When she was born, Justina Lorenz Showers’ father was a minister for the United Brethren of Christ, serving a Dayton congregation. Her mother volunteered in the Women’s Missionary Association of the United Brethren. Therefore, it was natural for Showers at age five to join the Gleaners Band, which was the children’s missionary organization, and later join the Young Women’s Missionary Society and the women’s organization.

After college, she returned to Dayton and was elected as the first secretary of Young Women’s Work, later a department of the Women’s Missionary Association. In 1908, when the Young Women’s Band became a national organization, she became secretary. In 1915, four years after she married J. Balmer Showers, then a professor at Union Biblical Seminary, now United Theological Seminary, Showers was elected president of the Miami (Ohio) Conference Branch, a role she held for many years. For 25 years, she also served on the Board of Trustees of the Women’s Missionary Association, some of those years as vice president.

In 1941, she was elected national president. When the Evangelical and United Brethren churches merged in 1946, she was elected president to oversee the church’s reorganized work of women. Staff from the former denominations worked well together, owing to Showers’ leadership.

J. Balmer Showers was elected bishop in 1945. In 1954, Bishop and Mrs. Showers were sent by the Evangelical United Brethren Board of Missions to Latin America where they encountered missionaries who needed accommodations on their intermittent furloughs. When they retired in 1954, they bought a house in Dayton large enough to accommodate several missionary families. Mission Manor was dedicated in 1960. The Bishop lived only a few years to see the project succeed, but Ms. Showers had the joy of being a volunteer host to many missionary families.

Adapted from Mary McLanahan, New World Outlook, November, 1983.