A Heritage of Zeal and Grace

Salem Church celebrates 140 years of preaching Jesus, living for God’s glory, and working for the kingdom.

In the early 1870s, a German schoolteacher in Gridley, Illinois, had the opportunity to tutor several families involved in the local “Egly Amish” movement. He noted in his diary that these people “lay much more zeal on the work to the praise and glory of God than is the case with many of us [in other churches],” and they “know that [they] can only be saved through the grace of God and the propitiating blood of our Savior.”

The Egly Amish eventually became the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches, and the people who were the subject of these observations were the original members of Salem Church, which celebrated its 140th anniversary in August. The schoolteacher’s words are just as true of the church today as they were almost a century and a half ago.

How it all began
Salem Church was started in 1866 by several families from a local Amish congregation who were convinced that “you must be born again” (John 3:7) and that a local congregation needed to confess to a living relationship with Jesus Christ. The founding pastor, Joseph Rediger (1826-1904), knew Henry Egly (1824-1890), the founder of what would eventually become the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches. Salem Church was the fifth congregation to join the Egly movement. (For a look at another FEC church’s history, see “From Grabill to Crossview,” page 3.)

The church has been in the same location since 1875, when it built its first meetinghouse—before that, members met in homes. In 1965 a fire burned the church.

Pastors and missionaries with ties to Salem Church, pictured clockwise from front left: Sharon Streid, Jacqueline Zehr, David Zehr, Neal Hauser, Earl Cecil, Seth Kempf, Steve Estes, Charles Rupp, Donald Roth, James Bertsche, Charles Zimmerman, and Jenny Bertsche.
building to the ground, but the congregation pulled together and met at Salem Children’s Home until they could rebuild in 1967—the building the church still meets in today.

After the fire, a few things survived, including several missionary banks shaped like acorns. “Like those acorn banks, we as a church are sometimes put through the fire for purifying,” says Steve Estes, Salem’s pastor since 2004. “Like those acorns, we are a bank that holds a treasure—Jesus Christ is our greatest treasure. These acorn banks were for a missionary purpose—we are on God’s mission in central Illinois and around the world. An acorn is a seed, and Salem Church is like a seed—God isn’t finished with us yet.”

Focus on missions
One of the ways Salem stewards the treasure of Christ is through missions. As early as 1892, Salem Church supported a deaconess ministry in Chicago founded by John A. Sprunger (1852-1911) of Berne, Indiana—an innovative ministry entrepreneur with a vision for mission. Sprunger started many homeside ministries, which in turn fostered interest in foreign lands.

In 1896 the Salem congregation supported a young missionary named Mathilde Kohm (1871-1949), who went to the Congo. Kohm was a Sprunger deaconess and was originally from the same part of Germany as Salem pastor Joseph Rediger, which is likely how she came to be supported by the church.

According to memoirs of that era, Joseph Rediger was a prayer warrior for missionaries overseas. Even though he had not grown up knowing about foreign missions, it became extremely important to him. God used Mathilde Kohm and Joseph Rediger to inspire Salem Church to make a commitment to overseas missions.

More missionaries soon followed. The first three missionaries to grow up in and be sent out by an FEC church were all from Salem: Anna Zimmerman (1879-1979), Amos Oyer (1882-1931), and Julia Oyer (1885-1967), who all went to British East Africa. The first FEC missionary to go out under the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission was Alvin J. Stevenson (1870-1913), who had married Mathilde Kohm.

After those early years, Salem Church continued to develop a deep heart for local, national and international missions. Career missionaries from the church have included James and Jenny Bertsche, David and Jacqueline Zehr, and Sharon Streid. Local mission has included a bus transportation ministry since 1990 to bring local youth to the church for Wednesday night clubs.

In addition, Salem people have moved to help establish churches in other areas, including Sterling, Kansas; Centralia, Missouri; and Woodburn, Indiana. “The Salem Church has been a sending church,” Pastor Steve says.

Back at the ranch
In 1896, the FEC founded Salem Orphanage, which eventually became Salem Children’s Home and then Salem Ranch, in rural Flanagan, Illinois. Salem Church was heavily involved from day one. Daniel R. and Mary (Claudon) King, who provided the land, were early members of the congregation. And a majority of the original board members were from Salem Church.

For most of its history, Salem Ranch has made Salem Church its home church. It is now a residential school for teenage boys with an emphasis on biblical counseling. Students at the ranch come to Salem Church for Sunday school, worship services, youth meetings and other activities. And many Salem Ranch workers—counselors and dorm parents—are members of the church and actively involved. “It’s a very strong relationship,” Pastor Steve says.
From Grabill to Crossview: A Historical Journey

By Donald Roth

As one of the oldest congregations in the denomination, the FEC church in Grabill, Indiana, has a long, rich history. But with an important name change, the church is responding to contemporary ministry needs and looking forward to an equally significant future.

The church in Grabill began in the years between 1866 and 1870 as a split from the Amish Church of northeastern Allen County, Indiana. It was one of three churches in Indiana that were birthed by the ministry of Bishop Henry Egly, an Amish minister who left the Amish church in Adams County in order to freely preach about the importance of new birth in Christ. From this period of time until 1908, the congregations he founded were referred to informally as “Egly Amish.” However, in a deed dated March 27, 1902, transferring property ownership from David and Caroline Klopfenstein to the church, the Grabill church’s given name was the Mennonite Mission Church.

After Egly’s death in 1890, Joseph E. Ramseyer emerged as the new leader of this group. In 1908 the group formally adopted a new name: the Defenseless Mennonite Conference of North America, informally known as the Defenseless Mennonite Church. Local congregations used that name along with the name of the nearest town. Thus the church in Grabill became known as the Defenseless Mennonite Church of Grabill, or the Grabill Defenseless Mennonite Church. Frequently this was shortened to Grabill Mennonite Church.

In 1948 the denomination changed its name to the Evangelical Mennonite Church. In response, the Grabill church changed its name to Grabill Evangelical Mennonite Church. In recent years, this name was shortened informally to Grabill Church or Grabill EMC.

On Aug. 2, 2003, the denomination adopted its new name, the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches. This resulted in the Grabill church’s decision to choose a new name in March 2006. On Oct. 8, as part of the Fan the Flame Halftime celebration (the church is halfway to its fundraising goal), we are formally saying goodbye to our old name and celebrating our new name: Crossview Church.

For churches such as Grabill, denominational affiliation was more important than local identity until the 1940s. For the next 50 years, the local name began to assume a significance equal to the denominational identity. Today, in order to be accessible to the community, most churches are choosing a local name that doesn’t indicate denominational affiliation. Names are being chosen that appeal to unchurched people and welcome them to the fellowship of Christ-followers.

While a name is important, it’s only a name. Of much more significance is the mission of the church. We hope the name Crossview helps us fulfill our primary mission: to connect persons to Jesus Christ.

Celebrating 140 years
On Aug. 26-27, Salem Church threw a 140th anniversary party. To start off the festivities Saturday morning, the church helped with a 5K run in Flanagan. Next came a brunch planned by Christine Folkers and family, which brought 1960s- and 1970s-era high schoolers together for a sharing time—a personal highlight for Pastor Steve. “Hearing people of my generation and a bit older sharing about what church meant to them—that was significant to me,” he says.

On Saturday afternoon a bus tour visited important sites in the church’s history, and that evening, approximately 250 people gathered at Salem Ranch for a hog roast picnic. Organizers honored Eula Mae Zimmerman in a surprise celebration recognizing her fifty years of service at Salem Children’s Home from 1954-2004.

Sunday morning featured missionaries who shared about how the Lord used Salem Church in their ministries, and the worship service included a homecoming choir directed by Lowell Litwiller. After the morning service, attendees enjoyed a good old-fashioned church dinner and then an afternoon service that included music by the Salem Ranch Choir, a pictorial presentation of the church’s history, and a meditation by Donald Roth, who grew up in the congregation. Other pastors with ties to Salem who attended some or all of the activities were Bruce Rocke, Neal Hauser, Charles Zimmerman, Charles Rupp, Earl Cecil, Donald Ashley and Milo Nussbaum.

“The people who came, the expressions of how God used Salem Church in their lives—it was all wonderful,” says Pastor Steve. “By looking at God’s faithfulness in the past, we celebrate his faithfulness today and move forward into the future he has planned for Salem Church. Our theme verse was Ephesians 3:21, and we are seeking to impact every generation with the truth of Jesus Christ to the glory of God.”
2006 Convention Quiz-Off Results

FEC youth test their knowledge of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon

Top 10 junior high quizzers
1. Calvin Hirschy, Berne
2. Adriana Gehman, Brookside
3. Anna Klassen, Grace
4. Abby Fisher, Upland
5. Nathan Law, Brookside
6. Hanna Roberts, Grace
7. Maelynn Too, Pine Hills
8. Bekah Steiner, Pine Hills
9. Mary Moser, Pine Hills
10. Dan Getz, Grace

Top ten senior high quizzers
1. Theresa Lindell, Grace
2. Daniel Gerber, Pine Hills
3. Libby Trudeau, Upland
4. Mary Rocke, Oak Grove
5. Megan Powers, Pine Hills
6. Tricia Leman, Eureka
7. Cori Stemen, Brookside
8. Dave Getz, Grace
9. Austin Martin, Salem
10. Graham Haas, Oak Bend

Top three junior high teams
1. Pine Hills 1: Whitney Webster, Mary Moser, Maelynn Too, Adam Hughes, Judah Sistrunk
2. Berne 2: Calvin Hirschy, Kara Lehman, Jake Amstutz, Rachel Fahl
3. Brookside: Abby Madison, Adriana Gehman, Nathan Law

Top three senior high teams
1. Upland 2: Libby Trudeau, Edward Meaders, Seth Bird, Rachel Bird
2. Pine Hills 1: Daniel Gerber, Megan Powers, Carrie Patterson, Ashley Race
3. Grace 1: Trevor Crawford, Kristi Menold, Dan Ackerman, John Kellerstrass, Jeremy Pflederer, Ben Kindred

Top junior high quizzer from each church
Archbold: Anna Ridley
Berne: Calvin Hirschy
Brookside: Adriana Gehman
Eureka: Liesel Pflederer
Grace: Anna Klassen
Pathway: Steven Taggart
Pine Hills: Maelynn Too
Salem: Elisha Hildenbrand
Solid Rock: Noah Keefer
Upland: Abby Fisher

Top five junior high quizzers
1. Abby Fisher, Upland
2. Calvin Hirschy, Berne
3. Anna Klassen, Grace
4. Adriana Gehman, Brookside
5. Hanna Roberts, Grace

Top five senior high quizzers
1. Theresa Lindell, Grace
2. Libby Trudeau, Upland
3. Daniel Gerber, Pine Hills
4. Dave Getz, Grace
5. Kaitlin Pflederer, Eureka
6. Tricia Leman, Eureka

Top senior high quizzers from each church
Archbold: Jordan Fruchey
Brookside: Cori Stemen
Eureka: Tricia Leman
Grace: Theresa Lindell
Oak Bend: Graham Haas
Oak Grove: Mary Rocke
Pine Hills: Daniel Gerber
Salem: Austin Martin
Solid Rock: Brianna Lloyd
Upland: Libby Trudeau

Stats for the 2005-2006 Quizzing Year
Servant Evangelism Online

The following websites contain information and resources about servant evangelism and are provided by Steve Sjogren, Convention speaker and servant evangelism leader. Sign up to receive Steve’s newsletters and receive updates on a regular basis.

www.Serve-Others.com
www.ServantEvangelism.com
www.OutwardBuzz.com
Living Local with a Global Vision

Daily needs and responsibilities shouldn’t crowd out compassion for unreached people.

By Earl Cecil, Director of FEC’s International Ministries

Busy is a word that aptly describes our lives. We’re inundated with family needs, work responsibilities, church activities, meetings to attend and appointments to keep. Life can also be crowded with more sinister problems—road rage, domestic violence, abuse and rebellion.

With so many dire needs crowding our vision, we have little time left to set our sights on people far away. How do we balance our local involvement with global investment? Instead of responding with a simple punt—or full-blown panic—I suggest that we retreat regularly to a quiet place and listen to how God wants to help us regain equilibrium.

Also, to help the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches keep a clear global vision, International Ministries strives to invest resources in the parts of the world with the least reached people—areas where there is little or no active body of Christ. Jesus had compassion on the multitudes because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

To break it down statistically, we focus on investing time, money, and personnel in the 25 percent of the population, or 1.6 billion people, who have less than 5 percent of international mission resources.

So, as you tend to things around you, be sure to also sharpen your global vision by considering these spiritual needs:

• The Yalunka tribe in Guinea, West Africa: 160,000 people with only 45 believers, two village churches, and hundreds of villages with no church.

• The Middle East: Countless people blinded by tradition and a false teaching that promises eternal life on the basis of good deeds.

• The Basque people in northern Spain and southern France: No national church and few who know anything at all about Jesus Christ.

Ask God to lay on your heart the specific resources he wants you, your family and your church to invest in these opportunities. Is the Holy Spirit sharpening your global vision by giving you a close-up compassion for a faraway people? Read below and see where God is moving and wants to move you to join him.

Come let us go to the ends of the earth. Contact us at FECMissions@aol.com.

Calling All Churches

International Ministries needs a church or cluster of churches to adopt each of the following areas and stand behind it with prayer, time, people and energy on an ongoing basis. Will you take the next step of faith and contact FECMissions@aol.com or call us at (260) 423-3649 ext. 310? You can impact the ends of the earth for the name of Christ.

Albania: The Albania Bible Institute helps develop Christian leaders for the local church. Help area churches reach women, children, youth and men with the knowledge of Christ as Savior and see the church planted in new areas. Contact Jerry and Sandy Lugbill at lugbill@icc-al.org or call them after November 1 at (419) 445-2476.

Asia: Use your business expertise to help start a company as a way to disciple believers and initiate a church fellowship.

England: Consider The Oakes, a year-round Christian camp ministry God is using to reach young people for Christ. In this area, less than 5 percent of youth attend church and know very little about Jesus. Check out the website at www.oakes.org.uk.

Guinea: Among the Yalunka people we need church planters, missionary children’s teachers and other workers to reach the young people in southern Guinea. Check with your church about the “Yalunka People” DVD, which offers a quick look at the needs in this part of Africa.

Hungary: Teaching English is an excellent door opener to building relationships that lead to sharing the hope of Christ. Contact Attila and Tamara Szögedi at szogediek@yahoo.com.

The Middle East: In this part of the world, believers can use business as a way to live among and witness to people who need Christ. Contact John and Janet at john@mac6.org or (309) 263-5327.

Venezuela: Caracas, Venezuela, is a city with many needs and opportunities. Reach young people and others through youth work with a camp ministry vision.
Teacher Needed in Albania
A teacher is needed to help the Rosebooms homeschool their son Hudson, age 5, for six to nine months. Looking for a high school or college graduate who is willing to expand his or her world and invest in the life of missionaries and the Albanian people. Contact us at FECMissions@aol.com or (260) 423-3649, ext. 310.

Help Wanted in Guinea, West Africa
Positions open for church planters, a business administrator, and teachers for missionary children. Basic requirements: Love Jesus and be willing to work hard, live in a village setting, and learn a new language or two. Benefits: Caring about what God cares about, seeing lives changed, see Yalunka people in heaven. For more information, contact FECMissions@aol.com or (260) 423-3649, ext. 310.

English Teacher Heads to Ukraine
Betty Sauder of Archbold will join Brent and Nicole Preston in Ukraine Oct. 17 to Nov. 10 to help follow up on more than 300 students in the English school where the Prestons are ministering.

First in Asia
Soaring Glory Awning Co. recently had two firsts: the first salvation of a worker and the first sale of awnings to a company in Florida. Doug and Jen Witzig of Grace in Morton are workers for FEC-IM.

New Workers Approved
The MacLean family has said yes to go where few people have heard a clear message of Jesus’ love: the Middle East. Contact the MacLeans to find out how you can join with them to reach these people who have not heard. Check out www.mac6.org.

Service License Granted
Attila Szögedi, the husband of Tamara (Hoffmann) Szögedi, was granted an FEC service license in accordance with IM policy for cross-cultural marriages. We welcome Attila to FEC and IM as he begins Bible school to meet the requirements for serving as a church planter in Hungary. The Szögedis are in the United States until January 2007 sharing their vision for the church in Hungary and raising support. Contact them at (269) 637-7997 or szogediek@yahoo.com to find out more about their needs and opportunities.

New Ministry Planned
Project Impact Basque is designed to reach high school youth through a four- to five-week visit to the U.S. living with a family, learning English, attending a week of camp and experiencing the reality of Christ through FEC families. Contact Jeff Shadowen at shadfam@juno.com or (260) 632-4828 for more information. You can also learn more by going to www.aboutimpact.org.

New FEC Hotline Address
The FEC Hotline is your opportunity to receive updates about our FEC kingdom workers. Tom Lichtenberger sends these out on a regular basis. If you would like to be added to the list, e-mail Tom at FECHotline@verizon.net.

A Mission Made Possible: 2007 Prayer Walk
Destination: Caracas, Venezuela
Date: March 19–26, 2007
Purpose: Meet and pray with FEC-IM workers and nationals, worship and intercede for the needs of the church and the city.
Cost: $1,750 per person
Contact: Hal Lehman at FECHal@aol.com or (260) 423-3649, ext. 303.
A college student in the 1970s, I took a course called “Eco-Crisis.” We studied the economic and environmental conditions that foretold doom to this world, and we wrote a paper on what should be done to avoid the impending catastrophe. My paper focused on the book of Revelation and held that this world would end, and a new heaven and a new earth would be formed. Therefore, our focus should be saving the people in the world. My professor gave me a “C” and wrote, “Interesting thesis, but no empirical evidence to support it.”

With events in the Middle East, deteriorating values in our nation, and a world that desperately needs Christ, I believe the empirical evidence is mounting. Of course, the death and resurrection of our Lord is the ultimate evidence of God’s great plan to reconcile man to himself, and he has chosen us to communicate that plan.

As Convention 2006 came to a close in August, the delegates adjourned their final meeting with a resounding shout of “Let’s go!” The Fellowship of Evangelical Churches is making plans to significantly advance the visible body of Christ, and the time to go is now. We will not reach Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria or the ends of the earth if we fail to go, and we will not go if we fail to make actionable plans. Vision 2020 provides the plan—which we submit to prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Impact Basque is our first step in reviving a ministry to the Basque people of Spain. Earl Cecil has begun enlisting churches and families to host Basque students in the summer of 2008. We trust this ministry will establish long-term relationships between our congregations and the Basque people, ultimately leading to the establishment of a church there. Host families will be missionaires engaging with their students before, during and after their stay. Jeff and Mary Shadowen, former missionaries to the Basque people, are preparing to spend a year in Seattle, Washington, learning how the Impact Basque program works and training FEC churches and host families.

Our effort to double the number of U.S. FEC churches by the year 2020 is off to a great start. True North, a church plant in Cannon Falls, Minnesota, has begun meeting with up to 80 people in attendance. Life Point in Portage, Michigan, will be the next plant. Roger and Linda Andrews have moved to Portage and plan to launch the church in spring 2007. We are also in conversation with several other groups. By Convention 2007, five or six new churches could be launched or on the drawing board.

Over this next year I will keep you advised of progress on Vision 2020. If you have not already done so, please contact us and become a supporter of Vision 2020 through generous giving and prayer.