

Archives

65 The Evangelical Free Church
Kirkwood, Minn.

25 Twenty-Fifth Anniversary
1932-1957
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
Souderton, Minnesota

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY
of
FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
1922-1962
1425 Main Street
Austin, Texas

PASTORAL INSTALLATION
AND
CHURCH DEDICATION
SERVICE
October 17, 1965 — 3:00 p.m.
HOMewood EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
60th Street and 34th Avenue
Maline, Illinois
Vernon E. Olson, Pastor

"Silver & Centennial"
Evangelical Free Church
7th & Commercial Street
Chick, California

EFCA
Multiplying Transformational
Churches Among All People

Dedication
Program
Evangelical Free Church
645 W. Main
Fullerton, California
WILEY L. COFFMAN, Pastor

1891 1941
The Norwegian
Evangelical
Free
Church
156 VROOM STREET
JERSEY CITY, N. J.

GOLDEN JUBILEE

Dedication Program
FOR OUR NEW SANCTUARY
The Evangelical Free Church
Yuca Valley, California
DEDICATORY SERVICES
January 23-26, 1966

FAITH
EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
OF ALLENTOWN
ROUTE 28, WINDSORVILLE-FREDERICTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA
Services of
Dedication
UNIT ONE
... Ours Him that liveth in, and loved us from our sins by His blood...
BAPTIST 1:3
Friday, Saturday, Sunday, May 5, 6 and 7, 1967
(Pastor: Dedication, Sunday at 1:30 P.M.)

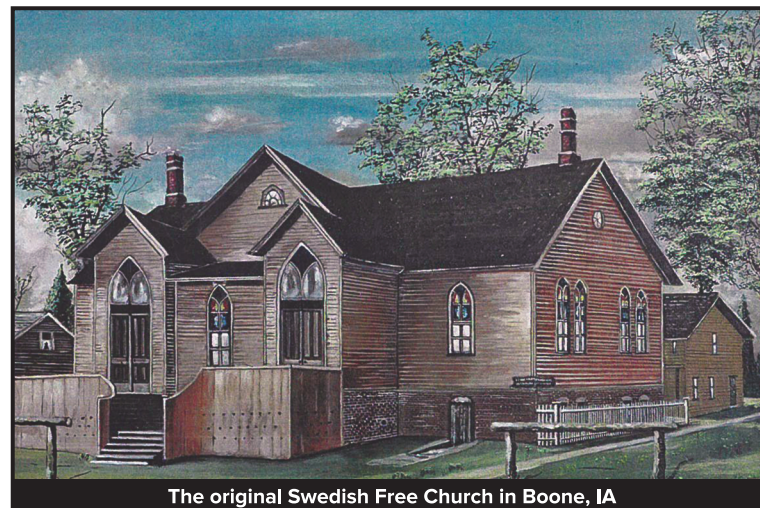
The Evangelical Free Church
Concord, Nebraska
Fifth Anniversary
The Evangelical Free Church
THOMAS MARSHALL THOMPSON, TH. M.
Pastor

**Every Church
Has a History to
Celebrate**

901 East 78th Street / Minneapolis, MN 55420
(952) 854-1300 / www.efca.org

The EFCA Church Historian

**Preserving And Celebrating God's
Blessings On Your Church From
The Past And Into The Future!**



**Thomas P. Cairns
EFCA Archivist
2019**

*"Remember the wonders He has done..."
(Psalm 105:5)*

- Writing a History of your Local Church: Congregational Library, Boston, MA http://www.congregationallibrary.org/sites/all/files/Writing_Brochure.pdf
- The Reason for Church Archives – Sumners, Bill http://www.sbhla.org/art_reason.htm
- Bergeron, J. Manual for South Carolina religious activities and recordkeeping – <https://bit.ly/2vvNkHe>

More Information

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Introduction

God has blessed the Evangelical Free Church of America with a rich heritage. As we move forward and see God's hand of blessing across the movement, we celebrate our history. From the founding of the Swedish and Norwegian/Danish associations in 1884 and 1885 and their merger in 1950, right down to the present, there is much to appreciate and there are many lessons to learn. With nearly 1500 local churches scattered across the country in 2019, each one has a history to celebrate. Some have been around for over 130 years. Others only a few years or a decade or so.

Nonetheless, God has blessed these churches and it's appropriate to keep records of God's working among us. Unfortunately, it sometimes occurs that people will see a stack of old documents and not recognize their historic value. This would be very sad. Sir Winston Churchill is quoted as saying: "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

And throughout Scripture the prophets, apostles and Jesus himself kept referring to the lessons of the past to guide the future. Indeed, Scripture is replete with references to the importance of remembering the past and God's blessings, power and work.

"I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago." Psalm 77:11 (How can we remember what happened before our birth or our participation in a church if it's not a written history?)

"Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this." Deuteronomy 24:22

"Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt." Deuteronomy 25:17 (These two passages were oral history as all their parents had died in the wilderness.)

"They did not remember his power—the day he redeemed them from the oppressor..." Psalm 78:42 (Here's the result of failure to remember the power of God and celebrate his works)

How the District and EFCA National Archives can help you

We are available to serve you in many ways. We can advise as you work on your archive project and you can contact us at **archives@efca.org** or at **1-800-745-2202**.

However, if you are seeking historical information about your church, we may well have photos of former pastors, copies of documents from your past. As you might be planning anniversary celebrations, please connect with us and we'll be glad to find ways to help. In addition you can access our Archive website at **<http://archives.efca.org>** where there is a wealth of material on EFCA history and on your own church's history in Beacons, books and Yearbooks.

Archive Supply Sources

- Gaylord **<http://www.gaylord.com/c/Preservation>**
- Hollinger **<http://www.hollingermetaledge.com>**
- Your local librarian may know of suppliers in your area

Bibliography

- Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual* (American Association for State and Local History Book Series)
- *Church Historian: Remembering the Past and Inspiring the Future*; The General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Churches, 2012. **<http://bit.ly/1Bvd5VY>**
- *Memory Work: A Guide for ELCA Congregational Archives and History*; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Region 3 Archives; Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN



A great wall photo display at Maplewood, MN EFC

Sharing with your District Office and the EFCA National Archives

Your EFCA District Office and the National Office in Minneapolis want to rejoice with you as you discover your history. Of special interest would be any booklets celebrating 10th, 25th, 50th or other milestone anniversaries of the church. Many churches have chosen to put a history section on their websites. This is very helpful for those wanting to know more about your church, but also for the District and National archives as well.



Can we find your church history here in our files?

The mere fact that they had the tabernacle was a huge archive or repository of memory in a day when most Israelites were illiterate. The Ten Commandments on stone, the rod of Aaron that budded, the pot of manna, were all artifacts that helped remind the Israelites of the power of their God. For well over a millennium as one generation gave way to another, these items were their reminder of their God and what He had done for them. Stories on the scrolls were another way.

The sword of Goliath was kept for a time near the ark as a reminder of God's deliverance.

Esther 6:1 describes how the King couldn't sleep so he had the records or chronicles of his reign read to him (hoping they'd put him to sleep), with the result that Mordecai was honored for something he had done and Haman was disgraced. Such records are very valuable to guide the future.

"As for the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer..." 1 Chronicles 29:29 (This was done for almost all of the kings to have a record of their reign.)

"The other events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz." 2 Chronicles 26:22

"Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder;" 2 Samuel 8:16 (So this Jehoshaphat was the designated historian or archivist of David's reign.)

"Those who are wise will take all this to heart; they will see in our history the faithful love of the Lord." Psalms 107:43 NLT

All scripture is from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

Helping the Church Historian

This document is intended to help the church historian:

1. Know what to collect, how to preserve it, and how to share it.
2. Know how to access help from the District Office and/or the Archive of the EFCA
3. Wisely share materials with the District and EFCA Archive and within the church.

Jeanine, the Business Manager at Calvary Church, was busy at her desk when she got a call from a former member, now living in retirement far away. Mrs. Olson wanted to remind the church that it was going to be the 50th anniversary of the church in a few months and wondered if there would be some kind of celebration, and perhaps an anniversary book published. Jeanine, who had only been at the church a few years was surprised and mentioned it to Pastor Anderson, who also had not been aware of the coming anniversary. Only a few charter members were still around from the start of the church. Soon there was a flurry of activity as the elders and various others tried to find documents about the church's history and plan for the special event.

Unfortunately, many churches find themselves in this situation. In an increasingly mobile society, early members move on, attendees come and go, and after a few decades there aren't many who remember the early pastors, how the Lord worked a miracle to obtain the church land, or how their building mortgage was paid off in just seven years! And as documentation is increasingly electronic using the Internet and social media, it's even easier to lose track of our history.

So, what can we do to preserve our history, and celebrate it for God's glory? Who should take the lead? What should be saved and how do we handle the realities of the electronic age?

You can also go back and find every previous version of your church website from the very beginning using the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at: <https://archive.org/web>.

Oral History: is a tool to interview leaders and laity alike who might be too old or little inclined to sit down and write their memoirs of the church. It's actually quite easy to record an interview with them on a pocket digital voice recorder, available from any electronic store for under \$50. This is also a service you can provide for families of older folk in the congregation to hear their parents' testimony and memories of their church, even long after they are gone. The interviewer needs to spend some time in preparation for the interview in order to ask open-ended questions to draw out good content, not just yes/no answers.



Your EFCA Archives

Sharing what you have with the church

While we are talking about archiving materials of our past for the future, it is also very important to let our church of today celebrate its history. This might be a permanent protected display in the foyer of a Swedish Bible, a choir robe from the past, or a document from the early years of the church. Some photos on the wall, well labeled and changed from time to time, can draw attention to God's work in the past. Or you might post an enlarged photo and ask people to help identify early members of the church who are pictured there.

Photos: are important but must be labelled. Use a #2 pencil on the back of the photo, or a separate card. Curled photos can be uncurled carefully. Place a soggy wet sponge in a large sealable rectangular bin.

(Tupperware, Rubbermaid, Sterilite, etc.) and put the photos in a glass or plastic dish above or beside the sponge with the cover on tightly for several days. Upon removing the photos, place them face down between paper towels with a weight such as a book over them for a day or two. If possible, when thoroughly dry put them in archival quality Mylar sleeves and keep them flat, either in file folders, in an acid-free album, or in photo frames. Labels should accompany the photos but not be physically attached to them.

Books: of archival interest are not the typical ones in your church library. More often these would be very old or unique books, too valuable to make available for general circulation. They should be carefully protected.

Church Records: Minutes of board meetings, legal documents, and newsletters are all valuable history. Even church bulletins provide significant history.

Digital Media: are very diverse and problematic. The problem is that what we write today on our websites, blogs, Facebook pages and other forums may seem official, formal and permanent, but in reality in ten years most of it will be long replaced by other electronic methods, and a great deal of history may well be lost. Here again, we need a long-term perspective to help people several generations from now to know what our church was like, what our leaders said and wrote, and how God worked in our church during these “early” years.

One method is to make a PDF version of each web page, electronic document, blog etc.

This can be done as a comprehensive PDF once a week or even less, but then can be kept as a PDF on the Cloud or on your External Hard Drive.

The Archivist and the Heritage Committee

One of the first questions the church needs to consider is the person or committee to do the archive work. Often there may be a single person who is motivated to capture and preserve the church history and this is great. This person might be called the “Archivist” or the “Church Historian”.

Typically it might be someone with deep roots in the church who is knowledgeable of the history of the church, perhaps a recent retiree doing the work as a volunteer. It would be especially helpful if that individual would have some basic computer skills. This individual may be able to commit an hour or two a week, or perhaps half a day each week, which is all that may be needed in the smaller church. A larger church, or one that has a long history, may require more time if there has not been much archive work done in the past.

But it’s even better if there is a small committee of interested people who can serve as a Heritage Committee to oversee, encourage and help make significant decisions. It’s important that church leadership, pastor and/or elders, affirm the individuals working on the project due to the significance of the decisions being made.

Safe-keeping of church history can be done in as little as a single fire-proof file cabinet. The cost of such a cabinet would be a very worthy investment for the church. A larger church, or one with more history may be able to designate a specific room for that purpose. Ideally it could be a cooler and drier room or one with the thermostat kept lower, perhaps in the 50’s, when no one is working there.

At some point there will be a need to scan documents and photos so it would be great to have a computer and scanner available for archive work. If there is not a dedicated computer, at least it would be wise to have an external hard drive kept in the fire-proof cabinet in the archives to which documents could be scanned periodically. An alternative would be remote storage on the cloud.

From the beginning the archivist should avoid throwing away any materials presently available until there is a good sense for what is significant for the church’s history, and what is not. This is where the

committee can be very valuable in helping decide what to keep and what to eliminate.

What should we keep?

Documents: One of the first questions you'll face is what to keep and what to throw away. Some good questions to ask ourselves are:

1. "For those who will be in our church fifty years from now, what would help them understand the significant history of the church?" E.g. Who were our pastors? When were our buildings built?
2. "What milestones have occurred in our church that will help reflect God's work in our church and our community outreach?" E.g. Have we been used of God to plant a new church? Who has been through our confirmation classes? What mission outreaches have we done, locally or globally?
3. "What publications have we issued?" E.g. Church newsletters, the weekly church bulletin, our Website, the Pastor's Blog. A good principle is that copies of all publications should be kept in some form.
4. "Do we have any unique historical photos we need to keep?" E.g. Ground-breakings, Confirmation classes, installation of former pastors, commissioning of our missionaries and short-term teams, burning of the mortgage.
5. "What official church records need to be kept?" E.g. the official record of quarterly and annual congregational meetings, Elder meeting records; Annual financial reports. The ECFA (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability) has some excellent guidelines on how and where and how long to keep such records. www.ecfa.org
6. "Do we have records of marriages, funerals, births, baby dedications, etc?"
7. "What legal documents should we keep?" E.g. Articles of Incorporation; Original constitution and bylaws, as well as each subsequent iteration of them; Mortgage documents; (See the ECFA link above).

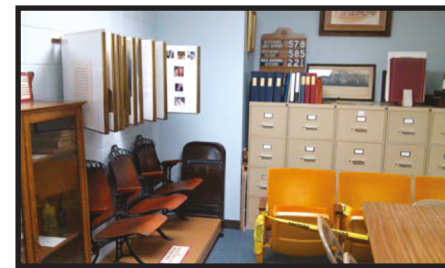
8. "What documents will reflect our church's history one hundred years from now for those who will be seeking to know who we are now?" In other words, we need a long-term perspective, not just what is going on currently.

It should be noted that certain records need to be kept for legal purposes as required by the State such as the Annual Meeting reports. Other records may need to be kept confidential, such as Elder meeting notes, Annual Performance Review of the pastor, yet still accessible to the Elder chairman and/or senior pastor, but not in the general Archive files.

As you sort through documents, you can probably group them by year, or perhaps by church activity (Youth groups, Sunday School, Worship team, Sermon archive, etc.). We strongly advise putting these documents in acid-free file folders and, if possible, in acid-free archival boxes. These can be obtained from suppliers such as Gaylord and Hollinger (see below).

The church office may have a copy of every bulletin ever published. This is probably worth keeping. Each weekly or monthly newsletter would provide good history of events in the church.

Physical Artifacts: are more problematic. Often there may be space limitations on what you can keep. If there's a place for a display case in a church entry way or hallway, there might be place for some memorabilia. There may be an old pulpit Bible, a church bell, or some other item that has true historic significance. But unless it has clear linkage to the ministry of the church and some evidence documenting it to the church or an early leader, it may not be worth keeping.



Various physical artifacts, well organized document files and photos in a swinging wall display at First Free in Rockford, IL