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Author(s): Valerie Rempel.

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EARLY MISSIONARY SOCIETY ACTIVITY AMONG U.S. MENNONITE BRETHREN WOMEN

Valerie G. Rempel

In 1959, Elfreda Fast, an officer of the young Women's Missionary Service of the Southern District Conference (U.S. Mennonite Brethren), added a handwritten note to a letter she had typed regarding several matters of Missionary Service business. "Forgive my many mistakes," Fast penned, "This is Sat. & between *zwiebach*, plus children's questions, I'm having a time of it."¹ As Fast's note suggests, Mennonite Brethren women have often added the work of missions to the activities and responsibilities of their daily lives. Allowed to be present but instructed to "keep silent in Brother deliberations," Mennonite Brethren women traditionally watched and worked from the sidelines of church and conference activities.² Unlike many denominations where local women's missionary societies united during the nineteenth century to form powerful organizations, Mennonite Brethren women did not begin to formally organize at regional levels until the middle of the twentieth century.³ However, nearly every congregation, including home mission congregations, had at least one mission or sewing circle actively supporting mission and relief work.

Though the charge to "keep silent" has been lifted, the early work of the women's missionary societies has received little attention.⁴ Denomi-

Assisting missionaries initially, women's societies extended their efforts to post-war relief work, but were also mindful of local projects.

Valerie G. Rempel is a doctoral student in Church History at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, Nashville, Tenn.

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national histories, in particular, have been almost silent on the contributions of the early mission societies. The index to J.A. Toews' work, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, does not include any listing under "women" or "mission societies,"⁵ and G.W. Peters' book, *Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions*, devotes only one paragraph to the work of the societies and their role in "nurturing" mission interest among Mennonite Brethren.⁶ Yet references to women's missionary societies among Mennonite Brethren in North America can be found as early as 1881—four years after the first unofficial conference meeting of North American Mennonite Brethren.⁷

Early Mission Support

A survey of congregational histories written for various anniversary celebrations reveals that mission societies or sewing circles were often among the early organizations of the local church and grew out of their members' commitment to mission. This commitment is illustrated by the authors of the 80th anniversary booklet for the churches in Delft and Mountain Lake, Minnesota, when they acknowledge missions as a dominating factor in the two churches throughout their history. "Right in the beginning," they write, "Mission hours were started where the sisters would sew or knit with their hands articles for Mission and the brethren would study the Word of God and unitedly they would pray for the missionaries."⁸ In her account of the sewing society organized at Corn, Oklahoma, Mrs. C. W. Vogt writes that "the sisters of our church had the deep conviction that a true Christian after first having experienced the saving grace of God cannot contain such experience to himself but that such a person has a desire to help others to a like experience."⁹ Likewise, the 75th anniversary booklet for the Bible Mennonite Brethren Church in Cordell, Oklahoma (formerly the Bessie Mennonite Brethren congregation), notes that "since the spirit of missions has always been a vital and intimate part of the work of God's people, the sisters of the Bessie M.B. Church organized a *Naehverein* in the year 1919."¹⁰ The *Naehverein* of the Henderson, Nebraska, congregation was organized in 1905 after a period of revival in the community resulted in significant church growth. As a result, "the sisters of the church then realized their need in helping with the missionary program."¹¹

These early mission or sewing societies clearly served both a social and religious function. Esther Vogt has written that the sewing circle was "a family affair,"¹² and Mrs. C. W. Vogt recalled that besides Bible study and prayer, "men folk" used the day for "visitation and fellowship."¹³ The primary function of sewing circles however, was to provide a means of

support in the form of cash and goods for local and overseas mission efforts. By 1890, the General Conference minutes record multiple donations from mission sales and sewing circles.¹⁴ In fact, the General Conference minutes of 1891 indicate that a gift of \$164.99 for foreign missions from the Mountain Lake “sisters Union” was the largest amount receipted that year.¹⁵

Flourishing in a Missionary Climate

The mission climate in these early congregations nurtured the calling of missionaries from their midst. Many congregations claimed as their own missionaries in China, India, and the Comanche Indian reservation in Oklahoma, as well as others involved in various local and city missions. These connections provided ongoing contact and motivation for mission groups and a seemingly endless supply of projects. For example, a sewing circle from the Ebenfeld congregation (Hillsboro, Kansas) made clothes for Anna Hanneman’s orphanage in India, sent money to India and China for famine relief, and outfitted their missionaries by providing wardrobes and household items.¹⁶ Women from the Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren church (Kansas) organized a *Schwesterverein* (sister’s society) in 1912 specifically to support missions.¹⁷ A visit by missionary J.H. Pankratz prompted a group in Henderson, Nebraska, to collect used clothing and to begin sewing for needy people in India. A reporter for the *Zionsbote* wrote:

We are grateful that Brother Pankratz has been among us. He has told us about the kind of clothes the people wear in India. Now the sisters have gone to work to cut cloth. We will have meetings like this every Thursday until we have enough to fill a chest to send.¹⁸

Missionaries seem to have been well aware of the support provided by women’s missionary societies. “Since many sisters participate with gifts and prayer, I feel obligated to give them a survey of my work,” wrote missionary Magdalena Becker in a special report of the work at the Post Oak Mission in Oklahoma for the General Conference meeting October 30 - November 3, 1915.¹⁹ They were also not averse to direct appeals for aid. In a report from the city mission in Minneapolis, Minnesota, A.A. Schmidt wrote that

In this area of the city where there is much poverty we could by the help of many sewing circles and youth organizations of the many churches help many needy people. Many a family we could help with clothes and groceries. Eternity only will reveal how many in the name of the conference we fed and clothed. “Whatsoever ye did it unto these my brethren, ye did it unto me.”²⁰

As Mennonite Brethren moved west, new churches and new mission societies were begun. For many of these congregations, relief work

became an important aspect of mission society work. In Reedley, California, a Mennonite Brethren church was organized in 1905.²¹ Women organized a sewing circle in 1913 and by 1919 their mission sale was able to net \$1,545.00 for missionary and relief work in India and Russia.²²

The Shafter, California, congregation formally organized in 1918 as a result of Mennonite migrations from Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma.²³ Shafter church historians John C. Penner and Adolf I. Frantz have noted that the congregation began mission and relief work immediately. "During the first decade thousands of dollars in cash and large amounts of clothing were forwarded to indigent and starving people, especially Mennonites, in Siberia, Russia, and Canada." They further note that a large portion of the relief material and money was gathered by members of the women's sewing circles.²⁴

Interestingly, although the Shafter congregation provided thousands of dollars for mission and relief work, the congregation had initially been reluctant to allow women to formally organize a society. Penner and Frantz write that

As early as March, 1921, a spokesman for the women brought up the matter of forming a Sewing Society, *Naehverein*, but it took two more years before the men of the church, in a business meeting, were really in favor of it and wished the women God's blessing in their undertaking. And we must at this point quote from the minutes of the business meeting held December 16, 1928, where we read: "it was decided that we allow the Junior Sewing Circle to buy a new piano for us and turn in the old one for a down payment."²⁵

The Second Generation

As members and mission societies grew older, many congregations began new, or "junior" sewing circles. Many of these groups attempted to meet the changing schedules and interests of younger women. In Buhler, Kansas, ten women organized the Herwanna Chapter, March 3, 1937, and asked a missionary on furlough, Mrs. John H. [Maria] Pankratz, to serve as a sponsor. Among their projects was the support of an indigenous preacher and several orphans in India.²⁶ In Shafter, the *Naehverein* had disbanded in 1934, but in 1939 a "Bible Class and Sewing Hour" grew out of a Sunday School class. As well as relief sewing, the group canned fruit for the Civilian Public Service camps, and gave aid to people with various needs.²⁷ In Corn, Oklahoma, the junior sisters organized in 1945. This group chose to focus primarily on local mission projects, leaving the older group to continue serving foreign missions. Among their ministries was a children's hour conducted prior to the message on the first, third and fifth Sundays, and, in keeping with tradition, the Africa Dress Committee

which sent approximately 800 garments a year to Africa.²⁸ In Reedley, the Christian Charity Workers organized with nineteen members on January 21, 1937 as a “junior sewing circle especially for working girls and young mothers who were unable to attend day meetings.”²⁹

Post-War Relief Work

As has been noted, many circles added relief sewing to their foreign and home mission projects, particularly in the wake of World War II. The work of the General Welfare and Public Relations Board (Mennonite Brethren), together with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), presented both a need and the means to meet that need. Tina Dahl, who assisted in the administrative work, reported to the 42nd General Conference session in 1943 that twenty-nine churches had “organized relief circles which sew garments for sale or for direct donations for Home Mission stations, for Red Cross or clothing sent abroad.”³⁰ The Year Book of the 35th Central District Conference (1943-1944) reported that,

The responses of our churches and especially of our Sewing Societies has been very gratifying. Enormous amounts of both new and used clothing have been received. All are carefully processed for shipment abroad as soon as doors open to the needy people. To date we have shipped larger quantities to England, North Africa, Egypt, and South America. Eternity alone will reveal what these quiet labors of love on the part of our sisters in the church have accomplished in relieving suffering and pleasing our Lord and Master.³¹

The following year, the Central District relief work report noted that almost all churches collected clothes for the suffering in war zones. Many Sewing Societies also ordered material from the M.C.C. cutting rooms and sewed dresses. Our sisters should be credited of doing herewith a wonderful work for the Lord.³²

Individual congregations provided significant amounts of relief aid. Penner and Frantz give a glimpse of the activity among Kern County, California, congregations. They write that

In the minutes of the business meeting held January 10, 1946, we read that the Shafter Church planned to send fifty carloads of potatoes to Europe. October 8, 1946, Solomon Bartel, representing the local Relief Committee, reported that the four Mennonite Brethren Churches of Kern County, during the year 1946, had contributed \$2,394.66 of which \$1,258.68 came from Shafter. Also 24,661 cans had been filled with meat and potatoes, 800 of which were made available by the Shafter Church. Again, between December 1944 and April 1946, the women relief workers and sewing circles of the Shafter Church sent 5,036 pounds of clothing to the Mennonite Central Committee forwarding centers.³³

In Hillsboro, following a request from church leadership, women organized a new circle, The Relief Society, in 1941. Orlando Harms noted that

Every two weeks as many as sixty-five ladies met all day to mend donated clothes, to cut out material for dresses, skirts, blouses and shirts which they took home to sew, to collect and make comforters and quilts, to collect blankets, wool scarves, sweaters, overcoats and other clothes to help keep the destitute refugees warm.³⁴

In Corn, the Junior Circle responded to Mennonite Central Committee's call for aid for the European refuge camps. When the task became too large, the women established the Relief Sewing Committee in 1944 which worked to sew and gather relief aid.³⁵

Local Projects

Along with foreign mission and relief work, the financial needs of home mission and other local projects received support from various circles and mission societies. For example, the Home for the Aged in Reedley, California, received donations from area missionary societies for the furnishing of additional resident rooms.³⁶ The minutes of the Southern District Conference record cash donations from individual circles for home missions projects throughout the 1940s. The Mexican Mission, in particular, received attention in the early part of the decade. A gift of \$106.25 by the Mennonite Brethren Ladies Aid, South Fairview, Oklahoma, was the third largest contribution to the Southern District Home Missions budget during 1940-1941, and the largest to the Mexican Mission for that same year.³⁷ Several other circles contributed gifts for church buildings on home mission fields, and others for a mission bus.³⁸ At least one circle, the Hillsboro Sewing Circle, contributed toward the colonization and rehabilitation program for men who had served in the Civilian Public Service (C.P.S.) program during World War II.³⁹

Sewing circles also provided funding for local church needs. In 1948, the editors of the fiftieth anniversary booklet prepared for the Harvey, North Dakota, congregation, noted that "when other departments of the church are in need of finances it calls on this society."⁴⁰ With good reason—between 1945 and 1948 the group contributed \$1,076.88 to the church's general fund, \$1,000 for a new parsonage, and \$627.13 for "flowers, sick and funerals, cards postage and merchandise."⁴¹ As noted earlier, women in Shafter were "allowed" to purchase a new piano for the church. In 1940 the women's groups at the Bethel Mennonite Brethren Church in Yale, South Dakota, offered to give up to \$500 to improve acoustics in the church sanctuary, and in 1941 promised \$250 for other church improvements. Local church historian Joseph A. Kleinsasser noted that in 1944, "the matter of giving some support to the boys in the Service

was a concern of the men at the business meeting. They settled it by giving the Ladies Aid the responsibility.” In 1949, the Yale women contributed half the purchase price of the parsonage—\$250.00.⁴² Likewise, the Corn women were involved in the building and furnishing of the Corn church building after it was destroyed by fire in early 1949.⁴³ During the 1940’s the “Willing Workers of God” in Dinuba, California, helped furnish the Zion Mennonite Brethren church nursery and kitchen, and bought shrubbery for the church landscaping.⁴⁴

The variety of these projects points to the diversified interests of mission societies by mid-century. Although initially their work and their money was devoted almost exclusively to foreign mission work, sewing circles and mission societies gradually expanded their focus to include general relief work and the local mission projects of their churches and district conferences. The united efforts of the district level Women’s Missionary Services grew out of the work of these individual societies. Beginning with the Pacific District in 1948, and followed by the Southern District in 1954, and the Central District in 1960, these women’s organizations moved into a new era of cooperative work. Each would take a slightly different approach which reflected the interests and activities of the various district conferences. Each would have to deal with the new roles and responsibilities women were assuming in their private and public lives.

Faith at Work: More Projects, Circles, Influence

Early mission societies and sewing circles grew out of the local churches’ commitment to mission and met a variety of needs. Members met for fellowship, and to work together for the cause of missions. Though early mission societies were often made up of both men and women, in succeeding years the groups became strictly a women’s organization.⁴⁵

In addition to outfitting missionaries, sewing circles provided funds and goods for home mission projects, and local church projects. Many groups continued to conduct Bible studies and kept active correspondence with missionaries, particularly those from their own congregation. During and after World War II, circles helped contribute to the enormous relief efforts of the Mennonite Central Committee. Clothing and canned goods were tangible products which women could provide out of their own resources.

As members in the various circles grew older, new circles were often started by younger women. These groups often tried to meet the changing schedule needs and interests of younger women who were working or had small children. As a result, junior circles often focused on the needs of the

local church while senior groups continued their support of foreign mission efforts.

Until 1948 no formal organization of the various women's groups existed. Each circle functioned independently. Most elected officers and kept records. Projects were chosen by the individual groups. Funds were raised in a variety of ways. Circles catered meals, sold food at public auctions, held mission sales of goods such as handmade quilts and other items, collected offerings, etc. Although recognized as existing, sewing circles were not included in the various statistical reports of the district conferences which recorded the activities and organizations of the local churches.

The activities of the women's missionary societies prior to formal organization at a district conference level, parallel the widening ministries of local congregations. And although they were generally excluded from formal decision-making at a congregational level, these women were not without influence. Women took care of much of the practical and service work of the church. In addition, they developed strong fund-raising capabilities, which in turn, allowed them a measure of influence within their local congregations. Above all, it is important to remember that these efforts grew out of women's own sense of belonging to the larger church body, and their commitment to its mission. Mrs. C. W. Vogt gave voice to that commitment when she wrote that a true Christian cannot contain the saving grace of God, but desires to help others to a like experience. The various mission and sewing societies of the U.S. Mennonite Brethren churches clearly viewed their work as a demonstration of their faith.

A sequel to this article is published in Bridging Troubled Waters, Paul Toews, ed., Kindred Press, 1995.

ENDNOTES

¹ Elfreda Fast to Esther [Ebel], February 14, 1959. folder "No. 15." SDC WMS.

² Minutes of the Conference in York Co., Nebr. in the year 1879," *Yearbooks of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches: Sessions 1 - 22, 1879 - 1900*, trans. Evangeline Kroeker and Robert Seibel, 10.

³ The Pacific District organized in 1948, the Southern District in 1954, and the Central District in 1960.

⁴ The statistical reports presented at the Mennonite Brethren district conferences (United States) do not include data about women's organizations until 1949 in the Pacific District (discontinued 1957 - 1963), 1956 in the Central District, and 1966 in the Southern District—although as noted, nearly every congregation had at least one mission or sewing circle. By contrast, the statistical reports regularly included information on the number and membership of musical groups, youth organizations, Sunday School classes, Daily Vacation Bible Schools, and various extension programs.

⁵ By comparison, there are seven individual listings related to "Youth". John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers* (Fresno California: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975), 512-513.

⁶ G.W. Peters, *Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions* (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Press, 1984), 122. Peters writes that "special credit for the nurture of missions interest must be given to the women's missionary societies in the local churches."

⁷ A reference in the minutes of a conference session held October 10, 1881 records a treasury report under the heading "Women's Mission Activities." "Conference in Nebr. Oct. 19, 1881," *Yearbooks of the General Conference... Sessions 1 - 22, 1879 - 1900*, 14.

⁸ H.E. Wiens, et al., *80th Anniversary 1877-1957: The Mennonite Brethren Churches of Delft, and Mountain Lake, Minnesota* (1957), 39. The Mountain Lake group encompasses both the Mountain Lake congregation (located in Mountain Lake) and the Carson congregation (located in Delft). The two groups functioned as one congregation meeting in two locations until 1918.

⁹ *Sixtieth Anniversary: 1893-1953, Mennonite Brethren Church, Corn, Oklahoma* (1953).

¹⁰ *Diamond Jubilee: Bible M.B.* (April, 1980), 28. The Bessie congregation was organized in 1905. During the years 1919 -1980, the Nachverein (a German word usually translated as sewing society or circle) raised over \$20,000 for home and foreign missions (pp. 28-29).

¹¹ Henderson Hosts Area Conference," *The Challenger*, September 1974: 1. The unnamed writer reports that "86 souls were saved and added to the church," as a result of cottage prayer meetings.

¹² *The Ebenfeld Church in Action*, 16. The preface attributes the section on "Women's Work" to Esther L. Vogt.

¹³ *Sixtieth Anniversary*, (Corn, Oklahoma).

¹⁴ The report lists receipt of \$150 from the "WMS Minnesota [sic] thru Johann Wiebe;" \$30 from the Ladies Aid in Hillsboro, Kansas; \$55.65 from the Ebenfeld, Kansas, mission sale; \$82.20 from a mission sale in Nebraska, and another \$134.61 from an unnamed mission sale. "Minutes of October 19 and 20, 1890, Hamilton County,"

Yearbooks of the General Conference... Sessions 1 - 22, 1878 -1900, 100.

¹⁵ General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church, October 12, 1891, Turner County, South Dakota," *Yearbooks of the General Conference... Sessions 1 - 22, 1879 - 1900*, 111.

¹⁶ Ebenfeld, 16.

¹⁷ Orlando Harms, *The Journey of a Church* (Hillsboro, KS: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1987), 90. Harms also notes an earlier reference to disagreements over a mission sale. "Whether this indicates that the church had sewing circles which held mission sales, we do not know."

¹⁸ Clarence Hiebert, *Reflections after a century... The Henderson Mennonite Brethren 1878-1978* (Henderson: Centennial Committee, the Mennonite Brethren Church, Henderson, Nebraska, 1979), 132. Mrs. John A. Wiebe [Viola Bergthold Wiebe] recalled the receipt of such a chest in India, sent from the Carson (Delft, Minnesota) congregation as follows: "Then came the distribution of the gifts among the Indian Christians. That often was a problem—so many in need, how were we to do justice to all. Often the things were given to the widows and orphans. When the schools were in their beginning the children were provided with two sets of clothes a year. When there were from 100 to 200 children at each mission station to be clothed, you can see well how much the gifts from the *Naehverein* were appreciated." Mrs. John A. Wiebe, 11.

¹⁹ Year Book, 1915, Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, Convened October 30, 31 & November 1, 2, 3 at Winkler, Manitoba, Canada," *Yearbooks of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Sessions 33-37, 1915 - 1927*, trans. Robert Seibel, 29.

²⁰ Year Book of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America for the year 1921-22, Convened at Reedley, California November 19 to 27, 1921," *Yearbooks of the General Conference... Sessions 33-37, 1915 -1927*, 100.

²¹ Esther Jost, *The Church Alive in its 75th Year: 1905 - 1980* (1980), 3.

²² Esther Jost, *The Church Alive*, 105.

²³ John Cornelius Penner and Adolf I. Frantz, *Through the Years: A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Shafter, California, Its Organization and Its Development, 1918-1968* (1968), 6.

²⁴ For example, in 1930, \$725.79 plus \$500.00 worth of clothes were sent out. Penner and Frantz, *Through the Years*, 7.

²⁵ Penner and Frantz continue: "What Christian condescension! From then on until the present day, except for a few war years, when on account of a gas shortage, transportation was lacking, the women of the church have sewed and quilted, conducted sales, donated their time and money to such an extent that their work constitutes one of the brightest chapters in the history of the Mennonite Brethren relief and Missionary enterprise." Penner and Frantz, *Through the Years*, 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "History of the Sewing Circles of the M.B. Church of Shafter," Shafter Mennonite Brethren Church Records, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, Calif., Microfilm roll 77, pp. 1405-1406.

²⁸ *Sixtieth Anniversary*

²⁹ Esther Jost, *The Church Alive*, 107.

³⁰ *Year Book of the 42nd General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North*

America Held at Buhler, Kansas, May 26-30, 1943 (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, n.d.), 64.

³¹ *Year Book of the 35th Central District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America Held at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, June 10-14, 1944* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, n.d.), 16. The minutes also note that "closely allied with and often united under the same management has been the very successful and greatly welcome home canning and drying program."

³² *Year Book of the 36th Central District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America Held at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, June 6-19, 1945* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, n.d.), 18.

³³ Penner and Frantz, *Through the Years*, 11.

³⁴ Orlando Harms, *The Journey of the Church*, 213.

³⁵ Aid also went to various home mission fields (Texas, Arkansas, etc.) in addition to overseas. *Sixtieth Anniversary*, n.p.

³⁶ *Year Book of the 36th Pacific District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America Held at Reedley, California, November 18 to 21, 1945* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, n.d.), 40. The cost of furnishing a room was \$250.00.

³⁷ *Year Book of the Southern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America: Reports for the year 1940-1941 with resolutions for the year 1941-42* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, n.d.), 12-14.

³⁸ *Year Book of the Southern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, Reports for the year 1940-1941* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, n.d.), 14-15. The record lists \$50.00 from the Copper Needle Club in Enid, Oklahoma, and \$50 from a society in Buhler, Kansas for church buildings; plus \$25.00 from the Sewing Society from Ebenfeld, Kansas and \$16.00 from the Paxton, Nebraska Mission Society.

³⁹ *Year Book of the 39th Southern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America Held at Hillsboro, Kansas, October 16-19, 1948* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, n.d.), 35. A contribution of \$50.00 is noted in the financial report.

⁴⁰ J. J. Seibel and Mrs. J. J. Seibel, *Fiftieth Anniversary: Mennonite Brethren Church, Harvey, North Dakota, 1898-1948*, 14.

⁴¹ Seibel and Seibel, *Fiftieth Anniversary*, 11. Total income for this time period is recorded as \$4,281.98, of which \$2,704.01 went for local projects, while \$1,587.05 was channeled into mission-related projects (\$800.00 - Care packages, \$376.25 - "missions, widows and needy," and \$410.80 - "mission schools, children's homes and radio work)."

⁴² Joseph A. Kleinsasser, *A History of Bethel Mennonite Brethren Church, Yale, South Dakota* (Sioux Falls, SD: J. A. Kleinsasser, 1979), 80-81.

⁴³ *Sixtieth Anniversary*

⁴⁴ *50th Anniversary: Zion Mennonite Brethren Church, Dinuba, California*, 16.

⁴⁵ Mrs. C. W. Vogt attributes this change to the use of cars. She writes, "But with the passing of the horse and buggy days and the introduction of the automobile, which came into use in a matter of a short time, the meeting of the brethren discontinued because most of the sisters soon learned the art of car driving and most anybody who would, could drive, as no drivers license were required at that time." *60th Anniversary*.