

# HERITAGE HORIZONS

NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST HERITAGE COMMISSION

*Celebrating a Rich Past ... Inspiring a Promising Future*

SUMMER 2021

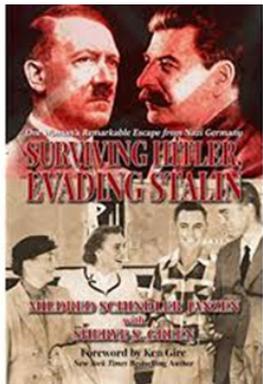
Welcome to this Triennial Edition of Heritage Horizons – the newsletter of the North American Baptist Heritage Commission. The mission of the Heritage Commission is to collect, preserve, and organize documents, photos, and artifacts that tell the story of God at work in the lives of individuals, institutions, and churches of the North American Baptist Conference for more than 150 years. Located on the campus of Sioux Falls Seminary, the Archives serves a library housing scores of historical Bibles and books, a museum displaying historic pieces of furniture and denominational artifacts, and a depository for thousands of pages of written history telling the stories of our denominational churches and describing behind-the-scenes operations of an extensive foreign mission outreach and educational institutions.

As we focus on Reimagining Hospitality during this 2021 Triennial Conference, North American Baptists will be challenged to reexamine our relationships with each other and with our neighbors. The realities of a worldwide pandemic, changing demographics in our communities, heightened racial concerns, and an increased dependence on electronic communication all cause us to think or rethink what it means to care for others. While Reimagining Hospitality is clearly a concern for the twenty-first century church, hospitality is not something new for the NAB. In my time as director of the Heritage Commission, I have spent many hours combing through photos, correspondence, and documents related to the various ministries and individual lives of the NAB:

- For more than a century, our foreign missionaries have been providing healthcare, educational opportunities, and evangelism to people in places around the globe. Hundreds have come to faith in Christ, illiteracy has been overcome in many places, pastors, nurses and teachers have been trained, basic health care and increasingly intricate medical treatments have blessed the lives of many. I am especially touched when I see photos of missionary nurses physically tending to the open sores of lepers.
- Over a hundred years ago, in places like Hell’s Kitchen in New York City, concerned and prophetic leaders like Walter Rauschenbusch led the way advocating for the rights of people for a safe work-place environment and limited hours, fair wages, quality healthcare benefits, safe and adequate food, educational opportunities for all, and more – benefits related to hospitality we take for granted in today’s world.
- In the mid-twentieth century, denominational leaders like William Kuhn and William Sturhahn were instrumental in working with churches and other institutions in



finding employment, homes, and places of worship in North America for European refugees. Some of the story is told in Sturhahn's book, *They Came from East and West*.



- Mildred Schindler Janzen's book *Surviving Hitler, Evading Stalin* tells the fascinating and compelling story of a young woman who survived grave dangers as she was blessed and protected by the hospitality of family,

friends, and strangers.

While times and cultures have changed, the biblical call to hospitality continues: "‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’" (Luke 10:27 NIV).

## Celebrating Our Heritage

In the midst of composing this piece, I happened across the Spring 2004 issue of *Heritage Horizons*. The lead story, written by George W. Lang, was titled "Heritage Sunday for Your Church?" As Director of the Heritage Commission, he wrote, "When was the last time that your church celebrated its God-blessed history? When was the last time the younger members of your church were told about how God led in the planting of your church, its early growth and development?"

Rev. Lang went on to encourage local churches to consider hosting or celebrating a Heritage Sunday in conjunction with a church anniversary or even on an annual basis. While Triennials are opportunities for individuals and congregations to consider NEW challenges and opportunities, they also are a good time to reflect and celebrate God's faithfulness in the PAST. That is especially true in 2021 as meet virtually due to COVID.

Please let us know how or if the Heritage Commission can assist you in celebrating your heritage.



Congratulations to **Central Baptist Village** in Norridge, Illinois. Throughout 2021, they are celebrating 125 years of caring for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of seniors in their community. You can find them online at <https://cbvillage.org>.

Central Baptist Village is a part of the Upper Mississippi River Region of the North American Baptist Conference, where Rev. James Renke serves as regional minister.



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