

**To: Fellowship Council Members**  
**From: Liz Cutler Gates**  
**Date: 28 January 2011**  
**Re: Brethren Digital Archives**

In *Restoring the Household, the Quest of the Grace Brethren Church* (BMH 2008), the late Todd Scoles quotes Brethren historian Donald Durnbaugh, who wrote about the importance of a perspective on the past in order to set course for the future.

*History is to the group what memory is to the individual. No sensible person ignores his past experiences when an important decision must be made. He may decide to act differently than he did in the past because of changed circumstances, but his judgment is tempered by past successes and failures. Similarly, for a group to act intelligently it must be informed of its heritage. It must understand how it came to be what it is, in fact, today.*

Scoles emphasized that it is easy to dismiss the past without pausing to understand it. He noted that models and methods adjust and change; circumstances and environments emerge, influence, and are replaced. People and initiatives shape new perspectives, which become old. It becomes difficult to trace a clear path from a rich heritage to a rich future.

“Durnbaugh’s point is that our heritage has formed our present, and we should not ignore it when projecting our next steps,” Scoles wrote. “We must recognize the values and principles that have become part of our fiber and character. We can choose to change them or set them aside, but we should do so intentionally and not ignorantly.”

For that reason, I believe the Brethren Digital Archive project is important to the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches and I’m here to ask for your support.

The project is an effort to digitize Brethren periodicals from the mid-1800s until 2000. This includes 24 different publications and 10 almanacs (totaling more than 150,000 pages). Among the list are the *Brethren Missionary Herald* magazine (1939-1996), *Grace Journal* (1960-1973), and *Grace Theological Journal* (1980-1991). A number of publications pre-date the original three-way split among the Brethren in the late 1800s and all contain valuable theological, historical, and genealogical information.

The Archives committee includes representatives of the major Brethren groups. In addition to the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, they include the Church of the Brethren, the Old German Baptist Brethren, the Old German Baptist Brethren New Conference, the Dunkard Brethren, the Old Brethren, the Brethren Church (Ashland), and the Conservative Grace Brethren Churches International. Committee members come from publishers, like the Brethren Missionary Herald Company, libraries and archives, such as the Morgan Library at Grace College and Theological Seminary, as well as other denominational boards. (A list of partners may be found on the attached newsletter or in the brochure that has been included.)

Plans are being made to scan the following documents and make them available on the Web:

- *Ashland Theological Journal*
- *Bible Monitor* (1922-2000)
- *Christian Family Companion* (1865-1873)

- *Christian Family Companion and Gospel Visitor* (1874-1875)
- *Der Brüderbote* (1875-1877)
- *Der Brüderbote* (1880-1892)
- *Der Evangelische Besuch* (1852-1861)
- *Grace Journal* (1960-1973)
- *Grace Theological Journal* (1980-1991)
- *Messenger* (1965-2000)
- *Schwarzenau* (1939-1942)
- *The Brethren at Work* (1876-1883)
- *The Brethren Evangelist* (1885-2000) and *The Brethren's Evangelist* (1883-1884)
- *The Brethren Missionary Herald* (1939-1996)
- *The Brethren's Missionary Visitor* (1894-1896)
- *The Gospel Messenger* (1883-1964)
- *The Gospel Preacher* (1879-1882)
- *The Gospel Visitor* (1857-1873) and *The Monthly Gospel-Visitor* (1851-1856)
- *The Inglenook* (1900-1913)
- *The Missionary Visitor* (1902-1930)
- *The Pilgrim* (1870-1871 & 1875-1876) and *The Weekly Pilgrim* (1872-1874)
- *The Pilgrim* (1954-2000)
- *The Primitive Christian* (1876 & 1880-1883) and *The Primitive Christian and Pilgrim* (1876-1879)
- *The Progressive Christian* (1878-1882)

In addition, almanacs published by Brethren groups in the late 19th century will be included. So far, this includes:

- *The Brethren's Almanac* (Holsinger, 1871-1874)
- *Pilgrim Almanac* (Brumbaugh, 1873-1874)
- *The Brethren Family Almanac* (Brumbaugh & Quinter who had purchased Holsinger, 1875)
- *Brethren's Almanac* (Brumbaugh's & Quinter, 1876-1879)
- *The Brethren's Family Almanac* (1880-1917, 's dropped in 1903)
- *Brethren Annual* (started by Holsinger about 1884 with almanac format until 1915-1924)
- *The Brethren's Family Almanac*, 1875, Quinter
- *The Brethren's Annual For the Year of Grace*, 1885 (Holsinger)
- *Our Almanac and Annual Register*, 1880, 1883, 1885 (Kurtz)
- *The Brethren at Work, Almanac and Annual Register for All The People*, 1882, Brethren At Work Steam Printing House

Within the last month we have committed to a partnership with Lyrasis, the nation's largest regional membership organization for libraries and information professionals. We expect work to begin soon on the project. This partnership allows us to complete the project for approximately \$50,000, far below the original \$150,000 estimate.

Publications will be available at *archives.org*, as well as the web sites of the various groups represented. (For example, the *Brethren Missionary Herald* magazine also will be available at

fgbcworld.com.) A complete set may also be accessed by computer at the Brethren Heritage Center, Brookville, Ohio. That set will contain publications that will not be available on the Internet.

This project is not a Brethren Missionary Herald or Morgan Library project. It is one that belongs to the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches. For that reason, I am asking for your endorsement of this effort. It will benefit everyone involved in our network of congregations, especially as we move further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will not only provide historians with an easy way to trace a congregation's history or see how a mission field developed, it will provide information for genealogists and help theologians in the future see how a particular doctrine was interpreted over time.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Liz Cutler Gates".

Liz Cutler Gates  
executive director, Brethren Missionary Herald Company  
committee member, Brethren Digital Archives

## **Suggested Resolution in Support of the Brethren Digital Archives**

The Fellowship Council, the governing board of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, recognizes that much of the history of the Grace Brethren movement is contained in publications that are deteriorating with age, rendering them unusable. It also realizes the importance of the information contained in these publications, which are valuable resources for theologians, historians, and genealogists and this information should be preserved for future generations.

The Fellowship Council commends the Brethren Digital Archives for their cooperative effort to preserve the printed history of the Brethren movement, which dates to Alexander Mack and the baptism of eight believers in Schwarzenau, Germany, in 1708.

The Council further encourages Grace Brethren people, congregations, and organizations to support the effort of the Brethren Digital Archives through prayer, volunteer service, or financial donations. Such action will ensure that while our heritage has formed our present, we do not ignore it in projecting our future.