



## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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## 2025 Annual Meeting to Release New Sider Biography

The 2025 Annual Meeting of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society will be held on Saturday, October 4, at 12 noon, at the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church, 421 Grantham Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA. Appropriately, it is being held during Homecoming Weekend at Messiah University, next door to the church. The program this year will celebrate the release of the new biography of E. Morris and Leone Sider, who were central figures in the Brethren in Christ Church and at Messiah University, and honor their lives.

Devin Manzullo-Thomas has written what former Historical Society president Emerson Leshner calls "a wonderfully insightful biography of the dean of Brethren in Christ history and biography, E. Morris Sider." Entitled *Storyteller: The Life and Ministry of E. Morris Sider*, the book "captures how Sider more than anyone gave of his expertise, time, energy, and financial resources to ensure that current and future generations would understand and appreciate the theology, values, practices, and people of the Brethren in Christ movement in North America."

A catered meal will be served at the Grantham Church, including the tradition of homemade pies for dessert that Leone Sider began many years ago. Following the program honoring Morris's life as a storyteller, copies of the book will be available. Members of the Society will receive a complimentary copy, and additional copies will be available for sale. Members not attending the Annual Meeting can look forward to receiving their copies sometime later. Also, everyone is invited to the open house being held during Messiah University's Homecoming at the Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives in the basement of Murray Library on campus.

Register by September 15 at  
bic-history.org/events

Mail check payment of \$25 per person to cover cost of meal to:

Brethren in Christ Historical Society  
c/o Lancaster BIC Church  
1865 Fruitville Pike  
Lancaster PA 17601



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## Storm Damages Historic Ringgold Meeting House

The Ringgold Meeting House sustained serious damage to its roof and grounds this past May when a high-wind microburst sent a tree through the roof and punctured several holes. This and heavy damage to trees which blocked access to the building led to the cancellation of the Annual Heritage Service in June. While our insurance company has settled claims, repairs have been slow to happen. Trees and brush were removed from the roof and from against the building, but much work remains with a number of trees needing to be felled and removed. Roof patches have held against the several recent storms but finding available roofers (or volunteers) to replace the roof has been difficult. Donations toward restoration efforts may

be designated for the Ringgold Meeting House and sent to the Brethren in Christ Foundation, in care of Kim Lehman, 431 Grantham Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. If you would like to volunteer to help, please contact John Walker, a trustee for the meeting house, at pastorjohn@fabicchurch.org or 717-712-3704.



# Treasures from the Past

by Harriet Sider Bicksler, editor

My parents, Lewis and Gladys (Bohen) Sider, both passed from this life more than twenty years ago, yet over the past few weeks I've been thinking about them more than usual. I've been going through "stuff" as my husband and I plan to move from the house where we've lived for thirty-two years. That "stuff" includes memorabilia from my parents that as the appointed-by-my-brothers family historian I have kept—mostly in the basement. There are the baby clothes—circa 1911, the year they were born—which I have donated to the Archives. There are the love letters written to each other while they were engaged and early in their marriage when my dad was working a few hours north of Upland, California, my mother's hometown. There is the suitcase of precious family photographs, some of which I've doled out to my brothers and cousins. There are all the clothes (dresses, sweaters, capes and bonnets, underwear) my mother sewed and knitted for my dolls with the same exquisite skill she applied to everything she sewed and knit for me and many others.

As a testament to those knitting skills, I found a three-ring binder (maybe leather, about 6 x 9) that is chockful of stitch patterns and swatches. On the left side of each page is the swatch, and on the right is the pattern and a suggestion for the item for which it could be used. Some of the pages are pieces of leftover wallpaper, evidence of my mother's thrifty and resourceful nature.

I found further evidence of her thrift and resourcefulness in a wooden recipe box. Most recipes are hand-written—in the handwriting I recognize from her letters to me both in boarding school in Africa and then in graduate school in Idaho—and many give the source of the recipe, whether her mother, a friend, or a fellow missionary. Examples are the recipes for cold soap and boiled soap, useful not only for those who lived through the Great Depression, as

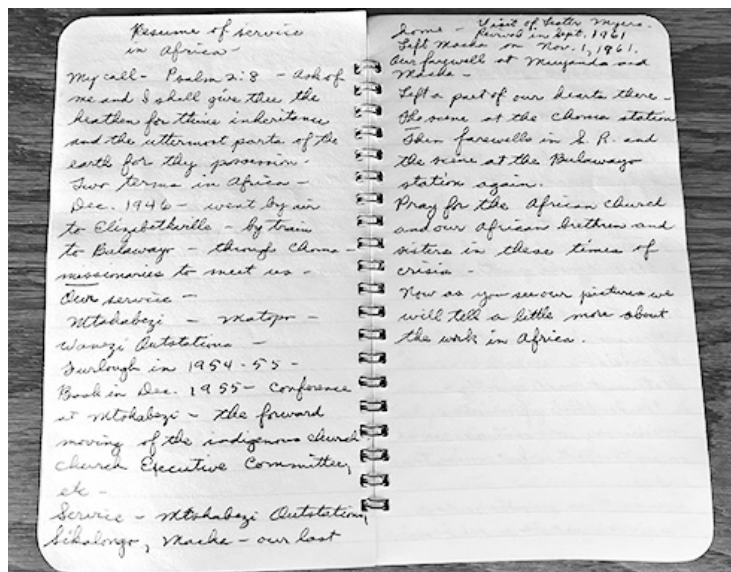
my mother did, but also on the mission field in the 1940s and 50s. And in good Brethren in Christ fashion, there is a recipe for a crowd-size batch of communion bread.

Surviving the years and moves is also a small 3 x 5 brown notebook of my father's sermon notes. Judging by the contents, they are notes for the sermons and talks he gave during



From the suitcase of photographs: the Joseph and Peter Steckley families, circa 1909. My grandmother, Alice Steckley Sider, is second from the right in the middle row.

missionary deputation after returning to the United States from Africa in December 1961. Particularly poignant is his "resume of service in Africa," in which he summarizes his call to missions, describes the various assignments he and



A page from my father's sermon notebook.

my mother had, and notes, "[We] left part of our hearts there." I know that to be true: even though his missionary service was only fifteen of his ninety-one years, I think he saw it as the most significant part of his life. Almost every set of notes ended with a call to prayer for the church in Africa.

There's nothing quite like moving to bring out the nostalgia and make one think back over one's life and the lives of parents and grandparents. As my husband and I plan our move to the same place my parents spent their last years, I am grateful for the legacy they left that is evidenced in these treasures from their past.



My mother's knitting book of knitting swatches.



## News and Notes

From the Brethren in Christ Historical Library & Archives

### 1922 Notebook from Fairview Congregation Offers Glimpse into History and Life

By Dwight W. Thomas\*

In the course of doing historical research, we sometimes encounter wonderfully rich items. While researching the young people of Englewood, Ohio's Fairview Brethren in Christ congregation, I discovered such an item: a notebook, dated 1922, describing Brethren in Christ home mission activity. The Fairview congregation's passion for missions is obvious. Titled "Our Home Missionary Enterprises by Fairview Bible Study Members," the black binder notebook includes brief descriptions of:

- Philadelphia Mission
- Lancaster Mission
- Chicago Mission
- San Francisco Mission
- Centre County (Pennsylvania) Mission
- Buffalo Mission
- Welland (Ontario) Mission
- Dayton (Ohio) Mission
- Des Moines (Iowa) Mission
- Chambersburg Mission
- Altoona Mission
- Bethel (Michigan) Mission
- Messiah Home Orphanage
- Mt. Carmel (Illinois) Home
- Jabbok Faith Orphanage (Oklahoma)
- Messiah Rescue and Benevolence Home
- Oakley (California) Mission
- Boston (Massachusetts) Mission
- Kentucky Missions

The notebook also includes one- or two-page descriptions of each mission station along with photographs that vividly document the mission buildings and workers. Most of the photos are well-framed, clearly focused shots which convey the contexts of these home mission efforts.

Equally valuable for my study, the notebook includes the names of people who helped compile the notebook.

Most are Fairview members, including:

- Jesse W. Wenger
- Rolla Wenger
- Edna Hoover
- Ellen Rohrer
- Albert H. Engle
- Ruth Berger
- Harriet Engle
- Iva C. Herr
- Alma Cassel
- Mary Berger
- Anna Hoover
- Anna Tucker
- Ralph H. Herr
- Ohmer U. Herr
- Lela Fern Hoover
- M. L. Dohner

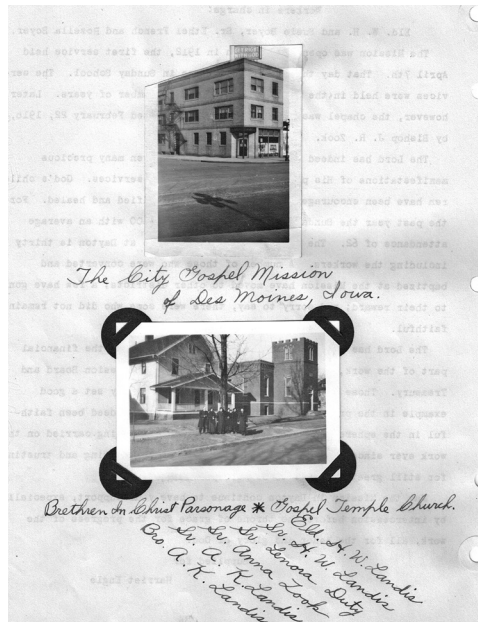


*The Welland Mission.*  
ack  
led: Bro. Gordon Shick,  
Sr. Clara Winger,  
Sr. Sarah Clements.

fies the mission advocates in this local congregation; many are from families that had and still have strong connections to the Brethren in Christ. That they were serious about their concern for home missions is obvious, and several reports especially intrigued me. For example, the account of the Boston Mission notes that the mission was "launched especially in the interests of the beloved Armenian people." The North American Brethren in Christ connection with Armenian Christians is interesting in that it represents a unique tie to this diaspora in the United States.

It is also interesting to note a printed item on the title page which states "Use Me Carefully. FAIRVIEW S. S. LIBRARY. Sec. 1. No. 114." It would appear that the Fairview congregation was not only serious about home missions, but also serious about maintaining a congregational library—one that was evidently organized into sections that included relevant materials.

In short, I see a wealth of interesting historical information from this one single black notebook in the Brethren in Christ Archives.



The historical value of this notebook to me is not simply in the home mission details. I am interested in what the artifact tells us about the Fairview congregation members—their interests, their connections, their sense of obligation and responsibility beyond the local setting. The list above identi-

\*Dwight W. Thomas is a retired music professor from Messiah University. He is the author of *Blest Be The Tie That Binds: Studies in Brethren in Christ Faith and Culture*.



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## Images from the Past

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

Photographs are among the most valuable historical artifacts contained in our collection. But these materials become much less useful for researchers when they are deposited without any identifying information! For example, this photo appears to depict a sports team and coaches from one of our denominational schools, perhaps in the 1920s or 1930s. No date or names are written on the back side of the print; the only information is a short, hand-written note: "Upland College?"

### Do you recognize anyone in this picture?

Send your insights to [archives@messiah.edu](mailto:archives@messiah.edu). And remember to always caption your photographs!

