

# The Ministerial Association of the EFCA

## *A Summary of the History and Goals of our Association*

1894-2016

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### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FREE CHURCH MOVEMENT**

Our Scandinavian forefathers were the violent and feared heathens known as Vikings. Around the ninth century the Catholic Church brought both civilization and Christianity to our lands. Following the Protestant Reformation in Europe, Lutherans came to Sweden and later to Norway. “The priests, accompanied by soldiers, were sent out by the king, Gustav Vasa, and the people must choose between accepting the established faith and being baptized, or being put to death. The majority chose the former.”<sup>1</sup>

While these forced conversions were lamentable, the Word of God reached the people in their own language, and this fact alone quickly bore fruit both in lay people and ministers alike. Lines began to be drawn between true “awakened” believers and the unregenerate majority who were attending worship and communion only because it was, at that time, required by law.<sup>2</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> Century pietism, flowing from the Halle School in Germany and the Geneva school of Robert Haldane brought streams of revival that began to force groups of true believers to independence.<sup>3</sup> Methodist missionary George Scott served in Sweden from 1830-42, hosting illegal gospel services that the Lord blessed with revival. Scott went on to publish the *Pietisten*, a periodical that “would be an instrument of revival and free church promotion well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>4</sup>

Some of the converted remained in the Lutheran State Church but others began to form small communion societies where “**believers only but all believers**”<sup>5</sup> could share in the Lord’s Supper together. “Some of these communion groups would eventually become free church congregations. The years between the relaxing of the Conventicle Law in 1858 and the Uppsala incident to come in 1878 would generally be regarded as the watershed in transforming groups of believers within the Church

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<sup>1</sup> *The Free Church Activities*, Aug. H. Modig, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> *What it Means to be Free*. Calvin B. Hanson, 1991, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Hanson, p. 27: European leaders of the Free Church movement (Guassen and D’aubigne) “illustrate what was to become the norm with free church founders: a desire to reform the church from within and founding free churches only as a result of being forced out of the established church.” The influence of Pietism was strong enough that the Swedish parliament issued the Conventicle Law in 1726 to prevent gatherings outside of the State Church (Hanson, p. 34).

<sup>4</sup> Hanson, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Hanson uses this phrase to “very succinctly capture one of the over-riding distinctives of the EFCA,” p. 17.

into free churches as such and would be years of remarkable blessing and unusual revivals.”<sup>6</sup> These Free Churches quickly came under attack, with many of their leaders abused and imprisoned. Far from stopping the movement, the persecution only served to make the lines of demarcation clearer, resulting in more independent churches and then the formation of independent denominations.

The 1878 incident featured Peter Paul Waldenstrom, whose most controversial sermon actually denied the substitutionary atonement even as he coined the Free Church rallying cry, “***Where stands it written?***” When this ordained Lutheran Pastor was not allowed to use the Uppsala Cathedral for a communion service, “22,000 converted church members signed a ‘communion petition’ requesting... a ‘closed’ communion service for believers only. The request was denied. The result of this denial issued in the organization of the Swedish Mission Covenant in 1878,” a parallel in Sweden of the Free Church movement taking shape at that time in America.<sup>7</sup>

“What are the Scandinavian springs from which the distinctly American Evangelical Free Church river rises? They are at least four in number: first, the home gatherings for Bible reading and believing individuals who stood against the dead orthodoxy of the state Lutheran Churches; second, the great sweep of the Pietist movement springing from the University of Halle which surged from Helsinki in the east to Civil War America in the west; third, the revival fires of the Moravian Brethren and Methodist groups which led many would-be emigrants to Christ; and fourth, the political-economic-religious ferment which unleashed upon the shores of the United States our hardy Scandinavian forebears: Lutheran, Free Church, and Viking pagan alike.”<sup>8</sup>

“About 1840 the Swedish people began immigrating to the United States in great numbers. This was caused by the hard times then existing in the homeland, the persecution of the Christians, and the compulsory military training which was so detestable to a great number of the young men. Thus many Christians, as well as non-Christians, sought refuge in America... During 1845-1860 many independent churches sprang up. Some of these were fashioned according to the type of the Swedish State Church with believers and unbelievers as members, others accepted only true Christians... The independent churches soon felt the necessity of mutual fellowship, and accordingly Bible Conferences and Mission meetings were held. These did not prove quite efficient as a connecting link. Therefore the Mission Synod was established in Keokuk, Iowa, May 22, 1873. As this did not satisfy all of the Churches, a third organization was formed in Galesburg, Ill., May 18, 1874, namely the Ansgarii Synod.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hanson, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup> Hanson, p. 40, citing *Diamond Jubilee Story*, H. Wilbert Norton, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> *A Living Legacy*. Spiritual Heritage Committee, 1990, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> *The Free Church Activities*, Aug. H. Modig, 1924.

The impulses that brought these independent pastors and churches together were (1) fellowship among other true believers, (2) the desire to learn about and encourage one another with the assurance of the Lord's imminent return and therefore (3) the urgent need to send out evangelists and missionaries into the harvest fields. Thus another Free Church distinctive, **"together we minister"** was built into our founding DNA.

The independent spirit of those founders, however, made unified efforts a challenge. Attempts to unite the Mission Synod with the Ansgarii Synod failed, but the prophetic and missional gatherings provided sufficient relationship and motivation to produce "The Christians' Confederated Activities," at the landmark conference held in Boone, Iowa, in 1884, which is considered the birth of the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of America. "The Free Church is not a product of dissension from any other denomination. It originated in this way, that a number of independent churches organized into a common Conference in view of conducting home and foreign missions."<sup>10</sup>

The Norwegian-Danish root of the EFCA developed along similar lines. "In the 18<sup>th</sup> century German Pietism, emphasizing the regenerate Christian life through faith in Christ and promoting the study of the Bible in small groups, made inroads into Norway and Denmark... Being branded as the worst kind of heresy, Pietism met with fierce opposition from the State Church... With a growing awareness of the radical change conversion brought, more and more believers felt the need of gatherings where, apart from the mixed multitude, warm fellowship with others of like persuasion could be enjoyed... Here as in Sweden the definitive factor in bringing about a break from the established Church and the founding of free churches proved to be the matter of the Lord's table."<sup>11</sup>

Fredrik Franson is the thread uniting God's work in the Free Church Movement: "a Swede who came from America to minister in Norway!"<sup>12</sup> Franson came in the middle of the mass emigration that brought over a million Swedes and nearly as many Norwegians to America between the Civil War and WWII.<sup>13</sup> His parents had been impacted by the revivals in Sweden, and as Franson began to read about them himself, he "became a Swedish clone of Dwight L. Moody and ministered with amazing effectiveness in the Moody style to Scandinavian communities across America."<sup>14</sup> Not only an evangelist, but also an organizer, Franson left twelve Free Mission congregations behind him after only thirteen

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<sup>10</sup> Modig.

<sup>11</sup> *What it Means to be Free*, Calvin B. Hanson, p. 41,44.

<sup>12</sup> Hanson, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> "Between 1846 and 1932, 387,000 Danes, 854,000 Norwegians, and 1,203,000 Swedes emigrated." *A Living Legacy*, Spiritual Heritage Committee, 1990, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Hanson, p. 45.

months of revival ministry in Norway (1881-1883).<sup>15</sup> Franson embodied the spirit of the EFCA of which he was a forerunner, with his gospel-centered revival preaching, his commitment to churches for “believers only but all believers,” and his zeal to mobilize missionaries to the ends of the earth.<sup>16</sup>

The primary founder of the Free Church in Denmark was Jens Jensen-Maar who established four principles “to form a union of truly free churches: ... to unite in the common task of gospel proclamation and winning the lost both at home and overseas; to encourage and edify one another; a membership composed of true believers only; free to administer its own internal affairs.”<sup>17</sup> The development of the early Free Church movement in Scandinavia and in America reveals these four common purposes, expressed by Jensen-Maar, all on the foundation of an unwavering commitment to the authority of Scripture as God’s Word.

Confident in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible as God’s Holy Word (“*Where stands it written?*”), and therefore urged on by the Great Commission and the knowledge that Jesus is coming soon,<sup>18</sup> the Free Church founders were committed to cooperating with other likeminded ministers and churches in pursuit of these four goals:

1. **MOBILIZE MISSION:** To send evangelists and missionaries to proclaim the gospel and reach the lost both at home and abroad. “*Into the harvest!*”
2. **PROTECT INTEGRITY:** To ensure that all preachers and missionaries in the association adhere to key standards of character and theology. “*All believers but believers only.*”<sup>19</sup>
3. **EDIFY ONE ANOTHER:** To gather for fellowship, Biblical training and to support one another. “*Together we minister.*”<sup>20</sup>
4. **PRESERVE INDEPENDENCE:** To maintain the autonomy of the local church and avoid creating a cumbersome denominational bureaucracy.<sup>21</sup> “*Each church its own synod.*”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hanson, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> A significant figure in Free Church history, Franson is also claimed as “the founder of Baptist, Congregational and Covenant churches. Far too large a man to be confined to any single group of his time, Franson is claimed by the Free Church more in terms of the ecclesiology he taught and practiced than in terms of denominational adherence. As a matter of fact, as will be seen, the Free Church was not even thought of as a denomination until well into its history.” Hanson, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> Hanson, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to overestimate the impact of End Times prophecies on the early days of the Free Church in America, with topics addressed at conferences in 1881-1883 such as “The importance of the doctrine of Christ’s Second Coming; The Day of the Lord; Antichrist; Israel; The Bride, the Wife and the Lamb; and The Millennial Kingdom.” Hanson, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup> From the beginning there was great concern over holiness that produced strong convictions against public vices such as polygamy and alcohol so that the Free Churches supported prohibition, “in every effort put forth to quell such iniquities in every honorable purpose and plan.” Hanson, p. 67, citing the founding charter of the 1884 meeting in Boone, IA.

<sup>20</sup> *A Living Legacy*. 1990 Spiritual Heritage Committee, p. 16.

The irony of America is that many of the colonists who arrived with the desire to worship freely did not, in fact, provide the same freedom for others among them. Most colonies instead established their own official religions with churches supported by taxation and little tolerance for those with divergent views or practices. The idea was that Anglicans should settle in Virginia, Puritan congregationalists in New England, Quakers in Pennsylvania etc. Roger Williams in Providence, Rhode Island, and Thomas Hooker in Connecticut were two prominent exceptions to this rule. Hooker's simple constitution paved the way for the national Constitution nearly 150 years later as William Penn's guarantee of "religious freedom for all" in Pennsylvania would eventually become U.S. policy.<sup>23</sup>

Carl August Bjork illustrates the parallels of the Free Church movement in America with those at the same time developing in Sweden and Norway. Bjork arrived in Swede Bend, Iowa, in 1864. He became a "true believer" by reading the *Pietisten* and, though only a cobbler by trade, immediately began to share his experience with others. A faithful member of the Swedish Lutheran Church in town, Bjork hosted simple home gatherings that the Lutheran Pastor fully supported. At these meetings Bjork led the singing of hymns and read from the *Pietisten*.

Bjork and his followers grew increasingly uncomfortable with sharing the Lord's Supper with others in the Lutheran Church they knew to be unregenerate and so began to host private gatherings for believers only to observe this sacred ordinance together. At the same time, they formed a Mission Society "for fellowship and edification and most of all as a means for missionary endeavors, but it was not yet thought of as a church... Something similar to what took place at Swede Bend was happening here and there across the land. While some of these groups of Mission Friends would become a part of the Evangelical Free Church, many more would develop into Evangelical Covenant churches."<sup>24</sup>

John G. Princell was an ordained Lutheran pastor. While serving a church in Manhattan in 1877 where a revival took place, Princell attempted to change the church's practice and limit membership and participation in the Lord's Supper to believers only, following the New Testament pattern. Princell,

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<sup>21</sup> "We should not follow the method of the denominations, however, in solving this problem, namely by multiplying of organizations, and organizations within organizations, until a lot of machinery is needed." Hanson, p. 66, citing *Chicago Bladet*, August 12, 1884.

<sup>22</sup> "Franson's simple slogan, *each church its own synod*, had great impact on church groups who believed that each local church had the right to govern its own affairs; that acting as its own synod the local church could ordain its own ministers; and that free and independent, the local church was also free to associate with other groups of like conviction to accomplish its missionary tasks." Hanson, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> See Hanson, pp. 52-53.

<sup>24</sup> Hanson, p. 55-56.

greatly influenced by Waldenstrom, was committed to the authority of Scripture but held his mentor's deficient view of the atonement and, as a result, was suspended from the Lutheran ministry.<sup>25</sup>

Many believers left the Lutheran church and came with him to found Bethesda Mission Church in New York City. As Franson became the primary evangelist for the Free Church, Princell became the primary professor.<sup>26</sup> Princell became a key writer for the *Chicago-Bladet*,<sup>27</sup> a new publication (in 1877) that gave national voice to Free Church ideas on the authority of Scripture and, above all, the independence of the local church. Princell and other *Bladet* writers produced strong and consistent attacks on denominations in general.<sup>28</sup> EFGA President Arnold T. Olson summed it up like this in 1984: "We still follow the slogan introduced by Franson: the congregation shall be its own synod and should join with others to carry out the Lord's work..."<sup>29</sup>

So the founders of the Evangelical Free Church did not set out to start a denomination.<sup>30</sup> Rather, they came together as a small band of like-minded Gospel preachers recognizing that they could better fulfill the Great Commission together as they labored diligently, anticipating the Lord's very imminent return.

"The new organization [in 1884] was called 'Kristnas Gemensamma Verksamhet' [The Christians' Confederated Activities]. And as the very name implies, this new organization was established on a very broad basis. The idea was to make an organization with room for all who believed in Christ and who accepted the Bible as the Word of God. It sought no separating shibboleths in doctrine or confession to which applicants for membership had to subscribe. The simple statement of the New Testament that all who believed were added to the church was the guiding principle. This principle has to a great extent been maintained ever since..."

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<sup>25</sup> Princell emphasized the love of God and denied the wrath of God or the need for propitiation.

<sup>26</sup> Princell was "the real founder of the Free Church work, who for more than thirty years has not only stood *with* us but gone *before* us as a prince in our spiritual warfare – our teacher, our friend and a father in Christ, who, by his deep and genuine piety set a beautiful example for all of us, and who, through his exceptional knowledge and gifts, along with his devotion to God, gave a measure of respect and recognition to the entire Free Church work." MA Chairman Andrew Modig, annual report to the conference, 1915. Cited in Thompson, 'A Historical Sketch of the MA,' p. 3, 1969.

<sup>27</sup> "It was Professor Princell's influence as an associate editor of that paper during the years 1880-1884 that led to the formation of the Swedish Free Church." Roy A. Thompson, "A Historical Sketch," p. 5, 1969.

<sup>28</sup> "From 1879 on, Franson and Princell joined Martenson [editor of the *Chicago Bladet*] in a 'concerted effort to abolish existing organizations among the Lutheran Mission Friends and to prevent the establishment of any new ones..." Hanson, p. 59.

<sup>29</sup> *The Search for Identity*, A.T.Olson, p. 130-131, 1984.

<sup>30</sup> "Princell was a fierce and articulate proponent of the absolute autonomy of the local church. His stand was very strong and highly individualistic. He tirelessly taught that no local church should salary its ministers, adopt any creed beyond the Bible itself, or keep any local records of business meetings or members. (Anyone who has tried to work on local Free Church histories knows how effective this staunch advocate of local autonomy was!)." *A Living Legacy*, Spiritual Heritage Committee, p. 23, 1990.

“The Free Church has therefore been very cosmopolitan as to its doctrinal make-up. Various forms and methods of baptism have, for example, been tolerated, even practiced...

“Prayer and a consistent and diligent study of the Bible were cardinal virtues... This was particularly true concerning the prophetic portions of the Bible. The personal and imminent return of the Lord was perhaps the foremost truth that gripped the hearts and minds of the Free Church pioneers. It became not merely a doctrine, but to many an anticipated event. It became to many ‘the blessed hope’ and their guiding star. Everything took shape and form with that event strongly in mind. A glorious truth it was, and is...

“It created an urgent and speedy call for Christian workers. The gospel must be preached and the time in which to do it was very limited. Hence a rush was made for the harvest fields. Trained and untrained workers labored together. They all clamored for the opportunity to gather some sheaves before the Lord of the harvest should appear.”<sup>31</sup>

## **MOBILIZING MISSION**

Saving souls was what brought the independent preachers together in the late 1800s. “Those who played a major role in this movement were mostly young preachers; men with strong convictions, fervent in spirit, zealous for the glory of God and eager to win the lost for Christ and His Kingdom. They were capable of hard work and would not be deterred in their earnest pursuits by the most bitter opposition.”<sup>32</sup>

In the late 1800s, Free Churches blossomed and spread all over America, fueled by a steady stream of immigrants and, above all, by the flowing waters of revival. “No other rational explanation will suffice. Revival was a frontier phenomenon.”<sup>33</sup> The pioneer preachers were more evangelists than pastors, both by necessity of having so many to reach in so short a time and by conviction to avoid complacency and conformity to the world (i.e. the liberal churches). “The brethren were anxious to get as many workers into the field as possible, and whenever men of any talent were found, they were urged upon to join in the work. Thus many were sent forth.”<sup>34</sup>

“The Free Church was not organized as a denomination. Primarily it was intended to be a missionary enterprise... Although no definite organization was accomplished [at the 1884 Boone meeting], yet enough was done to mark the beginning of a more definite work... All were alive

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<sup>31</sup> *The Golden Jubilee*, E.A.Halleen, p. 29-30, 1934.

<sup>32</sup> *Laborers Together with God*. Dahlen, Anderson, p. 7, 1945.

<sup>33</sup> Hanson, p. 77, for example: “The power fell on the speaker. With deep groanings he sagged to the floor... He brought the hearers so close to the Cross that every heart felt the solemnity of the occasion... Every unconverted person present surrendered himself to the Lord.”

<sup>34</sup> *The Free Church Activities*, A.H. Modig.

to the blessings bestowed; all were thrilled by the precious light shed upon and through the prophetic word, and all were on fire for the saving of as many souls as possible, and in as short a time as possible. Jesus was coming soon – that was the heart-throb back of it all. And that was sufficient.”<sup>35</sup>

The missional commitment of the Free Church was central in the 1884 gathering in Boone, Iowa. A couple was identified at that conference with the hope of sending them as missionaries to India. This plan did not materialize, but in 1887 the newly formed association sent its first missionary, J.H. Von Qualen, to Canton, China, where the work would carry on with much fruit for generations.

It is also vital to remember that until the 1930s such a steady stream of immigrants would come from Sweden, Norway and Denmark to America (sometimes as many as 15,000 each year) that reaching them required an intentional missionary strategy employing native speakers of each language who could bring the Gospel into their immigrant communities. This was the impulse that led Franson to Utah – not to reach Mormons but to reach the Swedes who had settled in Utah before the Mormons got to them. This was the guiding principle of the Congregational Church which “made the training of immigrant preachers the centerpiece of their strategy,” and thereby helped train and send many preachers and missionaries who would become leaders in the Free Church.<sup>36</sup>

“The primary purpose of the national organization was to help the congregations better carry out the Great Commission and provide fellowship. It was started and is maintained as an organization for missions. In this, the parts are greater than the whole for without the parts the whole would never have come into existence nor would it have survived. The highest authority was and is invested in the local congregations whose delegates make the decisions of mutual concern in accordance with the purpose so clearly stated at the beginning and recognize for the last century: ‘The Evangelical Free Church of American shall be an Association and Fellowship of independent congregations of like faith whose only objectives shall be the salvation of souls and the edification of believers in faith, hope and love.’”<sup>37</sup>

The 1950 merger<sup>38</sup> of the Swedish Free Church with the Norwegian-Danish branch affirmed the centrality of mission as the reason for the denomination’s existence: “The purpose of the organization

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<sup>35</sup> *The Golden Jubilee*, E.A.Halleen, p. 27, 1934.

<sup>36</sup> Hanson, p. 72-74.

<sup>37</sup> *The Search for Identity*, A.T. Olson, p. 128, 1984.

<sup>38</sup> “318 Swedish EFC members of the Ministerial Association; 185 churches with approximately 12,000 members. The Norwegian-Danish EFC had 134 pastors and missionaries on its Ministerial List and 90 churches with an estimated constituency of 6,000 people.” Proposed Merger Plan, 1949 Annual Report of the Norwegian-Danish, p. 18-19.



shall be to promote and extend the work of the Lord by the proclamation of the Gospel; also to encourage Christian fellowship among those ministering in the Evangelical Free Church of America and in a wholesome and loving manner build one another up in the faith... members are expected to live Godly lives and proclaim faithfully the Word of God within the historic framework of the EFCA ...An applicant for membership must 'work in harmony with the principles of the EFCA.'<sup>39</sup> This purpose statement shows the interconnectedness of mission, integrity and mutual edification, with independent churches choosing to partner together to the glory of God.

## PROTECTING INTEGRITY

By 1893 it became apparent to the Free pastors and churches that some recognition had to be given to who was a known and worthy preacher in the association in order to filter out impostors and heretics.

'Until the year 1893, the Free Church was only a partly organized association. Consequently, worthy as well as unworthy preachers, took the privilege of identifying themselves with our mission, and from time to time, such presented themselves as, by their unworthy conduct, brought our own brethren into disrepute. Thus our organization was oft times forced to serve as a place of refuge for undesirables. For many years this condition caused our pioneers great concern, till at last a motion was made to organize a Ministerial Association that might serve as a barrier between our upright brethren and those who, for any reason, were unworthy of confidence and furtherance.'<sup>40</sup>

So the second milestone in Free Church history, after the 1884 "Gospel Coalition," was the organization of the Ministerial Association on October 11, 1893 with an original group of 37 pastors. "It has ever since served as a protector, giving furtherance to the worthy and excluding the unworthy."<sup>41</sup> Affiliation with brethren of "kindred faith and principles for the purpose of mutual help and encouragement... provided protection from undesirable elements posing in the garb of Christian liberty, while misrepresenting the cause of Christ."<sup>42</sup>

For the Swedish Evangelical Free Church, an official statement of faith was not established until just before the 1950 merger (and that confession created by the Ministerial Association).<sup>43</sup> But the 1894

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<sup>39</sup> *The Search for Identity*. A.T. Olson, p. 133, 1984.

<sup>40</sup> *The Free Church Activities*., Modig, citing Rev. A.A. Anderson in 'Frikyans Minnesskrift.'

<sup>41</sup> Modig.

<sup>42</sup> *Laborers Together with God*., Dahlen, Anderson, p. 8, 1945.

<sup>43</sup> "The resolution adopted at the Boone meeting: 'Without herewith wishing to declare a confession of faith that in any way shall be binding for ourselves or others, otherwise than as an expression of what we find the divine

Association set up an ordination process “unique at that time among American churches, but which is still followed in four steps today [in 1990]: (1) The local church sponsors the candidate. (2) The District examines. (3) The National Ministerial approves and records. (4) The district and local church together ordain in the local church. 1893-1894 held EFCA pastors to a triple accountability under God’s call.”<sup>44</sup> In 1909 “The Norwegian-Danish groups adopted the first American Free Church statement of faith... They voted to adopt a nine-point parent to the twelve-article statement of faith which was adopted forty-one years later at the merger of the Swedish and Norwegian-Danish groups.”<sup>45</sup>

In this way the young movement protected not only the theological integrity of its preachers but also their character. The Norwegian-Danish side, for example, had this safeguarding policy built into their Constitution: “Members of this society, whose life and practice are not in accordance with the above stated principles, or concerning whom complaints of improper conduct are circulated, may be summoned to appear before the board, where said complaints shall be investigated, and, if found necessary, refer the matter to revoke the membership of such a person, after a decision has been reached by the majority vote of members present.”<sup>46</sup>

“The accrediting, governing and discipline of ministers, missionaries, and in many cases, professors, has called for local Free Churches to seek common identity in the development of a national ministerial association charged with the licensing, ordaining, credentialing, and disciplining of Christian workers. This passion for ministry in missions, higher education, and personnel has called us together and shaped our identity: ‘together we minister.’”<sup>47</sup>

“Be it said of this organization of brethren in the ministry, that it has in no small degree been instrumental in maintaining a high standard of conduct and Christian ethics, in promoting a truly spiritual and scriptural ministry in sponsoring Bible and prophetic conferences, in providing material for Bible instruction for children and the young people, and extending a helping hand to one another in time of trial and need. The Ministers Annuity and Aid Plan, now approved and accepted by the Free Church and endorsed by the local churches everywhere on our field, is largely a result of efforts put forth by the association.

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word teaches in certain things, and which is of importance to all Christians... the Word of God, especially the New Testament, is the Constitution of the church and its unforgettable rule, therefore it behooves each group of believers to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free (Gal. 5:1); i.e. individually, as well as collectively we have the right and obligation to remain independent of all forms of church authority.” Cited in *The Golden Jubilee*, p. 28.

<sup>44</sup> *A Living Legacy*. Spiritual Heritage Committee, 1990, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> *A Living Legacy*, 1990, p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> Constitution of the EFC Association of Am, Norwegian-Danish, printed in the Annual report of 1935-36, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *A Living Legacy*. 1990 Spiritual Heritage Committee, p. 16.

“It is with gratitude to God we here affirm that while the brethren often have differed as to the interpretation of certain Bible doctrines, they have nevertheless always presented a solid and united front against modernism or unscriptural teachings. The great fundamentals or basic doctrines of the Bible such as the virgin birth, the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the efficacy of His blood, His physical resurrection, His high priestly office and function in heaven, His return for them that love His appearing, and His visible return to earth to reign and rule in righteousness, have not only been defended but boldly and emphatically declared both in preaching and teaching.”<sup>48</sup>

Without a doubt the single factor that guarded the integrity of Free Church pastors and churches was a foundational commitment to the inspiration and authority of God’s Word. “Where stands it written,” rings through the pages of our history. Long time EFCA Pastor and TEDS professor Ted Olsen shared about one of his early memories as a young pastor.<sup>49</sup> Arriving early for a Ministerial Association Conference in 1953, he came upon a group of godly older pastors in a meeting to prepare for the event. He heard strains of music and, as he got closer he could hear that the song they were singing was, “The B-I-B-L-E, yes that’s the book for me. I stand alone on the Word of God, the B-I-B-L-E.” It was a vivid impression that has stuck with him through his over 60 years of ministry.

## **EDIFYING ONE ANOTHER**

The Free Church movement began as awakened believers started meeting with one another to celebrate the Lord’s supper. There was a *fellowship* among the converted that added fuel to the revival fires of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Similarly, as preachers, evangelists and missionaries labored in the harvest fields – traveling long distances, combating the elements, dealing with separation from loved ones and enduring all manner of other dangers and threats – they needed times of refreshing with their fellow ministers.

“The pioneers arrived on the scene in the days of youth... The vastness of the task before them constituted a tremendous challenge for strength and endurance. Many of them were newly married people and the family increases brought new responsibilities... Vast areas of land lay between the settlers, or impenetrable woods. They were pretty much alone, and thrown upon their own resources... never thwarted except by the forces of God or nature...

“In these days of financial distress [in 1934] folks should recollect the pioneer days. It would lessen the feeling of hardship considerably. People feel like martyrs if they are compelled to walk 12 blocks on smooth sidewalks. Walking 36 miles through thick woods and brush, carrying all the necessities of life, is a different story... The pioneer’s spiritual existence was a battle, as was his physical existence... Nothing came easy. No one expected it to. The little pioneer church

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<sup>48</sup> *Laborers Together with God*. Dahlen, Anderson., p. 7-10, 1945.

<sup>49</sup> I interviewed Pastor Ted on 12/14/15.

was rough and simple. So were the services. And so were the sermons, the songs, prayers and testimonies. No one wanted it otherwise. And it filled the need of the hour.”<sup>50</sup>

In addition, many of the early preachers were untrained, thinking the Lord’s return was so imminent there was no time for extended study. Until formal *schools* were founded in the early 1900s, “most ministers were dependent on Bible conferences and 2-3 week Ministerial Institutes to strengthen their knowledge of the Bible and improve their effectiveness in ministry.”<sup>51</sup>

“The School work in the Free Church is yet in its infancy [in 1934]. It is regrettable that it should be so. Shorter courses in Bible teaching and Christian training were given from the beginning, as needs and means seemed to offer themselves. The leaders of those early days, although themselves fairly well educated, did not, for the most part, encourage school work within the organization. As before stated, great stress was put on evangelistic and missionary work, which work could be done without a great amount of education. At least it appeared that way for a number of years. One great revival after another swept over the churches and communities and oftentimes the instruments were unlearned, though gifted, men.

“Not until these seasons of refreshing ceased and the work in the churches became better organized and established, did the actual need of better trained preachers appear. It was about the year 1900 that Rev. P.J. Elmquist, then superintendent of missions, took the initiative in establishing a Bible Institute... Professor Princell was called to assist in the work and became the leading spirit in the work until his death in 1915... In the year 1926 the Free Church voted to enlarge its school facilities by adding a four year academic or high school course... Later a three year Seminary was added for those desiring to enter the ministry.”<sup>52</sup>

Even as more formal training became available for pastors and missionaries, the Ministerial Association continued to provide opportunities for fellowship and education. “Besides our Annual Conference, the Ministerial Association sponsors a Ministerial Institute in the Fall, during which time a program of devotional, doctrinal, prophetic and practical messages are given for the edification and inspiration of the brethren.”<sup>53</sup> This practice continues today, though in 2015 responsibility for the Theology Conference (formerly the Mid-Winter Ministerial) was handed to the Credentialing Department of the President’s Office. Committees were formed at various times to address issues of pressing concerns such as the ordination of women and divorce and remarriage as it relates to the

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<sup>50</sup> *The Golden Jubilee*, E.A.Halleen, p. 44, 1934.

<sup>51</sup> Thompson, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> *The Golden Jubilee*, E.A.Halleen, p. 33-34, 1934.

<sup>53</sup> Willard J. Eckman, Secretary of the MA, 1954 Yearbook, p. 93.

credentialing of ministers.<sup>54</sup> And at the forefront was the desire to help one another improve effectiveness in ministry:

“Think of the questions that confront us these days. Shall we bus students to our Sunday Schools, leaving their parents in bed, or shall we insist on whole families coming? Shall we begin a serious program of visitation evangelism? If so, shall we visit a la Campus Crusade Lay Institute, or shall we go the James Kennedy route? Shall we give ourselves to organization, or shall we ‘hang loose’? Is the answer to be found in small group Bible studies and in depth sharing, or shall we insist on the traditional structured services? Shall we push ‘body life’? Shall we gear our churches to the seventies, grow beards, get with it, and make the young crowd happy, or shall we slip back into the pattern of the forties and delight the senior citizens? There are times when I feel confused spelled with a capital K, and I am tempted, like Stephen Leacock’s horseman, to mount, and ride off in all directions.”<sup>55</sup>

In addition to fellowship and training, Free Church ministers were committed from the beginning of their association to support and assist one another as much as possible. In 1909 the purpose of the Ministerial Association was expanded: “to promote and extend the work of the Lord by the preaching of the Gospel; also to foster more intimate fellowship among the brethren, and in an affectionate and loving manner be of **assistance** one to another.”<sup>56</sup>

The assistance was informal and spontaneous in the early days and, by necessity, limited. The idea to start an Old Peoples’ Home in 1910 illustrates this point well:

“Rev. E. Thorell was traveling from Utah to the yearly Conference held in Boone, Iowa, 1910. On his way, he stopped off in Kearney, Nebr., to conduct a meeting and call on friends. Here he found one of our veteran preachers, the usually happy and contented brother, L.M. Ekman. But why the sorrow and anxiety pictured in the kind face? Why the tears trickling down the furrowed cheek?

“List to the answer: Our venerable brother is growing old and feeble. His years and strength have been spent in service of the Lord and the Free Church... His future on earth seems dark and gloomy... His sorrowful plight made a deep impression upon brother Thorell. Arriving at the meeting he told of Ekman’s worries and recommended that a home be built to care for aged ministers and others who, perchance, might be rendered homeless.

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<sup>54</sup> 1980 EFCA Yearbook, Ministerial Association Report; recommendations made by the MA “in cooperation with the Committee on Ministerial Standing.”

<sup>55</sup> James R. Leonard, Chairman of the MA., 1974 yearbook, p. 247.

<sup>56</sup> Dr. Roy A. Thompson, “A Historical Sketch,” 1969, p. 2. He notes that this wording was preserved unchanged up through 1969.

“Ready heed was given to his appeal, and as a result a beautiful home was, in a short time, erected a few blocks from the birthplace of the Swedish Evangelical Free Church, under the care and protection of the Mother Church in Boone... Reverend Ekman was one of the first inmates of the Home and spent here, in quiet, happiness and content his remaining years, after which he peacefully fell asleep in the arms of his Saviour, and was laid to rest in the beautiful cemetery at Boone, about a mile from the Home...”<sup>57</sup>

“The care of the aged was also thought of, though not as early as the orphanage work. Perhaps the greatest incentive for erecting the Old People’s Home, located at Boone, Iowa, was the fact that the Free Church had several elderly preachers, who had served well in their day, but who now lacked the comforts of a home. A workable plan of pensioning old ministers has not yet been devised [by 1934]. The necessary funds to carry out such a plan are also hard to obtain. It is so much harder, of course, when the denomination is small, to find adequate means to care for the worn-out workers of the vineyard. As a first step, therefore, in providing help for those ministers who were in immediate need, the said home was erected. The first to enter the new home was Rev. E.L. Ekman, an elderly veteran from Nebraska. The Home is a beautiful three-story brick building accommodating about forty people, each member having his own private room.”<sup>58</sup>

A retirement program was finally set up in 1944, the product of much discussion through the difficult financial days of the ‘30s.<sup>59</sup> “Aged members, or widows of ministers, in need, have received help regularly as well as certain ones experiencing distressing situations.”<sup>60</sup>

“Since Social Security is not available for pastors, it is imperative that the Plan follow the present program, as it has in past years. Should the Social Security program cover more ministers, adjustments can be made, but the probability is that a large number will not qualify even though they might seek to enter on a voluntary basis.

“As has been pointed out frequently by your secretary, the Minister’s Annuity and Aid Plan offers only the minimum of aid to ministers as they reach the declining years, but at least we have a workable Plan which meets the needs of ministers within the capacity of the Free Church. The Board of Trustees is pleased indeed with the support of the Plan by churches, institutions and ministers. God has blessed this aspect of the Free Church work in seeking to

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<sup>57</sup> *The Free Church Activities*, A.H. Modig, 1924.

<sup>58</sup> *The Golden Jubilee*, E.A.Halleen, p. 32, 1934.

<sup>59</sup> “The Ministers Annuity and Aid Plan started after much promotion from Rev. Arthur G. Lindquist – a missionary home on furlough from China. Discussion on the need for this kind of program started in the early thirties with the onset of the Depression, but no plan was agreed upon.” Dr. Roy A. Thompson, “A Historical Sketch,” 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ministerial Association, 1969, p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> John E. Dahlin, Secretary of the Board of Trustees for MAAP, 1964 Yearbook, p. 197.

meet a need which had been neglected until a decade ago. We ask you delegates and pastors to remain enthusiastic supporters of the plan.”<sup>61</sup>

In 1971 the Free Church Ministers’ and Missionaries’ plan (FCMM) was established. This retirement program was administered through the EFCA home office until incorporating independently in 2012 and subsequently expanding to add benefits like Long Term Disability Insurance.<sup>62</sup>

Fellowship, education and mutual assistance were facilitated through various gatherings, conferences and other initiatives, many formally sponsored by the Ministerial Association and its subcommittees. For example, the MA often promoted seasons of prayer.<sup>63</sup> As E.A. Halleen put it in *The Golden Jubilee*, “Prayer was everybody’s business.”<sup>64</sup>

“A Resolution to the General Conference from the Ministerial Association: ‘That a week of prayer be held at a very early date in all our churches at the same time to unite in asking God for a gracious revival sent by the Holy Spirit (Jude 33,3; 2 Chr. 7:14)... In view of threatening dangers and the challenge of the present need, we further request that the General Conference may see fit to appoint a week of prayer in the early Fall, and call upon all our Ministers and people to meet together in definite and earnest prayer and supplication for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that the Jubilee Year may be a season of consecration and soul-winning.

“We feel that a week of united prayer would do much to strengthen our arms in our fight against apostasy, worldliness, and spiritual lethargy. As a group of Christians who stand for true Christianity endeavoring to hold forth the Gospel Light in a darkening age, we have a great and important place to fill in this midnight hour. May the holy flame that has continued to burn upon the altars of our Free Churches since the early years of the work, blaze anew with divine presence, from coast to coast.”<sup>65</sup>

As the Districts became larger and the needs of the movement more complex, additional structures were created to serve the ministers. In 1991 the Ministerial Association approved the creation of an Executive Director’s office. “The purpose was to give administrative leadership to the various ministries that had grown up around the Ministerial Association. The board of the association

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<sup>61</sup> John E. Dahlin, Secretary of the Board of Trustees for the MAAP, 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the EFC, 1964.

<sup>62</sup> <http://fcmmbenefits.org/history>

<sup>63</sup> “It is not enough that we be-moan our failures and short-comings or even rest upon any laurels that we may have accumulated. Our need is that the power and unction of God rests upon us in these dark days of spiritual declination so that we may be faithful to the tasks that are at hand and lie ahead.” 1954 yearbook, p. 93.

<sup>64</sup> “At such occasions the younger brethren in the ministry would be used to open the sessions with Scripture reading. (Prayer was everybody’s business.) Prayer and supplications would come from all parts of the room, and always offered on bended knees...” Halleen, p. 38-39, 1934.

<sup>65</sup> 1934 Yearbook of the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of America, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Committee on Resolutions Chairman, Axel J. Thorwall, p. 122,124.

also envisioned the creation of ministries that would strengthen pastors and their families for a lifetime of service within the EFCA.”<sup>66</sup> Dues were raised to \$50 per year at this point (the original contribution was \$5 in the early days) and have increased periodically to the \$75 annual contribution today.

Matching pastors with churches became easier when Minister Connection was introduced in 1994 as “a prayer-driven, consultant-assisted, ‘fitted ness’ approach to placement that uses the technology of the Internet to communicate... The system does not ‘do placement.’ What we offer requires the involvement of a person who is assisting in the process. It provides that person with relevant information that is accurate and able to be updated regularly.”<sup>67</sup>

“We see it as part of our responsibility to challenge and encourage each pastor to do what is necessary to continue to develop the strength, endurance, flexibility, and strategy required to [run well and finish well]. We cannot afford to be on the playing field ill equipped or out of shape.’ As the Board of the MA has worked on the concept, they have concluded that the Pastoral Care Project should be a framework of opportunities and experiences that would encourage every Ministerial Association member to continually develop in three critical areas: ***Spiritual formation, Personal well-being, and Ministry excellence...*** The Pastoral Care Project is essentially a ‘self-care project’ we are voluntarily undertaking as an association.”<sup>68</sup>

One of the key milestones in the care of EFCA ministers was the Recovery Church network developed in the early 1990s. By 1995, Executive Director of the MA John Herman could write: “With more than a dozen EFCA churches having embraced at least one hurting or ministry-weary pastoral couple, we feel we are ready to offer this opportunity whenever it seems appropriate. Four churches are prepared to serve on an on-going basis through identified team members and housing options. The ministry has begun to receive national attention as a model for other denominations. Several couples have actually completed their recovery and are serving Christ in satisfying ministries. Additional material and training will be made available in 1995.”<sup>69</sup>

A subtle but significant shift took place in 2003 when, “the members of the EFCA Ministerial Association gave their support to a commitment to serve an expanded constituency. While retaining an identifiable membership as a solid base for the ministry, additional resources have become available through the creation of a pastoral care department.”<sup>70</sup> In essence, Pastoral Care Ministries was launched

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<sup>66</sup> John Herman, 1994 Annual report Book, p. 76.

<sup>67</sup> John Herman, 1994 Annual Report, p. 77.

<sup>68</sup> Jim Ramsak, chairman of the MA, 1994 Yearbook, p. 77.

<sup>69</sup> John Herman, 1995 Report Book, MA Annual Report, p. 107b.

<sup>70</sup> John Herman, 2004 Report Book, PCM / MA Annual Report.



to extend the resources and care the Ministerial Association had historically offered to its members to all ministers in the EFCA movement.

“The role of Pastoral Care Ministries within the EFCA movement is to assure that **all EFCA pastors** [emphasis added] have access to the practical resources and the pastoral care that will enable them to serve with excellence over a sustained period of time. If, by God’s grace, the EFCA experiences the multiplication of healthy churches among all people, one of the key factors will be the faithful ministry of a diverse group of healthy pastors who serve with a clear sense of God’s calling, drawing upon their unique set of God-given resources while maintaining a vital relationship with God and others around them.”<sup>71</sup>

### **PRESERVING INDEPENDENCE**

While many souls were saved and many independent churches founded, the loose organizational structure of the Free Church led many of these churches to associate with other denominations.<sup>72</sup> The Swedish Evangelical Free Church wasn’t incorporated as such until 1908, and the Norwegian-Danish in 1912. Similarly, neither branch of the EFCA had its own school for the training of ministers until the early 1900s. The Swedish Bible Institute of Chicago was opened in 1901 and the Norwegian-Danish Bible Institute started in 1910 in Rushford, Minnesota.

“The churches are well organized with a board of directors and a pastor, but they are free and independent of any ecclesiastical authority and are not controlled by a synod or presbytery. The local churches, however, are organized into district associations extending over this country and Canada. At the annual or semi-annual meetings of these associations the churches are represented by delegates, but the association acts only as an advisory, and not as a controlling or judicial body over the local churches.”<sup>73</sup>

This convictional independence was woven into the fabric of the movement, for better and for worse. The early pioneers were “as free as the prairie winds; fresh as the fragrance of the woods. They

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<sup>71</sup> John Herman, PCM / MA Annual Report, 2004 Report Book.

<sup>72</sup> “As before stated, most of the preachers of the Free Church were at this time traveling ministers. Gradually it became evident to both the preacher and the churches that this system was not practical. The former could not, in this way, find ample time for Bible study, and the latter were not given the care necessary for wholesome development. What had been gained through the evangelistic work must now be cared for. This was a task not easily accomplished. Many of our brethren, who had proved most successful as evangelists, proved utterly incapable as teachers and leaders. Others, well qualified, preferred evangelistic work. Thus arose a scarcity of ministers. Hereby the Free Church sustained a great loss. Almost the entire field east of Chicago, where its influence had so powerfully been felt through the work of Prof. Princell, A.L. Anderson and K. Erickson, was almost entirely lost to our mission [to the Congregational denomination]...Kansas, where the Free Church had a number of congregations, was also lost to our organization, as were Montana, Wyoming and other states... Thus other denominations reaped a rich harvest.” *The Free Church Activities*, A.H. Modig, 1924

<sup>73</sup> L.J. Pedersen, *Our Evangelical Free Churches*, 1931, p. 6.

were no one's servants. They desired no regulations except their own wills. Organization of churches, Sunday schools, and various societies was therefore a tedious task. Oftentimes it was fought as from the evil one..."<sup>74</sup> This spirit of freedom was rooted in Christian liberty and an aversion toward state (or any centralized) authority. Early on, even record-keeping in local churches was avoided as it was overtly rejected by Professor Princell.<sup>75</sup>

By the 1920s, a few years after Princell's untimely death in 1915, more organization was given to the local churches and increasingly churches engaged salaried pastors rather than just supporting traveling evangelists.

"During the later 20 years, the Free Church has followed a somewhat different trend in furthering its work from that of the former. Greater stress has been placed upon organizing and maintaining local churches. Resident pastors have been engaged by all our self-supporting churches, while those unable to defray their own expenses are given aid from the Home Mission Fund. Thus the work has been more firmly established, as a result a number of active churches have been founded. The essential feature now is the maintenance of the spirituality, fervor and zeal of our pioneers. This done, the Free Church can serve, in the hands of God, as a fountain of untold blessings."<sup>76</sup>

Over the years the independence of its leaders posed some challenges to the structural organization to the movement:

"Most of our pioneer leaders not only had lofty ideals, but were also very independent. And because of their independence they were in many ways lone warriors of the Lord. And the churches that were organized in those days became also very independent... Because of this trait among both leaders and churches, all organization work among us has made slow progress. To begin with, the churches could hardly be called organized congregations. No records were kept; no constitutions were adopted; no prescribed methods of work were followed. Their great ambition was to steer clear of denominationalism. They were afraid to be connected with any denomination. As a matter of fact there are a considerable number with the Free Church who to this day [in 1934] maintain that the organization is not and never can be a denomination in the general sense of the word. These contend that the Free Church constitutes only an affiliation of local, independent churches for the sole purpose of propagating missionary work at home and abroad. Such as the leaders were, such did the churches become."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *The Golden Jubilee*, E.A.Halleen, p. 44, 1934.

<sup>75</sup> See footnote 29 on p. 6

<sup>76</sup> *The Free Church Activities*, A.H. Modig, 1924

<sup>77</sup> *The Golden Jubilee*, E.A.Halleen, p 16, 1934.

## CONCLUSION

The original impulse that brought pastors together in 1884 was to ***mobilize mission*** in light of Christ's imminent return. By 1893 it was clear that definition had to be given to who were recognized Free Church preachers (and who were not), so the original Ministerial Association was created to ***protect the integrity*** of the loosely organized movement. These two purposes led at least one historian to conclude: "The small group of ministers who formed the association in 1894 really *gave birth* to the Evangelical Free Church of America."<sup>78</sup>

The MA has maintained a clear and consistent role throughout the development of the EFCA: "The object of this Association shall be to promote mutual friendship and harmony among the churches, and also to unite them for co-operation in denominational activities, but it shall have no controlling power of the local churches..."<sup>79</sup> In addition to mobilizing mission and protecting integrity, this statement from 1934 still rings true today with our additional goals to ***edify one another*** while ***preserving our independence***.

"For many years the Ministerial Association membership consisted of pastors with an EFCA credential. Dues were \$5 / year. A Board of 5 members was elected by the membership. The association, in cooperation with the EFCA, created benefits programs (MAAP - *Ministers Aid and Annuity Plan* replaced by FCMM – *Free Church Ministers and Missionaries Retirement Plan*; Health Care and Long Term Disability through Minister's Life), provided training and fellowship opportunities (Midwinter Ministerial and Annual Meeting during EFCA National Conference), published materials (Minister's Handbook and Bible Instruction materials), sponsored events (Day of Prayer) and made available benevolence assistance to members on a limited basis. In summary, the Ministerial Association was a respected organization of pastors serving with an EFCA Ordination or License credential. It sought to help the EFCA create and sustain programs and material that were needed within the EFCA structure."<sup>80</sup>

In short, the Ministerial Association, for over 122 years (1894-2016), has helped to identify and address the needs of Free Church ministers and to serve the EFCA movement. As a representative body, led by a board composed of EFCA leaders,<sup>81</sup> the MA has been an expression of both the independence

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<sup>78</sup> Dr. Roy A. Thompson, "A Historical Sketch," 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ministerial Association, 1969, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Annual Report of the EFC Association of N Am (Norwegian-Danish), 1935-36, p. 2

<sup>80</sup> John Herman, Executive Director of Pastoral Care Ministries and the Ministerial Association, 1991-2014.

<sup>81</sup> "The Ministerial Board shall consist of five members: the President of the Evangelical Free Church of America, the President of the Trinity Seminary and Bible College, the Chairman of the Ministerial Association, and two mature and experienced clergymen elected for a term of one year by the Annual Meeting." 1950 Yearbook of the EFCA.

and interdependence of our denomination. For more than half of our history this body functioned as the coordinating influence behind the independent pastors and churches. Then, as more formal structures took shape at the District and National level (for programs like credentialing), the MA shifted to play key supporting roles through retirement assistance, health insurance, ministry placement, specialized training, affinity fellowship and crisis intervention (Recovery Church).

Today the Ministerial Board continues to represent not only the faithful members of the Ministerial Association but all EFCA pastors and ministers. We meet two-three times a year to pray for and discuss how best to encourage and support the 5,000 ministers giving leadership to the 1,500 EFCA Churches. Our Board consists of pastors from different parts of the country in different church roles and sizes, including a chaplain who regularly advocates for our brothers and sisters serving outside of church-based ministry.<sup>82</sup> We are committed to cooperating with the District and National Leadership to ensure that all EFCA ministers have access to the resources and opportunities they need to sustain effective ministry while supporting those with various struggles through a process of Gospel-centered restoration.

We are privileged to stand in the noble stream of Free Church History, looking back on the godly legacy of our founders and the faithful ministry of so many who have gone before us even as we look ahead to a future in which we will labor side by side to mobilize mission, protect integrity, edify one another and preserve independence, all based on our supreme confidence in the authority of Scripture, the centrality of the Gospel and the assurance of our Lord's very imminent return! It seems fitting to let one of our prominent leaders, Rev. E.A. Halleen (writing in 1934), conclude this historical summary:

“Not only have fifty years passed by like an ever-fleeting panorama, and as steadily as the hands of the clock, but the Almighty God has moved with us. And His moving with us has meant grace and strength and will to do His bidding. The Free Church can, therefore, in this year of Jubilee sing praises unto Him for the past fifty years of blessings. But we should do more than that. We, the sons and daughters of the sturdy pioneers and joint heirs with them, should dedicate ourselves anew to God and pledge our faithful allegiance to the banner of the Cross, pledging ourselves to carry the banner ‘further afield,’ and sacredly hold and maintain the forts taken by the pioneer founders.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> 2016 MA Board: Linton Lundeen, Executive Director, Pastor of Counseling in IA; Curt Mudgett, Chairman, Sr. Pastor in CO; Bill Wick, Chaplain in VT and BOMS member; Darin Anderson, Vice-chairman, Outreach Pastor in IL; Todd Hessel, Secretary, Sr. Pastor in IA and; Michael Callahan, Sr. Pastor in CA.

<sup>83</sup> *The Golden Jubilee*, E.A.Halleen, p. 44, 1934.