



PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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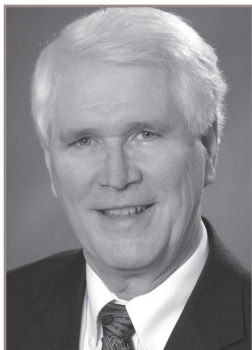
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Annual Meeting to be Held in Ashland, Ohio

Society to meet in conjunction with Ashland Seminary event



Dr. Luke L. Keefer, Jr., whose life and legacy will be honored at the 2015 annual meeting of the Historical Society

This year, the Brethren in Christ Historical Society will hold its annual meeting on October 3 at the Ashland (Ohio) Brethren in Christ Church, beginning at 5:00 pm.

The Society will meet in conjunction with a larger event, "Honoring the Life and Legacy of Dr. Luke Keefer, Jr.," at Ashland Theological Seminary, October 2-3. The event will include the release of a *festschrift* in honor of Luke.

The book is published by the Society and edited by Drs. J. Robert Douglass and Wyndy Corbin-Reuschling, both of whom were colleagues of Luke's at Ashland Seminary.

The book, titled *Celebrations and Convictions: Honoring the Life and Legacy of Dr. Luke L. Keefer, Jr.*, will be celebrated at the Society's annual

meeting. It contains a brief biography of Luke and essays on topics related to Luke's particular interests, including the Brethren in Christ theological synthesis, missions, women in ministry, biblical pacifism, and others. Some essays are written by Luke's colleagues at Ashland, while others are by Brethren in Christ authors.

The annual meeting program will feature comments by the *festschrift* editors as well as a panel discussion among *festschrift* contributors reflecting on their relationship to Luke and how it shaped their contribution to the book. A meal will precede the program.

Pre-registration is needed for the meeting. The cost is \$15 per person. To register, send a check payable to the Brethren in Christ Historical Society to Glen Pierce, Brethren in Christ Historical Society, One College Ave Suite 3002, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.

For more information about the Ashland Seminary event, please visit the Historical Society website (www.bic-history.org/) and click on the banner image "Honoring Luke Keefer, Jr."

Photo's Identity Confirmed

In the fall 2015 issue of the Historical Society newsletter, we published what was thought to be a photograph of the Jesse Engle family (right). As many Society members know, Engle was the leader of the five-member pioneer team of Brethren in Christ foreign missionaries to then-Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) in 1897. We hoped that a newsletter reader would be able to identify the image and confirm that it, in fact, did show the Engle family.

In January 2015, member Rhoda (Sider) Heise of Kansas called the editor to say that the image did in fact depict the Engle family. However, she also said that the image was taken sometime after Jesse died in Africa in 1900 (having arrived in Southern Rhodesia only two years earlier).

After identifying the persons in the photograph, Rhoda reported that she and her husband Austin took the photograph to California about a decade ago, and left it at the bishop's office in Upland. Another mystery in the Archives has been solved!



A photo of the Jesse Engle family taken sometime after 1900

But we have heard rumors that a photograph exists of Jesse and Elizabeth Engle before they left for Africa in 1897. If anyone knows if such a photograph exists and where it is, please contact the Archives (the address is on page 3).

Apparently a photo of Jesse and Elizabeth Engle is a highly sought after commodity; not only would the Archives like a copy, but we've also heard that the Zimbabwe church would like to add to its photo archives.

The Grandfather I Never Knew

Meeting a family member through old letters

by Harriet Sider Bicksler

I never knew my Grandpa Jesse Sider, who lived his entire life in Wainfleet, Ontario. He passed away on June 21, 1948, less than two months after I was born on the other side of the world in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where my parents were serving as missionaries. Of course, my dad talked about him some, but I learned a lot more about the man I never knew from reading some letters he'd written to my dad—letters I only recently found. They are short with maddeningly few details, but they return to the same themes almost every time.

Interest and concern about his oldest son and family: Grandpa's letters indicate that he prayed regularly for my dad and supported him in his missionary service, first in Saskatchewan and then in Africa.

March 24, 1944: We received your letter a few days ago. . . . We suppose that it will be quite a change for you to be left alone, especially when there are no other ministers near.

March 11, 1946: It will be nice to see you all again. This life brings many separations but God's way is always best and we would not want to change it.

April 10, 1947: We received a letter from . . . Walter Winger. . . . Walter says that if you folks keep on as good as you have started that he thinks you will be alright [referring to my parents' first missionary assignments in Rhodesia].

Farm life: Grandpa Sider's letters reflect the difficult life of a small farmer.

July 20, 1944: I rode the binder to cut the 19 1/2 acres of wheat although I was at it on four different days.

July 19, 1945: We have our haying pretty well along. . . . Our wheat is good, about ripe. . . . We sowed oats on Mar 30 and forepart of April but had a lot of rain after that.

April 10, 1947: We have had a late cool spring but the wheat is turning green now. We tried putting in a few fence posts but the frost bothers yet. Elmer [youngest son] got a nice lot of manure out but we cannot farm for a while yet.

Church life: Grandpa's letters are also filled with the names of relatives and church members, and the revival meetings and Bible conferences he attended.

January 31, 1944: Grace [daughter] was home only once since Christmas, a week ago last Thursday while our revival was on. . . . We had fairly good results the latter part of the meeting. Quite a number of the S. S. children were saved.

March 24, 1944: We are planning for our Bible conference tomorrow, and then special services all next week. Bro Henry Schneider is to be the evangelist. Uncle Ernie [E. J. Swalm] and Charlie Byers are to be the other speakers.....



Wedding photo of Jesse and Alice Sider, grandparents of the author of this article

July 20, 1944: I have been going to the camp every evening. . . . We are getting some rich holiness teaching.

His health: Grandpa was in poor health ever since his barn was struck by lightning in 1942 while he was in it milking the cows.

July 20, 1944: . . . I was not feeling well. . . . I started with the stomach flu about the 24th of May and have not entirely recovered from it yet.

October 31, 1945: I'm not able to do very much work now but my heart is some better.

May 4, 1946, note added by Grandma Ada: Papa is not holding his own very good. Getting some weaker. Paralysis in both hands.

January 11, 1947, note added by Grandma Ada: Papa went to church this morning, but he hasn't been very good. . . .

March 11, 1947: Have not been very well lately but am still hoping God will answer.

July 20, 1947, letter written by Grandma Ada: Papa did his best to write a bit, not very strong this morning. Stomach bothering him lately. Appetite not very good.

The July 20, 1947 letter is the last one before his death. The final letter is from Grandma Ada, dated July 6, 1948. She describes the morning of his passing and the funeral, and continues: "We miss Papa so much. . . . Every place we go on the farm we see something Papa made or fixed, and it's so hard on me." When my dad read the letter, I wonder if he thought about what Grandpa said in his March 11, 1946 letter, "This life brings many separations but God's way is always best and we would not want to change it."

Harriet Sider Bicksler is editor for the Brethren in Christ Historical Society. This article is condensed from her blog, Pieces of Peace (harrietbicksler.wordpress.com).

MCC Leader's Biography Published

Recently Herald Press and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partnered in the publication of *My Calling to Fulfill: The Orie O. Miller Story*, by John E. Sharp. Of particular interest to Brethren in Christ readers is Miller's pivotal role in molding MCC in its early years into the well-respected international relief and development agency of Brethren in Christ and Mennonite churches in Canada and the United States.

Historical Society Editor Emeritus, E. Morris Sider, represented the Brethren in Christ as a member of the editorial board for the book.

My Calling to Fulfill is available for purchase at www.mennomedia.org or by calling 1-800-245-7894.

News and Notes

From the Brethren in Christ Historical Library & Archives

The Archives could use your help in locating lost congregational records. By General Conference action taken in 1984, pastors and church secretaries are supposed to send to the Archives such items as minutes of congregational councils, church board minutes, and other historical documents, which would include older listings of baptisms and membership lists, etc. (Regional and general church agencies and institutions are also supposed to send minutes and other historical documents to the Archives, generally five years after the documents are created.)

The 1984 *General Conference Minutes* notes the rationale for establishing a policy on congregations and church officers placing their papers with the Archives: “Many important documents and historical materials have been lost to the denomination because they have remained in local, often private hands, and have not been placed in the denominational Archives.”

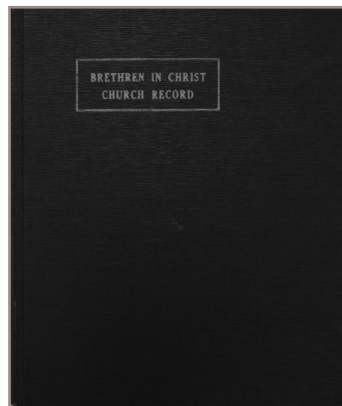
Referring to a common misperception, the rationale statement continues, “A widespread opinion exists that individuals, local bodies, and church agencies somehow lose their materials when given to the Archives; such people consider that these materials are thus better and more properly cared for by the original holders. Guidelines are needed to correct this point of view.”

It is actually far more likely that historic materials will “go missing” if kept locally or in homes. A new church secretary may decide there is no reason for those musty old records. Or a family member may decide that “these aren’t our family records” and toss them out, or put them in a damp basement or dusty attic.

Some congregations have very done well in placing their historical records in the Archives, and their faithful work pays off when many years later they find useful information (including historic photographs) when the time comes for anniversary observances or other celebrations. Other congregations have done quite poorly, to the extent that the Archives may have only one or two folders of material for congregations that have been in existence for fifty years or more.

Of particular concern are the records of congregations which have been closed. Let me offer an example. Three years ago, the Archives received a request from “T. J.,” a former member of a congregation now closed. She wrote, “During the years 1969-71, I was baptized at the [congregation’s name] by [pastor’s name]. In 1990 a house fire consumed all my belongings. I am trying to locate something that states when I was baptized. . . .”

My response read, in part, “We have a very small collection of materials from [the congregation’s name], including a congregational directory for the year 1977 that shows your address. . . . And we have a few monthly reports that the pastor sent to the regional conference bishop in which the pastor indicated the number of baptisms, but unfortunately not the names of persons baptized. . . . [We] checked with a couple of the former pastoral couples and one thought they remembered a book which was a register of baptisms and church memberships. Unfortunately, we do not have that book in the Archives. Sadly, a number of congregations have not sent those historical records



Example of a “Brethren in Christ Church Record” book used by many congregations to document significant congregational matters

to the Archives for safekeeping.” The Archives regularly receives these types of research requests.

This, then, is a plea for readers of this newsletter to start on a “treasure hunt,” looking in attics, bookshelves, and file cabinets—both at home and at your church—for these historic records. For example, many Brethren in Christ congregations used in years past a large red ledger-type book with the words “Brethren in Christ Church Record” embossed in gold on the front cover. Also referred to as a “church register,” the book (pictured at left) was first published by General Conference in 1937 and had sections for recording historical sketches of the district, an alphabetical index of members, a record of baptisms and church membership, rosters of church officials, a place for trustee records, and notes on evangelistic and other events. Since this is a bound volume, it may have been kept at a secretary’s home, shelved with other books.

For more information, or if you locate historical records from your congregation, please contact:

Glen Pierce, Director
Brethren in Christ Historical Library
and Archives
One College Avenue – Suite 3002
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
Email: Archives@messiah.edu

Research Help Requested

Morris N. Sherk is researching the history of Morrison Cove District, a Brethren in Christ district that existed in Bedford and Blair counties in Pennsylvania before regional conferences were formed.

Recently, he learned of two individuals by the name of Jacob Snively (father and son), both of whom are identified as River Brethren ministers in Morrison Cove. The father died in 1829 and the son in 1860.

The first Brethren in Christ *Directory* listing the names of church officials and members was published in 1880. If you have any information about individuals who served as ministers or deacons in Morrison Cove who died before 1880, Morris would appreciate receiving that information.

His address is 924 Williams Grove Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055, and his telephone number is (717) 766-5977. Or you may send him an email using the email address Archives@messiah.edu



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Images from the Past

From the photograph collection of the Brethren in Christ Historical Library & Archives



The Living Hope Gospel Ministry trio (from left to right): Nancy Smith (Frey), Ruth Muss-er (Cober), Alma Smith (Wilkins), and organist Ruth Drescher (Glick)

Living Hope Gospel Ministry

In the late 1940s, members of the Cross Roads Brethren in Christ Church (Mount Joy, PA) sponsored “The Living Hope” radio program, staffed by evangelist John Rosenberry and members of the congregation. As E. Morris Sider notes in his biography, *Called to Evangelism: The Life and Ministry of John L. Rosenberry*, “Increasingly the group became convinced that they should expand their ministry in the direction of tent meetings, using a large tent to attract sizeable audiences.”

With major sponsorship by Paul Martin Sr., the Living Hope Gospel Campaign staff bought “a large fireproof tent . . . with seating for approximately 1,200 people. They also purchased two modern house trailers (one for the evangelist and his family, one for the song leader and his family), an electric and sound system, 1,000 steel folding chairs, and an electric Hammond organ.

“When the time for the tent meeting arrived, one of the staff would drive his car around the area announcing the revival through a loudspeaker attached to the car. On the top of the car was a large sign identifying the campaign. . . . By beginning in early June and ending in September, the staff could conduct up to eight tent campaigns a year.”