

# **The Historical Society of the Bible Fellowship Church**

## **January, 2011**

Welcome to another January edition. I think my motivation to publish increases with the end of the holidays. With the low point of winter facing us, I think that I get to do my part to provide something that might be interesting on a cold or snowy day.

I have to begin with some necessary information.

First, if you have not renewed your membership, this will be your last issue. I will add a renewal form at the end. Not only would I like you to renew your membership, I would like to encourage you to offer a gift membership to someone you know. Having a lot of members has never been the goal of the society. However, I keep running into people who express an interest and know nothing about the society and what we do. You are the best (and the cheapest) advertisement we have. All you have to do is give a membership or even invite someone to join.

Second, for those of you who are highly organized and even keep a calendar months or years ahead, our next Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, October 29, 2011. I can tell you that our speaker will be Richard Gehman who will be presenting material he collected while writing his book. You can wait for the specific details which you will know in plenty of time. While I have not confirmed the location of the meeting at this time, it will be in the Lehigh Valley which is very convenient for many of you.

Bruce Ellingson kindly sent me an email with the information that the Lebanon Church celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this month. The actual date is January 11, 2011. They will commemorate the day but real festivities with special meetings will be held in May. Those with a good memory will recall that we met at the Lebanon Church to help them celebrate their 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2001. Our website contains two Lebanon resources, [The Golden Anniversary of Lebanon Bible Fellowship Church – 1911 – 1961](http://www.bfchistory.org/lebanon.htm) by Dan Ziegler ([www.bfchistory.org/lebanon.htm](http://www.bfchistory.org/lebanon.htm)) and [Heralding the Gospel in Lebanon, PA](http://www.bfchistory.org/Lebanon2001.htm) by Judy Althouse ([www.bfchistory.org/Lebanon2001.htm](http://www.bfchistory.org/Lebanon2001.htm)).

I received a copy of a book by Ardella Bray, long time member of the Emmaus Bible Fellowship Church and now a resident at Fellowship Community. Her book is a collection of memory capturing poems entitled, [My Legacy](#). Her poem, Homecoming,

which was written for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Emmaus Church in 1982, captures the personal side of historical memories.

## Homecoming

Homecoming - a special day,  
A time for us to review;  
A day for fellowship with friends,  
Some old, and others new!

A day to share with family  
And all those we hold dear;  
We're all gathered here together,  
Both from far away and near.

It's a time to reflect on by-gone days,  
Remembering how life was then,  
Realizing the years have brought change  
It will never be like that again!

That thought brings us mixed feelings,  
It may make you very sad,  
But realizing some things are over  
May make you feel very glad.

God allows glad times and sad times,  
In the life of each sister and brother,  
And His plan is for each to share,  
Our times of joy and of strife.

How wonderful to realize  
While on our journey Home,  
He gave us one another,  
We travel not alone.

And then to realize someday,  
When our life on earth is done,  
Our life together with Him  
Will have only just begun!

Thanks, Ardella. If you are interested in ordering a copy of her book and its poetic memories, you may mail her at Ardella Bray, Fellowship Community, 3409 Gehman Court, Whitehall PA 18052.

Barry Kauffman helped the Lancaster Bible Fellowship Church celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in July, 2010, by blogging some of his memories. He gave me permission to reprint some excerpts which will give you a bit of the history of one of our newer churches.

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Jobs were scarce in the years following World War II and so our family moved quite often during those years. When we lived in New Cumberland, Elizabethtown, and Lancaster, we traveled each Sunday and most Wednesdays to attend the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church in Harrisburg. After my father took a permanent job in Lancaster at RCA, he desired to find a church that was more convenient for our family to attend. He found that there were a number of other families living in the Lancaster area who had previously attended Mennonite Brethren in Christ churches in Lebanon and Mt. Carmel. It was this nucleus of families that worked with the denomination to begin a mission work in Lancaster.

A young pastor, James Koch, was appointed to lead the new mission work. And, on July 22, 1950, the new congregation held its first service in a tent at the corner of Broad and Orange Streets. This was a very special time for all of us who attended. Then, on August 28, the mission held its first Sunday School in the tent with 28 attending. The teachers were Beulah Koch, Parke Rankin, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Sheffy, and my father, Horace Kauffman. On September 3 the congregation held its first service in the meeting rooms of Malta Temple, on East King Street. I can vividly remember that during prayer meetings we would hear the bowling balls and pins from the bowling alley below us.

Fellowship was important in developing unity and the first church social was held at Malta on October 17. During the next few years the young congregation would often meet with the Lebanon congregation for times of fellowship and encouragement. A charter membership included 31 members and during the first ten years the membership grew to 47 and the average Sunday School attendance grew to an average of 106. Since the death of my father in 2009, I am now the only remaining charter member who still attends Faith. We've lost contact over the years with a couple of others who, like me, were children then and might still be living.

Less than a year after their first meeting, the congregation approved a resolution to have a church building built by Benjamin Groff, at a cost of \$23,177, on Hager Street. This lot was on the corner of an emerging neighborhood with open land to its south and west. Prospect St., which now borders the lot on the west, and Seymour St., to the south, were not yet extended and only woods and fields of corn were in these areas. Showing signs of new life and growth, church officers were elected on May 23, 1951, and these included the first trustees – Raymond Snyder, Merle Lefever and Horace

Kauffman. Ground was broken for the new building in July of 1951, the cornerstone was laid on August 8, and the first service was held in the basement on November 1, less than 16 months after the first service. I remember the excitement of that first Sunday meeting and though it was just in the basement, it was our new home.

Earlier, during that summer, tent meetings were again held, this time where the Lafayette Fire Company now exists on Prospect Street. During those services, a neighboring family, the Irwin family, helped our church workers and began to attend. Some of the family members were saved. A daughter, Sharon Irwin Gantz, is still an active member of our church.

I have many great memories of these years. I personally remember meeting many of the young students from the newly formed Berean Bible School who came during the summers to share in the outreach. Many of them stayed in our home on Queen St. Later, many of them became pastors in our denomination. I remember the times we went door to door sharing literature and inviting folks to visit with us. I remember the unity shown as the charter members donated many hours of labor at the new church. I especially recall the time families spent together painting the walls of the new building. Those early years taught me many lessons about God's provision and God's blessing when His children give of themselves to labor in unity, doing God's work.



Church buildings certainly have played a key role in the growth of our church over the past 60 years. We started in a large tent in 1950 and additional tent meetings, at two different locations on Prospect St., were part of the summer ministry for the next two years. In later years tent meetings were also often held on the lot behind our first building. After meeting for over a year at Malta Temple on King Street, we moved into our first permanent building in November of 1951.

In January of 1952, our new building was dedicated and the dedication message was delivered by Jansen Hartman, a personal friend of my father, who had also been our pastor in Harrisburg. As Director of Home Missions, he was very instrumental in the founding of this new mission in Lancaster. In September of 1953 the congregation voted, very appropriately, to add Faith to the name of our church.

The early pastors lived in rented apartments. In fact, Pastor Koch lived behind us in a third floor apartment on W. James St. and later a block away in a second floor apartment on N. Queen St. But in February, 1958, the members voted to purchase 532 Prospect St. as a parsonage at a cost of \$14,500. In 1967 the house was sold for

\$13,500 and a new, and much larger, parsonage was constructed across from the church, at 608 Prospect St., for \$22,075. The new parsonage included space for a pastor's study, Sunday School classes, and socials in the basement. This parsonage was sold in 1999.



Since the congregation was growing, we wisely purchased land behind the original building in 1964 for \$16,472. Five years later, we approved construction of a new church facility, to be built by Abram Horst, at a cost of \$119,000. The first service in the new building was held on August 2, 1970, twenty years after our first service in the tent. The original building was renovated to include a kitchen in 1972 and an addition to the parking area was approved just three months later. A final major renovation, connecting the two buildings and adding a gym, offices and additional classrooms, was approved in 1985 at a maximum cost of \$372,000. A sacrificial giving Sunday, three months later, surpassed its goal of \$25,000 for the new building.

For many years these new facilities met the needs of a growing congregation, but on February 22, 1998, the congregation voted to purchase property at Woods of Round Top for \$730,000. However, a few months later, due to rising land development costs and zoning problems, we abandoned that option and in December of 1999 purchased 23 acres near Donerville and Weaver Roads for \$650,000. In June of 2000 the church property was sold to New Song Fellowship Church for \$525,000. In November of 2000, worship services were held in the Ramada Inn until we were finally able to begin services in a transition facility, the former Calvary Church building. Groundbreaking for the present church building was held in June of 2002 and the first service was held there on June 20, 2003.

Two other key developments were completed in 2007 when the softball field was named "H. A. Kauffman Field" and the extensive renovation of the horse barn was completed and dedicated as the Stables Youth Center. It is incredible to see how the Lord has led us, step by step, over these 60 years, from a tent to a beautiful complex. Should the Lord tarry, it will be exciting to see future generations complete the new phase of the complex's development with the addition of a new education wing and a sanctuary. That presently seems like a dream, but every phase of this growth also seemed like a dream before it was completed. But God was faithful as we followed His leading. Never was there a time that we couldn't pay our bills and every phase of the expansion was paid off in full long before it was expected.

Over 60 years God's people have stepped out in faith and have given faithfully of their tithes and offerings. And appropriately, we have been known as FAITH Bible Fellowship Church.

The backbone of the 60 years of Faith Bible Fellowship has been the ministry of our pastoral staffs and the leadership of committed elders and officers. All of our pastors have been true to the Word and have openly taught God's truths. The founding pastor, James Koch, set a good foundation and met the needs of a new family that included many young Christians as well as numerous mature Christians. He related well to the members and spent time with them developing unity and goals. I especially remember spending time with him and his wife as they would take me along to various places such as Mizpah Grove.

In 1954 Annual Conference assigned Frank Herb Jr. to be our second pastor. He had a special connection to us because he was a son of the Lebanon church and was known by many of our folks who had previously attended there. He was a very strong Bible teacher and his solid pulpit emphasis was vital to our young growing congregation.

In 1958 we were assigned our third pastor, Rudy H. Gehman. And unlike our previous pastors, he came to us with many years of experience and this was important for our maturing congregation. His son, Richard Gehman, a college student while his dad was our pastor, later became a veteran missionary to Kenya and an author of several books. In 1961 we were stunned when the Lord suddenly took Pastor Gehman home with a heart attack while he was preparing for the final night of our VBS.

Two months later, Annual Conference appointed Norman Weiss as our fourth pastor. This was our first real experience with a pastor who had young children and we enjoyed seeing them grow and develop their musical talents.

At Annual Conference in 1967 we were informed that our fifth pastor was to be John Dunn. I knew most of the pastors in our denomination at that time and I admit that I was very disappointed when I heard this announcement. He was not known as a great preacher, he had pastored small churches, he wasn't dynamic, and he had a slightly deformed arm. But what I didn't know was that he had a heart for people. Soon we didn't even think about his handicap because people responded to his caring ministry. His influence in Lancaster still is affecting lives today, even though he is now in heaven. After a battle with cancer, Pastor Dunn announced his plans to retire in 1979. Incidentally, the Lord saw fit to heal his cancer and he lived a full life before the Lord took him home in 2009.

On July 13, 1980, thirty years after our first service, we approved a call to David Thomann to be our sixth pastor. With the exception of one year, he has served with us for the second thirty years of our existence. In 1986, he felt the call to become Director of the Pinebrook Bible Conference. During that year we struggled to find a new pastor. I devoted my time to finding weekly replacements for the pulpit, leading the services, and taking care of the church business while our pulpit supply committee interviewed

numerous candidates. Thankfully our attendance and giving remained steady during that time and in fact we even gained some new folks. Then, a year later, Pastor Thomann accepted our call to return to Lancaster where he has faithfully served since that time.

In December of 1980 we called Pastor Dunn to return as our Pastor of Visitation and he teamed successfully with our new young pastor until 1987 when he moved to Florida. During the past thirty years we have also had a number of other men who have served in various capacities on our pastoral staff. And we are thankful for their ministry to our church family. Today we have four pastors on our staff.

But as I said originally, one of the strengths of our church has been the strong lay leadership, especially our elders. My father served in this capacity for 58 years. Richard Matthews has now served for 51 years. I served for 34 years, my brother Terry for 31, Monroe Kreisher for 22, Ken Malick for 20, Allen Minnig for 19, and Ted Cundif and Steve Groff for 16. Numerous others have now served for 10 or more years. Various folks have served as deacons, as elected officers and as directors of various ministries.

I thank the Lord that for 60 years He has called wise men and women to serve at Faith, and they have responded to His call. Sound preaching and wise leadership, yielded to the Will of God are a strong formula for God's blessing upon a ministry.

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Thanks, Barry. If you would like more of Barry's memories and thoughts, he maintains a blog which you can visit at [barrysbasicblog.blogspot.com/](http://barrysbasicblog.blogspot.com/).

LeRoy Wilcox has been hard at work and has shared the results of his interests by giving some background of the Gehret family whose name is prominent on the pages of our history and the somewhat dizzying interconnections of some of the families in our church.

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## THE GEHRET FAMILY LeRoy Wilcox

The name Gehret is from Gerhardt and means "brave, strong". The Gehret family of our Conference is traced back to Jacob Gehret, born on February 25, 1768. Not much is known about him except that he married a woman named Rebecca and died on April 7, 1852. At least seven children were born to them, one being a son named Jacob, born in 1813. The family resided in Richmond Township, Berks County and worshipped at St. Paul's Union Church in the township. Jacob (1813) married a woman named Mary Becker, from Lebanon County, and they had at least four children. One, Mary Ann, born on December 10, 1851, died of spotted fever on November 25, 1864 and is buried in St.

Paul's Union Cemetery. Jacob died on February 22, 1902. A son, born on April 15, 1846, was also named Jacob. On November 3, 1866 he married a woman named Fayette (also spelled Fyetta and Fietta) Plan from Ruscombmanor Township, which adjoins Richmond Township. The marriage was performed by a Lutheran pastor, Rev. Kramlich, who also officiated at the marriage of John B. Gehman (son of Heinrich) and Mary Oberholtzer. Rev. Kramlich, of Kutztown, performed pastoral duties in Kutztown, Upper Milford Township (Lehigh County) and Richmond Township (Berks County). There is no record of anyone by the surname of Plan to be found in Berks County nor is there any record of anyone by the name of Fayette Plan anywhere. Perhaps she was a young widow who had moved to the area. It appears that the surname Plan is a shortened form of the surname Plank, which in turn is derived from the name Blankenburg.

Jacob lived in Fleetwood and worked as an ore miner but later moved to Reading where he died while living at 520 Oley Street. Daniel Koch was named as a delegate to Annual Conference in 1884 but the delegates were not listed with their churches. In 1885 Daniel Koch was not listed but Jacob Gehret was listed as a delegate representing both the churches of Fleetwood and Reading. In 1886 and 1887 Jacob represented only Reading and Daniel Koch was the delegate from Fleetwood.

Jacob died in 1887 and the Gospel Banner reported Jacob's death, stating,

“Gehret - On Saturday afternoon the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1887, in Reading, Pa., of typhoid fever, brother Jacob Gehret, aged 41 years, 1 month and 6 days. Not only does sister Gehret and family feel the loss sustained by the removal of Bro. Gehret, but also the church in which he was a real pillar, and his house always welcome to the pilgrims. Brother Gehret received an injury by the falling of a scaffold about 4 weeks before he died and it is supposed that that had something to do with his death. He died happy in the Lord. On the day of his death, after prayer, he sang 'Dort sind die Engel and singen so schoen' (writer's translation: 'there the angels are and they sing so beautifully'). He was buried in the Fleetwood cemetery. Elds. W.B. Musselman, conducting the service at the house and Gehman and Strawn at the church. Text John 11,28”.

Jacob was buried at St. Paul's Union Church cemetery in Richmond Township. After the death of Jacob, Fayette married Daniel Stonebach (also spelled Steinbach), a farmer from Upper Saucon Township in Lehigh County. They were joined in marriage on March 7, 1889 in Coopersburg by Abel Strawn. Fayette, born in September 1847, died in 1911 and is buried next to Jacob. Her tombstone shows her surname to be 'Gehret'.





Tombstones of Jacob and Fayette

At least seven children were born to Jacob and Fayette. A daughter, Mary, married William Haag, a hardware molder, on October 06, 1890 in Reading. They moved to Allentown and Charles, born in 1881, also moved to Allentown and is found in the 1910 Census living at 35 Hickory Street, with his sister Mary and her husband, William Haag, and Fayette, now a widow of Daniel Stonebach. Daniel was born on December 13, 1835 but his death date is not known.

Charles' occupation is listed as butcher. He died on November 2, 1963 in Cedarbrook, near Allentown, and his obituary states that he was a retired house painter. There is no record of a marriage. Frank, born on February 10, 1877, was living next door to his sister, Mary, and husband, with his wife Gwennie and their daughter, Edith. He was living in Brecksville, Ohio, at the time of Charles' death. A daughter of Jacob and Fayette, Amanda, born on September 23, 1868, died on March 14, 1872 of spotted fever and is buried in the cemetery at St. Paul's Church. A daughter, Hettie, is listed but information about her is lacking.

Hettie Gehret and Mary (Gehret) Haag (standing).  
The children's identity is not certain.

Another daughter, Fannie, born on October 12, 1872, worked as a silk weaver and was married to Alfred Monroe Clauser on December 31, 1892, in Allentown by Oswin S. Hillegas. Alfred, born in Saegersville, North Whitehall Township, Lehigh County, was the son of Joseph William and Rose Ann (Heberly) Clauser. Alfred worked for a candy company and was converted in the winter of 1890 at Allentown. He became a preacher in our Conference and was ordained February 7, 1896 at Annual



Conference in Allentown. He resigned from the pastorate in 1899 to take a training course in the Missionary Society "Light and Hope" and then undertook two missionary trips through the Western states. He served at several churches in the Missionary Church Association and also served as a district superintendent. Later he resigned from the ministry and began a successful candy business. Alfred had a stroke in the summer of 1956 and later a mild heart attack. He died of a cerebral thrombosis at the Berne Nursing Home on October 15, 1956. Fannie died on April 17, 1953 in Decatur, IN. Alfred and Fannie had six children, some of whom helped in the candy business.



Alfred Monroe Clauser



Alfred, Fannie & family July 4, 1946

The first child of Jacob Gehret was a son, Adam, born on January 7, 1867. He worked in the ore mines with his father and grandfather but felt called to the ministry. Adam married a woman from the Bethlehem Church, Ida Doney, and served at Bethlehem from 1892 to 1895. He then was sent to the circuit of Upper Milford (Zionsville), East Hereford and Emmaus. His grandson, Bob Gehret, relates that he caught pneumonia when caught in a cold winter storm while walking from one of his churches to another on this circuit. He lingered on for many months but death finally overtook him. He died on June 1, 1898 in the parsonage in Dillinger's Station, just inside Upper Milford Township. The Macungie Progress newspaper reported that "His remains were brought to his last earthly resting place in the graveyard of the church of his congregation (Meeting House No. 3) on Monday, where a great multitude ... were present. ... Rev. Charles Brunner, of Reading, Presiding Elder, delivered an excellent sermon ... which lasted one hour ... after which his remains were brought to their resting place. ... Besides his mother, grandfather, two brothers and three sisters, his wife and four small children mourn his loss."

Ida Doney was born on March 30, 1867 in Bethlehem to William and Sevilla nee

Newhart Doney, who were married on December 22, 1866. William, born on May 28, 1844, enlisted in the Union Army as a private on March 22, 1865 as a member of Company I, 46<sup>th</sup> Regiment. He died on December 12, 1921 and is buried in the Nisky Hill Cemetery in Bethlehem. William worked as a brakeman on the railroad, became a bricklayer, but by 1890 was a foreman in the zinc works in South Bethlehem. Sevilla was the daughter of Jesse and Sarah Newhart of Bethlehem Township. She died of diphtheria on August 5, 1879 as her throat closed up and she was unable to swallow. Ida was only 12 years of age. William then married Araminta Mack of Bethlehem on October 22, 1881 at the Evangelical parsonage in Bethlehem.

Ida began attending the Bethlehem church and became a member on December 26, 1887. It is not known how she became acquainted with Adam Gehret but they were joined in marriage by William Gehman, founder of the Bible Fellowship Church, on December 21, 1889 in Upper Saucon Township. Four children were born to them although information is lacking about the first child, Fannie. After Adam, died, Ida found employment at Moravian College but the income was only enough to keep her daughter, Esther. She had to farm out her two sons who both later became leaders at the Bethlehem church. Esther married a preacher. Ida married a Bethlehem member, Hiram Ettinger, on October 31, 1907, the pastor being Harvey B. Musselman. Hiram, a widower, born on May 12, 1848, didn't live long much longer, dying on June 3, 1915 and was buried in the Fairview Cemetery in Bethlehem. Once again Ida was a widow.



Adam Gehret (seated on R) with William B. Musselman on L. Standing in back (L to R) is Joshua E. Fidler, Christopher W. Ruth and Oswin S. Hillegas.

Esther was born on December 11, 1892 and when she became a young woman she met a young preacher, Horace Kauffman, whom she married. He gave his testimony in The Gospel Banner, December 23, 1909:

I was converted in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church at Coopersburg, PA, in January, 1902, during the pastorate of Elder E. W. Martin and was baptized

and joined the church in the same month. I served the Lord for a few years at Coopersburg and was led into a deeper consecrated walk with the Lord by Elder W. S. Hottel. After trying in vain to evade the Lord's persistent call to a larger work, I obeyed His call and entered the Gospel Herald Society on October 29, 1907.

He was sent to the Royersford-Spring City circuit but died there on October 22, 1918 during the influenza epidemic, leaving a son, Horace and a pregnant widow. It was a trying time for Esther. The parsonage had to be vacated immediately for the replacement pastor and Esther returned to Bethlehem to stay with her mother, who had just become a widow again. A young Gospel Herald pastor, Norman Wolf, was interested in marrying a woman he had met but William G. Gehman, head of the Gospel Herald Society, told him that he would be better off marrying the widow Esther. He took that advice and they did marry on November 11, 1919. Later Norman was assigned to the Royersford-Spring City circuit. Esther felt that those making the assignment were very insensitive to return her to the parsonage where she had seen her first husband die. Ida went to live with Norman and Esther when he was assigned to the Sunbury church. Ida died there on October 2, 1944 and is buried in the cemetery at Zionsville next to her first husband, Adam.



Norman accepted Horace as his own son as he did the new daughter, from the previous marriage, Ellen, who married John Derck. Horace married Dolly Wise and was involved with our Conference in several responsibilities. This included serving as financial secretary of the Board of Directors for almost 40 years. He was also a founding director of Berean Bible School. In 1950 he helped establish the Bible Fellowship Church at Lancaster and served there as an Elder, delegate, Sunday School teacher and financial secretary. In the community he served as a president of the Warwick

School Board.

Jill Davidson pointed out in her article on the Kauffman families, that a son, Barry, “married Diane Bickle from the Sunbury church, the ceremony being performed by Preacher N. H. Wolf, Barry’s ‘grandfather’. Barry and Diane founded the Awana program at the Lancaster church in 1982 and continue to run it. Barry and Diane have three sons who are members of the Lancaster BFC.” Another son of Horace and Dolly, Terry Allen, was a student athlete who participated in baseball, football and wrestling. He became a teacher and coach and also was very active in the church he attended. Residing in Lititz, he died on May 10, 2009. The daughter of Horace and Dolly, Kendra, married Rick Grimm and both are very active in the Lancaster church, serving in Awana, the nursery and in Maintenance activities.

Two daughters were born to Norman and Esther, Beatrice and Thelma. Beatrice married Marlin R. Derck and resides in Lancaster (Marlin died on October 8, 2003). Norman and Esther served at Ebenezer from 1945 to 1954. During that time Norman had the privilege of joining his other daughter, Thelma, in marriage to a young preacher from a Bethlehem church family, Robert W. Smock, on November 11, 1949. Norman and Esther lived in Ephrata in retirement and Esther died in Ephrata on May 20, 1976. Norman died there on June 8.

Robert William Smock was born on October 17, 1928 to Walter and Ida (Hoffert) Smock, in Bethlehem. The pastor at the Bethlehem church, Franklin M. Hottel, had just started a Cradle Roll and Robert became the first member. After graduation from high school Robert entered the ministry, serving first in the Gospel Herald Society with John Dunn at Trenton and later at various churches in our Conference. After retirement he continued to serve at Ephrata as an assistant pastor. He died in Ephrata on November 4, 2009 and is buried in the Zionsville Cemetery. Robert’s father, Walter Sr., died on November 26, 1965 and his widow, Ida, then married Paul H. Cressman. After his death she was united in marriage to Timothy Gehman, grandson of William Gehman. Timothy’s first wife, Marie nee Baus, had died on December 22, 1982. Timothy died on November 26, 1990 at Fellowship Manor and Ida also died there on October 12, 2002, having outlived three husbands. Robert’s brother, Walter Jr., and his wife, Aurelia, continue to be active members at Bethlehem.

The oldest son of Adam, Myron Doney, was born on September 30, 1891. After his father’s death he was raised by Harvey and Lizzie Hottel of our Coopersburg church. Harvey was a brother of Franklin Hottel who had moved to Bethlehem and became a church member at our Bethlehem church. Franklin married a Bethlehem church member, Ida Moyer, and later became a pastor at Bethlehem. Harvey Hottel allowed Myron to keep his first name but changed his middle name from Doney to Harvey. On April 10, 1915 Myron married a young woman from Zion Hill, in Bucks County, named Lizzie Berdella Kauffman, daughter of Charles and Ellen (Schoenly) Kauffman. The marriage was performed by Harvey K. Kratz in Coopersburg. Charles operated a

general store and was the father of fourteen children. He was also the son of preacher Abraham Kauffman and father of preacher Horace Kauffman. Myron and Lizzie became members at the Bethlehem Church where Myron later served as Class Leader and delegate to Annual Conference. A businessman, he was the owner of the Bethlehem Candy Store for 25 years, retiring in 1960. He died at his home on November 21, 1971 and was buried in the Memorial Park Cemetery in Bethlehem. Lizzie died on August 9, 1979 in the Bible Fellowship Home in Nazareth. Three daughters were born to them, the oldest being Ruth Raeburn, born on October 20, 1918. She met a young man from the church named Arlington Seifert and they were married by the pastor, Norman H. Wolf, on May 2, 1947. Arlington was the son of Thurston and Beulah Mae (Sloyer) Seifert, active members at the Bethlehem church. Thurston's first wife, Carrie Hinkel, died on December 3, 1918 leaving a daughter, Eleanor, who married Stephen Buddock. A daughter of Eleanor and Stephen, Stephanie, married Charles Mann and they served as missionaries in Africa for several years. Charles and Stephanie now live at Quakertown and are actively involved in our church there.

Arlington entered the ministry, was licensed in 1950, ordained in 1953 and served several churches in our Conference. He was elected as District Superintendent, serving from 1967 to 1970 and in 1968 he accepted the position of Director of Pinebrook Bible Conference. He also served as Chairman of Annual Conference. Retired, he lives in Dreher Township in Wayne County near Newfoundland. Ruth died on September 19, 2009 and the funeral was held at the Bethlehem church after which she was interred at our Zionsville Cemetery. They had two children, Dale and Darlene. Dale married Janet Lundgen and Darlene married Timothy Kent Salisbury.

The second daughter of Myron was Eleanor Jeanette, born on April 20, 1924. She met a young man from Allentown named Arden Gackenbach and they were married on July 27, 1947 by Norman H. Wolf, Bethlehem's pastor. Arden is the son of Ezra and Lucinda (Gehman) Gackenbach. Lucinda was the daughter of Francis Gehman, son of William Gehman, credited with being the founder of the Bible Fellowship Church. Ezra's father, Howard E. Gackenbach, served as delegate in 1911 from the Walnutport church. Eleanor was active in the church, serving as church organist for many years and also at one time directed the choir. Stricken with cancer, she died on June 25, 2004 and was buried in the Memorial Park Cemetery in Bethlehem. Arden continues to serve at Bethlehem as a song leader and member of the finance committee. His son, Kyle, and daughter, Kay, continue to serve the Lord in their localities.

The third daughter, Joyce, married Donald Deppe, son of Arthur and Florence (Henry) Deppe. Donald, born on August 16, 1930 died on May 26, 2004.

Another son of Adam and Ida was Timothy Doney, born in the parsonage at Terre Hill on April 28, 1895. After his father died he was found in the 1900 Census in the household of John Balliet in Hanover Township, Northampton County and Timothy was listed as a grand nephew. John's wife, Ursala, was a sister of Sevilla Newhart,

Timothy's grandmother. John and Ursula both died in 1929 and are buried in the Altonah Cemetery. In 1910, at the age of 14, Timothy was living with his mother and stepfather, Hiram Ettinger, as was his sister, Esther. Their next-door neighbors were Joseph Moyer with his new wife of four years, his son, Harold, and his daughter, Hilda, who later married Allen G. Woodring. His other daughter, Ida, had married Franklin Hottel on March 02, 1906. His first wife, Sarah Ann nee Landis, died on April 19, 1904.

Timothy taught in the Sunday school at the Bethlehem Church and met a young woman named Beulah Lutz. They were united in marriage by William S. Hottel, Bethlehem's pastor, on November 27, 1919. Beulah was born on June 23, 1896 in Schnecksville, North Whitehall Township, in Lehigh County and was the daughter of Gustave and Josephine (Schreiner) Lutz. Gustave had come from Germany and appears to have had no connection with the Bethlehem church but Josephine was a member. Gustave had gone to California but Josephine and Beulah lived in Bethlehem at the time of Beulah's marriage. Timothy was employed as a machinist and Beulah was working in a hosiery mill. After the marriage Timothy entered the ministry and was serving at Philadelphia in 1924. Beulah died of diabetes in the parsonage on September 10, 1924 and is buried in the Fairview Cemetery in Bethlehem. Her mother, Josephine, born in New York City, died on March 18, 1948 and is also buried in the Fairview cemetery. One child was born to Timothy and Beulah, Robert W., born on April 19, 1921. He continues to serve as delegate to Annual Conference and lives in Ephrata with his wife.



In October 1925 Timothy married Esther Deppe from our Walnutport church. Timothy, known as T.D. Gehret, was licensed to preach in 1921 and ordained in 1925. He served churches in Harrisburg, Philadelphia (Calvary), Scranton, Easton, Blandon and Fleetwood. He also served as a District Superintendent for the Bethlehem District from 1945 to 1954 and for the Allentown District from 1962 to 1967. He was on many

other boards and committees of our Conference and was also the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Berean Bible School as well as of the Bible Fellowship Church Home. On the night of November 25, 1966, tragedy struck. T.D. was driving west of Reading when lights from an approaching car blinded him as he was rounding a curve. He crashed into a tree, the accident causing the death of his sister-in-law, Clara Beil, mother of James Beil, then pastor at Scranton. T.D. was injured and treated at St. Joseph's Hospital in Reading. Esther was also injured and treated at Reading Hospital. Timothy died on November 21, 1971 at the Allentown Hospital and a memorial service was held at the Bethel Church in Allentown. Jansen Hartman reflected on his life and noted that one pastor, when asked what he remembered most about Brother Gehret, stated, "He had a heart for pastors." T.D. Gehret is buried in Memorial Park Cemetery in Bethlehem.

Esther Deppe, born in Franklin Township, Carbon County, on July 22, 1900, was the daughter of Alfred and Delilah Deppe. Alfred and Delilah were first cousins, married on April 02, 1888. Two children were born to Timothy and Esther, a son, Lloyd, and a daughter, Marilyn Mae. Lloyd, born on March 26, 1934, was a member of the Cedar Crest Church. After serving in the Air Force he operated the Dudsy Coin-Op and was also a self-employed carpentry contractor. He died in Allentown on July 19, 2001, leaving a son, Vincent. Marilyn, who never married, attends our Cedar Crest Church. Esther died in Allentown on October 19, 1980.

The Gehret family has certainly contributed much to the Lord's work, especially in the Bible Fellowship Church and descendents continue to serve the Lord. Truly we can thank God for the dedication and service of the Gehret family members.

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### Roots of the Gospel Workers: The Roaring 1890s – Part One Richard Taylor

Both the Gospel Worker Society and the Gospel Herald Society played significant roles in the development of what was the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, now the Bible Fellowship Church. Both took root during the 1890s and were at the heart of the progress made in our denomination for the following years. The two organizations took different paths. The Gospel Workers became focused on publications. The Gospel Heralds became focused on training and proving themselves as pastors. The public face and ministry of the Gospel Workers had diminished by 1920 in Pennsylvania. The Gospel Heralds continued to be a force until the early 1950s when they became the Home Mission Society and later the Church Extension Department.

Having heard the story of the Gospel Workers from Ron Kohl and learned of one of the churches of the Gospel Workers, Emmanuel in Sunbury, Pennsylvania, I want to probe



a bit to learn about some of the Gospel Workers and perhaps learn more about the soil that gave root to their organization. This probing is somewhat like the child's puzzle that many of us enjoyed in which a pattern of dots, each with a number, might be connected to form a picture. I hope to identify some of the dots but must tell you in advance there are no numbers to show how they are to be connected. Perhaps you will have opportunity to comment on the connections and even add new dots to the picture.

The dots come from various sources we have available to us. The information is not complete but adds something to the picture. The approach here is to see when people and events arrived in the recorded information.

In October, 1885, the subject of women in ministry arose at the General Conference held in Upper Milford, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. They decided that: "Whereas, we believe that God, in former times, chose holy women to prophesy and labor in the church, therefore Resolved, That we allow a sister thus chosen of God, to preach and to labor for the salvation of souls, under the supervision of a minister or presiding elder." In 1887, future Gospel Worker number 10, Elmira Dech, became a member of the Bethlehem Church. She was approximately 21 years old, the daughter of Samuel and Sophia Dech who lived in the First Ward of Bethlehem where Samuel worked as a carpenter. Serving as pastor of the church was W. B. Musselman who later served as the president of the Gospel Workers. Several of the early Gospel Workers came from the area around Bethlehem.

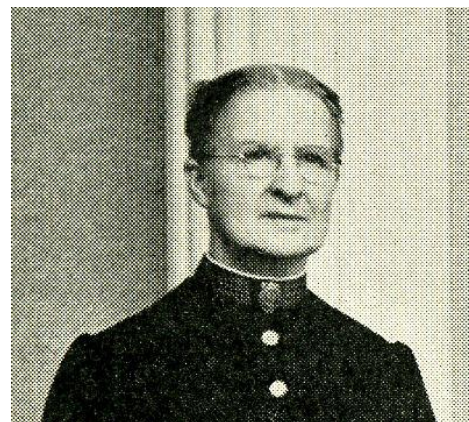
In October of 1888, the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ met in Berlin, Ontario. They again faced the issue of women in ministry and passed the following as a policy: "OF WOMEN PREACHING. Resolved, That any sister who feels called of God to preach shall be recognized as an evangelist, subject to the minister in charge and the Presiding Elder. They shall be received the same as probationers except ordination." The Mennonite Brethren in Christ had come to the conviction that women could serve as evangelists given proper recognition. They apparently saw a distinction between women serving as evangelists and being ordained as preachers. This action opened the door for women to become involved in public evangelism but was not intended to lead them into a pulpit role. It did not send them into pulpits but into the streets.



**Lucy Musselman**

In 1890, according to the 1896 Yearbook, Lucy Musselman was licensed. I can find no record to document this action. Perhaps it was a local recognition. The minutes of the Pennsylvania Conference of 1892 first note that Lucy was licensed. Lucy was at the time the widow of church planter / preacher Jonas Musselman who had died in 1886. She was the mother of 6 children, 3 boys and 3 girls. Each of the boys became a preacher. The oldest, William, inherited the mantle of leadership from the aging founder of the church, William Gehman. Harvey later became a long term presiding elder in the church serving for 5 decades. The youngest, Allen, died in 1900, only 28 years old.

Of the three girls, the oldest, Emma, died at age 16. Sallie was married to preacher, later missionary, Joshua E. Fidler but died at age 18 shortly after their marriage. Hattie, the youngest, became one of the Gospel Workers, number 45, where she served under the leadership of her brother William.



**H B Musselman**

Lucy was herself the daughter of John and Maria Brunner. Her nephew, Charles Henry (C.H.) Brunner served for many years as a pastor in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. Her niece, Sarah Gehman Brunner, was another of the Gospel Workers, number 23.

This brief profile shows that evangelism and ministry was “in the blood” of the Musselman family, mother included. It also shows how family attachments were in the formation of much of the early ministry of these days.

In January, 1891, Amanda (or Amelia) Kichline became a member of the Bethlehem church. She was joined by her husband, James, in December of that year. While Amanda is listed as a Gospel Worker, she was not assigned a number. This is an indication that she may not have been a “full” member.



**M A Snyder**

In July, 1891, Mary A. Snyder wrote a letter of testimony to the Gospel Banner. She later became Gospel Worker number 20. Letters of testimony written for the banner were full of praise and devotion for the Savior but were very short on details. Even in later years, it appears that the Workers were reluctant to give

personal or family details often leaving their personal stories and biographical data a mystery. Census data for 1880 shows Mary A. Snyder, age 2, living in Upper Milford Township, Lehigh County. She was the daughter of George and Eliza Snyder. George was a worker in the iron ore mines of the area. She was 13 when she wrote her letter and 19 when she was licensed to serve in the Gospel Workers.

In February, 1892, the Pennsylvania Annual Conference officially licensed Lucy Musselman and assigned her to serve with her son-in-law, J. E. Fidler. It also appointed her son, William, as the presiding elder to replace the aging William Gehman. With this appointment, it seems that a new and more evangelistically progressive era began.

The September 15, 1892, issue of the Gospel Banner took note of the ongoing work of evangelist Noah Detwiler. Brother Detwiler was a Canadian who came to conduct evangelistic services in Pennsylvania working with various pastors. The meetings conducted by Detwiler reached into new communities. This issue of the Banner notes that D. Roat (Dora Rote) had “joined the band” with O. S. Hillegass who had been serving in Reading but had been moved to Allentown in February, 1892. Dora Rote’s story has been told elsewhere (see our publication of March, 2009). This is a first mention of her and her involvement in the work of evangelism. She later became Gospel Worker, number 2, second only to Gospel Worker, number 1, Lucy Musselman. In 1892, Dora was living in Reading in 1892 and working in a knitting mill.

In October, the General Conference convened again. One of their topics was the licensing of candidates.

The following enacted: Applicants for the ministry who have no convictions to give themselves unconditionally, to the Annual Conference or give all their time to the work of the ministry, but still claim to be called of God to preach, may be annually licensed at the last Quarterly Conference in the conference year by the consent of two-thirds of the Quarterly Conference members present; or such who do not satisfactorily pass at Quarterly Conference, it may refuse to give a recommendation to the Annual Conference, but may grant him a Quarterly Conference license. A brother or sister desiring a Quarterly Conference license must be recommended by the class the same as other candidates for the ministry, and may preach as directed by the Quarterly Conference or Presiding Elder.

This action seems to allow for both men and women to be recognized at the local level, the Quarterly Conference, without being recognized at the denominational, or Annual

Conference, level. This may offer an explanation for why some women were listed as Gospel Workers but not assigned a number. The number indicates a recognition that went beyond that of the local church.

In 1893, two future Gospel Workers made themselves known in letters to the Gospel Banner: Frany Wismer of Graterford (January 10), Alice Eisenhart of Erwinna (April 4). Agnes Messinger shared her testimony in the May 30 edition but I have no record of her serving in the Gospel Workers. She was, however, assigned in 1895 to serve as assistant at Coopersburg. I find no other record of her beyond this assignment.

1894 brought more record of the women who were stepping up. Alice Eisenhart again wrote to the Banner (January 9). Emma Geissinger and Amanda Schaeffer showed up as members of the Bethlehem Congregation in August.

At the Annual Conference in February, 1895, not only was Agnes Messinger appointed to serve, Dora Rote was listed an applicant and an evangelist.

In June, 1895, the movement coalesced at a meeting in Annandale, New Jersey. The zealous spirit of evangelism led to formation of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Home Missionary Society. The signatories were: W. B. Musselman (chairman), D. B. Rote (secretary), W. K. Ziegler, Agnes Ziegler, W. C. Betz, Lucy Musselman, L. M. Christman, Cora J. Felty, Lydia Weber, Frany Wismer and Elmira C. Dech.

The organization had not yet become gender specific. Three of these founders were men, W. B. Musselman, W. K. Ziegler and W. C. Betz. W. B. Musselman seems to be a key driver of this movement. W. K. Ziegler is probably Wilson K. Ziegler, another Upper Milford Resident, probably the son of Benjamin and Mary Ziegler. He was first recognized at the Annual Conference in 1894. Earlier in 1895, he had married Agnes who had joined him in the work. By 1900, they had two children, Ruth (born 1896) and Benjamin (born 1898). I am uncertain of the identity of W. C. Betz. A man by that name is shown in Spring City, Chester County, but nothing specifically makes a connection.



**L M Christman**

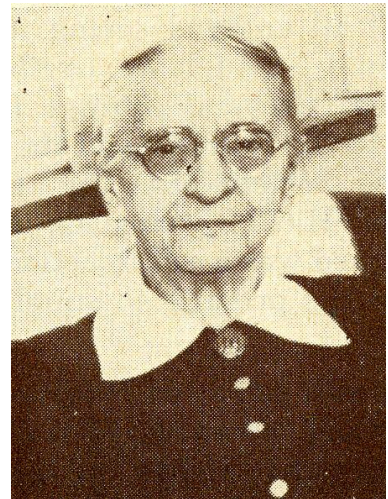
Lizzie M. Christman, who was either Gospel Worker number 3 or number 6, was actually named Emma Elizabeth, born in 1863 to Jonas and Emma Christman, a farm

family of New Hanover in Montgomery County. No explanation is offered for her change of name. Lizzie would serve for the rest of her life in the Gospel Workers.

Cora J. Felty may have come from Pine Grove, Schuylkill County. If so, she was the child of Aaron and Amanda Felty. The data shows that she was born in 1870 or 1876. She too would give her life to service in the Gospel Workers. She was listed as Gospel Worker number 5.

I was not able to gather any information on the identity of Lydia Weber. The Gospel Worker roster shows her as number 8.

Frany Wismer entered the Gospel Workers from Graterford. She was recorded as worker number 4. She was the daughter of Abraham and Franie Wismer. Abraham, A. K., was a significant lay leader in the Graterford Congregation. She would likewise be a long term member of the Gospel Workers.



**Frany L. Wismer**

Women had begun to gather for ministry. By the end of 1895, ten women had been recognized: 1892 – Lucy Musselman (#1), Sarah G. Brunner (#23), Mrs. Nora Dreisbach (no number); 1893 – Dora B. Rote (#2), Lizzie Christman (#3 or #6); 1894 – Frany Wismer (#4), Agnes Ziegler (#4?); 1895 – Cora J. Felty (#5), Rosa J. Rote (#7) Elmira C. Dech (#10).

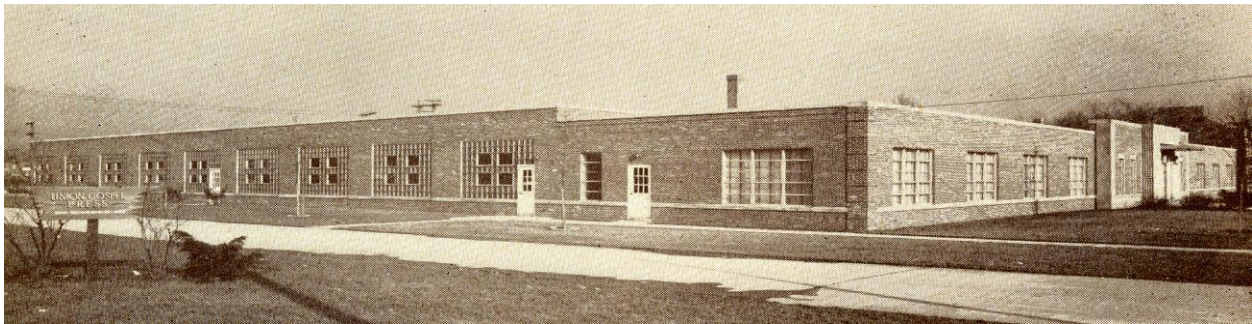
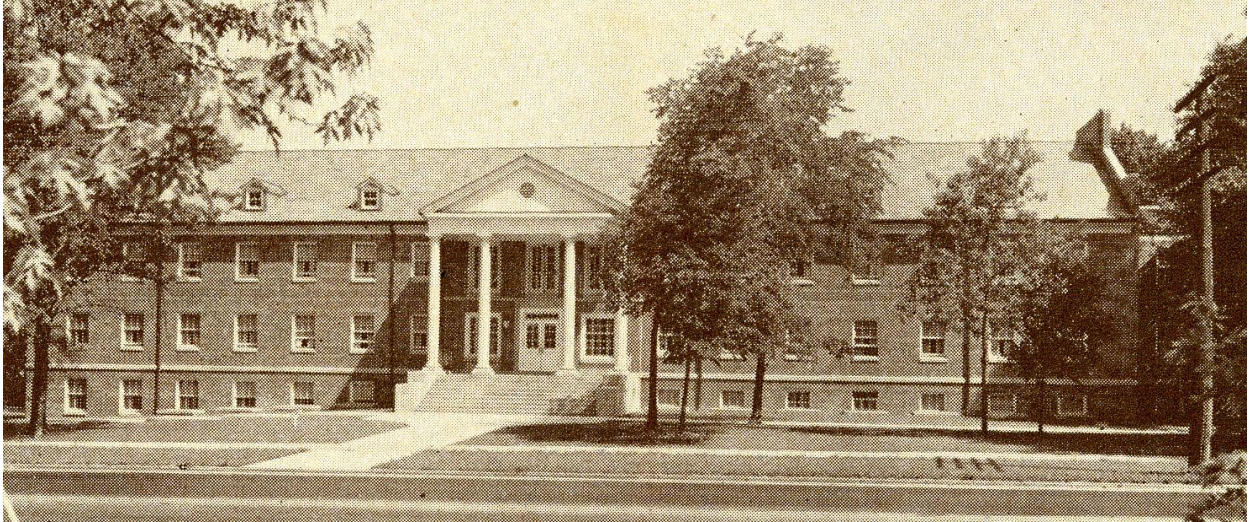
But the flood gates were only beginning to open. 1896 was a turning point. That year would bring an explosion in the number of women recognized for ministry. It began with the decision that the Home Missionary Society be exclusively a woman's organization known as the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Women's Home Missionary Society. Among those who joined that year was Annie Corey Spellman whose story may give further insight into the motivation and expectations of the women who were drawn to the Gospel Workers. More on that will come in the next issue.

[A newly completed roster of the Gospel Workers can be found on our website, [bfchistory.org](http://bfchistory.org). Check it out.]

Don't forget to renew your membership if you have not. And, bring us a new member!

Dick Taylor  
[retaylor723@gmail.com](mailto:retaylor723@gmail.com)

**Gospel Workers Home – 1950s, 1980 Brookpark Road, Cleveland OH**



**Union Gospel Press - 1950s, 2000 Brookpark Road, Cleveland OH**



**Union Gospel Press 1907-1947, W. 7th St., Cleveland OH**

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