

Pastor Lee Kisman from Spokane First EFC, became Interim Superintendent in May, 2012, and was re-elected for a 3-year term at the 2013 Annual Conference. Following the election, he resigned from his church in order to serve as a full-time Superintendent.

The NMD is composed of a variety of large and small, almost urban/suburban/rural, young and old churches. Only six churches have multiple paid staff – Colville, Pullman, Post Falls, Belgrade, Great Falls, and Bozeman. In our geographical area there are many communities that do not have any gospel witness, which means that there is much to do in the area of church planting. Truly God has been good and the District faces the future with confidence that even greater days are ahead.



## **THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA**

**AN ASSOCIATION OF**

**INTERDEPENDENT  
AUTONOMOUS  
CHURCHES**

**NORTHERN MOUNTAIN DISTRICT**

**PO BOX 1514**

**Libby, MT 59923**

**Phone 509.590.2199**

**Email [office@efcanmd.org](mailto:office@efcanmd.org)**

04.22.2016

## THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

The **Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA)** is an association of over 1250 autonomous, but interdependent, churches united by a mutual commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in obedience to the Word of God. We are committed to cooperating with one another in ministry and fellowship as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission, which Christ entrusted to His Church. The growing ministry of the EFCA currently extends to 43 other nations or regions on five continents, through the Evangelical Free Church Mission's over 600 missionaries.

The term **Evangelical** refers to our commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel and to the doctrine that the Bible is the only rule of faith and that salvation is attained by grace through faith in the redemptive work of Christ.

The term **Free** refers to the autonomy of local churches, as well as to a congregational form of government. Evangelical Free Churches depend upon the active participation of lay people in their decisions and ministries.

The words **of America** distinguishes us from the Evangelical Free Churches of Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Lebanon, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Mexico, Japan, Congo, Peru, Venezuela, and others. We, like all of these churches, are members of the International Federation of Free Evangelical Churches.

From its inception, the EFCA has been committed to active involvement in the mission of Christ's church in local congregations, communities, our nation, and the world. The EFCA Mission Statement focuses on evangelism and discipleship in response to the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in

### **Matthew 28:19 – 20:**

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*

### **The EFCA Mission Statement is:**

*"To glorify God by multiplying healthy churches among all people."*

In Idaho changes have also occurred. Post Falls was added in April, 1996 and Grangeville in June of 1997. Bonners Ferry became an Associate member in 1995 and then decided not to become a full member of the EFCA in November of 1999.

The number of churches in Montana has also changed. Bozeman was added in June, 1988; Stockett in May, 1991; Fort Benton in May, 1994, and Butte in May, 1997. In January 2000, Stockett withdrew from the EFCA and returned to Independent status. The church in Pony moved to another denomination in 1990 and the Roundup church changed denominations in 1999.

At the Annual District Conference in 2003, Grace Bible Church in Forsyth, MT, was accepted as a member church. Also, in 2003, the church in Cut Bank chose to become affiliated with the Rocky Mountain Bible Mission Association. In 2006 New Hope Bible Church in Belgrade, MT, was accepted into membership.

In 2007 the church in Deer Park became a non-denominational church and in 2008 Northwoods Fellowship of Coeur d'Alene, ID, was accepted as an Associate Member of the District. Also in 2008, due to the loss of members, the Airway Heights church and the Big Timber, MT, church began a process of "restarting" the church under the leadership of the District Board.

Some of the additions, were church plants and others became part of the District by way of "adoption." During the past few years there has been interest expressed in several communities to establish a Free Church in their area.

In 1996, Rock Stewart became the District's second Superintendent. By 1999 the District had increased to 26 member churches. In 2002 conference Rock's second term as District Superintendent was completed and he chose not to serve another term. Walt Patroske was elected as District Chairman and began to serve as Acting Superintendent during the search for a full-time Superintendent.

Pastor Mark Liesch of the Butte, MT, church was elected District Superintendent for a three year term at the 2003 Annual Conference. Following the election, he resigned from his church in order to serve as a full-time Superintendent. The District office was then moved to Butte. Mark returned to the pastorate of the Butte church in 2006. Rick Weinert was elected Interim Superintendent at the 2006 Annual meeting and was elected Superintendent by the 2007 Conference with the District office moving to Libby, MT.

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

### NORTHERN MOUNTAIN DISTRICT

In 1986, 18 churches that were members of the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain Districts of the EFCA were asked to form a new District. Both of these Districts were geographically quite large, which was a hindrance to the sense of belonging and cooperative efforts. When Steve Watkins assumed the role as the first Superintendent of the newly formed Northern Mountain District, it included the 18 congregations plus the new church plant in Missoula, in the three-state area of eastern Washington, northern Idaho, and most of Montana. There were 8 churches in Washington – Airway Heights, Colville, Deer Park, Kennewick, Pullman, Soap Lake, Spokane-Cornerstone, and Spokane-First. There were two in Idaho – Osburn and Sandpoint. In Montana, there were 9 – Big Timber, Billings, Cut Bank, Deer Lodge, Great Falls, Libby, Missoula, Pony, and Roundup.

Several changes have occurred in the number of churches in Washington since the formation of the District. Otis Orchards was added in June, 1990; Entiat in March, 1991; Pullman-University in April, 1995, and Spokane-Christ Community in April, 1996. Spokane-Cornerstone closed in the summer of 1992. Spokane-Christ Community merged with Faith Community of Spokane, in 1998, keeping the Christ Community name and the facility of Faith Community. And then, in 2004, Christ Community Church became a non-denominational church.

In the spring of 2001, several families began to meet together in Chewelah, Washington, with the goal of beginning an Evangelical Free Church in that community. At the 2001 District Annual Conference, they applied for Associate status, and were accepted as full members at the 2002 Annual Conference.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE EFCA

The Evangelical Free Church of America began in the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Its religious and philosophical roots are firmly planted on the foundational principles of two major historical events. The first was the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation that changed the religious climate all across Europe. The Church had strayed far from a biblically based foundation, and a return to biblical roots was desperately needed. Three revolutionary principles of the Reformation laid the foundation for spiritual renewal and formed the basis for the “free church” movement during the next 250 years:

- ⇒ **Sola Scriptura** (“Only the Scriptures”) The Scriptures, not the institutional church, are the final authority by which man must live and against which truth and error must be judged.
- ⇒ **Sola Gratia** (“Only by Grace”) Salvation is by grace alone, the free and unmerited gift of God to a sinful mankind.
- ⇒ **Sola Fides** (“Only by Faith”) The gift of salvation and the benefits of being in God’s eternal family come through personal faith in Christ as Savior, not by any personal good works, the merits of a human mediator, religious ceremonies, or institutional efforts.

The second major historical event was a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century movement across Europe to break away from established state-controlled churches, which were in many cases, simply arms of government. In Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, the Lutheran Church acted in such a manner. A number of issues emerged and brought an unsettledness among a growing number of Christians:

- ⇒ **The Dominance of the State over the Church.** The relationship between the State and the Church was unhealthy because the State had far more authority over the Church than did the Scriptures. In most places, the State dictated what the Church was to believe, how it was to worship, and how it was to be governed.
- ⇒ **Deadness of the Church.** As a State Church, it was the Church of all citizens whether or not they were truly believers. The churches’ beliefs and practices were not under the control of believers who sought to follow the Scriptures in

everything they did. In many churches, the services and ceremonies had become hollow religious experiences with little personal spiritual commitment, involvement in ministries, or evangelistic missions outreach.

- ⇒ **Mandatory and Open Communion.** Instead of emphasizing the need for a personal faith in Christ, the churches emphasized the attendance at a Communion service, which was often a requirement of the government and open to everyone regardless of their personal spiritual commitment.

As a result of revivals in these countries, a grass roots movement began which encouraged the return to a faith founded on the Scriptures and based on an individual personal decision. As people came to know Christ personally as Savior and Lord and studied the Bible, they formed some strong convictions regarding the foundational principles for local churches:

- ⇒ **Church Membership** of “Believers only, but all Believers.” Local church membership should be composed only of individuals who profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and must not exclude anyone except when this confession is lacking.
- ⇒ **A Scriptural Basis** for theological belief and personal lifestyle. “Where stands it written?” was asked on questions of belief and practice.
- ⇒ **Local Church Autonomy**, the right of self-government, free from the control of the State.
- ⇒ **The Ordinances** were for believers only. Baptism and Communion were for those who confessed personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- ⇒ **Active Involvement of Lay People** in the work of the church. The ministry of the church was for all believers, not just for the professionally trained pastors.
- ⇒ **Missionary activity.** Other people needed to know the good news of the Gospel and missionaries needed to be sent to other parts of the world.

Believers affirming these principles began to develop informal and unofficial gatherings within the larger State Church. But as these new groups began to implement some of the principles, church authorities pressured them to abandon their ways or

**3. We believe** that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled, and renewed.

**4. We believe** that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel’s promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

**5. We believe** that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

**6. We believe** that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

**7. We believe** that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

**8. We believe** that God’s justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God’s Word, the Spirit’s power, and fervent prayer in Christ’s name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ’s commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

a society undergoing radical change and a call for action in a world hungry for the healing touch of the gospel and open to the expression of Christian compassion. The challenge is to incorporate such concerns into a consistent and productive pattern of activity, while at the same time respecting the boundaries posed by theological commitments, polity considerations, and resource limitations.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### **Books by Dr. Arnold T. Olson**

*This We Believe*

*Believers Only*

*The Search For Identity*

*The Significance of Silence*

*Stumbling Toward Maturity*

### **Books by Dr. Calvin B. Hanson**

*What it Means to Be Free*

*The Trinity Story*

These books can be ordered from:

#### **Next Step Resources**

901 East 78<sup>th</sup> Street

Minneapolis, MN 55420-1300

Phone: 612.853.8400 (1.800.444.BOOK)

## **STATEMENT OF FAITH OF THE EFCA**

*The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions:*

1. **We believe** in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

2. **We believe** that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

withdraw from the established Church. They chose to withdraw and began establishing new "**Free Churches**" on their own. Hence the "free" church was born.

A few years after this movement began, immigrants from the Scandinavian countries started coming to the United States and established churches. In 1884, the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of America formally began in Boone, Iowa, as an association of congregations brought together for the purpose of missionary activity abroad and in America, including the training of workers. The same year Norwegian-Danish believers formed the Scandinavian Evangelical Congregational Church in Tacoma, Washington. In 1885 another group formed the Scandinavian Evangelical Congregational Church in Boston, Massachusetts. These two were the first churches in what became the Eastern and Western sections of the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association when they united in 1912 to form a national body. Many of the early churches were also established in Minnesota and parts of the Midwest, the location of most Scandinavian immigrants.

The Swedish and Norwegian-Danish branches of the Free Church grew independently of one another for many years. Because each group still used its respective language and was strongly nationalistic, they rarely fellowshipped together. But in the 1940's, the two groups developed an increasing desire to merge. By this time, they commonly shared five elements: their heritage, English-speaking services, doctrinal statements, church structure, and a desire for joint ministries. In 1946, they began the process of organizational unity when both conferences approved the merger of their schools and publications.

Finally, in June of 1950, near Minneapolis, Minnesota, the two associations completed their merger. The Evangelical Free Church of America was born with 275 churches from the US and Canada uniting to better fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus. The National and International offices of the EFCA have been located in Minneapolis since that time.

Dr. E. A. Halleen, who had led the Swedish group for 28 years, was elected president, at the age of 76, for one year. A statement in his inaugural address illustrates the spirit of that meeting, "I feel that I am the connecting link between yesteryear and today... It is an honor to be a Norwegian – nearly as much as it is to be a Swede. By tomorrow we'll all be Americans."

One year later, Dr. Arnold T. Olson was elected president, eventually serving for a remarkable 26 years. During that time, the Free Church moved from being a small ethnic denomination to one with appeal to all Americans and Canadians. The Free Church missionary force grew to 200 churches multiplied and a new magazine, *The Evangelical Beacon*, replaced the old ethnic publications. *Free Church Youth Fellowship (FCYF)* groups around the country began to meet in national student conferences each summer. *Trinity College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School* prospered, moving from Chicago to a sprawling campus in Deerfield, Illinois. In 1962, *Trinity Junior College [Now Trinity Western University]* was founded in Langley, British Columbia.

By the time Dr. Thomas McDill was elected president in 1976, the Free Church had changed dramatically. During his tenure, the Free Church experienced even more rapid growth. The denomination also began moving aggressively toward urban and ethnic ministries within the United States. Each of the Free Church Departments established specific, aggressive long-range goals to guide their growth. By 1990 there were 1,038 churches and 450 missionaries on 15 fields. The churches in Canada became a separate association in 1985, *the Evangelical Free Church of Canada (EFCC)* and by 1990 had 115 churches.

The growth continued under the leadership of our fourth president, Dr. Paul Cedar, who was elected to this position in June of 1990. His term was completed in 1996 and Reverend Bill Hamel, who had served as Executive Vice President, became Acting President. Reverend Hamel, was elected to a six-year term as President in June 1997 and re-elected to another term in June 2003. Bill Hamel served as President for a total of 19 years before transitioning his responsibility to newly elected, Reverend Kevin Kompelien, in June of 2015 for a six-year term ending in the year 2021.

The EFCA is divided into 22 geographical divisions, called Districts. Each District chooses a Superintendent and Board of Directors to assist the EFCA churches of their area in their ministry of reaching the lost and building healthy churches.

So what is the Evangelical Free Church of America? Prior to the 1960's, the few who had even heard of it probably would have responded that it was just a small Scandinavian denomination with little to distinguish it and with minimal influence on what was happening on the larger church scene. Within the past 100

- Could such an emphasis tend to lead us into a social gospel emphasis in the wrong sense?
- Is it wise for a church denomination to make pronouncements with respect to social issues that tend to become political in nature?
- What kind of social issues could be considered by a denomination?
- How far would social problems be considered in their analysis and solution and what is the best way for us as an Evangelical Free Church to consider the same?

In 1966 a new committee was formed; "Committee on Social Concerns", and it asked, "Do we know the measure of our responsibility resulting from the place of privilege accorded us 'in this our day'?"

In the 1967 EFCA Yearbook, the following appeared in the report of the Committee on Social Concerns:

"This committee is concerned to better understand how the gospel applies in every area of life. Ours is a revolutionary world of change. Do we have an openness to God's leading in relation to modern man? Are our organizational structures mobile enough to adjust to emerging social patterns? Are our methods flexible enough to meet a changing world? Are we as individuals living creatively the Spirit of Christ? Such questions need to be asked and answered, and it is our hope that action may grow out of such soul-searching on the part of leaders and members of our churches." From its inception the Social Concerns Committee has had a concern to apply the gospel to the whole of life; a self-reflective desire to evaluate our own attitudes and patterns of organization in a society undergoing radical change and a call for action in a world hungry for the healing touch of the gospel and open to the expression of Christian compassion. The challenge is to incorporate such concerns into a consistent and productive pattern of activity, while at the same time respecting the boundaries posed by theological commitments, polity considerations and resource limitations."

From its inception the Social Concerns Committee has had a concern to apply the gospel to the whole of life; a self-reflective desire to evaluate our own attitudes and patterns of organization in

From the time of Constantine, the church developed certain practices which strengthened the power of the priests over the people. With the decision that the bread and wine became the real blood and body of Christ when consecrated by the priest, each communion service became a repetition of Christ's sacrifice and a means of salvation. Therefore a priest could withhold salvation by the denial of communion. In 1414 the cup was withheld from the laity, and John Huss was sentenced to die for insisting the cup be returned. The communion service and baptism were used as means to hold the territorial church together.

The church and state became one and if a man found salvation through faith in Christ and then avoided the communion service he would be identified as a heretic by the church and found guilty of treason by the state. Baptism and communion became sacraments, with the importance placed on the giver rather than the partaker. The altar replaced the table and sacrifice replaced meal. States then enacted laws that required participation in "Holy Communion" by all its citizens at least once per year in order to demonstrate their allegiance to both crown and church. The priest became an agent of the state and all people, redeemed and heathen, participated together. Those who began the Free Church movement rebelled at this and refused to "sit at the same table" with the unredeemed. This caused much difficulty and persecution.

The Free Evangelical Churches in Europe and America came out of the State Churches, not in disagreement over baptism or Arminianism and Calvinism but the Lord's Supper. Further, it was not a question of whether it was merely a memorial service; whether Christ was physically present through faith in the elements or present through faith in a spiritual sense; but that the Lord's table was for believers only and could be held wherever and whenever people gathered in Christ's name, even without the benefit of clergy. Therefore, the doctrinal statement is silent on the interpretation with one exception – that Communion, sacred though it is, is not a means of salvation. No applicant for church membership is required to hold or declare any one interpretation for none are listed. The silence is historically significant. (*The Significance of Silence*, p. 126-127)

## **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES**

At the 1964 EFCA National Conference the Committee on Social Action raised the following concerns regarding the "matter of social action":

years, and especially in the past 30 years, the Evangelical Free Church has grown from a small ethnic-oriented fellowship of churches into one of the fastest growing small denominations in America. Its membership includes people from all walks of life, all ethnic groups, and almost all denominational backgrounds. They are joined together with one common commitment – that Jesus Christ is Savior of the World, Head of the Church, and Lord of Life.

## **DISTINCTIVES OF THE EFCA**

*"In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, charity.  
In all things, Jesus Christ." Chrysostom*

### **1. The Evangelical Free Church of America is inclusive, not exclusive.**

The great heritage of the Evangelical Free Church people around the world includes the fact that fellowship and ministry opportunities in the local church are based solely on one's personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, trusting in Him alone for salvation. Membership requires commitment to sound doctrine as expressed in our Statement of Faith. However, a person is not excluded from membership because of not being confirmed, or baptized, or not agreeing on every fine point of doctrine. The Evangelical Free Church of America holds to a 10 – point statement of faith, but there is allowance for legitimate differences of understanding in some other areas of doctrine.

### **2. The Evangelical Free Church of America is ecumenical in spirit though not in structure.**

We believe in unity, though not necessarily in structural union. We join with Christians in other denominations and para-church organizations that share common goals, beliefs, and ministries to accomplish the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19 – 20). But we believe there is strength in diversity and that it is important to preserve the distinctives of various organizations. Our foremost concern is unity of spirit with our Lord and with other Christians.

We do not desire to build a large human organization but, instead, to be involved in building the eternal Kingdom of God. We enjoy teaming and fellowshiping with Christian brothers and sisters of many denominations, cultures, and nationalities who embrace: the Lordship of Jesus Christ; the authority of the Scrip-

tures; the compassion to reach out with the love of Jesus Christ to poor, hurting and lost people; the concern to evangelize and make disciples of Jesus Christ; the desire for holy living; and the commitment to experience the power of Christ day by day.

### **3. The Evangelical Free Church is evangelical but not separatistic.**

The Evangelical Free Church is born out of a heritage of commitment to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. Being "evangelical" means that we have deep convictions that doctrine and life-style are to be based on the authority of God's Word. We have also chosen to fellowship with a wide spectrum of Christians who also agree on the major doctrines of the Bible. Minor issues of doctrine are not a test of fellowship within the local church. In life-style, we believe in personal holiness and not living by the standards of the world. We are also not separatistic in life-style. We do not refrain from being with others who do not believe or live exactly as we do. It is our responsibility to live out our faith in the world and to bring other people to Christ. We are to live in the world but not by the standards of the world.

### **4. The Evangelical Free Church of America believes in liberty with responsibility.**

We believe in Christian liberty, the freedom to live in obedience to Christ rather than by a list of rigid rules. Freedom, however, always has its limitations. Responsible Christians are also accountable to others, both Christian and non-Christian, to live their lives so as not to bring discredit to the Lord in any way. The Evangelical Free Church desires to preserve our freedom in Christ and to encourage our people to be responsible, godly men, women, and young people who desire to live under the control of the Holy Spirit, in obedience to the precepts of God's Word for life as revealed in the Scriptures.

### **5. The Evangelical Free Church of America believes in both the rational and relational dimensions of Christianity.**

We believe that the Scriptures must be applied to our individual lives with receptive minds and hearts. We believe it is essential to have solid biblical content in our doctrinal understanding of faith, but it is equally important to have a dynamic, vital relationship to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son and to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. Sound Christian doctrine must be coupled with dynamic Christian experience.

## **MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION**

### ***The Significance of Silence on Some Issues***

Two significant issues which have caused division within the body of Christ concern baptism and the Lord's Supper. *Article 7* in the *EFCA Statement of Faith* has a very brief statement concerning these issues and is significantly silent in what is not said. *"We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer."*

*Article 5* in the *EFCA Statement of Faith* clearly spells out the EFCA doctrine of salvation. *"We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, and all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation. It is what Jesus did that provides the means of salvation, and not any act of man. If there is no saving grace in the act of baptism, then the mode, time, and place are not so significant. This allows room for differing opinions without sacrificing the unity of believers. Silence is not ignoring the issue, it is placing it in the proper Biblical perspective. Baptism is not a Biblical requirement for membership in either the Body of Christ or the local church. The position of the EFCA is that baptism is commanded by Jesus and is therefore an ordinance to be observed by all who follow Him. Neither the method, the place, the one who officiates, nor the age of the one being baptized is essential to salvation, therefore not mentioned. We do say that it is to be observed during *this age* to set us apart from those who say otherwise."*

In the beginning of the Free Church movement in Europe, believers rejected the teaching of salvation through infant baptism but were forced to continue the practice in order to have the birth of a child duly registered and his or her citizenship established. It was the rite by which a child was made a member of the church and the secular community. The believers, while rejecting the concept of sacramental salvation, were able to make out of the ritual a means of dedicating the child to God since in their view the child did already belong to God. Parents saw no conflict between the act of the dedication of a child with water and the fact that salvation is through faith and faith alone. (*The Significance of Silence*, p. 62)

sion of our commitment to “All People”:

**African-American Ministries**  
**Church Health**  
**Church Planting**  
**Family and Children’s Ministries**  
**Hispanic Ministries**  
**Student Ministries**  
**Urban & Holistic Ministries**  
**Women’s Ministries**

**Trinity International University** – A College of Arts and Sciences with campuses in Deerfield IL, a graduate school of theology — Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; and an evangelical law school, Trinity Law School in Anaheim, CA.

**Trinity Western University** – Canada’s largest Christian liberal arts university in Langley, BC with undergraduate programs, the graduate school, and the Associated Canadian Theological Schools Seminary.

**Ministerial Association** – Provides assistance of benefits, pastoral care and professional services.

**Board of Ministerial Standing** – Administers ministerial licensing, ordination, and discipline of credentialed persons.

**Next Step Resources** – A source for Bibles, books, and videos for the entire EFCA family.

**Christian Investors Foundation** – Provides real estate loans to Evangelical Free Churches.

**EFCA Foundation** – Provides trusted charitable estate planning services to help meet personal planning goals while furthering the Lord’s work.

**Ministry Advancement** – exists to further the mission of the EFCA by serving with excellence the national ministries, local churches, and EFCA constituents through stewardship education, development, and communications.

**Campaign Services** – Serving the local church by helping it reach its God-given vision through ministry expansion.

## **6. The Evangelical Free Church of America is congregational in government**

The Evangelical Free Church is committed to a congregational form of government. Article II A of our Articles of Incorporation states “*The Evangelical Free Church of America shall be an association and fellowship of autonomous but interdependent congregations of like faith and congregational government.*” The preamble to our statement of faith says “*The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association of autonomous churches united around these theological convictions.*” The founders of the Norwegian-Danish Free Church proposed using the name Congregational instead of Free. This was about to be adopted by the delegates to the founding convention when one pastor reminded the delegates that (a) the name really belonged to the Congregationalists in England and America, (b) the Scandinavians would not understand its significance and (c) they couldn’t pronounce it. So the original motion was withdrawn and the name became the Evangelical Free Church. (*The Significance of Silence*, p. 25)

Strong pastoral leadership coupled with discerning and well-equipped Christian lay people can foster spiritual growth as well as significant church growth. The New Testament emphasizes the importance of the “Body” of Christ ministering through the spiritual gifts that have been given to each believer. “Congregational in government” means that each local church governs its own affairs and that, within the local church, the highest human authority is the congregation. This authority comes from Christ, who is the head of His church. When the Church, His Body, gathers in His name and in His presence, it moves with His authority.

Our definition of congregationalism is: “*That form of government wherein the highest authority under Christ in a local church resides in the corporate understanding of the mind of Christ and in which a realistic process and reasonable opportunity exists by which that understanding is determined and carried out, especially as it affects such matters as: determination of membership, selection or appointment of the principal governing board (elder, deacon, etc.), selection of the Senior Pastor, approval or alternating of constitution/bylaws, approval of the annual budget, and approval of any major purchase or dissolution.*”

Congregationalism should not be confused with democracy. In democracy, people gather to decide the will of man. In Congregationalism, Christ’s people gather to determine His will, not

their own. This point is often missed. Because Christ is present in their midst, His mind CAN be known. The correct practice of this type of government places a high value on the members of the church, as they become mature in their faith and practice. In 1 Cor. 5:1 – 5 we find that when the church gathers in Christ's presence and power it could hand an immoral man over to Satan. Such awesome power and authority is granted to the church, Christ's body. The frequency of meetings and types of decisions made varies with the size of the local church.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE EFCA**

The Evangelical Free Church was and is to this day, not an organization of member congregations but a conference of voting delegates and ministers who constitute the denomination from one conference to the next. To ascertain who constitutes the Evangelical Free Church for any given year one does not look for the list of churches but the list of those who were given voting rights at the last previous conference. Technically, the congregations do not join the denomination but are recognized by the district conferences, which in turn give the churches the right to participate in the National Conference.

The local church retains the right to call its own pastor and to ordain its own pastor. The Local church retains the right to send out its own missionaries to the fields at home and abroad but does so through the fellowship of churches thus following the very principle laid down in 1884 as being the purpose of a denomination. However missionaries are not commissioned at a general conference but in their home churches.

There is no unified budget calling for unspecified giving to the national organization. The support of workers as well as institutions is according to the wishes of the individuals and members. The congregations are not taxed. Goals may be set but the response must be clearly voluntary.

Not even the decisions of the general conference are legally binding upon the affiliated congregations. They support voluntarily. The department heads must face the conference every three years to give the delegates an opportunity to approve or disapprove of their leadership.

The Board of Directors is a coordinating, rather than a governing body, and has no authority over local congregations. Separate administrative boards are chosen for the purposes listed in the Bylaws. Their members are elected by the delegates for three-

year terms and limited to two terms to prevent a hierarchy from developing. At least one third of the membership of each national board shall be laymen/laywomen and one-third pastors. The delegates to the conference have the right to nominate candidates for all of the offices equal to the number proposed by the committees or boards.  
(Search for Identity, p. 128 – 131)

## **SUMMARY**

In summary we can say that there are several principles which have characterized the Free Church movement from the earliest days. Former President McDill, wrote an article for the Evangelical Beacon in 1990 in which he listed 10 of these principles.

1. They had a commitment to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture.
2. They had a commitment to the church.
3. They had a commitment to personal holiness of lifestyle.
4. They had a commitment to evangelism and world missions.
5. They had a commitment to Bible reading, prayer, and singing.
6. They had a commitment to Christian fellowship.
7. They had a commitment to the doctrine of Christ's return.
8. They had a commitment to a congregational form of church government.
9. They were committed to cooperation with other churches of like precious faith.
10. They were committed to obedience to the lordship of Christ and freedom of conscience as guided by the Scriptures through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

## **MINISTRIES OF THE EFCA**

***The EFCA TODAY Magazine*** – A bi-monthly publication that communicates EFCA international, national, district and local church news.

**ReachGlobal** – The international ministry of the EFCA began by sending a missionary to Mormons in 1885 and then one to China in 1887. Now over 600 EFCM missionaries serve in 45 nations or regions of the world.

**TouchGlobal** – The ministry of the EFCA that engages churches around the world, connecting them with resources and opportunities to serve those in need.

**ReachNational** – The national ministry of the EFCA is carried out through several departments that combines the vision and pas-