



Arthur Evangelical Free Church celebrated its 125th Anniversary: August 12 – 15, 2010



Original church building
in the country, picture
taken 1925

The Arthur Evangelical Free Church began in 1885, with 12 charter members. The first location was in the country, between Arthur and Kiron. Many of the charter members had moved north to Hayes Township from Kiron, and they had previously been part of the Swedish community and the churches there.

When the church was organized in August of 1885, the gatherings of the few members were held in the different homes with the exception of the first Sunday of each month, when a communion service was conducted in the “Larson School.” This arrangement continued until 1890 when a

church building was erected. The structure that was begun in May was nearly completed in June when a severe storm wrecked it. The group of committed members simply became more determined, renewed their efforts, and dedicated the new church building in October.

The first pastor of the church was a lay leader – for 15 years, John Johnson led the small congregation. Later pastors and leaders served in the Arthur church for short intervals, often moving on to other Evangelical Free Churches in the mid-west as they felt called. Tent meetings were sometimes held to accommodate traveling preachers – every evening for a week or two, there would be a service of singing and evangelistic preaching. It was not uncommon to see souls saved during these tent meetings. It was also a more informal service than those held within the four walls of the church building; these tent meetings had a more peppy reputation in the eyes of outsiders.

All Evangelical Free Churches (some were called Free Mission churches) during the 1800’s had Scandinavian roots. The Arthur church services were conducted in Swedish, using Swedish hymnals, and Bibles, and all of the surviving church records of the early years are in Swedish. The decision to change to English happened in 1920 and was supported by the older members as necessary to accommodate future church growth.

As the name “Free Mission Church” implies, mission activities were paramount to the church founders.



The same building was moved
into the town of Arthur in 1943,
and remodeled in 1949

They assumed that Christ's redeeming work was available for everyone world-wide, and believers had the sacred privilege and duty to share in the work of spreading the Good News, as had the Apostolic Churches described in the New Testament. Our small congregation joined forces with other like-minded Evangelical Free Churches across the mid-west to support increasing numbers of foreign missionaries. Within our own congregation, a Women's Missionary Society was formed in 1886 so the women could contribute money and help in other ways. The youth also contributed money for foreign missions work.

In 1943 the original church building was moved from the country into the town of Arthur, to the corner of 1st and Maple. Paul Lindgren, who had just turned 18 at that time, remembers driving behind the trailer as it traveled the four miles to its new location. This building was remodeled and enlarged in 1949.

During this time period, the church grew and reached out to the community in many ways. Thanks to the influence of several visionary leaders, the youth program thrived, and some of the young people helped with the Saturday night street meetings in downtown Ida Grove. Jim Linman remembers that they would get there early in the afternoon to get a proper parking spot for the evening, and then broadcast their voices using a microphone/amplifier on top of their car for the singing and preaching to the rural folk who would come for their weekly venture to town.

Several long-standing annual occasions were anticipated each year – specifically the Sunday School picnic in Lake View during the summer, and the Christmas program (complete with a bag of candy and a piece of fruit afterwards) during the winter.



The current church building, on the corner of Hwy 175 and M31, was dedicated in 1973. It has also been expanded throughout the last 40 years.

In 1973, the current church building was dedicated at the corner of Hwy 175 and Quail Ave. In 1980, the church began an AWANA program on Wednesday nights. Since then, the congregation has since seen fit to add on twice, and build a separate youth building. All of this is a testimony to the steady attendance and intense ministry which still occur on a weekly basis.

It is a wondrous thing to see the Spirit of God fall fresh on each new generation, as the baton of faith is passed down

within this church congregation. Many things have changed over the years, but the

foundations remain the same – an unwavering commitment to the Word of God, and a warm welcome for all who believe in Jesus for salvation, regardless of their differences on minor theological debates. May God continue to bring glory to Himself through the Arthur Evangelical Free Church until the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.