

Converting to the Amish

Several years ago a minister of the Old Colony Mennonites contacted some of the authorities in an Amish settlement. He was seeking a stricter path for his children and did not feel that the Old Colony community provided his family with the “right” values and practises. Therefore, he wished for his son to attend one of the Amish schools. The Amish church leaders discussed the matter thoroughly, and finally decided that the boy was allowed to attend their school on one condition; that his family would live in accordance with the Amish values to a higher extent than what their own religious beliefs and practises taught them at that particular point. In response no television or radio was allowed, since the Amish church leaders feared these could have a negative influence on their own children. There were several modern innovations the family had to get rid of for their children to attend the Amish school. As expressed by church leaders, these precautions were made for several reasons. First, the authorities did not want the boy to have a negative influence on the Amish children by telling them about everything he was allowed to do compared to what the Amish children were restricted to do in terms of their Ordnung. Secondly, the church leaders felt that they could demand these actions because they feared if they allowed non-Amish to attend their parochial schools too easily, members of other religious groups might ask for permission to let their children attend the Amish schools. This was an important argument since, in the long run, this could lead to confusion for the younger Amish children since they might encounter experiences and beliefs from children with another religious background that is inconsistent with the Amish religious beliefs and practises. The Old Colony minister agreed, and the boy became an Amish pupil.