

**2026 Kulp Reunion Speaker – Pastor Robert W. Gerhart (as Rev. Hans George Bechtel)**

Hi KKC Extended Family,

A belated Happy New Year! I hope you enjoyed the holidays and are doing well in spite of the recent snow storms and cold weather. We are excited to announce that **Bob Gerhart** will be our **2026 Reunion** speaker, to be held on **June 14<sup>th</sup>** at the **Lower Skippack Mennonite Church Social Hall**.

Robert W. Gerhart, recently retired after 62 years of Pastoral Ministry, having served churches in Quakertown; Downey, California; Maseru, Lesotho (in southern Africa); Bally PA; and Springfield, Upper Bucks County. His missionary service in Southern Africa, with the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, also led to seven years as a Mission staff person for AIMM in Elkhart, Indiana, before returning to his home town of Bally in 1988, to pastor the Hereford Mennonite Church for the next twenty years.

Here, Pastor Gerhart discovered the fascinating history of Rev. Hans George Bechtel (1706-1759), the Hereford congregation's founder and the first Mennonite preacher to reside in Berks County, having arrived in 1728. With a life-long interest in local history, Pastor Bob Gerhart has brought Rev. George Bechtel "back to life" with his historically accurate, costumed impersonation.

During Rev. George Bechtel's "return" to the 21st Century, to attend the Kolb-Kulp-Culp Reunion, he will share his 18th Century experiences and some memories of the Kolb brothers, who were his contemporaries and colleagues in ministry in southeastern Pennsylvania. George, who was born the same year as Benjamin Franklin, was also acquainted with Henry Antes of Frederick and heard the English evangelist George Whitfield preach during his travels through the colony of Pennsylvania.

Bob Gerhart grew up in Eastern Berks County and is a graduate of Boyertown Area High School and, in 1963, graduated from Grace Bible Institute in Omaha, Nebraska. During his college days, he met his wife, Joyce, originally from Isabel, South Dakota. After marriage in 1963, Bob began studies at Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia, while serving in Quakertown. He graduated with a Divinity degree in 1967. He later earned a Doctorate in Ministry in 2005 from Westminster Theological Seminary.

Ordained in the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1964, Bob served in various denominational positions. In 1998, he was part of a movement that led to the formation of AMEC, the Alliance Mennonite Evangelical Congregations. Pastor Gerhart became the first Executive Director of AMEC, serving from 2002 to 2020.

The Gerharts have two children, a daughter, Barbara, living in Ephrata PA and serving with Global Disciple, and a son, Johnny, a freelance cinematographer, who lives with his wife Dawn in Nashville Tennessee. The Gerharts only grandchild, Kennedy, is a first-year student at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands.

**Looking forward to seeing you on June 14<sup>th</sup>!!**

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