



PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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Cober Church Hosts Biennial Hymn Sings

by Leonard Chester, Archivist, Be In Christ Church of Canada

The historic Cober Church is located in the city of Vaughan, northwest of Toronto. It was built in 1888, and used by the Brethren in Christ/Tunkers over the years, with preaching frequently provided by the elders of the Heise Hill congregation. The church building was built on the same plan as the Union Church (1873) in Puslinch Township, Wellington County, Ontario; it has retained its original structure, pews and appearance. In 1971, the church was sold to private ownership; one of the leading families in this arrangement was the Baker family, who continued to operate the church until the late 1990s. Over the years, a trustee group has supervised the church, adjoining cemetery, and shed for parking buggies. The late Bruce VanderBent (Heise Hill congregation) was one of this group.



The Cober Church, Vaughan, ON.

In 2007, the trustees organized a Sunday afternoon hymn sing, completely a *capella*. In 2012, I was invited by Bruce to share in leading the singing, along with himself and several members of the John Drudge family. Mrs. Drudge is from the Baker family. The hymn sings have continued every two years (the last one was in June 2018, and the next will likely be in June 2020). I have been privileged to share in leading for several years. The

extended Drudge family comes each time, which augments the a *capella* singing, as well as presenting several special numbers. The church is always filled to capacity with friends and former attendees coming from far and near. It is a delightful time of worship through music, for which a booklet of songs is selected and printed.



The buggy shed adjacent to the Cober Church.

Historical Society Searches for New Executive Director

The board of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society invites persons to consider serving as the next executive director of the Society. This is a part-time volunteer administrative position. It is ideal for a person with a flexible schedule who wishes to have a significant impact on the work

and direction of the Society. The executive director works closely with the board and the Society editor; gives oversight to the Society's membership engagement, activities and program; serves as the Society's representative with other organizations, and handles additional administrative ac-

tivities. While this is a volunteer position, there is a modest honorarium and reimbursement for Society-related expenses. Ideally the person would be based in Central Pennsylvania. For more information contact Emerson Lesher, board president at emerson.lesher@gmail.com.

After World War II: Taking Cattle To Germany

by Lester C. Fretz

Following the utter devastation of Germany during World War II, the United States implemented the Marshall Plan to help rebuild Germany. Brethren Service, the relief arm of the Church of the Brethren, formed the Heifer Project to elicit donated bred heifers to be given to German families who had lost every animal during the war.

My father became very interested in this project so he encouraged Brethren in Christ congregations in Canada to donate heifers. For the ocean crossing, the shipping line needed young men with farm experience to care for the cattle. The requirement to be considered as a volunteer for this position was to write an essay on pacifism. I was told that my application was taken from a bushel of other essays.

Because I was a Canadian working on a United States' ship, I was not allowed to join the union. The alternative was to travel as an officer. The only requirement was that I dress in a navy blue suit for every meal, so I went to a thrift store and bought one for \$20. This concession also entitled me to an officer's private cabin and an assigned table in the officers' dining room near the captain and chief engineer. Each morning and evening, I spent about an hour caring for the 49 cattle who gave birth to three calves during an exceedingly treacherous crossing of the stormy North Atlantic in late November and December. The storms were so bad that a ship ahead of us broke up and sank.

After crossing the North Sea, we docked in Germany. Representatives of Brethren Service met us to organize the off-loading of the cattle. My job was finished. For my work, United Nations provided me with an open return ticket from any United States Lines port whenever I wanted to use it. I had great ideas about travelling across Europe until the Brethren Service director took me ashore to explore the port city.

I had never heard of culture shock but that's what I experienced that dreary December night less than a week before Christmas. The streets were very narrow and winding. I couldn't understand what the people were saying. I couldn't even read the signs! It was traumatic to see the bombing devastation from the war. I decided I wanted to return home immediately instead of looking up a list of people I had brought with me. However, the Brethren Service director advised me to spend the night on the ship, eat a big breakfast, and he would return in the morning.

When he returned, he suggested visiting the parents of a young couple my parents had sponsored to come to Canada. He took me to the train station and put me on a train to Hamburg. After the train ride, I took a subway tram, and then walked to the home of the immigrant couple's parents.

Over the ten days I lived with them, the man taught me many things—about frugality (repairing a pair of shoes I would have thrown away), currency devaluation, how to combat in-

flation, to stay away from red light districts, and about Mozart and opera. Attending church services at Christmas time was exciting and enjoyable. Never did I think about Germans as enemies as radio propaganda had taught me a few years earlier.

Having overcome the frightening feeling of that first night, I then began to look up the many references I had been given which took me to Dauchau, a concentration camp, and to a military base near the Iron Curtain to visit the son of a woman in Ridgeway. The memory of visiting the concentration camp and workmen digging bombed rubble where crosses marked the location of bodies yet to be buried still haunts me. Etched in my memory is a bombed, flattened opera house in which were still the bodies of 4,500 people.

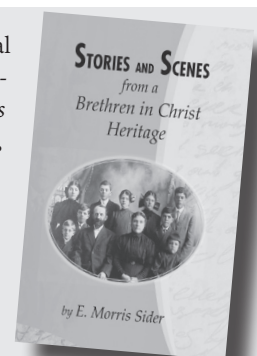
After travelling from north to south across Germany, I visited Austria, Venice, Switzerland, and Paris. When I ran out of money, I became a volunteer on an MCC building project, a community centre near Frankfurt, mixing cement. My two partners were Dutch and Chinese. I also spent some time with Brethren Service in Kassel, Germany, where I was able to work in a food and clothing distribution centre in one of Hitler's bunkers.

A highlight was visiting a family who had received a heifer from one of the five Brethren in Christ donor congregations in Canada. They had agreed to give their first heifer calf to a neighbour who had lost all of his livestock during the War. Just think of the ripple and compounding effect now 66 years later of that program which was built on giving calves to neighbours!

Lester C. Fretz is a retired school principal and former director of stewardship and finance for the Canadian Conference Brethren in Christ Church (now Be In Christ). He and his wife live in Port Colborne, Ontario.

At the Historical Society's annual meeting in September, we celebrated the release of *Stories and Scenes from a Brethren in Christ Heritage*, the 33rd book by Society editor emeritus E. Morris Sider. The book features a variety of stories on such themes as courtship and falling in love, family life, evangelism and conversion, compassionate ministries, peacemaking, and responding to God's call.

All members of the Society received a free copy of the book, and additional copies are available for sale at \$12.00 each. To order the book, send a note with a check payable to the Brethren in Christ Historical Society to Harriet Bicksler, 127 Holly Dr., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. Please include \$3.00 for postage for one book; add \$1.00 for each additional copy.



News and Notes

From the Brethren in Christ Historical Library & Archives

National Workshop on Race and Reconciliation Atlanta, GA, June 13-15, 1975

Adapted from a June 1975 report to members of the Brethren in Christ Commission on Peace and Social Concerns, written by John K. Stoner.

It is my impression that the idea for the Workshop emerged from the ferment of the Chicago Thanksgiving Workshops for Evangelicals and the Brethren in Christ Mission Board's Urban Study Committee. Whatever the mix of these two in forming the concept, the reality took shape because the Board for Missions appropriated just under \$3,500 to fund the workshop. [In 2018 dollars, that would have been about \$16,000.]

Attendance at the workshop was by invitation. Approximately 100 persons were registered, slightly less than half of them black. Premnath Dick, Dan Ebersole, Beth Heisey, Glen Pierce, Ronald J. Sider, and I were the Brethren in Christ present. Glen, Beth, and Dan were not in many sessions because of duties connected with hosting the workshop....

One might try to assess the significance of the workshop by asking, Did any structure emerge from it to carry on an evangelical interdenominational race relations program? I would say that the potential for such a thing emerged. At an early Sunday morning session, with 35-50 persons present, action was taken to ask the planning committee to carry on, to expand its present membership of 15, and to formulate an action proposal—something like the proposed interdenominational/evangelical program on race and reconciliation which came from the Brethren in Christ Urban Study Committee. This proposal for action would constitute the main agenda for a future large meeting.

Another way to evaluate the workshop is by asking what significant personal contacts, conversations and relationships happened among workshop participants. Looking at the roster of people present, one would assume that some useful dialogue would have occurred among people representing such diverse ministries as the David C. Cook Publishing Co., *The Other Side*, the Fuller School of World Mission, the Voice of Calvary (John Perkins in Mississippi), the *Post-American* [now *Sojourners*], the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, the Tom Skinner Evangelistic Association, the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Black Evangelical Association, etc. For example, I was in a discussion group that dialogued for two hours with Peter Wagner, one of the chief church growth theoreticians from Fuller....

In summary ... evangelicals surely need to do more on race relations than hold a workshop, but it is hard to see how they could justify doing less.... I commend the Board for Missions for supporting this workshop [and] hope that the Brethren in Christ will continue to support this effort toward an interdenominational evangelical program on race and reconciliation.

Editor's note: The Brethren in Christ Board for Missions, through its Secretary of Urban Ministries, helped to sponsor a follow-up consultation in Newark, NJ, in October 1976. Growing out of that Newark meeting, a November 1976 meeting was co-sponsored with Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) at the Temple campus of Messiah College, which resulted in a restructuring of ESA.

From the Board for Missions 1974 report to General Conference:

"Believing that the church's historic interest in and call to the cities of America had not ended and seeking to provide for faithful continuation of city work, the Board for Missions in 1972 authorized a major study of urban ministries....

"Whereas, a Department of Urban Ministries could provide resources to Board for Missions enterprises and to the general church by working with city missions and urbanizing congregations, as well as helping to develop new urban ministries, we therefore

"Recommend that General Conference authorize the creation of a Department of Urban Ministries...."

Part of the Urban Ministries section of the mission board's report to the 1976 General Conference:

"In helping to plan for [the National Workshop on Race and Reconciliation in Atlanta], Brethren in Christ leaders have aided in bringing a Christian response to one of the most vexing issues confronting the church today—racial oppression.

"A continuing witness to the gospel of unfettered love is given through Brethren in Christ participation with two evangelical black Christian missions programs in Philadelphia, PA. The Christian Stronghold Missionary Society [in West Philadelphia] and the Southside Center [South Street] both have a vision for an interracial witness for Christ...."

From the 1978 General Conference Minutes:

The Board for Missions received approval to create a new position, Secretary of Home Ministries, which included the work of the Secretary of Urban Ministries (created in 1974 in response to the urban ministries study).

Address Service Requested

Images from the Past

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

A picture postcard showing the Orlando (Florida) Brethren in Christ Church

On the message side of the picture postcard, W. O. Winger writes a brief August 1950 note to Paul W. McBeth, Elizabethtown, PA: "Here is a snap of this place in the winter, when tourists are more plentiful than now.... I would say things look good for this place with the new couple who are coming and I think it is a very good station. Quite hot here, but they say it is the same in Penna."

As the Home Mission Board reported in the 1951 *Handbook of Missions*, Walter O. Winger served for two months at the Orlando Mission after Charles and Myrtle Nye completed 14 years of service at the Orlando city mission and before the "new couple" could arrive to pick up their assignment—the "new couple" being Ernest and Kathryn Boyer. In their report in the 1951 *Handbook*, the Boyers write: "The twelve months ended have been very encouraging. The Sunday School rose from an average attendance of 26 last July to a high of 97 in April, averaging 67 for the year The attendance in the evening services and prayer meetings has also been gratifying, especially the Youth Fellowship each Sunday night Even though we arrived and served here on something of an emergency basis, yet, because

of this year's service we will always be deeply concerned about the work at Orlando....

The Boyers served at Orlando for about a year and were succeeded by Paul and Evelyn Book, who wrote the Orlando city mission report that appeared in the 1952 *Handbook*.



The photo was taken sometime prior to 1950.