

Lectures/Training in Bienenberg, Switzerland and Travel, History, and Educational Experiences in Germany and Switzerland – November/December 2017

The idea/invitation started about three years ago with an e-mail from Frieder Boller who was at that time the President of the Mennonite Seminary in Bienenberg Switzerland. He has since retired but the invitation continued to be extended. The invitation was to present the ideas of Restorative Justice from an Anabaptist Christian Biblical perspective. It was a wonderful and welcome invitation. Bringing ideas into reality requires patience, perseverance, time and significant planning. Marcus Weiland was the person at Bienenberg that worked out all the details and was our very gracious host. Three years from the initial invitation we were in Bienenberg.

Preparing for these lectures/training gave me the excuse to revisit Walter Wink's, *The Powers that Be*. We also suggested making the book part of our church small group monthly discussion. Wink introduced the language of "the myth of redemptive violence." That is a myth we see in action all around us and in the newspapers. It happens when people with power think that they can apply just the right violence, punishment, etc. and that will lead to order and peace (at least for them and their powerful friends). The good news of the Bible is that peace is a result of right relationships. Wink also says that our "structures" that we all live with in our families, churches, communities, and the world, are not benign. They have tremendous power over our lives. Even people wanting to do good are often actually perpetuating the myth of redemptive violence because of the "structures" they live in and perpetuate. The Good News of the Bible is that the powers can be redeemed, changed to be ones that support and encourage right relationships with all people.



Restorative Justice provides the vision, theory and practices that can redeem structures. Part of the challenge in teaching about Restorative Justice is to help people see that Restorative Justice is more than just a program that can be applied within a punitive structure to help make it a little less punitive. I believe that Restorative Justice can redeem, change a punitive structure into one that is respectful, reasonable, reintegrative, and restorative for all, not just for those who are deemed worthy by the privileged and powerful. The time at Bienenberg Seminary was great fun.

The students and community participants who were part of the course were there because they wanted to increase their understanding of restorative justice.

Restorative Justice requires skills and strategies to implement it. One can't just apply the same skills and strategies that are effective in managing a punitive structure and expect them to work effectively in creating a restorative justice structure. It was again a privilege to work with the students and other community participants at Bienenberg



because they also wanted to advance their skills and strategies to help them be more effective in working at Restorative Justice.

As those of us who are teachers know, it is in teaching something that we gain additional and deeper insights. That was my experience again at Bienenberg. I appreciate the invitation and opportunity.

Following the lectures/training, Marcus Weinand, the person who managed all of the arrangements for the course, also arranged for Roxanne and me to meet with a group of teachers, administrators and social workers. The focus was on sharing how we implement Restorative Justice using the theory, skills, and strategies that are part of our books, *Discipline That Restores* and *Making Things Right*. After, and throughout our presentation, we had lively discussion. Many questions, as they should be, were focused on if we really think that a school can change their discipline system from a punitive one to a restorative one. Almost all teachers, administrators, and social workers, when they reflect on what they have experienced as a successful discipline intervention, realize that what they did, often without

knowing it, was discipline that restored, not hurt or embarrassed or separated. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to meet with them. The host school was a very successful 3000 plus K-12 (in US terms) school. Since the meeting, they have contacted Marcus to let him know that they want to explore the possibility of further training to implement restorative discipline in their school.

They also said they will be hosting the German conference of Christian Schools next year and that they are considering inviting us to make a presentation there. Our goal is that local people within the school systems gain the knowledge, skills and strategies so that training goes on without us. But we had such a good time on this trip that we may consider another trip if it would lead in the direction of and not distract from our goal that they become the trainers.

In addition to the lectures/training, we had time to do some traveling in Germany and Switzerland. We flew into Munich, Germany where we were met by Frieder Boller. He drove us to Ingolstadt where we stayed a few days with Frieder and Gabi, who were members of our church while studying at the Fresno MB Seminary. They were very generous with their time in showing us around Ingolstadt, home of Audi (we toured some of their facility). They introduced us to our first Christmas Market (later we saw Christmas Markets



in almost every open plaza) and treated us to a wonderful meal at their favorite Bavarian Restaurant. They took us to Dainbach where my grandfather Quenzer (my mother's father) lived with his parents before he left at age 18 or 19 to immigrate to the US. It was an incredible experience to be at the home, an all in one barn and home (pictured above). The current residents are recent arrivals from Croatia and they welcomed us and gave us a very thorough tour of the home and barn. Driving to Dainbach we saw the beautiful countryside, small towns and larger ones and stopped occasionally for wonderful Kaffee and pastries. We, of course, were amazed by the very old, by our standards (200-700 years old), homes and other buildings and how well kept they are, not as museums but as functional homes, stores, churches, and government buildings.



Frieder and Gabi then drove us from Ingolstadt, Germany to Bienenberg Switzerland, which is very near Basel. On Sunday, they took us with them to the Mennonite Church they attended in Basel and then on to visit some historical Anabaptist sites. One was a castle, Trachselwald, in which the leaders of the Reformed Church and the Government they supported, imprisoned many early Anabaptists because they would not



recant their beliefs (adult baptism rather than infant baptism, a structure for supporting the "powers that be,") and because of

their belief in pacifism, would rather be imprisoned than join the military or use other force to resist imprisonment. Roxanne is pictured in the stocks and chains much as the early Anabaptists might have been. It was a cold stone room, about 32 degrees on the day we were there. It is hard to imagine what they experienced. We also went to visit the Kambly cookie business and had fun watching children enjoy unlimited samples and then watching their parents and grandparents leave with large bags of cookie treats,



probably for Christmas gatherings. We ended the day in Bern, the capital of Switzerland.

We traveled on our own via train to Zurich. We were met there by Peter Dettwiler, thanks to one of our class participants who arranged for him to meet us. Peter is the Ecumenical Officer for the Swiss Reformed Church (founded by Zwingli as part of the protestant reformation), headquarters in Zurich. He had become sensitized to the experience of the early Anabaptists and current Anabaptist visitors. Until recently there were no formal church recognitions and no plaques allowed that marked the significant places for Anabaptists. He was instrumental in a formal church apology to the Anabaptist/Mennonites and also helped make it possible



HIER WURDEN MITTEN IN DER LIMMAT VON EINER FISCHERPLATTFORM AUS FELIX MANZ UND FÜNF WEITERE TÄUFER IN DER REFORMATIONSZEIT ZWISCHEN 1527 UND 1532 ERTRÄNKT. ALS LETZTER TÄUFER WURDE IN ZÜRICH HANS LANDIS 1614 HINGERICHTET.



for markers to be placed at significant locations like the one along the Rhine River (Roxanne with Peter pictured above) near the place where early Anabaptist leaders were intentionally drowned by church and government leaders in the 1500s. He gave us a very exceptional tour pointing out important Reformed and Anabaptist sights. It was an amazing historical experience for us. We were also privileged to help him translate into US English a document he had translated into English. He wanted it to be prepared for an audience in the US since it was a formal official government apology to Mennonites/Anabaptists. We worked on it while eating at his

favorite fondue restaurant. We



acknowledged together the “myth of redemptive violence.”

After resting and touring Basel on our own and enjoying Kaffee across the plaza from the City Hall, we returned to Bienenberg for another restful night. Before we said goodbye to Marcus and Erik at Bienenberg, Erick interviewed each of us about restorative justice and Discipline That Restores, topics that we both love to talk about.

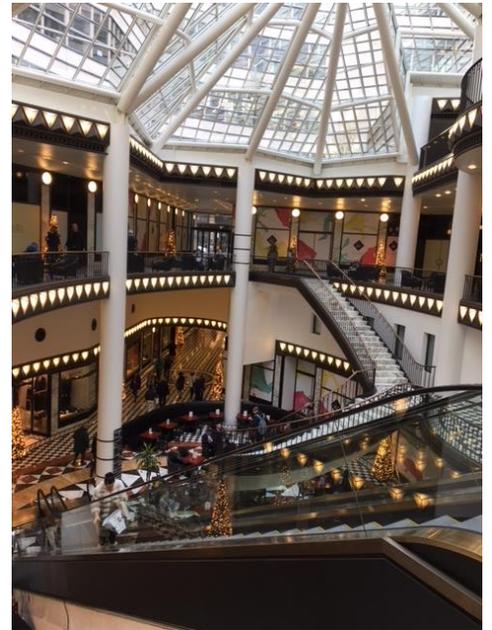


We left by train for Heidelberg where we stayed for three days in a very well appointed 300 year old hotel in the old downtown area (pictured). In addition to a sightseeing introduction to Heidelberg and a visit to the huge Heidelberg Castle, most of our time was spent walking, enjoying the many very old buildings (Heidelberg was not damaged much in WWII) and stopping occasionally for Kaffee and pastries, a favorite activity for us.





We then traveled again by train (an amazingly efficient and easy to use system) to Berlin. There we again took a sightseeing tour for a basic introduction to the city. Then, on our own, we visited places like "Checkpoint Charlie," the Brandenburg Gate, and the Berlin Wall at the East Side Gallery (pictured). Berlin was the first place we visited



where all the Christmas Markets were open and very, very busy. We enjoyed joining the local people enjoying one of their very significant



traditions, all outdoors and cold, approx. 29-33 degrees. Because Berlin was so large we stayed by the central train station where we had very easy access to public transportation. I think one of the amazing parts of the

visit was to see how the former Soviet Sector business district, which was almost completely destroyed in WWII and laid in rubble for nearly 40 years, and upscale district is now a very, very modern (pictured).



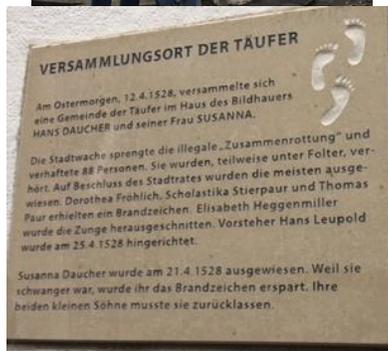
is now a very, very modern (pictured).



We traveled, again by train, back to Ingolstadt. With Frieder and Gabi we took the train to Augsburg where they showed us some more important



Anabaptist history sites. The one pictured with the plaque is the home of Susanna, an Anabaptist who was forced to leave the city because of her faith and unwillingness to recant. She would have been branded but wasn't because she was pregnant at the time.



The time with them gave us time to learn more about their family and provided opportunity for dialog about faith, politics, and other topics of importance to all of us. A very rich experience for us.



We then traveled again by train to Munich where we stayed near the airport with easy access to



public transportation to downtown old Munich. There we were met by Elisabeth, Jurgen, and their son Johannes, who were also members of our church while attending the MB Seminary in Fresno. We spent the day walking along the main downtown street which for a mile or more was filled with Christmas Markets. We stopped to watch the Glockenspiel (a clock tower as part of the government center that on certain hours with moving characters, tells the early history of Munich – pictured). We went to their downtown apartment for a cozy time of lunch, coffee and conversation. They wanted to take us to their favorite Bavarian restaurant for dinner but since the downtown was so busy and the wait so long, we ate at their favorite Indian restaurant.



The trip was a wonderfully educational experience. The world is much bigger than what we see and hear about in our day to day world. And it was good to be home again. We like our day to day world and this experience certainly added interest to our conversations. It gave us some hope that restorative justice could become an influencing factor in reducing the dominant reliance on the “myth of redemptive violence.”

