

GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHERN (DUNKERS)

GENERAL STATEMENT

The general statement of the early history of the Brethren, Dunkers, or German Baptist Brethren, is presented very largely in the section for the Church of the Brethren (Conservative Dunkers), the oldest and largest of these bodies. In view of the fact that they have been popularly known, not as "German Baptist Brethren," but as "Dunkers," or "Dunkards," that name has been preserved.

The denominations grouped under the name German Baptist Brethren (Dunkers) in 1926, in 1916, and in 1906, are listed in the table below, with the principal statistics as reported for the three periods. The denomination reported in 1916 as German Seventh Day Baptists is now known as Seventh Day Baptist (German, 1728), and the denomination then reported as Old Order German Baptist Brethren is now shown under its correct name, Old German Baptist Brethren; one body listed in 1916 was not reported at the census of 1906.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHERN (DUNKERS), 1926, 1916, AND 1906

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
1926								
Total for the group.....	1,279	158,248	1,206	\$11,110,013	1,182	\$2,293,622	1,067	133,483
Church of the Brethren (Conservative Dunkers).....	1,030	128,392	968	8,630,499	951	1,744,755	895	109,891
Old German Baptist Brethren.....	62	3,036	59	161,450	53	18,781	-----	-----
The Brethren Church (Progressive Dunkers).....	174	26,026	166	2,274,064	166	523,681	160	22,917
Seventh Day Baptists (German, 1728).....	4	144	4	18,000	3	2,400	3	144
Church of God (New Dunkers).....	9	650	9	26,000	9	4,005	9	531
1916								
Total for the group.....	1,283	133,626	1,188	5,055,835	1,154	924,630	1,097	136,365
Church of the Brethren (Conservative Dunkers).....	997	105,102	928	3,990,898	911	705,725	899	111,686
Old Order German Baptist Brethren.....	67	3,399	60	107,212	43	7,120	-----	-----
The Brethren Church (Progressive Dunkers).....	201	24,060	184	896,725	185	204,562	183	23,728
German Seventh Day Baptists.....	5	136	3	33,000	4	1,980	3	152
Church of God (New Dunkers).....	13	929	13	28,000	11	5,243	12	799
1906								
Total for the group.....	1,090	97,144	974	2,802,532	-----	-----	866	78,575
German Baptist Brethren Church, Conservative.....	815	76,547	741	2,198,957	-----	-----	708	66,595
Old Order German Baptist Brethren.....	68	3,388	57	89,800	-----	-----	-----	-----
The Brethren Church (Progressive Dunkers).....	202	17,042	172	472,975	-----	-----	156	11,850
German Seventh Day Baptists.....	5	167	4	40,800	-----	-----	2	130

THE BRETHREN CHURCH (PROGRESSIVE DUNKERS)

STATISTICS

Summary for the United States, with urban-rural classification.—A general summary of the statistics for the Brethren Church for the year 1926 is presented in Table 1, which shows also the distribution of these figures between urban and rural territory.

The membership of the Brethren Church comprises baptized persons who have been enrolled as members upon personal profession of faith. Baptism is by immersion.

TABLE 1.—SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, 1926: THE BRETHREN CHURCH (PROGRESSIVE DUNKERS)

ITEM	Total	In urban territory ¹	In rural territory ¹	PER CENT OF TOTAL ²	
				Urban	Rural
Churches (local organizations).....	174	53	121	30.5	69.5
Members	26,026	12,089	13,937	46.4	53.6
Average per church.....	150	228	115		
Membership by sex:					
Male.....	10,835	4,914	5,921	45.4	54.6
Female.....	15,161	7,145	8,016	47.1	52.9
Sex not reported.....	30	30			
Males per 100 females.....	71.5	68.8	73.9		
Membership by age:					
Under 13 years.....	2,007	1,021	986	50.9	49.1
13 years and over.....	22,366	10,754	11,612	48.1	51.9
Age not reported.....	1,653	314	1,339	19.0	81.0
Per cent under 13 years ³	8.2	8.7	7.8		
Church edifices:					
Number.....	176	51	125	29.0	71.0
Value—Churches reporting.....	166	48	118	28.9	71.1
Amount reported.....	\$2,274,064	\$1,459,500	\$814,564	64.2	35.8
Average per church.....	\$13,699	\$30,406	\$6,903		
Debt—Churches reporting.....	37	22	15		
Amount reported.....	\$236,814	\$186,614	\$50,200	78.8	21.2
Churches reporting "no debt" on church edifice.....	119	26	93	21.8	78.2
Parsonages:					
Value—Churches reporting.....	56	20	36		
Amount reported.....	\$258,200	\$135,500	\$122,700	52.5	47.5
Debt—Churches reporting.....	17	7	10		
Amount reported.....	\$50,600	\$37,200	\$13,400	73.5	26.5
Churches reporting "no debt" on parsonage.....	35	11	24		
Expenditures during year:					
Churches reporting.....	166	49	117	29.5	70.5
Amount reported.....	\$523,681	\$307,996	\$215,685	58.8	41.2
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$447,977	\$263,251	\$184,726	58.8	41.2
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$75,704	\$44,745	\$30,959	59.1	40.9
Average expenditure per church.....	\$3,155	\$6,286	\$1,843		
Sunday schools:					
Churches reporting.....	160	50	110	31.2	68.8
Officers and teachers.....	2,445	1,042	1,403	42.6	57.4
Scholars.....	22,917	11,614	11,303	50.7	49.3

¹ Urban territory includes all cities and other incorporated places which had 2,500 inhabitants or more in 1920, the date of the last Federal census; rural territory comprises the remainder of the country.

² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

³ Based on membership with age classification reported.

The data presented herewith for the year 1926 represent 174 active organizations of the Brethren Church (Progressive Dunkers), with 26,026 members. The classification of membership by sex was reported by 171 churches and the classification by age was reported by 159 churches, including 127 which reported members under 13 years of age.

Comparative data, 1890-1926.—Table 2 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this denomination for the censuses of 1926, 1916, 1906, and 1890.

TABLE 2.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1890 TO 1926: THE BRETHREN CHURCH (PROGRESSIVE DUNKERS)

ITEM	1926	1916	1906	1890
Churches (local organizations)	174	201	202	128
Increase ¹ over preceding census:				
Number.....	-27	-1	74	-----
Per cent.....	-13.4	-0.5	57.8	-----
Members	26,026	24,060	17,042	8,089
Increase over preceding census:				
Number.....	1,966	7,018	8,953	-----
Per cent.....	8.2	41.2	110.7	-----
Average membership per church.....	150	120	84	63
Church edifices:				
Number.....	176	192	184	96
Value—Churches reporting.....	166	184	172	-----
Amount reported.....	\$2,274,064	\$396,725	\$472,975	\$145,770
Average per church.....	\$13,699	\$4,874	\$2,750	-----
Debt—Churches reporting.....	37	38	29	-----
Amount reported.....	\$236,814	\$114,289	\$41,490	-----
Parsonages:				
Value—Churches reporting.....	56	25	20	-----
Amount reported.....	\$258,200	\$67,250	\$41,700	-----
Debt—Churches reporting.....	17	-----	-----	-----
Amount reported.....	\$50,600	-----	-----	-----
Expenditures during year:				
Churches reporting.....	166	185	-----	-----
Amount reported.....	\$523,681	\$204,562	-----	-----
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$447,977	\$164,223	-----	-----
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$75,704	\$40,339	-----	-----
Average expenditure per church.....	\$3,155	\$1,106	-----	-----
Sunday schools:				
Churches reporting.....	160	183	156	-----
Officers and teachers.....	2,445	2,402	1,564	-----
Scholars.....	22,917	23,728	11,850	-----

¹ A minus sign (-) denotes decrease.

State tables.—Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 present the statistics for the Brethren Church (Progressive Dunkers) by States. Table 3 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches classified according to their location in urban or rural territory and the total membership classified by sex. Table 4 gives for selected States the number and membership of the churches for the three censuses from 1906 to 1926, together with the membership for 1926 classified as under 13 years of age and 13 years of age and over. Table 5 shows the value of church property and the debt on such property, for 1926 alone. Table 6 presents, for 1926, the church expenditures, showing separately the amounts expended for current expenses and improvements, and for benevolences, etc., and also gives the data for Sunday schools. Separate presentation in Tables 5 and 6 is limited to those States in which three or more churches reported the principal items shown (values or expenditures), in order to avoid disclosing the financial statistics of any individual church. The States omitted from these tables can be determined by referring to the complete list which appears in Table 3.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, AND TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: THE BRETHREN CHURCH (PROGRESSIVE DUNKERS)

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX			
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Sex not reported	Males per 100 females (1)
United States.....	174	53	121	26,026	12,089	13,937	10,835	15,161	30	71.5
Middle Atlantic:										
New Jersey.....	2		2	126		126	43	83		
Pennsylvania.....	33	14	19	5,222	2,937	2,285	2,231	2,991		74.6
East North Central:										
Ohio.....	30	10	20	4,825	2,407	2,418	2,014	2,811		71.6
Indiana.....	38	10	28	6,278	3,290	2,988	2,686	3,592		74.8
Illinois.....	3		3	738		738	286	452		63.3
Michigan.....	3		3	148		148	55	93		
Wisconsin.....	3	3		30	30				30	
West North Central:										
Iowa.....	8	2	6	1,150	382	768	500	650		76.9
Nebraska.....	3	1	2	655	350	305	250	405		61.7
Kansas.....	6	1	5	688	60	628	318	370		85.9
South Atlantic:										
Maryland.....	4	1	3	842	516	326	339	503		67.4
District of Columbia.....	1	1		221	221		89	132		67.4
Virginia.....	21	4	17	1,656	375	1,281	649	1,007		64.4
West Virginia.....	6	1	5	776	83	693	328	448		73.2
East South Central:										
Kentucky.....	2		2	363		363	139	224		62.1
Tennessee.....	1		1	89		89	35	54		
Pacific:										
Washington.....	2	1	1	368	83	285	149	219		68.0
California.....	8	4	4	1,851	1,355	496	724	1,127		64.2

¹ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

TABLE 4.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, 1906 TO 1926, AND MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926, BY STATES: THE BRETHREN CHURCH (PROGRESSIVE DUNKERS)

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches in either 1926, 1916, or 1906]

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926			
	1926	1916	1906	1926	1916	1906	Under 13 years	13 years and over	Age not reported	Per cent under 13 ¹
United States.....	174	201	202	26,026	24,060	17,042	2,007	22,366	1,653	8.2
Pennsylvania.....	33	45	49	5,222	5,561	3,885	442	4,593	187	8.8
Ohio.....	30	28	29	4,825	3,639	2,592	166	4,110	549	3.9
Indiana.....	38	41	29	6,278	5,879	3,800	644	5,519	115	10.4
Illinois.....	3	4	7	738	581	716	28	513	197	5.2
Michigan.....	3	5	5	148	248	201	12	136		8.1
Wisconsin.....	3	3	3	30	45	68			30	
Iowa.....	8	9	13	1,150	1,299	852	87	948	115	8.4
Nebraska.....	3	3	4	655	645	471	31	624		4.7
Kansas.....	6	13	16	688	1,007	810	42	646		6.1
Maryland.....	4	5	5	842	976	616	28	814		3.3
Virginia.....	21	20	26	1,656	1,675	2,166	56	1,536	64	3.5
West Virginia.....	6	7	1	776	500	80	53	327	396	13.9
California.....	8	7	7	1,851	982	379	250	1,601		13.5
Other States.....	8	11	8	1,167	1,053	406	168	999		14.4

¹ Based on membership with age classification reported.

**TABLE 5.—VALUE OF CHURCH PROPERTY, AND CHURCH DEBT, BY STATES, 1926:
THE BRETHREN CHURCH (PROGRESSIVE DUNKERS)**

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting value of edifices]

STATE	Total number of churches	Number of church edifices	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		DEBT ON CHURCH EDIFICES		VALUE OF PARSONAGES		DEBT ON PARSONAGES	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount
United States.....	174	176	166	\$2,274,064	37	\$236,814	56	\$258,200	17	\$50,600
Pennsylvania.....	33	33	32	610,464	8	66,450	13	78,700	3	16,200
Ohio.....	30	32	30	473,850	10	84,875	10	39,400	4	5,300
Indiana.....	38	40	38	508,400	5	39,389	12	48,800	5	11,100
Illinois.....	3	4	3	34,500	1	2,500		(1)		
Michigan.....	3	3	3	8,000						
Iowa.....	8	8	8	107,500	2	7,500		(1)		
Nebraska.....	3	3	3	40,500			3	16,000	1	1,800
Kansas.....	6	6	6	40,300	1	1,860	3	8,500	1	1,200
Maryland.....	4	4	4	58,500			3	23,000	2	12,500
Virginia.....	21	18	18	53,050	2	725		(1)		
West Virginia.....	6	7	5	33,500	1	140		(1)		
California.....	8	10	8	246,500	5	31,923		(1)		
Other States ²	11	8	8	59,000	2	1,452	12	43,800	1	2,500

¹ Amount included in figures shown for "Other States," to avoid disclosing the statistics of individual churches.

² The figures for parsonages (value and debt) include data for 8 churches in Illinois, Iowa, Virginia, West Virginia, and California.

**TABLE 6.—CHURCH EXPENDITURES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY STATES, 1926:
THE BRETHREN CHURCH (PROGRESSIVE DUNKERS)**

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting expenditures]

STATE	Total number of churches	EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR			SUNDAY SCHOOLS			
		Churches reporting	Total amount	For current expenses and improvements	For benevolences, missions, etc.	Churches reporting	Officers and teachers	Scholars
United States.....	174	166	\$523,681	\$447,977	\$75,704	160	2,445	22,917
Pennsylvania.....	33	33	144,536	129,652	14,884	33	495	4,681
Ohio.....	30	29	114,564	102,915	11,649	29	450	4,386
Indiana.....	38	38	97,362	79,575	17,787	37	579	5,281
Illinois.....	3	3	9,629	8,206	1,423	3	72	702
Michigan.....	3	3	2,241	1,800	441	3	36	126
Iowa.....	8	8	17,110	14,367	2,743	7	92	947
Nebraska.....	3	3	9,537	7,747	1,790	3	65	480
Kansas.....	6	6	10,433	8,540	1,893	6	82	551
Maryland.....	4	4	14,526	12,721	1,805	4	76	765
Virginia.....	21	17	17,979	15,626	2,353	14	124	1,280
West Virginia.....	6	6	6,727	5,825	902	5	51	540
California.....	8	8	64,527	50,379	14,148	8	206	2,323
Other States.....	11	8	14,510	10,624	3,886	8	117	855

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION¹

DENOMINATIONAL HISTORY

The first Brethren came to America from Crefeld, Rhine Valley, in 1719. They settled at what is now Germantown (Philadelphia), Pa. The first church was organized there on Christmas Day, 1723, with 23 members. The first minister was Peter Becker. Ten years later, Alexander Mack, their leader in Europe, landed at Philadelphia with 59 families.

The numerical growth of the Brethren communities was slow, and by 1880, though widely dispersed,² the total membership was scarcely 60,000. The membership was largely agricultural and the ministry, though it numbered among its members some men of profound learning, was for the most part uneducated. There were no theological seminaries to which they looked for a ministry. Gradually the autonomy of the local churches was lost; strict adherence to forms of dress and worship were rigidly enforced; any steps looking toward progress or toward a better organization were sternly opposed; the attempt by some of the Brethren to establish higher institutions of learning, promote missionary enterprise, provide for an educated and supported ministry, and above all else, the earnest questioning of the authority of the annual conference as a legislative body, brought on a crisis. This led, after many futile efforts to avert it, to a division in the church. Those who advocated progress were derisively called "progressives." Their leaders were expelled from the church. After a vain attempt to be reconciled to the church, covering more than a year, these leaders determined to organize independently. Others in sympathy with this "progressive" movement voluntarily joined with it. So in 1882 the Brethren Church was organized.

DOCTRINE

In doctrine the church is thoroughly evangelical. The Brethren avoid doctrinal controversy and there is complete unanimity in belief and practice throughout the whole brotherhood. Perhaps the best expression of this doctrinal belief is set forth in the "Message of the Brethren Ministry," adopted about 1917. These declarations are, in part, as follows:

The authority and integrity of the Holy Scriptures; God's supreme revelation made through Jesus Christ, a complete and authentic record of which revelation is the New Testament; and the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, the infallible record of the perfect, final, and authoritative revelation of God's will, altogether sufficient in themselves as a rule of faith and practice;

The preexistence, Deity, and incarnation by virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

The fall of man, his consequent spiritual death and utter sinfulness, and the necessity of his new birth;

The vicarious atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ through the shedding of His own blood;

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in the body in which He suffered and died and His subsequent glorification at the right hand of God;

The justification by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of which obedience to the will of God and works of righteousness are the evidence and result; the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the world, and the life everlasting of the just;

The personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, who indwells the Christian and is his Comforter and Guide;

The personal and visible return of our Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the glorious goal for which we are taught to watch, wait, and pray;

¹ This statement, which is somewhat fuller than that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, was furnished by Rev. J. Allan Miller, of Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio.

² See Church of the Brethren (Conservative Dunkers), p. 236.

The Christian should "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind," should not engage in carnal strife, and should "swear not at all";

The Christian should observe, as his duty and privilege, the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, among which are (a) baptism of believers by trine immersion; (b) confirmation; (c) the Lord's Supper; (d) the communion of the bread and wine; (e) the washing of the saints' feet; and (f) the anointing of the sick with oil.

ORGANIZATION

The polity of the Brethren Church may be best described as congregational. Every congregation is a church of Christ. All the congregations voluntarily uniting for the promotion of the work committed to them form the Brethren Church as a whole. The organization of the local congregations is very simple and believed to be in harmony with the spirit of the New Testament teachings. There are elders and deacons, evangelists and deaconesses. The minister in charge of the work of a local church is the pastor. The deaconess may be a minister. A local congregation is entirely free to perfect its organization by electing any officers deemed necessary. The churches of a convenient geographical territory are formed into district conferences, of which there are nine.

WORK

The church maintains and supports Ashland College, located at Ashland, Ohio. This college has a property value of \$400,000, a permanent endowment of \$350,000, and additional income from church conferences and church organizations equivalent to another \$100,000 endowment. A strong school of education approved by the State board, a college of liberal arts and a seminary for the training of ministers, with a total enrollment in the 3 of 790 students in 1926, are maintained.

The church expends about \$20,000 annually in the extension of work in home mission fields. This includes a prosperous school in Breathitt County, near Jackson, Ky., and in a number of the large cities mission churches are supported. The foreign mission board expends above \$40,000 annually in French Equatorial Africa and in Argentina. In Africa there are 3 stations manned by 15 North American missionaries, a number of native evangelists, and 2,600 native Christians. In Argentina there are 9 North Americans under appointment and about 12 native ministers. There are about 15 or 20 stations and churches, with 600 members.

In addition to the above special enterprises of church activity there is maintained a home for the aged ministers and members, at Flora, Ind., and a large and fully equipped publishing house at Ashland, Ohio. The main auxiliary organizations of the church are its Sunday schools, its Christian Endeavor societies, and the women's missionary society, including the girls of the church under the Sisterhood of Mary and Martha.

Though the church is numerically small, nevertheless aggressive work is being done, a spirit of Christian union and fellowship is fostered and the church believes a valuable contribution to Christian culture and progress is being made.