

The Organization of The Schwenkfelder Church

The legislative and administrative meeting of The Schwenkfelder Church is called a General Conference. It deals with all matters delegated to it by the churches: publication, education, mission, charitable, statistical, and financial. An annual meeting is held once a year in May, and is known as the Spring General Conference. Occasionally, an additional meeting is held in October. Churches annually present statistical reports on membership, finances, service, as well as the spiritual condition of the congregations, at the Spring General Conference.

The Schwenkfelder Church and the individual churches provide for the maintenance and care of the historical Viehweg Monument in Poland. Erected in 1863, the Viehweg Monument marks where many persecuted Schwenkfelders were buried. In Pennsylvania, Schwenkfelder immigrants are buried in cemeteries at: Chestnut Hill, Towamencin, Salford, Kraussdale, Hosensack, Washington, and in small family plots. In 1934, during the Schwenkfelder Bi-Centennial Celebration, Schwenkfelders erected suitable monuments to these immigrants.

In addition to belonging to The Schwenkfelder Church, Palm Church is an associate member of the United Church of Christ, and Olivet-Schwenkfelder UCC is a federated church of the United Church of Christ.

Throughout the years, The Schwenkfelder Church has formed committees for promoting the work of the denomination. Reports of their work are given at the Spring General Conference.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

In Fall 2008, members re-organized The Schwenkfelder Church by approving revised Bylaws. At that time, the Executive Council was created as a single, over-arching group to administer the work of The Schwenkfelder Church. This elected body is made up of a Moderator, Vice Moderator, Secretary, Treasurer, and six members elected at large. The Conference Minister of The Schwenkfelder Church is an ex-officio member of the Executive Council. The Executive Council holds the authority to conduct the business of the denomination between Conferences.

MINISTERIUM

The Schwenkfelder Ministerium is made up of the ordained clergy authorized for ministry within The Schwenkfelder Church. The Ministerium conducts services of worship for the denomination. A leader of the Ministerium, called the Conference Minister, is elected yearly from among the members of the Ministerium. The Ministerium is also responsible for administering the ordination and installation processes within The Schwenkfelder Church. Schwenkfelder clergy are recruited from graduates of accredited theological seminaries.

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

A Board of Publication was organized in 1898, succeeding a publishing committee previously appointed in 1884. The primary focus for the Board of Publication was the publication of the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* - a critical edition of the writings of Caspar Schwenckfeld. Between 1907 and 1961, nineteen volumes appeared in print. In 1906 The Board of Publication also took over the publication of *The Schwenkfeldian*, the church magazine. Pamphlets and other books related to Schwenkfelder theology and culture are also printed for general distribution. With the reorganization of the denomination in 2008, the Board of Publication once again became a committee. This committee continues to be responsible for the publications of the denomination.

MISSIONS

A Board of Home and Foreign Missions of The Schwenkfelder Church was organized in 1895. The churches engaged in unorganized missionary work in the fifty years preceding this formal organization. The Board of Home and Foreign Missions organized the Philadelphia Mission in 1899, the Norristown Mission in 1904, and the Lansdale Mission in 1918. The most recent addition was the Philadelphia Missionary Church in 1999.

The Mission Board sent Miss Flora K. Heebner of the Worcester Church (now Central Schwenkfelder Church) to China, where she served for almost forty years. In 1946, the Board of Home and Foreign Missions sponsored Miss Mabel H. Reiff, also of the Worcester Church, as its missionary to the Taiku Mission in Shansi, China. Combined mission work of The Schwenkfelder Churches continues to this day, and is administered by the Executive Council.

CHARITIES

On their way to America in 1734, the Schwenkfelder immigrants spent a brief time in Holland. Members of a Mennonite mercantile house in Haarlem paid the immigrants' ship passage to Pennsylvania, and gave them 224 Rix dollars to aid the poor after their arrival. This was the beginning of the Charity Fund. Today, funds are still distributed to needy members of The Schwenkfelder Church through the Executive Council, advised by the Ministerium.

THE BOARD OF ADVANCED LIVING, INC.

The Schwenkfelder Church established the Board of Advanced Living to develop plans and projects for the needs of senior citizens. In 1974, Schwenckfeld Manor was dedicated for apartment living for low-income senior citizens, as well as disabled persons. Over 500 apartments are currently available, and the number continues to grow. Residency is open to all people.

PERKIOMEN SCHOOL

The Society of Schwenkfelders sponsored the founding of a college preparatory institution known as Perkiomen Seminary. Renamed Perkiomen School in 1916, the school is located in Pennsburg, PA. Through the years the Schwenkfelders have provided financial, moral, and spiritual support for this educational enterprise.

SCHWENKFELDER LIBRARY & HERITAGE CENTER

The 1945 spring General Conference granted authorization to form The Schwenkfelder Library. A majority of the members of this corporation were to be descendants of the 1731-1737 immigrant Schwenkfelders. In 1951 Wayne Meschter donated a new building to house the archives. A museum collection was housed in the second floor space of the nearby Perkiomen School Carnegie Library.

Following a successful capital campaign, expansion and renovations to the original structure were completed, and opened in 2001. At that time The Schwenkfelder Library became known as The Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center. The contents of the Carnegie Library museum were moved to the new facility.

THE SOCIETY OF THE DESCENDANTS OF THE SCHWENKFELDIAN EXILES

The Society of the Descendants of the Schwenkfeldian Exiles seeks to maintain interest in the genealogical and cultural heritage of the 18th century Schwenkfelder exiles. The Society meets annually to promote education and social interaction among its members. The Board of Publication published the *Genealogical Record of the Schwenkfelder Families* in 1923. Volunteer members of the Exile Society continue to collect and update this genealogical information.

THE UNITED SCHWENKFELDER CHOIR

Organized in 1928, the United Schwenkfelder Choir performs a concert of sacred music annually on the first Sunday of December. Interrupted by World War II, the choir was reorganized in 1946. Today, choir participants represent many local churches and denominations.

MEADOWOOD RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

This nonprofit continuing care community offers independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing. Opened in 1988, it is located adjacent to Central Schwenkfelder Church. This non-sectarian facility is open to all people, and continues to be associated with The Schwenkfelder Church.