

CHRONICLES

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

A Time To Speak

Significant progress has been made in this journey of creating a Heritage Center, called CrossRoads, to share stories of faith and conscience. Since a small but steadfast group formed in 1999, key events suggest that now is the time for this idea to become a reality. Although these events have sometimes come in fits and starts, the overall progress has been remarkable. The generous level of giving in 2003 and the enthusiasm at the dedication ceremony seem to indicate that many share this sentiment.

These events make me think of the passage from Ecclesiastes – what I think of as God's timeline:

To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under
the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to break down, and a time
to build up;
A time to keep silence, and a time to
speak . . .

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2a, 3b, 7b

The message seems clear: there is a time for
everything; there is a balance in life.



Mennonites and Brethren are very comfortable with putting their faith to work. We are quick to respond to others in time of need, especially when disasters occur or when events out of our control cause pain and suffering throughout the world. Sadly, there is no shortage of need; in the crush of time the challenge is to be as responsive as possible, knowing that we can only impact a limited scope of all we see.

The creation of this Heritage Center provides an opportunity for a new witness to our faith; it becomes a setting where stories past and present can reveal this faith to visitors who are not in the midst of crisis. It represents a departure from our style of witnessing through works; it becomes, in effect, a time to speak.

This is a new direction for all of us. It is outside our comfort zone. It requires us to consider how we can share our stories with integrity and yet humility to a world that is in crisis spiritually as well as physically.

Your thoughts and reflections are important; we sincerely hope you will share your perspectives with us as we strive to go forward. We welcome your calls, visits and letters sharing your recommendations and words of guidance. We invite you to participate on various committees that will have responsibility for the direction of the Center and the stories that are shared.

Most importantly, we ask for your prayerful support as we continue to work toward the development of this Heritage Center. May all be for the glory of God.

Doris Showalter

Doris Showalter, Interim Director



Unionists book grabs attention Emmert Bittinger (l. to r.) Norman Wenger, and David Rodes stand in front of a pre-Civil War building in Pleasant Valley that they believe was used by the Underground Railroad for Unionists during the war. The trio is researching and compiling stories of the Unionists in Rockingham County who lost cattle, crops, food stores, firewood and the like to the U.S. Army during the war. Their first book, **Unionists and the Civil War Experience in the Shenandoah Valley**, has sold over 300 copies since its release in October. It is available from Reflections of Yesteryear in the Dayton Farmer's Market and in several bookstores in the Harrisonburg area.

CrossRoads Board names full-time director

The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center Board has called Steve Shenk of Harrisonburg, Va., as director of CrossRoads, effective June 1, 2004. He will be the first full-time director for the Center located at 711 Garbers Church Road.

"We look forward to Steve's leadership in bringing to fruition the vision of the Center," notes board chair Robert Alley of Bridgewater, Va., sharing and celebrating the story of Jesus Christ as it has been reflected in the lives of the Mennonites and Brethren in the Shenandoah Valley.

Currently Shenk serves as Director of Public Relations for Bluffton (Ohio) College, commuting periodically between Harrisonburg and the college where he directs a five-member staff. Previously he served as director of communications at Eastern Mennonite University, 1991-2002; as managing editor of the Mennonite Church's denominational magazine, 1984-1991; and as news and information manager for Mennonite Board of Missions, 1978-1984. Prior to these roles he taught English in Japan.

Shenk, an EMU graduate with a BA in History Education, has served on numerous professional organizations, including Council on Church and Media, the Shenandoah Valley Public Relations Council and Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians.

He says, "Brethren and Mennonites, who were among the first settlers in the Shenandoah Valley, share a rich heritage of faith. I am delighted to be part of the effort to celebrate their unique contribution to the Valley.

"Much has been accomplished already to establish a heritage center at the edge of Harrisonburg, but there is still much to do."

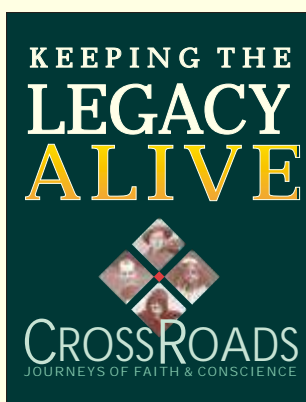
Steve and his wife Karen are the parents of two grown children.



Steve Shenk

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