

HERITAGE HORIZONS

NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST HERITAGE COMMISSION

Celebrating a Rich Past ... Inspiring a Promising Future

FALL 2018

The North American Baptist Heritage Commission

was officially established in 1991 for the purpose of preserving, organizing, and displaying the history of the North American Baptist Conference (NAB). However, the work of archiving important historical documents and artifacts related to the ministry of the NAB began much earlier when it was still the German Baptist Conference. By cooperative agreement, Sioux Falls Seminary houses the NAB Archives in a climate-controlled environment to ensure it is a proper home to the hundreds of photos and artifacts and thousands of documents that tell the stories of faithful pastors, missionaries, professors, denominational leaders, and lay-persons who have served faithfully in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia for more than 150 years.



Albert Ramaker (1860–1946) was an early leader in the collection of historical materials. He served many years as dean of the German Department of the Rochester Theological Seminary, as a professor of Church History beginning in 1897, and as the denominational historian for a time.

George A. Dunger (1908–2002) was officially appointed as conference archivist at the 1982 NAB Triennial Conference in Niagara Falls. A former missionary in Cameroon and a professor of Missions and librarian at North American Baptist Seminary (now Sioux Falls Seminary), Dr. Dunger laid important groundwork for the organization and operation of the Archives.

Over the years, the Heritage Commission has been guided in its mission by faithful workers like Joyce Ringering, Reinhold Kerstan, John Siewert, Bee Westermann, and numerous others. Faithful volunteers continue to bless the Heritage Commission by researching, organizing, and filing photos and various other documents. Previous Heritage Commission directors George W. Lang and Jackie Howell each provided valuable leadership. In April 2018, Randy Tschetter was appointed director, with Darlene Frueh as the administrative assistant. They are developing plans to digitize documents such as *The Baptist Herald* to make them available to anyone with internet access.

Being Missional Is Not New:

The Life and Ministry of Walter Rauschenbusch

by Randy Tschetter



Recently, I added the word **missional** to my computer's dictionary because my word processor did not recognize it as a legitimate word. Although missional is a word not easily defined, it is also one that has grown in usage and popularity among Christians in the early years of the twenty-first century. Simply stated, missional is the intentional living out of one's faith in an effort to share God's love and bless the lives of others. The call to missional living is articulated on the NAB website:

Throughout history, God has chosen a people who will bear witness to who He is in the world. God created His church to be a blessing to all of the nations through the way we live. He did not create us to isolate ourselves to do spiritual things.

It is important to understand, however, that this newly popularized word has been incarnated in the lives of many North American Baptists for more than a century. This was reinforced in my thinking as I attended a conference earlier this year in which speakers and hearers reflected on the legacy of Walter

Rauschenbusch. Rauschenbusch, who died in 1918, was a theological educator, social activist, and historian whose social and spiritual impact is still felt in today's culture.

When an uncle offered him free university education if he would study law, Rauschenbusch turned down the offer and instead pursued his calling to the Gospel. He graduated with honors in 1886 from the Rochester Theological Seminary, which gave birth to the North American Baptist Seminary and is now known as Sioux Falls Seminary. He then accepted a call from the Second German Baptist Church located in the Hell's Kitchen section of New York City. He served for eleven years in this poverty stricken area – the poorest of slums, the lowest rung on Manhattan's socioeconomic ladder.¹

Living in the so-called Gilded Age in which many embraced the promises of economic prosperity and unlimited wealth, Rauschenbusch saw the world through different lenses. Biographer Christopher Evans writes, "As a pastor in the Hell's Kitchen section of New York City, Rauschenbusch had first-hand exposure to men, women, and children who were exploited in hazardous factories and sweat shops, with no guaranteed wages, no limit on working hours, and no employment benefits."² The experience caused Rauschenbusch to ask in his book *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, "What does Christianity require of us in the face of these brutal social and economic inequalities?"

Against a political and economic background of unbridled power and unlimited profits, Rauschenbusch became the "theologian" of the Social Gospel movement³ – raising concerns about the need for

1 Jacky Ng, Michael Luboa, and Emily Tabolt, "The Peopling of New York," https://macaulay.cuny.edu/seminars/cesario08/articles/h/e/l/Hell's_History_7e51.html.

2 Christopher Evans, "Celebrating a Classic: Christianity and the Social Crisis at 100."

3 Daniel J. Everitt, "Interpreting Salvation . . ." A case study located in the Walter Rauschenbusch file at the North American Baptist Heritage Commission, Sioux Falls, SD.

The official beginning of the Heritage Commission in 1991 also included the creation of the Board of Governors, whose task was to give direction to and oversee the ministry and staff of the Heritage Commission. Rev. Orville Meth became the first Chairperson of the Board of Governors in 1993. Dr. Ernie Zimbelman, Dr. Janelle Beck, Ben Engbrecht, Dr. Marvin Dewey, and Tim Heerts have also served in this position.

In 2017, the Board of Governors submitted a request to the NAB for additional financial support

for operation of the Archives. In responding to that request, it was determined that the Heritage Commission would become a full ministry partner of the NAB. The Heritage Commission is now funded through the budget of the NAB. The director and administrative assistant are employees of the NAB, serving under the direction of Executive Director Dan Hamil. The Board of Governors will be renamed and serve in an advisory role to the Heritage Commission staff.

Triennial Conference Display Draws Interest

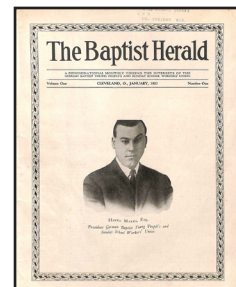


The Shaw Conference Center in Edmonton, Alberta was the home of the 2018 Triennial Conference of the North American Baptist Conference. The Heritage Commission booth (pictured) in the

display area was a busy place as people stopped by to visit and reminisce around the photos and documents which were on display. Randy and Darlene were kept busy answering questions and encouraging individuals and churches to submit important historical documents to the Archives. Included in the display was a special section dedicated to the memory of Dr. Jackie Howell and Dr. George W. Lang.

Digitizing Archival Records

Several years ago, the Heritage Commission was able to purchase a tool which allows us to scan historical documents and save them as PDF documents in our computer system. The goal is to upload the scanned documents to the HC website so that researchers will have digital access.



Nearly all of the HERITAGE HORIZONS issues dating back to 1992 are accessible online. We have a volunteer who is currently scanning issues of the BAPTIST HERALD, dating back to 1923. A variety of other documents have also been scanned. As we forward scanned document to the International Office, Josh Jackson uploads them to the HC Webpage. We still have a long way to go, but we are making progress as we move toward our priority of digitizing archival records.



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