anabaptist Law” (Täuferordnung), including dress requirements for Anabaptists (1816).

- 1815** At Congress of Vienna, Canton of Bern annexes Jura territories formerly belonging to the bishopric of Basel, dashing hopes of Anabaptists from the original part of the Canton that they might enjoy the alleviation of restrictions recently enjoyed in Jura. Anabaptist fear of renewed repression, agricultural crisis and famine (1816ff) lead to extensive emigration (note founding of the Sonnenberg congregation in Ohio, 1819/21ff, named after a Swiss congregation) Continual weakening of the Emmental congregation due to emigration necessitates that elders from Jura provide intermittent supervision. Nevertheless, Emmental congregation experiences growth through transfers from the State Church. (In Emmental there is more participation in local religious renewal movements than in Jura!)
- 1820** A new law legally recognizes births and marriages that have taken place in Anabaptist congregations: factual recognition of Anabaptists as a religious organization. However, this was limited to those already on membership lists in 1820 and proselytizing was forbidden (1823). Considerable growth in Emmental congregation after the decree of 1820 (and in the context of a contemporary revival movement) stokes the apprehensions of authorities.
- 1832ff** Emergence of “New Anabaptist” (Neutäufer) congregations due to work of Samuel H. Fröhlich, combined in region of Bern with influences of the Anabaptist and revival movements. Today they are known as “Evangelical Anabaptist Congregations” (Evangelische Täufer-Gemeinden [ETG]). 1835 schism in Emmental “Old Anabaptist” (Alttäufer) congregation. After 1840 the movement spreads beyond Switzerland, Alsace and southern Germany to Eastern Europe and North America. (In the USA they are called the Apostolic Christian Church.)
After 1860, develops into an increasingly “closed” fellowship.
- 1835ff** Continuing disagreements regarding the question of military service (among “Old” and “New Anabaptists”).
- 1848ff** Switzerland evolves from a federation of states into a federal state: same rights and duties for all! Obligatory military service, also for Anabaptists: theoretically starting in 1848 but not enforced until 1874. Once again, many emigrate, especially from the Bernese Jura.
- 1862ff** Itinerant ministry by South German Mennonites: regular visits to Switzerland. Increasing influence of revival movement (especially the “fellowship” (Gemeinschaftsbewegung) and holiness movements.

- 1874** Institution of universal mandatory military service: Motivates a final group exodus of Swiss Anabaptists to North America.
- 1880ff** Discussion of domestic and foreign missions: Commissioning of the first overseas missionaries: Rodolphe and Maria (Gerber) Petter to work among the Cheyenne Indians in Oklahoma, 1890.
- 1882ff** Founding of “Zion’s Pilgrim” (Zionspilger), weekly publication of the “Conference of Old Evangelical Baptism-minded Congregations” (Konferenz der Altevangelischen Taufgesinnten-Gemeinden) (edited at Langnau)
- 1890ff** Spiritual vacuum: new growth from revival movements, though at times deficient in understanding concerns – at times calcified – of Anabaptists. Bernese Anabaptists build their first meetinghouses: Cernil (1883), Langnau-Kehr (1888), Jeangu (1900), Moron (1892), etc. (in Basel, already 1847)
- 1895** Publication of Reformed Pastor Ernst Müller’s (Langnau) “History of Bernese Anabaptists” (Geschichte der bernischen Täufer) sets new standards for a fairer historical treatment of Anbaptism.
- 1905** Internal division within the “New Anabaptists” (Neutäufer) among the “Tolerant” (Vertragsamen) and the “Intolerant” (Unvertragsamen). (These latter, today in Bärau, Münsingen, Busswil etc..)
- 1914ff** Due to questions related to private schools and use of German language,
- 1940ff** Anabaptist congregations in Jura become entangled in struggles surrounding the formation of a new French-speaking Canton of Jura. (1963 – cases of arson on Anabaptist farms)
- 1929ff** Economic crisis: Interwoven financial guarantees among Anabapitsts cause financial ruin for some. Many farms are sold.
- 1937** “Old Anabaptist” (Alttäufer) congregation in Emmental revises its confession of faith: strikes a reconciliatory tone in relation to the State Church. General abandonment of requirement for re-baptism and absence of an article on non-resistance lead to sometimes hefty critique within the conference.
- 1938** First Swiss-wide Mennonite Youth Day (Jugendtag) held at Les Mottes (Freiberge), later in Tramelan, with over 1000 participants at times!

1941ff Discussion regarding mandatory church tax for the “Old Anabaptists” (Alt-täufer) in Emmental. Rejected in 1941 by Church Director Dürrenmatt, approved by an official Reformed opinion in 1946, then rejected again in 1947. As a result, the Synodal Council declares Anabaptist “usefulness” to be “consonant with that of the State Church”. The Reformed periodical “Sower” (Sämman) reports “Former differences have disappeared” and declarations of blessing and goodwill are offered.

1945ff After the second World War more and more members begin leaving hamlets and isolated farms in the mountains to seek education and work in the valleys, in villages and cities. This geographic and sociological transition is also reflected in congregational and theological processes of change (for example the increasing cooperation with other churches [“Swiss Evangelical Alliance” (Allianz), “Working Group of Christian Churches” (ACK), etc.], in Jura the gradual language shift from German to French even in worship services, greater openness to allowing men and women to perform all church functions, etc.)

Founding of the European Mennonite Bible School in Basel/Liestal (today called the “Theological Seminary Bienenberg” [Theologisches Seminar Bienenberg]) in cooperation with North American Mennonites (1950ff); influence of the North Americans’ “rediscovery of the Anabaptist Vision”. Important influences from contacts with Mennonites worldwide at World Conferences (since 1925) exchange programs (trainees), charity and development projects, etc.

1974ff Mennonites and the “Evangelical Anabaptists Congregations” (Evangelische Täufer-Gemeinden [ETG]) begin to meet regularly for consultation and cooperation.

1975ff Numerous further signs of closer cooperation (including explicit “steps of reconciliation”) between Reformed and Mennonites in Bern, in Switzerland and worldwide: For example the statement (Gutachten) of the Bern Synod Council (1975); first Mennonite certified to offer formal catechetical instruction in the Bern State Church (1980); memorial church services in Zurich (1983; 2004), Bern (1988, 2005); Schwarzenegg 1993 etc.; dialogue at worldwide level 1983ff – regional dialogues had begun earlier; interdenominational “reconciliation meetings” (Winterthur 2003 and others)

2006 Current Mennonite congregations in the Cantons of Bern and Jura (formerly Bern) totaling approximately 2000 members are: Bern, Langnau, Biel-Brügg,

Sonnenberg; Moron-Kleintal, Bassecourt/Vallée de Delémont, Vallon de St. Imier, Tavannes, La Chaux-d'Abel and Courgenay (Ajoie). [Additional congregations in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Basel, Münchenstein, Muttentz] Of the 1.4 million members of Mennonite congregations worldwide, perhaps 150,000 have roots in the Canton of Bern.

Current "Evangelical Anabaptists Congregations" (Evangelische Täufer-Gemeinden [ETG]) in the Cantons of Bern and Jura: Langnau-Giebel, Bern, Diessbach, Chandon; [1984 – ETG Federation (Bund ETG) founded by approximately 30 congregations in Switzerland and Germany with about 2300 members]

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Dates in the History of Anabaptism in the Jura

1525ff Due to persecution Anabaptists are forced to retreat from the bigger towns into rural and secluded areas along the border: That is the only way they are able to survive in Switzerland for the time being. (eg. Zurich Oberland; parts of the Jura belonging to Basel and Solothurn; Oberaargau, Emmental and Bernese Oberland)
Until the 30-Year-War (1616-1648) a flood of emigration to Moravia.

1670ff Massive persecution of Anabaptists in Bern:

1690ff • Emigration and escape of many ETG to Alsace and the Palatinate – after 1712 also to the area of the bishopric of Jura, as the option of fleeing to Alsace had become impossible since Louis XIV had given the edict of expulsion from there.
• (The Amish people prefer to move to the Prussian part of the Jura in the area of Neuenburg and to Montbéliard, which was territory of Württemberg.)

Conditions of settlement defined by the governing Bishop of Basel:

- Not in the villages (in the valley) but in the highlands (at about 1000 m altitude)
- no proselytism (mission)
- no land can be acquired (only cultivated on lease)
- immediate departure when told to leave

1715ff Increasing complaints from the local French-speaking population:

1. The land taxes which Anabaptists paid were said to be too high

2. Anabaptists did not invest much in agriculture, thus reducing the amount of wheat to be tithed
 3. Anabaptists were taking away residential area
 4. The cattle of Anabaptist farmers were consuming too much and were liable to spreading infections
 5. Anabaptists were a bad example (eg. because they held secret meetings at night, they refused to do military service, etc.)
 6. Shortage of firewood due to the production of cheese by Anabaptist farmers
- The bishop is in a dilemma: on one hand economic profit because of high Anabaptist working morale, on the other hand these complaints from the locals against economic competition and against the religious non-conformist attitude of the Anabaptists.

1730 First official expulsion order from the bishop

1750ff Continual uncertainty in legal affairs leads to increased immigration mainly to North America. Theological selection: As a rule the emigrants are those who are not prepared to compromise.

end of the 18th century Increasing sympathy for Anabaptism from influential humanitarian circles.

Church services:

- Primarily in the woods, in gorges (bridge of the Anabaptists near Corgémont, engraved date 1633) and caves (“Geisskirchlein” so-called chapel of the goats near Souboz, 1779), later in private homes.
- gradual emergence of various congregations in the Jura: Büberichgraben (Péry), Sonnenberg (Mont Soleil), Münsterberg and Kleintal (Montagne de Moutier / Petit Val), Tscheiwo and Gräteli (Chaluet / Graitery), Muntschro (Mount Girod near Court), La Chaux-D’Abel and Bucheggberg (including the southern slopes of the Weissenstein mountain range).

Church life

- Fund for the poor (progressive social security)
- High priority of Bible reading and congregational singing
- Private schools (eg. in Jeangui, La Paturatte, Moron, Fürstenberg, etc.)
- spiritual counselling of fellow-believers under pressure in the Emmental (through visits)
- annual meetings for elders and people with responsibility in the church in Talvogne near Sonceboz
- Interaction with the congregations in the Palatinate and Alsace

1789ff French Revolution / Swiss confederation postulates freedom of religion and conscience: Although conservative parties restrict some of this freedom, there is nevertheless growing acceptance.

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Dates in the History of Anabaptism in Basel

1500 1525-1529

-1600 First period of the establishment and expansion of Anabaptism. Because attention is focussed mainly on the conflicts between the Catholics and Evangelicals in Basel, the Anabaptists have certain liberties and relative freedom. Gradual increase of persecution; resettlement from urban areas to the countryside.

1529-about 1540

1529: breakthrough of the Reformation in Basel: Beginning of systematic persecution of Anabaptists

- 1529 Reformation Order
- 1530 Anabaptist Mandates
- 1534 Confession of Basel
- 1530 First execution (Hans Lüdi from Bubendorf)

General decrease of Anabaptism in the town, survival on the periphery of rural areas

1540-1580

Time of “relatively open atmosphere” in Basel:

- 1544-1556: The wealthy Anabaptist spiritualist David Joris from Holland lives in Basel (Spiesshof; St. Margrethen; Weiherschloss in Binningen; Weiherhaus zu Gundeldingen, Hinter-Birtis, etc.)
- The copperplate engraver Christoph von Sichem and his Anabaptist wife Catharina Serwouters live in Basel (1568-1598)
- The humanistic professor Thomas Platter and his son Felix Platter, town doctor, get in touch with Anabaptists in the “Gundeldingen” castle (which Platter had bought from the Ex-Anabaptist Ulrich Hugwald)

Centers of Anabaptism: Thürnen, Rothenfluh, Oberwil, Riehen

1600 1580-1630

-1700 Church and government change their policy (moving away from Lutheran and heading towards a more orthodox-reformed point of view, strong connections to the other evangelical areas of Switzerland. Anabaptism becomes the meeting place of those who “seriously strive to be Christians”: 2nd period of growth

- People who criticise the exaggerated authority of the government and their power in society sympathize with the Anabaptists (Solidarity mainly in the villages)
- Renewed increase of persecution: imprisonment, disinheritance, confiscation of property (1595ff), victims are chained and put in the pillory, flogged, expelled.
- A great number of Anabaptists emigrate to Moravia (a few return), later on some move to Markkirch in the area of the Vosges.
- meeting places: Blauen, Oberwil, Riehen/Lörrach, Grenzach/Rheininsel Gewerth, Rothenfluh, Buus/Maisprach, Thürnen (+BE-Aargau): go into hiding and keep still
- significant role of certain women
- Anabaptist doctors and midwives in service for their neighbors (discovery of mineral springs in Bad Bubendorf!)
- Printing of Anabaptist literature in Basel (mostly anonymous)

1630-1650

Period towards the end of the Thirty Years War: Anabaptism in Basel secretly continues to exist

1650-1700

Final blossoming and fading of traditional local Anabaptism in Basel

- main centers: Thürnen, Tecknau, Buus/Wintersingen

Emigration to Alsace (and the Palatinate respectively Zweibrücken) [Worth mentioning: Anabaptist family by the name of Hersberger originally from Basel, Thürnen with a great number of descendants now living mainly in North America]

1700 1700-1750

-1800 New impulses for Anabaptism in Basel through:

- itinerant ministry from some, who had moved abroad
- stop-overs of expelled Anabaptists from Bern (in context with the climax of persecution in Bern in 1670, 1790, 1710f etc.)
- being in touch with the movement of Pietism (Basel was the meeting-place of international interaction; important role of French Huguenot refugees)

New Pietistic-Anabaptist beginnings in Langenbruck (1696ff), Frenkendorf (1705ff), Pratteln (1718ff) and Diegten (1719ff). On the other hand Pietist mandate (1722)

1750-1800

Gradually less discrimination because of pietistic and humanistic influence
Displaced ETG take up residence

- a) coming from the Emmental and bishopric of Jura
- b) coming from Alsace, from the area Belfort/Montbéliard and also from Baden (mainly ETG originally from Bern and Zurich, often Amish people, who emigrated during the 17th and early 18th centuries)

1. Agricultural farms and farmers in the rural area of Basel:

- St. Romai (1748, Daniel Jacob of Trub)
- Alt-Schauenburg (1776, Claus and Jacob Hirschi from Schangnau)
- Arxhof (1777, Jacob Schmucklin from Grindelwald, via Montbéliard)
- Wildenstein (1777, Christian Freyenberg from Oberhofen, via Alsace/South Baden)
- Muren/Läuferlingen (1777, Ludwig Blattner from Rüederswil via Court)
- Dietisberg/Diegten (1777, Family Gehrig from Kulm)
- Gräubern/Liestal (1778, Jacob Küpfer from Sumiswald)
- Wüstmatt/Tenniken (1780, Ludwig Blattner from Rüederswil)
- Holdenweid Hölstein (1780)
- Talacker and Sichtern/Liestal (1780, Christian Röhliberger from Langnau via Courtelary)
- Mill Augst (1781 Jacob Bürki; 1782, Hans Hunziker),
- Sawmill Rothenfluh (1781, Christian Bürki from Emmendingen)
- Hoher Rain/Pratteln (1783)
- Grütsch/Niederdorf, Schillingsrain/Liestal, Oberäsch/Duggingen, Röseren/Liestal, Hasenbühl/Liestal etc.

1700 2. Parallel to those mentioned above, farms in the urban area of Basel:

- 1800**
- Rothaus/Schweizerhalle-Muttenz (1776, Fridli Gerig from Safenwil)
 - Schlossgut Binningen (1777, Michel Stauffer from Guggisberg and Jakob Würgler from Rued)
 - St. Jakob-Waisenhausgut (1778, Hans Freyenberg from Oberhofen)
 - Spalentor (1779, Hans Rüegegger)
 - Brüglingen (1783)
 - Birsfelderhof (1790, Jakob Müller from Oberkulm)
 - Klybeck (1793, Christian Müller)
 - Wenkenhof/Riehen (1807? Family Kaufmann)
 - etc. (including areas near the border of Alsace and South Baden)

Almost all the farms were property of wealthy, often religious townspeople in Basel!

- Gradual development of a more liberal congregation (so-called "Obere

Gemeinde”, mostly non-Amish) originally people who had migrated from the Emmental and Jura, and a stricter congregation (so-called “Untere Gemeinde”), mainly Amish people who had returned from their exile in Alsace, Montbéliard and South Baden.

1800 1800-about 1880

-1900 From separation to gradual acceptance and integration

- Effects of the French Revolution (1789) and Swiss Confederation (1798): equal rights, freedom of conscience
- Question concerning military service is a point of focus in the struggle between compromise and resistance (gradually compulsory military service is enforced in the Cantons and in the whole country.
- Other areas of conflict in relation to the surrounding society: dress requirements and hair style; church discipline etc.
- increasing number of members through large families, on the other hand emigration (mainly to North America)
- Emigration is partly a question of theological selection (for or against military service) and leads to a spiritual vacuum.

Tendency of becoming rigid in the legal structure of outward forms (the elders are dominant)

Signs of growing integration and acceptance:

- Births, marriages and deaths are registered (1776/83ff) as well as baptisms (1822ff) in the “Untere Gemeinde” (mainly Amish)
- The “Untere Gemeinde” donates the area of the cemetery to St. Louis (1828)
- The “Untere Gemeinde” requests building a “house of prayer” in the Holee Street in Basel (1847), which is granted;

1880-1900

Movement of renewal in the church

- After the period of rigid legalism, the Swiss Mennonite churches experience spiritual renewal through a fresh wind of revival mainly towards the end of the 19th century: holiness and fellowship movements
- Strong influence from the Pilgrimsmission/St. Chrischona, passed on partly by itinerant Mennonite ministers from South Germany (Ulrich Hege, Jakob Hege).
- Gradually more individualistic and less ethereal piety, but more conformity with the government
- Sudden increase of members
- Building of own meeting places and chapels:
- Langnau-Kehr (1888)

- Grosslützel (1891)
- Moron (1892)
- Les Bulles (1894)
- Fürstenberg (1897)
- Bowil (1899)
- Jeanguisboden (1900)
- La Chaux-d'Abel (1905)

The "Obere Gemeinde" also builds a meeting place in 1891 on the farm Schänzli near Muttenz.

Because the tenant farmer moves away from the farm estate Schänzli, the church decides to build a new meeting place on the road between Basel and Muttenz. Dedication in March 1903.

- 1900**
-2000
- The borders are closed during both World Wars (1914-18 and 1939-45), which makes life in the congregation at the Holee Street congregation more difficult;
 - Because of this and also because there are more and more French-speaking people, members of the Holee congregation go over to Schänzli; meanwhile Holee stays a member of the Conference of French Mennonites.
 - Attempt of the Holee congregation to unite with the Schänzli congregation (1945) leads to nothing

Revival through new impulses and struggle with own identity

Growing awareness for the Mennonite church worldwide: significant impulses due to international contacts

- increasing influence of North American Mennonites through the rediscovery of their own Anabaptist heritage ("Anabaptist vision")
- The 1st and 5th Mennonite World Conferences take place in Basel (1925; 1952)
- extensive relief projects after the war on behalf of those harmed during the war (1920ff; 1946)
- Basel hosts the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC, relief organisation of North American Mennonites, 1946ff):
- Establishment of the European Mennonite Bible School in Basel (1950), moved to Bienenberg near Liestal after 1957 (today educational and meeting center respectively Theological Seminary Bienenberg TSB)
- Impulses through intensified contacts to other churches (Alliance, "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen" and others)
- Struggle for identity and for a good balance between continuity and change
- Continual and systematic expansion of church related activities and structures:
- youth groups

- Sunday school
- Choir
- Women's Craft Group
- Bible Club
- Teens Club

Growth of the church due to people on the move from other Mennonite churches and new members

Number of members Schänzli: 1850: 30 / 1903: 116 / 1905: 118 (plus 60 children!) / 1919: 120 / 1950: 150 / 1964: 229 / 1976: 343 / 1983: 368 / 1986: 381 / 1990: 381 / 1991: 359 / 1994: 355 / 2003: 350

Number of members Holee: 110

Number of members Münchenstein: 50

Number of members St. Louis: 60

New churches planted (Liestal 1975-1997, St. Louis, Münchenstein 1991ff)

Total number of Mennonites in Basel region: about 600

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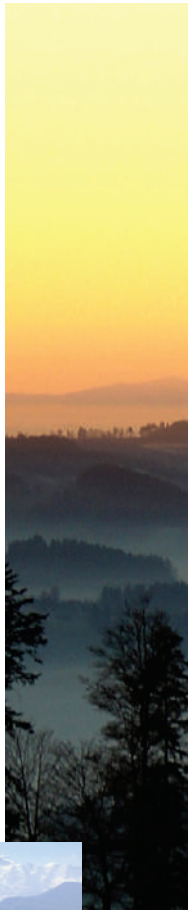


The long and turbulent history of the Anabaptists started in 1525 in Zurich and continues up to this present time. Issues that were significant in the past are just as relevant today.

“Discover Anabaptism in Switzerland” invites you to become familiar with historical places and people of the past and the present.

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