

BRETHREN WOMEN IN MINISTRY: CENTURY ONE

by Jerry R. Flora



Top row (l-r): Laura Grossnickle Hedrick, Sadie Gibbons Evalson, Mary M. Sterling.
Bottom row (l-r): Clara Myers Flora, Lovina Young Meyers, Mary Wagoner Bauman.

The purpose of this article is to introduce a chapter of Brethren history that has not yet been written. The material is sketchy and at times inadequate, but the subject is of continuing interest. Other students of the Brethren past—even knowing some of the story firsthand—did not write it, apparently because their interests lay elsewhere. But the time has come to attempt a beginning at recovering the evidence and reconstructing the picture. And so, uneven and incomplete as it may be, this essay intends to introduce those women of the Brethren Church who have participated in the church's official ministry.¹

When the German Baptists divided in 1881 and 1882, the Progressives who formed the Brethren Church (1883) found themselves confronting a cluster of issues on "the woman question": May a woman in the communion service receive the bread and the

cup from another woman, or must she take them from the hand of a man (whether elder or deacon)?² What is the role of women in the teaching and evangelistic activities of the church? Must women wear a prayer cap or veil and, if so, when and for what reasons?³ What of the temperance movement, led largely by women (especially Frances E. Willard of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union)? May congregations elect deaconesses as well as deacons and, if so, should the women be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands like the men?⁴ What of the woman suffrage movement with its specific goal of giving women the right to vote in political elections?⁵ Similarly, what privileges and responsibilities are open to them in the life of the church? In particular, may women be ordained to the ministry and serve as pastors of congregations?⁶

Henry R. Holsinger, the leading spokesman of the Brethren Church in the period following 1883, wrote at the age of sixty-two, "I am glad I never stood in the way of women preaching, and that I belong to a church that assists them in doing so."⁷ How did the church assist? Not only by personal and tangible support as the women organized to underwrite the infant outreach efforts, but also by formally encouraging them to enter the ministry. For example, the 1890 Michigan district conference included in its resolutions this statement: "6. Women are eligible to the office of minister or deacon from the following scriptures: Acts 2:18; 8:1-4; 15:32; 18:26; Rom. 16:3; 2 Cor. 3:17."⁸ In the next year the Indiana conference, not to be outdone, adopted the following: "*Resolved*, that we extend the hand of welcome to our sisters to enter the ministerial field when possessing the necessary qualifications."⁹ The Illiokota conference of the same year (1891) included in its decisions a motion ". . . that no distinction be made in representative bodies of the church on the basis of sex."¹⁰

A fourth district, Pennsylvania, adopted this statement in 1892: "*Resolved*: That we regard woman's work as essential to the salvation of the world, and that her divine mission is the same as man's."¹¹ The Ohio district conference of 1894 heard their Committee on Woman's Work report, "The sisters certainly feel the pressing need of more ministers in the Brethren church [sic] and realizing this fact we deem the preparation of young men and women for the ministry of first importance in extending the missionary cause and promoting the best interests of the church."¹² And the General Conference of 1893, just ten years after the new denomination began, took the following position: "*Resolved*, That this convention recognizes and appreciates the force of the expression in Holy Writ: 'There is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ.'¹³

Thus, the Brethren Church in the first dozen years of its life went on record through its leading spokesman, district and na-

tional conferences as favoring the equality of men and women in the church and the inclusion of women in the ranks of pastors and missionaries.

Who were the women who responded and were acknowledged by the Brethren? We give here a roster of those who have been recognized as ministers and/or have served for any length of time as pastors in the century of the Brethren Church's existence. Little is known of some of these, but what has been gleaned up to this point is presented here for the sake of the record. (Numbers in parentheses indicate their position in the chronological description which follows.)

Emma Aboud (28)	Grace Fetters (24)	Edna Nicholas (30)
Mary Wagoner Bauman (8)	Clara Myers Flora (5)	Catherine Parker (9)
Bertha Bell (19)	Florence Newberry Gribble (25)	Mary Pence (27)
Anne Black (33)	Alice Harley (13)	Jennifer Jones Ray (37)
Cora Jean Black (35)	Laura Grossnickle Hedrick (2)	Mrs. J. B. Richard (17)
Etta Warvel Bowman (20)	Margaret Hoover (15)	Mrs. T. E. Richards (18)
Loretta Carrithers (32)	Mary Hoover (16)	Mary Sparks (34)
Margaret Cooke (21)	Susan White Hyland (38)	Grace Srack (29)
Nora Bracken Davis (26)	Mrs. P. J. Jennings (22)	Mary Sterling (1)
Vianna Detwiler (12)	Laura Larson (31)	Etta Tombaugh (6)
Esther Dickey (3)	Jenny Loi (36)	Antonia Walker (11)
Ada Garber Drushal (14)	Lizzie Masters (4)	Maude Cripe Webb (23)
Sadie Gibbons Evalson (7)	Lovina Young Meyers (10)	

(1) The first woman to be ordained in the Brethren Church was MARY MALINDA STERLING (1859-1933), a native and longtime resident of Masontown, Pennsylvania. She was converted during a revival at twelve years of age and was the youngest of seventeen persons baptized on December 30, 1871. She began to teach at nineteen and continued until she was twenty-two, studying meanwhile at Monongahela College, from which she graduated (B.A., 1882). At that time she became a charter member of the Masontown Brethren Church, then went to Ashland, Ohio, where she taught on the Ashland College faculty in 1883 and 1884. She later received the Master of Arts degree from Monongahela College (1887).

When the Sisters' Society of Christian Endeavor (after 1919, the Woman's Missionary Society) was established by the General Conference of 1887, Mary Sterling became its first president, continuing in that office until the reorganization of the society five years later. The trustees of the S.S.C.E. called her to the ministry in 1889, and the Masontown congregation confirmed that initiative by unanimous vote. She was ordained at her home church in 1890 and began a vigorous period of ministerial service. During the eleven years 1889-1900, she preached 1,157 sermons and brought into the Brethren Church seventy-eight persons, forty-eight of them

receiving baptism at her hand.¹⁴

A measure of her reception in the denomination may be inferred from her being asked to preach the Sunday morning sermon during the 1894 General Conference.¹⁵ She also wrote from time to time for *The Brethren Evangelist*¹⁶ and in 1895 served as state evangelist for the Brethren churches of Pennsylvania.¹⁷ She was pastor of the Masontown congregation early in the twentieth century and, in addition, did evangelistic work in New Jersey and West Virginia.¹⁸ Her name appears in the ministerial list of *The Brethren Annual* every year from 1892 until 1933, when her death came on May 25 at the age of seventy-three. One who did not agree with her kind of service still described Mary Sterling as "a remarkable woman, . . . a splendid leader . . ." ¹⁹

(2) Those same phrases could be used as well of LAURA E. N. GROSSNICKLE HEDRICK (1858-1934), a native of Mapleville, Maryland, about midway between Boonsboro and Smithsburg. There at the age of ten she slipped into an empty church building on the way home from school in order to kneel and surrender her life to Christ. Four years later she revealed her decision and was baptized in October 1872. She began to teach school at age seventeen and taught for thirteen years in the state of Maryland, becoming the first woman in Washington County to hold a first grade and first class teaching certificate.²⁰ She also was a charter member of the Mapleville Brethren Church. When the Fairview congregation west of South Bend, Indiana, called her to become their pastor in 1891, Mapleville hesitated to ordain her. On the way to Fairview she attended the Ohio district conference where she was ordained, then continued to Fairview where she pastored for three years (1891-94).

During this time her obvious abilities became increasingly known. She was invited to preach the Tuesday evening sermon at the 1892 General Conference held at Warsaw, Indiana. Three days later, at the Friday morning session, she delivered an address to the delegates on "Woman's Work in the Church."²¹ Following her address the conference was moved to act: "*Resolved*: That this National Convention extends to the sisters all privileges which the brethren claim for themselves."²² Six weeks later she spoke to the Illiokota conference at Lanark, Illinois, on "How Shall the Brethren Church Attain a Higher Standard of Spirituality?"²³ And the next spring she preached to the Indiana Ministerial Association in their meeting at Mexico, Indiana.²⁴ She was secretary of the board of directors of the National Brethren Ministerial Association during 1892-93²⁵ and also contributed frequently to *The Brethren Evangelist*.²⁶

Following her Fairview pastorate, she became the (third) na-

tional president of the Sister's Society of Christian Endeavor (1894-98) and, because of her talents and energy, they sent her among the churches for six months as a field organizer. In that time she visited twenty-seven congregations, twenty former societies, and organized thirty-eight new groups.²⁷

In January 1898, Laura Grossnickle married George W. Hedrick, a widower of Dayton, Virginia, and she served as pastor of the Brethren Church there for several years. The Hedricks lived in Dayton until 1910, when her husband's asthma required a move to Hallandale, Florida, their home until her death at the age of seventy-six on August 7, 1934. Twenty-three years later she was the subject of a major two-part article in *The Brethren Evangelist*—the only ordained Brethren woman to be so honored.²⁸

(3) Several other women are listed as ministers in the Brethren Church during the 1890s, although not so much is known of their lives and service. ESTHER L. DICKEY is one of these. *The Brethren Annual* recorded her as being at Bourbon, Indiana, in 1892, and at Sidney, Indiana, in 1893 and 1894. In addition to her pastoral service she, together with Laura Grossnickle, was included among the Indiana pastors "who did mission work outside of their own charge . . . in the plan to aid weak churches."²⁹ Problems developed, however, in her disagreement with the Brethren attitude toward "worldly conformity," and Mrs. Dickey withdrew from the denomination.³⁰ (4) Also active in the ministry at this period was LIZZIE MASTERS, who served the Elkport, Iowa, congregation according to *The Brethren Annual* for 1893-99.

(5) CLARA MYERS FLORA (b. 1850), like Esther Dickey, first appears in the ministerial list for 1892. She was born in Illinois and married Noah A. Flora (b. 1846) of Virginia in 1868. The couple united with the German Baptist Church in 1870, of which he became a minister in 1875. They transferred, however, to the Brethren Church in 1886 "from choice of conviction."³¹ Clara Flora was called to the ministry in 1892 and from that time actively engaged in preaching and evangelistic work. Writing at the turn of the century, H. R. Holsinger observed that she performed all the duties of pastoral ministry including baptism, marriages, and funerals, preaching an average of eleven sermons per month.³²

Her recorded ministry was at Dallas Center, Iowa (1892-1900), and Des Moines, Iowa (1901-16). While at the former church she served as "vice-president" of the Illiokota district in 1897 and 1898.³³ In the early years of the twentieth century *The Brethren Annual* listed her as a missionary-evangelist (1904-07). One example of this activity is the notice from 1904 that she had preached a four-week revival at Lake Odessa, Michigan, and at the time of reporting was engaged in another meeting at Hudson, Iowa.³⁴ It is

significant that in no ministerial list does her name appear without that of her husband; they are listed in *The Brethren Annual* from 1892 through 1916. Their style of ministry was described by Holsinger when he wrote of the Appanoose [Udell], Iowa, church, "Brother and Sister Noah Flora of Des Moines, Iowa, are the present pastors, who preach alternately twice each month."³⁵

(6) ETTA TOMBAUGH of Rochester, Indiana, appears in the ministerial lists of *The Brethren Annual* for 1894-98. (7) Beginning at the same time, SADIE A. GIBBONS EVALSON served in pastoral capacity at Waterloo, Iowa (1894); Chicago, Illinois (1895-1900); Independence, Kansas (1900-03); Leon, Iowa (1903-09); Portis, Kansas (1909-13); and St. Joseph, Missouri (1913-20). Her notice in the denomination at large began when, at the 1896 General Conference, she was ordained to be assistant pastor of the Brethren mission in Chicago. She worked there with J. D. McFaden until he left in 1898, at which time she carried on alone for six months until J. O. Talley arrived on the field. She was active in children's work, food and clothing distribution, and pulpit ministry.³⁶ In 1915 she married J. W. Evalson of St. Joseph, Missouri, while working in that city, and she continued there as pastor. She is one of several ordained women whose work has combined home missionary and pastoral functions.³⁷

(8) MARY MELISSA WAGONER BAUMAN (1876-1909), a native of Kansas, became a member of the Methodist Church at the age of thirteen. She entered high school at Lawrence, Kansas, in 1892, and taught for several years following her graduation in 1896. She married Louis S. Bauman (1875-1950) in 1898 and was baptized into membership in the Brethren Church. Her ordination came at Roann, Indiana, in December 1899.³⁸ Holsinger described her as "a talented, forcible, and consecrated woman," adding, "In his absence she is ever ready to take the place of her husband in the pulpit, and his people are delighted to have her do so."³⁹ She is usually credited with organizing the first Sisterhood of Mary and Martha⁴⁰ and wrote occasionally for *The Brethren Evangelist*.⁴¹ Her ministry was shortlived, however, for she died suddenly of typhoid fever at the age of thirty-three on September 12, 1909.⁴²

(9) Little is known of the work of CATHERINE PARKER (1838-1913) except that she began to preach for the Aurelia, Iowa, church in 1899 and died at the age of seventy-four in January 1913.⁴³

(10) Nor is much presently known of LOVINA ELLEN YOUNG MEYERS (b. 1862). H. R. Holsinger included her in his turn-of-the-century gallery of "women preachers,"⁴⁴ describing her as a native of Pennsylvania. She joined the German Baptist Church at age sixteen and married M. C. Meyers at eighteen. She became a charter member of the Jones Mills Brethren Church and was national sec-

retary of the Sisters' Society of Christian Endeavor for several years. In 1896 she organized the Pennsylvania S.S.C.E., served most of the period 1896-1900 as state president, and in 1899 became field secretary for the district organization. She was an earnest advocate of the temperance cause, a movement endorsed in nearly every Brethren conference of the early years.⁴⁵

(11) ANTONIA WALKER was pastor at Beaconsfield, Iowa, near Leon, for at least fifteen years (1902-17).⁴⁶ It is assumed that she was ordained for, in the years when a special mark signaled unordained ministers in *The Brethren Annual*, Antonia Walker was not so designated.

(12) VIANNA DETWILER (d. 1921) was born near Columbiana, Ohio, of German Baptist parents who joined the Brethren Church when it began. Her family moved when she was fourteen to Ridgely, Maryland, on the east side of Chesapeake Bay near Easton. There she finished public school and taught for two years, then attended the state Normal School, graduating in 1896. Following this she went to Washington, D.C., to assist in the Brethren mission there, having been baptized in 1895 by I. D. Bowman. It was also he who ordained her at Philadelphia in 1901⁴⁷ while she was president of the Sisters' Society of Christian Endeavor (1898-1905). She traveled for the S.S.C.E. during her first year as president, then entered Ashland College in 1899 and the University of Chicago in 1903. While in Chicago she worked in the Brethren mission where Sadie Gibbons had labored a few years earlier.

Upon completion of her university examinations Miss Detwiler left for the Brethren mission in Montreal, Quebec, where she served until about 1908 "faithfully but with little results."⁴⁸ She returned to Montreal about 1912 for brief service, then worked at other Brethren missions in Pittsburgh (1913), Philadelphia (1914-15), and Spokane (1915-16). The Spokane, Washington, work began about 1915, and for a year she and a handful of helpers did house-to-house visitation, conducted cottage prayer meetings, and led Bible study classes. After this a tent meeting led by L. S. Bauman resulted in more than fifty converts.⁴⁹ In addition to her frequent travel and constant ministry, Vianna Detwiler wrote often for *The Brethren Evangelist*, sometimes reporting her activities,⁵⁰ at other times offering devotional thoughts⁵¹ or challenging women to become more active in the work of the church and its ministry.⁵² The denomination was stunned by news of her sudden death on October 29, 1921, following a very brief illness.⁵³

(13) ALICE M. HARLEY (1878-1905), like Mary Bauman, had only a brief life to give in her service for Christ. An 1896 graduate of Allentown, Pennsylvania, High School, she was baptized by I. D. Bowman in the same year. The congregation at Allentown named

her its first church school superintendent in 1898, and she built it in five years into the second largest school of the denomination.⁵⁴ She was ordained a deaconess in 1899 and was chosen to be assistant pastor in 1901. Although she made several mission tours in Pennsylvania on behalf of the S.S.C.E., she declined the offer of the presidency in 1903. Her heart was set on the foreign mission field, and I. D. Bowman ordained her to the ministry in May 1903.⁵⁵ Later that year the General Conference endorsed her for the soon-to-open work in Persia. But that field never materialized, and Miss Harley continued to work in Allentown through 1904 and into 1905, when she died unexpectedly of a lung ailment on March 3. She was twenty-six years old.⁵⁶ She wrote occasionally on devotional or missionary topics,⁵⁷ assisted in the care of a large family at home, guided the Allentown church school in its outstanding growth, and preached almost weekly.⁵⁸

(14) It has been suggested that ADA GARBER DRUSHAL (1881-1975) was ordained to the ministry shortly before she and her husband George E. Drushal (d. 1958) went to Lost Creek, Kentucky, in October 1905 to begin the Brethren mission there.⁵⁹ She was reported together with him as a missionary-evangelist in *The Brethren Annual* for 1906-08, after which his name alone appears in the ministerial lists. She spent most of her adult life at Lost Creek, working as treasurer, bookkeeper, Bible teacher, midwife, undertaker, herb-healer, and correspondent. She was an active church school teacher until the age of ninety-two and died at ninety-four on December 28, 1975.⁶⁰

This may be an appropriate place to introduce the names of four women of whom virtually nothing is known at present. (15-16) MARGARET AND MARY HOOVER were sisters remembered in later years by Brethren antiquarian Freeman H. Ankrum. He recalled that the sisters were from the Helser or Zionsville church districts of Perry County, Ohio. "They frequently preached in the Berachah church east of Glenford and the Bethel church west of Glenford."⁶¹ (17) MRS. J. B. RICHARD was listed in *The Brethren Annual* for 1906 as the pastor at Allentown, Pennsylvania. (18) MRS. T. E. RICHARDS was similarly reported in the *Annual* for 1907 through 1910 as pastor with her husband at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Since neither of these last two was designated as unordained in lists where that distinction was made, the assumption is that both were ordained ministers.

The Brethren Annual for 1908 introduced the names of two other women whose lives proved to be interconnected in ways they did not expect. (19) BERTHA MAY BELL was mentioned in the 1908 ministerial list, but as unordained. The following year she became, with Dr. and Mrs. C. F. Yoder, one of the three original Brethren

missionaries to Argentina. (20) ETTA WARVEL BOWMAN was originally scheduled to be the Yoders' companion, with Miss Bell as a fourth party if possible. The lingering terminal illness of Mrs. Bowman's father caused her to remain in the United States while Miss Bell sailed with the Yoders from New York to Buenos Aires by way of Southampton, England, in the summer of 1909. Etta Bowman was national president of the Sisters' Society of Christian Endeavor in 1906-11, missionary-evangelist at Sidney, Indiana, in 1908, pastor at Akron, Indiana, in 1909, and appears in the ministerial lists for more than twenty years after that (North Manchester, Indiana, 1908-27; Spokane, Washington, 1928-31).⁶² Bertha Bell, after a couple years of work in Argentina, returned to the States, and Dr. Yoder later wrote of her, "She was an able worker but was hindered by the customs which made it improper for a young woman to go about alone."⁶³

(21) *The Brethren Annual* for 1909 listed MARGARET A. COOKE as pastor of the Cherry Hill church at Indiana, Pennsylvania. In the following year she was reported as pastor of the Brush Valley congregation, Dial, Pennsylvania. During the next few years Mrs. Cooke is recorded as serving either or both congregations until, after 1914, her name appears only in the general ministerial list for Pennsylvania through 1920. (22) MRS. P. J. JENNINGS also made her first appearance in *The Brethren Annual* for 1909: she was pastor at Allegheny and Oriskany, Virginia, while her husband was pastor at the Bethlehem church, Harrisonburg, Virginia. Her name next appears in the 1915 *Annual* as pastor at Buena Vista, Virginia, where she remained until 1923, when she was reported at Lynchburg, Virginia. In 1917 she submitted to *The Brethren Evangelist* a report of the expanding work at Buena Vista which had prospects of requiring enlargement of their church school facilities.⁶⁴

(23) With MAUDE CRIPE WEBB (1886-1976), the Argentine mission field re-enters the picture. Having been called by the Missionary Board, ratified by the General Conference, and "set aside for the work by the laying on of hands,"⁶⁵ she sailed to Argentina in February-March 1911. Prior to that, her name had appeared in *The Brethren Annual* ministerial lists for 1909 (Goshen, Indiana) and 1910 (Reliance, Virginia); she was designated as unordained in both years. Having arrived in Rio Cuarto, Argentina, she entered the work, encountering the same barriers that Bertha Bell had experienced shortly before. In the course of her service there Miss Cripe met and married Leonard Webb, an Englishman who joined her in the work. The pair were greatly loved by all who knew them, but he became seriously ill, causing them to move in 1917 to Indiana, where he died and she remained to care for their two chil-

dren. Except for a brief period at Fort Scott, Kansas (1918), Mrs. Webb lived at Goshen or Shipshewana Lake, Indiana, until her death on January 6, 1976, at the age of eighty-nine.⁶⁶ She was accepted into membership in the National Brethren Ministerial Association in 1939.⁶⁷

(24) During the period 1914-20 GRACE PRUDENCE FETTERS, wife of Pastor Enoch Feters, was enrolled in the ministerial list of *The Brethren Annual*, first at Columbus, Ohio (1914-17), then at New Troy, Michigan (1918-19), and Lapaz, Indiana (1920).

(25) DR. FLORENCE NEWBERRY GRIBBLE (1880-1942) was a figure well known in Brethren missionary annals a generation ago. In 1908 Miss Florence Newberry, a physician, sailed for missionary service in French Equatorial Africa on the same ship with James S. Gribble, a member of the Brethren Church traveling for the same purpose. Although James Gribble fell in love with Dr. Newberry at once, she wished to remain single in order to pursue her work with the Africa Inland Mission, which she did until several years later Mr. Gribble overcame her resistance. They were married during the summer of 1913 in Africa, then spent the years 1914-17 in the United States. The General Conference of 1914 approved Africa as a Brethren mission field, and the Gribbles worked through most of World War I to raise support for the venture. Prior to their return to Africa in January 1918, the 1917 Ohio district conference was informed that Dr. Gribble had been ordained to the ministry.⁶⁸ James Gribble lived only five more years on the African field, but Dr. Gribble was listed among the ministers in *The Brethren Annual* until the denomination divided in 1939. She continued to serve in medical missions until her death in Africa on March 31, 1942.⁶⁹

(26) NORA PEARL BRACKEN DAVIS (1888-1935) was a native of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. After teaching school for seven years (1904-11), she enrolled at Ashland College, where she began the English Divinity course of study. Upon completion of two years she then worked another two years in the mission school at Lost Creek, Kentucky. Returning to Ashland, she completed the Divinity course in 1917 and served in 1917-18 as the pastor at Vandergrift Heights, Pennsylvania. She was ordained in October 1919 at the Vinco Brethren Church.⁷⁰ Further studies resulted in her receiving the B.A. degree from Ashland College (1921), after which she entered the Hartford (Connecticut) Seminary Foundation, specializing in religious education. She married Daniel R. Davis of Johnstown in August 1921, and the two attended North Manchester (Indiana) College for a brief time. During the years that followed they lived in Johnstown (1924-29), Schwenksville, Pennsylvania (1930-31), and Ridgely, Maryland (1932-35)—the latter ear-

lier known as the home of Vianna Detwiler. In the denomination at large Nora Bracken Davis was best known as the writer of teacher's materials for elementary and junior church school lessons. For this her advanced education, wide reading, and knowledge of the Greek New Testament served well. She died on July 23, 1935, at the age of forty-six.⁷¹

(27) Although some workers like Nora Davis traveled rather widely, MARY PENCE remained in one place throughout her more than twenty years of pastoral ministry. She was ordained in the summer of 1919 during a revival at Telford, Tennessee.⁷² From 1920 through 1940 her name appears in *The Brethren Annual* ministerial list, always with the same address: Limestone, Tennessee, near Johnson City. She wrote occasionally for *The Brethren Evangelist*.⁷³

(28) EMMA ABOUD (1880-1967) was born in Abey, Lebanon, and came to the United States at about the age of fourteen. After attending the Nyack Bible College she became affiliated with the Brethren Church and was accepted into the National Ministerial Association in 1920.⁷⁴ Her name first appears in the ministerial list of the 1923 *Brethren Annual* (Dayton, Ohio, to about 1927). She spent considerable time in evangelistic preaching in Brethren churches from coast to coast. She also served as pastor at Mulvane, Kansas, in 1940-41 and was church planter for the present congregation at Carleton, Nebraska. From 1942 to 1963 she lived in Los Angeles and Long Beach, California, after which she made her home in Philadelphia until her death on July 9, 1967.⁷⁵

(29) Little is known at present of the ministry of GRACE P. SRACK. Having worked in the Kentucky mission, Mrs. Srack was called as pastor of the Pleasant Grove, Iowa, church at the beginning of 1922.⁷⁶ After that *The Brethren Annual* listed her as being at North English, Iowa (1923-25), and Lost Creek, Kentucky (1926-27). (30) Similarly, EDNA NICHOLAS (d. 1967) of Elkhart, Indiana, is not well known in the information currently available. *The Brethren Annual* includes her name in the ministerial lists from 1930 through 1967. She was accepted into the National Brethren Ministerial Association in 1939⁷⁷ and wrote occasionally for *The Brethren Evangelist*.⁷⁸ (31) The name of LAURA EVANGELINE LARSON is included in *The Brethren Annual* list of ministers for 1932 through 1935. She went to Argentina as a missionary in 1931 (the last one to go in the period 1909-39), where she worked in Rio Curato.⁷⁹

(32) LORETTA CARRITHERS is another ordained Brethren woman who worked in a team ministry with her husband. Elmer Carrithers was a military chaplain during World War II, while his wife Loretta served as a licensed minister in Ohio and Iowa. She

was ordained at Peru, Indiana, in 1948⁸⁰ and then together with her husband pastored the Mansfield, Ohio, Brethren Church from about 1949 to 1953. She was accepted into the National Ministerial Association in 1949.⁸¹

(33) The last woman known to be ordained in the Brethren Church was ANNE BLACK, wife of Pastor E. J. Black. Her ordination took place at Muncie, Indiana, in 1957,⁸² and her name was included in the ministerial lists of *The Brethren Annual* through 1959, when she and her husband left the denomination.

During the quarter-century since 1957, no women were ordained in the Brethren Church, but several have served as pastors: (34) MARY SPARKS was listed in *The Brethren Annual* as pastor of the Raystown, Pennsylvania, congregation in 1964-66, and (35) CORA JEAN BLACK was similarly reported for Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania, in 1965-67. (36) The 1979 and 1980 *Brethren Directory* included Malaysian missionary JENNY LOI in the list of pastors and elders. At present, two women are licensed ministers in the Brethren Church: (37) JENNIFER JONES RAY is co-pastor of the Roann, Indiana, congregation in a team ministry with her husband James, and (38) SUSAN WHITE HYLAND, together with her husband Kenneth, has accepted a call to the pastorate of the Papago Park Church in Tempe, Arizona. The aspirations of Mrs. Ray and Mrs. Hyland are in keeping with a recommendation adopted by the 1974 General Conference: "2. Encourage women and men to engage in team ministry as ordained persons or as lay persons."⁸³

This article has been only an introduction to the study of Brethren women in a century of ministry. Much more remains to be done. All names, places, and dates given herein are subject to correction on the basis of better evidence. Some persons have received scant attention in this discussion, not because their ministries were unimportant but because little information has been published about them. The writer invites pastors, students, and interested church members to join in recovering the story of Brethren women who have served in this way.

Questions of historical explanation and theological interpretation wait in the wings for answers: What arguments did the Brethren use a hundred years ago for and against women in ministry, and how do those arguments appear in light of current understanding? Why did the number of female ministers reach its peak around 1915 and then decline? Why have no women been ordained in the past quarter-century? What differences, if any, exist between ordination to missionary service and ordination for pastoral ministry?

The present study will be rewarded if others take up the intrigue

that remains. Most of all, the ideals of the Christian gospel will be served if some who read this will answer the challenge of the ministry for their own lives in the Brethren Church: Century Two.

FOOTNOTES

¹"Ministry" is a biblical concept as large as the church and its membership; "ministry" is "service." But for ease of understanding, "the ministry" is used in this article in the common sense of the church's "official" ministry, i.e., the ordained clergy or those serving as pastors, whether ordained or not.

As an introduction to the subject of Brethren women in ministry, this article is based almost entirely on previously published sources. They fall into several categories: For the early years, a primary source is the minutes of district and national conferences held by the (Progressive) Brethren Church, beginning in 1883, published annually in *The Brethren Annual*. An equally valuable source is [H. R.] *Holsinger's History of the Tunkers and the Brethren Church* (see note 14, below), which contains considerable information in its biographical chapter (pp. 642-758).

For the entire period 1883-1983, the ministerial lists published almost every year in *The Brethren Annual* are valuable. Since they often describe the situation in the year prior to publication, a margin of error of at least one year must always be assumed. For easier reference, most citations in this article are to the publication date. A second source for the entire century is the denomination's periodical, *The Brethren Evangelist*, which for careful research purposes suffers two serious defects: no copies exist in any Brethren collection for the years 1889-94, and no complete index is yet available. The files of Albert T. Ronk (see notes 40, 48, below), preserved at Ashland Theological Seminary, approximate a subject index of the paper, as do those of Dale R. Stoffer (see note 59, below), who has graciously made his material available to the writer (especially notes 2-6).

²For example, S. H. Bashor, "Bashor's Reply to Calvert," *The Brethren Evangelist* (hereafter abbreviated *BE*) 7 (No. 20, May 20, 1885): 2-3, 6-7; E. S. Miller, "Seeing and Hearing," *BE* 7 (No. 24, June 17, 1885): 1.

³For example, Edward Mason, "The 'Covering,'" *BE* 8 (No. 46, Nov. 17, 1886): 3; A. L. Garber, "Editorial Items," *BE* 9 (No. 14, Apr. 6, 1887): 4; E. L. Yoder, "Paul's Instructions to Women," *BE* 9 (No. 21, May 25, 1887): 2-3; Edward Mason, "The 'Power' of the 'Covering,'" *BE* 10 (No. 35, Aug. 29, 1888): 2-3; A. D. Gnagey, "Notes and Comments," *BE* 18 (No. 26, June 24, 1896): 1; J. W. Beer, "The Kiss and the Covering," *BE* 20 (No. 29, July 27, 1898): 4-5; D. Bailey, "The Prayer Covering: Whence and Wherefore?" *BE* 20 (No. 36, Sep. 14, 1898): 4; A. D. Gnagey, "Information Bureau," *BE* 23 (No. 4, Jan. 24, 1901): 15; J. L. Gillin, "The Covering in the Corinthian Church," *BE* 23 (No. 21, May 23, 1901): 4-6.

⁴For example, C. F. Yoder, "The Deaconess Movement," *BE* 29 (No. 39, Oct. 9, 1907): 4; Mrs. J. Allen Miller, "Deaconesses," *BE* 30 (No. 34, Sep. 2, 1908): 6-7; Mrs. J. Allen Miller, "The Brethren Church and the Opportunity of Her Women," *BE* 37 (No. 34, Sep. 1, 1915): 6.

⁶For example, Lida Calvert Obenchain, "A Fool Notion," *BE* 25 (No. 39, Oct. 7, 1903): 12-13; [C. F. Yoder,] "Editorial Items," *BE* 26 (No. 41, Oct. 24, 1906): 1; [C. F. Yoder,] "Progress of a Good Cause," *BE* 27 (No. 41, Oct. 16, 1907): 12.

⁷For example, A. L. Garber, "Paul on Women Preaching," *BE* 8 (No. 27, July 7, 1886): 4; J. W. Beer, "Woman's Work in the Church," *BE* 10 (No. 28, July 11, 1888): 4; W. J. H. Bauman, "A Little Friendly Criticism," *BE* 10 (No. 28, July 11, 1888): 6; [A. L. Garber,] "Response to Bro. Harrison's Farewell," *BE* 16 (No. 39, Oct. 3, 1894): 11-12; A. D. Gnagey, "Women as Ministers," *BE* 17 (No. 8, Feb. 27, 1895): 11; A. D. Gnagey, "Women and the Apostle Paul," *BE* 21 (No. 34, Oct. 4, 1899): 1; J. L. Gillin, "Women in the Churches," *BE* 23 (No. 26, July 4, 1901): 3-4; L. S. Bauman, "Quaker City and Allentown Notes," *BE* 25 (No. 9, Mar. 4, 1903): 14-15; C. F. Yoder, "Gospel Church Government: V," *BE* 28 (No. 5, Jan. 31, 1906): 10; Mrs. L. S. Bauman, "Woman's New Place in the World under Christianity," *BE* 30 (No. 50, Dec. 30, 1908): 13-14; J. Allen Miller, "Answers to Queries," *BE* 32 (No. 19, May 11, 1910): 7; Vianna Detwiler, "Woman in the Church—Her Place and Work," *BE* 33 (No. 43, Nov. 8, 1911): 9; Mrs. Ellen Lichty [selected from *Central Pentecost*,] "Shall Women Preach?" *BE* 35 (No. 17, Apr. 23, 1913): 5.

⁸H. R. Holsinger, "Holsingerisms," *BE* 17 (No. 23, June 26, 1895): 3. Charles R. Munson kindly brought this statement to the attention of the writer.

⁹*The Brethren Annual*, 1891, p. 26. Although the title of this yearbook changed slightly through the century, for easier reference it will be cited in this article as *The Brethren Annual*. In recent years it has been at times separated into two parts, the Directory containing names and organization and the Annual containing minutes and reports. That division will be indicated and readily identifiable.

⁹*The Brethren Annual*, 1892, p. 23.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹²*The Brethren Annual*, 1894, p. 24.

¹³*The Brethren Annual*, 1895, p. 10. In 1899 the editor of *The Brethren Evangelist* wrote, "Years ago, at one of the conferences of the Brethren church [sic] held in Pennsylvania, the following resolution was unanimously passed: 'Resolved that we encourage worthy young men and women in the Brethren church [sic] to enter the Christian ministry'" (A. D. Gnagey, "Women and the Apostle Paul," *BE* 21 (No. 34, Oct. 4, 1899): 1. Perhaps the Pennsylvania resolution referred to is one which the writer has not been able to find, or Gnagey may have mistakenly thought of the Indiana or Ohio resolutions quoted above.

¹⁴[H. R. Holsinger,] *Holsinger's History of the Tunkers and the Brethren Church* (Lathrop, CA: By the author, 1901), p. 735 (hereafter abbreviated Holsinger, *History*).

¹⁵*The Brethren Annual*, 1895, p. 18.

¹⁶For example, "Impressions of the Hour: Essay for Master's Degree, Monongahela College," *BE* 10 (No. 7, Feb. 15, 1888): 2; "The Silent

Teacher," *BE* 10 (No. 20, May 16, 1888): 2; "Elsewhere," *BE* 10 (No. 31, Aug. 1, 1888): 3; "Divine Growth," *BE* 23 (No. 3, Jan. 17, 1901): 8; "Mason-town, Pa.," *BE* 24 (No. 4, Jan. 22, 1902): 13.

¹⁷Holsinger, *History*, p. 735.

¹⁸F[loyd] Sibert, "A Pastor's Tribute," *BE* 55 (No. 32, Aug. 19, 1933): 14.

¹⁹Homer A. Kent, Sr., *Conquering Frontiers: A History of The Brethren Church (The National Fellowship of Brethren Churches)*, revised ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972), p. 121.

²⁰Freeman H. Ankrum, "Laura Grossnickle Hedrick: Part One," *BE* 79 (No. 23, June 8, 1957): 5.

²¹Reprinted in *The Brethren Annual*, 1892, pp. 38-43.

²²*The Brethren Annual*, 1892, p. 43.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 118.

²⁴*The Brethren Annual*, 1894, p. 45.

²⁵*The Brethren Annual*, 1892, p. 113.

²⁶For example, "Follow Me," *BE* 9 (No. 42, Oct. 19, 1887): 2; "Behold the Lamb of God," *BE* 9 (No. 45, Nov. 9, 1887): 2; "Christ's Compassion," *BE* 10 (No. 11, Mar. 14, 1888): 6; "Thoughts as Given to S.S.C.E.," *BE* 11 (No. 17, Apr. 24, 1889): 6; "What Think Ye of Christ?" *BE* 16 (No. 19, May 9, 1894): 4-7; "Heaven," *BE* 28 (No. 15, Aug. 11, 1906): 4; "The Sisters' Society of Christian Endeavor," *BE* 31 (No. 25, June 30, 1909): 4-5.

²⁷*The Brethren Annual*, 1896, p. 7.

²⁸Freeman H. Ankrum, "Laura Grossnickle Hedrick," *BE* 79 (No. 23, June 8, 1957): 4-5, 7, and *BE* 79 (No. 28, July 13, 1957): 4-6.

²⁹*The Brethren Annual*, 1894, p. 67.

³⁰*The Brethren Annual*, 1895, p. 41; A. D. Gnagey, "Sister Dickey's Withdrawal," *BE* 16 (No. 48, Dec. 12, 1894): 8-9, containing a letter from Mrs. Dickey and comment by editor Gnagey.

³¹Holsinger, *History*, p. 670.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 672.

³³*The Brethren Annual*, 1898, p. 13; 1899, p. 29.

³⁴[C. F. Yoder,] "Work and Workers," *BE* 26 (No. 46, Nov. 30, 1904): 10.

³⁵Holsinger, *History*, pp. 554-55.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 573-74; [C. F. Yoder,] "Missions and Missionaries," *BE* 26 (No. 1, Jan. 6, 1904): 4.

³⁷See also her articles "Three Sisters," *BE* 16 (No. 13, Mar. 28, 1894): 5-6; "Shadows," *BE* 20 (No. 34, Aug. 31, 1898): 2; "Heaven," *BE* 28 (No. 15, Apr. 11, 1906): 4; "How Awaken a More Extensive Missionary Zeal among our Women," *BE* 36 (No. 8, Feb. 25, 1914): 6.

³⁸Holsinger, *History*, p. 644.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Albert T. Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church: Its Life, Thought, Mission* (Ashland, OH: Brethren Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 263-64.

⁴¹"Giving Enriches the Giver," *BE* 20 (No. 37, Sep. 21, 1898): 4; "Christian Growth," *BE* 22 (No. 12, Mar. 22, 1900): 9; "Woman's New Place in the World under Christianity," *BE* 30 (No. 50, Dec. 30, 1908): 13-14; "Loyalty to the Holy Spirit," *BE* 31 (No. 45, Dec. 1, 1909): 4-5.

⁴²See the memorial by H. L. Goughnour, *BE* 31 (No. 36, Sep. 29, 1909): 16.

⁴³Holsinger, *History*, p. 562; *The Brethren Annual*, 1914, p. 32.

⁴⁴At present, Holsinger's inclusion of her photograph in the group he called "women preachers" (Holsinger, *History*, p. 699) is the only evidence for her official ministerial status among the Brethren.

⁴⁵Holsinger, *History*, p. 701. See her article "Women and the Temperance Cause," *BE* 30 (No. 16, Apr. 22, 1908): 5.

⁴⁶*The Brethren Annual*, 1903-18. References to this minister present the student of history with major problems, for she is listed as Antonia Walker/Wanker of Beaconsfield/Beaconsville, Illinois/Iowa! Her name is spelled Walker more frequently than Wanker. The writer has been unable to locate a Beaconsville in either Illinois or Iowa, but near Leon, Iowa, where the Brethren had a congregation for many years, there is the village of Beaconsfield; hence the identification given in the text.

⁴⁷I. D. Bowman, "Philadelphia, Pa.," *BE* 23 (No. 45, Nov. 21, 1901): 11-12.

⁴⁸Albert T. Ronk, *History of Brethren Missionary Movements* (Ashland, OH: Brethren Publishing Company, 1971), p. 35.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 37.

⁵⁰For example, her report on the Ridgely congregation, *BE* 21 (No. 7, Feb. 15, 1900): 13; "Letter from the President," *BE* 25 (No. 24, June 24, 1903): 8.

⁵¹"St. John," *BE* 23 (No. 6, Feb. 7, 1901): 5-6; "How to Realize the Friendship of Jesus," *BE* 36 (No. 13, Apr. 1, 1914): 4-5; "Am I an Intercessor?" *BE* 43 (No. 17, Apr. 27, 1921): 5-6.

⁵²"Woman and the Church," *BE* 30 (No. 16, Apr. 22, 1908): 3; "Woman in the Church—Her Place and Work," *BE* 33 (No. 43, Nov. 8, 1911): 9.

⁵³See the reports and tribute in *BE* 43 (No. 46, Nov. 30, 1921): 15; *BE* 43 (No. 48, Dec. 14, 1921): 14.

⁵⁴L. S. Bauman, "Alice M. Harley," *BE* 27 (No. 12, Mar. 22, 1905): 15.

⁵⁵Isaac D. Bowman, "Philadelphia, Pa.," *BE* 23 (No. 45, Nov. 21, 1901): 11-12.

⁵⁶[C. F. Yoder,] "Miss Alice Harley Called to Persia," *BE* 25 (No. 35, Sep. 9, 1903): 11; [C. F. Yoder,] "Work and Workers," *BE* 27 (No. 11, Mar. 15, 1905): 10; Q. R. Musselman, "Alice Harley," *BE* 27 (No. 11, Mar. 15, 1905): 15; "An Open Letter from I. D. Bowman to Brother Harley and Family,"

BE 27 (No. 11, Mar. 15, 1905): 15; L. S. Bauman, "Alice M. Harley," BE 27 (No. 12, Mar. 22, 1905): 14-15.

⁵⁷"The Conditions of True Spiritual Growth," BE 21 (No. 41, Oct. 19, 1899): 9; "Qualifications of the Foreign Worker," BE 24 (No. 45, Nov. 12, 1902): 9-10.

⁵⁸[C. F. Yoder,] "Miss Alice Harley Called to Persia," BE 25 (No. 35, Sep. 9, 1903): 11.

⁵⁹Dale R. Stoffer, "The Background and Development of Thought and Practice in the German Baptist Brethren (Dunker) and The Brethren (Progressive) Churches (c. 1650-1979)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980), p. 536.

⁶⁰Harold E. Barnett, "In Memory of Mrs. Ada Garber Drushal," BE 98 (No. 3, March 1976): 23.

⁶¹Freeman H. Ankrum, "Laura Grossnickle Hedrick: Part One," BE 79 (No. 23, June 8, 1957): 7.

⁶²L. S. Bauman, "Field Secretary's Notes," BE 31 (No. 6, Feb. 10, 1909): 15; Ronk, *History of Brethren Missionary Movements*, pp. 62-66.

⁶³Charles F. Yoder, *The Argentine Mission Field* (Ashland, OH: Brethren Publishing Company, 1930), p. 124.

⁶⁴[R. R. Teeter,] "Review of the Thought and Work of the Church," BE 39 (No. 5, Jan. 31, 1917): 8. Her report follows on pp. 12-13.

⁶⁵Ronk, *History of Brethren Missionary Movements*, p. 65.

⁶⁶See notice of her death, BE 98 (No. 3, March 1976): 24.

⁶⁷*The Brethren Annual*, 1940, p. 21.

⁶⁸[R. R. Teeter,] "News from the Field," BE 40 (No. 26, July 10, 1918): 10. The Ohio Ministerial Examining Board consisted of A. D. Gnagey, J. Allen Miller, and W. C. Teeter.

⁶⁹Orville D. Jobson, *Conquering Oubangui-Chari for Christ* (Winona Lake, IN: Brethren Missionary Herald Company, 1957), p. 97.

⁷⁰Mrs. Davis's granddaughter, Patricia Pyne, has generously made available her grandmother's ordination certificate as evidence of this.

⁷¹See Charles A. Bame, "Nora Bracken Davis: An Appreciation," BE 57 (No. 31, Aug. 10, 1935): 11-12, together with a tribute by her husband in the same place. Patricia Pyne (see preceding note) also furnished the writer with an undated newspaper obituary. The three accounts do not agree, and so the writer has attempted a conjectural reconstruction which will present as few contradictions as possible.

⁷²G. C. Carpenter, "Kentucky Mission Notes," BE 41 (No. 26, July 2, 1919): 12.

⁷³For example, "Jesus of Yesterday, Today and Forever," BE 42 (No. 7, Feb. 18, 1920): 8; "The Epitaph at Christ's Tomb," BE 42 (No. 13, Mar. 31, 1920): 7.

⁷⁴*The Brethren Annual*, 1921, p. 3.

⁷⁵Robert Keplinger, "Rev. Emma Aboud Passes Away," *BE* 89 (No. 17, Aug. 19, 1967): 25; *The Brethren Annual*, 1967-68, p. 33.

⁷⁶[G. S. Baer,] "Editorial Review," *BE* 43 (No. 43, Nov. 9, 1921): 3. See also her article "An Opportunity, A Vision, A Duty," *BE* 43 (No. 43, Nov. 9, 1921): 7.

⁷⁷*The Brethren Annual*, 1940, p. 21.

⁷⁸For example, "The All-Sufficiency of God's Grace," *BE* 52 (No. 14, Apr. 5, 1930): 6; "The Sustaining Power of Faith," *BE* 78 (No. 34, Sep. 1, 1956): 11.

⁷⁹Ronk, *History of Brethren Missionary Movements*, p. 66.

⁸⁰[F. C. Vanator,] "Loretta Carrithers Ordained to Full Gospel Ministry," *BE* 71 (No. 4, Jan. 22, 1949): 8. The ordination service was conducted by J. Milton Bowman, Willis E. Ronk, and Claud Studebaker.

⁸¹*The Brethren Annual*, 1949-50, p. 19. See her article "A Little Child Shall Lead Them," *BE* 70 (No. 14, Apr. 3, 1948): 4. Beginning in *The Brethren Annual* for 1973, Loretta Carrithers was erroneously listed in such a manner as to make readers unaware of her status as an ordained minister. After 1976 her name did not appear at all, but the writer understands that she continues to be a member in good standing of the National Brethren Ministerial Association.

⁸²[W. S. Benschhoff,] "Mrs. Anne Black Ordained on Easter Sunday," *BE* 79 (No. 28, July 13, 1957): 13. The ordination service was conducted by Henry Bates, E. J. Black, and Arthur H. Tinkel, Sr.

⁸³*The Brethren Annual*, 1974, p. 26. The action came as a recommendation from the moderator, Paul D. Steiner, and subsequently was endorsed by the Executive Committee and adopted by the General Conference. William Kerner kindly brought this item to the attention of the writer.