The Power of Forgiveness: Lessons from Nickel Mines

September 22, 2011
The Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies
Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania

Using the fifth anniversary of the tragedy at Nickel Mines as a backdrop, this one-day conference will explore the moral dilemmas arising from violence and the potential power of forgiveness for personal healing and the restoration of relationships.

The conference will benefit counselors, therapists, pastors, leaders, and others interested in the process and potential of forgiveness. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are available to attendees.

An evening program, “The Enduring Power of Forgiveness,” will be held after the conference. Registration is not required for this event; it is free and open to the public.

“The Tragedy at Nickel Mines: A Story of Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” an exhibit that chronicles the events surrounding the schoolhouse shooting at Nickel Mines and its subsequent worldwide witness, will accompany the conference. It will open in mid-September and continue through mid-December.

Preliminary Agenda

8:00 a.m.  Registration
8:30  Opening Address
   Forgiveness in the Face of Tragedy: Five-Year Lessons
   Donald B. Kraybill
   Kraybill will explore the unique aspects of the Nickel Mines forgiveness story and, using the lessons of the story, probe distinctions between grace, forgiveness, pardon, justice, and reconciliation.

10:00  Keynote Address
   Habits of Forgiveness: Shaping Contexts for the Hard Questions
   L. Gregory Jones
   Christians are called to embody habits of forgiveness, learned and lived in and through faithful communities. As the Nickel Mines tragedy exemplifies, none of us can avoid wrestling with such daunting challenges as healing the wounds of memory, dealing with the relationship between repentance and forgiveness, and finding a hopeful future not bound by the destructiveness of the past. Jones will explain how a rich embodiment of forgiveness can help us wrestle with such hard questions in life-giving ways.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

L. Gregory Jones is vice president and vice provost for global strategy and programs at Duke University and senior strategist and professor of theology at Duke Divinity School. Widely recognized as a scholar and church leader on forgiveness and reconciliation, he is the coauthor of Forgiving As We’ve Been Forgiven: Community Practices for Making Peace (with Celestin Musekura) and the author of Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis.

How does forgiveness relate to justice?
10:45  A Response to L. Gregory Jones  
       David Weaver-Zercher
11:00  Q and A with L. Gregory Jones
11:45  Lunch
1:00 p.m. Concurrent Sessions
• Forgiveness without Reconciliation: 
   The Four Station Approach 
   Frank Stalfa
In most faith traditions, forgiveness and 
reconciliation are a unity: the first naturally 
leads to the second. In the work of family 
therapist Terry Hargrave, they are separate 
decisions with very different motives. Forgiveness 
is understood as a choice people make for them-
   selves; reconciliation is a choice people make for 
   a relationship. Stalfa will show how each position 
have its own integrity and power to heal.

• Sexual and Domestic Violence as Abuse of 
   Power: A Pastoral Response to Forgiveness 
   Linda Crockett
The abuse of power in sexual violence requires a 
pastoral response that does not frame forgiveness 
as an alternative to justice. Quick forgiveness 
can harm both victim and abuser because abuse 
has long-term spiritual, emotional, and physical 
impacts. Participants will reflect on stories that 
illustrate the deep wounds of abuse, and they’ll 
explore how a mandate to forgive can be a barrier 
to healing.

• Writing the Story of a Tragedy: 
   Ethical and Practical Challenges 
   Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, 
   David Weaver-Zercher
The authors of Amish Grace: How Forgiveness 
Transcended Tragedy will describe the ethical 
complications and sensitive issues with which 
they struggled in writing the story of the 
Nickel Mines tragedy. They will also discuss 
the subsequent dilemmas they faced regarding 
the film Amish Grace.

• My Journey with Forgiveness 
   Terri Roberts
Receiving the gift of forgiveness from those we 
have harmed is an important part of healing. 
Based on her personal experience with the Nickel 
Mines story, Roberts will discuss how being 
forgiven can offer spiritual power for reconciling 
and building vibrant new relationships with 
those who’ve been harmed.

2:45 Concurrent Sessions
• Forgiveness without Reconciliation (Stalfa)
• Sexual and Domestic Violence as Abuse of 
   Power (Crockett)
• Writing the Story of a Tragedy 
   (Kraybill, Nolt, Weaver-Zercher)
• My Journey with Forgiveness (Roberts)
• Forgiveness Five Hundred Years Later (Erling)
4:00 Conference Wrap-up

7:30 Public Program
The Enduring Power of Forgiveness
• What I’ve Learned about Forgiveness 
   Steven M. Nolt 
   Terri Roberts
The Nickel Mines story prompted many questions 
about forgiveness and reconciliation for both 
Steve Nolt and Terri Roberts. They each will 
discuss what they have learned about forgiveness 
in the five years since the tragedy.

• The Worldwide Witness of Nickel Mines 
   Kenneth Sensenig
The Amish response to the Nickel Mines tragedy 
captured the imagination of many people around 
the world. Mennonite Central Committee served 
as a bridge between the Amish and other cultures, 
religions, and nations. Sensenig will recount stories 
of heartwarming exchanges between international 
guests and members of the Amish community.

• Open Q and A

Please visit www.etown.edu/forgiveness2011 
for details and updates.
Presenters

**Linda Crockett** directs the Samaritan Counseling Center’s education and consultation programs. As a church volunteer, she accompanied refugees and survivors of torture during the civil war in El Salvador. Crockett is the author of *The Deepest Wound: How a Journey to El Salvador Led to Healing from Mother-Daughter Incest* and contributed to *Render Unto God: Economic Vulnerability, Family Violence and Pastoral Theology* with Dr. James Newton Poling.

**Maria Erling** is professor of church history and mission at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pa. She participated in the Lutheran-Anabaptist service of reconciliation in 2010. Her recent book, *The Augustana Story: The Shaping of North American Lutherans*, tells the history of one of the more ecumenically oriented Lutheran church bodies in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**Donald B. Kraybill** is senior fellow at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College. Nationally recognized for his scholarship on Anabaptist groups, he is coauthor of *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy and The Amish Way: Patient Faith in a Perilous World*.

**Steven M. Nolt** is professor of history at Goshen College in Goshen, Ind. He has studied Amish history and culture across many settlements. His books include *A History of the Amish*, and he is also coauthor of *Amish Grace and The Amish Way*.

**Terri Roberts**, wife of 41 years, mother of four sons, and grandmother of nine, has lived near Strasburg, Pa., for the past 20 years. Hers was a relatively quiet life until five years ago, when an unthinkable tragedy in her community, a tragedy for which one of her beloved sons was responsible, propelled Roberts into the public eye. She has walked through circumstances beyond her own ability to cope, yet has found strength and even joy along the way. Hers is a message of God’s grace given and received and the mountains it can move.

**Kenneth Sensenig** has served with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for 20 years, including six years in Africa, and is currently assistant director of the MCC East Coast regional office. He is also a licensed minister in the Lancaster Mennonite Conference. Sensenig has facilitated meetings of international visitors and Nickel Mines families.

**Frank Stalfa** is dean of students and professor of pastoral theology at Lancaster Theological Seminary, where he has taught since 1988. He is also a staff therapist with the Samaritan Counseling Center and an ordained minister with the United Church of Christ.

**David Weaver-Zercher** is professor of American religious history at Messiah College, Grantham, Pa. He is coauthor of *Amish Grace and The Amish Way*, and coeditor (with William Willimon) of *Vital Christianity: Spirituality, Justice, and Christian Practice*.

---

REGISTRATION

Registration includes all sessions, refreshment breaks, and lunch.

To register, mail this form with payment to Forgiveness Conference 2011, Young Center, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA 17022-2298; fax this form with credit card information to 717-361-1443; or register online at www.etown.edu/forgiveness2011.

Name: __________________________

Organization: __________________

Address: ________________________

City: ___________________________ State: _________ Zip Code: ___________

Phone: __________________________ E-mail address: _______________________

☐ Early registration by August 30: $45  ☐ Registration by September 8: $55  ☐ Student rate: $25

Payment:

☐ Check payable to Elizabethtown College (enclosed)  ☐ VISA  ☐ Mastercard  ☐ Discover

Credit card number ____________________________

Expiration date ____________________________

CVV (3-digit code on back of card) ___________

Cardholder’s name __________________________

Cardholder’s billing address and zip code

Full refunds will be given for cancellations made by August 30; a $20 administrative fee will be deducted for cancellations made after August 30.

THE REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 8.
The Power of Forgiveness: Lessons from Nickel Mines

September 22, 2011

Discount for early registration!