

BRETHREN IN CHRIST HISTORY & LIFE

*Challenging Tradition,
Finding a Ministry:
John and Nellie Hostetter
in the Brethren in Christ Church*

by
J. Norman Hostetter



Brethren in Christ History and Life

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J. Norman Hostetter
Deland, Florida
March 1998

INTRODUCTION

The lives of John and Nellie Hostetter were inextricably linked to the Brethren in Christ Church. As members of that church, they had a single mission in life to make Jesus Christ known to family, friends, and neighbors. In fulfilling this mission, they contributed to a number of important changes in the traditions of the Brethren in Christ Church which strengthened the ministry of the local congregations.

The Brethren in Christ denomination evolved from several conservative Christian groups and traditions. First known as the River Brethren, the church originated in the Pennsylvania German community near the Susquehanna River in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, about 1780.

Early members were mostly descendants of European Anabaptist families. After experiencing heart-felt conversion in a religious revival in the Susquehanna River community, and not finding another group who believed in their form of adult baptism (trine immersion), the first members decided to start a church of their own. They wrote their own creed, were orthodox in their beliefs, and were "plain people."

The Brethren continued to emphasize separation from the world. By the twentieth century they also embraced the doctrine of spiritual perfection, derived from the writings of John Wesley. Pacifism, which rejected conflict and participation in war, stemmed from their Anabaptist background, as did rules for personal behavior emanating from the church leaders, which were obeyed by good church members. Disobedience brought questions about the reality of the salvation experience.

When John Hostetter's father and mother joined the church in 1899, they accepted the "ways of the Brethren." Members were known for their plain, dark clothes, prayer coverings for women,

and rejection of any form of personal adornment, such as jewelry. Simplicity, modesty, and honesty governed personal relationships and life's decisions. Yes meant yes, and no meant no. They shunned the worldly activities of their neighbors, but assisted anyone in need. Their children attended the local schools.

By the early twentieth century, church services were conducted by lay ministers, who, in their extemporaneous preaching, relied on the Holy Spirit's guidance. More than one minister could speak during the service. Hymns were sung without the use of instruments.

Unlike some of their Anabaptist cousins, the Brethren used modern transportation, electricity, telephones, radios, and the latest farming techniques and equipment. They were frugal, spending little money on luxuries or frills. Some members, placing their trust in the Lord, questioned the need for insurance. In 1929, the year John Hostetter entered the ministry, there were about 5,000 members in the United States and Canada.

The Hostetters began their ministry in Clarence Center, New York, a farming community about twenty miles east of Buffalo. The 100-year-old congregation was founded by Brethren from Lancaster and York Counties in Pennsylvania who came to western New York searching for cheap farmland. The western New York Brethren maintained close ties with other Brethren who continued on to Ontario, Canada, before settling in new territory.

In the middle of the twentieth century, some denominational leaders questioned openly the effectiveness of the Brethren's ministry. This unrest led to a number of changes in the Constitution and Bylaws of the church, certain practices in worship, and in the appearance of members.

By 1960, most members of the church had discontinued a separate form of dress. Many worship services were modified to include a choir and musical instruments. These changes and the emphasis upon a supported ministry (salaried pastors) changed the local image of many congregations. Church buildings were updated to reflect the changes in worship patterns and to provide facilities

for educational programs. Greater efforts were made to participate in community organizations and events.

As a church pastor, evangelist, editor, and administrator, John Hostetter advanced denominational changes. When he realized his evangelistic message was judged more by the church's legal interpretation of the Bible than by the content of the message, he modified his views and challenged some of the traditions of the Brethren.

The church of the late twentieth century is considerably different from the church at mid-century in its ethos patterns and in its ministry in the community. Adherence to "ways of the Brethren" is expressed more in the spirit of the people and less in uniform attire and church services with no instrumental music. The church now has about 22,000 members in the United States and Canada and about 44,000 members in other countries.

As John Hostetter served the church, Nellie supported him through her work in the home, in the local church, as his personal secretary, and through the operation of the family business. Because of the nature of his work to church members, John was more visible than Nellie. However, Nellie's behind-the-scenes work made their ministry a team effort.

The Hostetters' ministry spanned the middle years of the twentieth century. John preached his first sermon at his only pastorate in Clarence Center, New York, in April 1929, and his last sermon at Messiah Village, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, in April 1989.

This, then, is the story of the Hostetters' journey through life as devout Christians and as loyal members of the Brethren in Christ Church. Ever faithful in their mission, they responded to church assignments to fulfill their divine calling.

CHAPTER 1

The Manor Township Farm Boy

Historical Roots

John Hostetter's ancestors were Swiss-German Anabaptists, a loosely organized group of deeply religious people opposed both to the religious practices of the Roman Catholic Church and major Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century. To avoid religious persecution, they moved among the small European states in their search for freedom to worship. Known as the radical fringe of the Reformation, the early Anabaptists valued religious freedom more than security or life itself.

The Anabaptists held that western European society was unchristian, a claim passionately rejected by the established churches. Considered as church rebels, they refused to bear arms, to serve on juries, and to participate in other forms of community life. They rejected infant baptism, a sacrament taught by the Roman Catholic and Reformation Churches, and rebaptized (anabaptist means "to rebaptize") members in violation of the Catholic Church's fourth-century ban on rebaptism. Led by the established churches, local officials charged them with treason punishable by death.¹

In 1598, partly out of his own beliefs, and with some sympathy for the radical Protestants, the reigning king of France, Henry of Navarre, issued the Edict of Nantes granting freedom of worship to dissenting religious groups. The French and German boundaries were not clearly defined and persecution probably lessened in the German and Swiss states close to the French borders. For about one hundred years, the Anabaptists and other groups, such as the

Huguenots and Quakers, conducted their own worship services and lived relatively peaceful lives in their communities.

Unfortunately for the religious dissenters, the Edict was revoked in 1685. The early eighteenth-century drive to enforce Roman Catholic worship and loyalty to the Catholic French king in all lands under French control forced the Anabaptists and other protesting groups to move farther north toward Holland.

While searching for homes and religious freedom, the persecuted dissenters learned of Penn's Experiment and sought passage to Pennsylvania. Jacob and Anna Hostetter, John Hostetter's eighteenth-century ancestors, were among those who moved to Holland, from which they booked passage to Pennsylvania.

Of Swiss ancestry, the Hostetter name has long been associated with the Anabaptists and has been traced to the fourteenth-century German states. The family name was prominent in the Swiss states and meant "high settler."² Most of the spelling variations--Hochstetter, Hostetler, Hofstetter, Hosteter, Hostator--can be found in large numbers in the Heidleburg section of Germany today.

Jacob and Anna Hostetter sailed from Amsterdam, Holland, to Philadelphia in 1712. Believed to be the first Hostetter family to arrive in North America, Jacob moved his family in 1717 to a farm along the Conestoga river (Engelside).³ By 1745, he acquired 475 acres in Manor Township south of the city of Lancaster.⁴

Other Hostetter families migrated to America in the eighteenth century and located in different sections of the United States. Today there are large concentrations of the families in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio.

The early Hostetter families were affected by the American Revolutionary War. At least one family, that of Herman Hostetter (1753-1812), a grandson of Jacob and Anna, were Loyalists and relocated to Vineland, Ontario. Herman may have been the first Hostetter to settle in Canada.⁵ The long red coat he wore during his British service in the Revolutionary War is preserved in an Ontario

museum. In contrast to Herman's loyalist beliefs, a recent search of the Pennsylvania Archives identified nineteen Hostetters (with some variations in the spelling) who served with the Lancaster County Militia during the Revolutionary War, 1775-1783.⁶

The Manor Township Hostetters

John Hostetter's father, Christian Newcomer Hostetter, was a sixth-generation descendant of Jacob and Anna Hostetter. Born in 1868, he married Ella Neff in 1891 and began farming in Manor Township on a farm purchased by his father. Ella came from a well-known Lancaster County Mennonite farm family. She met Christian on a blind date arranged by her sister.⁷

The Hostetter family must have been among the first members of the Brethren in Christ Church, popularly known as the River Brethren. Christian's grandfather was a bishop in the church. His funeral in 1888 was attended by more than 1,000 people.⁸

Neither Christian nor Ella were converted or church members before they were married. As a young man, Christian attended many activities in his horse and buggy. Their wedding photograph led John to observe they were "quite dressed up. Dad had a mustache and they had rings on their fingers."⁹ Their first son, Harris, was born in 1892.

By his own account, until the age of thirty, John's father "paid practically no attention to spiritual things . . . no Sunday school attendance, no Bible study . . . my ambition was to build up a thorough-bred dairy herd. That would give a fellow a name and income, for the spirit of money making did entirely control me."¹⁰

In 1898, the deaths of some of his high-priced cattle "without notice" caused Christian to assess the direction of his life. In the fall of 1899, the sudden death of a close relative "brought a deep concern in respect to my soul. . . . Without a word of warning or knowledge of her affliction, I received word of the passing out of life . . . without definitive evidence of the knowledge of salvation."¹¹

With the realization they were not ready to meet God, the Christian Hostetters were converted to the Christian faith at a prayer meeting. They united with the Brethren in Christ Church, thus continuing the family association with the Anabaptist roots and "the plain way." Three sons (Christian Jr., Henry, and John) and two daughters (Mary and Ella) completed the family circle in the early twentieth century. Mary died of burns when she was three years old.

Family Farm and Home Life

John Neff Hostetter, the fourth son of Christian and Ella, was born on January 4, 1904. Harris, the oldest in the family, was already eleven years old, Christ (pronounced Crist and later known as C.N., Jr.) was five and Henry was under two. The Hostetter family life on the farm and in the church was well-established by the time John was born.

Early in life, John completed routine assignments and daily chores. An eight-year-old boy was up by 5:30, expected to have the table set for breakfast by 6:00. With breakfast and family worship at 6:30 each morning, the older boys were up at 5:00 and in the barn to milk and feed the cows before breakfast. If one of the boys overslept, the other boys milked more cows. The "sleepyhead" knew he had not done his part for the day--there were no words of admonishment from the parents.

Breakfast and family worship were completed by seven and it was back to the barn to finish chores by eight. The children had ten minutes to wash and change clothes and twenty minutes to walk to school. If chores took longer than expected, the mile distance to school was "on the run." After school, the chores were usually finished by 6:00 and the evening was free for reading, devotions, or play; the time was structured by the children. The only exceptions to evening work were during hay-making and harvest seasons.¹²



Aerial view of the Hostetter family farm near Washington Boro, Pennsylvania, about 1950.



The Hostetter family in 1930; from left, front: C.N. Hostetter, Jr., C.N. Hostetter, Ella Hostetter, John Hostetter; back: Harris N. Hostetter, Ella Hostetter, Henry N. Hostetter.

Mealtime was a special family time in the Hostetter home. The boys knew they must be at the table properly washed and ready to eat on time. Nothing was said to the latecomer, but everyone knew it was wrong to be late.¹³

With Christ and Henry, John attended the Prospect Hill one-room elementary school. His teacher, George W. Gamble, was known for keeping order, and his discipline tactics were frightening to a small boy. Even with several "near grown" men in the classroom, there was no question in John's mind who was in charge.

With Miss Humphreys as his teacher between 1917 and 1918 (seventh and eighth grades), John did well in school. All marks were in the high 90s. His deportment was also in the nineties, with perfect grades on occasion. One has to question what he did to warrant less than a perfect deportment score for some marking periods!¹⁴

John's 1918 report recorded many absences from school, presumably to work on the farm and around the house. By this time he was an able-bodied fourteen-year-old. His father was often absent from the farm to pursue church administrative or evangelistic assignments. Harris was married and farming independently, and Christ was attending Messiah Bible School. That left Henry and John and the hired help to care for 130 acres and many milk cows, chickens, horses and mules. School attendance was a second priority.

For a number of years, John's father operated a milk route in the city of Columbia. At first, people brought their containers to the wagon and milk was drawn from a tank. Later, milk was delivered in bottles. On Thursdays, the eggs, carrots, potatoes, onions, spinach, and tomatoes from the farm and gardens were peddled off the back of their little truck in Washington Boro and Columbia. Father Hostetter announced his street presence with an ear-splitting whistle, and the ladies came to the truck for their purchases. The boys carried many sacks of potatoes and bushels of apples to the customers' cellars for safe-keeping during the winter

months. During the fruit season, peaches and apples were sold at the Lancaster market.

Father Hostetter was an up-to-date farmer. He was among the first to use the manure spreader, the iron-wheeled Fordson tractor, and to install a Delco plant to power the farm lights. Miles from any electrical station, the boys were thrilled when the Delco plant was completed and the farm buildings illuminated. Hostetter also watched carefully for farm advice from the Pennsylvania State College of Agriculture.

Father Hostetter provided guidance to many people and was quite serious minded. His matter-of-fact style was friendly, but he didn't go out of his way to amuse people. John recalled that the disciplinary procedures for the children were positive. He never "let you have it" because he was angry. There was a good deal of counseling with his discipline. Because he established reasonable boundaries, the home had few rules. John and his brothers "learned to obey without the stringent demands that we must obey."¹⁵

One should not leave the impression that the Hostetter household was full of "saints with no sinners." John followed the examples of his older brothers. Christ was sufficiently older to lead Henry and John into some difficulty. "He . . . made the paper wads and we threw them. He would have the cutest way of getting us younger kids into trouble and leave us hanging with the short end of the rope."¹⁶ However, he was so diplomatic in what he did that his brothers were not alienated from him.

There were also occasions when "common sense" in the handling of an emergency was noticeably absent. On one occasion, there was a skunk in the basement window well. After duly weighing the options, John found the 12-gauge shot gun, retreated to the second floor window above the skunk and fired. Fortunately, the skunk died; unfortunately, the basement window shattered and the smell of skunk permeated the entire house for weeks thereafter!¹⁷

The first automobile on the farm was a 1911 air-cooled Franklin. John listened many times to his father's despair over the

machine's repair costs. He almost returned to the horse and buggy, but finally purchased a Model A Ford.

After the boys left home, their sister Ella taught their dad to drive. He took up the challenge late in life, perhaps to enhance his church ministry.¹⁸ As he learned, the Ford would start with a roar, and their mother sat on the edge of the front seat asserting that "four eyes were better than two" when driving.¹⁹

In later years, John reflected favorably upon farm and family life. He remembered the farm as prosperous and up-to-date with well-kept buildings. His father was well known in the community as a good farmer, able to make money without farming tobacco. The family life with its everyday work and activity contributed to their Christian witness in the community.²⁰

Family Spiritual Life

Father Hostetter was ordained to the ministry at the Manor Brethren in Christ Church on May 19, 1907.²¹ By 1912 he was elected bishop of the Manor-Pequea District. Through Executive Board assignments from the General Conference of the denomination, he also served other districts such as Morrisons Cove and Cumberland Valley.

Father Hostetter had firm convictions about a number of issues facing the church in the early 1900s. He believed in tithing and simplicity of attire. He also believed in God's providential care and did not buy insurance or lightning rods for the farm buildings. However, his personal convictions were not the basis for his sermons; they were always scripturally based and presented in a teaching manner. "Preaching about things was not his style--he set an example."²²

The Manor congregation was one of five churches in the Manor-Pequea District. In the early 1900s, the churches rotated services among the locations, and Manor convened Sunday morning services once every four weeks. Evening services were

held in members' homes. The service schedule provided the opportunity to visit with families in locations other than Manor.

As the means of transportation improved and the programs of the churches developed (Sunday schools, young people's meetings), services were conducted on a weekly basis. On occasion, the Hostetter boys accompanied their father to preaching appointments and, as a result, learned to know many of the young people in the district.²³

Apart from the farm, Manor-Pequea District churches were the centers of family activity. Church life was both religious and social. Late in life John reflected, "This may have had some drawbacks, but frankly we did not consider life circumscribed. The Manns, the Hesses, the Heiseys, the Lutzes and other families gave life variety and meaning. Those were the days of shaping life-time acquaintances."²⁴

In December 1913, T.A. Long was engaged to hold a revival meeting at Manor. Due to floods in Texas where he lived, Long was delayed. Father Hostetter replaced him and conducted an exceptional revival in the life of the congregation. John remembered the revival as the time of conversion of a number of future ministers and missionaries. His experience on December 27, 1913 made him "happy as a lark." In May 1914, he was baptized with twenty others in the Susquehanna River near the end of the Blue Rock Road.²⁵

The Manor youth movement which began with the 1913 revival was new and different for both the local congregation and the denomination. Traditionally, the Brethren (and the Anabaptist heritage) viewed religious experience from an adult perspective. Until the early twentieth century, little thought was given to Christian education for children.²⁶

When the three Hostetter boys publicly confessed Jesus Christ as their Savior in 1913, they were joined by children from the Heisey, Lutz, Mellinger, Hess, and Mann families. This large number of young converts caused the church leaders to organize activities under the church's supervision and control. Saturday

night young people's meetings became a part of the church routine. Parents and children attended regularly. Singing classes (using the Randolph Singing book and a pitch pipe) taught the young people to read music and to sing on pitch. The singing books also provided Sunday recreation for the family.²⁷

The Hostetter boys were serious about their commitment to the Lord. Christ, Henry, and John were active in church functions from the time of their conversion. Christ was fourteen when converted and a good influence on the younger Henry and John. As a typical ten-year-old and one of the youngest members to join the church, John did his best to keep up with his older brothers. "We made time schedules--blocked out time to do this and that--Bible reading, all kinds of things. It became a challenge to try to keep the schedules."²⁸

The Oldest Brother and Younger Sister

From the perspective of the Brethren in Christ Church, three of Christian N. Hostetter's sons--Christian, Jr., Henry, and John--were well known. There were two other children who did not follow the "ways of the Brethren." Their lives were also deeply influenced by the home life of the C.N. Hostetter family.

Born in 1892, Harris remembered a time when the family did not attend church. Returning home after a brief absence, he discovered the family deeply involved in the church and in the "plain way." He seldom discussed his family's change in lifestyle; however, he did tell his son-in-law later in life that he would have appreciated some discussion of the change before it occurred.²⁹

A teenager before his father and mother became deeply involved in the Brethren in Christ Church, Harris was not active with the church. The Manor Sunday school began in 1910, and there was no youth program in the church before the 1913 revival. When the Sunday school was started, it concentrated on teaching the younger children. There were no classes for the young adults of Harris' age.

The Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home at Grantham, Pennsylvania, began in 1909 and did not influence Harris' life as it did his younger brothers. The differences between the church's program during Harris' youth and that of his brothers' were evident. Whether those differences influenced his decisions about the church can only be speculated.

As was the practice in those days, Harris, at age sixteen (1908), received a horse and buggy from his father. Of course, this broadened his contacts in the community. Within a few years, he began to keep company with Mabel Musser, whose family were members of the very conservative New Mennonite Church.

After their marriage, Harris and his bride did not join either church. They operated the forty-acre farm set up for him by his father. For a period of time while farming, Harris sold livestock feed for the Farm Bureau. After the barn burned in 1925, Harris and Mabel discontinued farming and moved to Millersville, Pennsylvania, several miles from the family homestead.

In 1930, Harris, Mabel, and their two children, Richard and Gladys (Dolly), moved to Buffalo, New York, where Harris became assistant manager of an Eastern States feed mill, a large milling operation that served much of New York and Pennsylvania. For the remainder of their lives, they lived in the Buffalo area where Harris served on several philanthropic boards and as trustee of Buffalo Deaconess Hospital.

Occasionally, the two western New York Hostetter families visited with one another. In 1938, the C.N. Hostetter family enjoyed a family reunion at the parsonage in Clarence Center.³⁰

The youngest member of the C.N. Hostetter family, Ella, was born in November 1905. She joined the Manor Church around 1919 and was a member until about 1930.

Ella attended Messiah Bible School. Her opportunities for Christian service and attendance at Bible conferences and church meetings were much the same as for her three older brothers. She taught Sunday school classes and was active in the Manor Church youth program.

After completing high school, Ella became a public school teacher. At age seventeen, she taught in Hossler's School near Manheim, Pennsylvania. After one year she returned to Manor Township to teach at Highville, a one-room school near Safe Harbor. From there she taught at the Upper Leacock High School on the east side of Lancaster before moving to New Jersey, where she completed her eighteen-year teaching career. During her early teaching career, she earned a bachelor's degree at Millersville State Teachers' College.

As noted, Ella joined the Manor Brethren in Christ Church. For a number of years, she dressed in the prescribed church uniform. When she decided to no longer wear the plain dress, she received vocal disapproval from a member of the Manor Church. As the criticism continued, her mother and father advised her to withdraw from the church. In their quiet way, her parents said very little to anyone about the criticism which caused their daughter to have little association with the church for the remainder of her life.³¹

In 1940, Ella's teaching career ended when she married J. Collins McSparran. They purchased a dairy farm in Drumore Township, Lancaster County, and farmed until his appointment as secretary of the Pennsylvania State Grange in 1952. In the early 1960s, McSparran entered the Republican primary for governor of Pennsylvania, but lost to William Scranton. Active in civic organizations in the Harrisburg area (he was a member of the Pennsylvania State University Board of Trustees for many years), they divided their time between central Pennsylvania and the Florida Keys after retirement from a construction business.

In summary, the childhood and early teen years of John and his siblings were disciplined and structured. Each person took responsibility for the welfare of others in the family. Church services and programs provided spiritual direction and a social dimension to the lives of the young family. Most of the family interaction centered on farm life, Messiah Bible School, and church programs. There was little contact with the "outside world" on a social or educational level during the teen years.

CHAPTER 2

New Responsibilities and Life Decisions

The year 1921-22 was an important milestone in John's life. His father and D.W. Heise from Gormley, Ontario, were sent by the General Conference to visit the mission stations in Africa and India. John and his brother Henry were left with major responsibilities for farm operations.

As a seventeen-year-old, John could not forget the flickering lights of his father's train as it left the Lancaster station in June 1921. "Upon returning home, I remember saying to Mother, 'I guess this will be a long year.' In her inimical style, she replied, 'You are as bad as Job's comforters.'"¹

His father's absence also interrupted John's education at Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home. He attended the 1921-22 winter term after the fall harvest; however, he returned to the farm before completing the third term. He attended briefly for the 1922-23 year, but completed no courses.

The pressure of farm duties may have ended John's formal instruction, but his learning opportunities within the church continued. He acknowledged the value of the Bible conferences at the church school at Grantham. In his view they provided a good opportunity for young people to leave their "small, parochial, restricted church settings and [meet] with young people from other places."² As a visitor to the school during those years on the farm, John participated in social and spiritual activities, thereby benefiting in an informal way from that setting.

For the next twenty-five years, John did not have any formal instruction. But when he learned of alternate means for attaining a high school diploma, he completed the Tests of General

Educational Development (GED) at the University of Buffalo, and, in 1948, was a recognized high school graduate.³

From 1919 to 1925, John worked on the farm and participated in church activities. The combined family, work, and church influences provided an in-depth, informal education which shaped his early years of ministry.

As the Manor-Pequea young people matured, they conducted an afternoon Sunday school program at the Lancaster church. By 1919, they formed the nucleus of teachers that taught classes enrolling about 250 children. More than a dozen young people from other churches joined "the country boys" in the Sunday school effort. John's brother Henry remembered: "Some of these young people did not come to the Brethren in Christ Church--probably because of our attire, since they came from homes that were not plain."⁴ The Sunday school children often enjoyed Saturday afternoon outings on the Hostetter farm.

Romance at the Lancaster Church

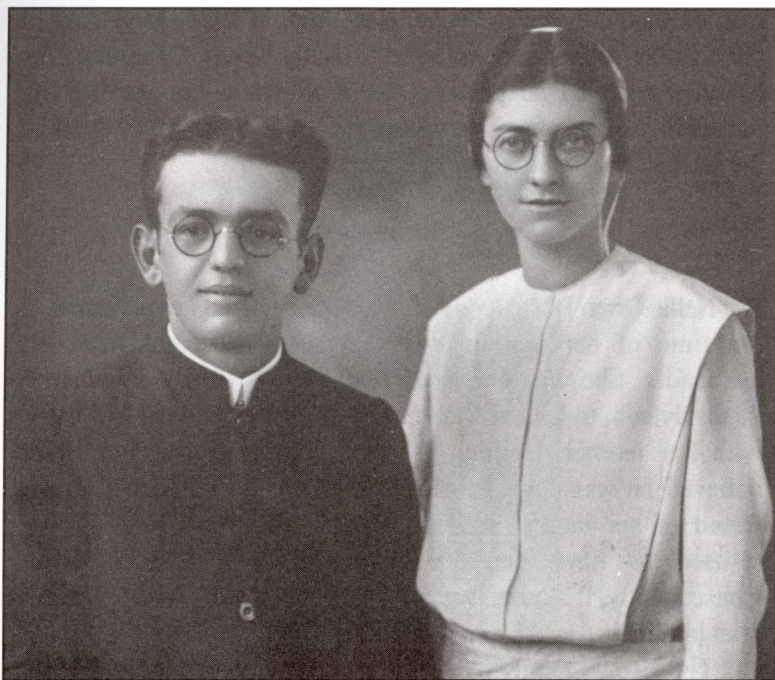
John's Sunday school work may have been spiritually rewarding, but the extra-curricular activities had their rewards as well. At the Lancaster church, he met Nellie Orren. She was a Sunday school teacher and superintendent. After Nellie finished the commercial course at Messiah Bible School, she worked as a stenographer for the Hoffman Seed Company in Landisville, Pennsylvania.

In addition to the Sunday school there were numerous activities of common interest throughout the Manor-Pequea District where a romancing couple could associate. Travel from the farm to Lancaster and Landisville was relatively easy in John's 1922 Ford sedan. Train travel from Lancaster to Harrisburg and Grantham for Bible School activities provided the courting couple opportunities to be together.

John and Nellie were married in the Lancaster church on Halloween, October 31, 1925. In later years, both their children



The Hostetter family at a reunion at Messiah College, November, 1949; from left, front row: Mabel Hostetter, Harris Hostetter, Ella Hostetter, C.N. Hostetter, Anna Hostetter, C.N. Hostetter, Jr.; second row: Richard Hostetter, Dell Hostetter, Gladys Boebel, Esther Hostetter, Nelson Hostetter; third row: John Hostetter, Nellie Hostetter, Ella McSparran, Jack McSparran, Audrey Hostetter, Glenn Hostetter, Ray Hostetter, Lane Hostetter; fourth row: Winifred Worman, Robert Worman, Norman Hostetter, Kenneth Hostetter, Alice Grace Zercher, Beula Hostetter, Henry Hostetter.



John and Nellie Hostetter at the time of their marriage, 1925.

and grandchildren teased them about their choice of a wedding date. But John had a ready explanation: "It was the end of the season for Hoffman Seed Company and a suitable time for Nellie to terminate employment. In those days, very few married women continued to work outside the home."⁵

Then it was off to Niagara Falls, New York; Gladwin, Michigan; and southern Ohio for a three-week wedding trip. Little did the newlyweds realize that Clarence Center, just twenty-eight miles from Niagara Falls, was in their future.

For a period of more than ten years, the Hostetter boys, Christ, Henry, and John, contributed much to the Sunday school and church program of the Lancaster Church. However, it is rumored the members in Lancaster were thankful there were only three unmarried Hostetter brothers helping with the program. Christ was the first to marry one of the teachers, Anna B. Lane. Henry then married another teacher, Beulah Hess, and, in 1925, John married the Sunday school superintendent, Nellie Orren. Of course, the brothers received no payment for their work, but the lifelong remuneration each received was worth the few years they spent in the Lancaster Sunday school.

More About the Orrens

Nellie Orren Hostetter's family background and experiences to the time of her marriage were radically different from her husband's. She was born on December 4, 1901, in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, to Lillian Mae Brown, a seventeen-year-old living with her mother. Nothing is known of her father, but Nellie believed he was John Blouck, a fifteen-year-old Irish Catholic friend of her mother's. Her grandmother, Mary Frey Brown, refused to have her daughter marry an Irish Catholic. Consequently, mother and daughter lived with Nellie's grandmother.

The Brown family lived in very poor circumstances. For the first six or seven years of Nellie's life, her grandfather's Civil War



Nellie's mother and sisters; from left: Gladys, Lillian, and Lucinda Orren.



Ella Hostetter with her mother, Mrs. Christian Hostetter, about 1948.

pension was the only family income. Her Uncle Jess lived with them but refused to get a job. He would send Nellie to the store for chewing tobacco, and she remembered him as a lazy man.

During part of this time, a cousin, George Shafer, a worker in the railway car shops in Middletown, also lived with them. If there was any money in the house, it usually was spent on beer. Anyone coming into the home was ready to play cards. Cigar smoke blanketed the rooms in the house.

About 1907, Nellie's mother married a family friend, John Orren from Newport, Pennsylvania. Two daughters were born to the Orrens, Lucinda (1907) and Gladys (1910). Before Gladys was born, John Orren had disappeared.⁶ Mrs. Orren, unable to care for the three girls, requested assistance from the Messiah Orphanage, Grantham, Pennsylvania, a mission of the Brethren in Christ Church. Promising to pay fifty cents a week and to provide clothing, Mrs. Orren made it clear she wanted the girls restored to her if her husband returned. Unfortunately, the orphanage did not accept the girls because of lack of room.⁷

Nothing is known of the living conditions of the girls and their mother for the next three years. In August, 1914, Mrs. Orren again contacted the orphanage for assistance in caring for the girls. She had received word from her mother-in-law that Mr. Orren, who left her in a "destitute condition four years ago," was dead. After consultation with their physician, the three girls were adopted by the orphanage.⁸

The practice of the orphanage was to place the older girls in homes to live and work. At age thirteen Nellie began to work for the Adam Knepper family in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. She cared for younger children, was assigned general housework, and was kept busy with routine chores. School attendance took second place to work in the home. Within a year, disagreements with the Kneppers, probably over school attendance, led to Nellie's reassignment to another home. She was evaluated as a strong-willed child.⁹

In 1917, at age fifteen, after several months with the Albert H. Hess family, Nellie was transferred to the Samuel Root home in Landisville to work for them and to attend school. The Roots operated a guernsey dairy farm, but Nellie worked primarily in their home in town. She remained with the Roots for two years.¹⁰

In 1919, while living with the Roots, Nellie graduated from East Hempfield Township High School. She delivered the valedictory address, entitled "France, We Paid Our Debt." With World War I ending, the theme referred to the French General Lafayette's support of the American troops during the Revolutionary War. Nellie also received the Certificate of Junior Membership in the Order of Artistic Typists "having passed the required test which discloses a practical working knowledge of the technique of typewriting." The certificate was signed by her teacher and future sister-in-law, Anna B. Lane.¹¹

As a seventeen-year-old, Nellie was now on her own. She returned to Grantham and registered for the commercial course at Messiah Bible School. She was active in a number of extra-curricular organizations, but her free time was curtailed because of a work assignment to pay her school debt. As one of the college cooks, she remembered President Enos Hess coming through the dining hall, scolding the cooks for making cookies, then helping himself to a handful as he went out the door!

During Class Day exercises in May 1921, Nellie gave the class prophecy. Again, she received the Order of Artistic Typists Certificate of Membership for "having passed the . . . Senior Test which requires exceptional skill in accurate and artistic arrangement of matter."¹²

Nellie probably did not realize at the time the value of the commercial training she had received. Through the coming years, her skills in office procedures were of inestimable value in supporting both church and family business activities. For years she typed the agendas and minutes of church council meetings. Preparing church bulletins, letters, editorials, manuscripts, and sermons became routine work for this master stenographer. For

more than ten years, she managed the office of Hostetter Oil Corporation, performed the daily book work, ordered products, and scheduled customer deliveries.¹³ Her husband's ministerial effectiveness was greatly enhanced by her training and organizational skills.

Many years later, Nellie's love of learning and her faith in formal education were expressed to her children. She was a powerful influence in their educational plans. In days when some questioned the value of higher education, particularly for women, she strongly advocated formal instruction as one of the best preparations for life, service in the church, and economic well-being.

From November 1925 to April 1929, John and Nellie worked the family farm in Manor Township in partnership with his brother Henry and wife. While Henry and Beulah worshiped with the Pequea Church, John and Nellie were members of the Manor Brethren in Christ Church. Father Hostetter moved to the upper forty-acre farm, set aside for the oldest son Harris, thus providing a home on the main farm for John and Nellie. In March 1928 their first child, Winifred, was born.

God's Call to the Ministry

Apparently, John harbored a call to the Christian ministry for some time before he made it known to family members and the Manor Church. Before their marriage in 1925, John had asked Nellie if she could be a minister's wife. It was late in 1928 before he made his call known to the local church.¹⁴

Announcing a call to the ministry was not unusual for the Brethren; however, in Manor-Pequea District the call usually came through election. In 1920 John's brother Christ had been elected by the district and was serving a church in nearby Refton.

Having made his convictions known, John completed the examination for the denomination's Ministerial Examining Board. The questions probed the applicant's biblical understanding of the

Brethren in Christ Church doctrines. John answered each one with appropriate scriptural references and stated he was willing to teach each doctrine.¹⁵

The Hostetters applied to the Home Mission Board for placement in a needy area. Both John and Nellie wanted to work outside Manor-Pequea District because of the greater need for Christian workers elsewhere. Their November 1928 application included their personal testimonies. At age eighteen Nellie was converted on January 24, 1920, while attending Messiah Bible School. John's conversion, as noted, was at a much younger age. Both testified to another time when they dedicated themselves to the Lord.¹⁶

The officials of Manor-Pequea District filed recommendations for the applicants. John and Nellie were listed as "limited" in their Bible knowledge, "about average" in their frugal and careful expenditure of money, and able to take direction from those in authority. They were recommended for rural (rather than city) work.¹⁷

In a series of letters exchanged among the members of the Home Mission Board and the General Conference Executive Board, John and Nellie were recommended for service. However, John's father, a member of the Executive Board, felt that Clarence Center, the anticipated place of service, needed a minister of mature years. "Since I was personally involved in the investigation there [Clarence Center], I certainly would prefer someone else to be placed there because of the possibility of a conclusion by those at that place, that ulterior motives prompted the recommendations."¹⁸

Another recommendation echoed the same note of caution: "In respect to locating at Clarence Center . . . in placing a new recruit in the front and heat of the conflict is not quite the same thing as to use him as a home guard."¹⁹ The recommendations also expressed the desire to keep the Hostetters in Manor-Pequea District.²⁰

The Hostetters also considered other pastoral assignments. Opportunities for service were available in Arcadia and Orlando, Florida. The yearly reports of these churches recorded difficulty in

maintaining viable congregations. Several ministers had been assigned depending upon their availability in Florida.²¹ John and Nellie gave some consideration to the Orlando assignment, but Nellie was sure she could not cope with the Florida heat.

In early 1928, the Clarence Center, New York, congregation had contacted the Home Mission Board for help in finding a minister. In contrast to Orlando, this congregation was about 100 years old and had an established, year-round program. As noted, there were difficulties within the congregation and the number of church members was small. However, after prayerful consideration, John and Nellie accepted the invitation to serve at Clarence Center.

On the last Sunday of March 1929, both John and his brother Henry were ordained to the ministry in a "service of celebration" at the Manor church. John was ordained for service at Clarence Center, New York, and Henry for service in the Manor-Pequea District. John was listed as a minister for the first time in the 1929 minutes of General Conference.²² In January 1929, he also received a diploma from the Correspondence Department of Messiah Bible School for completing the Introductory Teacher Training Course.²³

With their ordinations, John and Henry joined their brother Christ and father, C.N. Hostetter, as pastors, evangelists, and church administrators. From 1929 to 1949, when Father Hostetter retired, the four Hostetters from one family were a unique asset to the denomination, well known throughout the church for their ministry. And the services of the sons continued for many years after their father's retirement.

In summary, John's entire life to the time he journeyed to Clarence Center revolved around his family life on the Manor Township farm, the Brethren in Christ Church in Lancaster County, and Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home. Except for his farming contacts, he had little experience with other groups, religious organizations, or cultures. However, his Christian experiences in the "ways of the Brethren" provided a good foundation for his future ministry.

In contrast, Nellie had experienced the "ways of the world." Her views of everyday life were colored by her deprivation as a child and the unstable family life she and her sisters encountered. She brought a street-smart realism to the family, which questioned and second-guessed many decisions. Although she was loyal to the Brethren in Christ Church, she was not especially tolerant of the views and pronouncements of certain ministers. She balanced John's more accepting attitudes with a skepticism all her own.

Nellie was pleased when her sisters, Lucinda and Gladys, moved to western New York. For a short time, Lucinda worked with the Earl Bosserts at the Buffalo Mission.²⁴ Gladys married Ethan Martin, one of the great-grandsons of a founding family of the River Brethren Church in Clarence Center. Both sisters lived the rest of their lives in Clarence Center and Buffalo.

CHAPTER 3

The Clarence Center River Brethren

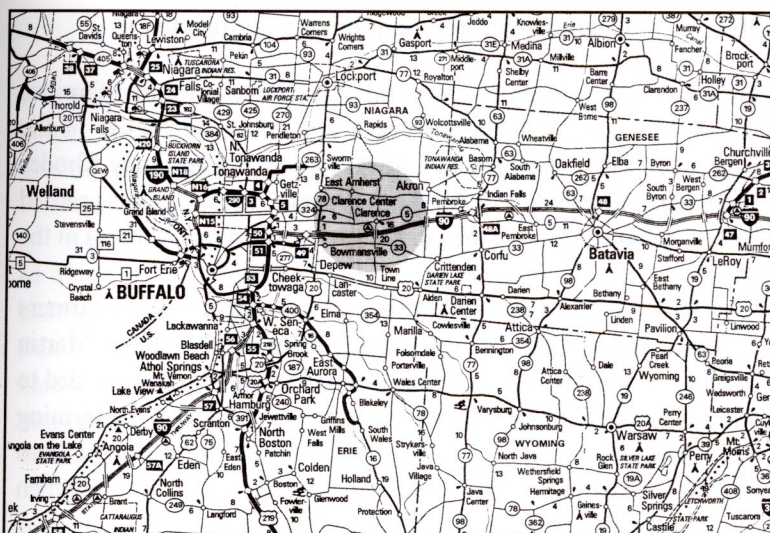
More Historical Roots

During the early 1800s, the Pennsylvania River Brethren and others from the crowded York and Lancaster County farms joined many families searching for cheaper land to the north and west.¹ These Pennsylvania counties were crowded because of the need for large farms to make a living, and the need to purchase more acres for the children in each family.

For example, Jacob Hostetter arrived in Lancaster County in 1712 and by 1745 had acquired at least 475 acres of land for farming. He had eight children and forty-three grandchildren, twenty-two of whom were boys.² Dividing farmland and acquiring new acreage for the second and third generations of the typical Lancaster County farm family were enormous tasks.

Of course, some family members pursued other occupations, but the principal occupation was farming. Although the northern and westward movements of families into other Pennsylvania counties provided some relief, some families set their sights on more distant lands in search of cheaper land and good living conditions. There is no record of the Hostetter family moving north in the early nineteenth century; however, the northerly movement of other River Brethren families and their decision to settle in western New York eventually led to the migration of the John Hostetter family to that area in 1929.

The western New York territory, through which the River Brethren passed on their journey to Canada, was under the control of the Holland Land Company. It was true frontier country and thousands of acres of cheap land were available. When they found



Map of western New York, showing locations of the town of Clarence and Clarence Center (shaded).



Orlando Martin, right, grandson of Abraham Martin, the founding church member, takes down tree, helped by son Vernon, left, and grandson Tennyson, center.

favorable living conditions, several of the River Brethren families decided to remain in the territory. The founding family of the Clarence Center Brethren in Christ Church, the Anthony Rhodes family from Mount Wolf in York County, Pennsylvania, settled east of Clarence Center (then known as VanTine's Corners) in the 1820s.

Between 1829 and 1832, several Lancaster County farmers followed the Rhodes family, among them the Abraham Martin family. Martin was interested in settling in Canada, but decided to stay in the town of Clarence after finding an ideal spot for farming near VanTine's Corners.³ Martin's grandson, Orlando Martin, born in 1864, and his children were members of the congregation when the Hostetters arrived in 1929.

The township of Clarence, where the village of Clarence Center is located, was formed in 1808 and included the village of Buffalo. At the time, both were part of Niagara County. The civility of the 150-year-old communities in eastern New York, western New England, and Pennsylvania stood in sharp contrast to this frontier region, which remained unsettled and largely uncharted following the end of the American Revolution. Wolves, turkey, partridge, deer, and bear provided food and other supplies until crops could be raised and routine farming established.⁴

In 1826, Rhodes formed the River Brethren society in VanTine's Corners (renamed Clarence Centre when the post office was established in 1849). The John Windnagle and John Eshelman families, new arrivals from Lancaster County, joined the Abraham Martin family as the first members. They held their worship services in members' homes and barns. In 1838, Rhodes was ordained as the society's first minister, serving until his death in 1872.⁵

Rhodes' son, Peter, was ordained and began to minister in 1854. He was recognized as a prominent religious leader in Clarence Center. Born about 1820, he was highly respected for his forceful Sunday morning sermons.⁶

Peter Rhodes raised a large family. Two daughters went to China as missionaries in the early 1890s.⁷ One daughter, Hettie, died of yellow fever, and Anna returned to Los Angeles, where she worked among the Chinese who settled there.⁸

The River Brethren were among many ethnic groups migrating to VanTine's Corners and the town of Clarence. The northern section of the township was settled largely by Prussian Germans. Families from Scotland, Ireland, Poland, and most European countries located in other sections. Each ethnic group set up social and religious practices which mirrored the old world communities from which they came.⁹

The early River Brethren settlers were not the only migrants to organize a church society. The Methodist society and its circuit riders were prominent in the community soon after the first settlers arrived. The Presbyterians organized a church in 1817. The Good Mennonite Church was built in 1829, and the First Church of Christ was started in 1834. In 1838, Saint John's Evangelical Lutheran and the Reformed people, then one congregation, built a church building. About twenty-five years later, the Lutherans moved out and formed their own church. There were several Mennonite societies, German Lutherans, and German Baptists (probably Dunkers or Church of the Brethren). In 1855, the United Brethren church was organized.¹⁰

Although the River Brethren formed their religious society in 1829, they did not construct a church until almost fifty years later. Land had been purchased in 1852 from Abraham Martin for fifty dollars and construction was completed in 1877 at a cost of \$1,800.¹¹ The construction delay was probably related to the denominational debate over the use of church buildings.¹² The lack of funds, and the overall economic and social effects of the Civil War may also have contributed to the delay. The 1877 building was in use, largely in its original condition, when the Hostettters arrived in 1929.

Contrasting Church Services and Members' Lifestyles

Before the Civil War, non-Catholic church services and programs in the settlement of the town of Clarence were much the same from one denomination to another. Most of the people were farmers and attended church meetings regularly. There were usually two services, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, no time limits on sermons, and an hour for lunch and class meeting. Many of the churches followed the old custom of the men sitting on one side and women on the other side of the church. Parishioners responded with frequent amens to the minister's exhortations. The Brethren worship services followed the same schedule and pattern as the other churches.

Hymns were sung without the use of instruments. They were evangelical in nature and were lined by the song leader because of the scarcity of hymnals. Musical instruments began to arrive in some of the area churches in the 1850s; however, the use of the "fiddle" was objected to by some because of its close association with the dance.¹³ The River Brethren sang the evangelical hymns but used no musical instruments until the late 1940s.

The Sunday meetings were social as well as religious events and provided an opportunity for catching up with the news of the week, or, as some would say, the town gossip.

During Peter Rhodes' ministry in the River Brethren Church, the Methodist minister was Glezen Fillmore, a first cousin of President Millard Fillmore. A circuit rider and a camp meeting evangelist, he was in great demand. Methodist camp meetings were regular summer events in the town of Clarence, and there were "hundreds of white tents clustered around a pulpit where several hundred people would gather for up to eleven days to hear sermons from morning until late at night."¹⁴ In those early days of the frontier, the Brethren probably participated in the Methodist services.¹⁵

The River Brethren, Methodists, and other church groups of the mid-nineteenth century stressed a personal, heart-felt religious

experience as preached by lay preachers with little, if any, formal education.¹⁶ This style of worship and evangelism was informal and the sermons were less "intellectual" than the sermons delivered in the more formal home churches of the New England and Pennsylvania migrants.

For example, Baker reported Fillmore's sermon of consolation for three murderers, and a two-hour sermon for the crowd waiting to witness the hanging. He was loud, energetic, and probably exhibited all the unrefined attributes of concern to the educated clergy. However, it was reported that many of the crowd became Christians!¹⁷

The preaching of such men as Fillmore probably contributed to Richard Niebuhr's later evaluation of church life on the frontier:

The reduction of life on the border [frontier] to bare fundamentals of physical and social existence, the dearth of intellectual stimulation and the lack of those effective inhibitions of emotional expression which formal education cultivates . . . made the settler subject to the feverish phenomena of revivalism.¹⁸

Scratching out a living on the frontier was tough, and the public hangings illustrated the presence of physical danger in administering typical frontier justice. Church meeting disruptions by local ruffians were well known.¹⁹ While there are no records of disruptions in the Brethren services, the early River Brethren must have experienced cultural shock over frontier living conditions. Perhaps such behavior contributed to their opinions of "the world" and their decisions to remain apart from it.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the practical Christian behavior of the Brethren was much like that of the Methodists. A declaration of salvation by the individual was necessary for church membership. These groups of believers likely presented a united front in their expressions of right and wrong in the community. The Brethren's dress codes were probably more defined, but the Methodists also advocated simplicity of dress and a head covering for women when in worship and prayer. Both groups frowned upon

improper amusements and excessive recreation, labeling them causes of spiritual decline. Methodist camp meetings, revivals, and prayer meetings would have made any member of the River Brethren feel at home.²⁰

In the early days of the town the pioneer farmers joined together without regard to ethnicity or other factors to participate in logging bees, barn-raising, harvesting bees, butchering, and other worthwhile activities within the normal routines of life. Some of these work details concluded with social events and certainly included the serving of local whiskey. The Brethren participated in the work activities (the degree of participation in the social activities is unknown and probably varied among families) and their interaction with others in the community was apparently positive.²¹

As the mores of the community changed and the social events were not related to work bees, the Brethren had difficulty determining their level of participation in community social activities. The immigrants to the town established their living styles and social clubs, music organizations, sports activities, and other forms of leisure life reflecting their ethnic roots and entertainment. Singing classes, ox sled rides, fiddler's jamborees, and community dances were organized for the young people. Members from the Methodist, United Brethren, and Lutheran Churches joined the activities and organized some of them.

One *Visitor* reporter regretted the conflict between attendance at the River Brethren's revival services and three socials in the town attended by some of the young people.²² The church members considered the revival meetings the more important activity, thus producing conflict with the youth of the church. The Brethren rejected any social activity which conflicted with church attendance.²³ Rather than face continuous criticism, church young people who attended community activities probably discontinued church attendance.

As the nineteenth-century Brethren in Christ denomination defined its role in society, the Clarence Center congregation

struggled to answer its own questions regarding participation in social and intellectual activity. School board service, politics, jury service, and voting were new ways to be involved in the frontier community, and the Brethren were having difficulty accepting such responsibilities.²⁴ Reluctance to accept civil service and the growing negative attitudes toward the use of liquor and tobacco²⁵ contributed to a deepening social isolation of the Brethren from the community by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Other church groups endorsed the importance of civic duty and accepted the more liberal governmental and social patterns of the community as they developed. On the other hand, the Brethren adopted rules about clothing, jewelry, wedding services, wagons with springs, the use of photographs, membership in lodges and secret societies. Thus, through their own rules, they isolated themselves from most social and religious activities in the community.²⁶

Of course, the mid-nineteenth century members of the River Brethren society participated in the Clarence Center community through their daily work and routines. Most members were farmers and a few were successful businessmen. For example, the Eshelmans, second and third generation descendants of the River Brethren migrants to Clarence Center, became the owners of the general stores in town. Eventually, they also owned the feed and coal businesses, and were involved in the building of homes.²⁷ Their descendants were active members of the Lutheran, United Brethren, and Hunts Corner's Baptist Churches when the Hostetters arrived in Clarence Center in 1929.

Another River Brethren member, David Martin, son of Abraham Martin and father of Orlando, started a potashery on the banks of Ransom Creek. Wood ashes from cook stoves and fireplaces were plentiful and trees were cut and burned when necessary. The final product from the potashery was a form of baking soda, used in medicine and cooking. Martin spread the waste material from the potashery on his fields, thereby adding to the productivity of the farm.²⁸

One of the more notable members of the River Brethren Church in the late nineteenth century was Joseph T. Lehman, a town physician. A native of Ohio, he married Salome, one of Peter Rhodes' daughters, in 1873. He began to practice medicine in Clarence Center in 1895. He was well known in Erie County medical circles and served as the Erie County Health Officer. By 1909, he was the "leading physician and surgeon in the community."²⁹ However, his name does not appear on the Brethren's church membership roster, in 1899 or thereafter.

By the late nineteenth century, although the number seemed to fluctuate, the number of families in the Clarence Center congregation was small. The prominent business families (the Eshelmans and some of David Martin's descendants) who had been members of the church were no longer attending.³⁰ The 1886 denominational directory listed eleven families, with D.V. Heise and Peter Rhodes as ministers. The 1898 directory listed thirty-three members, including ten members of the Rhodes family. An 1892 report in the *Visitor* may have reflected the spirit of the congregation:

Our love feast at Clarence Center was small, only three strangers were present. . . . Notwithstanding the number was small yet we were richly admonished. I felt greatly revived and strengthened. The past year I felt very much discouraged, but I wish to go on in my loneliness, and ask an interest in the prayers of all God's people, that I might hereafter live a more devoted life and not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.³¹

By 1900, most of the families attending the Sunday services were related either by blood or marriage.³² The congregation had not attracted new members from the community and many of the descendants of the early church families no longer worshipped with the Brethren. This was particularly true of the families who operated businesses in the community.

By the turn of the century, the membership included the Andrew Herrs and their seven daughters, the Thomas Lewis family,

and the Dan Eshelmans. Peter Rhodes, the former minister, had become the bishop of the district (Clarence Center was the only church in the district). For a time, the church building was used by preacher Jacob Krehbiel and his Mennonite congregation.³³

In summary, the River Brethren began their ministry in Clarence Center with a message similar to that presented by churches of different denominational and ethnic traditions. However, as the congregation matured, its social and religious pronouncements separated the members from the community. When other churches, such as the Methodists, modified their expression of Christian ways to include updated clothing and community service, the Brethren held to their "plain way" and questioned whether routine social discourse could be ordained of God. The "ways of the Brethren" became the standard for measuring the worldly behavior of other churches, people, and society.

As the national Brethren in Christ Church made rules and regulations which affected everyday life, the Clarence Center members withdrew from the community. Negative judgments about civic duty, clothing styles, and memberships in local groups were not understood by their neighbors. When the church members did not participate in community life, the neighbors ignored them.

Many of the Brethren who ventured into business or followed a profession left the church. Failure to have a meaningful interaction with the community and loss of family members left few church members by the turn of the century.

CHAPTER 4

The Brethren Enter the Twentieth Century

Early Leadership

Daniel V. Heise became the River Brethren minister at Clarence Center in 1875. A Canadian by birth, he married one of Anthony Rhodes' granddaughters, Fannie Rhodes, in 1866 and consequently had close family ties to Clarence Center.¹ He was recognized as a church leader,² serving the denomination in several ways, including Messiah Bible School treasurer,³ a founding member of the Buffalo Mission,⁴ and the first secretary of Ontario Joint Council in 1892.⁵ He was also familiar to the readers of the *Evangelical Visitor* for his articles on church proprieties.

Heise was baptized in his home church, Markham, Ontario, in 1872. After Bishop Samuel Snyder promoted him to the ministry in 1875, he moved to Clarence Center to assist Peter Rhodes in the ministry. The family settled on a farm west of town.⁶

Heise ministered to the Clarence Center River Brethren for about fifty years, spanning the turn of the century. For a number of years, he was assisted by Alvin Berry, another descendant (great-grandson) of Anthony Rhodes who was raised in the Clarence Center Brethren community.⁷

Heise was a staunch supporter of the teachings of the Brethren. In his words, the Brethren in Christ Church

... far excels anything the world has ever devised, or ever can devise. Because it is a God-given order, not "the style of a century ago," and any person who adopts it, not being "led of the Lord," or finding "it in the Bible," must certainly be very ignorant of what the Bible teaches.⁸

Declaring that Jacob was a plain man, women should not wear men's garments, and ornaments must be put off to experience the blessing of the Lord, Heise cited many Bible passages to show the pride and spiritual deadness existing in other churches. His church, the Brethren in Christ Church, was the Christian's home and must not be conformed to the world.⁹

Heise was also concerned with the literature that entered the home and the unwholesome influence of the newspaper. Reading to make one wise was responsible for much of the mental derangement and broken-down physical condition of people, he said. "In a happy home where Jesus could truly be the head . . . there would be no use for the Sunday paper, no time to read long, fictitious tales."¹⁰

Heise's views of the Christian life were in keeping with those in the larger Brethren in Christ Church. However, in Clarence Center, they apparently contributed to the withdrawal of the congregation from community life. The styles of dress advocated by Heise were too much of a burden for some of the young people as they watched the styles of "the gay nineties" enter the other churches. Whether one should read the newspaper continued to be debated in 1929 when the Hostetters arrived.

Ministering to the Few

During Heise's ministry, the Clarence Center congregation remained small. Most of the thirty-three people listed in the 1928 Sunday school record were descendants of the early families or recent arrivals in the community with Anabaptist or Brethren backgrounds. The only member of the founding Rhodes' family attending the church when the Hostetters arrived was Mrs. Heise.¹¹

In 1915, Heise wrote to the editor of the *Visitor*, advising his readers of the availability of farms, formerly the homes of Brethren families in Clarence Center. The editor noted: "We know of no other section that is more conveniently located for industrious, energetic, economical, temperate, careful, Christian people to

Certificate of Church Membership

This Certifies: That Orlando Martin
of Clarence, State or Province of New York, is a
member of the Brethren in Christ Church, formerly known in the
United States as River Brethren and known in Canada as Tunkers;
and that membership is held in Clarence Centre District.

Dated Sept 20 1917

D. V. Heise

Bishop, or Overseer of the District.

Orlando Martin's certificate of church membership, signed by D.V. Heise, dated September 20, 1917.

Church of the Brethren in Christ in United States and Tunkers in Canada.

A RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION FOUNDED ON THE WORD OF THE TRIUNE GODHEAD, FATHER, SON
AND HOLY SPIRIT, THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION THROUGH FAITH IN THE ATONING BLOOD
OF JESUS CHRIST—HIS MINISTRY, SUFFERING, DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION
ASCENSION AND HIS COMING AGAIN.

To Whom it may Concern:—

This is to certify that John H. Hostetter was appointed to the office
of Minister in the District of Manor- County of Lancaster
State or Province of Pennsylvania in the Brethren in Christ Church
and was ordained to the said office on the Twenty first day of March
in the year of our Lord 1929, and whose duties are defined under Classification:

WITNESS:

J. L. Heisey
J. C. Seitz

E. N. Hostetter
OFFICIATING BISHOP

John Hostetter's ministerial license, dated March 31, 1929, and signed by his father.

locate. A small membership is there now, a good church building with services and Sunday School."¹²

In the next few years, three families moved to Clarence Center from Mennonite and Brethren churches in Ontario, Pennsylvania, and Switzerland.

During Heise's ministry, the Clarence Center congregation interacted with the Brethren in Christ congregations in Canada. In addition to the weekly services, the two principal activities of the year were the two-day love feast occasions and the extended revival meetings.

Visitors from Canada and Buffalo were often present at the love feasts and most of the speakers were ministers from the Canadian churches. Samuel Baker,¹³ Jonas Winger, Bishop L. Shoalts, and George Whisler¹⁴ were among the love feast speakers and J.W. Hoover of South Cayuga, Ontario, and George Detwiler of Sherkston, Ontario, were frequent guests for the extended revival meetings. On occasion, the *Visitor* reporter noted that large numbers of Canadian brethren joined the small congregation for special services.¹⁵

After the death of Bishop Peter Rhodes in 1901, the Clarence Center Church was administered through the Bertie, Ontario (Black Creek) District. The bishop was instructed to make at least one visit every three months.¹⁶ Canadian ministers received \$3.00 a trip when deputized to serve in Clarence Center.¹⁷

In 1905, Thomas Doner from Markham, Ontario, married one of the four Herr sisters from the Clarence Center Church. The new bride and groom settled in his Ontario home, where in that same year he was elected to the ministry. After assisting in the ministry at the Heise Hill Church, he served the Buffalo Mission and conducted evangelistic meetings primarily in the Ontario congregations. In 1915, the Doners accepted a call to assist Reverend Heise in the ministry at Clarence Center.¹⁸

The ministry of Thomas Doner followed the themes of Heise. He was a soft-spoken man and a rather uninspiring speaker. His daughter remembered:

I do have some memories of my younger years, and the strict regulations of our Clarence Center Church, of Bishop Bert Shirk [sic] and the district. As children . . . our only activities were going to church services. We were not allowed to take part in any of the school plays or events. I remember my mother usually had us bake Christmas cookies on the nights of school Christmas plays for we [were] not allowed to take part. We were not allowed a musical instrument in church or home even though I wanted to take lessons and spent time "playing piano" on a chair. . . . I left Clarence Center in 1928 [to attend] Messiah Bible College and joined the Grantham Church.¹⁹

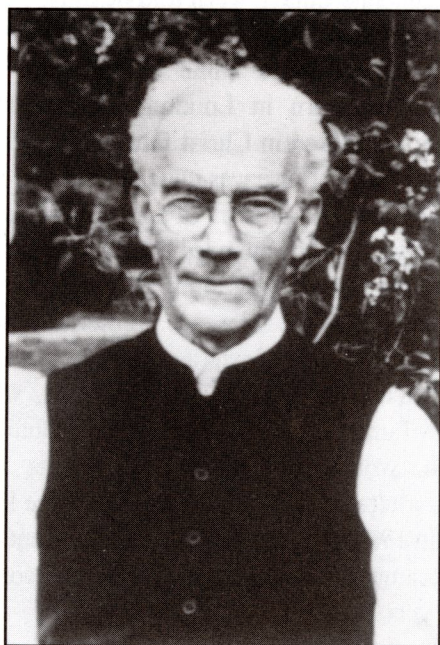
Another teenager of the time remembered Doner's strict outlook on life and specifically her mother's closing the living room door so, when visiting, he would not see their Christmas tree.²⁰

During the Doner ministry and through the first ten years of the ministry of John and Nellie Hostetter, the church program and its outlook were dominated by four of Eliza Herr's daughters. Eliza was the sister of a powerful local businessman, A.G. Eshelman (direct descendant of an early River Brethren member, John Eshelman), a landowner and developer. Her daughters, Mary Wittlinger, Hattie Sider, Katie Herr, and Cora Doner (the minister's wife), "were very vocal and . . . very persuasive when it came to seeing that we all walked the straight and narrow path."²¹ Personal behavior of members was monitored and the principles of separation and non-conformity were followed to "the nth degree."²²

In the twenty years prior to the Hostetters' ministry, community outreach was minimal, and visitors unfamiliar with "the plain ways" were not welcomed to church services. Church administrative decisions were made in small family groups. No records were kept of any congregational decisions. There were few notices of services or special meetings in the local paper, although the *Amherst Bee* reported the return of T.S. Doner from conducting evangelistic services.²³ By 1929, differences among the extended



Clarence Center River Brethren church, about 1900.



Rev. Thomas Doner, minister at Clarence Center in years after 1915.

families of the Herr sisters and the poor health of his wife caused Doner to become inactive as a minister.²⁴

Although the congregation was not receptive to newcomers from the community, several new families with either Mennonite or Brethren in Christ backgrounds began attending during Rev. Doner's ministry. In 1912, the Frederick Brauen family of eight boys arrived. In the 1890s they lived in Ohio but returned to Switzerland in 1900 to operate the family farm after the death of Mrs. Brauen's father. Because of the thickening war clouds over western Europe, Mr. Brauen decided to return his family of boys to the United States.

The Brauens had been invited to locate in Clarence Center by Jacob Krehbiel, the local Mennonite minister, who had visited the Anabaptist community in Golaten, Switzerland. Mrs. Brauen and the boys joined the Brethren in Christ Church, but Frederick attended the Mennonite Church when told he must be rebaptized to join the Brethren.²⁵

In 1917, Albert Davis came to Clarence Center from Markham, Ontario. Born in London, England, he settled in Markham with a Brethren in Christ family after the death of his father in England.²⁶ D.V. Heise was quite elderly and invited Albert to work the Heise farm. At 23 years of age, Albert had just married Ella Niedrauer, whose family attended the Buffalo Mission.²⁷ In the years to come, the large Davis family became one of the strong supporting families of the Clarence Center Church during the ministry of John and Nellie Hostetter.

One of the children of Orlando Martin was responsible for bringing a new family to the Clarence Center Church. His oldest son, Emerson, worked for a period of time in Mill Hall, Pennsylvania, where he met his future wife, Faye Brown.²⁸ After their marriage in 1924, they settled in Clarence Center. Their large family also became a very important part of the congregation for the next sixty years.

In 1927, Faye's parents, Boyd and Vergie Brown, three sisters, and two brothers, also moved to Clarence Center. One daughter,



Workers at the 1926 Clarence Center tent meeting; from left: Mary M. Hess, Rev. R.I. Witter, Ella Cober, and Rev. Earl and Elsie Sider.



The home of Bishop D.V. Heise on Heisey Road in Clarence Center.

Trena, married Joe D. Miller, a Mennonite farmer from Kansas, who relocated in western New York with his brother and two sisters. As deacon and wife, they served faithfully for twenty years during the Hostetters' pastorate. Joe also served as treasurer of the congregation. Both were Sunday school teachers and staunch supporters of the ministry of the Clarence Center Church.

One of the first Clarence Center Brethren in Christ evangelistic tent meetings deserves mention. In 1926, a summer tent meeting team--Earl and Elsie Sider, Mary Hess, and Ella Cober--was sent to town by the Canadian church. The tent was erected on the school ground and R.I. Witter, Navarre, Kansas, was the evangelist. Stories of the wonderful services were recounted even after the Hostetters arrived in 1929.²⁹

Of note, the Eli Hostetler family had recently located to Alden, New York (south of Clarence Center). They heard about Witter's preaching and decided to attend. "It was their very first contact with the Brethren in Christ Church. They went to a meeting one night [and were] favorably impressed with the evangelist, the congregation, and the church doctrines. They made a commitment to the Lord then that stood up for the rest of their lives."³⁰

At the conclusion of the first century of the Brethren in Christ Church in Clarence Center (1929), there was a small group of families worshipping at the old church on Clarence Center Road just west of town. The presence of the young families of Davis, Martin, Brauen, and Brown provided a good base for the future development of the church.

If friends and neighbors did not accept the "ways of the Brethren," the Brethren remained distant in their social and religious contacts. Unfortunately, the congregation did not retain many of its children. When the members failed to attract new families, the church membership dwindled and the morale of the group suffered. There were rumors that the church would close if the denominational Executive Board could not locate a new minister.³¹

CHAPTER 5

New Experiences in the Clarence Center Church

A New Minister Arrives

John and Nellie Hostetter and their year-old daughter, Winifred, left Manor Township in Lancaster County on Tuesday morning, April 2, 1929. Accompanied by John's mother, the four made the nine-hour trip to western New York in John's 1924 car, which was not known for its comfort.

The Hostetters' arrival in Clarence Center culminated a two-year period of major decisions and change in their lives. They left their prosperous farm life in Lancaster County and the Manor-Pequea District John knew so well, to follow God's call to a pastorate in Clarence Center, New York. With their life savings of \$800, they entered into a life of church service and, for the foreseeable future, economic insecurity.

Following the denominational practice, the Clarence Center Church provided no home for the pastor and paid no salary. As a farmer with a limited education, John was not prepared for the world of business unrelated to agriculture. Nor was he financially prepared to purchase either a business or a home. The decision to move to New York was a step of both spiritual and economic faith.

John felt the welcome to Clarence Center was cordial. On the first Sunday, Bert Sherk, the bishop of the Black Creek District, welcomed them. However, after his visit, the Hostetters appeared to be on their own. The cultural setting for the church in predominantly Catholic western New York was certainly different from that of rural Pennsylvania, where the "ways of the Brethren" were well known and understood.¹ John often recalled the times people mistook him for a Catholic priest when they met him in his

church uniform. One other small Brethren in Christ congregation was located in Buffalo.

The local newspaper announced the arrival of Rev. and Mrs. Hostetter and baby as the new pastoral family of the River Brethren Church.² The congregation was happy to have the new minister;³ one member wrote to his brother, "If [John] is anything like his brother the evangelist, C.N. Hostetter [Jr.], the Clarence Center young people will have some one to look after them."⁴

First impressions of a new home are often made by buildings. The 1877 Clarence Center church building had changed very little from the time it was built. In 1911, a corner of the property had been sold to the neighboring farmer for fifty dollars; the money was used for roof repairs. On the interior, the "salt-box" structure had a raised platform at the front end and good benches in the worship room.

John's mother was astonished at the poor repair of the building. Paint and a good general cleaning would have improved both the appearance of the building and the morale of the group.⁵ Western New York spring winds and snow whistled around the well-worn window sashes.

The Hostetters soon discovered a number of differences between the church activities of Clarence Center and those they left in Manor Township. As the only Brethren in Christ congregation within easy driving distance, Clarence Center conducted Sunday morning and evening services, with a mid-week service each week. In Pennsylvania, church services were held on a rotating basis, and there were several ministers to fill the pulpits. Three services a week was a heavy schedule for a newly ordained minister who was also establishing a home and earning a living.

On the first Sunday in April 1929, forty-seven scholars and fourteen visitors attended Sunday school.⁶ Bishop Sherk brought several visitors with him and there were some visitors from the community. Rev. John W. Hoover preached the morning sermon.

Hostetter's first sermon was preached in the evening service. Thereafter, he spoke twice on Sunday and conducted the

Wednesday evening prayer service. His first absence was in late June and early July to conduct his first evangelistic tent meeting in Cheapside, Ontario.⁷

The May 1, 1930, church council was the first business meeting conducted in many years. With the bishop in charge, the congregation decided the men should clean the church on the Saturday before love feast and voted to have Rev. Doner assist in the ministry.⁸

In 1931, the council appointed a song leader, Albert Davis, reactivated the sewing circle, and started a singing class.⁹ Using the pitch pipe and the Randolph sightsinging book from his youthful experience at Manor, Hostetter became the leader of the class. Several members of the Clarence Center and Alden Mennonite congregations joined the class, and the exercises were followed for a number of weeks each winter.

The cleanliness of the church was discussed at each of the annual council meetings. With the coming of the new minister, a janitor was appointed and instructed to start a fire on Saturday evenings to make sure the church was thoroughly heated. Other improvements to the church's appearance included the waxing of the benches, adding gravel to the parking lot, and spending about \$12 to improve the basement for teaching the junior Sunday school class.¹⁰

A Growing Church Program

Progress continued in the program of the church in succeeding council meetings. Bible conference committees were appointed, revival services were scheduled, delegates to Ontario joint council and other meetings were elected, and a foreign missions solicitor was appointed. In 1935, a young people's committee planned for weekly youth meetings.¹¹

In a departure from previous years, regular Sunday school and church offerings were received. For example, special offerings had

been taken to meet the needs of earthquake victims in India.¹² By 1936, offerings were scheduled for the calendar year.¹³

Soon after his arrival, the new pastor baptized eighteen converts and accepted them into church membership. Several, the Noah Schrock and the David Yoder families, came from the Amish Mennonite community near East Aurora, New York, about thirty miles from Clarence Center.¹⁴ Within a short time, they moved to homes near Clarence Center and were active in the church program for a number of years.¹⁵ The Urban family (with family ties to the Amish Mennonite community) was converted during an early revival service conducted by Abner Martin.¹⁶ The other baptisms were children of member families. Baptismal services were held each year in the cold waters of the local stone quarry or the streams of Orlando Martin's farm.

The Sunday school attendance in 1935 averaged about sixty-eight.¹⁷ It was difficult to schedule places for the meeting of seven classes in the one small meeting room and the tiny room in the rear of the church. There was little class space free from distraction to teach the increasing number of small children. The needs of the children led to the first remodeling of the old sanctuary.

In September 1935, the congregational council approved the installation of a balcony in the rear of the sanctuary with two coat rooms beneath the balcony.¹⁸ Curtains provided some privacy for the two classes that met in the balcony. One coat room also served as a classroom. Except for routine repairs and painting, this was the last improvement to the 1877 building until major remodeling began in 1950.

By 1936, there were fifty-five children registered in the Sunday school cradle roll, primary, and intermediate classes. Most of them attended regularly, and the program of the church and Sunday school began to revolve around their well-being.¹⁹ Scripture memorization, new Bibles for attendees, and a program of visitation added new life to the Sunday school program. Children were often featured in Christmas and Easter programs through readings and poem recitations. Of course, all of the children looked

forward to the Sunday school Christmas gift of a beautiful navel orange and large Hershey chocolate bar!

Hostetter used the Evangelical Teacher Training materials to assist teachers in their preparation and teaching of Sunday school lessons.²⁰ Early Sunday evening lessons preceded the evening evangelistic service and required some study to fill in the blanks of the lesson sheets.

After many years of self-imposed isolation, the congregation participated in programs with other churches to share effective teaching methods and improve the overall effectiveness of the Sunday school. At the community level, the Sunday school began to send a representative to meetings of the Clarence-Newstead Sunday School Association. The Brethren's Sunday school often received the Association's attendance banner for the best quarterly average attendance.

The congregation began a community outreach effort by conducting Sunday afternoon services on the Tonawanda Indian Reservation near Akron, New York, about ten miles from the Clarence Center church. The announcements for the busy church week of January 23, 1938, included the afternoon service on the Indian Reservation, Sunday evening teachers' training, young people's meeting and worship service, the Wednesday evening prayer service, and upcoming revival services.²¹

On the recreation side, the Sunday school began its annual Fourth of July picnic of games, recreation, and the all-important softball game. These annual outings to Lincoln Park in Tonawanda, Akron Falls Park, or the Clarence town park became important occasions for drawing the members together.

In the early 1940s, youth meetings became a regular part of the Sunday evening services. The minister and other adults provided fifteen-minute features for the children. Christian Life Bible studies for young people's meetings, published by the denominational Young People's Board, were used for the services.

The efforts of the minister to build the Sunday school were described by Hostetter in a *Visitor* article. His strategy to improve

Sunday school effectiveness included outreach in the community, better Sunday school material, and greater teaching effectiveness through teacher training.²² However, by 1943, when this article was written, the major improvement in Sunday school attendance had come from nurturing the children in the church and from the Amish Mennonite community near East Aurora.

From 1935 to 1949 the average Sunday school attendance fluctuated between 66 and 72.²³ These were "the growing years" for the children, and there were few changes in the names in the Sunday school registers. With one exception, greater cooperation with the other churches in town and a more open response to school and community activities made no difference in church membership from the community.

In 1940, one family from the community was added to church membership. Several years earlier, the father of this family was converted during revival services conducted by C.R. Heisey. After the father's death in 1940, the widow and her daughter, appreciating Hostetter's Bible teaching, began to attend Sunday school and church regularly. The daughter became a good friend of the pastor's daughter and in succeeding years made several trips with the family to Bible conferences and other activities in the Canadian churches. Later, she graduated from Messiah Bible College.²⁴ This family was one of the few community families to join the church during Hostetter's early ministry. Increased attendance from the community did not occur for another decade.

Evangelistic meetings, revival services, tent meetings, Bible conferences, and Holy Week services were regularly scheduled events at Clarence Center during Hostetter's ministry. Convinced of the value of tent meetings, Hostetter served as evangelist for the 1931 Millgrove summer tent meeting, located about twelve miles southeast of Clarence Center.

Speaking at a later time of the importance of such meetings, he noted that tent meetings provided community contact and an opportunity for a "preliminary work" without a permanent expense. He cited the interest of neighbors like one who attended the 1936

Long Street tent services by sitting on a tree stump outside the tent, but within hearing range. It was very unlikely he would attend a service in a church building. A neighbor next to the parsonage attended the Long Street tent service, but showed no interest in services in the church.²⁵ Jesse F. Lady and his wife, Lucille, served as evangelists in 1936.

Hostetter led the last tent meeting in Clarence Center in 1945, with Emerson Frey from the Manor Church as song leader. That meeting was located on the baseball diamond in the fireman's grove and was well attended by the community. For a brief period, the site of the Sunday ball games, opposed for years by the congregation, became a place for evangelistic outreach.

Through the years, the congregation was blest with the ministry of many of the denomination's evangelists and missionaries. Albert Engle, a home mission worker in Kentucky, conducted the first revival service a year after the Hostetters arrived in Clarence Center.²⁶ Abner Martin, Elwood Flewelling, Earl Bossert, E.J. Swalm, Marshall Winger, C.N. Hostetter, Jr., Edward Gilmore, P.W. McBeth, Henry Hostetter, R.I. Witter, Henry Ginder, Charles Rife, A.D.M. Dick, J.T. Ginder, William Charlton, Earl Sider, Charles Eshelman, Samuel Wolgemuth, and others served for times ranging from a few days to three weeks. Usually, services were conducted each evening and included stories for the children and special music either by local singing groups or visitors from other churches. Members of the community were invited and attendance varied.

The adult members were often asked to sign pledges of support for revival. Prayer was asked for "unfaithful, backslidden Christians," and for neighbors and friends who did not know the Lord. There were also pleas for the young people to choose the will of God and shun those things that were wrong.²⁷ The words were general, but the young people knew the older people expected them to choose the church's dress and behavior codes. To choose otherwise led to negative judgments about one's spiritual well-being.

There were always young people (particularly young men) who lived on the edge of secular society by occasionally wearing neckties, failing to testify on Wednesday evenings of the Lord's daily work in their lives, skipping prayer meeting or other services, or even sitting on the back bench of the church. They became objects of prayer and fasting efforts. Of course, most of the youth exhibiting such behavior probably had sinned in thought, word, or deed and were good candidates for another salvation experience!

One of the youthful members recalled the deacon and pastor walking among the young people during the altar call of revival services. The pastor "put his arm around me and asked if I didn't hear the Holy Spirit talking to me. I didn't know if it was the Holy Spirit or Brother Hostetter, but I went forward!"²⁸

By the late 1930s and continuing for many years thereafter, the routine church program was enhanced by visits of musical groups from Messiah Bible College. Men's or ladies' quartettes and choruses made regular visits to western New York at Eastertime. The programs were so well attended by the community that it was often necessary to place extra chairs in the church aisles.

Hostetter coordinated these visits to include a number of appearances in the Canadian churches and in the Churchill Tabernacle, a large evangelical ministry in Buffalo. During one of these visits, Homer Rodeheaver, the guest song leader at the Tabernacle and well-known gospel song publisher of the early twentieth century, praised the male chorus for its beautiful singing. He suggested that the words to "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" could be improved by singing, "Let us *live* to make men free." The chorus adopted the change.²⁹

In the mid-1940s, music groups from Ontario Bible School often sang during the evangelistic services or during love feast occasions. Since the school was nearby in Fort Erie, Ontario, the groups were scheduled for single services rather than a series.

These musical programs were important to the Clarence Center congregation for their spiritual inspiration and for the strengthening of relationships with the other churches and the citizens in the

community. Occasionally, the programs were moved to the elementary school auditorium to accommodate the large crowds.

Hostetter was a tireless supporter of Messiah Bible College. By the time he concluded his Clarence Center ministry in 1954, at least fifteen of the Clarence Center young people had attended the academy, college, or the Bible study program during Winter Term. Some, including his three children, spent two to four years on the campus, completing the academy and/or college programs. To a lesser degree, because of the differences in educational systems, he promoted the work of Ontario Bible School in Fort Erie, Ontario.

In the 1950s, after leaving the Clarence Center pastorate, he continued to promote the church's colleges among the young people through monetary support.³⁰ In later years, he divided his church service between promotional work for the denomination's Board for Schools and Colleges and editorial duties for the denomination's Publication Board.³¹

Significantly, Hostetter added to the program of the church and to its membership soon after his arrival in April 1929. Through the church council, he organized the members to update and add to the church's program. Of course, many of the early decisions of the council were routine matters and only required someone to organize them. His youthful leadership re-established a viable program lost in earlier years. Hostetter was an organizer and a doer, traits which distinguished his service to the denomination in later years.

CHAPTER 6

The Clarence Center Pastor and Evangelist

Learning by Doing

Hostetter's practical Christian education in the Manor congregation probably contributed to his early success in organizing the program of the Clarence Center congregation. However, as a pastor and evangelist, he developed his preaching style and content through on-the-job training.

Ordained to the ministry one week before arriving in Clarence Center, John had no preaching experience. The Lancaster and Manor Sunday school classes and his work with the Manor young people's program had provided most of his speaking opportunities.

Perhaps his best educational preparation for the ministry was acquired through family influences and the many services attended in Manor-Pequea District. In later years, John voiced "a measure of embarrassment over the little preparation for the pastorate in 1929."¹ To assume the weekly ministry of a congregation was a challenge for a twenty-five-year-old, newly ordained minister.

Hostetter's first year of pulpit ministry reflected considerable study and preparation. Speaking at the Canadian Sunday school convention, he reminded parents of the need of young people for advice rather than criticism.² In a published article later that year, he warned of the danger of large meetings with children where emotional appeals did not produce sound conversions. He advocated sound instruction in the home and Sunday school as a substitute for emotional meetings.³ Perhaps he was remembering the support he received from the family and church after his conversion as a nine-year-old.

His early Clarence Center sermons came from both the Old and New Testaments. Choosing several difficult Scriptures for a young minister, he found a sermon on "Heart Communion" in I Kings 10, the account of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon. From Genesis 7:1, he preached on the righteousness of Noah, and from Nehemiah 7:64, on the unclean Israelites who could not find their family records. Other titles, like "Rock of Ages," "More than Conquerors," and "Be Troubled, Ye Careless Ones," were more common sermons of the day. His records also showed the dates and places where the same sermons were preached again and again.⁴

Hostetter's sermon topics acknowledged the seasons of the year and special occasions. In early January 1938, he preached a New Year's sermon from James 4:14: "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow." Calling James the practical religionist, he encouraged the congregation to proceed in life as the "Lord wills." He cited the horrors of 1937, the armed conflicts in Spain, China and Japan, the horrible floods in Ohio and Mississippi, nineteen deaths in an airliner crash in Utah, the May 6th Hindenburg disaster in New Jersey, the death of three hundred children in New London, Texas, and the 40,000 yearly deaths from auto accidents in the nation. In conclusion, he encouraged members to live a day at a time and to rely on the promises: "Lo I am with you always even unto the ends of the earth" and, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The following Sunday he urged his members to set goals for 1938 which included "faithfulness to God, family, and church."⁵

On occasion, he summarized the events of the week or tragedies of the year through such topics as "Prevalent Signs of Christ's Return" (November 6, 1932) and "Rumblings of the Last Days" (November 13, 1932). His sermon "Signs of the Last Days" in early 1938 listed the moral shortcomings of America, the British problems in Palestine, the threats of Germany to western Europe, and Italy's move to control all of Africa. Hostetter quoted extensively from H.A. Ironside, pastor of Chicago's Moody Church, on the tense Far Eastern situation. He ended by saying, "To save democracy, we will have to do so in the next two years."⁶

Hostetter spoke often at Bible and youth conferences. His lack of formal training in certain areas did not keep him from exploring topics of interest to particular groups. For example, at the Lancaster young people's conference, he appealed to the younger set with these topics: "Resisting Temptation and Growth in Grace," "How Can I Find My Life's Work," "My Individual Obligation to My Church," and "The Christian Home." The topics were scripturally based, with personal experiences illustrating his steps for choosing life's work.

Several Clarence Center members recorded his sermon texts. One recorded seventeen references in her Bible for the 1940s, and another listed his sermons on tithing. A third recalled his "great teaching ministry." One time he startled his listeners by bowing at the altar after preaching himself under conviction.

John was a strong promoter of family and personal devotions. The semi-annual visits to each home by the pastor and his family were counted as "good fellowship," with dutiful pastoral inquiry about the devotional life of the family members.

The pastor enjoyed good hymn-singing and possessed a strong baritone voice. Apparently, he loved the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy," for the children in particular remembered singing it often.⁷

That Personal Touch

On the personal side, John was remembered for standing at the church door after services with a firm, gentle handshake. He always had a kind word and encouraging comment about something he knew of the personal lives of the members.

Nellie also had a way with the teenagers--"she sought a Christian life for each one of us," said one of them. "Many times she offered words of encouragement and quietly gave us the benefit of her wisdom. She was sensitive to our problems--sensing my desire to have a little money of my own, she gave me a Saturday job. I truly am thankful for her influence."⁸

Several of the children remembered the times John or Nellie transported them to church for practices or events their parents were reluctant to approve. Others enjoyed the trips in John's big cars (probably the Chrysler or Buick) and the FM music they heard for the first time. His Volkswagen Karmen Ghia was not the usual car of a Brethren preacher.⁹

The family's Boston terrier, Mitzi, was also a novelty, partly because it was an uncommon breed and partly because the children taught it a number of tricks. One person observed that the dog probably went to heaven [because] it "prayed more consistently than a lot of people."¹⁰

One young lad thought John was both revered by all and enjoyed the times at the Sunday school picnic, when he participated in the softball games, sometimes as umpire. His cousin disagreed with the "reverend umpire's" call and yelled at the top of his lungs, "The umpire has a glass eye!" When word of what had happened got back to his uncle, that cousin "had the wrath of the ages come down on him."¹¹

Hostetter was remembered by the children for his disciplinary tactics when they were not paying attention. The balcony of boys became a target for his reprimands. And on the front pew, one of the young girls and her friend felt his gaze when they whispered too loudly. A snap of the fingers and a penetrating look over his glasses without missing a sermon sentence were favorite methods of getting the culprit's attention. Perhaps the ultimate embarrassment for the pastor's sons was the familiar motion to sit alone on the front bench. His disciplinary efforts contributed to the extra-biblical, teaching-learning process of the young people!¹²

The Evangelist

In late 1931 and early 1932 Hostetter was absent from the Clarence Center pulpit, conducting four revival services and spending some time in December at the Manor homestead. He left home in late October and did not return until late February 1932,

after a meeting at Martinsburg, Pennsylvania. He began another meeting at the Sixth Line Church, Stayner, Ontario, on May 9, returning to Clarence Center on June 12. The remainder of the year included a tent meeting at Refton, Pennsylvania, a young people's conference at Lancaster, and Bible conferences at Rosebank and Markham, Ontario. During the fifty-two Sundays in 1932, he preached twenty-one Sundays at Clarence Center. In his absence, T.S. Doner, John Nigh, William Charlton, Warren Winger, and other ministers from Canada conducted the services.¹³

John's concern for evangelism is fervently expressed by a handwritten and signed statement at the end of his sermon notes:

With a deep concern on my heart for the work of the Lord and a longing for the Holy Ghost manifestations as of the day of Pentecost, I, by the grace of God and a prayer on my heart that the Holy Ghost manifestation shall have full control in my own life, pledge to miss at least one meal per week, spending the time in prayer for Backsliders in the congregation, unsaved around us and ask God for a mighty revelation of the Spirit of revival.¹⁴

John's most intense period of evangelism occurred during November-December 1936, in several Kansas churches, and from January 10 to February 21, 1937, in Ontario. Because the distance to Kansas was great, he combined several invitations on one trip and asked the Clarence Center Church council for permission to be absent from the pulpit for an extended time.¹⁵

The Bertie Church meeting in Stevensville, Ontario, was scheduled for two weeks, but the time was extended at the end of each succeeding week "because of the working of the spirit of the Lord. Many souls were looking for a deepening in the things of God."¹⁶ More than 100 "bowed at the altar," and twelve were received into church membership on the closing night. During this revival Hostetter returned home on most evenings to attend to business the following day, traveling over 4,200 miles in that six-week period.¹⁷

Hostetter's 1934 sermon content during a revival service at Locke, Indiana, illustrated his conviction about evangelistic preaching. "Be troubled, ye careless ones" was based upon Isaiah 32, which warned the women of Israel against complacency. "A Two Foot Sermon," was based upon Acts 3, the account of Peter's healing of the crippled beggar. "Keep Thyself Pure" was the subject for young people's night. And the services concluded with Daniel 5: 27: "You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting."

Sermon topics were selected to bring back to the church those who had strayed, to encourage and instruct the new converts and young people, and to warn unbelievers of the consequences of not accepting Christ. The latter topics were used, to a great extent, on the last few nights of the revivals. One young attender remembered a sermon which scared him pretty badly, "not badly enough, however, to cause me to mend my childhood sinful ways."¹⁸

The evangelistic services and Bible conferences conducted in Nottawa (Ontario) District and his relationship with the Swalm family deserve special mention. Hostetter's first Sixth Line revival meeting began May 8, 1932, and continued through June 5th.¹⁹ Throughout the 1930s, he was a regular speaker for love feast occasions and Bible conferences. In 1944, he conducted an extended tent meeting in Collingwood, returning in the summer of 1948, the winter of 1956, and the fall of 1957.²⁰ "Daddy [Swalm] would invite [Hostetter] for revival meetings, Bible conferences and other times just as often as was possible. . . . One time it was six weeks [with] many of the converts from the community. . . . After one meeting, I remember we had the largest church growth."²¹

The fellowship between the Hostetters and the Swalms continued throughout their lives, as indicated in one of E.J. Swalm's letters:

I am alone today and was mentally strolling back over my yesterdays. Suddenly your names were in mind. I recalled with a deep sense of gratitude March of 1927 while holding meetings at Refton I first met

you folks. The years that have followed furnished an unforgettable chapter of my life. At this point I stop writing for a moment and give thanks to God. Heaven bless you.²²

Hostetter conducted more than forty evangelistic meetings during his twenty-five-year pastorate at the Clarence Center Church.²³ He ministered to most of the Indiana, Kansas, and Ohio congregations, many of the Ontario congregations and several of the Pennsylvania congregations, such as Grantham, Maytown, Elizabethtown, Manor, Martinsburg, Antrim, Five Forks, Chambersburg, and Refton, later returning to many of them. On at least one occasion, he conducted services in several of the California churches.

Most of the time John traveled by train and Nellie remained in Clarence Center with the children. When the meetings in Pennsylvania did not interfere with the childrens' school attendance, the family spent time with the grandparents in Manor Township.

After each revival service in the first six years of meetings, John recorded the names of those "bowing at the altar." If he did not know the seekers' names, he recorded, "two men were saved, one in his home, other in the hayfield" or, "one more in addition to those named above."²⁴

The revival services did not always proceed as planned. Several times Hostetter returned home to conduct funerals of local members.²⁵ Early in 1933, after preaching for five nights in Pleasant Hill, Ohio, he became ill with the flu and spent the next three weeks in bed. That was probably the longest illness of his life and was life-threatening. In February he recuperated in Pennsylvania with his family and returned to the Clarence Center pulpit on March 5 considerably strengthened.²⁶

John also engaged in personal evangelism. No one knows the number of times he spoke to his business friends about spiritual matters. He cultivated an extremely compassionate conscience and was careful to follow "the leadings of the Holy Spirit." Once, he recorded his regret over failure to speak with a neighbor the day

before he died.²⁷ His firm belief in evangelistic outreach and his love of people were fundamental assets in his ministerial career and evangelistic success.

The Pastor and the Community

From his first days in Clarence Center, Hostetter cultivated a close working relationship with the ministers of the United Brethren and Zion Lutheran Churches, the other two churches in the village. Both ministers welcomed the Hostetters, and Winifred became a lifelong friend of the Lutheran minister's daughter. Summer Bible school was sponsored jointly by the three churches and met in the United Brethren and Zion Lutheran churches. Revival services were part of the program at the United Brethren Church. Each church canceled the Wednesday evening prayer service and, on occasion, Sunday evening service to attend the others' special services.

Occasionally, some of Hostetter's church members questioned the congregation's participation in community services. For example, at the 1936 church council meeting, members discussed the annual community church night sponsored by the Clarence Center community council scheduled for April 19 in the Brethren in Christ church. It was decided to continue cooperation with the service "so long as the service is conducted in a manner that is consistent with the advancement of the Gospel of Christ in the community."²⁸ Hostetter was in charge of the service and he preached the sermon, "There Am I in the Midst of Them."²⁹

However, dissatisfaction with the annual church night continued. The 1937 church council ordered the writing of a paper explaining why the congregation could no longer cooperate with the service. The resolution carefully included an effort to maintain contact with the United Brethren Church during their revival by lifting the Sunday evening service.³⁰ The head of the community council with whom there was disagreement was the United Brethren minister, Rev. U.B. Brubaker.

On October 27, 1937, following prayer meeting, the commissioned paper was presented to the congregation. The major objection to the service was the sponsorship of a sacred service by a secular community organization. ". . . We believe that before Christ ascended to the Father, He delegated full responsibility for carrying on His spiritual program to a spiritual organization, the Christian church." The writer also disapproved of the community council's sponsorship of card parties, dancing, and the desecration of the Lord's Day through public ball games and picnics in the fireman's grove and Williams Hall (both were located within sight of the church). The paper was approved by secret ballot and signed by Bishop Sherk.³¹

Understandably, this was a difficult time for the church. Two young men, Tennyson Berry and Lloyd Hoover, who had attended Sunday school regularly, were members of the town baseball team. Because they played early Sunday afternoons, the players skipped Sunday school class and church service. Berry, who had been Sunday school treasurer, but whose time for church activities was severely curtailed, was also a star athlete in the local high school.

Perhaps this paper was a method of expressing concern over this conflict between church and community. Some parishioners questioned any participation in athletic events, but to substitute such events for church services was totally unacceptable. The two young men continued to play baseball and soon left the church.³²

On February 9, 1938, the community council replied to the congregation and agreed to commit the community church night to the pastors of the three churches to be arranged as they directed. The congregational council discussed and then tabled the response.³³ Council minutes in succeeding years were silent on the matter, but the ministers of the three churches continued to conduct community services at least once a year.

In 1948, in cooperation with the Clarence-Newstead Ministerial Association, the churches were invited to conduct baccalaureate services at the Parker High School. Although conducted annually by the ministers, this was the first time the

schedule was formalized by the association. By alphabetical order, the 1948 service was assigned to the Brethren in Christ Church. Hostetter conducted the service in the Parker High School auditorium, and two of his children sang a duet.

The Brethren church reached a new level of participation in community services by hosting a church service during the town celebration of the 1949 Post Office centennial, with John Hostetter officiating. Again in 1958, Hostetter, by then the retired pastor, and Paul E. Hostetler, the pastor, and church members played leading roles in the first act of the town's bicentennial pageant.³⁴ The pageant recognized the contributions of the River Brethren, particularly by the Rhodes, Eshelman, and Martin families, in the settlement of the town.

By the conclusion of his twenty-five-year ministry at the Clarence Center Brethren in Christ Church, John Hostetter was recognized for his pastoral skills, his evangelistic work among denominational churches, and his work with the churches in the community. He learned many lessons through his on-the-job experiences and used those lessons to extend his ministry in the community and the denomination over the next thirty-five years.

CHAPTER 7

Family Life in Clarence Center

From the Children's Perspective

As noted, a daughter, Winifred, was born in Pennsylvania and accompanied John and Nellie to Clarence Center. Within several years two sons, Norman (1930) and Kenneth (1933), were added to the family. The church parsonage on Long Street was the center of family life, and the Brethren in Christ Church on Clarence Center Road, about a half mile from the house, was the center of most of the family's social and spiritual activities.

Daily life in the Hostetter household was routine. School attendance at Clarence Center Elementary School and later at Parker High School filled most of the day. Family chores included care for the chickens, washing the dishes and cleaning the kitchen, spading the garden, scrubbing the attic floor during Easter vacation, washing windows, and, of course, shoveling snow. For a growing youngster in a "Pennsylvania Dutch" household, it seemed the chores never ended.

However, there was time for recreation. Sledding on "Bunker Hill" near the creek, and playing baseball with the Martin boys and Merrill Brown filled winter and summer vacations. Radio listening included Jack Armstrong or Tom Mix. Riding a bicycle on Long Street with Billy Rafter and Anita Duttweiler were favorite pastimes. The many games of kick-the-can with the neighbors left one exhausted after a long summer evening.

Sledding on winter evenings, a winter highlight, was curtailed by a shortness of daylight. Kitchen cleanup after dinner lasted until it was quite dark, and sledding was forbidden in the street after

dark. Pleas to postpone evening chores until nightfall fell on deaf ears.

Family worship, following supper, was rarely missed. (Those long prayers also competed with the descending darkness.) On Saturday study time was set aside for preparation of the Sunday school lesson.

The Hostetter house was often full of visitors. Church leaders, journeying from Canada to Pennsylvania, arrived at the Buffalo train station in the evening and continued their journey the next morning. Bishop Swalm was a regular and favorite guest. Newlyweds spent a day or two in the parsonage and visited Niagara Falls. During Easter vacation, the Messiah Bible College singers were house guests and, at times, marooned by the late spring snow. Many summer afternoons were spent at the Falls with guests.

The family dog, Mitzi, a Boston terrier, added another dimension to life in the parsonage. Because of the many family visitors, the dog became well known for its tricks and sometimes saucy disposition. The Hostetter children taught the dog to do the usual tricks, but the one which seemed to attract attention was its ability to "pray" and to respond to the "Amen" command before eating a morsel of food. She also would not eat until the number "eight" was spoken.¹

Sometimes the dog's disposition left something to be desired. One of Henry Ginder's young sons carried a scar on his nose for many years from getting too close when the dog was "out of sorts."

From 1930 to 1945, the Hostetter family participated in many love feast weekends in the Canadian churches. Most of the trips began Saturday morning or afternoon, depending on the service schedule for the weekend.

The trip to the Swalms in Duntroon, Ontario, was long and dusty over the road north of Toronto; however, the entire family looked forward to the visits. It was never difficult to find things to do when not attending church--which wasn't often during love feast weekends. The laughter of E.J. Swalm and John Hostetter during their snack (apples and pretzels and sometimes Maggie's apple

pie) and story time after service confirmed their fondness for one another. Winifred and Lela Swalm often listened to the conversations from the top of the stairs, after being "sent to bed."²

The late Sunday night return from weekend services went through Buffalo. By the time the family crossed the Niagara River, there were urgent hunger sounds. Fortunately for the children, John loved his late-night snacks, so it was easy to persuade him to visit Freddie's Doughnut shop at Main and Michigan, or Love's Ice Xream Shop on Elmwood Avenue. The stands along Sheridan Drive were also favorite places for foot-long hot dogs. Monday mornings came too quickly after the active weekends.

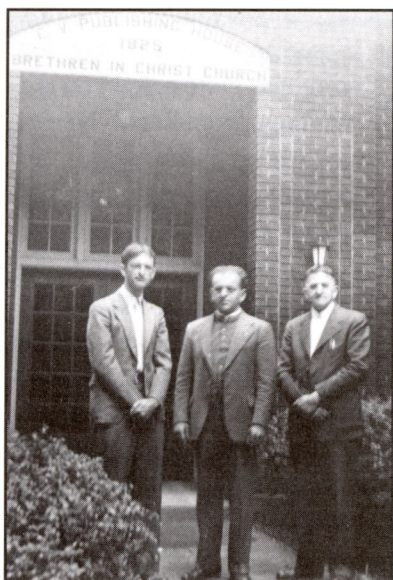
The Hostetter household was one of loving care for the children. However, personal discipline was administered by mother and father over transgressions such as poor school grades (a disease afflicting the boys only), failure to complete assigned chores, or other sins which stood as a barrier to "growing up properly" or even to personal salvation. The familiar "This hurts me more than it does you" was heard on numerous occasions. But as the children "matured," the dreaded strap, and its successors, were mysteriously lost.

As the children grew older, they were expected to work in the gasoline business. They learned the double-entry bookkeeping system, repaired cars, trucks and gas pumps, fixed oil furnaces, prepared World War II ration stamps for bank deposits, and painted trucks, tanks, gas stations, chicken houses, and the parsonage during the teen-age years. The skills and discipline learned in those years were used throughout later careers in nursing education and health care, the management of an oil and gasoline distributorship, and university administration. Fortunately, digging holes with a hand shovel for underground gasoline tanks was not a part of work assignments in later life.

The Hostetters indoctrinated their children in "the ways of the Brethren." At the center of the family's activities was the church and its program. The children participated in all the church services and in the young people's programs, Sunday school classes, teacher



John Hostetter, oil distributor, with his two assistant sons, Norman and Kenneth.



On an early visit to the Publishing House, about 1933, John Hostetter, center, meets Paul W. McBeth, left, and V.L. Stump, then editor of the church paper.



The John and Nellie Hostetter family, about 1936.

training exercises, and recreation programs. The teaching ministry of the church affected the lives of all three.

At times, there was much discontent with the staid approach of the family and the church toward the normal community activities such as organized sports and recreation. Even though the parents had difficulty accepting such activities, they attended some basketball games when the younger son starred on the high school basketball team for one year. Regardless, according to Winifred, "We were blessed with parents whose daily lives and priorities reflected their strong commitment to the Christian faith and to Brethren in Christ doctrine."³

Earning a Living

Soon after arriving in Clarence Center, John and Nellie rented part of a double house from John Weseman, a local farmer, for thirty dollars a month. This rent payment was quite a drain on the small amount of money they brought with them from Pennsylvania. Western New York laborers and factory workers were already out of work. Although the newly organized National Gypsum Company (1925), just outside of town, provided some work opportunities, the regular hours did not allow Hostetter the flexibility he needed for church obligations. Also, they were hiring few people in 1929.

John and Nellie probably did not consider farming for a living. John was familiar with the long hours in the barn and fields. Such obligations also did not fit his pastoral schedule.

John also determined that the conditions for farming in western New York were less than ideal. In contrast to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, he thought the soil was poor, the growing season short, and the farming methods not up-to-date. Gypsum speculation in the 1920s had increased land prices, and the soil productivity could not sustain large mortgage payments. Soon after arriving in Clarence Center, John joined a group of men from the church who contracted for house and barn painting. With his

pastoral schedule as a priority, such work gave him the needed flexibility.⁴

In addition to exterior painting, John and Nellie combined their efforts in hanging wallpaper and painting interior woodwork. They purchased paper-cutting tools, ladders, and other equipment. This work schedule also favored the minister's life style. However, when the number of homes in the Clarence Center vicinity requiring redecoration could not sustain the income needs of the Hostetters, they looked for other opportunities to earn a living.

During the early summer of 1934, while painting a barn on the Bender farm on Salt Road, the painting crew suffered a scaffolding accident. When the rope came loose from the end of the scaffold, Hostetter and Carlton Wittlinger fell from the eaves of the barn, about twenty feet to the ground. Fortunately, the two painters were not seriously injured; however, the swinging scaffold had hit John's left leg, causing a compound fracture between the knee and the ankle. The loss of income from May 20 to June 17 was a severe blow to his young family.⁵

After the initial recovery period, John resumed his activities. He performed at least one marriage, that of Joe Miller and Trena Brown, while seated, and several remembered his Sunday preaching while seated with his leg elevated.

For about eight months, John was unable to do any strenuous physical work. Climbing ladders and standing on scaffolds were out of the question. Probably about that time, John and Nellie decided to enter the chicken business, for both food and income purposes. They were familiar with chicken farming from their Manor Township farm experience.

In late 1934, a two-story chicken house was built on the lot behind the parsonage garage. Several times a year for the next ten years, day-old Leghorn chicks were shipped from Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, to the Hostetters through the Clarence Center post office. To separate the small chicks from the more mature ones, a brooder house was moved to the back of the lot.

Nellie managed the chicken business. To make the most money, she developed an egg and chicken route in a nearby Buffalo suburb. For several years, the "Quaker lady" as she was known, delivered her products from house to house, taking orders for the next week.

Each Thursday the children assisted their mother in preparing for the next-day deliveries. Catching the chickens before dawn, they were required to pluck them before leaving for school. Nellie was left with the job of gutting and wrapping the chickens. After-school assignments for the boys included the task of getting rid of the residue.

Careful records of income and disbursements were kept. The follies of childhood were also reflected in the expense ledger, including seventy-five cents to repair a neighbor's broken window—an errant baseball, no doubt.⁶

The family chicken business continued until the mid-1940s, when the children left home to attend Messiah Bible College. But as they grew older, they became more involved in the gasoline and oil business. By 1947, the chicken pens became storage places for cases of motor oil, car polish, fan belts, tires and tubes, and other automotive products.

During the early depression years, the wage earners in the Clarence Center congregation were farmers, carpenters, miners in the local gypsum mines, painters, housekeepers, day laborers in the mills and factories near Buffalo, a craftsman, delivery men, and occasionally a family requiring welfare support. Because there were no business owners, the economic depression was very difficult for the congregation.

Within a few years, one church member became a Richfield Oil Company commission agent, working out of his home in Alden, New York, about fifteen miles south of Clarence Center. After his painting accident, Hostetter did some part-time truck driving and service work for him. He delivered motor oil, gasoline, and kerosene to small service stations, farmers, and homeowners.

After moving the business to Batavia, New York, the Richfield Oil Corporation changed the operations from a commission agency to a distributorship. When David Yoder, the owner, was unable to continue in business, John and Nellie borrowed money and purchased the assets.⁷

John reflected on those early days in business:

Any training we had in business was certainly not in oil and gasoline marketing. Also, it was necessary to cut operating costs . . . and to learn what needed to be known. . . . With the good Lord's special help and hours anywhere from 6:30 in the morning till sometimes rather late into the night . . . red ink became black ink again. To say that we did not enjoy the contacts in the business world would not be truthful. Known as a 'reverend' in no way interfered with public relations.⁸

Through the gasoline business, Nellie made very important contributions to the economic well-being of the family. Trained as a stenographer, her skills and knowledge of office routines served the family and oil business very well. From the standpoint of education and experience, she was the family member best prepared for conducting a business. And her abilities provided John with greater flexibility in the handling of church work.

Some experiences in the oil and gasoline business were not pleasant. Handling explosive materials was a hazardous occupation. One winter evening, driving home in the dark, John hit a patch of ice on a road near home. The truck, with a partial load of several hundred gallons of gasoline, rolled into the ditch, landing on its side. When the top came off one of the tanks, gasoline ran down the ditch.

When Nellie, her sister Gladys, and the children arrived, there was much concern about the danger of fire. Then a tow truck operator attached a long cable to the truck chassis and the truck was soon on its wheels. However, the tension mounted as John started the 1937 Chevrolet motor, hoping it would not backfire into the ditch where the gasoline had spilled. The motor performed well

and the truck was driven home without further incident. There were extra prayers of thanksgiving that night.

The ever-present ministry of the Clarence Center congregation and a deep interest in general church work weighed heavily upon Hostetter's mind and heart. The conflict between the time for the gasoline business and the time for church work was partly resolved when a United Brethren man began to drive a delivery truck. With several part-time employees and with family members growing into work assignments, John was able to spend more time in pastoring the church, in protracted meetings elsewhere, and in general church administration.

Hostetter's absences from home for evangelistic services or administrative work were difficult for his wife and children. The strain of truck repair, product inventory, snowy weather, and the lack of technical support were left to Nellie's problem-solving ability. The trucks often traveled a hundred miles a day. And western New York was not known for hospitable winter weather. From a child's perspective, crises seemed to deepen each time Hostetter boarded the train for Harrisburg or some other distant point for his many administrative duties or revival meetings.

It was also difficult for a minister to collect past-due bills. Money owed for fuel oil and kerosene by families in the wider "church" community were the most sensitive to collect. Some people assumed the minister didn't need the money if he could afford his own business.

Several young people from the church were employed in the office or as delivery men. Winter days were the busiest with fuel oil deliveries and furnace repairs. Carpenters, farmers, and others from the church with seasonal work found the winter work a source of income. Young ladies from the church answered the telephone, and performed other routine assignments. Several assisted with the upkeep of the home while Nellie worked in the office.⁹

Occasionally, the pastor's employment of church members led to interesting conversations. When one of the young drivers was sent to the Tonawanda terminal, he informed the terminal manager,

Joe Fagan, that "Brother Hostetter" needed motor oil. Now Fagan, a good-humored but irreligious Catholic man, couldn't let that one go by. He promptly called the Clarence Center office, asked for "Brother Hostetter," and announced that "Brother Fagan" was calling! The thought of Joe Fagan using a Brethren in Christ greeting brought laughter to John and Nellie for many months.

Hostetter was a good business man even though he was an absent manager during the last ten years of business ownership. However, his greatest asset, his love of people, led to his biggest shortcoming--making promises he could not keep within the time planned.

To his credit, John learned all aspects of the business. From double-entry bookkeeping to truck repair, from contract negotiations with Richfield Oil Corporation to the installation of gas tanks and pumps, John worked beside his employees. The added burdens of gasoline rationing during the second World War and the ever-changing state and federal tax structures further complicated the business. At least one young church member was impressed with Hostetter's personal financial independence.¹⁰

John and Nellie usually attended the annual meetings of the Richfield Corporation in Atlantic City, New Jersey. There new products and marketing techniques were introduced each year. John enjoyed this and other annual exchanges of business ideas with some of his friends.

Late in life, Hostetter reflected,

I have only the most pleasant memories of my treatment as a 'Reverend' on the part of the executives from the New York office. My experience with the business world did not leave me in any sense disillusioned.

Christian business men have a vital role to fill and almost limitless opportunity for witness, silent or otherwise. They indeed can be a light to the world and a salt to the earth. To rejoice with people in their highs and sympathize with them in their lows was just a bit different as a Christian business man. To live, love, and work with people is really a mission in life with few equals.¹¹

The gasoline business provided regular support for the family. However, the business never really prospered to the extent possible with a full-time manager and owner. John used it as a means of support during the time when he was raising a family, had no other income, and was deeply committed to church work.¹² Through most of the 1950s the business was managed by the two sons but was sold in 1958 when they made plans for other vocations.

Responsibility for the gasoline business determined the Hostetters' decisions to continue living in Clarence Center. Early in his editorial career, Hostetter informed the Publication Board of his inability to move to Indiana for reasons of the church program and family conditions.¹³ After his resignation from the pastorate in 1954, he was again urged to join the staff in Indiana. However, continuing business responsibilities, and invitations to serve other congregations and church agencies appear to have kept him from making the move.¹⁴

Building a House

During their twenty-five-year ministry in Clarence Center the Hostetters were primarily self-supporting. From time to time, they received some support from members of the congregation. A daily gallon of milk from the Arnold Brauen family, plumbing and appliance repair by Joe Miller, garden produce as it was available, and other in-kind gifts of products and services from members were gratefully received. In addition, from 1939 to 1942, a yearly congregational offering was given to the pastor.¹⁵

The most significant congregational assistance was given in building a parsonage in 1932. With the birth of a son, Norman, in 1930, the rented home did not meet the family needs. Also, without a steady income, rental payments were difficult to make.

By late 1931, the Hostetters made their housing concerns known to the church members. John's Uncle Dave, a successful



A Clarence Center Sunday school class, about 1914; from left, back: Beton Brauen, Kenneth Davis, Eleanor Climenhaga, Leona Martin, Arlene Martin; front: Duane Martin, Pauline Climenhaga, unknown, Gilbert Miller, Leonard Winger.



The Hostetter residence on Long Street built in 1932.

Lancaster County tobacco farmer interested in the Clarence Center ministry, agreed to lend the money.

A proposal to build was presented to the January 20, 1932, congregational council. A secret ballot was taken with a slight majority in favor. However, since "the proposition should financially involve all members," the bishop and "several others," decided (after the fact) a three-quarter majority vote was necessary to proceed with the building.¹⁶

Apparently the men of the congregation with the skills and time to build a parsonage could not wait for another meeting. The evening following the regular council meeting, sixteen men signed a pledge to assume responsibility for the two-thousand-dollar loan for five years. They also asked the church trustees to accept the property for that length of time.

Ten of the signers accepted responsibility for the mortgage interest during the five-year period. A building committee was appointed, with T.S. Doner, chairman, and J.N. Hostetter, secretary. They decided to build a Devonshire house, naming Clyde Urban, a carpenter and church member, and David Yoder, a deacon, as leaders of the work.¹⁷ The house was built in Clarence Center on a lot donated by Thomas Doner.

John Hostetter did not sign the petition. However, he agreed to proceed with a project "that seemed right" even though it circumvented the action of the church council. By midyear 1933, the Hostetters moved into the new parsonage in time for the birth of their third child, another son, Kenneth. John assessed the morale of the congregation as "good." With the increase in congregational membership, he placed the church building as the next project for improving the program.¹⁸

Almost two years after the parsonage was built, evidence of congregational unrest surfaced. On February 11, 1935, about two months before the 1935 congregational council, John and Nellie resigned as pastor, effective April 1, 1935. Finding the demands and requirements associated with the work greater than they could meet, they asked for new and efficient leadership "for the future of

the work." The letter closed with a plea for forgiveness "for any misunderstanding or failures that may have caused a grievance."¹⁹

Although no official action was recorded with the letter, the April 4, 1935, church council rejected the resignation. It was noted that the Hostetters "consented to remain with the work for the present."²⁰ The church council also approved the Hostetters' request to be absent fifteen Sundays during the year to assist in evangelistic work. T.S. Doner was appointed to minister in Hostetter's absence.²¹

The first five years in Clarence Center had been a strenuous economic time for the Hostetters and a time of adjustment to a difficult church situation. Learning to know the Clarence Center members had been straining and exhausting, made more difficult by the constant criticism of several members. It was common for several adults to talk aloud during the service, "hack and cough" during the prayers, exhibit jealousy and stubbornness, and engage in private slander.²² Of course, the decision to build the parsonage without formal approval from the church council had increased these critical attacks.

Unfortunately, the disagreements over the ownership of the house as a parsonage continued long after the unaccepted resignation of the pastor. In 1938, the General Executive Board of the Brethren in Christ Church prepared a questionnaire, and each church member was privately questioned. They issued an ultimatum to the "indicted" members to confess their wrongs to the board or automatically sever their membership with the church.²³ Finally, in 1939, the General Executive Board asked Bishop Swalm to investigate. However, his report to the board was not placed in the record.

A December 26, 1939, letter from Hostetter to Swalm provided some insight into the circumstances surrounding the 1935 resignation. He recounted the bitter feelings that surfaced during the January 1935 revival meetings held by R.I. Witter of Kansas. When he became aware of the feelings, Hostetter apologized for

not waiting for a housing plan to develop in 1932.²⁴ As noted, his subsequent resignation was not accepted.

There is no record of membership termination, although one of the church trustees resigned on June 30, 1938.²⁵ Six of the members named in the General Executive Board investigation discontinued church attendance; several others had moved to Pennsylvania by 1940.

Finally, nine years after the house was built, the congregation accepted the parsonage and within four years paid off the note.²⁶ The parsonage provided a comfortable home for the Hostetter family throughout their years of ministry in Clarence Center.

In summary, family life in Clarence Center from 1929 to 1954 was routine for three growing children. The family experienced the difficult economic times of the depression, the sorrows of World War II, and the growth and development which followed the war. The church provided a context for spiritual instruction and guidance.

Above all, John was able to fulfill his calling by participating in the ministry of the local church, the denomination, and other churches in the community. Perhaps the family's support for his work was the greatest contribution they made to his life.

CHAPTER 8

Relationships with the Canadian Church

An American in Canada

The Clarence Center Church was closely associated with the Canadian Conference of the Brethren in Christ for many years before the Hostetters arrived in 1929. The Clarence Center pastor, Daniel V. Heise, was the first secretary of Ontario Joint Council (1892). Peter Rhodes, longtime bishop and minister at Clarence Center, was sent by the joint council on occasion to settle disputes among the brethren.¹

A number of evangelists, love feast and Bible conference speakers, and visitors from the churches "near the border" frequented the Clarence Center services. In 1901, the congregation became part of Black Creek (Bertie) District. In addition to Heise, Thomas S. Doner, the minister who preceded John Hostetter, and Albert Davis, a young Canadian farmer, came to Clarence Center from the Markham, Ontario, congregation.

In 1929, John Hostetter began a long and fruitful relationship with the Canadian Brethren in Christ Church. Through 1936, he recorded the names and dates of Canadian ministers who visited Clarence Center. E.J. Swalm, John Nigh, D.W. Heise, Lafayette Shoaltz, William Charlton, Marshall Winger, Bert Sherk, Earl Sider, Warren Winger, and George Sheffer made regular visits, either for one or two services or for administrative meetings.² Although Hostetter did not record the names after 1936, ministers and speakers from the Canadian churches were regular guests throughout his ministry.

In his first year and a half in Clarence Center, Hostetter spoke at the Canadian Sunday school convention and the Markham Bible

conference.³ In 1930, he was Black Creek (Bertie) District delegate to General Conference.⁴ Before the end of the year, he had also served as secretary of the Black Creek (Bertie) District annual meeting.⁵

For the next two decades, Hostetter was a frequent speaker at many of the Canadian churches for Bible conferences, love feast occasions, and revival services. Among his most memorable meetings were the four-week revival at the Sixth Line Church (Nottawa, now Stayner) in May and June 1932, and the six-week revival at the Bertie Church in January and February 1937.⁶ Through the 1930s, he averaged two three-day Bible conferences, several revival meetings, and a number of love feasts each year. He also conducted tent meetings and one-day Sunday school conventions for some churches.⁷ His most frequent visits were made to the Nottawa, Bertie, Boyle, Markham, Boyle, Sherkston, Cheapside, and Wainfleet congregations.

Except for his administrative work with Ontario Bible School, Hostetter was a rather minor administrative officer of the Canadian Church and Black Creek (Bertie) District. However, he served on several district and joint council committees and as one of the official delegates from Black Creek (Bertie) District to General Conference in 1930, 1937, 1940, 1947, and 1948. In 1940, he served as moderator of the Black Creek council meeting.⁸

In one of his administrative assignments, John was instrumental in streamlining the administration of the Ontario camp meeting and Niagara Christian College. Each organization had its own governing board, and each board's decisions usually affected the other. Working with several others, Hostetter succeeded in combining the boards. The facilities were shared by both groups, and joint meetings shortened the time for administrative decisions. Hostetter served as chair of the joint board for one year.⁹

In 1932, Hostetter participated in a very emotional decision of the Ontario Joint Council. From the mid-nineteenth century, the River Brethren in Canada were known as Tunkers. The term came from the German word for baptism, *tunken*, meaning "to dip." By

the early twentieth century, many Canadian church members adopted the Brethren in Christ name; however, as late as 1917, the Canadian joint council persuaded the General Conference to include the phrase "known as 'Tunkers' in Canada" on the title pages of its annual minutes and in the *Evangelical Visitor*.

For legal reasons, in 1933 the Ontario government urged the church to clarify the name issue. A committee was appointed and recommended the adoption of the name, "Brethren in Christ." The joint council approved the recommendation.¹⁰

During the council discussion, Hostetter supported the name change, while his bishop, Bert Sherk, adamantly opposed it. Some years later, Hostetter recalled an impromptu meeting of the members of the Bertie Church in the horse shed following the council session, at which Sherk threatened to resign. The joint council did not reverse its action, and the bishop did not resign until his health failed in 1948.¹¹

This incident occurred early in Hostetter's pastoral career in the Black Creek (Bertie) District. Perhaps he should have been more aware of the bishop's wishes and more reserved in the expression of his position on the question. However, as an American he probably had little appreciation for the historical significance of the name, "Tunker."

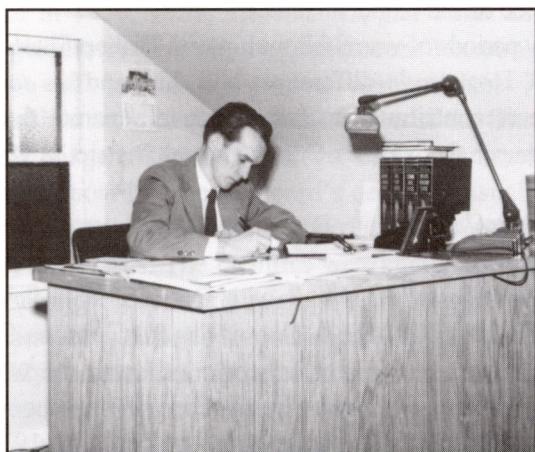
Many periods of warm fellowship with Bishop Sherk followed. However, Hostetter's differences with him and his successor in future years contributed to his efforts to separate the Clarence Center Church from Black Creek (Bertie) District in 1952.

A Venture into Educational Administration

Perhaps Hostetter's work with Ontario Bible School (later Niagara Christian College and now Niagara Christian Collegiate) was his greatest administrative contribution to the work of the Canadian Brethren in Christ Church. Early in the school's history (1934), he had served as secretary of the board. In 1936, he had delivered the address for closing exercises in the Markham



John Hostetter is joined by Canadians to break ground for a new building at Niagara Christian College; from left: Dorothy Sherk, Elizabeth Gilmore, John Nigh, Harold Nigh, John Reugg, James Sider, John Hostetter, George Sider, E.J. Swalm, Charles Wright, Alvin Winger, George Sheffer, Orlo Heise, Jesse Sider, Earl Sider, Andrew Sider, Edward Gilmore, Bert Sherk, and Paul Nigh.



Paul Hostetter, the new pastor at Clarence Center.

Church.¹² In 1938, he had conducted three nights of evangelistic services during the first Bible conference convened in the school's newly purchased facility, the Belmont Club on Niagara Boulevard, near Fort Erie.¹³ From 1943 to 1945 he served as financial auditor, and from 1949 to 1966 as school trustee.¹⁴

At the 1944 General Conference, the Ontario Bible School Board of Trustees named Hostetter the school's new president. Serving on a part-time basis, he shared administrative duties with Elmer Steckley, the principal.

Obviously, this was a new experience in the life of a pastor, evangelist, and businessman, whose formal education was discontinued after several high school terms at Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home in 1921-22.

The opportunity to enter the world of education prompted John to consult with his brother Christ, president of Messiah Bible College. He asked whether he should give any consideration to the administrative position, whether he could administer the school on a part-time basis (four days a week), and about the possibility of returning to school.

Christ encouraged him to consider the administrative assignment even though "school administration [is] much more difficult on the average than pastoral work." He also urged him to have a person work with him who had a good knowledge of the Canadian educational system. And he said he could enter Toronto Bible College as a "mature student," in the theology program.¹⁵

Accepting the assignment, Hostetter enjoyed his work at the Bible School. He was well received as a Bible teacher. He knew his material and related well to students. One former student wrote, "We felt valued and important."¹⁶ Another remembered, "Many times as I now hear sermons or certain Scriptures I recall [John's] teaching to us--I shall NEVER get a picture of Job and how he 'eschewed' evil out of my mind--he clearly imprinted it well into my memory!"¹⁷

Another recalled Hostetter's love of students as evidenced by his body language and interaction with people. He was warm and

relaxed, qualities that contributed to openness and honesty in relationships. Said one former student,

I came from a different denomination and bumped into Brethren in Christ doctrine and practices which were different. As a young Christian, I was troubled--wanting to obey God and His Word, but also wanting to follow the interpretations of my own church. Hostetter helped me steer between the more radical elements regarding Holy Spirit/Sanctification versus a virtual ignoring of the work of the Holy Spirit. He helped me to an integrated view, not only on that issue, but carrying over to a greater appreciation of the unity of the larger body of Christ.¹⁸

Hostetter was adviser to the student yearbook staff and the officers of the student assembly. He was remembered for his sound advice "in areas of improving management and time as well as finances."¹⁹

As part of his duties, the president administered discipline to students who broke the school rules. Once when returning to campus, he picked up two young lady students who were hitchhiking. One later reported,

A classmate of mine and I were hitch-hiking from Fort Erie to school. And of course you can guess who picked us up. How I wished the ground would have swallowed me up. As we climbed into his car, my heart was pounding and I was upset because I was caught. [He] gave me wise counselling plus a few demerits and said he was doing this for my father's sake. . . . [He] administered the punishment very calmly but firmly.²⁰

Several of the boys loved his flair for the Buicks and Chryslers--"not usual vehicles for Brethren in Christ preachers"--which he drove "with a sense of sanctified pride."²¹ Apparently, they timed their hitchhiking to campus from town to intersect with his many trips from Clarence Center!

Another student remembered the time thirteen boys rose up and threw their cottage supervisor into a snowbank. "I was called

into the president's office expecting to be reprimanded for my part in it. Instead he asked for my assessment of the situation and then asked if I would be willing to be supervisor. He accepted my terms. I was deeply impressed and we had a great year."²²

Several students recalled Hostetter's work with the school chorus. "He introduced us to songs we had never learned out of the [hymnal] and so he made us feel modern, up-to-date, and very progressive."²³ The group sang in Canadian and New York Brethren in Christ churches and Mennonite churches.²⁴

During his presidency, Hostetter looked for opportunities to promote the church schools. Some Clarence Center young people attended the Bible school. He also promoted the attendance of Canadian students at Messiah Bible College. After a visit there by the 1946-47 Grade XIII class, several enrolled in the junior college at Grantham.

When possible, John's family participated in school programs. On one occasion, they accompanied the graduating class to the Canadian Keswick at the end of the school year. It was a rewarding experience for the family and the students. The Hostetter family returned to the camp for a family reunion in the late 1960s.

Hostetter was known as a warm-hearted person who used his "charm" in several ways. Hiring staff members was not easy, so he appealed to candidates with all the charisma he could summon. One staff member recalled his persuasive tactics. Even though she felt incapable, she finally called him and accepted the job. "I'm sure I did it more not to disappoint him, than that I was confident I could do it."²⁵

During Hostetter's presidency, students from several Russian Mennonite churches (descendants of recent Russian Mennonite immigrants to Canada) attended in large numbers. Of course, as president, he was the chapel speaker many times and, on occasion, conducted the revival meetings. The Mennonites were concerned with the theology and teaching of this Brethren school and were not afraid to question the content and presentation style of the evangelists.

Church historian E. Morris Sider reported an occasion when some visiting Mennonite carpenters objected to Hostetter's dramatic preaching style. One of the Bible school faculty members from the Mennonite church talked to the evangelist the next day contending, "You may need to act like that for your American audiences, but not for us here in Canada." Hostetter agreed to change his delivery, but later stated, "I've got to act like myself."²⁶ Years later, Hostetter referred to the incident's positive effect on his preaching style.

Apparently, Hostetter thought the school could become a greater force in the Canadian church. He may have been optimistic about the number of students available; the Russian Mennonites had swelled their ranks for several years. At least one student remembered plans for new classrooms, updated dormitories, and faculty housing which John presented to the Ontario joint council. The council's rejection of the plan may have caused Hostetter to seek other avenues of service within the church.²⁷ (That student endured a similar experience as president of the college thirty years later.)

In gratitude for his unselfish efforts on behalf of the students and the school, the students dedicated the 1947 yearbook, *The Niagara Torch*, to President Hostetter. With pleasant memories of his three years with the students, Hostetter moved on to serve the church as editor of the *Evangelical Visitor*. In a parting statement, he exhorted the students to be willing to sacrifice. If there is no sacrifice, "we are not worthy to help carry this lamp that is the light of the world, or we cease to be the salt that prevents the decay that is setting in."²⁸

In 1992, shortly after his death, the Niagara Christian College Alumni Association honored Hostetter with the Alumni Association Distinguished Service Award,

... In appreciation of faithful service to the College and the Church. You who for so long have shared in its daily tasks, may take pride in the knowledge that you have had a considerable part in the development of the College and its achievements.²⁹



Dedication

In gratitude for his unselfish efforts to make our school days both pleasant and profitable, to our President, Mr. Hostetter, we dedicate this, the ninth issue of The Niagara Torch.



John and Nellie Hostetter enjoy the outdoors with their children: Winifred, Norman (back center), and Kenneth, about 1946.

Hostetter's family accepted the award with gratitude for the recognition.

Changing Administrative Contacts

In the four years following his service at Ontario Bible School, Hostetter's interaction with the Canadian church was less intense than in the previous decade. Editing the *Evangelical Visitor* required a significant amount of time. Also, the Clarence Center church-building program, which began in early 1950, required more supervisory time.

Other than a week's meeting at Ontario Bible School in early March 1948, and one at Collingwood in May 1948, Hostetter did not conduct many services in the Canadian churches until 1955, after his resignation from the Clarence Center pastorate.³⁰

In the late 1940s, the denomination was modifying its position on two issues of importance to the Clarence Center congregation: the showing of missionary picture slides in the churches and the use of musical instruments in the worship services. In earlier years, both activities were forbidden by the General Conference. By 1949, after making a number of rulings which were difficult to enforce, the General Conference allowed the showing of pictures approved by the local district.³¹ In 1951, on the same basis, Conference also approved the use of musical instruments in church services.³²

Hostetter saw the value of these supplements to the worship program and the educational activities of the church. However, if Clarence Center desired to use a musical instrument or show missionary pictures, Black Creek (Bertie) District had to approve or give the congregations authority to decide.³³ At that time, approval from the more conservative district council appeared unlikely.

The associate pastor recalled Hostetter's campaign to introduce a musical instrument. John "orchestrated a way for Clarence Center to get an organ. . . . First, he got most of the Clarence Center members, men and women, to drive over to Bertie

for the annual council. Second, he brought a recommendation asking that the music matter be decided at the congregational level. . . . The motion passed, although some Bertie members felt the women should not be voting."³⁴

By 1951, the sentiment of the Clarence Center Church leaders leaned toward the separation of their church from the Canadian Conference. In a memo to the General Executive Board of the General Conference, several of the congregational leaders asked that board to determine the opinions of the Clarence Center congregation on the issue.

Citing little shared district activity because of the international boundary and the channeling of church offerings through the church treasury in the United States, the Clarence Center leaders appeared hard pressed to find substantive reasons for separation. The General Executive Board assessed the opinions, and on November 26, 1952, informed Bishop William Charlton of the board's decision to place the Clarence Center congregation under the oversight of Henry Miller, bishop of the Center, Clinton, and Lycoming District in northern Pennsylvania.³⁵ Thus ended fifty years of Black Creek District oversight of the Clarence Center congregation.

When the denomination was restructured administratively in 1957, the congregation was placed in the Allegheny Conference. In later years some felt the separation from the Canadian church was hastily done, with the congregation "stranded far away from the nearest church in the conference, and . . . for reasons of geography" would have been better in the northern [Canadian] Conference.³⁶

After the separation and, later, after retirement from the Clarence Center pastorate, Hostetter continued work and fellowship with the Canadian church. Between 1955 and 1958 he preached at seven different meetings in Canada, in addition to twenty-three extended revival meetings or youth conferences in the United States. And he added at least one meeting at a United Missionary Church. While his church responsibilities changed, his love for evangelistic work and the Canadian church continued.³⁷

CHAPTER 9

Enduring Congregational Change

Ten Years of Transition

By 1945 the Hostetters had pastored the Clarence Center Church for sixteen years. Winifred was attending Messiah Junior College, Norman was a high school sophomore, and Kenneth was completing elementary school. Family life was firmly established in Clarence Center. The Hostetters were well known in the community for both their church and business activities.

After operating the gasoline business from Batavia, New York, a distance of twenty-five miles, John moved the office and warehouse to Clarence Center to reduce the miles traveled each day. Two men were employed full-time. Nellie did the bookkeeping, and the children were assigned jobs as their school work allowed. John managed the business, conducted evangelistic meetings, and served on denominational administrative committees. During those first sixteen years in Clarence Center, Sunday school attendance more than doubled,¹ and the church sponsored services or meetings several evenings each week. The congregation continued to worship in the small sanctuary built in 1877 and modified in 1936. Hostetter was a strong Bible teacher and was loyal to the distinctive, separated life style of the Brethren in Christ. The coming challenges to the status quo of congregational life were hardly predictable.

The entire congregation was affected by the country's rebuilding efforts following the World War. Several young men returned from military service or Civilian Public Service.² Some of them started home construction businesses, others worked for local manufacturers. A few of the Sunday school children of the mid-

1930s had come of age and were planning for families, post-secondary education, jobs, and the work of the church in the community. The youthful Clarence Center congregation wished to make new advances into the community.

However, health concerns also affected the lives of the members. For example, during the rugged winter of 1944-45, a polio epidemic swept western New York. Two children and two young people from the church who contracted the disease were hospitalized for most of the winter. Because little was known of the contagious nature of the disease, Erie County health authorities isolated the victims in an effort to control the epidemic.

The church members responded to this crisis with prayer for the sick and their families. The pastor, deacon and others visited the young people in the makeshift wards set up in the Buffalo area.³ This was probably the first major crisis, involving circumstances outside its control, experienced by the church. The four victims suffer the effects of the illness for the remainder of their lives. Two of the victims were Nellie Hostetter's niece and nephew.

To an "outsider," the Clarence Center Church on a Sunday morning in 1945 was "plain" in its dress (the women wore prayer coverings and plain dresses, the men wore no ties), busy, noisy, (most of the Sunday school classes were in one room), with no musical instruments. Attendance averaged about seventy people. For the pastor's family, Sunday afternoons were devoted to family activities and visitation. And then it was back to church for the evening young people's service and evangelistic message.

By 1954, one decade later, the 1877 church building had been remodeled and a wing added. The distinctive dress of the church members was no longer in evidence. The young families had abandoned those visible "ways of the Brethren" in favor of a mainstream evangelical expression of the faith. Worship services included musical instruments and a sanctuary choir. Support for Red Cross projects in town, appointments to a citizens' advisory committee planning for future township schools, and joint planning

with Mennonite groups for a disaster relief unit showed a greater commitment to the community.⁴

The leadership of the church also changed. Hostetter had resigned as pastor, and a new minister, the former associate pastor, had been called. Several members from the recently closed Buffalo Mission had transferred their membership to Clarence Center.

Clearly, the changes in the congregation related more to outward appearances in the expressions of the Christian faith than to changes in doctrine or beliefs. The church members had rejected the separated life as defined by the Brethren. The salvation experience and a daily Christian witness remained the prime concerns. But why had the members changed? And had Hostetter led the congregation in making the changes?

Clarifying and Promoting the Faith

Hostetter's reaction to any change in church practices as defined by the Brethren was negative. The first violations of the dress code (1947) by the young men were met with statements of strong opposition. To understand Hostetter's response at this time in his life calls for a review of his responsibilities in church-wide administration from the beginning of his ministry.

During the first fifteen years as pastor, Hostetter's work on denominational committees demonstrated his commitment to the gospel as expressed by the Brethren in Christ. As a member of General Conference from the beginning of his ministry, he was appointed to several standing committees. The Tract Committee⁵ and the General Education Board⁶ were his first two assignments. The discussions and decisions of those committees and others had affected his ministerial outlook.⁷

In 1934, John was appointed to the newly organized committee to review the Church's Constitution and Bylaws.⁸ As a young minister, he participated fully in the constitutional-doctrinal discussions and decisions. Although he, and others, may have

dissented from some decisions, committee rules precluded minority reports.⁹

The constitutional changes strengthened the statements about what it meant to be a Brethren in Christ member. Dress codes were amplified, vocal music was confirmed as the preferred form of musical worship, and a number of changes were made in the denominational boards and committees.¹⁰ Indeed, this committee was more explicit in outlining a dress code than any other committee in the history of the denomination.¹¹ Through this work, Hostetter, closely associated with the church doctrines, became a spokesman for its distinctive life style.

Hostetter's image of church loyalty was also strengthened by his outspoken support of the church's peace witness.¹² As war clouds gathered over Europe in the late 1930s, he assisted young men to declare their opposition to war. He counseled church members from his church, the Mennonite churches, and the local community who wished to file papers for conscientious objector status. He visited draft boards with the men when they were called for hearings about their pacifistic beliefs.

In 1941, Hostetter was appointed by General Conference to the newly formed Industrial Relations Committee.¹³ The denominational leaders were concerned about church members working in factories where "the real power . . . and success of [the labor unions] ultimately depend upon the use of coercive measures, such as strikes, lock-outs, picketing, closed-shops, etc."¹⁴ These measures, at times leading to violence, were not consistent with the Brethren's opposition to violence.

Further, union membership linked the Christians to a non-biblical program in violation of the scriptural admonition not to be "unequally yoked with unbelievers." The Brethren joined only groups whose purposes were consistent with biblical principles. The unions, they thought, were anything but biblical in their outlook and purpose.

By 1942, the committee declared that church members should have no part with employers or employee organizations whose

ultimate goal was achieved through the use of force. The statement included a rejection of the "financing of capitalist, agricultural, or labor organizations, insofar as these funds may be used in any way for coercive purposes."¹⁵ The document was accepted by the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations at the national level. Brethren in Christ and Mennonite members were not required to join the unions in plants with closed shops.

The agreement with the unions at the national level was an important first step in the recognition of the Brethren's belief in non-violence. However, in 1943, before Hostetter completed the agreements with the local unions, western New York plants had converted to war production, and Brethren in Christ and Mennonite workers found other employment.¹⁶

Hostetter did not convince a few local church members to follow these teachings on peace and nonresistance. They entered the armed services or joined the unions as factory workers. In the Clarence Center congregation, several men were employed by Harrison Radiator, a General Motors facility in Lockport, New York. A degree of tension arose among the church members when, although the plant converted to war production, one of the men continued his employment. But he rationalized that sweeping floors was not a part of the war effort.¹⁷

The rigid stand of the General Conference committees on the dress code, and the decision of the church to withdraw membership from men who joined the military, began to have its effect upon church membership. In 1942 and 1943, the denomination reported the loss of members and a decline in Sunday school attendance.¹⁸ Of particular concern was the loss of young people.

While expressing concern over the loss of members, the education board of General Conference also noted a "general spirit of disregard for authority . . . among the constituency of our brotherhood."¹⁹ To teach young people and new converts the principles of the church, Conference appointed the Committee on the Preparation of Doctrinal Literature.²⁰ Hostetter was appointed

to that committee, thereby adding to his image as an advocate of those doctrines and practices. The committee published *The Manual for Christian Youth* (1945), profiling the life of a Christian as defined by the church.

By the next year, the Board for Young People's Work recommended the appointment of a joint committee representing the Board of Education, the Sunday School Board, and the Board for Young People's Work to improve "the effectiveness of the doctrinal instruction in the educational agencies of the church."²¹ Accordingly, General Conference appointed the Indoctrination Committee to that task. With R.H. Wenger, Hostetter represented the Education Board, an assignment which further enhanced Hostetter's image as a spokesman for the doctrines of the church.²²

Within the year, the Indoctrination Committee surveyed the pastors and bishops on the failure of the church to indoctrinate its youth properly. A questionnaire was distributed, and the usual answers were received: a lack of spirituality in the members, failure of the home and church to instruct properly, and a lack of good instructional materials.

However, two respondents, Samuel Wolgemuth from Pennsylvania and H.G. Brubaker from California, made observations somewhat different from others. Wolgemuth was dismayed over the "lack of a closely directed ministerial program which would require our ministers to abide by certain standards doctrinally."²³ He advocated a special Bible course, outlined by the church, and taught by the church schools.

A more radical response to the questionnaire was received from H.G. Brubaker. Noting that the church traditions had been "slipping," he stated that church ritual and outward form were not necessary for personal salvation. "Christ and the Holy Spirit are the only means of inner salvation and heart purity." Church ritual, ceremony, and Christian apparel were merely companions to salvation.²⁴

Brubaker was the only respondent to question the church rituals and outward forms. Indirectly, he encouraged an

examination of their importance. However, his comments were not included in the Committee's summary report to the 1945 General Conference.²⁵

It is difficult to determine the influence of Wolgemuth's and Brubaker's notes upon Hostetter's views of the church doctrines. John deeply respected both men and would have considered their opinions carefully. Within the decade, as *Evangelical Visitor* editor, Hostetter called for better educational preparation of ministers and for the primacy of evangelism in the church.

In May 1948, Hostetter visited the Michigan churches to distribute indoctrination materials. In Detroit he spoke of the importance of the teaching ministry of home and church. He recorded staff interest in the materials.²⁶ At Mooretown and Merrill, he also discussed the importance of teaching. Several other visits were noted, but with unenthusiastic comments about the outcomes. His notes show his efforts to use Scripture in explaining the doctrines of the church.²⁷

With all of this committee work on doctrine, it is not surprising that Hostetter was negative about the efforts of his young people to change "the ways of the Brethren." However, by 1949, he expressed some doubts about nonconformity. In a *Visitor* editorial, he lectured the upcoming General Conference on the importance of "thoughtfully presenting" its interpretation of the truth:

There are times when a certain interpretation of truth means much to one personally, but there is danger we violate some other vital phase of truth when we assume the attitude that it must be the interpretation that prevails.

The Brethren In Christ Church . . . has been a bit more detailed in interpretation of certain Bible teachings than many other denominations. This position holds the possibility of being of real assistance to its constituency [sic]; likewise, if not thoughtfully presented and wisely administered, it can become a continued source of agitation. . . . The Church is an institution of Grace and not of the Law.²⁸

To summarize, from the mid-1930s through 1950, John Hostetter participated in a number of important denominational committees which defined doctrines and planned methods for teaching the church young people. Through improved instructional materials and indoctrination, these committees attempted to promote and preserve the Brethren's way of life.

It can be assumed that John, an active participant in the work of those committees, agreed with most of their decisions. Even if he disagreed with one or two issues, he was too loyal to the church to express differing opinions to General Conference. As though to recognize his orthodoxy and commitment, the leaders of the church appointed him editor of the *Evangelical Visitor* in 1947.²⁹ Thus, when his Clarence Center young people began their non-compliance, he could do no other than defend the "ways of the Brethren."

Defender of the Faith

In the mid-1940s, Hostetter's commitment to the church probably was best expressed through his Clarence Center pastoral work and his family life. He promoted denominational views, and there were few visible signs of church members questioning the expressions of the faith before 1948.

There were several written references to dress codes in Hostetter's Clarence Center sermon notes. However, such teaching was underscored at least twice a year on love feast occasions. He also preached infrequently about "separation from the world" and, "don't be afraid to be different."³⁰

During their growth and development, the young people conformed to the dress regulations. Some parents, indoctrinated through the strict teachings of D.V. Heise and Thomas Doner, agreed with the pastor and assisted in church code enforcement.

For the young people, one of the greatest sources of tension was the daily high school routine. It was most difficult for the girls to wear the prayer covering to school. Also, few children

participated in school activities because the parents questioned the value of programs not under church control. For the young people, being "different" from their schoolmates was a heavy burden to bear.

Of course, the reasons for the church rules were of no interest to friends or teachers. So, with few exceptions, the church young people attended classes only, retreating to the psychological safety of activities in the home and church.³¹

However, school activities affected the Hostetter family relationships and home routines. Winifred graduated from the local high school, but Norman and Kenneth became interested in sports and social activities. Perhaps the parents found it less difficult to send the boys to the church academy at Grantham than to face the constant tensions which came from their desires to participate in school sports and social exercises.

There was little discussion in the home about dress practices. Throughout their high school and Messiah Junior College years, the children complied with their parents' wishes. Hostetter's public ministry was sufficient to impress the children with the importance of church doctrines. Open rebellion to dress codes occurred only after leaving Messiah Bible College for further education.

Other disagreements with parents occurred over the boys' dating and social activities. There seemed to be a desire to allow the children to make their own decisions, but the pained look on John Hostetter's face when the wrong decision was made was not easily forgotten. To ask a young lady from the community to attend a Buffalo Bills football game on a Saturday afternoon generated a silent emotional crisis few words could describe. Fortunately, the informality of the social occasion did not require a discussion of dress issues.

By 1950, there was widespread disenchantment with the "ways of the Brethren" by Hostetter's family and church young people. Hostetter appeared to realize the necessity for some change and declined to make quick judgments regarding the problematic attitudes. By that time he had acquired a son-in-law and knew of

his commitment to medical missions. Perhaps he was realizing there was Christian commitment outside the "ways of the Brethren."³²

Beyond the family, a number of congregational members were dissatisfied with the church's distinctive practices. One of the young ladies, upon graduating from high school in 1947, moved to Pennsylvania, partly because of family disagreements over the dress code.³³ By 1949, the young men, including the pastor's sons, were wearing neckties, in violation of the dress code.

Little was said in informal meetings or from the pulpit in the next few years. Gradually, the ladies modified the dress styles and adopted the hair styles of the community.

In an attempt to keep them from straying too far from the church's accepted practices, in early 1954, Hostetter prepared a statement for a meeting with the women of the congregation: "The Bible is explicit and detailed as to what manner of life and spirit should characterize a Christian. The church must emphasize each . . . area of truth earnestly striving to do so in proportion to its frequent or infrequent mention in Scripture."³⁴

The pastor was apparently referring to the Brethren's biblical basis for teachings on the prayer covering. But he made only a slight reference at that point. Although, he repeated his concern over the detailed interpretation of certain Bible teachings by some church leaders, he seemed to distance himself from such teaching.³⁵

Using several Scripture references, Hostetter acknowledged the unclear meaning of the Bible's reference to "long hair." He concluded by asking the women to have a plain and simple hair dress with length that reaches to the shoulders.³⁶

The tug-of-war between Hostetter's loyalty to certain dress styles, and the need for change in the church's prescribed uniforms, apparently ended in his own mind about this time. By thus stating his new interpretation of biblical passages in writing, he accepted the changes already in practice in his church. His changing attitudes were evident as he concluded his twenty-five year pastorate.

Gradually, the men and women in the congregation abandoned the denominational dress code. Several members disagreed with the new practices and moved to the local Mennonite churches or to Bertie Church in Canada, which they considered more conservative and, therefore, more spiritual. Before the end of the decade, both John and Nellie had adopted conventional dress styles.

These changes in the Clarence Center Church occurred several years in advance of other congregations. Such visible modifications contributed to the labeling of the church and Hostetter as liberal or progressive by other church leaders.³⁷ However, Hostetter's young people convinced him to abandon the "ways of the Brethren," and he probably appeared more progressive in the early 1950s than he really was.

In review, by the late 1940s, Hostetter was recognized as one of the church leaders and a spokesman for the distinctive doctrines of the church. Gradually, he began to see that written materials and indoctrination were not the answers to the denominational dilemma of lost members. The contacts of families with non-Brethren in Christ Christians, the overall efforts to attract community people to the church, and the changes occurring in his own family impacted Hostetter's life. Other faith-modifying experiences, noted below, added vital dimensions to the changes in his expression of the gospel message.

CHAPTER 10

Faith-Modifying Experiences

For the first twenty years of his ministry, Hostetter asked few questions about the Brethren's interpretation and expression of the gospel message. It was his sociological/psychological context for pastoral and evangelistic work. He believed that those truly "born again" would have no difficulty conforming to the Brethren's lifestyle.

The family and Clarence Center Church unrest was not the only challenge to John's thinking in the late 1940s and early 1950s. A series of denominational and personal experiences outside the Clarence Center Church influenced Hostetter's image of the Brethren. Although it is difficult to establish a cause and effect relationship, his writings confirm their importance.

The Influence of the National Association of Evangelicals

The unrest over dress codes and social isolation in the Clarence Center Church evidently reflected a dissatisfaction in the larger Brethren community. Church historian Carlton Wittlinger stated: "A sense of uneasiness and uncertainty had begun to permeate the ranks of the Brethren as they approached the mid-century. Some of them wondered why their message made so little impact upon communities contacted through their congregations."¹

As noted, Hostetter experienced uncertain feelings. His young people questioned the Brethren lifestyle he held sacred. However, even with his uncertain feelings, they were looking for changes he was reluctant to accept. Factors outside the Clarence Center Church would be required to convince him of the need for change.

The most influential event in Hostetter's ministry was the 1949 General Conference decision to join the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and, in 1950, the National Holiness Association (NHA). For the first time, he and other church leaders recognized the value of association with other evangelical groups, many of whom had been judged in previous years as "conforming to worldly practices."²

Hostetter's *Visitor* editorial following his first attendance at an NAE convention summarized cooperative efforts of evangelicals.³ Association with other evangelical Christians was a real boost to the editor's morale. Here were Christians speaking the same revivalistic message he had preached for years, but they were experiencing God's blessing in ways unknown to the Brethren.

[I am] impressed with the spiritual inspiration received and with the emphasis upon revival and evangelism on the NAE program. . . . To rub shoulders with Christian workers from all over America inspires one to believe that there are "yet seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."⁴

He made no reference to pacifism, a basic Brethren doctrine which separated them from other evangelical and holiness churches.

Before publication of Wittlinger's *Brethren in Christ Church* history in 1978, relatively few church members knew of a late-night meeting of Brethren leaders at the 1950 NAE convention in Indianapolis. Several denominational leaders attending the convention and staying at the same hotel decided to call together the Brethren church leaders to discuss, "How can we as a Brethren in Christ Church absorb and put into practice what we are hearing?"⁵

Although the group discussed many issues, two major concerns surfaced. One was the need for a congregationally-supported ministry, allowing pastors to devote their time and energies to their pastorates. The second was the failure of congregations to assimilate converts into the church. As vital participants, both John

and his brother Christ were deeply affected by the frankness and openness of the discussion.⁶

Samuel F. Wolgemuth recalled:

In light of the spiritual depth and vision evident in the NAE speakers and leaders, we began to evaluate in depth, together, the "felt" restrictions that the "legalistic" teachings and practices of the Brethren in Christ church placed upon our church and its outreach ministry. We were seeing in our outreach evangelism, people who were willing to say yes to our Jesus, but no to becoming part of the Brethren fellowship.⁷

At this time, John was preparing to preach the 1950 General Conference sermon in June. Wolgemuth thought that he may have been eliciting a response to his outline:

John, as I recall, provided tactful leadership for extended discussion. My memory of him in that setting was his deep exercise of soul. Said he, "I must face the reality of this release of spirit that we are experiencing here in my conference sermon opportunity a few months from now. I must be true to our people and the trust given to me."⁸

The 1950 Conference Sermon

John considered preaching the General Conference sermon a high honor. Diligent in his preparation, his *Visitor* editorials in the early months of 1950 anticipated that sermon. In one he declared the urgency of the hour by referring to the hands of the clock on the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. "Since time is running out [and Christ's return is imminent] . . . every effort should be made to make 1950 a Holy Year wholly dedicated to the Lord's work."⁹ He would also refer to the clock in the Conference sermon.¹⁰

By early 1950, reports of Billy Graham's 1949 Los Angeles campaign appeared in numerous church publications. In a February editorial, Hostetter continued the theme of the shortness of time. However, this time he questioned the Brethren's revival efforts.

"The present revival fires may be the final call just before the rapture. Maybe in our effort to 'hold the faith' we needlessly withheld the gospel from those for whom we are responsible."¹¹ The meaning of "holding the faith" was left to the reader, but he seemed to be referring to the nonconformist practices of the Brethren.

Citing the catastrophic events of World War II, the development of atomic and hydrogen bombs, the formation of the nation of Israel, the Korean War, and the rise of "godless communism," many early 1950s evangelists were predicting the imminent return of the Lord. This theme added a tone of crisis to the Conference sermon and indirectly called for change in the Brethren's presentation of the gospel.

In preparing his sermon, Hostetter spent some time analyzing membership statistics. He found that the church had gained one thousand members in the twenty-year period from 1927 to 1947.¹² When he reviewed these figures with Dr. Constantine Yeracaris, a University of Buffalo sociology professor and population expert, Hostetter was disturbed to learn that normal retention of church families should have increased the membership by another one thousand. And evangelistic efforts should have added even more members.

Equally disturbing in Hostetter's brief research was Elmer T. Clark's church directory which listed the Brethren in Christ Church with the small legalistic sects in America. Describing that category, Clark said, "Nearly all [sects in this category] are legalistic in that they regard the Bible as an objective authority and insist upon observances drawn therefrom."¹³

Clark observed that sects stressed certain rules, objective forms, or "things" which were essential to true religion. For the Brethren, he cited the matters of dress reported in the 1929 *General Conference Minutes*, and the foot-washing ritual as reasons for listing them with the legalistic sects.¹⁴ Although Hostetter stated he was unsure of the reasons for the listing, Clark made his rationale quite clear.¹⁵

Hostetter saw a negative image in the classification. He concluded that the Brethren may have assumed that "unlikeness to others" (undefined) was really the church's testimony and witness. The closing statement of his sermon summarized his view of the classification: "It requires less sacrifice to be legal than to be spiritual."

Two of the three issues Hostetter cited were regular themes of church leaders and evangelists. The shortness of time for evangelistic efforts and church growth were not new to the Brethren. For several years lack of denominational growth had been a concern of the Sunday School Board and the Board for Young People's Work. Both these boards and others were involved in the work of the Indoctrination Committee, the publication of the youth manual, and the Sunday school "Forward" enlargement campaigns. The efforts of the church "to indoctrinate" the youth were well underway.

As noted, Hostetter was active in these developments and could have cited them as evidence of positive activities. However, he chose not to recount these efforts. In his entire sermon, he did not mention the efforts of the Indoctrination Committee and other General Conference groups to improve the retention of youth. He seemed to long for the evangelistic results which appeared to be bypassing the Brethren.

The third issue, legalism, had not been addressed in an open meeting at the denominational level. The late night session of church leaders at NAE probably emboldened him to raise this very sensitive issue at the General Conference. The debates of the General Conferences that followed testified to the lack of unanimity in tackling the issue.¹⁶

Bishop Luke L. Keefer, Sr., one of the more conservative church leaders of the day, stated that Hostetter's sermon was received by the Conference members with mixed feelings. To some, "including myself, [it] was not well liked."¹⁷ Particularly, he thought the legalistic label "almost did our church a dishonor." However, after serving with Hostetter on the Church Review and

Study Committee, appointed by the 1950 Conference to examine many issues, Keefer realized the conscience of the church had been awakened. "In my judgment, [that committee] became the most revolutionary and far-reaching force in the history of our denomination to that time."¹⁸

With all of Hostetter's writing and preaching on these issues, he did not immediately propose a corrective plan. Neither his conference sermon nor his weekly Clarence Center sermons outlined steps correcting the problem now defined as "legalism." However, his editorial themes in the next decade seemed to build upon the remarks by church leaders at the Indianapolis meeting. Two subjects became central: an educated, supported pastoral system, and the need to build strong congregations. Contrary to the perceptions of some of his peers, John did not advocate the abandonment of the "ways of the Brethren" in the early 1950s.

Hostetter was not alone in his criticism of the church program. Several church leaders and lay persons had questioned the trend of the last twenty years. A 1946 special committee of General Conference observed that coercive measures of dress conformity (represented in the 1937 Revision of the Constitution and Bylaws) were undesirable and ineffective. In his 1949 report to General Conference, Carlton O. Wittlinger, assistant secretary of the Board for Young People's Work, had asked for the young people to be taught "enduring principles." Dr. Jesse Lady, associate editor of the *Visitor*, urged the church to stop holding its young people back.¹⁹ However, no one proposed remedial steps for resolving the issue.

In later years, it became clear that Hostetter's 1950 General Conference sermon awakened other church leaders to the need for changes. For the first time, said the church historian in 1978, the sermon placed the "theme of . . . revolution clearly before the brotherhood."²⁰ The sermon opened the denomination to a decade of administrative and spiritual changes which modified the delivery of the church's gospel message to the local community.²¹

New Administrative Appointments

In 1950, Hostetter, now a forty-six-year-old pastor, shared in a second major effort in behalf of the Brethren in Christ Church message. His first effort came in 1935 with membership on the denominational Constitution and Bylaws Committee and the Indoctrination Committee. There he gained in-depth knowledge of church polity and, undoubtedly, knowledge of the pitfalls to be avoided.

The 1950 General Conference named two committees to address the concerns raised at the Indianapolis meeting and as a follow-up to Hostetter's sermon. Hostetter was appointed to both committees. The Church Review and Study Committee was assigned to "make a review and study of the state, function, and work of the general church, and . . . report their findings and recommendations of adjustment needs to the General Conference of 1951."²²

The Pastoral Stationing Committee was charged "to seek out, encourage and, on request from congregations or district boards, station men, called of God and approved by the Church." Provision was made for financial support as congregations desired.²³

The 1951 Report of the Church Review and Study Committee introduced significant recommendations to the General Conference. Among other things, they asked for greater individual discretion in the matter of dress codes, placed the decision to use musical instruments at the district council level, and defined associate church membership for those unable to meet all of the Brethren's membership requirements.

Unable to cope with some of the proposals, the Conference delegates returned them to the committee for further study, but the "revolution" which had been generating for some years was producing visible results.²⁴ These new committees changed the language of the 1937 dress codes, and restructured the operation of church life through a reformation of church polity.

Through the Church Review and Study Committee, Hostetter's undefined "spiritual" concerns of the late 1940s began to take form. Conference actions based upon the committee's first report transformed many of the local churches by the middle of the decade.²⁵

The appointment of the Pastoral Stationing Committee was an important milestone in congregational life. Hostetter's experiences in the Clarence Center ministry convinced him of the value of ministerial training and support. Through his editorial writings and other administrative and evangelistic work, Hostetter promoted the committees' recommendations.

Hostetter was a tireless committee member. Henry A. Ginder, his longtime friend and colleague, said,

[John] was a high quality committee man. His leadership helped the Church during our transition from legalism to real brotherhood. The Brethren in Christ Church loves each other across more lines than any group I know and John Hostetter contributed very much to this quality.²⁶

The 1952 Mennonite World Conference

In August 1952, in his first overseas trip, Hostetter attended the First Mennonite World Conference in Basel, Switzerland. With E.J. Swalm he boarded the *Queen Mary* in New York with about ninety representatives from Mennonite churches in the United States and Canada. Crossing the Atlantic provided opportunity for conversations with Mennonite friends, Youth for Christ leaders, and students.

In France, John was greatly impressed by war's destruction, the lack of good farm implements, and the many French cathedrals. The Arch of Triumph, the Eiffel Tower, the Sacred Heart Church, and Notre Dame Cathedral were but a few of the many sights he enjoyed in Paris. In his diary he noted that "part of the day was wasted on the war story of France-revolution, etc. Another waste

was the idolatry and darkness of the Catholic church. No wonder France is a second-rate nation."²⁷ Later he observed:

There is something about cathedrals and the form of worship that is here perpetuated, [which] fills one with the sense of the futility of it all. Thank God for those that He raised up to turn away from it. The gospel enlightenment that has beamed across the centuries to our day stands as a glittering, glowing rainbow of gospel hope in contrast to the dreariness of pagan worship as here witnessed.²⁸

He was not totally negative about France, however. As he passed through Alsace-Lorraine, he compared it with Pennsylvania. Horse teams and barn buildings reminded him of his Pennsylvania boyhood: "Saw lots of tobacco here in the Valley. They harvest here by pulling leaves from the bottom and taking into the shed to cure."²⁹

John's views of the World Conference and its value were mixed. On the one hand, he listened to excellent presentations about the Anabaptist witness. From various German, Swiss, Dutch, and French speakers, he learned much Anabaptist history. His visit to Zurich and to the Rhine River, where Felix Manz was drowned, was a "high point of the day's activities."³⁰

On the other hand, he listened to so many speeches and visited so many Mennonite churches, rest homes, and orphanages that he became allergic to their messages. His sharpest criticism was leveled at the meeting of the editors and publishers from the various countries. After stating that no agreements were reached about publishing goals, he noted the wide range of differences among the European Mennonite groups.

He observed some who were as conservative in dress and theology as some of their American cousins. But he also found Mennonites who smoked cigarettes, drank wine and beer, and who were anything but pacifists. And the Holland "Modernist" Mennonites were free to publish, even "if some question might exist as to the fundamental aspect of the article."³¹

After the conference, Hostetter visited more Anabaptist sites in Switzerland and Germany. Local people presented special music and dances, while Mennonite ministers and others lectured on local history. At St. Chrischona, the evening ended with a yodeling octet of Swiss men. Thrilled by the yodeling, a man from Michigan said to Swalm, "Won't it be wonderful in heaven?"³² Hostetter dutifully reported the comment but gave no hint of Swalm's response or his own emotional level when the singing ended.

Making new friends from Europe, Canada, and the United States was a real privilege for Hostetter. On the bus one evening, his seat partner was a Mennonite Brethren minister from Manitoba. They talked of many things, and John wrote, "I am more convinced than ever that some approach to study the possibility of working together should be undertaken." This was a "grand time of fellowship."³³

On occasion, Hostetter discussed with his family the potential advantages of cooperation with another denomination "of like theology." He saw the possibilities of strengthening the missions program, reducing administrative overhead, and becoming a more visible church on the national scene.³⁴ Apparently, his conversation on the bus had identified a group for such cooperation.³⁵

In early 1952, the Clarence Center congregation participated in a project sending heifers to needy families in Germany. In one of the highlights of Hostetter's trip, in Kirchartt, Germany, he visited the family who had received the heifer sponsored by Clarence Center. Of that visit, Hostetter wrote:

Paul Peachey and I went upstairs to the apartment. The lady was looking out of the window. When she turned about her face showed the lines of heartache that is on so many faces here in Germany. Paul Peachey told her who I was. Her face lightened and she took my hand and said over and over, "You are the man who sent us the cow." We then went to the barn to see the cow and it was led outside where numbers of pictures were taken. The glow of their faces was a memory never to be forgotten.³⁶

Hostetter published several reports of his travels in the *Visitor*. The destruction of World War II, the magnificence of the cathedrals, the lack of middle-aged men in Germany, the Hague Peace Palace as a symbol of man's futile search for peace, the absence of youth in the churches, and the impressive Anabaptist historical sites--all were brought to his readers' attention.³⁷

While it is difficult to assess the impact of the Conference on Hostetter's life, it was another faith-modifying experience. On numerous occasions after he returned home, he illustrated his sermons, evangelistic meetings, and informal talks to Sunday school and youth groups with pictures from his European trip.³⁸

The Sixth World Congress in Tokyo

Within a year of John's return from Europe, Nellie accompanied him in an evangelistic outreach campaign in Japan sponsored by Youth for Christ. Samuel Wolgemuth, a Brethren in Christ bishop from Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, had begun to work with Youth for Christ, was in charge of this crusade, and had invited them to join. The Hostetters participated with seven other Brethren in Christ ministers and lay persons in this evangelistic experience.

Hostetter was well aware of the need for evangelism and missionary activity in Japan. For several years, he had encouraged Pete Willms to pursue his vision for a Brethren in Christ missionary program in that country. Pete and his wife, Mary, seized the opportunity to work with the crusade and to begin the Brethren's work after the crusade.³⁹

This overseas experience was quite different from the European trip. Both countries were recovering from World War II; however, the basic Christian heritage of the European continent stood in sharp contrast to the oriental Buddhist and Shinto heritage of Japan. In an early evaluation of the country, Hostetter covered several topics in a few sentences:

Japan is a land of darkness, superstition, and sin. Before any change can be effected, the scales must be removed. The trains all run on time. This is a reading nation. Everywhere you look people are reading. They make the most with the least of any people I have ever seen. Gambling, prostitution, and vice of every description are rampant.⁴⁰

Unexpectedly, Hostetter discovered American young people supporting the crusade. In Tokyo, he was surprised at the number of servicemen in attendance. With Bibles under their arms, they evidenced a purpose of heart and soul to be Christians whatever their circumstances. John was troubled:

What about the spiritual counsel and guidance of these young men that are so terribly exposed to the viciousness of sin? I fear too often our attitude has been to write them off as gone and our follow-up has been very inadequate. Spiritual counsel must be provided and intercessory prayer on the part of the Church should constantly be exercised.⁴¹

Apparently, this was the first time Hostetter gave much thought to the church's responsibility for committed Christians in the armed forces. Their support of the crusade was a testimony to their Christian commitment. In another faith-modifying experience, he was newly aware of need for church ministry to those serving in the armed forces. However, the fact that one son and his son-in-law had just entered military service had already been much on his mind.

Following the large meetings at the World Congress in Tokyo, the Hostetters joined a small evangelistic team for meetings in several cities. Samuel Wolgemuth remembered:

John was one of the best communicators in those local evangelistic settings. He was loved and spoken of with deep appreciation by the people to whom he ministered. He always spoke with love and compassion. Little wonder really that several years later The Navigators who had charge of the follow-up of the evangelistic

evening meetings reported 4000 plus Japanese added to the local church.⁴²

Probably the high point of the Japanese trip was the visit to the newly established Brethren in Christ mission in Hagi. After many years of hearing of Bulawayo in Africa and Saharsa in India, he reported, the church would now hear of Hagi, another place of service. Before they left the islands on August 31, the Hostetters were thrilled to visit the home purchased by the Willmses.⁴³

In summary, during the five-year period 1949 to 1953, several experiences contributed to changes in the Hostetters' strict Brethren views. Although they continued to observe their conservative practices through the conclusion of their ministry in Clarence Center, the seeds of change had been planted in their minds.

The yearly attendance at the NAE convention had provided fellowship with a wide range of church leaders. The 1950 Conference Sermon had raised questions about traditional church practices. Overseas trips had broadened their view of the Christian world, provided a firsthand view of the futilities of war, and suggested the value of cooperating with others "of like faith." Along with interaction with family and congregation, these experiences were to change the Hostetters' ministry of the next thirty years.

CHAPTER 11

Concluding the Clarence Center Ministry

Remodeling the Church Building

The decade of the 1950s began with the Clarence Center congregation immersed in an extensive church remodeling program. Before the pastor resigned in 1954, two projects were completed, and the original 1877 building was transformed into a modern facility. Remodeling the physical plant was a fitting conclusion to the Hostetters' ministry in Clarence Center.

In 1944, six years before the project began, the pastor asked the congregation for a "place of worship on a par with the homes in which we live." Following the example of King Joash of Judah in the Old Testament (II Kings 12: 4-15), the congregation established a building fund called the Joash Fund.¹

When the campaign was announced, each family was given a cardboard bank in which to place offerings for the new building. At least once a quarter the banks were brought to a Sunday morning service and deposited in a beautiful mahogany Joash Chest crafted by Boyd Brown. The first offering on May 28, 1944, amounted to \$415. The 1945 financial report showed \$278 added to the fund.² Children and adults were caught up in the spirit of giving, and the offerings increased each year thereafter. In 1950, the year construction began, \$4,940.48 was contributed.³

Seven members of a planning committee met on January 8, 1946, to review the architect's drawings. Attention centered on the need for Sunday school rooms, space in the sanctuary, rest rooms, and a basement that could be used for general purposes.⁴ At later sessions, consideration was given to relocating the church in town,



John and Nellie Hostetter bid farewell to the Robert and Winifred Worman family on their sailing for service in Africa. With Robert Worman is Craig; with Winifred, Linda; with John and Nellie Hostetter, Kent and Scott.



The newly remodeled Clarence Center church at its dedication in 1954.

but eventually, the decision was made to remodel the original building.⁵

After years of planning and fund raising, the congregation broke ground in late April 1950. The men of the church did much of the work. In the supervision of the project, the new associate pastor, Paul E. Hostetter, an experienced builder and finish carpenter, worked closely with Hostetter and Ray Yoder, a local builder.

The completed building was dedicated in July 1951. Five Sunday school rooms, two new furnaces, new rest rooms, and a kitchen and dining area had been added to the original building. The sanctuary was replastered, and new windows, lights, ceiling tile, and carpet completed the project.

A highlight of the dedication program was Hostetter's presentation to the church of a new pulpit and altar rail. Crafted in the workshop of Charlie B. Byers, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, the light oak furniture was given by the Hostetter family as a tribute to John's Uncle Dave and Aunt Emma. Although neither had visited Clarence Center, they had supported the congregation by lending funds to build the parsonage in 1932, with a gift of \$1,000 for the remodeling effort in 1950, and through the giving of offerings for the general work. Their frugality in life provided for numerous mission offerings.⁶

Within a year of the 1951 dedication, several members discussed plans to renovate the church entrance. The newly remodeled sanctuary and the new Sunday school rooms contrasted sharply with the outdated entrance of the church. In late 1952, one of the members offered \$2,025 toward new construction.

With new money in hand, a January 1953 building committee offered three propositions to the congregation. The first suggested the money be used for another cause. Because the church still owed money on the renovation just completed, there was some opposition to borrowing more money for a second project.

The second proposition accepted the gift and proposed new construction, with indebtedness limited to \$6,000. The third

proposition added \$2,000 to the debt limit to purchase an organ. The report proposed a two-thirds affirmative vote of those in attendance to proceed with propositions two and three.⁷

In February 1953, Pastor Hostetter wrote to the manager of the Bank of Clarence, advising him of the remodeling plans, and projecting the need for approximately \$7,000. He also noted that, in eighteen months, the \$4,500 borrowed for the 1951 renovation had been reduced to \$1,800.⁸

In early 1953, a building committee made specific recommendations for the overall size of the new entrance, stairways to the sanctuary, the second floor nursery, and the pastor's office.⁹

A congregation business meeting was held on May 2. Because plans for the project had generated opposition, the final vote (twenty-two in favor of proposition one and twenty-five in favor of two and three) fell short of the two-thirds vote required to proceed. The vote stirred into action those who were planning for the building improvements.

On May 6, 1953, four days after the business meeting, Bishop Henry Miller (overseer), Pastor John Hostetter, and Deacon Joe Miller sent a letter to the members overturning the decision of the May 2 business meeting. Their principal concern was the votes cast by members with "long periods of absence from church service, nonparticipation in communion services and in some instances a militant attitude against the program of the church."¹⁰ They declared proposition three of the building committee report approved and that work on the building would begin as soon as practical.

However, within three weeks, the pastor and deacon issued another statement acknowledging imperfection in judgment and in grappling with situations through the years. Hostetter asked pardon for any references to church members who had declined the project for legitimate reasons.¹¹

Some members objected to the building program because the congregation was not giving enough money to missions. To meet that objection, the leaders scheduled a missions offering each

month. Other members objected to borrowing money for additional building expenses. To meet this objection, the leaders received an offering each Sunday other than the first Sunday for the building fund. To reduce costs of the project, the installation of the baptistry was postponed. Finally, the project was set to begin about June 10 or 15.¹²

To overturn the decisions of the congregational leaders, several members of the congregation contacted the denominational General Executive Board as well as the Bank of Clarence to block the borrowing of funds.

By mid-June 1953, the General Executive Board replied with acknowledgement of errors of the leaders. However, after careful investigation, they had determined that the building program should go forward. Their instruction to the congregation to vote again on borrowing money for the organ resulted in a congregational decision to exclude the organ from the building program.¹³ In October 1953, the General Executive Board wrote to the Bank of Clarence, authorizing the borrowing of up to \$6,000, the bank note to be signed by the pastor and treasurer.¹⁴

John Hostetter was much annoyed by efforts to influence the vote of the congregation. His irritation was reflected in a series of *Visitor* editorials in late 1953, in which he outlined the qualifications of church members for voting on church issues. He denounced family cliques, unscrupulous politicians, and self-asserting individuals who could obstruct the development of church life. In a list of voting qualifications, he included loyalty to the church, tithing, family piety, and adherence to church doctrines.¹⁵ Thus, difficulties with his own members led him to admonish to the entire denomination.

Pastoral Assistance and a New Minister

At least one time, the Hostetters resigned when they felt their work was not in the best interest of the church. The resignation was not accepted and they remained in Clarence Center.¹⁶

By 1945, through a questionnaire, John asked his members if he should continue in service. Then president of Ontario Bible School, he may have considered returning to formal education to better prepare himself for that office. His letter to the congregation expressed frustration with the minimal time he spent in visitation because of the duties of general church work and private business.

On the question of whether the pastor should be released in favor of another minister, only sixteen of more than fifty members replied, split equally on the question. When asked if the assistant pastor should come from inside or outside the congregation, the respondents overwhelmingly called for someone from outside.¹⁷ Although this questionnaire may have given some direction to the pastor, no action was taken for the next few years.

In 1949, the church council minutes referred to the 1945 survey approving the call of an assistant minister. A nominating committee recommended the appointment of Paul Hostetler from Massillon, Ohio. Paul had completed two years of college at Messiah College and, with his bride, Lela Swalm, daughter of Canadian Bishop E.J. Swalm, consented to locate in Clarence Center.¹⁸

Upon arrival, the new assistant minister was favorably impressed with the friendly people and the elder pastor's strong desire to penetrate the community. "I was conscious of the uphill battle we had in light of our conservative image, and purposed to do something to change it." Hostetler was also impressed with the attendance at the three services each week as evidence of the good preaching and teaching they had received over the years.¹⁹ The Hostetlers served the Clarence Center Church until they returned to Messiah College in the fall of 1952 to complete Paul's undergraduate degree.

In late 1953, John and Nellie Hostetter submitted their letter of resignation to the Clarence Center Church. Reviewing membership figures, contrasting offerings in 1929 with 1953, and recounting the building projects, the Hostetters thanked God and the congregation for "many, many occasions of blessing and

inspiration." They stated their intention to remain in Clarence Center for the foreseeable future.²⁰

The resignation was accepted by the congregation at the next council meeting. The congregation voted to pay Hostetter a salary of \$150 a month for the remaining months of his ministry. In the same resolution, an invitation was extended to Paul Hostetler and wife to serve as full-time pastor, beginning July 1, 1954.

In Hostetter's farewell sermon, he combined review of their twenty-five years of service with exhortation for greater accomplishments in the future and regrets for denominational shortcomings through its failure to advocate a supported ministry. Also, after reviewing his years of wrestling with the concept of "the separated, holy life of the Christian," he made an important statement on his conclusions:

[The Holy Spirit] did not direct people to us. We have so militantly promoted a way of life, sometimes to the degree that our emphasis beclouded the fact that Salvation is found in a person and not in a mode of life. When you meet the Lord Jesus Christ as a person and experience the personal touch of saving Grace, life becomes relaxed.

While I do not believe that the Holy Spirit will entrust people to a legalistic, regimented way of life that gives undue stress to a mode of life, neither do I believe the Holy Spirit will entrust people to a worldly, self-satisfying, fleshly minded group of so-called Christians.

Separation, simplicity and modesty are but outworkings of a genuine experience of saving Grace in the heart. Separation covers the area of my pleasure, the things I do and the places I go to achieve my personal delight. If a Christian delights in the sinful and questionable practices of the world, one concludes they are not separated and certainly are not an effective witness for Christ. A Christian who fails to pay his tithes and give offerings to the Lord is a worldly minded Christian. He is covetous and according to the Prophet Malachi is guilty of robbery.²¹

The Creekview Years

By mid-1954, the Hostetters moved into a new home on Creekview Drive in Clarence Center. With the Hostetters taking over the ministry of the local church, John and Nellie were relatively free to minister in the broader community and to concentrate on editing the *Visitor*.

Within a short time, their daughter, with her two boys, returned to live at home while her husband completed military service in the South Pacific. Norman, having completed his army duty at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, returned, with Lois, to Clarence Center in the spring of 1955. In the summer of 1955, Kenneth married Eunice Feather; they built a home on the other side of town. Within a year, the Wormans built a house on Creekview Drive, next to the Hostetters. They lived there during Dr. Worman's six-year surgical residency in Buffalo, New York.

Until the Hostetters moved to Indiana in late 1962, their home on Creekview Drive was the center of family activity. John's home movies of the grandchildren provided a wonderful record of the weekly family gatherings.

Perhaps the good will and respect the community held for the Hostetters was measured by the many times he was invited to speak in local churches from 1954 to 1961. Between many other speaking and administrative commitments, he spoke regularly at the Hunts Corners Baptist Church, Clarence Center and Harris Hill Evangelical United Brethren Churches, Clarence Methodist Church, Arcade Baptist Church, and the Clarence Center Mennonite Church. He also spoke often at his former church.

John continued his revival services throughout the Brethren in Christ churches. Many included promotional features for Brethren in Christ missions. To heighten awareness of missions and to raise funds for mission projects, he showed pictures from his travels.²² His emphasis on missions was evident also when speaking in the community churches.

Through his contacts over the years with other denominations, Hostetter was invited to speak in several churches in other towns. By the late 1950s, he conducted extended meetings in the United Missionary Churches of Listowell, Vineland, Toronto, and Stayner, Ontario, and the Mennonite churches of western New York, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. In 1958, he spoke for the first time at the business and professional men's meeting at Laurelville, Pennsylvania, a Mennonite businessmen's gathering to which he returned regularly through 1962.²³ He also spoke at such local meetings as Buffalo Youthtime and the Lime Lake Bible conference.

The sale of the family business in 1958 ultimately led to the exodus of the Hostetter family from Clarence Center. After working as a commission agent for Ashland Oil and Refining for several years, in December 1961, Kenneth, with his wife, Eunice, and their children, moved to Martinsburg, Pennsylvania, to work for Eunice's father, also in the petroleum business. Norman and Lois continued to live in Clarence Center while he taught history at Akron High School and pursued graduate studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo in preparation for service at Messiah College.

The Wormans' leaving for Africa early in 1962 was a time of joy for John and Nellie. For many years they, with their children, had planned for this occasion. And within three years, they visited the family in Africa.

On their last Sunday at Clarence Center Church, December 15, 1962, John spoke on "Be strong in the Lord." He sent to the Wormans a taped recording of the service and of the Christmas music program at the Evangelical United Brethren Church.²⁴

A new chapter in the lives of the Hostetters was about to begin in Nappanee, Indiana.

CHAPTER 12

Evangelical Visitor Editor

From 1947 to 1967, John Hostetter served as editor-in-chief of Brethren in Christ Church publications, including its major periodical, the bi-weekly *Evangelical Visitor*.¹ Until 1963, the editorial work originated in his Clarence Center home. The papers were published at the E.V. Publishing House (later, Evangel Press) in Nappanee, Indiana, to which he made frequent visits.

Hostetter was, of course, a part-time editor while living in Clarence Center. He pastored the Clarence Center Church until 1954, managed the gasoline business with his sons until 1958, served on denominational administrative committees, and conducted evangelistic services and other special meetings.

The 1947 decision of the Publication Board, the church agency responsible for the printing ministry, to appoint a part-time, inexperienced, non-resident editor was a testimony to their faith in Hostetter's ability. He had much to learn. Perhaps his loyalty to church doctrines was of greater importance to the board than his unproven editorial skills.

More On-the-Job Training

As noted, John seemed to accept new challenges to his life fairly regularly, even those for which he had no educational preparation or practical experience. Although he had no formal training for the ministry, he accepted the Clarence Center pastorate. He had no experience in the wholesale gasoline business when he purchased a marginal business in 1935. And he knew little of the operation of a school when he accepted the presidency of Ontario Bible School in 1945. His appointment to the editorship in 1947

continued this practice of accepting responsibility regardless of previous experience.

Hostetter's personal ambition was "to do the will of the Lord"; he was devoted to the ministry of the Brethren in Christ Church. He considered an invitation by church leaders to a position of service as a divine call and did his best to master the assignment. If the church leaders thought he could do the job, he felt responsible to accept. Apparently, if others issued an invitation for service, he was confident of his abilities in managing the job.

John had learned quickly the requirements for operating organizations on a day-to-day basis. He thrived on challenges which forced concentrated action. The preparation of sermons, the repair of an oil burner, or working through bookkeeping tasks were challenges to him. He was a self-starter, not one to shrink from challenges or long hours of work. Many sermon outlines were composed behind the wheel of a gasoline delivery truck.

And so it was with the editorship of the *Evangelical Visitor*. Nellie supported his decision to accept the assignment, but expressed dismay over his poor choice of words, awkward phrases, and incoherent ideas in a paragraph. For years, she had assisted in the writing of letters, official minutes of meetings, and articles. However, when he became editor, he refused her editing, making clear his desire to have his thoughts printed as written. But she continued as his behind-the-scenes secretary-stenographer.

When Hostetter became editor, he was no stranger to the pages of the *Visitor*. His first article was published in 1931, just two years after his ordination.² A year later he wrote an article on "fighting the good fight to claim the prize promised in Revelation 3."³ Over the next fifteen years, several of his General Conference or Sunday school convention talks were printed in the *Visitor*.⁴

However, this church assignment, more than any other, showed John's lack of educational preparation. His personality and ability to work with people, his acceptance of the church doctrines, and his Bible knowledge could not mask his unpolished diction and syntax

in writing. His pulpit ability to amplify sermon ideas did not transfer easily to writing for the printed page.

Perhaps Hostetter's initial success as editor was based on his knowledge of the church and its constituents. Although a novice in the editor's office, he was no stranger to the work of the church. Eighteen years' experience as a pastor and church leader provided a firm understanding of the church. Having traveled across the United States and Canada in evangelistic work, he knew many pastors and church members personally.

Hostetter acknowledged his lack of preparation. Having expressed his "deep sense of personal inadequacy" in his first editorial, he promised to present biblical truth from Brethren in Christ writers and speakers.⁵

John received reminders of his lack of editorial deficiency from well-meaning readers and colleagues. One congregational correspondent, after chiding the editor for sending a message through an intermediary, took the editor to task for his editing skills.⁶ He then said he would send subsequent material directly to the publishing house, where "it will . . . receive more intelligent treatment." Hostetter probably learned a good editorial lesson from that writer's admonition.

Later, an editor from the Baptist Conference Press scolded the editor for using "clipped" material from other papers for over seventy percent of two issues of the *Sunday School Herald*. "Is daylight robbery an established practice of the *Herald*?" He concluded by offering to make arrangements for legitimate exchanges with a number of papers.⁷

It was not the practice of the publishing house to reprint articles without adhering to prior agreements. When the apprentice editor violated that practice, the Baptist editor contributed to his understanding of editorial procedures.

In those first years of learning the work of the editor, the publishing house staff was supportive of the novice editor. Jacob G. Kuhns, Hostetter's first compiling editor in Indiana, and an experienced English professor, provided excellent advice through



In his new office after the remodeling program, Office Editor Ray M. Zercher, left, confers with John Hostetter on plans for the church paper.



In 1997, J. Norman Hostetter confers with the former Office Editor on the preparation of this account of his parents' lives.

1949. Ray M. Zercher, office editor from 1949 to 1962, was also an English teacher, as well as an artist skilled in layout and design. His keen eye for detail and his writing skills greatly enhanced the work of the Nappanee office.

John worked closely with the skilled managers of the E.V. Publishing House, Erwin Thomas and John Zercher. In later years, he also gave much credit to Clair H. Hoffman, manager of Christian Light Bookstores, for his advice and consistent support.

Without the backing and counsel of seasoned editors and managers, Hostetter would have experienced much greater difficulty learning the nuances of the editorial office and the publishing business. Those friendships established during editorial work remained long after their official relationships ended.

Managing the Editor's Office

Hostetter's employer, the Publication Board, also supported the editor-in-training. In the first year, the board received favorable reports from the constituency and commented on the forward steps of the editorial department. Observing that the paper was "spiritually feeding," the board said it belonged in every Brethren in Christ home.⁸

Hostetter was anything but a novice when it came to the business end of the editor's work. To the Publication Board, he voiced a major concern over the inability of the editor's office to pay its own way.

As a church leader, John knew of the persistent financial problems at the publishing house. Sales volume and subscription levels for the papers were too low to pay the expenses.⁹ Therefore, subscription fees and related income could not offset editing and printing costs.¹⁰ The editor realized that new subscriptions could produce some revenue for his office. So, with more promotion, *Visitor* subscriptions were increased, for which he received a commendation from the board.¹¹

After a brief period in the mid-1950s, when *Visitor* subscriptions declined, probably over dissatisfaction with the editor's messages and changes in paper format, Hostetter organized an annual subscription campaign involving the pastors of the churches. Pastors were encouraged to contact each member for new subscriptions or renewals. Gifts of inspirational books or credit at Christian Light Bookstores provided incentives for the pastors.¹² In 1961, the editor reported to the board that the ratio of *Visitor* subscriptions to the number of church members was "favorable when compared with other small groups."¹³

However, by the late 1950s, the editor's office was able to raise only half its operational funds. Prohibition of *Visitor* advertising and a hesitancy to raise subscription prices curtailed the editor's options for balancing his budget.¹⁴

Fortunately, for the editor and the Publication Board, the Christian Light Press (later named Christian Light Bookstores), ably managed by Clair H. Hoffman, was experiencing good sales growth and store expansion. By board decision, much of the profit from that venture was allocated for the editorial budget. For example, the 1955 editorial budget of \$45,150 required a subsidy of \$22,759, most of which Hoffman turned over to the Publication Board.¹⁵

Both for the propagation of truth and for reduction of subsidies, the editor also planned a wider distribution of the Brethren in Christ publications. Denominational membership in the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Holiness Association led the editor to search these constituencies for new markets. Ads were placed in the NAE periodical, *United Evangelical Action*, inviting churches to examine the church's publications, but with no apparent increase in sales.

In 1962, after considerable experience as editor, Hostetter addressed the Literature section of the Mennonite World Conference in Kitchener, Ontario, on the topic, "Financing Publishing." He said he considered tithes and offerings a legitimate source for subsidizing the publishing work. "It is a mistake to feel

that 'bricks and mortar' hold greater claim on the Lord's money than 'pen and ink.'"¹⁶

When the editor considered the sale of Brethren in Christ papers to other church groups, he judged some sectarian content unacceptable for non-Brethren audiences. Two editorial judgments--on the denominational dress code and the peace witness--led to differences with the Board for Young People's Work. Hostetter wanted less emphasis on these doctrines in papers offered to youth groups in other churches. Speaking his mind on the illustration of religious garb in a permanent page heading, the editor wrote, "One of our church weaknesses is and has been that rather innocently, we have allowed things of lesser importance, to become irritating issues and have endangered our being united in the great cause of evangelism and real spiritual leadership of the church."¹⁷ After an exchange of letters, the debatable heading was redrawn (the editor offering to pay the artist's extra fee), and articles on the peace witness appeared more often in the *Visitor* and less often in youth publications.

This exchange showed Hostetter's changing attitude toward the "ways of the Brethren" to propagate the Christian faith. However, during the early 1950s, he frequently exhorted his Clarence Center members to be cautious in their break with traditional practices. Although he was ready to modify the outward expression of the faith to attract others to the church, he expected his own members to follow the "ways of the Brethren."

The editor was also responsible for the text in the Sunday school lesson booklets. For forty years, the Brethren had purchased lesson material from the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottsdale, Pennsylvania. By arrangement, pre-publication galleys were sent to the editor to be edited in conformity to Brethren in Christ doctrine.¹⁸

Although some questions were raised about doctrinal differences, editorial relationships with the Mennonites were cordial. However, letter writers underlined points of differences--on

the holiness doctrine, for example--when the editor failed to rewrite certain passages.

On one occasion a pastor returned a page from the Sunday school lesson with this statement underlined: "Justification and sanctification can be separated only in the mind, not in experience. Both are two aspects of the same experience." Sanctification is completed when "we shall see Him as He is." This Mennonite perspective on holiness/sanctification was contrary to the Brethren's second-definite-work teaching. The pastor questioned the editor's approval and asked for a statement in the *Visitor*, affirming the denominational understanding of holiness.¹⁹

Seeking material more favorable to the Brethren's perspective, Hostetter showed interest in Wesleyan and Free Methodist publications.²⁰ Within a short time, a joint curriculum committee of the Publication Board and Sunday School Board reviewed the Sunday school literature. In August 1948, the committee met with several Mennonite representatives to discuss changes.

The committee also distributed a literature survey to Brethren in Christ Sunday schools. Respondents asked for more material written from the church's viewpoint, more illustrations, more pre-school material, more effective application of the lessons to life, and, of course, reduced Mennonite emphasis.

At a meeting of the curriculum committee, the editor judged the Wesleyan material to be in harmony with the Brethren's doctrine.²¹ However, before changing publishing organizations, the committee decided to review other denominational materials.

By October 1950, the Publication Board and the Sunday School Board jointly decided to purchase Sunday school literature from the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. The material satisfied the doctrinal issues (strong holiness emphasis, pre-millennial, baptism by immersion, no issue made for or against war, simplicity of dress). Thus, for unstated reasons, they did not follow the editor's earlier recommendation on the Wesleyan literature.

The switch in the source of Sunday school materials was the first major change in the publications of the church after Hostetter became editor. Later, he reported a satisfactory relationship with Christian Publications (the Alliance Publishing House) "with little need for changing any of the script for doctrinal conformity."²²

Regardless of the doctrinal compatibility of material from other sources, the editor expressed concern over the lack of denominational writers²³ and the need to purchase materials.²⁴

Perhaps to improve denominational materials, the editor asked several writers to compose a youth study document which promoted the basic tenets of the Brethren in Christ faith.²⁵ Whether the editor planned for additional Brethren documents is unknown; this was the only booklet completed by Brethren writers while he served as editor of denominational publications.

Improving Editorial Content and Long-Range Planning

As noted, Hostetter edited the church publications from his Clarence Center home from 1947 to 1963. After he concluded his Clarence Center pastoral work (1954) and sold his gasoline and oil business (1958), he maintained a heavy schedule of evangelistic meetings and other speaking engagements. Typical of a busy churchman of the time, he administered his activities in a day-to-day problem-solving style. This was also true of his approach to management in the editor's office.

Apparently, his ad-hoc procedures and his failure to make long-range plans left his staff uncertain of editorial direction. In late 1956, in a letter to the Publication Board secretary, Ray M. Zercher, office editor at Nappanee, expressed frustrations about several issues. Citing obscurity of purposes caused by uncritical performance of editorial routines, he asked for a restatement of purposes and policies of the publishing interests.²⁶

Along with several penetrating questions, Zercher proposed some straightforward answers. For example, to justify maintenance of denominational publication, he saw the need for a vigorous

editorial program with a well-defined editorial platform. He asked, "Do our readers not have the right to expect directive truth from our papers just as they might from their local pulpits?"²⁷

Relatedly, the office editor seriously questioned the continued deficit publication of the three Sunday school papers, the *Sunbeams*, *Youth's Visitor*, and *Sunday School Herald*, by then adapted for a wider readership. "Can we [keep] them innocuous and still produce that which is distinctive, positive and purposeful to our own people?"²⁸ He was also concerned with improvement in the writing style of the papers and for the development of denominational writers.

Apparently, Zercher's paper had an impact upon the secretary and board members with whom it was shared. At its November 1956 meeting, the board asked a small committee to prepare a statement of editorial policy for the board's approval. The committee included Ray Zercher, John Hostetter, the board secretary, and two other board members.²⁹

By March 1957, the editorial policy committee reported to the board, listing nine specific purposes for the *Visitor*.³⁰ They included these objectives for the editorial page: to promote denominational loyalty, including doctrinal teachings; to inform the membership on current religious movements; to expose heretical movements; and to interpret General Conference decisions on matters of polity. They granted the editor "freedom of action in interpreting these purposes." Thereafter, the Editorial Council served as a permanent advisory group.³¹

These guidelines forced the busy editor to consider more carefully the need for long-range plans for the *Visitor*. Within a few months, Hostetter presented such proposals to the Editorial Council for the following year. This annual projection of editorial strategy gave the council an opportunity to advise, adjust, or make additions.³² Reporting to the 1957 General Conference, the board secretary noted the importance of the Editorial Council in publishing the *Visitor*.³³

Apparently, Zercher's call for assessment of policies probably led to other important changes in the publication program. The publishing house soon discontinued printing the three Sunday school papers: the *Sunbeams*, *Youth's Visitor*, and *Sunday School Herald*. Since the *Sunday School Herald* had featured a page for denominational youth, then designated as Christ's Crusaders, the board authorized a new monthly periodical, the *Crusader*, to take its place, naming Ray Zercher editor.³⁴ The board also took a new interest in cultivating Brethren in Christ writers.³⁵

In the midst of coping with these new demands, the editor had his moments of comic relief. One of Hostetter's colleagues, Clarence W. Boyer of Dayton, Ohio, enjoyed indulging the playful humor they shared in common. The two were boyhood friends and members of important church committees in the 1930s and 1940s. Boyer also served as an assistant editor for the *Visitor*.

After reading a controversial article, Boyer wrote, "One person even wondered whether there might be some indication of the editor becoming senile!" On a postcard three days later, he explained, "I just wanted to make it crystal clear that I did not go along with the comment referred to in my letter suggesting a deterioration of the editor's mental faculties."³⁶

On another occasion, after a long treatise on typographical errors, two of which changed the meaning of a phrase, Boyer urged the editor not to rush out "and try to make some rash attempt to ban all future typographical errors. I doubt whether you would if you could, and of course you know as well as I do that you couldn't if you would."³⁷

In September 1962, John became full-time editor. At the urging of the Publication Board, in January 1963, the Hostetters moved to Nappanee.³⁸

When Hostetter's decision to leave Clarence Center in 1962 was announced, the local headline read, "Rev. Hostetter Leaving Clarence." Within a short time, he received a postcard from C.W. Boyer with the headline pasted at the top, and typed underneath "Oh No! Please Don't! You Can't Do This to Me!--Clarence."

Both men enjoyed close fellowship and association in later years at Messiah Village, the Church's retirement center.

The Indiana Lifestyle

The geographical distance from the children and grandchildren during the Hostetters' Nappanee years (1963-1972) changed their lifestyle somewhat. Their Creekview Drive home in Clarence Center had been filled with grandchildren. When they lived in Indiana, the Wormans were in Africa, the Norman Hostetters in New York and Pennsylvania, and the Kenneth Hostetters in Pennsylvania. Now frequent Sunday dinners at grandma's house were replaced by yearly visits of three or four days.

In Indiana, John developed his golf game. His children were amazed that, after years of little recreation, he actually took time to relax in this way. When family members visited their Indiana home, at least one game of golf was on the agenda. John's straight drives down the fairways easily outdistanced the more powerful slices of his sons! For the rest of his life, golf was his recreation. Many church friends--pastors, bishops, and laymen--enjoyed the game with him.

Also during this time, John joined the Kiwanas Club in Nappanee. Their regular luncheons provided a contact with the businessmen of the community. He often referred to information he received through their programs. Also, these contacts provided a setting for discussing community issues they faced in common.

Of great satisfaction to John during these days was his involvement in building the new Nappanee church. He served as chair of the building committee, spending many hours with church members refining the building plans. He would later be involved with the administration of the church as bishop of the Central Conference, in which Nappanee was located.

In 1965, John and Nellie visited overseas mission fields. Both were anxious to visit mission stations they had heard about all their lives. He wrote several editorials reporting his views of the

nationalistic spirit in both Zambia and Rhodesia. Of course, a top priority was their visits with their daughter, son-in-law, and four grandchildren at the Macha Mission Hospital in the southern province of Zambia. Nellie stayed in Zambia for several weeks after John left for visits to India and Japan.

In summary, Hostetter, a churchman with little writing experience, survived his early days of combat with words, phrases, paragraphs, proofreading, and editorial protocol. Inevitably, the publications reflected changes in the editor's own life, including his endorsement of a broader evangelical expression of the gospel. In the midst of undefined changes and a lack of stated purposes, his staff asked for a statement of editorial policy and careful planning in advance.

The Editorial Council and colleagues supported his vision, working with him to make more effective use of the editorial platform. Constructive criticism from his staff improved the organization and content of the *Visitor*, enhancing the presentation of the message he had come to represent.

CHAPTER 13

The Editor's Messages

John Hostetter's editorial messages encompassed twenty years of social, ministerial, and administrative adjustments in the Brethren in Christ Church. Generally, he advocated changes in policies and practices he thought would improve the declaration of the gospel. His messages encouraged the strengthening of congregations, a supported pastoral ministry, and congregational nurture which promoted personal Christian growth.

When he was appointed editor, Hostetter was a member of the Church's Indocctrination Committee.¹ As expected, he promoted the denominational doctrines. The retiring editor, Jesse Hoover, was also an avid supporter of the church's distinctive doctrines--separation, holiness, and the peace witness.² In his last editorial he declared, "If the Brethren in Christ Church is not to remain distinctive she has no good excuse to remain at all."³ In 1947, neither the retiring nor the incoming editor expressed a need for changes in church life, particularly as it was expressed in the separation doctrine.

The Publication Board's change in editors was probably caused more by preference for style than substance. Hoover's tone was critical and judgmental, particularly taking to task church members who joined the church but refused to follow its doctrines. This "acerbic tone . . . characterized much of his writing, [and] contributed to his leaving his post as editor."⁴ Although the church leaders were not open to major changes in 1947, they may have been ready for greater tolerance by defenders of the "ways of the Brethren."

Hostetter's *Visitor* agenda included the Brethren in Christ interpretation of biblical truth and proposed responses to current

events.⁵ Self-discipline, prayer, the dangers of the use of tobacco, military preparedness as a deterrent to war, and the dangers of communism were addressed during his first year of editorial service.⁶ There was no evidence of a challenge to the separation doctrines of the church.

The first influences on Hostetter after assuming the editorship included his friendship with leaders of the National Association of Evangelicals,⁷ the National Holiness Association, and Youth for Christ.⁸ These contacts broadened his evangelistic outlook. Firsthand information about other ministries led to judgments about the effectiveness of the Brethren's ministry.

As noted, Hostetter's family, Clarence Center congregation, and world travels in the early 1950s contributed to a spiritual unrest. That unrest led him to search for a modified definition of the "ways of the Brethren" to improve the presentation of the gospel to the local community.

This spiritual unrest shaped his editorial messages for ten to twelve years. There were two basic areas he considered vital to denominational progress: congregational growth and development, including church members' spiritual growth, and the education and support of pastors. On occasion, he also offered comments on world events and the social conditions in America. The latter topic led to frequent references to the imminent return (second coming) of the Lord. Significantly, he wrote little about the separated life or the "ways of the Brethren."

Congregational Growth and Development

Early in his editorial work, Hostetter declared the local congregation the strength of the denomination. Without discounting missions, he saw strong congregations as the base to carry the non-paying (monetarily speaking) load of missions and outreach. To maintain strong programs overseas, he challenged the idea "that the 'well-spent' money in our churches is the money we

send away from home.”⁹ Missions and evangelistic outreach could not thrive unless the home base was strong, he said.¹⁰

The overall program of the congregations received frequent attention from the editor. He encouraged Sunday schools to be aggressive in contacting potential attenders.¹¹ In 1950, when the National Sunday School Association promoted revival to counter communist attacks on Christian youth, he urged each Sunday school to join the revival. “Prayer, counsel, and visitation should be strongly manifest in the program.”¹²

Youth work in the church was a high priority. If adults led the way, he said, “youth become deeply spiritual and devoutly consecrated.”¹³ Local church leaders were urged to employ youthful talents in church work.¹⁴ He also cautioned youth workers to be careful of the methods employed for relating the Christian experience to children.¹⁵

Of course, the local church members were the lifeblood of the congregation. Hostetter’s basic tenet for the members’ Christian life was a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, “which makes Him a partner in all phases of my life.”¹⁶ If he preached one Brethren in Christ doctrine above others, it was the need for a personal experience of salvation which changed behavior and outlook on life.

As the Brethren in Christ congregations were finding their way through the 1950s changes in the expression of the gospel, Hostetter was not shy in criticizing substandard Christian behavior. He cautioned everyone to demonstrate forbearance:

To effectively promote goodwill some of us need to pray to be delivered from a rigid traditionalism that is intolerant to change, while some of us need to pray to be delivered from a passion that change is the answer to all of the seeming inadequacies of the past.¹⁷

Warning of man-made interpretations of Scripture, the editor continued, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink. I may dot every ‘i’ and cross every ‘t’ of regulation detail and be minus any heart throb for souls that are lost.”¹⁸

In a rather unsophisticated, but understandable admonition, the editor wrote about self-discipline:

It includes times when an individual places himself in a corner and talks to himself in certain very resolute terms. Failures in school, in church work, and defeatism in Christian living can be traced to the lack of self-discipline. The undisciplined tongue, failure to attend church meetings, failure to give the tithe, and the use of money for purchases not in keeping with Christian virtues are examples of the lack of self-discipline. Lives that have left a Christian impact on society have evidenced the rigors of self-discipline.¹⁹

The editor also had words for Christians who never "get past the point of an inner struggle. Constant occupancy of time with one's self and its interest is an endless circle, which, if never broken through, renders us useless in the larger sphere of life."²⁰

The importance of the church family, a warning against materialism, and admonitions on spiritual mindedness are further examples of the editor's instructions to his readers. Christian service, that is, providing a human service for others, was high on his list of worthwhile activities, particularly for young people.

Attitudes in giving did not escape the editor's attention. Declaring an offering was for the glory of God and not just another tax deduction, he stated, "Christians do things because they are Christians; they don't do things to make themselves Christians."²¹

Hostetter measured church loyalty by regular attendance, tithing, contributing talents to the church's spiritual program, and prayer for the pastor.²² Religious sniping when combined with shoddy performance in the church program was a deterrent to church growth, he said.²³ Members must live different from non-Christians and must project an image which draws people to the church.²⁴

In summary, Hostetter saw strong congregations as the foundational support of effective evangelism in the United States, Canada, and overseas. He advocated a variety of programs and the building of more congregations to support missions and other

outreach efforts. His editorials neither championed nor denigrated the "ways of the Brethren" as the true practice of the Christian in congregational life.

Pastoral Growth and Development

Of equal importance to the editor in the church's program was the development of full-time educated pastors. Twenty-five years of pastoral work and many evangelistic efforts, Bible conferences, and love feast occasions provided a practical base from which he made recommendations. These experiences, more than any carefully worded philosophical or theological positions, convinced him of the need for educated pastors and a congregationally supported ministry. In his judgment, both were prime ingredients in the improvement of congregational life.

Hostetter knew of the struggle to work full-time and to serve a congregation properly. When the pastor must work, he said, "something must suffer and in most cases it is . . . church leadership."²⁵

The editor set high standards for ministers:

They should strive to be free of the human element, clear of prejudices, tender and Christian in spirit, Biblical and illuminating in the declaration of truth [through] prayer, Bible study, Holy Spirit unction and sometimes a human check-up which may be a bit jolting but will help to keep us in line.²⁶

In the early 1950s many of the young people graduating from the church's colleges were accepting overseas assignments. Hostetter understood the call to missions overseas, but did not appreciate the drain of talent from the church in America: "When we exalt the work of the pastor to be on the same level of the evangelist and the missionary, we will have come into an era when new growth in congregational life will appear. . . ."²⁷

By additional means, Hostetter actively recruited young people to the ministry. In the 1950s, he addressed the Regional

Conferences and recruited new pastors. In 1956, with Bishop Henry Miller, he visited Messiah College to review the ministry with students. His two addresses, "Looking Ahead in the Pastoral Program" and "The Urgency of the Hour," reiterated the significance and urgency of pastoral work.

Speaking at the Allegheny Conference on "Leadership Training" in 1958, he urged pastors to build leaders at the congregational level through Bible study and prayer.²⁸ His selection as bishop of the Central Conference in 1968 permitted him to continue his efforts to work with young pastors and to build stronger congregations.

With all of his experience in conducting revival services, Hostetter took license to outline an evangelistic primer for the pastors. Personal convictions should be minimized, he said, and clearly labeled as such. Evangelism should result in an assault on Satan, baptism of new converts, and numerical increases in the church.²⁹

After more than ten years of work with the national associations, the editor raised several questions about the Brethren's evangelistic campaigns. What constitutes evangelism? Should the protracted meeting be six, five, or four weeks in length? Is it revival when church members line the altar night after night? Is it the time to present opinions and ideas as biblical truth? What is the relationship of revivalism to evangelism? Why are the Calvinist groups establishing more churches than the Arminian groups? "... Unless the Lord helps us to find the proper answers ... there is grave danger that revival meetings as we know them will pass."³⁰

The editor's association of a question about "night after night" trips to the altar with his observation on the success of Calvinist groups leads one to speculate about his conclusions. His association with other churches forced him to ask difficult questions. However, in future issues of the *Visitor*, readers looked in vain for answers to those questions.³¹

Hostetter extended his pastoral advice to the wider administrative body. In 1948, perhaps from certain tensions he was experiencing, the editor asked each delegate to General Conference to practice "second-blessing holiness" by exhibiting charity, kindness, and consideration for each other.³² By the next year, he became more instructive:

There are times when a certain interpretation of truth means much to one personally, but there is danger we violate some other vital phase of truth when we assume the attitude that it must be the interpretation that prevails. . . . May the Lord give us wisdom that "certain details" do not become our major emphasis, for in so doing, we confuse the Lord's work instead of directing it.³³

In 1952, with the changes in the dress code on the agenda, he reminded the delegates that constituents were watching their deliberations. Two dangers in church administration were noted: detailed directives which caused people to turn away, and little guidance which left the believer without a scriptural walk.³⁴

By 1954, the direction of the denomination toward less prescriptive mandates, particularly in the separation doctrine, was evident. In a post-Conference editorial, the editor reported the significant decisions, including the instructions to the bishops to proceed with plans for a supported ministry, the adoption of a conference budget, and the acceptance of believer's (adult) baptism from other denominations.³⁵ He provided little commentary; perhaps his desire for church unity kept him from expounding on the changes.

In summary, Hostetter's love of the pastorate and his personal experiences convinced him of the importance of well educated congregational leaders who devoted full time to their work. His association with national groups also broadened his base for questioning the effectiveness of the Brethren's evangelistic efforts.

Comments on Events Outside the Church

Events in the Middle East, the scientific success of "godless communism" during the 1950s, and various incidents and activities in American government and society received attention from the editor's pen.

Hostetter became editor just a few months before the Jews returned to Palestine. Noting the rapid changes in the Middle East, he wrote about the fulfillment of prophecy, the coming Battle of Armageddon, and Christ's return to the Mount of Olives. He doubted the ability of the earth to survive one more decade.³⁶

The 1951 Iranian oil crisis triggered an editorial response. With the threat of a cutoff in oil supplies to western Europe, the editor speculated on Russia's effort to control the oil reserves.³⁷ Five years later, while attending the Richfield Oil Corporation convention, he listened to columnist Bob Considine speak about the Jews making the desert "blossom like the rose." Responding, this time the editor wrote of "things falling in place for the end times."³⁸

Hostetter's last Middle East comment followed the Israeli-Arab war of June 1967. Again, he concluded "these events happening right before our eyes are some of the most meaningful moves in human history." "Be ready" and "Occupy until I come," he said, were the most important preparations for Christ's second coming.³⁹

Russia's space achievements in the 1950s were very disturbing to the editor. In his judgment, Sputnik signified atheistic Russia's superiority in scientific research over Christian America.⁴⁰ Citing the vast amounts of defense expenditures, he declared the United States a second-rate nation. With the Church's security in the gospel, he stated "the only hope for 1958 is CHRIST."⁴¹

Hostetter's most favorable comment about political personalities was reserved for Dwight David Eisenhower. On one occasion he noted that Eisenhower believed in prayer and had attended a Brethren in Christ Sunday school as a boy.⁴² Later, he

reported Eisenhower's effort to let Moscow know the United States wished to live in peace.⁴³ He seemed to take pride in the president's Brethren in Christ heritage.

Of course, the editor commented on the death of John F. Kennedy. "How quickly material things appear unimportant. Sympathy and understanding rise above political antagonisms and religious differences. Hopefully, the darkness, heartache, and frustration of this experience will not be in vain."⁴⁴

Pessimistic about national and international events, the editor admonished believers to "remain steadfast." Somber about society's ability to survive until the end of the twentieth century, he was sure of the return of the Lord in his lifetime.

Challenging the Editor's Messages

The changes in appearance and content of the *Visitor* met with opposition from longtime members of the church. The addition of color to the cover and the use of pictures which did not illustrate the dress practices of the church prompted a number of letters to the editor. Critics observed that the tone of the articles also appeared to be less testimonial and more topical. Articles promoting the separation and holiness doctrines appeared less frequently. While he was concerned for church unity in a time of fundamental change,⁴⁵ the editor was broadening the appeal of the *Visitor* to a wider audience.

By 1956, proponents of the separation doctrine and the Wesleyan interpretation of holiness were urging the church leaders to change the editorial messages. For example, at the Ohio-Kentucky council meeting, M.L. Dohner, bishop emeritus of Miami District in northern Ohio, noting the lack of articles on these doctrines, said he believed this shortcoming caused some members to drop their *Visitor* subscriptions.

When the editor asked Dohner to clarify his comments, Dohner said other church papers were much more in demand because they contained more teaching on Bible doctrine. He added, "[When I

spoke at the council meeting] there was strong expression of assent from the audience . . . and many spoke to me following the service concerning this lack of adequate doctrinal material."⁴⁶

In response to criticisms received, the Publication Board met with four bishops to discuss such criticisms. The principal issues they discussed were the lack of the Wesleyan approach to holiness, too strong an emphasis on the problems which the church faced, and the need for a stronger denominational emphasis. Later, the board met with the editor, who restated his intention to serve the church in accordance with her guidance.⁴⁷

The most carefully worded criticism came from Albert Engle, a professor of Bible at Messiah College. A well-known mission worker, evangelist, and forceful proponent of holiness, Engle had conducted revival services several times at Hostetter's church. Now he concluded that the editor's policy was geared for the general Christian public rather than toward the "promotion of the Gospel Message as officially interpreted by the Brethren in Christ Church."⁴⁸

To resolve the issue, Engle recommended the appointment of a geographical representation of assistant editors. He also wanted the Publication Board to choose editorial personnel who were more closely associated with general church life and who received ministerial credentials from the denominational Ministerial and Examining Board.⁴⁹

In September 1956, what was called the Editorial Council was convened. Since there is no record of this council in the Publication Board minutes, it might be assumed that Hostetter convened it for editorial guidance.⁵⁰

The council agreed that the editor must have full freedom to speak and interpret the church's message, and to determine the future direction of the publications. However, they also offered some suggestions on the use of the editorial page to alert the readers to pending issues. They advised that overcoming some readers' prejudices might be done more easily if the "bitter medicine" (undefined) were administered in smaller doses.⁵¹

Noting the scarcity of able writers to advocate church doctrines, the council discussed strategies for developing good writers through the schools and colleges. Subscription drives, the "Missions" section, obituaries, the "Preacher's Page," and other sections were analyzed. The secretary of the council also noted their greater appreciation for the work of the editor and his staff.⁵² Later, the editor reported the council's "close" analysis of the *Visitor's* interpretation of the decisions of General Conference.⁵³

Within the next year, one holiness editorial was printed,⁵⁴ but the subjects and content of the editorials after the Editorial Council meeting changed very little.

Moving On

Both the church and its social milieu made enormous changes in lifestyles during Hostetter's editorial years. He noted the church had experienced a time of searching that gave priority to the Word, a clear presentation of the Gospel, and a service ministry. In his final editorial, he recounted the changes and welcomed the opportunity to work closely with pastors and congregations as the bishop of the Central Conference.⁵⁵

Perhaps Hostetter's greatest service as editor of the church's publications was his willingness in 1950 to question the church's legalistic practices and the effectiveness of its witness. His editorials stressed the need for strong congregations, dedicated, supported ministers, and committed believers. There were strong reminders of what constituted the heart of the church.

In 1967, through a Publication Board report, the church acknowledged Hostetter's services as editor-in-chief: "His service . . . has brought his ministry into the churches, our Sunday Schools, and through the *Visitor* into the intimate confines of our homes. We thank God for this ministry."⁵⁶

CHAPTER 14

The Central Conference Bishop

Accepting New Responsibilities

The early 1967 report from the Bishops' Nominating Committee listed John Hostetter as the nominee for the denomination's Central Conference.¹ Before this report, John was listed as one of two alternates to the five nominees. When the other nominee declined the appointment, he became a finalist.²

When contacted by the committee's secretary, John stated his preference to remain in Indiana. Because of his long absence from the Pennsylvania churches, he declined an eastern assignment. His preference led to the Central Conference assignment.³

After thirty-nine years of ministry in the Brethren in Christ Church, John Hostetter was appointed to a five-year term as bishop (overseer) of the Central Conference. He also assumed the office of moderator (presiding officer) of the General Conference for the 1967-68 conference year.⁴

After he accepted the responsibilities of his new office, Hostetter said he found himself overwhelmed "with the confidence expressed, opportunities given, and sacred responsibilities" vested in him. Foreseeing "the gravest of possibilities and the direst of uncertainties" surrounding the upcoming General Conference year, he asked for support from "people who face up to the odds of today with vigor and spiritual strength."⁵

In sharp contrast to his preparation for earlier church assignments, Hostetter brought a wealth of experience to this assignment. His lengthy pastoral service provided a basic knowledge of the daily experiences of local ministers. For years he had served on commissions, committees, and councils to examine



The entire Hostetter family gathers in 1968; front, from left: Jay Hostetter, Lois Hostetter with Kim, John and Nellie Hostetter, Winifred Worman, Robert Worman; back: Norman Hostetter, Kenneth Hostetter, Steven Hostetter, Debra Hostetter, Eunice Hostetter, Kent Worman, Linda Worman, Craig Worman, and Scott Worman.



After being newly inducted as Central Conference bishop in 1957, John Hostetter, stands with his fellow bishops; from left: H.A. Ginder, Roy V. Sider, Arthur M. Climenhaga, C.B. Byers, and John Hostetter.

and re-examine what it meant to be Brethren in Christ. He spent many hours with church leaders restructuring church administration. Now, as a pastor/administrator, he was asked to lead the next generation of pastors and church members.

The bishop was a pastor to pastors. He conducted preaching missions, and held administrative sessions with congregations and church boards. He also served as chairman of regional and national conference boards and missions. Through membership on the Board of Bishops, he joined in church-wide administrative duties and decisions.⁶ In addition, Hostetter served as denominational representative to NAE from 1965 to 1974.⁷

In 1967, the Central Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church comprised the states of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin, with thirty-six churches and 1,113 members. The Sunday school attendance averaged about 2,100, and the total offerings were over \$388,000. Four of the congregations listed more than fifty members; the remainder ranged in membership from two to forty-nine. More than half the members (609) attended thirteen churches in Ohio.⁸ Two churches--Chicago, Illinois, and Shanesville, Ohio--listed property values, but no members or offerings. The Conference increased by sixty-three members in 1967, the largest increase in ten years, and the last year of Bishop Carl Ulery's service.⁹

The Bishop's Agenda

Bishop Hostetter wasted no time in instructing and admonishing his pastors and church leaders. One month after his appointment, he chaired his first Regional Conference meeting and preached the conference message. Taking the opportunity, he resumed the messages from his editorial work. Referring to I Corinthians, he summarized Saint Paul's dedication of himself to preach or minister. He stated that people were Paul's primary concern, and urged the pastors to look for measures of success in their ministry.¹⁰

The bishop amplified each point with some familiar phrases. He exhorted the church leaders to deepen their dedication to their divine call. Noting differences among members, he said the words which convince some of their need for salvation may not convince others. He returned to the use of statistics, noting that an overall loss of Central Conference members between 1957 and 1965 had raised questions about congregational effectiveness.

Although he had no aversion to small groups, he said, he could not understand why a church did not grow. His message concluded with, "May we never be guilty of rationalizing our failures by attempting to enumerate the compromises of successful churches around us. Busy, successful Christian workers have little time to criticize, but plenty of time for appreciation and thanksgiving."¹¹

Community evangelism was a top priority in his life. At the 1969 Regional Conference meeting, the bishop observed that institutional church life often found Christians singing, praying, and testifying to one another. "Do each of us have enough sinner friends?"¹²

The bishop's agenda for his pastors and churches was outlined in several manuscripts he prepared during his five-year term of service. Some were written to instruct pastors and church boards, others as reports to his Board of Directors or to the denominational Board of Administration. These papers summarized forty-three years of work as a pastor, evangelist, teacher, editor, and administrator.

At the 1970 Regional Conference meeting, Hostetter charged the pastors and the church boards to exercise leadership roles in church life. The spiritual life of members was his first concern, he said. He also highlighted the importance of a neat and attractive, up-to-date facility.

Hostetter continued with a review of the church's administrative decisions, including the pastor's salary, reimbursement to the pastor for entertaining church guests, and the need for adequate and up-to-date church supplies and equipment.

He was also concerned about part-time pastors finding suitable employment.¹³

In a paper assigned by the Board of Bishops, "Membership in the Brethren in Christ Church," Hostetter referred to the denominational Membership Covenant, giving instructions for implementing it. The church is not an organization, he said, but an organism based upon love. He believed the degree of love determined the level of fellowship, that love strengthened the bond of members.

However, within the fellowship, said Hostetter, the individual's conscience must have room to express itself. One should "extend the same kind of consideration and forbearance to others [that] I need."¹⁴ He concluded that individual differences could result in various expressions of the gospel.

As noted, the Hostetters continued to live in Nappanee, Indiana, a considerable distance from the more scattered churches in Wisconsin and Tennessee. But, with his wife, he traveled by automobile to visit churches in all seven states, spending many hours on the road during his administrative assignment. At the end of his term, the burden of travel was one factor which caused John to consider other avenues of service.¹⁵

On these visits, the bishop and his wife consulted the pastor and family, and usually the church board. At times, John conducted three- or four-day services at the church.¹⁶

One pastor remembered that he "visited the church in Dayton, Ohio, two or three times a year [and] was instructive (with humility); he was a good listener and available when needed."¹⁷ His pastors found him easy to work with, helpful in speaking words of encouragement and guidance, "a mover" if he sensed the program was "dragging."¹⁸ "Unusual grace and wisdom marked Bishop John's ministry," said another.¹⁹

At least one seminarian sensed Hostetter's desire "to move beyond some of the cultural conservatism characteristic of the church's past toward mainstream Protestantism."²⁰ An unhappy "holiness" experience at Messiah College had led the student to

choose the Mennonite Seminary at Elkhart, Indiana. He thought Hostetter would have been happier if he had attended elsewhere.²¹

Several pastors commented on his advice to church boards, his encouragement to young ministers to seek ordination, his advice for settling controversies between the conservative Brethren and the more liberal young people, and his role in the development of family life in the parsonage.²² "[John] was always one who I felt was on my side . . . [John and Nellie] were powerfully supportive and affirming of our young and very green pastoral family."²³

Without exception, the former pastors of the Central Conference responding to the writer's requests for information, expressed deep affection for John and Nellie when they visited. They also found a warm welcome for their families at the Hostetter home in Nappanee.

On occasion, after a weekend of services, the bishop found time for golf on Monday. Golfing with the pastor was a time of fellowship and informal discussion of church programs. Said one pastor, "Bishop John Hostetter had a powerful ministry under the direction of God; he set a good example and had an influence in my life and others like me; therefore, part of his ministry is still with the church today."²⁴

Central Conference Administrative Actions

The administrative work of Bishop Hostetter followed the spiritual messages noted above. He was looking for growing spiritual congregations and a church program that nurtured members in their Christian walk. A Bible-centered ministry which cannot "be stereotyped into a single pattern of observance" was a high priority, he said. "Adequate facilities, rightly [located], bear a significant relationship to a meaningful church program in today's world."²⁵

Hostetter also cautioned about the future of "dwindling or status-quo congregations. This is not meant to dishearten or discourage," he said. "It does mean that vision from within coupled

with spiritual dynamic and know how, has only a limited time to reverse long standing trends [of static membership]."²⁶ One of his colleagues noted his ability to be "very frank" when the occasion demanded.²⁷

Of course, not all congregations showing small attendance or little increase in membership were seen as devoid of spiritual programs, or fervor. For example, at the Chicago mission on Halsted Street, the Carl Carlson family had served the community with love and compassion for many years. However, changes in the inner city neighborhood forced the mission to close in 1966.

In the summer of 1967, General Conference transferred the mission to the Central Conference with the hope of beginning a new ministry. A team of young workers was sent to establish a recreational, social, instructional, evangelistic, and pastoral ministry.²⁸ After working for nine months, the effort was abandoned and a lease was executed with an inner-city ministry, Young Life.²⁹

However, after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., conditions in Chicago became very difficult. After Young Life discontinued their work, the Black Disciples occupied the mission building. With them in residence, no buyers could be found for the property. Fire damaged the property in May, 1971, and the insurance settlement did not meet the costs of repairs. The building was razed in December, 1971. The good intentions and best plans of the bishop and his Board of Directors had not met the requirements of the overwhelming inner-city agenda.

Other property changes were made in Hostetter's bishopric. After purchasing a parsonage for the pastor and family at the Dearborn Church in Michigan,³⁰ the bishop was forced to close the church because of a "growing crisis."³¹

This experience emphasizes that the image of a church in a given area is very significant. If a church fails in its ministry to those nearby, the laborious task of changing the image of the church must be faced. If not, sooner or later the church's ministry will come to naught.³²



The new Brethren in Christ church building in Nappanee.



In a farewell to his duties as bishop of the Central Conference and as Conference moderator, John Hostetter addresses the General Conference body at West Milton, Ohio, in 1972.

Several other church properties were sold during Hostetter's tenure. The church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, was closed when the Brethren in Christ families moved from the area. The Shanesville, Ohio, property was sold to the Church of God, renters of the property since 1964. A property was sold for relocation purposes, and another because of poor prospects for reopening.³³

After careful planning and a lengthy period of construction, Hostetter was pleased to attend the dedication of the new Western Hills Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1971.³⁴ Reports of other church relocations and remodeling attested to the bishop's success in conference renewal by revitalizing facilities.

As noted, Hostetter had raised questions on the ability of the Brethren in Christ Church to support all of the institutions established in earlier years. He doubted that a small denomination could continue to provide well-prepared workers and the financial support needed to update existing ministries and to develop new programs.

Hostetter's predecessor in the Central Conference, Carl Ulery, had explored with the Missionary Church Association joint ownership of Camp Lakeview, a Brethren in Christ Central Conference camp. Completion of this agreement lifted a heavy burden of investment and financial subsidy from the Central Conference; it also improved the level of use during the camping season. Under an able board of directors, it was a thriving program when Hostetter left the Conference in 1972.³⁵

The Board of Bishops

Hostetter's church-wide administrative work, after his one year as moderator, was accomplished primarily through the Board of Bishops. With their wives, they met quarterly in different regions of the church, many times in the homes of the bishops.

At these meetings, each bishop presented a general review of his conference. The bishops prepared congregational and pastoral report forms, discussed the reports from such organizations as the



At their Nappanee home, the Hostetters entertain friends from Africa, Naison Moyo and Sampson Mudenda.



After retirement at Messiah Village, John and Nellie Hostetter appear with fellow residents who were also retired bishops and wives; from left: John and Nellie Hostetter, Henry and Martha Ginder, Arthur and Lona Climenhaga, B.E. and Mary Ellen Thuma, David and Dorcas Climenhaga, C.B. and Ruth Byers, and Henry and Beula Hostetter.

Pension Fund Trustees, and shared advice on specific issues. Pastoral assignments occupied much of their time.³⁶ Hostetter counseled at length with his colleagues about a lawsuit with one of the Central Conference ministers over ministerial credentials.³⁷

It is of interest to note in the record of one of the meetings the job description of the bishops. Apparently, there was tension over decisions of the bishops which appeared to usurp the duties of church-wide administrative groups. The discussion was probably triggered by a report from the Study Committee on Priorities in the Responsibilities of the Bishops.³⁸ The report reminded the bishops of the need for sharing authority with the Board of Administration and other conference-wide committees.

The bishops assumed responsibilities for specific administrative areas of the church. For example, Hostetter worked with Evangel Press in expediting printing and distribution of materials endorsed by the bishops. Membership packets were developed. Other assignments included his defining the difference between Christian and secular pacifism.³⁹

Hostetter's five-year assignment as overseer brought to a close his direct administrative relationship with the General Conference and many administrative bodies. His final Central Conference message, "Keeping Priorities in Line," combined historical discourse and biblical exhortation. Using themes expressed throughout his ministry, he concluded by stressing the need to love people to win them. At times, the sermon was complex, but essentially, it was the simple gospel message he had delivered on countless occasions.⁴⁰ Perhaps he saw this as a final opportunity to declare what he had learned in his ministry.

A Final Assignment

At the 1972 General Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church, Hostetter's next assignment was announced. He would serve as Director of Development for Messiah Home, a church agency caring for the elderly. Looking forward to relocation of the

home, the Messiah Home Board was "grateful for the services of this church statesman in this project."⁴¹ Accepting the assignment, and showing his sense of humor, Hostetter told the conference members he was going "to prepare a place for them."

Hostetter had served as the host bishop for that General Conference. On the back of a conference program, he scribbled a few departing remarks. Once again, relying on his sly sense of humor, he considered his role as host bishop a real privilege and "opportunity to tell the two largest conferences in the Brotherhood what to do!"

CHAPTER 15

Updating the Retirement Ministry of the Church

In Transition

In 1972, John Hostetter, at age sixty-eight, as Director of Development for Messiah Home, began his last major assignment for the Brethren in Christ Church.¹ In this position he became the principal link between the Home's Board of Trustees and the church pastors and congregations in a fundraising effort for the building of new nursing facilities.²

Anticipating a return to Pennsylvania, the Hostetters purchased land for a home on the outskirts of Carlisle from their longtime friend and church co-worker, R.H. Wenger. Because Carlisle was the planned site for the new facility, that location was deemed suitable for fundraising efforts in eastern Pennsylvania. In July 1972, the Hostetters moved from Nappanee into their newly built home at 518 Biddle Drive in Carlisle.

This assignment was Hostetter's first effort to raise a large sum of money for the church. His only previous experiences were at the congregational level, first at the Clarence Center Church, then at the Nappanee Church. Several times he had solicited the Canadian churches for funds for Ontario Bible School, Ontario camp meeting, or Messiah Bible College. On at least one occasion, he had refused his brother Christ's request for large blocks of time for college fundraising.³

The Task Defined

In 1969, the Messiah Home Board of Trustees reported to General Conference the need for a modern facility. The Paxton

Street Home, built in 1935, had been inspected regularly by Pennsylvania state agencies and was found deficient. Now the trustees were under great pressure to update the facility. Nursing care facilities were out-dated, and the entire building was in need of modernization. Encroaching commercial development and limited space for home expansion contributed to the decision to relocate.⁴ Anticipating the move, the trustees purchased property on the outskirts of Carlisle, about thirty miles from the Harrisburg location.

In 1971, the trustees answered a number of questions from opponents of the move to another site. Their response to the critics also defined the job of the incoming Director of Development. They intended to raise \$600,000 in cash through three-year commitments, primarily from the eastern conferences of the denomination. The first project was a forty-bed nursing facility. Residential and administrative facilities would follow, but would be self-financing.⁵ They estimated the nursing unit would cost \$750,000 and committed \$250,000 from the Home's assets. General Conference approved all their recommendations.⁶

A special report by the Messiah Home's trustees to General Conference in 1972 summarized their actions for the year. An architectural committee and a finance committee had been appointed to facilitate planning. The finance committee had hired James W. Shaver, Inc., as the financial consultant and retiring Bishop John Hostetter as Director of Development.⁷

The final paragraph of the report established an ambitious schedule. The trustees expected to complete the fundraising drive and be ready for ground-breaking by April 1, 1973. Dedication and occupancy of the new nursing facility was projected for General Conference (June/July) 1974.⁸

The Venture in Faith Campaign

To receive firsthand knowledge of the church, James Shaver, the financial consultant, attended the 1972 General Conference.

After reviewing congregational information and conducting interviews with church members, he recommended a Venture in Faith campaign, with a financial goal for each congregation.⁹ He also affirmed the possibility of reaching a goal of \$600,000. Christian stewardship was the major campaign theme, with information, education, and responsibility as prominent topics.¹⁰ The campaign began with the arrival of Shaver's senior campaign director on August 12, 1972.¹¹

Although Hostetter was the appointed Director of Development, he first served as associate director of the Allegheny Conference campaign. As an employee of the Shaver organization until the end of 1972, he followed the progress of each of the fifty-eight congregations in the conference. After initial contacts, he recorded that less than half accepted the proposed fundraising goal. Several negotiated lower goals and others agreed to raise funds through an annual or quarterly offering, with no amount specified. One church refused to participate.¹²

Hostetter worked with Simon Lehman, Jr., the associate director for Allegheny Conference, in appointing thirty-four workers to contact the pastors and church boards. Lay leaders were instructed to hold family conferences and were trained to visit at least three churches to speak about the needs of the Home.

Hostetter worked with the lay leaders and speakers in the other church conferences: Atlantic, Canadian, Central, Midwest, and Pacific. Fifteen to twenty people were appointed in the Atlantic and Central Conferences. Because of the distances from Messiah Home and the smaller number of members in those conferences, fewer appointments were made in the Midwest and Pacific Conferences.¹³

Hostetter also placed campaign information in the *Visitor*. A brief article about Messiah Home was included in the October, 1972, issue. A four-page insert provided campaign information in the next issue, with campaign chairman Dr. Ivan Beachy encouraging readers to contribute.¹⁴ In November, Hostetter contributed a guest editorial about Christian stewardship and Messiah Home.¹⁵

In the fall campaign an intensive effort was made to contact each family in the church conferences. John and Nellie Hostetter were involved in telephone conversations, training sessions, letter writing, setting up meetings, and numerous other activities. On occasion, John visited with church members to discuss eligibility for home services and to explain misunderstood statements from professional fundraisers.¹⁶ He kept a strict account of the three-year commitments and cash, and made regular reports to the Building and Development Board, the task force appointed by the trustees to plan and build the facility.

The intensive Venture in Faith campaign ended officially with a general campaign committee meeting in Harrisburg on December 7, 1972. In early March 1973, Hostetter reported an overall commitment of \$587,064.22, with three large congregations yet to respond.¹⁷ The \$600,000 goal, he said, was within reach.

After Hostetter had served with the Shaver organization, the Home trustees continued his appointment, with his salary and office expenses paid from the development fund. The Building and Development Board redefined his job description and sent him to a fundraising seminar in Tulsa, Oklahoma.¹⁸

With plans for the new building in progress, the Building and Development Board introduced the new facility to the Carlisle community. For that purpose, in December 1972, members of the general campaign committee invited community leaders to a dinner meeting at the Indian Motor Lodge, where a history of Messiah Home and plans for the Carlisle site were presented. This was the first step in Hostetter's planned fundraising among the Carlisle businessmen.¹⁹

As public evidence of progress, the construction contract for the nursing facility was announced in the Carlisle paper, *The Sentinel*.²⁰ By midyear 1973, Hostetter reported to the pastors on progress toward the \$600,000 goal. The goal had been increased by \$54,000, presumably to meet the expenses of the development office and certain unanticipated site expenses.²¹ By the end of the year, \$678,354 was committed to the project and \$249,817 had

been received.²² The Venture in Faith campaign had reached its goal. All that remained was collection of the commitments.

During the first part of 1973, final construction plans had been drawn and sent to contractors for bids. In October, a contractor had been selected. But Beachy had informed Hostetter that the trustees could not sign the contract until the State Department of Health and South Middleton Township issued a building permit.²³ Thus began an extended delay in construction which eventually led to the abandonment of the Carlisle site.

When the Carlisle site was purchased, water and sewage services were approved. However, before the Home's Building and Development Board received their construction permit, the Carlisle sewage treatment plant was declared near capacity and the State Department of Environmental Resources (DER) halted new hookups. For the next several years, with John Hostetter doing much of the negotiating, the board searched for solutions to the sewerage dilemma. Thus Hostetter's work for the board expanded well beyond the normal assignments of a fundraiser.

Delays and Disappointments

By late summer 1973, Hostetter said the Venture in Faith campaign would plateau at around \$670,000. He also reported to the pastors on the sewerage problems.²⁴ He believed the lack of progress in construction affected the collection of funds and gave him reason to report the construction delays in his development report.

During the construction delays, George Kibler, the Messiah Home administrator, and the trustees were under great pressure from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry to make extensive improvements to the facility on Paxton Street. To avoid the mandated repairs, progress on the construction of the nursing facility in Carlisle was imperative. The delay in the start of construction not only affected the collection of funds for the

Venture program, but also undermined Kibler's efforts to negotiate temporary measures with the state agency.

At the Carlisle site, the apparent quick solution to the sewerage problem became more complex as delays and bureaucratic players increased. The requirement of a simple building permit from South Middleton Township soon escalated into a major issue, involving the Borough of Carlisle, the Carlisle Sewer Authority, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources (DER). Sometimes proposals which satisfied one organization were rejected by another.²⁵

Hostetter felt he had reasons to attack the causes for the delay.²⁶ As a goal-oriented person, he was following his life-long pattern of "making things move." The collections in his fundraising effort were lagging. In his usual fashion, he began to attack the chief impediment to progress, the sewerage problem. Also, he probably was the one member of the organization who could devote time from his fundraising job to find a path through the bureaucratic maze.

In a "Sewer Report" to the Building and Development Board, Hostetter recounted the late 1973 efforts to meet the demands of the governmental agencies. Among other attempts, he had met three DER men on the construction site in early December 1973. One, a soils expert, after hours of examination, recommended an on-site mechanical system, with spray irrigation for disposition of the effluence. "For once," Hostetter reported, "I met a man in DER that had an interest in solving a problem."²⁷

On the soil expert's recommendation, the board hired an engineering firm to draw the spray irrigation plans. Preliminary estimates placed the cost of the system at between \$25,000 and \$40,000. By March 1974, Hostetter had found a mechanical system for \$15,000, not including transportation and assembly. The system had a capacity for 70 homes and about 250 people.²⁸ Because the Director of Development was spending his time on sewerage rather than fundraising, the finance sub-committee of the

board asked for Hostetter's release from the site work "as soon as possible."²⁹

On March 27, Hostetter continued his site work by meeting with the South Middleton Township Planning Commission. He thought the plot plan and the engineer's drawings of the mechanical irrigation system were the final documents needed for the Stage I (nursing facility) building permit. However, approval was delayed until a total plot plan, showing the residential and administrative units, could be prepared--another delay the board did not need.³⁰

About this time, April 1974, questions were raised in the board's architectural sub-committee about an alternate location. Through test borings, the architect had discovered need for extensive rock removal to develop a basement level. Township delays, sewerage problems, rock removal, and the urgent need to build were listed as reasons to investigate other sites in the Harrisburg, Carlisle, and Lancaster areas. The committee also revisited the possibility of staying at 2001 Paxton Street.³¹ However, after careful consideration of their report, the Building and Development Board affirmed their purpose "to pursue the development of Messiah Home at the Carlisle site."³²

Because grapevine information about changing plans had circulated among the pastors and congregations, Hostetter reported his concern about the delays. Hearing the question, "Are you going to locate somewhere else?" he raised the alternate site issue.³³ Hostetter reported that one man said he had not fulfilled his pledge to date because "he knew we were still not actively underway."³⁴

By mid-July 1974, Hostetter reported that needed resolutions had been approved by the South Middleton Planning Commission, and DER was moving "toward final clearance and issuance of a building permit." He also reported the restrictions placed upon the building permit for an on-site sewage disposal system for the forty-bed nursing facility only.³⁵

While the wheels of government agencies and engineers turned slowly, Hostetter received a copy of an early September letter from the sanitary engineers to the South Middleton Planning

Commission accepting the board's plan for a temporary disposal field. This action apparently cleared the way for issuing the building permit.³⁶

However, the proposed on-site mechanical sewage system was temporary. Eventually, the entire complex was required to connect to the new Carlisle regional sewer system, slated for completion in two years. Since the Building and Development Board was already discussing Stage II of the development, this time frame could present more problems. Questioned by the board, Hostetter stated that a shopping plaza requiring a hook-up to the new system was already under construction.³⁷ He implied that it was possible to proceed with Stage II construction while the regional sewer system was under construction.

The coveted letter from DER to Paul Sheaffer, South Middleton Township building inspector, was dated October 25, 1974.³⁸ Issuance of the building permit was now a routine matter. Eighteen months had passed since the sewer issue was raised.

Hostetter and Beachy carried the everyday responsibility for solving the sewer problem. During this time, the many suggested solutions caused Hostetter to be optimistic to pastors, predicting imminent granting of a building permit. A trusting man, he accepted off-the-cuff time frames and promises from engineers and political appointees with the same level of trust he gave to churchmen. At his age, maybe he should have been more skeptical of their ability to deliver solutions with dispatch!

If he had known the sewer business, Hostetter probably would have been more realistic about the time frames necessary to test soils, dig monitoring wells, survey plots of land, and draw plans. In his usual attention to detail, he followed up on each of the suggested solutions made by DER, the township, and the engineers. When necessary, he put on his boots and visited the site with the experts.³⁹ When he reached the point of exasperation, he sought help through legislative channels. One has to ask why the architects and other professionals advising the Building and Development Board did not provide more advice on the sewerage question.

CHAPTER 16

Restarting the Home's Relocation Effort

Searching for Advice and New Property

When Hostetter announced at the September 1974 Building and Development Board meeting that everything had been cleared to issue the building permit on the Carlisle site, the secretary of the board recorded a "Praise the Lord!" The 40-bed nursing construction project could begin.

For some board members, however, the praises may have been less enthusiastic. Changes in their planning and outlook had caused uneasy acceptance of DER's building permit restrictions. The long-awaited ground-breaking ceremony was not planned for the immediate future.

During the sixteen-month sewerage delay, the Building and Development Board modified and re-shaped its relocation plans. As an indication of progress in planning, Hostetter announced to pastors in July 1974 approval by General Conference of the board's request to construct the residential and administrative building (Stage II) with the nursing facility (Stage I). Conference also approved an increase in the Stage I development goal from \$654,000 to \$850,000.¹ Unfortunately, the building permit for Stage I contained restrictions which required further negotiations with DER before Stage II could be constructed.

Early in 1974, the board took a closer look at the planning advice they had received. Apparently, there was dissatisfaction with the work of the architectural firm. A review of the preliminary plans by another firm revealed that, although the architect had followed the wishes of the board, as the secretary acknowledged,² Murray Associates had designed an expensive building.³ In

retrospect, the secretary said "the plans for the nursing unit would have resulted in a facility . . . prohibitively costly to operate."⁴

Through investigation by Musser Martin, a member of the Building and Development Board, the board learned of a social service agency of the Lutheran Church in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. As a church agency, they specialized in nursing and retirement facilities. Hostetter was a member of the ad hoc committee appointed to investigate the agency.⁵

After meeting with the general manager, David Bollinger, reading the agency's philosophical statements, and visiting a newly completed building and one under construction, the committee recommended the hiring of Tressler-Lutheran Service Associates (T-LSA). The list of anticipated benefits from working with T-LSA included the "knowledge that the agency working on our behalf is fully aware of the federal and state requirements."⁶

T-LSA's strong desire to work with Medical Facilities, a Nebraska architectural firm with whom they had extensive experience, led to the termination of the contract with the local firm, William Lynch Murray Associates.⁷ But the termination was not easy; several board members, including Musser Martin, had worked closely with Murray Associates on a number of Messiah College building projects.

With the employment of a social services group, in addition to an architectural firm, the Building and Development Board received professional help that went beyond architectural drawings. The new agencies also assisted the board in shaping a new concept of care for senior citizens.

An ad hoc committee of the Board had written a philosophy of operation as early as October 1973. Included in an overall statement were these: a home-like (family) atmosphere, places for work and to pursue hobbies, a place to read and meditate, church activities, and many other objectives. To them, the home was a place to live, not merely a place to die. Although priority would be given to Brethren in Christ Church members, it would be open to anyone interested in living in a Christian atmosphere.⁸

T-LSA's Bollinger, through sketches and philosophical statements, refined the board's statement. Emphasizing that "good care is helping people to be independent," his presentation outlined levels of care. Messiah Home became Messiah Village, with configurations of care ranging from independent living in small residences or apartments, through stages of assisted living, to skilled nursing care.⁹ The levels-of-care concept became the underlying concept for the entire development. Hostetter was particularly pleased with the "village" concept.¹⁰

With the decision to move forward with Stage II, T-LSA and Medical Facilities worked on the necessary building permits. Soon after his arrival, Fran Fanders, an architect with Medical Facilities, reported the Carlisle sewage plant probably would not be completed until 1980, thereby raising the question of service for Stage II of the complex. To proceed with immediate planning and construction of Stage II, Fanders recommended the use of a holding tank and the hauling of sewage to the South Middleton plant in Mount Holly Springs, several miles away.¹¹ Hostetter was skeptical of DER's approval. However, the board reaffirmed its Carlisle-location decision and instructed Fanders to pursue the holding-tank option.

One month later, at the December 1974 board meeting, Bollinger reported a possibility of holding-tank service at the Carlisle site. He also announced a delay of three to six months for written confirmation. With that news, the board's previous affirmations of building on the Carlisle site gave way to a desire to review of other locations.

Finally, in January 1975, the executive committee of the board recommended "a hold on further efforts for the Walnut Bottom Road site [Carlisle], and actively explore alternate sites."¹² The recommendation was accepted unanimously.

At least eight properties were discussed at the mid-December, 1974, meeting of the executive committee. Most were reviewed for grading, availability of water and sewerage, accessibility to main highways, aesthetic level (gently rolling hills), and number of acres.

Several properties were eliminated from further consideration, and the committee members were given investigative assignments.¹³

In January 1975, Bollinger examined a 35-acre property near Dillsburg, Pennsylvania. With good access from a side road off Route 15, it was owned by R.L. Shillito, the local Exxon distributor. The owner welcomed the inquiry and was anxious for Messiah Home to locate in the borough.

John Hostetter, sidetracked again from his development assignment, now became involved in the selection and purchase of a new site. After meeting with Shillito, he also found the Dillsburg Borough Council receptive to Messiah Home's relocation. Above all, DER gave its approval for connection to the local sewage system. A purchase contract was finalized, with a down payment planned for May 1975.

The seeming progress on the Shillito property came to an abrupt end at the May meeting with the Borough Council. The council's plan to run public streets through the property was not acceptable to the Building and Development Board, particularly when they expected the Home to donate the land and build the streets.¹⁴

A tax issue which looked very unfavorable was also a problem. Apparently, some council members were negative about a tax-exempt complex in the borough and considered senior citizens poor additions to the local economy. This change in the overall attitude of the council upset the Building and Development Board.

Rather than negotiate further, the board decided to consider other sites. Hostetter had worked with Shillito on the details of the contract. Having common interests in the gas and oil business, they talked the same language. Both were much disappointed when the Borough Council seemed to take advantage of Messiah Home and the church.¹⁵

In June 1975, the Joseph Hess property near Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, discussed by the board at an earlier date, came under discussion again. John and Nellie Hostetter had visited with the Hesses on several occasions, seeking a price the board could

afford. With the Shillito property out of the question, Hostetter renewed his efforts with the Hessses.¹⁶

After all the permits from the official agencies were received (including water and sewer permits), contacts with the surrounding community were made. After accepting Upper Allen Township deed restrictions, the trustees completed a purchase option agreement on the Hess property on August 12, 1975, for 47.6 acres for \$416,280.¹⁷

Although real progress was now apparent, Hostetter's communication to pastors was muted: "We pray that the board will be wise enough to use roadblocks as steppingstones rather than mere obstructions."¹⁸ Perhaps he was afraid another state agency would rise up and obstruct progress for another two years!

Indeed, there was another state agency, the South Pennsylvania Health Planning Council, which had to approve the construction of nursing facilities. At the Carlisle site, their authority could have produced the final obstacle. They had ruled that there was no need for more nursing services in that area. However, ruling otherwise on the new location, they approved the board's application in March 1976.¹⁹

From April 1973 to the end of 1974, the Building and Development Board had been frustrated in efforts to secure acceptable sewage service. When they decided to abandon the Carlisle property, it took another year, to the end of 1975, to locate and purchase the Hess property. Another ten months were required for refining building plans and completing financial plans before ground-breaking could take place.

Continuing Development Work

While assisting the Building and Development Board with township and state agency contacts, the hiring of a new social service agency and architect, and the search for a new home site, Hostetter kept the pastors and congregations informed of the status of the development fund. After all, he was appointed to direct the

development program. His communiques usually informed each congregation of progress in fulfilling its commitments. Construction delays and other news from the Building and Development Board were also reported.

Working on his fundraising assignment, Hostetter proposed memorial gifts in support of the home fund. Several families of deceased members of the Home's Board of Trustees had established memorial funds, honoring their extended service. The director sent updates to each family member and encouraged the payment of their pledges by the end of 1975, the target date for completion of the three-year commitments.

Working with the finance committee, Hostetter planned other efforts to raise funds. For example, he intended to contact all businesses supplying services to Messiah Home, and to solicit the wider business community. However, construction delays caused doubts about an effective campaign of that kind. The board approved his decision to delay the solicitation of the Carlisle business community until after construction began.²⁰

In March 1974, Hostetter reported another complication with business solicitations. He was struggling to identify businesses to contact, particularly the geographic area to be covered. In addition, a Messiah College fund drive which targeted businesses in particular, was in progress. It may have been significant that most of his monthly report to the board was devoted to sewerage issues.²¹

After almost two years of service as Director of Development, Hostetter may have been frustrated by the time it took to complete the fundraising. Now seventy years old, the overall day-to-day expectations for his services may have been burdensome. The diverse assignments, his struggle to plan an effective business campaign, and added workload from new board decisions precluded his careful planning and execution of each task. Not being able to say no to a new request no doubt contributed to his frustration.

Incidentally, during this semi-retired period of his life, partly to deal with his frustrations, Hostetter had continued to play golf. While playing, he said relatively little about the lack of progress in resolving the DER dilemma or about the slow progress of payments on commitments. However, his golfing partners, Charlie Byers and John Sollenberger, claimed they could win their golf round if they could get him to talk about his frustrations at the Carlisle site!²²

During the time of construction delays, costs were escalating. As noted, at General Conference 1974, the board stated the need for an additional \$175,000 to complete the modified nursing facility plan. The newly advertised goal of \$850,000 was expected to come from businesses, further solicitation from churches, and friends.²³

Of course, the Building and Development Board was mindful of the opportunity to promote their project at the General Conference. Hostetter and several other board members planned a Messiah Home display for the June 1974, session in Ontario, Canada. A self-contained 80-slide program on the Home's work was shown. A general publicity brochure and pamphlets about "Giving through your Will" and "Giving through Gift Annuities" were displayed.²⁴ In the absence of construction reports, publicity about "progress on the horizon" was given to delegates and other church members.

The increase in the Stage I campaign goal changed the workload of the development office. Fundraising strategies, communication devices, and publicity pieces were needed. Personal contacts were scheduled and new sources of funds were sought. The campaign for funds, scheduled to end by December 1975, now took on a new life and required new plans.

In October 1974, Hostetter visited the Central Conference to follow-up on the Venture in Faith campaign there. He was dissatisfied with the manner the professional fundraisers had handled the campaign. But, as a goodwill ambassador, he accepted the fact that it was too late to make a big difference in

commitments. And he was relieved to find less dissatisfaction than expected. Under pressure to raise additional funds, he probably considered his visits to five geographical areas of the conference a worthwhile investment of time, expense and energy.²⁵

The three-year commitments from the 1972 Venture in Faith campaign were to be paid by December 31, 1975. The pledges from five church conferences and specials from individuals, corporations and foundations had reached \$656,000. By the end of December 1975, \$585,927 had been received (including \$58,039 in interest) with an estimated \$165,680 outstanding.²⁶ The original goal of \$654,000 was within the grasp of the planners, but the lack of construction apparently affected the rate of giving. In October, in a direct appeal, General Chairman Ivan Beachy asked pastors to make all payments by the General Conference of 1976 (late June).²⁷

In January 1976, Hostetter reduced his work schedule for the Home to half-time and began another level of appeal for funds. With the completion of the original campaign, he targeted church members generally, and certain individuals in particular. For example, one campaign encouraged the designation of a living memorial "in lieu of flowers." The sponsorship options included wheelchairs, a flag and flagpole, hymnals, linen sets, trees, porch and lawn furniture, china/glassware, and oxygen units. The Book of Memorials, the record of giving, he said, would serve as a permanent memorial on display at the Village.

Another appeal recommended gifts for equipping and furnishing the building. A patient room could be furnished for \$1,400, the main lobby furnishings required \$2,000, and the kitchen, the most expensive, \$50,000. The entrance sign, pianos, organ, laundry equipment, and many other items provided the opportunity for designated gifts. This fundraising effort, continued after the beginning of construction, asked each congregation to choose items to help meet the \$200,000 furnishing cost.²⁸

In December 1977, General Chairman Beachy appealed to the pastors, church boards and congregations to increase their giving

to Messiah Village, particularly to meet the costs of furnishing the building. He reported the collection of \$713,000, but stated the need for approximately \$260,000 more to satisfy the board's basic financial plan. He suggested that each congregation choose an amount, spreading the commitments over three years.

These new funds replaced Venture in Faith funds spent on expenses at the Carlisle site, additional development costs, and the expansion of the proposed nursing unit from forty to ninety beds.²⁹ The funds were also needed to meet the overall financing of the new facility.

By 1978, with construction underway, responses to the fundraising efforts were better than in previous years. By the time Hostetter completed his work and gave a final accounting to the Building and Development Board in December 1978, the development office had received \$857,505.³⁰

Assembling a Financial Plan

As noted, the decision to build Stages I and II at the same time increased the amount of money the Building and Development Board needed for the new construction. The initial plan called for \$600,000 for the forty-bed nursing facility. The decision to expand the nursing unit and to build administrative and independent living facilities in the initial phase of construction required the borrowing of money much earlier than originally anticipated. To borrow the money needed for the entire project required the raising of additional funds by the development office.

One of Hostetter's early assignments was to draw up guidelines for acceptance of investment money from church members.³¹ Later, he reported that loans from individuals must be protected by cash reserves. A loan of \$15,000 was refused because of a high interest rate (8%).³²

With several others, Hostetter was also assigned the task of contacting local banks. James Shaver, of the Venture in Faith campaign, thought banks were the most likely lenders.³³ George

Kibler and Hostetter first contacted Dauphin Deposit Bank and found them receptive to lending two and one-half to three million dollars. The Farmers Home Association considered the home eligible for funds; however, their stated preferential treatment of Brethren in Christ members was "a problem."³⁴

After this preliminary effort at borrowing money for Stage II, the finance committee realized the need for expert advice in the preparation of operating budgets and financial statements for lending institutions. Loan applications required skills beyond those available in the finance committee. Such service was provided by Tressler-Lutheran Service Associates and was a factor in the original decision to contract with them.³⁵ The special report of Messiah Home to the 1976 General Conference acknowledged T-LSA's invaluable advice in financial planning.³⁶

Through 1975 Hostetter and two other members of the finance committee continued to contact banks, insurance companies, and other lending agencies. In the first half of 1976, with the advanced architect's drawings in hand, the board projected the need for \$3,700,000. With the submission of final plans and specifications, T-LSA's Clarence Johnson joined the search for funds.³⁷

Now that building plans were in hand, the board was anxious to set a date for ground-breaking ceremonies. However, financing arrangements first had to be completed. Again, the banks and semi-public groups, such as the Pennsylvania Industrial Realty Corporation, required more time to make decisions than the board thought necessary. After submissions to Dauphin Trust Bank, further conversations with Cumberland County National Bank (CCNB), visits to banks in Philadelphia and Baltimore, and a contract with the Flushing Savings Bank in New York City, the loan package came through local agencies.

With the Cumberland County Industrial Development Authority acting as guarantor, financing finally fell into place. The major loans were provided by Farmer's Trust in Carlisle (\$2,200,000) and the church's Jacob Engle Foundation

(\$1,000,000). With a loan from the State Nursing Home Loan Agency (\$527,426), construction began.³⁸

Hostetter's belief that the Jacob Engle Foundation commitment was a major factor in finalizing the financial package was confirmed when the president of Farmers Trust Bank said that the Foundation's commitment had "tipped the balance in favor of a firm commitment from Farmers Trust."³⁹

Ground-breaking, Cornerstone, and Dedication

In 1972, John Hostetter had accepted the position of Director of Development for Messiah Home to raise \$600,000 to build a \$750,000 forty-bed nursing facility near Carlisle. That campaign was completed by December 1972, and construction was to begin the following April. However, it took four years of careful work before ground-breaking ceremonies occurred.

In the intervening years, plans for the skilled-nursing care had been expanded to ninety beds and a sheltered-care building with 102 units was added, for a total census of 220 residents. Now called Messiah Village, it was located near Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. The eventual price tag of more than \$4,500,000 was considerably more than any board member had anticipated. The home's trustees had begun with a hurried plan to construct a forty-bed nursing facility; they ended the relocation project with the beginning structure of a total retirement community, Messiah Village.

During this period of delay, Hostetter had used many words, including delays, lengthy delays, forced delays, revisions, disappointment, frustrations, concerns, and real concerns, to explain to pastors and church members the lack of progress. One last time, he was forced to announce the changes in the date for the ground-breaking to accommodate the final arrangements for the financial package.⁴⁰

Finally, ground-breaking ceremonies for Messiah Village were conducted on October 24, 1976. Even though the financial package

had not been signed, apparently Hostetter insisted on the ceremony before freezing weather set in.⁴¹

On December 10 at Farmer's Trust in Carlisle, Hostetter and twelve other men participated in the final signing for the financial package. "Churchmen, bankers, attorneys, a contractor, and T-LSA counselors were present for this long-awaited session," Hostetter reported.⁴² The contractor moved to the site the next day.

On July 1, 1978, the home trustees welcomed 1500 visitors to the dedication of the newly completed Messiah Village Retirement Center on Mount Allen Drive, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. It was a grand occasion, and the ceremonies, conducted in the small worship room, were televised to other rooms in the building to accommodate the many visitors.

Hostetter was honored to deliver the dedicatory address. Calling attention to "Messiah" in the name of the Village, he said it was the church's purpose to emulate Christ's feeding and healing ministry. Further, he stated, "We are committed to operating a *Christian* retirement village."⁴³

For six years Hostetter had labored to remove construction and finance obstacles, and to raise funds for this ministry to senior citizens. His correspondence files attest to the many letters written, but they do not record his many meetings with state and local officials or his telephone calls. A measure of his work was summarized in Ivan Beachy's introduction of Hostetter at the dedication ceremony:

He has worked diplomatically with congregations and pastors, government bodies and agencies, land owners and financiers, consultants and architects, and with the Boards to whom he was responsible. Many times he helped to keep our spirits up in times of frustration during these six years. Very seldom did we see his spirit sag. There is no doubt that he came to Messiah Home at a critical time and helped to steer us successfully through a myriad of obstacles.⁴⁴

On December 31, 1978, Hostetter completed his service as Director of Development. He and Nellie enjoyed another eighteen months in their Carlisle home before moving to Messiah Village in 1980.

CHAPTER 17

To Messiah Village and Retirement

The Biddle Drive Home

At the end of December, 1978, when John concluded his development work for Messiah Village, he completed his last major assignment for the Brethren in Christ Church. For the first time in almost fifty years, he was without regular appointment or responsibility from the General Conference.

Regardless of their retirement status, the Hostetters continued their active lifestyle. In 1972, they had transferred their church membership to the Carlisle Brethren in Christ Church. Following his propensity to accept responsibility, John served as Sunday school teacher, member of the church board, and adviser to other groups on issues facing the congregation.¹

Walter Winger, John and Nellie's pastor from 1972 to 1979, illustrated John's good-natured willingness to be of service. Winger's busy schedule of pastoring, graduate studies at Temple University and Eastern Baptist Seminary, chairing the Carlisle Council of Churches, and raising three sons was more than most pastors were able to handle. When the seminary required full-time attendance in Philadelphia, John agreed to assume pastoral duties as needed. His help during those hectic days "will always be an example for me."² With his wide experience and knowledge of denominational life, Hostetter was a good support for the pastor and a resource for any operation of the church.

The Hostetters also enjoyed their home on Biddle Drive. Known for their beautiful roses in Clarence Center and Indiana, they continued this hobby in Carlisle. Their backyard was alive with birds at the feeders, including a pheasant or two eating the



John and Nellie Hostetter on their sixtieth anniversary, 1985.



Messiah Village, for which John Hostetter served as Director of Development from its beginnings.

corn placed on the stump behind the house. Two woodchucks from the undeveloped lots across the street also demanded much attention, enjoying the corn as did the pheasants. John regularly regretted his lack of firepower to deal with "those critters."

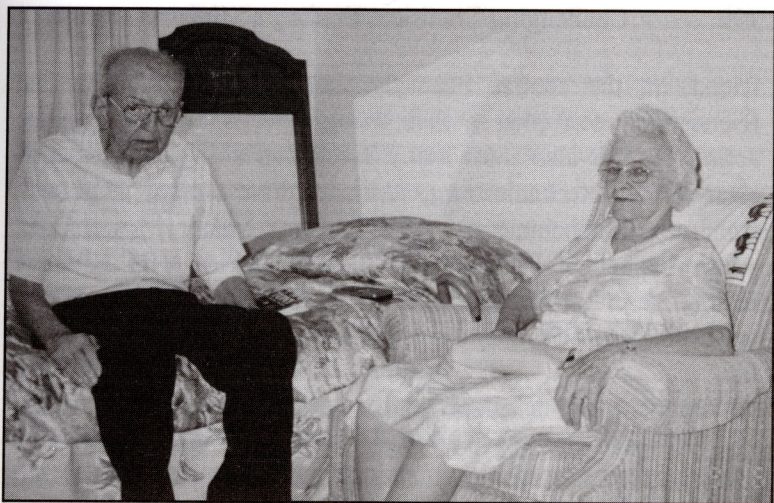
John's golf games, the one recreational activity he truly enjoyed, still provided relaxation and fellowship. Nellie supported his "golfing habit," but she admitted to lonesome days when the wives of his golfing partners were unavailable for lunch or conversation. In their home were displayed his several Messiah College or Gospel Tide Hour golf tournament trophies.

Nellie was an avid Scrabble player, always ready for a game. One of her boys enjoyed throwing strange words on the board. She would promptly "challenge" and go for the dictionary. And she was usually right.

And, of course, their scattered children and grandchildren made occasional visits. Kenneth and Eunice, living in Martinsburg, Pennsylvania, visited quite often. Norman and Lois lived in Slingerlands, New York, and visited less often. Bob and Winnie Worman resided in Columbus, Georgia, and sometimes drove through the nights for brief visits. In the late 1970s, the eight grandchildren, some with spouses and children, though scattered in many places, dropped in when they were in the area.

In October, 1975, John and Nellie celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary with a reception at the Carlisle Brethren in Christ Church. Of course, the children and grandchildren orchestrated the event. Perhaps the Hostetter's greatest joy was given them by the coming of a large number of not-so-young people from Clarence Center, New York. Their attendance testified to the esteem they held for the Hostetters for their many years of ministry in Clarence Center. The Hostetters requested no gifts, but accepted donations totaling over \$2,000 for the Messiah Village Development Fund.

In the Biddle Drive home, John and Nellie enjoyed a more relaxed lifestyle. When John reduced his work to half-time for Messiah Home in 1976, they had more time to visit the many



John and Nellie Hostetter rest in retirement at Messiah Village, 1991.



John Hostetter, left, and his Messiah Village friend, John Sollenberger, head for a game of golf.

friends in the central Pennsylvania area and to renew old friendships interrupted by their living in New York and Indiana. John's records also show many Sunday speaking engagements, such as at Mechanicsburg, Carlisle, Five Forks, Highland, Baltimore, Manheim, Refton, Martinsburg, Manor, Mowersville, Antrim, and non-Brethren in Christ churches. His Kiwanas membership, keeping him in touch with the Carlisle community and business leaders, maintained an important aspect of his retired life.

By 1980, the Hostetters decided to sell their personal property and real estate and move to Messiah Village. One of his golfing partners, John Sollenberger, had built a cottage at the Village and offered it to the Hostetters until he and his wife were ready for retirement. Living in that cottage, they began to experience firsthand the loving care of the retirement village they worked so hard to develop.

Living at the Village

After working at the Village for more than six years in the development of the first two building stages, John and Nellie were very happy with the comfort and conveniences they experienced at the Hemlock Hill cottage. They were free to come and go, assured that their home was cared for by neighbors and the Village staff. Knowing that assistance of any kind was only a telephone call away was reassuring. John was pleased with the results of the Building and Development Board's extended planning.

During this time, the Hostetters enjoyed winter trips to the South. For a number of years, they visited the Wormans in Georgia before moving on to Boca Raton, Florida. With a close friend, Dominic Sagolla ("Sag"), John played golf. The Hostetters attended the Bibletown services and visited family and friends in other Florida towns. Although they detoured to the Wormans' home in Georgia for several weeks, by late March they were ready to return to Pennsylvania.

In their retirement years, the Hostetters received regular visits and correspondence from many friends throughout the church. Among their corresponding friends was Ryohei Miyahara, a Christian businessman in Japan. Miyahara had visited the Hostetters in 1968 in their Nappanee home and was always grateful for their hospitality. When John and Nellie sent regular Christmas greetings, with news of the family and the work of Messiah Village, Miyahara responded with Christmas greetings and news of his food-service business.

In 1980, to the delight of the Hostetters and the Village Development Office, Miyahara began to send yearly offerings. By 1991, when Nellie made the last entry in her records, the Miyaharas had contributed more than \$9,700 to the Village Endowment Fund.³

That Sense of Humor

The retirement years of the pious Brethren helped them to recall a number of not-so-pious events in their lives. When they recalled their past, John Hostetter's friends reminded him of incidents which illustrated a part of their lives where piety had not penetrated.

The plain clothes and pious looks of the 1930s Brethren had masked the pranks of John Hostetter's generation. As one story goes, John and his friend C.W. Boyer were attending an important Constitution and Bylaws Committee meeting in the summer of 1934 at Messiah Bible College. Both young men were beginning their long careers of service on General Conference committees. On this occasion, they were serving with some of the bishops of the church. All took their responsibilities seriously and discussed the deliberations long after they went to their bedrooms in Lawn Annex, a men's dormitory at the college.

It so happened they were assigned to a room next to two bishops, R.I. Witter from Kansas and E.J. Swalm from Ontario. John Hershey, a well-known classmate of the two younger men



At her anniversary in 1975, Nellie Hostetter visits with her sister, Gladys.



At the Hostettters' sixtieth anniversary, Peter Willms, left, congratulates John Hostetter.



Four generations; from left: Norman Hostetter, John Hostetter, Jay Hostetter with Curtis Hostetter.



The E.J. Swalm family, longtime friends of the Hostetters; from left: Jean Swalm, Winnie and Ray Swalm, E.J. Swalm, Robert Hawes, Maggie Swalm, Mildred Hawes, Paul and Lela Hostetter.

from Messiah Bible School days, was living in Lawn Annex for the summer and decided it would be

. . . Interesting to wire the bed (metal, double-decker) where [Hostetter] and Boyer were to sleep. I had one of those electric generating boxes that workmen use to blast rocks when building roads. Dan Engle had brought it to Messiah where we had wired President Hess's chair and found it quite interesting when he sat down but jumped up with great flare.

I put the generator in the closet of the adjoining room. Ernie Schwalm [sic] and Ray Witter were in bed in that room. After [Hostetter] and Boyer abruptly stopped talking, we knew they were saying their bed time prayers. When the chatter began again, we knew they had gotten back into the double decker. It was then I set off the electric charge. There was a thump-thump as the two men landed on the floor. There was much confusion. They rushed into Schwalm's [sic] and Witter's room asking whether they had felt anything. With a straight face [sic], they stated that "no they had not noticed anything unusual." (All the time I was hiding in the closet.) Eventually, of course, the fun was too good to keep quiet.⁴

For years afterward, Hostetter reminded Hershey of his efforts to "electrocute" the two committee members who were engaged in the Lord's work.

In early April 1980, about forty-six years after the event, Bishop Swalm received an urgent letter from one John O. Hershey complaining of the actions of some of his elderly churchmen:

I have more or less assumed that since I was no longer listed on the Church roles that your problems had been greatly diminished. Little did I realize that "the spirit of forgiveness" seems to have disappeared from very high levels. . . I refer to a *dastardly* incident which happened . . . on the eve or early hours of the morning of Palm Sunday when I was awakened by an untimely telephone call. Possibly you will remember the names of Clarence Boyer and John Hostetter. In my youth I looked upon them as great sanctimonious leaders worthy of blind respect and admiration. It is inconceivable to me to think that they would harbor an unforgiving spirit for 44 years and

that after all of that time they would take advantage of poor me, tottering a bit in my mid-60s, by denying me a well-deserved good night of rest, just because I tried to electrocute them during my years of innocence.

I appeal to you as the Pope of the Church to exercise some discipline among your Cardinals. Just imagine these great giants of morality waiting all these years to get even. Do you think I should be more forgiving and . . . understand their second childhood?⁵

Of course, Hostetter and Boyer received copies of the letter. C.W. Boyer sent a letter of rebuttal to Swalm on April 14:

I have before me Brother John Hershey's letter of April 3, in which he asks, "What shall I do" about an incident which he speaks of as a "dastardly" (Webster: "cowardly," "brutal") incident which has presented him, so he says, one of the most difficult problems he has encountered in his long years as an administrator.

Boyer proceeded to describe the 5:25 a.m. phone call to Hershey, arguing that it was hardly the middle of the night and by that time he should have had a good night's sleep. The purpose of Boyer's call was to congratulate Hershey on the fine recognition he had just received (duly reported in the Harrisburg paper) and since he had slept soundly for the night, his "violent reaction" was ill-advised. Boyer reminded Swalm of the biblical injunction when there is difficulty between brothers to "first go and tell him his fault." However, "instead, he has chosen to go directly *to the top*." This indicates a serious laxity relative to following Scriptural guidelines about which you will no doubt wish to admonish him." A postscript to the letter acknowledged John Hostetter as co-writer.⁶

On April 17, 1980, having receiving Boyer's letter to Swalm, Hershey wrote once more to Swalm. Distressed over the lack of an immediate response from Swalm, he confessed he was no match

. . . For that fellow [Boyer] and now that I read his epistle, I surrender. The only thing left for me to do is to really pile loads of

big chunks of red hot coals of fire on their heads--dash all over them for that matter. Nothing would please me more than for you to be present when I perform this ceremony.⁷

He then invited Swalm, Boyer and Hostetter to a Sunday morning worship service at the Milton Hershey School and to red-carpet treatment at a lovely brunch. "To make certain that they behave themselves properly in order that I will not be embarrassed, I plan to include their wives, for as you know they have a remarkable positive influence upon these two fellows."⁸

Finally, on May 1, 1980, the tongue-in-cheek humor for which Swalm was well known, provided a perfect reply to Hershey:

I hasten to reply with the desire to alleviate the agony of your frustration to the limit of my ability. . . . If only I could convey to you the excruciating pain that spasmodically seizes me as I allow my sympathies, both imaginary and pretended, to go out to you, neither of us would feel any better.

I am glad you have surrendered. It is a delicious thought to anticipate being a star witness again at the heaping of hot coals ceremony. It is also gratifying to know it will be done with a lavish hand. Please suffer this word of advice. My neighbor confided in me his deep resentment concerning a relative whom he said grievously offended him. When I suggested he should heap coals of fire, he replied, "if I do I'll certainly use a cheap grade of coal."⁹

On July 27, 1980, the four men and their wives gathered at the John Hershey home, the restored home of Milton Hershey, the founder of the Hershey Corporation. There were no secretary's minutes or video of the hot-coals ceremony. However, from the eyewitness account of Nellie Hostetter, the food was superb, the setting lavish, and all of the men exhibited clear evidences of their second childhood.

Another incident in Hostetter's life illustrated his ability to acknowledge humor, even at his expense. He travelled widely on church assignments and was often paired with fellow preachers or committee members for overnight accommodations. Among them

he was famous for dropping off to sleep quickly and for snoring loudly. One night his roommate, Erwin Thomas, who couldn't sleep because of the snoring racket, had with him a dictaphone and decided to record the late-night noises. For about one-half hour he recorded the most bizarre sounds known! Of course, John didn't know what his friend was doing.

A second recording of John's snoring, made by Ray M. Zercher in a Chicago hotel, was used with background music at the publishing house staff Christmas party that year. By re-recording, Zercher had interspersed traditional Christmas music with excerpts of John's snoring. At first the crowd responded with "embarrassed silence." With no reason to know what they were hearing, it took several abrupt changes from music to snoring to music to realize what was happening. Then there was general laughter and enjoyment--even from John Hostetter.¹⁰

Hostetter had as much fun with the snoring recording as anyone. He played the Thomas recording for visitors to the Clarence Center parsonage and one observer recalled:

... The snoring was so horrendous that [John's] Boston Terrier barked frantically, causing Hostetter to laugh until he was stretched out on the floor. It was quite a scene. It is a big shame the wire [recording] got tangled and became useless; the Church Archives and researchers on snoring patterns in the Brethren in Christ Church would be the better for having and hearing it.¹¹

Good humor was important in the lives of John and Nellie Hostetter's family and the many friends they made during their sixty years of active ministry. Whether the humor came through sermon illustrations, family life, or through personal experiences, they clearly enjoyed the lighter moments in their Christian lives.

The Declining Years

In 1987, when the Sollenbergers were ready for their cottage on Hemlock Hill, the Hostetters moved to a Village cottage on

Walnut Way, built by the Wormans in anticipation of their retirement. While living there, they observed their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. With the kind assistance of neighbors, they remained in the cottage until mid-1991. Soon after he celebrated his eighty-seventh birthday, John moved to nursing care for the assistance Nellie could not provide. Within three months, Nellie moved to sheltered care. John received his daily exercise by using a walker to visit Nellie. Occasionally, he was advised to cut down on his speed and to take periodic rests during the long journey from his room to hers!

In late February 1992, John's overall health began to fail. On March 1, 1992, he died in nursing care, under the watchful, loving care of the nurses and his granddaughter, Linda Worman. His life had touched many people and organizations and, above all, was devoted to the Brethren in Christ Church, which he had served with unswerving loyalty.

Of all the tributes received upon his death, perhaps the most moving, personal response was received by the family from his close colleagues, Paul and Lela Hostetler:

We consider it a most fortunate leading of our good Lord that we were privileged to be associated with John in the pastoral ministries of Clarence Center.

His love of the Brethren in Christ Church was always clearly evident, even when he became impatient with its conservative ways. As you know, John was one of the key persons to get us moving in new ways, preaching the Conference Sermon which ultimately resulted in many changes, including the new bishop setup in 1957.

We remember his sense of humor. I will always remember the look on his face and his characteristic laugh when he found something funny. . . . We remember his love for ice cream and apple pie. Of course, the pie always had to be eaten with lots of sugar and milk.

John Hostetler was a great man in our eyes, and in the estimation of many others. But what is more, as far as we are concerned, he was a loving and very dear friend.¹²

Following John's death, Nellie remained in personal care until the Wormans returned from Africa in 1993. She then returned to Walnut Way, where she received loving care from her daughter Winifred. For eighteen months she recalled her life's journey, enjoyed the visits of children, grandchildren, and many Village friends. In early 1995, after her health had deteriorated, she died in nursing care on April 19, 1995. She had considered her productive life of ninety-four years a gift from the Lord.

CHAPTER 18

Postscript

For more than sixty years, the Hostetters ministered to many people through the programs of the Brethren in Christ Church. What were their lasting contributions to the lives of the family and church members? What difference did they make in the work of the church?

Perhaps the most important heritage was left by the Hostetters to their family. Loving parents and grandparents, hardworking, sincere, honest, hospitable, helpful to others, and willing to challenge the status quo are a few of the words and phrases which describe their lives. They challenged each other when they disagreed, and spoke their minds without hesitation when the family required guidance and instruction.

With the Bible and the church at the center of their home, the Hostetters passed to children and grandchildren the Christian messages of salvation and service. Even though their daily activities were strenuous and difficult, they never wavered from love for their Savior. That love was their everlasting guide and anchor when making decisions which affected the lives of others.

The Hostetters' rejection of many societal standards and values, and their belief in the approaching return and judgment of the Lord did not affect negatively their outlook on life. Their anguish over the sins of society led to the planning of church programs to teach and indoctrinate their members with Christian principles. Family, neighbors, friends, and strangers alike experienced their biblical desire to "turn the other cheek" or "go the second mile."

The heritage John and Nellie left to the Brethren in Christ Church is evident in their ministerial work. Their avenues of

service--pastor, evangelist, editor, and bishop--were used to proclaim the gospel they felt called to declare in 1925.

Their first avenue of service--the pastorate of the Clarence Center Church--molded a youthful group of members into a church with a message. The weekly program stressed strong Bible teaching, a well-organized Sunday school and church program, the nurturing of a large youth group, regular visits with families, and community outreach, including joint programs with other churches. The Hostetters challenged the behavior of several members and made some imperfect judgments when faced with church council actions which, in their opinion, delayed church progress. However, they loved the church and did all in their power to make the salvation of each member the foremost purpose of the church.

A second avenue of service in the Hostetters' ministerial career was evangelism. Fully accepting the Brethren's stress on revivalistic Pietism, John began his evangelistic career in 1930. Nellie supported this ministry by nurturing the family and caring for the family business.

Hostetter's evangelistic sermons followed several themes. The need for a personal decision for Christ was his basic message. Other messages included instructions for living the Christian life, which added meaning to the decision.

In later years, there were many converts who traced their time of salvation to his ministry. Eventually, Hostetter's over-riding desire to confront non-Christians with the gospel message led him to question the Brethren's effectiveness in Christian witness and, consequently, the church's traditions.

As editor of church publications, the Hostetters found a third avenue of service. Nellie's work in the office provided the much-needed support for John's everyday editorial work.

During this work, John refocused his ministry. When he began his editorial work in 1947, he saw himself as a "servant of the Brethren." His purpose was to proclaim in written form the messages of the Brethren in Christ Church. Within a few years, his editorial work reflected changes in his traditional views.

With influences from inside and outside the church contributing to his life, John modified his views of the church. Enduring the questions and behavior of his Clarence Center young people, fellowshiping with and observing the Christian witness of church leaders of other denominations, and participating with other denominational groups in overseas ministries, opened his mind to questions about the church's effectiveness in Christian witness. The lack of church growth and the "legalistic" label applied to the church disturbed him greatly.

Hostetter's greatest service to the Brethren in Christ Church centered on his desire to make Christ known to the unbeliever. His unrest of the early 1950s forced him to place the Brethren's beliefs in priority order. The church's pietistic theology became primary. Holiness teachings and pacifism were important doctrines, but subject to variations in interpretation. Church-approved dress standards and other requirements were of secondary importance. Thus began the *changes in tradition which strengthened the church's ministry*.

The Hostetters' last major service to the church was the office of bishop for the Central Conference. Through this assignment John and Nellie traveled widely and counseled many congregations and youthful ministers. With the firmness for which he was known, Hostetter made administrative decisions about several preaching appointments which showed little growth over many years. On the other hand, he encouraged new pastors and congregations to experiment with new ideas to bring their neighbors into the church.

Certainly, through John's Messiah Village development work he contributed to an important ministry of the church. His advice and fundraising work contributed to the advancement of the ministry to the elderly far beyond the initial vision of the planners.

Finally, John and Nellie's business activities offered another, though different, avenue of service. For more than twenty years, the business was an integral part of family life and affected many decisions. On more than one occasion, it became a means to serve others. Part-time job opportunities offered one form of service.

Perhaps the greatest service to the congregation and the church from the business operation was the flexibility it offered John and Nellie in time and money to engage full-time in the work of the church.

In their sixty years of service, John and Nellie Hostetter are not remembered for outstanding sermons, carefully worded editorials, or flawless administrative decisions. They are remembered for their common, ordinary, honest, everyday efforts to meet the spiritual needs of those with whom they worked. Through their devotion, they fulfilled their Christian commitment to present the gospel to others. There is no greater legacy than to be remembered by family, friends, and neighbors for attaining so noble a purpose.

APPENDIX A

Revival Services and Other Meetings Conducted by John N. Hostetter 1929 to 1964

1929

Cheapside, Ont., tent meeting

1930

Garret, Ind., revival

Nottawa, Ont., love feast, Sept. 20-21

Markham, Ont., Bible conference, Nov. 9-10

1931

Millgrove, N.Y., tent meeting

Maytown, Pa., revival, Oct. 26-Nov. 12

Dayton (Ohio) Mission, revival, Nov. 14-29

Fairview, Ohio, revival, Dec. 1-20

1932

Martinsburg, Pa., revival, Jan. 25-Feb. 11

Nottawa (Sixth Line), Ont., revival, May 9-June 5

Refton, Pa., tent meeting, July 25-Aug. 14

Lancaster, Pa., youth conference, Aug. 13-14

Rosebank, Ont., love feast, Oct. 2

Markham, Ont., Bible conference, Nov. 13 and 14

1933

Pleasant Hill, Ohio, revival, Jan. 5-9 (became ill with flu,
replaced by Wilbur Snider)

Nottawa, Ont., Bible conference, Nov. 5-6

Union Grove, Ind., revival, Nov. 23-Dec. 10

1934

Locke, Ind., revival, Jan. 21-Feb. 9

Manor, Pa., revival, Mar. 11-April 1

Nottawa (Sixth Line), Ont., love feast, Oct. 21

Sherkston, Ont., revival, Oct. 22-Nov. 9

Elizabethtown (Conoy), Pa., revival, Nov. 18-Dec. 9

1935

Highland, Ohio, revival, Jan. 13-Feb. 1
Grantham, Pa., Bible conference, Feb. 14-17
Markham (Ont.) Bible School chapel service, Mar. 6-7
Refton, Pa., revival, April 1-14
Walsingham, Ont., love feast, June 30
Guysboro, Ont., tent meeting, July 16-28
New Guilford, Pa., revival, Nov. 3-24

1936

Grantham, Pa., Bible conference, Feb. 15
Carlisle, Pa., revival, Feb. 16-Mar. 1
Bertie, Ont., Bible conference, Mar. 9
Nottawa, Ont., love feast, Oct. 10-11
Rosebank, Kan., revival, Nov. 5-22
Bethel, Kan., revival, Nov. 23-Dec. 9
Zion, Kan., Bible conference, Nov. 25-27

1937

Bertie, Ont., revival, Jan. 10-Feb. 21
Nottawa, Ont., Bible conference

1938

Grantham, Pa., revival, October

1939

Lancaster, Pa., revival
Boyle, Ont., tent meeting (replaced Henry Schneider)
Markham, Ont., Bible conference
Nottawa, Ont., Bible conference

1940

Pleasant Hill, Ohio, revival, January
Nottawa, Ont., love feast

1942

Markham, Ont., Bible conference
Nottawa, Ont., love feast
Buffalo (N.Y.) Mission, revival, April

1943

Fort Erie (Ont.) Bible School, revival
Nottawa (Sixth Line), Ont., Bible conference
Bertie, Ont., Bible conference

1944

Collingwood, Ont., tent meeting, July

1945

Clarence Center, N.Y., tent meeting, July
Nottawa, Ont., love feast
Roxbury Camp Meeting, Pa., Bible teacher

1946

Roxbury Camp Meeting, Pa., July 31-Aug. 11
Elizabethtown (Conoy), Pa., revival, Oct. 28-Nov. 10
Welland Mission, Ont., Bible conference
Bertie, Ont., love feast

1947

Rapho District, Pa., youth conference
Chambersburg, Pa., Nov. 23-Dec. 7
Nottawa, Ont., Bible conference
Ohio Memorial Holiness Camp, Bible teacher

1948

Niagara Christian College, Ont., revival, Feb. 29-Mar. 7
Collingwood, Ont., revival, May 2-9
Clarence (N.Y.) High School, baccalaureate sermon
Buffalo (N.Y.) Mission, Bible conference
Lancaster (Pa.) Mission, 50th anniversary celebration
Howick, Ont., love feast

1949

Messiah Bible College, Pa., baccalaureate sermon
Oklahoma, tent meetings, July and August
Belle Springs, Kan., camp meeting

1950

Elizabethtown, Pa., revival, Feb. 19-Mar. 5
Roxbury, Pa., peace conference

1951

- Waynesboro, Pa., revival, January
- Pasadena, Cal., revival, Oct. 22-Nov. 4
- Chino, Cal., revival, Nov. 4-11
- Upland College, Cal., youth conference, revival, Oct. 4-21

1952

- Locke, Ind., revival, Mar. 2-16
- Carlisle, Pa., revival, April 27-May 4
- European trip, August

1953

- Japan trip, July

1954

- Pasadena, Cal., revival, Oct. 6-10
- Upland, Cal., revival, Oct. 10-17
- Martinsburg, Pa., revival, Nov. 14-28
- New Guilford, Pa., revival, Nov. 30-Dec. 12

1955

- Waynesboro, Pa., revival, Jan. 16-30
- Orlando, Fla., revival, Feb. 28-Mar. 13
- Manor, Pa., revival, Mar. 16-27
- Fairland, Pa., revival, April 5-10
- Locke, Ind., revival, May 15
- Bertie, Ont. love feast, May 29
- Buffalo (N.Y.) Mission, last service, June 26
- Hunts Corners Baptist, N.Y., July 10
- Leamington, Ont., Japanese Missionary Conf., July 24
- Hunts Corners Baptist, N.Y., Aug. 7
- Kansas Youth Conference, Aug. 10-12
- Kansas Camp Meeting, Aug. 14-21
- Hempstead, Md., Youth for Christ, October
- Toronto, Ont., revival, Oct. 16-23
- Granville, Pa., revival, Oct. 24-30
- Bethany, Okla., revival, Nov. 13-27
- Vineland, Ont., United Missionary, revival, Dec. 4-11

1956

Souderton, Pa., revival, Jan. 8-22
Refton, Pa., revival, Feb. 12-26
Palmyra, Pa., revival, Mar. 18-April 1
Hunts Corners Baptist, N.Y., April 8
West Charleston, Ohio, revival, April 15-22
Wainfleet, Ont., Sunday school convention, May 5-6
Clarence Center, N.Y., United Brethren, May 27
Clarence, N.Y., Methodist, June 10
Hunts Corners Baptist, N.Y., Aug. 12 and 19
Listowell, Ont., United Missionary, revival, Oct. 28-Nov. 4
Green Grove, Pa., revival, Nov. 11-25
Collingwood, Ont., revival, Dec. 2-9

1957

Cedar Springs, Pa., revival, Jan. 6-20
Hunts Corners Baptist, N.Y., Aug. 4-11
Puslinch, Ont., Bible conference, Sept. 13-15
Fairland, Pa., revival, Sept. 29-Oct. 13
United Missionary, Stayner, Ont., Nov. 3-17
Elizabethtown, Pa., United Zion, Dec. 29

1958

Pleasant Hill, Ohio, revival, Jan. 5-19
Manor, Pa., revival, Feb. 23-Mar. 2
West Charleston, Ohio, revival, Mar. 30-April 6
New Dundee, Ont., Wilmot Community, April 27-May 4
Puslinch and Rosebank, Ont., revival, May 18-25
Roxbury, Pa., Peace Conference, July
Laurelville, Pa., Business Men's Camp, Aug. 23-29
Nottawa, Ont., Bible conference, Sept. 28
Messiah College, Grantham, Pa., revival, Oct. 19-26
Elizabethtown, Pa., revival, Oct. 26-Nov. 9
Toronto, Ont., revival, Nov. 23-30

1959

Rosebank, Kan., revival, Feb. 8-22
Abilene, Kan., revival, Feb. 23-March 8

Nappanee, Ind., Mennonite Publications meeting, Mar. 14-15
Fairview, Ohio, Mar. 25-29
Port Colborne, Ont., revival, April 5-19
Nottawa (Sixth Line), Ont., Canadian Sunday school
convention, May 2-3
Clarence Center, N.Y., United Brethren, July 19
Roxbury, Pa., retreat, July 24-26
Walsingham, Ont., tent meeting, July 29-August 9
Harris Hill, N.Y., United Brethren, Aug. 23
Laurelville, Pa., Business Men's Camp, Aug. 29-Sept. 2
Kings View, Ont., Mennonite church, Aug. 30
Pequea, Pa., revival, Oct. 16-25
Upland, Cal., revival, Nov. 12-22
Albuquerque, N.M., Dec. 4

1960

Springvale, Ont., revival, Feb. 4-14
Jonestown, Pa., Bible Church, April 3
DeRossett, Tenn., revival, May 1-15
Clarence Center, N.Y., United Brethren, July 24
Millgrove Bible Church, N.Y., Aug. 14
Laurelville, Pa., Businessmen's Camp, Aug. 20-24
Niagara Falls, Ont., revival, Oct. 9-23

1961

Zion, Kan., revival, Feb. 5-12
Brown County, Kan., revival, Feb. 19-26
Arcade, N.Y., Baptist church, sunrise service, April 2;
Mennonite church, morning service
Hyattsville, Md., Mennonite church, April 9
Martinsburg, Pa., Week of Evangelism, April 16-23
Lime Lake, N.Y., Bible conference, July 13
Springvale, Ont., dedication, Aug. 13
Laurelville, Pa., Businessmen's Camp, Aug. 27-30
Hamilton, Ont., revival, Oct. 22-29
Carlisle, Pa., Nov. 12-19

1962

Orlando, Fla., revival, Feb. 22-March 4

Baltimore, Md., April 15-22

Harris Hill, N.Y., United Brethren church, July 8 and 15

Laurelville, Pa., Businessmen's Camp, Aug. 26-29

Messiah College, Pa., revival, Oct. 14-19

Conoy, Pa., revival, Nov. 14-25

Clarence Center, N.Y., last service in residence, Dec. 15

1963

Hollowell, Pa., Mar. 10-20

Moore's Church, Pa., Sept. 29-Oct. 6

Maytown, Pa., Oct. 27-November 6

1964

Christian Union, Ind., Jan. 30-Feb. 9

Africa, India, Japan trip Nov. 6, 1964-Mar. 6, 1965

(Last entry in sermon notes)

(Compiled from John Hostetter's sermon notes and *Visitor* reports from congregations. The list includes the revivals, Bible conferences, love feasts, and special services where Hostetter preached. Services in community churches are listed. Listing does not include General Conference speaking assignments, Sunday worship services, prayer meetings, conventions, weddings, etc.)

APPENDIX B

Recorded Committee and Board Assignments of John N. Hostetter General Conference, 1930-1980

Tract Committee, 1930-1931
General Education Board, 1932-1936
Education Board, 1937-1943
Constitution and By-Laws Revision Committee, 1935-1941
Committee on Industrial Relations, 1942-1952
Committee on Social and Economic Relations, 1953-1965
Committee on Relief and Old Age Pensions (edit), 1943-1944
Committee on Preparation of Doctrinal Literature, 1943-1948
Committee on Indoctrination, 1944-1949
Committee on Conformity to Dress Standards, 1944
Financial Auditor, Ontario Bible School, 1943-1945
President, Ontario Bible School, 1945-1947
Committee on Reprinting the Constitution and By-Laws, 1945-1946
Publication Board, 1946-1947
Editor, *Evangelical Visitor*, 1947-1967
Ontario Bible School Trustee, 1948-1950
Niagara Christian College Trustee, 1951-1966
Church Review and Study Committee, 1950-1960
Committee on Pastoral Stationing, 1950-1956
Curriculum Committee, 1951-1958
General Conference Sermon, 1950
Board of Control, Buffalo Mission, 1953-1955
General Conference Executive Board, 1955-1957
General Conference Program Committee, 1955, 1957-1959, 1968
Commission on Christian Education Literature, 1960-1966
General Conference Board of Administration, 1964-1967
Representative, Board of Administration of the National Association of Evangelicals, 1964-1974
Bishop, Central Conference, 1968-1972
General Conference Moderator, 1968

General Conference Board for Missions, 1968-1972

Board of Bishops, 1968-1972

General Conference Board of Administration, 1968-1972

Director of Development, Messiah Home, 1972-1978

Interim Editor, *Evangelical Visitor*, 1979-1980

(Source: *General Conference Minutes*, 1930-1980)

NOTES

Chapter 1: The Manor Township Farm Boy

¹For a concise account of the early Anabaptist movement, see Walter Klaassen, "A Fire that Spread: Anabaptist Beginnings," *Christian History Magazine*, 4, no. 1 (n.d.), pp. 7-9.

²John Hostetter, "Notes of a European Trip" (John N. Hostetter papers, Brethren in Christ Church Archives, Grantham, Pa., hereinafter referred to as the J.N.H. papers.)

³Alice Grace Zercher to the writer, November 7, 1997.

⁴Richard L. Hostetter and David L. Bachman, *Hostetter Family* (Baltimore, Md.: Gateway Press, 1984), p. 8.

⁵*Ibid.*, 1.

⁶Rick Hostetter, "Hostetters Listed in the Lancaster County Militia, 1775-1783," *Die Familie Hostetter*, no. 2 (August 2, 1988), (J.N.H. papers).

⁷E. Morris Sider, *Messenger of Grace* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1982), p. 14.

⁸Bishop Jacob Hostetter (1799-1888), obituary (writer's files).

⁹"Messiah College/Hostetter Biography," interviews with John and Nellie Hostetter, October 7, 1978 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁰C.N. Hostetter, "A few notes from bygone days" (ms., writer's files).

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²John Hostetter, "Impressions in Early Life," typescript, n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Teacher's monthly report of John Hostetter, Prospect Hill School, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, 1917-1918, 1918-1919 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁵"Messiah College/Hostetter Biography," interviews with John and Nellie Hostetter.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Conversation with Kenneth Hostetter, January 3, 1995.

¹⁸Alice Grace Zercher to the writer, November 7, 1997.

¹⁹John Hostetter, "Impressions in Early Life."

²⁰For an account of the Christian Hostetter family life, see Henry N. Hostetter, *Seeking First the Kingdom; Reflections on My Heritage, My Ministry, My Beliefs* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1995), pp. 6-21.

²¹C.N. Hostetter, list of ministers in the Manor-Pequea District, handwritten, n.d. (Manor-Pequea Church Council Minutes).

²²"Messiah College/Hostetter Biography," interviews with Henry and Beulah Hostetter.

²³Henry Hostetter, typescript, n.d. (writer's files).

²⁴John Hostetter, "Impressions in Early Life."

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Conversation with Henry N. Hostetter, October 19, 1996.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Henry Hostetter, typescript, n.d.

²⁹Robert Bocbel to the writer, November 16, 1997.

³⁰Conversations with Henry N. Hostetter and Alice Grace Hostetter Zercher, November 25, 1996.

³¹Ibid.

Chapter 2: New Responsibilities and Life Decisions

¹John Hostetter, "Impressions in Early Life."

²"Messiah College/Hostetter Biography," interviews with John and Nellie Hostetter.

³High School Equivalency Diploma issued by the University of the State of New York (no. 11,070, 1948 series; J.N.H. papers).

⁴Henry Hostetter, typed notes, n.d.

⁵Hostetter, "Impressions in Early Life."

⁶Minutes of the Messiah Orphanage, Board of Managers, February 21, 1911 (Archives).

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., August 11, 1914.

⁹Record of Children Placed in Homes for an Indefinite Period, Minutes of the Messiah Orphanage Board of Managers, pp. 106-107.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Eleventh Annual Commencement Program, East Hempfield Township High School, May 15, 1919 (J.N.H. papers).

¹²Class Day Exercises, Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home, Grantham, Pa., May 31, 1921 (J.N.H. papers).

¹³Nellie Hostetter's personal history was reconstructed from conversations with her daughter and sons during the last two years of her life, 1993-95.

¹⁴J.N. Hostetter to Dale W. Ulery, June 8, 1967. Ulery, a member of the 1967 Bishop's Nominating Committee, wrote to Hostetter for an explanation of his holiness experience. Hostetter's response included a statement of his call to the ministry prior to his 1925 marriage (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁵Examination Questions for bishops, elders, evangelists, and missionaries as approved by General Conference, 1910 (*General Conference Minutes*, p. 39); Hostetter examination approved by C.C. Burkholder, Isaac Swalm, Henry Schneider, and H.B. Hoffer (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁶John and Nellie Hostetter, "Application Blank for Home Mission Worker," November 25, 1928 (C.N. Hostetter, Jr., papers).

¹⁷John and Nellie Hostetter, "Recommendation Blank for Home Mission Worker," November 28, 1928 (C.N. Hostetter, Jr., papers).

¹⁸C.N. Hostetter to C.N. Hostetter, Jr., December 3, 1928 (C.N. Hostetter, Jr., papers).

¹⁹Eli M. Engle to M.G. Engle, January 1, 1929 (C.N. Hostetter, Jr., papers).

²⁰Ibid.

²¹*General Conference Minutes*, 1927, p. 30; *ibid.*, 1928, p. 29.

²²*Ibid.*, 1929, p. 74.

²³Correspondence Department Diploma, Teacher Training Introductory Course, Messiah Bible School, January 26, 1929 (J.N.H. papers).

²⁴Jubilee Program, Brethren in Christ Mission, Buffalo, N.Y., June 4-6, 1948 (J.N.H. papers).

Chapter 3: The Clarence Center River Brethren

¹Carlton O. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience: The Story of the Brethren in Christ* (Nappanee: Evangel Press, 1978), p. 131.

²Hostetter and Bachman, *Hostetter Family*, pp. 1-4.

³Oneta M. Baker, *History of the Town of Clarence* (Interlaken, New York: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1983), p. 64. Oneta Baker, Clarence historian from 1952 to 1974 and neighbor of the John Hostetters, for many years published historical columns in the town newspaper, the *Clarence Press*. Her sources included Erie County newspapers, interviews with and photographs of many residents, official records of town government, and Erie County government records. After her death, her daughter Diane collected the columns, updated the information where necessary, and published this historical record of the town. The writer is indebted to her for the hard work and scholarship which produced much of the information about the early history of the town and the first members of the Clarence Center Brethren in Christ (River Brethren) Church.

⁴Ibid., p. 6.

⁵Ibid., p. 427.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 428.

⁸*Evangelical Visitor*, March 1, 1902, p. 94. The *Evangelical Visitor*, the Brethren in Christ denominational paper (hereinafter referred to as *Visitor*), has been published since 1887 and offers church news, inspirational articles, announcements, personal testimonies, and doctrinal instruction. John Hostetter served as editor from 1947-1967.

⁹Baker, *History of the Town of Clarence*, p. 75.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 70-72.

¹¹Recollections of Orlando Martin during the January 19, 1936 dedication of the newly installed balcony in the Clarence Center Church. Martin also remembered the building of the church in 1877. From notes transcribed by Joe D. Miller, February 18, 1949 (J.N.H. papers).

¹²In the mid-1850s, in Lancaster County, the River Brethren excommunicated Matthias Brinser for building a meeting house (see Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 133-140). Within a decade of the Brinser controversy, church buildings were accepted by the Brethren; however, some members continued to speak against them even in the 1890s (Ray M. Zercher, "'Hard By a Public Road': A Study of Brethren in Christ Architecture," *Brethren in Christ History and Life*, December 1981), 162.

¹³Baker, *History of the Town of Clarence*, p. 73.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 280.

¹⁵The first tent meetings sponsored by the Brethren occurred in Kansas in 1893 (Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 172).

¹⁶Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 136. A mid-nineteenth century Methodist minister said, "Training comes in the ministry, not for it."

¹⁷Baker, *History of the Town of Clarence*, p. 280.

¹⁸H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Cleveland, Oh.: The World Publishing Company, 1929), p. 142.

¹⁹See, for example, the account of a Methodist circuit rider, Peter Cartwright, *The Backwoods Preacher*, (1858), quoted in Charles Crowe, ed., *A Documentary History of American Thought and Society*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1965), p. 72. It was also reported that the Methodists posted "three strong men" at the doors to keep the ruffians out (Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism*, p. 231).

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 161.

²¹Baker, *History of the Town of Clarence*, pp. 50-53.

²²T. Lewis, "Clarence Centre, N.Y.," *Visitor*, March 16, 1894, p. 91.

²³Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 122.

²⁴There are no records of the attitudes of the Clarence Center River Brethren toward these subjects. However, the leaders of the congregation, aware of the emerging denominational attitudes, would have conveyed them to the congregation (see Martin H. Schrag and E. Morris Sider, "The Heritage of the Brethren in Christ: Attitudes Toward Involvement in Public Policy," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* [December 1989], 188-190).

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 192-195.

²⁶Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 50-52.

²⁷Baker, *History of the Town of Clarence*, pp. 435-438.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 78.

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 478-79.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 429.

³¹Emma Ebersole, "Clarence Center, N.Y.," *Visitor*, June 15, 1892, p. 189.

³²Baker, *History of the Town of Clarence*, p. 429.

³³*Ibid.*

Chapter 4: The Brethren Enter the Twentieth Century

¹Douglas C. Metz to the writer, August 28, 1997. Metz is a descendant of Anthony Rhodes and has collected considerable genealogical information about the Rhodes family.

²A.W. Climenhaga, *History of the Brethren in Christ Church* (Nappanee, Ind.: E.V. Publishing House, 1942), p. 109.

³Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 298.

⁴E. Morris Sider, *The Brethren in Christ in Canada: Two Hundred Years of Tradition and Change* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1988), p. 154.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 314.

⁶Orlando Martin to Lista Martin Heisey, February 13, 1936. Lista was the daughter of Orlando and the wife of evangelist C. Ray Heisey (files of Lester Martin, grandson of Orlando).

⁷Douglas C. Metz to the writer, August 28, 1997. Ruth Berry Thompson to the writer, July 28, 1995. Ms. Thompson is the daughter of Alvin Berry.

⁸D.V. Heise, "Not My Will But Thine Be Done," *Visitor*, March 1, 1906, pp. 7-8.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰D.V. Heise, "Then and Now," *Visitor*, February 21, 1910, p. 6.

¹¹Clarence Center Sunday School Ledger, 1929 (J.N.H. papers).

¹²"Letters," *Visitor*, October 4, 1915, pp. 4-5.

¹³Emma Ebersole, "Church News," *Visitor*, June 15, 1892, p. 189.

¹⁴Aaron Ebersole, "News of Church Activity," *Visitor*, June 27, 1910, p. 4.

¹⁵Alvin H. Berry, correspondent, *Visitor*, July 26, 1909, p. 5; *ibid.*, June 27, 1910, p. 4; Melvin Sider, correspondent, *ibid.*, July 24, 1916, p. 27; correspondent, *ibid.*, July 2, 16, 1917, p. 19.

¹⁶Bertie District Minutes, January 8, 1926, Article 10; *ibid.*, January 14, 1927, Article 11 (Brethren in Christ Archives).

¹⁷*Ibid.*, March 1, 1929, Article 9.

¹⁸Ruth E. Brauen, granddaughter of Thomas and Cora Doner, to the writer, May 3, 1995.

¹⁹Luella D. Winger, daughter of Thomas and Cora Doner, to the writer, May 10, 1995.

²⁰Ruth Berry Thompson to the writer, July 28, 1995.

²¹Ruth E. Brauen to the writer, May 3, 1995.

²²Ibid. This type of personal isolation from "the world" was relatively common among the Brethren. For a discussion of the Brethren's emerging attitudes at this time, see Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 119-124.

²³"Clarence Centering," *Amherst Bee*, February 2, 1928.

²⁴John Hostetter, "Church Life at Clarence Center," typed notes, n.d. (J.N.H. papers); Paul E. Hostetler to the writer, February 6, 1995. Hostetler recalled his father's visit to the Doners when passing through Clarence Center. Mrs. Doner was quite sick and unable to support her husband in the ministry.

²⁵Ruth E. Brauen to the writer, including mimeographed notes from the Brauen family history, n.d. (writer's files).

²⁶Albert Davis was one of several "orphan boys" sent to Canada from England near the turn of the twentieth century. For an account of this program, see Lucille Charlton, "I Was a Stranger: The Story of William Charlton," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (April 1989), 3-10.

²⁷Roy Davis to the writer, May 14, 1995; Harold Davis to the writer, May 22, 1995. Harold and Roy Davis are sons of Albert and Ella Davis.

²⁸Lester Martin to the writer, November 1, 1995. Lester is the son of Emerson Martin and the grandson of Orlando Martin.

²⁹Hostetter, "Church Life at Clarence Center."

³⁰Paul E. Hostetler to the writer, February 6, 1995.

³¹Hostetter, "Church Life at Clarence Center."

Chapter 5: New Experience in the Clarence Center Church

¹Hostetter, "Church Life at Clarence Center."

²"Clarence Center News," *Amherst Bee*, April 9, 1929.

³Ruth Berry Thompson to the writer, July 28, 1995.

⁴Fred Brauen, Jr., to Walter Brauen, February 10, 1929, included with correspondence from Ruth E. Brauen, June 8, 1995 (writer's files).

⁵Hostetter, "Church Life at Clarence Center."

⁶Clarence Center Sunday school ledger, 1929 (J.N.H. papers).

⁷John Hostetter, handwritten record of evangelistic services and sermon titles, n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

⁸Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, May 1, 1930 (J.N.H. papers).

⁹Ibid., January 1931.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., Article XI, 1935.

¹²Ibid., Article X, January 17, 1934.

¹³Ibid., Article XIII, 1936.

¹⁴The dates and names recorded on the stubs of the baptismal certificates (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁵David Yoder wrote a letter of resignation from all church offices on December 30, 1940. He had served the congregation as Sunday school superintendent, deacon, and trustee, but resigned after confessing to "indiscretions." He never attended the church again. Years later, Hostetter and one of his sons visited him in a tavern where he worked as a bartender, near Niagara Falls (recollections of the writer).

¹⁶Abner Martin to C.N. Hostetter, Jr., February 18, 1931 (C.N. Hostetter, Jr., papers).

¹⁷Clarence Center Sunday school record books, 1935 and 1936 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁸Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, September 18, 1935 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁹Clarence Center Sunday school record book, 1936 (J.N.H. papers).

²⁰Clarence Center Sunday school minutes, January 20, 1938; *ibid.*, April, 1939; *ibid.*, August 25, 1943 (J.N.H. papers).

²¹John Hostetter, sermon notes, January 23, 1938 (J.N.H. papers).

²²John Hostetter, "Clarence Center Sunday School Efforts," *Visitor*, October 11, 1943, pp. 14-15.

²³R.K. Worman (Sunday school superintendent), Summary of Sunday school average attendance, 1935-50 (J.N.H. papers).

²⁴Conversation with Mrs. Jeanne Stairs Martin, February 29, 1996.

²⁵John Hostetter, sermon notes, September 16, 1938.

²⁶Albert Engle, *Visitor*, April 14, 1930, p. 7.

²⁷Revival Pledge, 1939, Psalm 85:6, typewritten; Revival Pledge, 1941, typewritten (J.N.H. papers).

²⁸Ruth E. Brauen to the writer, June 8, 1995.

²⁹Recollections of the writer.

³⁰Patricia Weisser to the writer, July 23, 1995.

³¹J.N. Hostetter to Henry Ginder, May 1, 1958 (J.N.H. papers).

Chapter 6: The Clarence Center Pastor and Evangelist

¹[J.N. Hostetter], "Twenty-five Years," *Visitor*, May 24, 1954, p. 2.

²John Hostetter, "The Challenge of Our Youth Today," *Visitor*, January 6, 1930, p. 7.

³John Hostetter, sermon notes, handwritten (J.N.H. papers).

⁴Ibid., June 12 and 19, 1932, July 10, 1932 (J.N.H. papers).

⁵Ibid., January 2 and 9, 1938.

⁶John Hostetter, sermon notes, March 0, 1938. Hostetter spoke often of the fulfillment of prophecy through current events, at times quoting Donald Grey Barnhouse. On other occasions he referred to the placement of the hands of the atomic scientists' clock on the cover of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. For a number of years, particularly after the successful tests of the hydrogen bomb, the scientists moved the hands of the clock close to midnight (doomsday). The clock was shown at the end of each year. (For a historical summary of apocalyptic preaching by many fundamentalist ministers and teachers, see Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern America* [Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992]).

⁷Ruth E. Brauen to the writer, June 8, 1995; Roy Davis to the writer, May 14, 1995; Joe and Trena Miller to the writer, July 1, 1995; Lester Martin to the writer, November 1, 1995; Irvin and Margaret Winger to the writer, November 10, 1995.

⁸Ruth E. Brauen to the writer, October 17, 1997.

⁹Walter Winger to the writer, March 28, 1997.

¹⁰Richard Winger to his parents and the writer, November 10, 1995.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.; Patricia Weisser to the writer, July 23, 1995.

¹³Hostetter recorded places, dates, sermon titles, and the names of converts in his "sermon notes."

¹⁴John Hostetter, February 25, 1940.

¹⁵Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, Article X, April 2, 1936.

¹⁶"Black Creek, Ontario Report," *Visitor*, March 15, 1937, p. 9.

¹⁷John Hostetter, sermon notes, handwritten after the January 10 to February 23, 1937, list of evening topics.

¹⁸Walter Winger to the writer, March 28, 1997.

¹⁹"Announcement of Evangelistic Meetings," *Visitor*, July 4, 1932, p. 218.

²⁰Ibid., December 3, 1934, p. 9; *ibid.*, January 18, 1943, p. 7; *ibid.*, September 11, 1944, p. 7 (See also John Hostetter, sermon notes and meeting dates).

²¹Lela Swalm Hostetter to the writer, February 6, 1995.

²²E.J. Swalm to J.N. and Nellie Hostetter, May 17, 1990 (J.N.H. papers).

²³See Appendix A.

²⁴John Hostetter, sermon notes.

²⁵Ibid., February 7, 1932. Hostetter returned home from Martinsburg, Pennsylvania, to conduct Isaac Nigh's funeral, February 24, 1936, and from Carlisle for Alice Hoover's funeral.

²⁶Ibid., January 1933.

²⁷[J.N. Hostetter], "The Past Comes Back," *Visitor*, May 9, 1955, p. 2.

²⁸Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, Article XII, April 2, 1936.

²⁹John Hostetter, sermon notes, handwritten, April 19, 1936.

³⁰Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, Article XII, April 20, 1937.

³¹Ibid., comments attached to the Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, April 20, 1937.

³²The church was concerned with the personal associations of their young men in the social activities after the athletic events, which moved to the tavern in the middle of town. The young people were reminded regularly of the dangers of smoking and drinking. Close friendships with other athletes usually removed the church members from church participation permanently.

³³Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, Article VIII, April 14, 1938.

³⁴Bulletin of the 1949 Post Office Centennial Service; script of the 1958 Bicentennial production (J.N.H. papers).

Chapter 7: Family Life in Clarence Center

¹Walter Winger to the writer, March 28, 1997.

²Lela Swalm Hostetler to the writer, February 6, 1995.

³Winifred H. Worman, "Home Life," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (December 1994), 327-28.

⁴John Hostetter, "Reflections," handwritten notes, n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

⁵John Hostetter, sermon notes (J.N.H. papers).

⁶Worman, 326.

⁷J. Norman Hostetter, "Experiences in the Self-Supported Ministry," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (December 1994), 316.

⁸Hostetter, "Reflections."

⁹Ruth E. Brauen to the writer, June 8, 1995; Patricia Weisser to the writer, July 23, 1995.

¹⁰Richard Winger to Irvin Winger, November 10, 1995 (writer's files).

¹¹Hostetter, "Reflections."

¹²*Ibid.* Noting John's many absences from home, Harry Hagadorn, the Richfield salesman, asked, "John, the New York men are wondering when you are going to stay home and go into the oil business."

¹³Publication Board Minutes, January 27, 1949.

¹⁴J.N. Hostetter to Henry Ginder, May 1, 1958.

¹⁵Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1954, "Financial Reports." The pastoral offerings were discontinued in 1943 when the congregation began to make payments on the parsonage debt. Hostetter later received a part-time salary for part-time service from January 1 to July 1, 1954.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, January 20, 1932.

¹⁷Typewritten petition and handwritten notes, January 21, 1932 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁸John Hostetter, "Christian Ministry, a Life's Work," typewritten notes, n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁹Letter from John and Nellie Hostetter to the Clarence Center members, n.d. (With Clarence Center Church Council Minutes).

²⁰Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, April 4, 1935.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Record of the investigation by the General Executive Board into conditions existing among the members of the district, mimeographed, n.d. (J.N.H. papers). Although the investigation occurred in 1938, unrest had been prevalent in the congregation from the time the Hostetters arrived in 1929.

²³Resolution to the Clarence Center congregation from the General Executive Board, mimeographed, nd. (J.N.H. papers).

²⁴J.N. Hostetter to E.J. Swalm, December 26, 1939 (J.N.H. papers).

²⁵Melvin Sider to the Clarence Center congregation, June 30, 1938 (J.N.H. papers).

²⁶Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, February 4, 1941.

Chapter 8: Relationships with the Canadian Church

¹E. Morris Sider, *The Brethren in Christ in Canada*, p. 31.

²John Hostetter, sermon notes (J.N.H. papers). The speakers' appearances were recorded on the following dates: May 21, 1933, June 4, 1933, October 22, 1933, April 22, 1934, August 26, 1934, September 29, 1935, June 21, 1936, October 4, 1936. Earl Sider, Edward Gilmore, Warren Winger, Elmer Steckley, Jesse Steckley, and others were regular visitors as Bible conference speakers or evangelists, but their ministry dates are not recorded.

³*Visitor*, January 6, 1930, pp. 6-7; "Gormley, Ontario," *ibid.*, January 5, 1931, p. 7.

⁴*General Conference Minutes*, 1930, p. 5.

⁵*Visitor*, January 2, 1931, p. 7; Black Creek (Bertie) District minutes, January 2, 1931.

⁶John Hostetter, sermon notes; *Visitor*, July 2, 1932, p. 218; *Ibid.*, March 15, 1937, p. 9.

⁷In addition to previous references, see *ibid.*, December 3, 1934, p. 9; *ibid.*, January 7, 1935, p. 8; *ibid.*, July 22, 1935, p. 9; *ibid.*, August 16, 1937, p. 9; *ibid.*, October 17, 1937, p. 9; *ibid.*, January 30, 1939, p. 11; *ibid.*, October 9, 1939, p. 7; *ibid.*, January 15, 1940, p. 7; *ibid.*, December 7, 1942, p. 7; *ibid.*, January 18, 1943, p. 7; *ibid.*, December 6, 1943, p. 7; *ibid.*, September 11, 1944, p. 7; *ibid.*, December 22, 1947, p. 13.

⁸Black Creek (Bertie) District Minutes, January 8, 1940 (J.N.H. papers).

⁹Joint minutes of Ontario Camp Meeting Board and Niagara Christian College Board, November 7, 1953.

¹⁰See Sider, *The Brethren in Christ in Canada*, pp. 50-52; Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 27-28.

¹¹Hostetter's recollections of the council meeting were recorded in a taped interview with Carlton Wittlinger, July 5, 1971 (writer's files).

¹²The name "Ontario Bible School" was first recorded in the *General Conference Minutes*, 1935, Article LVIII, p. 77.

¹³*Ibid.*, 1939, Article LXIII, p. 103. For an account of the acquisition of the club house and the relocation of the Bible school to Fort Erie, see Morris Sider, *Here Faith and Learning Meet: The Story of Niagara Christian College* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1982), pp. 59-67.

¹⁴*General Conference Minutes*, 1943, p. 101; *ibid.*, 1944, p. 86; *ibid.*, 1945, p. 129.

¹⁵J.N. Hostetter to C.N. Hostetter, Jr., January 20, 1944; C.N. Hostetter, Jr., to J.N. Hostetter, February 2, 1944 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁶Peter Willms to the writer, January 10, 1995.

¹⁷Kathryn Fretz Steckley to the writer, November 30, 1994.

¹⁸Joe Burkholder to the writer, November 13, 1994.

¹⁹Alvin Steckley to the writer, November 30, 1994.

²⁰Mildred Swalm Hawes to the writer, December 12, 1994.

²¹Walter Winger to the writer, March 28, 1997.

²²Peter Willms to the writer, January 10, 1995.

²³Alvin Steckley to the writer, November 30, 1994.

²⁴Harold and Rhoda Marr to the writer, December 14, 1994.

²⁵Leone Sider to the writer, November 12, 1994.

²⁶Sider, *Where Faith and Learning Meet*, p. 98.

²⁷Walter Winger to the writer, March 28, 1997.

²⁸John Hostetter, "The President's Message," *The Niagara Torch*, 1947, p. 24.

²⁹Text of the 1992 Niagara Christian College Distinguished Service Award (writer's files).

³⁰John Hostetter, sermon notes.

³¹*General Conference Minutes*, 1949, Article XIII, p. 40.

³²*Ibid.*, 1951, Article XIX, p. 40.

³³For a discussion of the denominational efforts to resolve these issues, see Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 342-362.

³⁴Paul Hostetter to the writer, February 6, 1995.

³⁵Memo to the General Executive Board from officials and trustees of the Clarence Center Congregation, n.d.; letter to William Charlton from J.H. Martin, assistant secretary, General Executive Board, November 26, 1952 (J.N.H. papers).

³⁶Paul Hostetter to the writer, February 6, 1995.

³⁷John Hostetter, sermon notes.

Chapter 9: Enduring Congregational Change

¹The 1929 Clarence Center Sunday school attendance averaged thirty-one (Clarence Center S.S. register, 1929, J.N.H. papers). According to a 1935-50 study by the 1950 superintendent, Robert K. Worman, in 1945 it was seventy (J.N.H. papers).

²Several young men entered military service during World War II. Hostetter counseled with them, but did not dismiss them from the church.

as was done in some congregations. (For a discussion of the peace issue, see Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 366-406.

³On the lighter side, one of the polio victims tried to be sure he wasn't playing cards with others on the ward when the pastor visited! (conversation with Emory Martin, February 15, 1996).

⁴Report of the Church Board, Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, 1955, Article V (J.N.H. papers).

⁵Roll Call of Delegates, *General Conference Minutes*, 1930, pp. 5, 9.

⁶*Ibid.*, 1932, p. 8.

⁷Hostetter's General Conference and other administrative assignments are listed in Appendix B.

⁸*Ibid.*, 1935, Article VII, p. 13.

⁹In a retirement interview, Hostetter said the statements on sanctification as a second definite work of grace and wearing neckties were not worded to his satisfaction (taped interview by C.O. Wittlinger, January 28, 1974, copy in writer's files).

¹⁰For discussion of this committee's contribution to the separation of the church members from "the world" through personal appearance, see Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 350-356.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 354.

¹²[J.N. Hostetter], "UMT" *Visitor*, September 22, 1947, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "Peace," *ibid.*, November 17, 1947, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "God or Anti-God," April 19, 1948, p. 3. As bishop of the Central Conference during the Vietnam War, Hostetter wrote a pamphlet distinguishing pacifism from the peace witness (J.N. Hostetter, "Serving Through Love, Pacifism or Peace Witness: Which?," published by the Board of Bishops and the Christian Service Ministries of the Board of Missions).

¹³*General Conference Minutes*, 1941, p. 12.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 1938, p. 37.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 1941, p. 26.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 1943, Article XIV, pp. 22-23.

¹⁷Recollections of the writer.

¹⁸*General Conference Minutes*, 1942, Article XXXV, p. 66; *ibid.*, 1943, Article XXXIV, p. 55.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, Article XXXVIII, p. 59.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 1943, Article LIII, p. 88.

²¹*Ibid.*, 1944, Article LXXIV, pp. 110-111.

²²Ibid., Article LXXIV, p. 111.

²³Samuel Wolgemuth, response to indoctrination questionnaire, signed by P.W. McBeth, n.d. (Committee on Indoctrination file, Archives). Wittlinger records a "cautious step" of the examining board in 1939, advising ministers to read a certain book on homiletics and pastoral theology (*Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 434).

²⁴H.G. Brubaker response to indoctrination committee questionnaire, n.d.

²⁵*General Conference Minutes*, 1945, Article X, pp. 24-25.

²⁶John Hostetter, "Indoctrination Trip Through Michigan, May 14-20, 1948" (J.N.H. papers).

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸[J.N. Hostetter], "The Lord's Work," *Visitor*, June 6, 1949, p. 3.

²⁹*General Conference Minutes*, 1947, Article XXVII, p. 97.

³⁰John Hostetter, sermon notes, August 14, 1938 (J.N.H. papers).

³¹Ruth E. Brauen to the writer, June 8, 1995.

³²While a student at Messiah Bible College, Hostetter's son-in-law, Robert Worman, had stated his call to serve as a medical missionary. The completion of his education, Navy service during the Korean War, and doctrinal issues delayed the Wormans' arrival in Africa until 1962.

³³Ruth E. Brauen to writer, June 8, 1995.

³⁴John Hostetter, handwritten, n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Charlie B. Byers to writer, January 17, 1995; Henry A. Ginder to the writer, January 13, 1995.

Chapter 10: Faith-Modifying Experiences

¹Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 476.

²David Zercher, "Opting for the Mainstream: The Brethren Join the National Association of Evangelicals," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (April 1987), 51.

³[J.N. Hostetter], "NAE Convention," *Visitor*, April 25, 1949, p. 3.

⁴[J.N. Hostetter], "At the Crossroads," *Visitor*, May 1, 1950, p. 3.

⁵Paul W. McBeth, *20th Century Tentmaker, Autobiography* (Chambersburg, Pa.: McBeth Corporation, 1986), p. 96.

⁶Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 480. The second quote from a taped interview with John Hostetter, January 28, 1974 (writer's files).

⁷Samuel Wolgemuth to the writer, December 22, 1994.

⁸Ibid.

⁹[J.N. Hostetter], "Holy and Wholly," *Visitor*, January 9, 1950, p. 3.

¹⁰The editor's concern about the "last days" was ongoing. See also Vance Havner, "Last Days," *Visitor*, July 26, 1948, p. 4.

¹¹[J.N. Hostetter], "Evangelism and Education," *Visitor*, February 20, 1950, p. 3.

¹²Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, Appendix C, p. 557.

¹³Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects in America*, rev. ed.; (N.Y.: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 218.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵*General Conference Minutes*, 1950, Article III, p. 12.

¹⁶Discussion of the dress code continued (*General Conference Minutes*, 1952, p. 36; *ibid.*, 1953, pp. 28-29).

¹⁷Luke L. Keefer, Sr., *No Empty Dream: My Psalm of Life* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1990), p. 153.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 154. For Keefer's gradual acceptance of less prescriptive church rules, see p. 206.

¹⁹Frank Demmy, "The Spiritual Revolution in the Brethren in Christ Church as a Prelude to a Decade of Reorganization," (history honors paper, Messiah College, 1974), pp. 8-9 (Archives).

²⁰Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 482.

²¹J.N. Hostetter, "The Holy Ghost and Us," *Visitor*, June 12, 1950, pp. 3-6.

²²*General Conference Minutes*, 1950, Article XI, p. 31.

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 1951, Article XIX, pp. 33-41.

²⁵For more on the work of the Church Review and Study Committee, see Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, pp. 484-498.

²⁶Henry A. Ginder to the writer, January 13, 1995.

²⁷John Hostetter, Diary of the trip to Europe, 1952 (J.N.H. papers).

²⁸[J.N. Hostetter], "Enroute [six] to World Conference," *Visitor*, August 18, 1952, p. 3.

²⁹Hostetter, Diary of a trip to Europe, August 8.

³⁰*Ibid.*, August 15.

³¹*Ibid.*, August 11 and 13.

³²Ibid., August 15.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Recollections of the writer.

³⁵For report of a recent meeting between the Mennonite Brethren and the Brethren in Christ, see "Mennonite Brethren, Brethren in Christ Leaders Meet," *Visitor*, June 1996, p. 18.

³⁶Hostetter, Diary of a trip to Europe, August 23.

³⁷[J.N. Hostetter], "St. Chrischona," *Visitor*, September 1, 1952, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "Editors Abroad, As it Looks From Here," *ibid.*, September 15, 1952, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "No Sunday School," *ibid.*, September 29, 1952, p. 3.

³⁸"Grantham District," *Visitor*, December 8, 1952, p. 10; "Chicago Mission," *ibid.*, February 16, 1953, p. 13.

³⁹[J.N. Hostetter], "The Call to the Orient," *ibid.*, August 3, 1953, p. 3.

⁴⁰[J.N. Hostetter], "Assembled in Tokyo, Japan," *ibid.*, August 31, 1953, p. 3.

⁴¹[J.N. Hostetter], "Our Duty," *ibid.*, September 14, 1953, p. 3.

⁴²Samuel Wolgemuth to the writer, December 22, 1994.

⁴³[J.N. Hostetter], "Hagi," *Visitor*, September 28, 1953, p. 2.

Chapter 11: Concluding the Clarence Center Ministry

¹"A Look Forward," n.d., probably written by the pastor for presentation to the congregational council in January or February, 1944 (J.N.H. papers).

²Financial Report, Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, January 7, 1945 (J.N.H. papers).

³1950 Financial Report, *ibid.*, February 4, 1951.

⁴"A Look Forward."

⁵"Report of the Planning Committee," n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

⁶John Hostetter, "Dedication statement," July 8, 1951 (J.N.H. papers).

⁷"Building Committee (Planning) Report," mimeographed, n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

⁸J.N. Hostetter to Melville Snyder, February 13, 1953 (J.N.H. papers).

⁹"Report of the Building Planning Committee," March 1, 1953 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁰Bishop Henry Miller, J.N. Hostetter, and Joe D. Miller to Brethren in Christ Congregation, Clarence Center, N.Y., May 6, 1953 (J.N.H. papers).

¹¹Signed J.N. Hostetter and Joe D. Miller statement, mimeographed, May 27, 1953 (J.N.H. papers).

¹²Ibid.

¹³General Executive Board to Clarence Center congregation, June 15, 1953 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁴General Executive Board to Bank of Clarence, October 16, 1953 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁵[J.N. Hostetter], "Spiritual Administration," *Visitor*, October 12, 1953, p. 2; [J.N. Hostetter], "Spiritual Administration," *ibid.*, October 26, 1953, p. 2; [J.N. Hostetter], "Spiritual Administration," *ibid.*, December 7, 1953, p. 2.

¹⁶John Hostetter to members of Clarence Center congregation, February 11, 1935 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁷"To the Members of the Clarence Center Congregation," August 5, 1945, no signature (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁸Clarence Center Church Council Minutes, Article XIII, January 15, 1949 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁹Paul Hostetter to the writer, February 6, 1995.

²⁰J.N. and Nellie M. Hostetter to Clarence Center Brethren in Christ Church, December 15, 1953 (J.N.H. papers).

²¹J.N. Hostetter, "Farewell Sermon," typed, n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

²²John Hostetter, sermon notes, 1954-60 (J.N.H. papers).

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

Chapter 12: The *Evangelical Visitor* Editor

¹*General Conference Minutes*, 1947, p. 97.

²John Hostetter, "The Fettered Slave," *Visitor*, August 1, 1932, p. 245.

³John Hostetter, "More Than Conquerors," *Visitor*, August 1, 1932, p. 245.

⁴John Hostetter, "Sunday School Teacher Preparation," *Visitor*, June 24, 1935, p. 6; John Hostetter, "My Brother's Keeper," *ibid.*, May 24, 1937, p. 2; John Hostetter, "How Can We Build a Brethren in Christ

Church of Tomorrow from the Sunday School of Today?" *ibid.*, March 1, 1943, p. 12.

⁵[J.N. Hostetter], "My Brethren," *Visitor*, August 11, 1947, p. 3.

⁶Letter to the editor, September 24, 1947 (*Visitor* letter file, J.N.H. papers).

⁷David C. Olson to the editor, October 6, 1948 (*Visitor* letter file).

⁸Publication Board Minutes, January 27, 1949; *General Conference Minutes*, 1949, p. 96.

⁹J.N. Hostetter, "A Personal Word," retirement statement to the Publication Board, 1967 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁰See, for example, Publication board minutes, April 22-23, 1954; June 13-18, 1956; November 9-10, 1956; March 29-30, 1957.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Publication Board Minutes, November 9-10, 1956; Hostetter to church pastors, October 26, 1964 (*Visitor* letter file).

¹³Publication Board minutes, June 12-17, 1961.

¹⁴When Henry Davidson, the first editor of the *Visitor* (1887-1896), accepted a typewriter advertisement, readers promptly condemned it, saying it did not "conduce to the object in view." This restriction was later relaxed (see Ray M. Zercher, "For One Hundred Years: A Tie That Binds," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (December 1987), pp. 118, 140, 170).

¹⁵Publication Board Minutes, June 9-13, 1955.

¹⁶J.N. Hostetter, "Financing Publishing," Mennonite World Conference, Kitchener, Ontario, August 1-7, 1962 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁷J.N. Hostetter to Ohmer Herr and Grace Herr, October 25, 1950 (*Visitor* letter file).

¹⁸Curriculum Committee to Publication Board and the General Sunday School Board, January 25, 1950, Publication Board minutes, January 25, 1950.

¹⁹Joel E. Carlson to editor, July 26, 1949 (*Visitor* letter file).

²⁰Publication Board Minutes, June 8, 1948.

²¹Minutes of Joint Meeting of Curriculum Committee with Publication Board and Sunday School Board, October 26, 1948 (in the Publication Board Minutes).

²²Publication Board Minutes, April 15, 1952.

²³Zercher, "For One Hundred Years," p. 154.

²⁴Publication Board Minutes, June 10-15, 1963.

²⁵John Hostetter and Paul Snyder, eds., *On Your Way* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1966).

²⁶Ray M. Zercher to John E. Zercher, "Some Thoughts in Black and White," November 6, 1956, unpublished paper, p. 1 (copy in writer's files).

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Publication Board Minutes, November 9-10, 1956. Whether John Hostetter had read Ray Zercher's paper is not known.

³⁰*Ibid.*, March 29-30, 1957.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Editorial Council Minutes, April 17, 1957 (Publication Board Minutes, Appendix B, October 31, 1957).

³³*General Conference Minutes*, 1957, p. 100.

³⁴Under supervision of the Board, Ernest L. Boyer and Ray M. Zercher (named *Crusader* editor), both members of the denominational Commission on Youth, planned the monthly youth magazine. It was published from July 1959 to December 1962, when, being ruled too costly, it was discontinued. Also, Ray Zercher had begun teaching at Messiah College.

³⁵Ray M. Zercher to the writer, November 11, 1996. In the fall of 1951, the Publication Board sponsored these potential and/or occasional writers to attend a Mennonite-sponsored writers' conference at Laurelville Camp, near Scottdale, Pennsylvania: W.O. Winger, J.G. Kuhns, C. Ray Heisey, and Ray M. Zercher (*ibid.*).

³⁶C.W. Boyer to the editor, April 25, 1967 (*Visitor* letter file).

³⁷C.W. Boyer to the editor, May 16, 1957 (*Visitor* letter file).

³⁸Publication Board Minutes, November 30-December 1, 1963.

Chapter 13: The Editor's Messages

¹One year prior to John Hostetter's appointment as editor, a succinct statement of the denomination's principles on modesty, simplicity, separation and non-conformity in dress was presented to the General Conference of 1946. See Report of the Committee on Standard of Separation, *General Conference Minutes*, 1946, Article X, pp. 27-29.

²Ray M. Zercher, "For One Hundred Years, A Tie That Binds," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (December 1987), 149.

³[J.W. Hoover], "Indoctrination," *Visitor*, July 15, 1946, p. 211.

⁴Zercher, "For One Hundred Years," 149.

⁵[J.N. Hostetter], "My Brethren," *ibid.*, August 11, 1947, p. 283.

⁶[J.N. Hostetter], "Moral Discipline," *ibid.*, September 8, 1947, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "Let Us Pray," *ibid.*, October 6, 1947, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "Nicotine," *ibid.*, October 20, 1947, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "God or Anti-God," *ibid.*, April 19, 1948, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "UMT," *ibid.*, September 22, 1947, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "Peace," *ibid.*, November 17, 1947, p. 3.

⁷In 1949 Hostetter was elected to the Board of Directors of NAE's Evangelical Youth Organization; K.B. Hoover, "NAE Report," *Visitor*, May 9, 1949, p. 2.

⁸Samuel Wolgemuth, a Brethren in Christ pastor and bishop, became a leader in the Youth for Christ (YFC) movement in the early 1950s. Hostetter was a close friend of Wolgemuth and learned to know several of the YFC leaders. Wolgemuth served as YFC president for a number of years.

⁹[J.N. Hostetter], "Building Congregations," *Visitor*, April 2, 1951, p. 2.

¹⁰[J.N. Hostetter], "Indigenous," *ibid.*, March 14, 1955, p. 2.

¹¹[J.N. Hostetter], "Let's God," *ibid.*, October 3, 1949, p. 3.

¹²[J.N. Hostetter], "Sunday School Evangelism," *ibid.*, September 4, 1950, p. 3.

¹³[J.N. Hostetter], "Youth," *ibid.*, March 25, 1957, p. 2.

¹⁴[J.N. Hostetter], "The Lad," *ibid.*, February 24, 1958, p. 2.

¹⁵[J.N. Hostetter], "Christian Experience," *ibid.*, May 18, 1959, p. 2.

¹⁶[J.N. Hostetter], "Strength," *Visitor*, April 16, 1951, p. 3.

¹⁷[J.N. Hostetter], "Among Us," *ibid.*, December 21, 1953, p. 2.

¹⁸[J.N. Hostetter], "Not Meat and Drink," *ibid.*, December 6, 1954, p. 2.

¹⁹[J.N. Hostetter], "Self-Discipline," *ibid.*, May 20, 1957, p. 2.

²⁰[J.N. Hostetter], "Point of Attack," *ibid.*, January 14, 1957, p. 2.

²¹[J.N. Hostetter], "The Family," *ibid.*, December 15, 1958, p. 2; [J.N. Hostetter], "No Place to God," *ibid.*, January 11, 1960, p. 2; [J.N. Hostetter], "Spiritual Mindedness," *ibid.*, March 7, 1960, p. 2; [J.N. Hostetter], "A Goal for 1961," *ibid.*, January 9, 1961, p. 2; [J.N. Hostetter], "Words and Deeds," *ibid.*, January 3, 1966, p. 2.

²²[J.N. Hostetter], "Church Loyalty," *ibid.*, February 4, 1963, pp. 2, 5.

- ²³[J.N. Hostetter], "A True Evangelical," *ibid.*, October 2, 1961, p. 2.
- ²⁴[J.N. Hostetter], "What Others Think," *ibid.*, August 19, 1963, p. 2.
- ²⁵[J.N. Hostetter], "Let's Talk it Over," *ibid.*, November 28, 1949, p. 3; [J.N. Hostetter], "Building Congregations," *ibid.*, April 2, 1951, p. 3.
- ²⁶[J.N. Hostetter], "Ministers," *ibid.*, October 29, 1951, p. 3.
- ²⁷[J.N. Hostetter], "The Work of the Pastor," *ibid.*, December 7, 1953, pp. 2-3.
- ²⁸J.N. Hostetter, "Looking Ahead in the Pastoral Program," Messiah College, Grantham, PA, February 27, 1956; J.N. Hostetter, "The Urgency of the Hour," Messiah College, February 27, 1956; J.N. Hostetter, "Leadership Training," Allegheny Conference, Messiah College, Grantham, PA, March 22, 1958 (J.N.H. papers).
- ²⁹J.N. Hostetter, "Evangelism--A Church Ministry," *Visitor*, December 10, 1951, pp. 5, 14.
- ³⁰[J.N. Hostetter], "Knotty Questions," *ibid.*, March 12, 1956, p. 2.
- ³¹See Ray M. Zercher, "For One Hundred Years," 155. Zercher noted Hostetter's style of forcing the reader to "a vaguely suggested conclusion."
- ³²[J.N. Hostetter], "The Holy Ghost and Us," *ibid.*, May 31, 1948, p. 3.
- ³³[J.N. Hostetter], "The Lord's work," *ibid.*, June 6, 1949, p. 3.
- ³⁴[J.N. Hostetter], "By God's Grace," *ibid.*, June 9, 1952, p. 3.
- ³⁵[J.N. Hostetter], "Reflections," *ibid.*, July 19, 1954, p. 4.
- ³⁶[J.N. Hostetter], "Pining," *ibid.*, January 26, 1948, p. 3.
- ³⁷[J.N. Hostetter], "Seething Sands," *ibid.*, June 11, 1951, p. 3. The writer also remembers concerned discussions around the dinner table about a continuing supply of oil and gasoline products for the family business. However, no product shortages occurred because of the cultivation of friendships with several suppliers after World War II when products were plentiful.
- ³⁸[J.N. Hostetter], "The Middle East," *ibid.*, April 9, 1956, p. 2.
- ³⁹[J.N. Hostetter], "God and Geography," *ibid.*, June 19, 1967, p. 2.
- ⁴⁰[J.N. Hostetter], "Sputnik," *ibid.*, November 4, 1957, p. 2; [J.N. Hostetter], "Which?" *ibid.*, December 16, 1957, p. 2.
- ⁴¹[J.N. Hostetter], "1958," *ibid.*, December 30, 1957, p. 2.

⁴²[J.N. Hostetter], "Ministers Prefer Eisenhower," *ibid.*, November 5, 1956, p. 2.

⁴³[J.N. Hostetter], "A Worthwhile Effort," *ibid.*, December 14, 1959, p. 2.

⁴⁴[J.N. Hostetter], "Our Nation Mourns," *ibid.*, December 9, 1963, p. 2.

⁴⁵Ray M. Zercher, "For One Hundred Years," 152.

⁴⁶M.L. Dohner, "Evaluating Our Church's Witness," program topic at the Ohio-Kentucky Council, 1956; M.L. Dohner to editor, May 16, 1956 (*Visitor* letter file).

⁴⁷Publication Board minutes, Article IX, June 13-18, 1956.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰This action by the editor might also reflect the initiative of the board secretary, in response to correspondence with the office editor, as noted in the previous chapter.

⁵¹Editorial Council Minutes, September 13-14, 1956 (Publication Board Minutes, November 9-10, 1956).

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³[J.N. Hostetter], "Editorial Council," *Visitor*, September 24, 1956, p. 2.

⁵⁴[J.N. Hostetter], "Holiness," *ibid.*, August 26, 1957, p. 2.

⁵⁵[J.N. Hostetter], "And Now--Farewell," *ibid.*, August 28, 1967, p. 2.

⁵⁶*General Conference Minutes*, 1967, Article XXVI, Publication Board Report, p. 113.

Chapter 14: The Central Conference Bishop

¹"Report of the Bishops' Nominating Committee," *Visitor*, March 27, 1967, p. 2.

²Bishops' Nominating Committee Minutes, December 29, 1966.

³J.N. Hostetter to John Arthur Brubaker, February 15, 1967.

⁴*General Conference Minutes*, 1967, Article XXXVIII, pp. 137, 139, Article XL, p. 140.

⁵J.N. Hostetter, "Acceptance speech for moderatorship," to closing session of General Conference, July 2, 1967, typescript (J.N.H. papers).

⁶*General Conference Minutes*, 1970, p. 42.

⁷*Ibid.*, 1965, p. 29; *ibid.*, 1974, p. 152.

⁸Central Conference Minutes, 1968, pp. 58-59.

⁹Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 8-14.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., March 8, 1969., p. 17.

¹³John Hostetter, "Thinking Mission," September 10, 1970, mimeographed manuscript (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁴John Hostetter, "Membership in the Brethren in Christ Church," n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁵J.N. Hostetter to Owen H. Alderfer, December 2, 1971.

¹⁶Gerald Wingert to the writer, n.d. (writer's files).

¹⁷Marvin Keller to the writer, n.d. (writer's files).

¹⁸Jerel Book to the writer, n.d.; Louis Cober to the writer, n.d.; Melvin E. Stauffer to the writer, n.d. (writer's files).

¹⁹Sam Hollingsworth to the writer, n.d. (writer's files).

²⁰Lawrence Yoder to the writer, n.d. (writer's files). Arthur Climenhaga, a colleague of John Hostetter's, also observed that Hostetter was an "NAE type" (conversation, May 11, 1993).

²¹Lawrence Yoder to the writer.

²²Ibid; Gerald Wingert to the writer, Sam Hollingsworth to the writer.

²³Jerel Book to the writer.

²⁴Marvin Keller to the writer, n.d.

²⁵Central Conference Minutes, 1968, Article V, p. 21.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Conversation with Arthur Climenhaga.

²⁸*General Conference Minutes*, 1967, Article XX, p. 79.

²⁹Central Conference Minutes, 1969, Article V, p. 23.

³⁰Ibid., 1968, Article V, pp. 24-25.

³¹Ibid., 1970, Article IV, p. 12.

³²Ibid., p. 13.

³³Ibid., 1969, Article V, p. 22.

³⁴Ibid., 1972, Article IV, p. 11.

³⁵Ibid., 1972, Article IX, pp. 36-38.

³⁶Board of Bishops' Minutes, June, 1967 to March, 1972.

³⁷Letters between John Hostetter and Owen Alderfer, General Secretary of General Conference, October 21, 1969 and August 31, 1970.

³⁸Board of Bishops' Minutes, June 25-28, 1969, Appendix B.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Central Conference Minutes, 1972, Article XVI, pp. 51-57.

⁴¹*General Conference Minutes*, 1972, Article XX, p. 111.

Chapter 15: Updating the Church's Retirement Ministry

¹*General Conference Minutes*, 1972, p. 111.

²In 1995, a comprehensive centennial history of Messiah Home and Messiah Village was published. For John Hostetter's involvement, described in detail, see Chapters 33 through 36, Ray M. Zercher, *To Have a Home: The Centennial History of Messiah Village* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Messiah Village, 1995), pp. 281-317.

³C.N. Hostetter, Jr. to J.N. Hostetter, July 31, 1959; J.N. Hostetter to C.N. Hostetter, Jr., August 11, 1959 (J.N.H. papers).

⁴*General Conference Minutes*, 1969, p. 95.

⁵*Ibid.*, 1971, p. 101.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*, 1972, pp. 110-111.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Zercher, *To Have a Home*, p. 298.

¹⁰John Hostetter to Charles L. Lehman and Walter Bausman, September 27, 1972 (J.N.H. papers).

¹¹"Guidelines for Action, Messiah Home's Venture in Faith," mimeographed, n.d., p. 6 (Archives).

¹²Allegheny Conference summary sheets, typewritten and handwritten, n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

¹³Personnel Work List, Messiah Home, typewritten, n.d. (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁴"Messiah Home's Venture in Faith--1972," *Visitor*, October 10, 1972, p. 5; *ibid.*, October 25, 1972, pp. 9-12; Ivan E. Beachy, "A Letter from the General Chairman, Messiah Home's Venture in Faith," *ibid.*, November 25, 1972, p. 5.

¹⁵[J.N. Hostetter], "Christian Stewardship and Messiah Home," *ibid.*, November 10, 1972, p. 16.

¹⁶In mid-November 1972, Hostetter met several Canadian Conference representatives near the Buffalo, N.Y., airport to discuss the eligibility of Canadian citizens to enter the home. Also, there was some misunderstanding over statements made by the Shaver representative in a training meeting (Recollections of the writer).

¹⁷J.N. Hostetter to the Continuation Committee, March 1, 1973.

¹⁸Messiah Home Board of Trustees Minutes, December 16, 1972; *ibid.*, January 20, 1973.

¹⁹*Messiah Home Incorporated to the Carlisle Community," a dinner meeting, the Indian Motor Lodge, December 5, 1972 (program, J.N.H. papers).

²⁰*Messiah Home Awards \$763,100 Contract," *The Sentinel*, August 7, 1973.

²¹J.N. Hostetter to pastors and laymen, June 11, 1973 (J.N.H. papers).

²²*General Conference Minutes*, 1974, p. 121.

²³Ivan E. Beachy to Carlisle Construction Company, October 13, 1973 (J.N.H. papers).

²⁴Messiah Home Board of Trustees Minutes, July 24, 1973.

²⁵Zercher, *To Have A Home*, pp. 282-286.

²⁶Report of the Director of Development to Pastors and Churchmen, February 28, 1974 (J.N.H. papers).

²⁷Building and Development Board Minutes, January 11, 1974.

²⁸*Ibid.*, March 15, 1974.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰J.N. Hostetter, "Current Information," typewritten report, April 20, 1974 (J.N.H. papers).

³¹Architectural Committee Minutes, April 26, 1974; *ibid.*, May 16, 1974; *ibid.*, May 3, 1974.

³²Building and Development Board Minutes, May 30, 1974.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴J.N. Hostetter, "Current Information," April 20, 1974.

³⁵Building and Development Board Minutes, Exhibit F, July 9, 1974.

³⁶*Ibid.*, September 6, 1974.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Jose R. Del Rio to Paul Sheaffer, October 25, 1974 (J.N.H. papers).

³⁹Ivan Beachy to the writer, November 16, 1996.

Chapter 16: Restarting the Home's Relocation Effort

¹J.N. Hostetter to pastors and churchmen, July 22, 1974.

²Building and Development Board Minutes, July 19, 1974.

³Walter Winger to the writer, March 28, 1997.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Zercher, *To Have a Home*, p. 290.

⁶Building and Development Board Minutes, July 19, 1974.

⁷J.N. Hostetter to pastors and churchmen, October 23, 1974; Building and Development Board Minutes, October 15, 1974; Winger to the writer, March 28, 1997.

⁸Building and Development Board, Ad hoc Committee Report, October 3, 1973.

⁹Ibid., Executive Committee Minutes, November 22, 1974.

¹⁰Recollections of the writer.

¹¹Building and Development Board, Executive Committee Minutes, November 7, 1974.

¹²Building and Development Board Minutes, January 9, 1975.

¹³Ibid., Executive Committee Minutes, December 12, 1974. For a detailed account of the site review in early 1975, see Zercher, *To Have a Home*, pp. 291-294.

¹⁴J.N. Hostetter to pastors, June 27, 1975.

¹⁵Recollections of the writer.

¹⁶After sale of the property to the home, Mrs. Joseph Hess told Nellie Hostetter she prevailed upon her husband to lower the price, saying he "didn't need all that money anyhow" (Conversation with Nellie Hostetter, March 1993).

¹⁷Zercher, *To Have a Home*, p. 294.

¹⁸J.N. Hostetter to pastors, June 27, 1975.

¹⁹Zercher, *To Have a Home*, p. 304.

²⁰Business and Development Board Minutes, January 11, 1974.

²¹Director of Development Report to the Building and Development Board Meeting, March 15, 1974.

²²Charlie B. Byers to the writer, January 15, 1995.

²³*General Conference Minutes*, 1974, p. 121.

²⁴Director of Development Report to the Building and Development Board Meeting, May 29, 1974.

²⁵J.N. Hostetter, "A Brief Account of October 4-14, 1974," handwritten (J.N.H. papers).

²⁶J.N. Hostetter to pastor and church board, February 4, 1976.

²⁷Zercher, *To Have a Home*, p. 305.

²⁸Memorials, "in lieu of flowers," Messiah Village Memorials; Equipping and Furnishing Messiah Village (J.N.H. papers).

²⁹Ivan E. Beachy to pastors, church boards and congregations, December 6, 1977.

³⁰Messiah Village Final Cash Accounting; Venture in Faith, Development Fund, Furnishing and Equipment, September 30, 1972 to December 31, 1978, typewritten (J.N.H. papers).

³¹Building and Development Board, Finance Committee Minutes, March 15, 1974.

³²Director of Development Report to the Building and Development Board, May 29, 1974.

³³Building and Development Board, Finance Committee Minutes, March 15, 1974.

³⁴Building and Development Board Minutes, July 2, 1974.

³⁵*Ibid.*, September 6, 1974, Exhibit B.

³⁶*General Conference Minutes*, 1976, p. 132.

³⁷Building and Development Board Minutes, April 1, 1976.

³⁸For a detailed account of money campaigns and financial arrangements for the home, see Zercher, *To Have a Home*, pp. 297-305.

³⁹Ivan Beachy to the writer, March 31, 1997.

⁴⁰Ivan Beachy, J.N. Hostetter, Memo to the Building and Development Board, May 7, 1976 (J.N.H. papers).

⁴¹Zercher, *To Have a Home*, p. 308.

⁴²J.N. Hostetter to pastor, church board and congregation, December 13, 1976.

⁴³"Dedication Draws 1,500 to New Messiah Home," *Sunday Patriot News*, July 2, 1978, A13.

⁴⁴Ivan Beachy, Dedicatory remarks (Zercher, *To Have a Home*, p. 324).

Chapter 17: Retirement at Messiah Village

¹Ivan Beachy to the writer, November 15, 1996.

²Walter Winger to the writer, March 28, 1997.

³Ryohei Miyihara to John and Nellie Hostetter, December 19, 1991 (J.N.H. papers).

⁴John O. Hershey to the writer, December 9, 1994.

⁵John O. Hershey to E.J. Swalm, April 3, 1980 (J.N.H. papers).

⁶C.W. Boyer to E.J. Swalm, April 14, 1980 (J.N.H. papers).

⁷John O. Hershey to E.J. Swalm, April 17, 1980 (J.N.H. papers).

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹E.J. Swalm to John O. Hershey, May 1, 1980 (J.N.H. papers).

¹⁰Ray M. Zercher to the writer, March 13, 1996; conversation with S. Lane Hostetter, December 14, 1994.

¹¹Paul Hostetler to the writer, February 6, 1995.

¹²Paul and Lela Hostetler to Nellie Hostetter and family, March 3, 1992 (writer's files).



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. Norman Hostetter is the second child of John and Nellie Hostetter. Born in Buffalo, New York, in 1930, he received his early education in the Clarence, New York schools. In 1949, he graduated from Messiah Junior College and in 1951 received his B.A. in History from Houghton College.

In 1951 Norman married Lois Feather and settled in Clarence Center. During the 1950s he worked with his father and brother Kenneth in the family gasoline business. In 1958 he began to teach high school history at Akron Central School. At the same time, he commenced his graduate work at the University of Buffalo, completing his master's degree in 1962 and his doctorate in Education in 1967. His doctoral dissertation traced the educational history of the Rhodesian Brethren in Christ missions.

From 1964 to 1968 Dr. Hostetter was the Director of the Department of Education at Messiah College. He returned to administrative assignments at the State University of New York at Buffalo in the fall of 1968. In 1992, he retired as Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Special Programs (acting) after serving nineteen years at the SUNY system headquarters.

The Hostetters live in DeLand, Florida. They have traveled extensively during retirement. They have two children: Jay and his family (three children) live near Albany, New York, and Kim and her family (one child) live in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Front cover photo: John and Nellie Hostetter on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, 1950