



PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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Plans Underway for 2024 Heritage Service and Annual Meeting



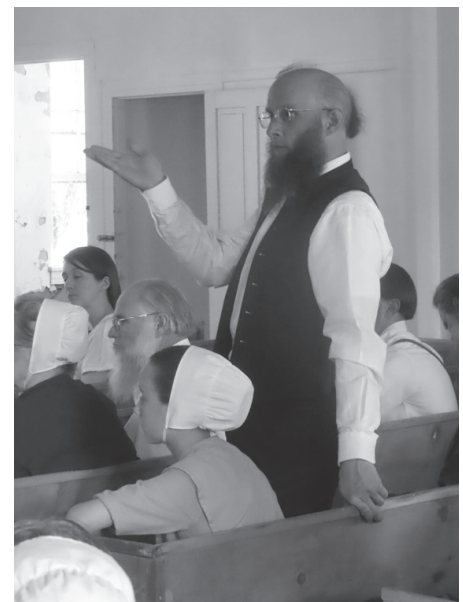
After the 2023 Heritage Service at the Ringgold Meeting House.

Heritage Service, June 2, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

We welcome you to attend the Annual Heritage Service at the Ringgold Meeting House, 14426 Misty Meadow Road, Smithburg, MD 21783. If you've never attended before, let this be the year you enjoy this simple service in a historic building.

The late Owen Alderfer (former professor and bishop) used to talk about the Brethren in Christ finding and being open to "new light." The late Luke Keefer Jr. spoke and wrote about us being people "with a difference" (Anabaptists with a difference, Pietists with a difference, Wesleyans with a difference) as he examined each of our three historical theological streams. He also called us to be as intentionally different with Evangelicalism as we were with the other three.

When we talk about who we are we often find ourselves using the word "and": (we are Anabaptists and Pietists and Wesleyans and Evangelicals and ...). This year we have asked Rob Patterson, bishop of the Allegheny Conference, to examine this theme in our history and speak to some of the challenges of working out the "ands" in current church life. We will gather to worship in song and to hear the word, with time for questions and further discussion.



Brother Sauder explaining the Old Order River Brethren singing style during the 2023 service.

Annual Meeting, July 2024

Our Annual Meeting this year will take place in Cincinnati, Ohio during the biennial General Assembly of the Brethren in Christ U.S. The specific schedule during these days is still to be determined, but it is likely we will meet over a meal or some other section of free time in the schedule. We are planning to invite people from the Great Lakes Conference to share stories from conference history; for example, a town in Ohio named after Brethren in Christ settlers, early church structures, the first racially integrated congregation, a church planting story, city ministries, and so on. Watch for more information in the assembly schedule.

Volunteer administrative assistant wanted!

The Historical Society is searching for a volunteer administrative assistant to the editor and executive director. Requirements include familiarity with the Brethren in Christ Church and attendance at a Brethren in Christ congregation, technical skills (especially financial management, social media, and web management), and general administrative skills. This position is for one or two days a month, unevenly distributed throughout the year. While it is a volunteer position, there may be a small annual stipend. If you are interested in helping the Historical Society in this way or if you know someone who might be interested, please contact our president, John Yeatts, at jyeatts@messiah.edu.

Rewards in Research

by E. Morris Sider

Few activities can be more rewarding than researching Brethren in Christ history. Waiting to be discovered are interesting people and events, opinions and church news of the past. Following is a selection of gems that I have unearthed.

1. **Sarah Bert** was one of the founders of Chicago Mission and its longtime superintendent. Albert Baker was a son of Bishop Charles Baker of the Nottawa District in Ontario and a professor at the University of Manitoba. He once traveled from Winnipeg to Chicago to propose marriage to Sarah. She rejected his proposal, obviously preferring to remain married to the Mission than to a very eligible bachelor.

2. **Asa Climenhaga**, an early professor and administrator at what is now Messiah University, wrote to the president saying that he would be donating \$3,000 to the school, the interest from which would help to pay an administrator's salary. In exchange for the donation, the school should annually place a rose on his tombstone.

3. A century ago **Noah Zook** was a leading churchman among the Brethren in Christ. Among other activities, he, along with S. R. Smith, edited the first denominational hymnal containing notes. While holding a revival meeting for the Wainfleet congregation in Ontario, he resided in the home of Christian and Anna Sider whose son Earl was then a child. Zook would place little Earl on his lap and teach him how to read music.

4. **Bishop Bert Sherk** of the Black Creek District in Ontario was a firm believer in divine healing. He gained such a good reputation for success in his ministry that the local medical doctor referred to the bishop those patients who were not benefiting from his own care.

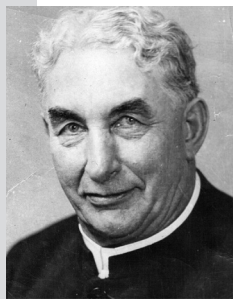
5. **John and Della Nigh** were the pastoral couple for the congregation at Springvale in Ontario, which was located close to a reserve for indigenous people. The Nighs developed an excellent relationship with these people, some of whom entrusted their money with the Nighs rather than placing it in a bank.

6. **George Detwiler** was another professor in the early years of the school at Grantham. He was known for his kind and generous personality. When asked how he graded the work of his students, he replied, "I give them all I can. Then I close my eyes and give them a little bit more." (When I explained to my college students that I followed Detwiler's practice, I sensed that I was met with skepticism!)

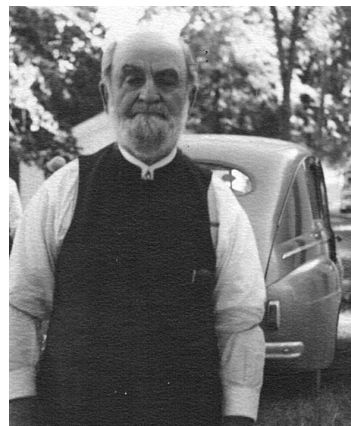
7. In the Markham District in Ontario, the son of a widow died by suicide, leaving blood scattered over the floor and on the walls. **Catherine Heise**, the wife of Deacon Orla Heise, and another woman of the congregation with mop and cloths cleaned the room for the grieving mother.



Sarah Bert in 1901 at the Chicago Mission.



Bert Sherk



Lafayette Shoalts.

8. When I was writing the biography of conservative Ohio Bishop **Orville Ulery**, his son Carl told me that when the family heard their father laugh while reading the newspaper, they knew that he was then reading the comics. (When I was a boy, the only safe place for me to read the frowned-upon comics was behind the locked door of the outhouse.)

9. **Avery Long** was one of our earliest evangelists. Thinking that the World Fair of 1904 in St. Louis was a likely place to save sinners, he and Benjamin Gish, with their wives, camped in tents outside the fair grounds. Gish could not bring himself to go into such a sinful place as a fair, but Long marched boldly on to the grounds, distributing copies of the church paper, *The Evangelical Visitor*, as he moved among the crowd.

10. **Enos Hess**, an administrator and professor in the earliest years of Messiah University, attended what is now Pennsylvania State University.

There as a student he was very much engaged in religious activities, among them playing a leading role in bringing Dwight L. Moody to campus for a series of religious services. But his pronounced spiritual life did not please some of his fellow students. On one occasion he barricaded himself in his room to escape an attack, and he was excluded from the school's yearbooks.



Enos Hess as a young man.

11. Still another conservative bishop, **Lafayette Shoalts** of the Wainfleet District, avoided buying anything on Sunday. However, his duties as bishop sometimes required traveling on that day. To ensure that he did not need to buy gas on such trips, he filled a can with the fuel and placed it in the trunk of his car.

Such discoveries are ample reward for time spent researching our Brethren in Christ history.

E. Morris Sider is editor emeritus for the Brethren in Christ Historical Society and has written numerous books on Brethren in Christ history

News and Notes

From the Brethren in Christ Historical Library & Archives

Family Donates Baby Buggy to the Archives

by Craig Isaak

In 1892, David and Agnes Eyster of Dickinson County, Kansas purchased a baby buggy for their third child, Edna. David and Agnes both arrived in Kansas as part of various Brethren in Christ migrations to the west when they were young teenagers. David's family moved west from Cumberland County, Pennsylvania in 1878, and Agnes from Perry County, Pennsylvania sometime between 1881 and 1885. Family history tells us that this buggy was purchased in used condition and likely dates back to the 1840s.

In 1895, David moved his young family to Custer County, Oklahoma to begin farming the land they had claimed little more than a year earlier after the federal government had opened the land for new settlers. The buggy made the trip with them because a fourth child had arrived just a month before the move. The buggy was used by multiple Eyster children, but it ultimately remained in Edna's possession. My mother, Allyne Isaac, Edna's sixth and youngest child, used it as a toy when she was a child.

Edna Eyster married P. B. Friesen in 1914. They homesteaded near Thomas, Oklahoma, in the area where both of their families lived. Their marriage represents the intersection of the three people who are central to much of my family history: David, his daughter Edna, and her husband, P. B.

The baby buggy remained in Edna's possession until she and P. B. were called to Knifley, Kentucky in 1955. The move to Kentucky was expected to be temporary, so they took only what would fit in their car. Edna was very sentimental about the buggy and considered it to be hers and a meaningful connection to her parents who had given it to her, so she put it in safe keeping with her sister Mary. P. B. and Edna continued to move around and never settled back in Oklahoma. Aunt Mary kept the buggy until 1985 when my family became its custodians during a long family road trip from Canada that took us to Oklahoma. Back home with us in Canada, the buggy was lovingly restored and became a conversation piece prominently displayed for friends and family.

We do not know its value as an antique, but its real value is in the story of the people connected to it. David Eyster was instrumental in starting the Bethany Brethren in Christ Church in Thomas, Oklahoma, and later became the first bishop of the newly-created Oklahoma District in 1907, serving as bishop until 1945. P. B. was ordained by David in 1919 and was the second bishop of the district. You can read more about David in *Brethren in Christ History and Life*.¹ Of note is his devotion to the Lord's work of pastoral care and evangelism—he held more than three hundred revival meetings across nine states and Canada.

David (often known as D. R.) Eyster and P. B. Friesen both



The restored Eyster family baby buggy. Approximate dimensions are 50" l x 26" w x 33" h.

made large contributions to the Brethren in Christ Church over many decades. They both made decisions that went against General Conference rules at the time, although some of their decisions have since become the standard. David was the first to ordain a woman to preach when he ordained Anna Kraybill in 1921. Both David and P. B. welcomed young men back into the church after they had picked up a gun in war when the common practice was to disfellowship these men.

David passed away on January 11, 1955 and was buried in the cemetery next to the church he founded. Both P. B. and his wife Edna retired to Messiah Home in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. P. B. lived there only a few months before he passed away on July 1, 1972. Edna remained there until the Home was relocated to Messiah Village in Mechanicsburg, where she became one of the original residents of the newly-constructed facility now known as Messiah Lifeways. Edna passed away on September 22, 1979.

My family has decided that the baby buggy, a unique piece of our history, belongs to the Brethren in Christ Church, so we are donating it to the Historical Library and Archives at Messiah University where it can continue to be preserved and provide enjoyment and education for others.

Craig Isaak lives with his family along the Front Range in Colorado. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have four children, and he is a proud alum of Messiah University, Class of 1995.

Note: This story came as the result of the author's message via our website asking whether the Archives would be interested in the baby buggy. If you want to know about anything related to Brethren in Christ history, please feel free to send your question via the website: bic-history.org/ contact. We will do our best to direct your question to the right person.

¹ Esther F. Richwine, "Frontier Bishop: The Story of David Ramp and Agnes Landis Eyster," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 23, no. 2 (August 2000): 227-324.



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Images from the Past

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



At first glance, this snapshot from an unknown Brethren in Christ General Conference—probably from the 1920s or 1930s—looks normal enough: a lot full of parked cars, likely belonging to delegates and other Conference participants. But on closer examination, there's some interesting decoration on one of the cars: a couple of small United States flags affixed to the front bumper! (See inset image for closeup.)

In this era, plain-dressed, nonresistant Brethren in Christ were urged by the church's doctrinal statement "to exercise precaution in political affiliations" (*Constitution and By-Laws of the Brethren in Christ Church*, 1924). What might a future historian make of this patriotic ornamentation?

