

On the Move:

125 Years of the East Coast Conference

by Rev. Paul Day

1st Edition

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Chapter 1

Movement

Identity | Who We Are

The East Coast Conference is a movement of God, organized in 1890 by an immigrant people with a spiritual heritage as Mission Friends. Now a multi-cultural communion of Evangelical Covenant congregations, we are gathered by God, united in Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

The Great Commandment

Jesus said, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

~ Matthew 22:37-39

The Great Commission

Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore 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 that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

~ Matthew 28:18-20

Mission | What must we do?

Believing we are movement of God, the mission of the Conference is to:

- **Multiply Congregations**, by planting new missional churches
- **Orchestrate Ministries**, by connecting district churches for shared ministry & mission
- **Vitalize Congregations**, by coaching pastors and church leaders to embrace renewal
- **Empower Leaders**, by building a culture of trustworthy Christian leadership

Vision 2020 | What will this look like in 2020?

- 100+ vital congregations growing deeper in Christ and further in mission;
Update: By 2020 we will grow to & support 120 churches;
- Dozens of new churches planted and growing in every state and the District of Columbia;
Update: By 2020 our healthy churches will plant 50 new churches;
- 5,000 new followers of Jesus being discipled and serving Christ in our churches;
Update: By 2020 we will be known distinctively as disciple making churches;
- Our churches doubling the number of people they now serve outside their congregation;
Update: By 2020 we will be known by the distinctives of generosity and compassion in our communities and around the world;
- A new generation of believers raised up who embody the love, grace and justice of Jesus;
Update: By 2020 we will effectively resources churches in developing children's, youth, young adult and marriage & family ministries;
- Growing ethnic and cultural diversity and inclusion within and among our churches;
Update: By 2020 we will reflect 50% diversity within the Conference;
- Churches and districts partnering in local ministries and global mission;
Update: By 2020 we will orchestrate 6 regional ministry networks;
- Regionally expanded Christian camping and spiritual retreat ministries;
Update: By 2020 we will establish a Conference camping and retreat ministry in the southern half of the Conference

As the East Coast Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church celebrates 125 years of ministry, we are decidedly focused on the present and the future, looking to the continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit. Yet, that present and future ministry and mission are firmly rooted in and built on the foundation of the past. Much of our history is shared with the wider Covenant Church, but the East Coast Conference has its own unique heritage and place within the denomination.

The Conference extends over 1,100 miles, from northern Maine to southwestern Virginia. Most of its congregations are within 100 miles of the Atlantic Ocean; no church is more than 250 miles from salt water. Nautical imagery and themes come naturally.

The East Coast Conference was born of the winds of the Holy Spirit stirring God's people amid the great tidal surge of immigration from Sweden to the United States in the second half of the 19th century. It has been borne on those winds and tides ever since, weathering the storms of two world wars and theological battles, and pulling through the doldrums of the Great Depression and the virtual end of Swedish immigration. Later, the Conference and its congregations navigated through the shifting currents of the mid-to-late-20th century. At the turn of another century, the Conference has been lifted on the surge of new movements of people, and unfurled its sails to the freshening winds of the Spirit.

The Preamble of the Constitution of the Evangelical Covenant Church states, in part,

“The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, the biblical instruction of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and the great spiritual awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These influences, together with more recent North American renewal movements, continue to shape its development and distinctive spirit. The Evangelical Covenant Church is committed to reaching across boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, and status in the cultivation of communities of life and service.”

That same heritage and that same commitment guides the East Coast Conference.

Chapter 2

Wind

Jesus promised his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them forever, to strengthen and guide them. (John 14:16-17) The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled Christ's followers. (Acts 2:1-4) The Church has never been without the presence of God's Spirit, but there have been times when the Spirit has seemed more active, or God's people more receptive, bringing about reform and renewal in the Church.

The Evangelical Covenant Church finds its heritage and ethos in several of those times that the winds of the Holy Spirit breathed afresh on God's people.

The first of these was the Reformation of the 16th century. A young Catholic priest in Germany, named Martin Luther, struggled with the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and of salvation. Encouraged by his confessor and spurred by the Renaissance rediscovery of ancient biblical texts, Luther studied the Scriptures. There he found what he was looking for in Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith." "Faith alone!" became Luther's cry. He began to question many of the teachings and practices of the Church of his day, which seemed to make salvation dependent on good works.

In 1517, Luther posted his "Ninety-Five Theses" at the cathedral church in Wittenberg, Germany. The Protestant Reformation had begun. Other Reformers emerged throughout Europe. Their ideas focused on five "solae":

- **Sola scriptura** – The Bible alone stands above church leadership or tradition.
- **Sola fides** – We are justified through faith alone and not by our good works.
- **Sola gratia** – We are saved by God's grace alone, free and unmerited.
- **Sola Christi** – Christ alone is our Mediator; also known as the priesthood of all believers.
- **Sola deo gloria** – All glory and worship is due to God alone and to no one else.

This Evangelical, or Lutheran, Church spread in parts of Germany and northward into Scandinavia. Thus, the "Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity, the

Protestant Reformation, [and] the biblical instruction of the Lutheran Church of Sweden.” (Preamble)

Over time, however, the warm spirit of the Reformation cooled, Protestantism fractured into theological argumentation, and the Lutheran Church became more formal. The wind of the Holy Spirit began to stir. A German Lutheran theologian, Johann Arndt (1555-1621) wrote a number of influential books of theology and devotion; the most well-known of these is *True Christianity*. In 1675, a German pastor, Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705), was invited to write a preface for a new edition of Arndt’s book. *Pia Desideria* (Pious Wishes) was the result.

Spener wanted to strengthen and renew the church. In his *Pia Desideria*, he gave six proposals of how to enact this reform:

1. to more thoroughly acquaint believers with scripture by means of private readings and study groups in addition to preaching;
2. to increase the involvement of lay people in all functions of the church;
3. to emphasize that believers put into practice their faith and knowledge of God;
4. to approach religious discussions with humility and love, avoiding controversy whenever possible;
5. to ensure that pastors are both well-educated and pious; and
6. to focus preaching on developing faith in ordinary believers.

Spener’s ideas gave birth to a reform movement known as Pietism, which was centered around Halle, Germany, under the ministry of August Hermann Francke (1663-1727). Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and the refugee Moravian Church (which traces its roots to Jan Hus, 1369-1415) infused Pietism with “Heart Religion”—a spirit of joy and a zeal for missions. As with Lutheranism, this resurgent Pietism also spread northward into Scandinavia.

The wind of the Holy Spirit is not confined to a single geographic area. The continental Pietists were roughly contemporary to the Puritans of old and New England, and were interested in similar ways of reform and renewal in their respective state churches. They even shared their interests and ideas through correspondence. This parallel background would come to play a role in the development of the East Coast Conference.

The third movement of the Holy Spirit that gave rise to the Covenant Church swept through Sweden during the 19th century. It happened this way: on the heels of the Wesleyan, or Evangelical, Awakening in Great Britain, in 1830 English Methodists sent George Scott (1804-1874) to minister to sailors and others among their countrymen in Stockholm, Sweden. Scott, following the “world is my pulpit” precepts of John Wesley, made contacts with Swedish Pietists and encouraged them to spread their message of renewal.

(John Wesley himself had been impressed by the deep piety of a company of Moravians during his own storm-tossed voyage to Georgia on a short-lived missionary venture. Later, he felt his “heart was strangely warmed” while listening to a reading of Luther’s Preface to Romans outside a church in London, and then spent the next three months visiting with Moravians in Germany. Sometimes the wind of the Holy Spirit blows in circles.)

Under Scott’s influence, Carl Olaf Rosenius (1816-1868) published a small journal, *Pietisten*; the renewal movement spread throughout Sweden through home Bible study and prayer meetings known as conventicles. Its adherents became known as “Readers” and “Mission Friends.” As the movement grew, the Mission Friends faced opposition from some State Church ministers and government authorities. Other State Church ministers joined the movement; among them Paul Peter Waldenstrom (1838-1917) would come to have the greatest influence, both in Sweden and in the United States. Waldenstrom became the successor to Rosenius as the publisher of *Pietisten*. He also challenged the State Lutheran Church on its view of the Atonement, and on its limits on the practice of communion.

Chapter 3

Tides

The ideas and spirit of these events in Sweden were carried to the United States on the tides of immigration from the second half of the 19th century into the first decades of the 20th century. Swedes had first come to America in 1638 to found the short-lived colony of New Sweden (Delaware), which was soon turned over to the Dutch and then to the English. Their numbers remained small, however, and immigration from Sweden to the United States was barely a trickle until the mid-19th century.

The first large party of Swedish immigrants came to the U.S. in 1846, under the leadership of Erik Jansson, a self-proclaimed prophet. They came seeking religious freedom and established a colony at Bishop Hill, Illinois. Jansson was killed in 1850 and the colony disbanded ten years later. The search for religious freedom, however, was not a major motive for most immigrants—not even for the Mission Friends. The Conventicle Edict, which had limited their meetings, was repealed in 1858, with the grant of full religious freedom in Sweden.

Most Swedish immigrants came to America in search of opportunity—land and jobs. Immigration began in earnest after 1850, slowed during 1855-62 due to economic difficulties and the Civil War, and then surged. The stream had become a flood in response to “America letters” which sent glowing reports of the New Land to family and friends in the old country. In all, from 1851 to 1930, some 1,150,000 Swedes came to America; throughout this time the population of Sweden fluctuated around 4.5 to 5 million people.

The first Swedish immigrants tended to pass through the ports of the East and head to the upper Mississippi Valley, largely in search of cheap land. Into the 1870s, the majority of Swedish settlements, and congregations, were in the Midwest. After 1875, however, the tides began to shift. Industrial workers and domestic servants started to outnumber farmers; new Swedish immigrants settled in the cities and towns of the Eastern states, often recruited for specific communities and industries. A secondary migration also occurred as some who had settled in the Midwest moved back East.

By 1900 the seven largest centers of Swedish population in the U.S. were, in order, Chicago, New York, Minneapolis, Seattle, St. Paul, Worcester, and Boston. New Britain, Connecticut; New Sweden, Maine; Brockton, Lynn, Lowell, and Quincy, Massachusetts; and Cranston and Providence, Rhode Island, all had sizeable Swedish communities.

The Mission Friends among the immigrants began to form churches, and were faced with the sometimes chaotic reality of American religious freedom. In Sweden, the Mission Friends had been content to form Mission societies alongside the official State Lutheran Church. In the U.S. they formed local congregations, often led by laymen and supplied with pastors who shared a Pietistic bent. Most of the congregations remained Lutheran in doctrine, although a few were drawn to Baptist or Methodist teachings.

The Swedish-American congregations tended to be organized locally and were at first independent. In 1860 several pastors and congregations organized the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod. Over time, the Augustana Synod would be the largest Swedish Lutheran body, and eventually merged into what is now the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

The first Covenant congregation in America was formed in 1868 in Swede Bend, Iowa, by a group of Mission Friends who separated out from the local Augustana Lutheran church. Other congregations soon followed. In 1873 several of these congregations formed the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Mission Synod, and the next year others joined together in the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Ansgar Synod. These two synods existed side by side until after the formation of the Mission Covenant and Free churches in 1885, when both of the older synods dissolved. In the East, most Mission Friends were members of Augustana, Ansgar or independent Lutheran churches.

In 1875-76, Mission Friends in the East were greatly strengthened by a visit from C. J. Nyvall, one of the leaders of the movement in Sweden. He held meetings in Boston, Brockton, Worcester, and Brooklyn before moving on to the Midwest. In 1877, E. A. Skogsbergh, the “Swedish Moody” stirred revival fires among Mission Friends in the Northeast. The Mission Friends in the Northeast thus looked in two directions for leadership and encouragement—across the Atlantic to Sweden and inland to the Midwest centers of settlement and church organization.

The first congregation that was to become part of the East Coast Conference was founded in New York. The Rev. John G. Princell, an Augustana Lutheran minister was called to serve the independent Gustav Adolph Lutheran Church in 1873. During this time the Waldenstrom Atonement controversy had erupted in Sweden. Princell took an interest and came to agree with Waldenstrom; he also began to preach that only truly regenerate Christians should be accepted into church membership. For such “heretical” ideas he was stripped of his synod credentials, and resigned as pastor of the Gustav Adolph Lutheran Church. Forty members resigned with him. On March 5, 1879, 29 of them united to form the Bethesda congregation.

At about the same time, the controversy engulfed Princell’s former church in Brockton, Massachusetts. He had been the pastor there from 1871 to 1873. Carl W. Holm, a cobbler and

devout lay member of the church, became convinced that the church should accept as members only those who had been born again to a living faith. In 1878 he withdrew his membership, but apparently continued to worship at the church. In fact, in the absence of a settled pastor, Holm was asked to lead services over Christmas 1878. Under his preaching a revival began in January 1879 and spread, along with controversy. Finally, on August 5, 1879, several members joined together to form a new congregation; it soon affiliated with the Congregational Church and was a charter member of the East Coast Conference, although it did not formally join the Evangelical Covenant Church until 1962. The congregation continues today as the Community Covenant Church in East Bridgewater.

C. W. Holm was soon called to the ministry and became instrumental in founding or strengthening churches in New York City, Providence, New Britain, and several places in New Jersey. His successor in Brockton, A. G. Nelson, was another pioneer missionary, strengthening the ministry throughout the Northeast. For a time he carried on an almost-impossible schedule—preaching in Worcester in the morning, in Boston in the afternoon, and in Worcester in the evening—relying on dependable railroad connections.

An early missionary in the East was George Wiberg: In 1874 he labored among Mission Friends in New Sweden and Portland, Maine; then he went on to Providence, Rumford, Pontiac, and East Greenwich, Rhode Island, through the fall of 1876. In 1879, Wiberg was in Keokuk, Iowa, but returned to Worcester, Massachusetts in 1880, where he organized the first Swedish Congregational Church in the U.S. That congregation is now Salem Covenant Church.

The decade of the 1880s saw the organization of thirty more congregations that would be part of the East Coast Conference: Boston, Lowell, North Easton, Woburn, Quincy, Waltham, Lynn, Orange, Springfield, and Worcester (Bethlehem), Massachusetts; Providence and West Warwick, Rhode Island; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Brooklyn (Pilgrim), New York; New Britain, Woodstock, East Hampton, Collinsville, New Haven, Washington Depot, East Norwalk, Thomaston, Georgetown, Deep River, Hartford, and Bristol, Connecticut; New Sweden, Maine; Proctor, and Center Rutland, Vermont; and Manchester, New Hampshire. Some of them have closed their doors, but have left a legacy behind them; others are still carrying on ministry today.

George Wiberg was supported in his work by the Congregational Home Missionary Society. Indeed, the Congregationalists had supported work among Swedes as early as 1850. In 1884, those efforts received a tremendous boost. The previous year Marcus Whitman Montgomery, superintendent of the Minnesota District of the American Home Missionary Society, travelled to Sweden and met with P. P. Waldenstrom. Montgomery brought back a glowing report on the Mission Friends movement—A Wind of the Holy Spirit in Sweden and Norway.

Montgomery, and F. E. Emrich, pastor of the Chicago Tabernacle Church, strongly encouraged their fellow Congregationalists to support the Mission Friends in the U.S. Emrich would soon become the director of the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, and formed a warm and important friendship with many Mission Friend pastors and congregations.

In 1885 the Congregationalists appointed Emil Holmblad as a general missionary to Swedes in Massachusetts, and C. J. Erixson to the same position in Connecticut. Other missionaries appointed by the AHMS included Erik Ostergren, Fritz Erickson, Charles Wedin, Charles E. Poole, P. E. Dillner, O. G. Tinglof, A. F. Lindquist, Ludwig Ellingson, and Gustav Dahl. The Congregationalists also supported Olaus Olson, missionary to sailors and immigrants in Boston, and established a Swedish Department at the Chicago Theological Seminary. By 1892 there were 70 Swedish Congregationalist churches in the U.S., and by 1909 there were 107, quite a few in the East. These were really Covenant churches in theology and practice, and most eventually made their way into the Covenant. Over the years, many Conference churches would receive aid from the AHMS in paying pastors and erecting church buildings.

Although there would be some complications and misunderstandings between Mission Friend churches and the Congregationalists, on the whole the relationship was positive and very helpful for the ministry and mission. Furthermore, Congregationalist influence proved instrumental in the formation of the East Coast Conference.

Chapter 4

Moorings

As the number of Mission Friend congregations grew rapidly, the efforts to bring them together proceeded apace. The previously mentioned Mission and Ansgar synods each had about 40 member congregations, most of them in the Midwest; there were several pastors in East who were affiliated with the Ansgar synod. In 1884, a meeting of the Ansgar synod in Worcester, Massachusetts voted to dissolve that synod the following year, with an eye toward uniting the two Mission Friend groups. At the same time, K. Erixon, E. A. Skogsbergh, and several other members of the Mission Synod were also working toward a more effective union of churches.

During February 18-25, 1885, delegates met in Chicago to form the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant of America, now the Evangelical Covenant Church. Due to a severe snowstorm that delayed their train, the delegates from the East arrived late, entering the hall just as the announcement was made forming the Covenant. From the beginning, Emil Holmblad and Axel Mellander took an active part in the work of the Covenant. Most pastors and congregations from the East, however, did not. They were held back by the distance in geography, by affiliations with the Congregational Church, and by the influence of J. G. Princell, who, because of his own mistreatment by the Augustana Synod, was leery of any but the loosest organization. At the same time that the Covenant was being formed, Princell led the organization of the Evangelical Free Church.

However, the churches in the East did see a need to organize among themselves in order to carry on their work more effectively. In November, 1886, delegates from seven churches met in Worcester and voted to form the Swedish Evangelical Mission Association of Massachusetts. One month later, on December 4, in Brockton, they met a second time; they drafted a new constitution and adopted a new name—the Scandinavian Free Mission in Massachusetts. The Free Mission pledged its support for the sailors and immigrants mission in Boston, and called Erik Ostergren as a general missionary for the state. The Free Mission continued its work until 1893, when it was absorbed into the Eastern Missionary Association.

In February 1888, thirteen Mission Friend pastors met in New Britain, Connecticut, and voted to form a ministerial association. The group met four times the following year—in Brockton, North Easton, Boston, and Quincy. In June 1891, at a meeting in Washington Depot, Connecticut, the Swedish Ministers' Conference in the Eastern States was formally incorporated. Ministers of Mission Covenant, Congregational and independent congregations were united into a single organization.

The Congregational Church sent a proposal to the Swedish Ministers' Conference to unite all of the churches into a Swedish District Conference to be affiliated with the General Council of Congregational Churches. The ministers favored the establishment of a union of all the churches in the Northeast, but many opposed affiliation with the Congregationalists. A committee was formed to draw up a proposal for a new organization.

On November 11, 1890, delegates from churches in New York, Brooklyn, New Haven, New Britain, Hartford, Woodstock, Collinsville, Worcester, Lynn, Woburn, Lowell, Quincy, Brockton, North Easton, Springfield, Waltham, and Portland met at Worcester to consider the proposal. The meeting voted in favor of organization, and commissioned E. G. Hjerpe, L. W. A. Bjorkman, and K. F. Ohlson to draft a constitution based on the Mission Covenant model.

Delegates from 14 churches met in Quincy on December 29, 1890, with 12 voting in favor of the forming the Eastern Missionary Association. The charter members were the congregations from Worcester, Waltham, Brockton, and Quincy, Massachusetts; New Britain, Hartford, New Haven, Deep River, and Collinsville, Connecticut; New York City and Brooklyn, New York; and Manchester, New Hampshire.

The purpose of the Association was to promote fellowship among the churches, and to work together to establish new churches among the Swedes in the Northeast. In 1891 the Association voted to raise funds to engage missionaries in New York, Massachusetts, and Maine, to ordain ministers, and to encourage the establishment of Sunday Schools. On March 26, 1892, representatives from Boston, Brockton, Woburn, Worcester, Lynn, and New Haven met in Boston to form the Eastern Sunday School Association—the first such organization among Mission Friends in the U.S. The first ordination service was held on August 11, 1892, at Lynn, with J. A. Johnson and J. E. Thunberg as the first ordinands.

Also in 1892 the members of the Scandinavian Free Mission extended overtures to unite with the EMA, provided that the larger group maintain support for the sailors and immigrants mission in Boston as well as an aggressive missionary work in Massachusetts. The proposal was received gladly; on January 12, 1893, the union was achieved and the Free Mission thereby dissolved.

In order to facilitate the organization of new churches, the Association was divided into three districts—O. G. Tinglof supervised work in the northern district of eastern Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine; A. L. Anderson led the efforts in the central district of central Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island; and A. P. Nelson led the southern district of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. As the Association grew, the number of districts increased to seven. The district plan proved invaluable in promoting fellowship among the churches and in planting new churches.

The period from 1891 to 1907 saw a flurry of activity in planting new churches throughout the region. The EMA engaged several missionary-evangelists, with assistance from the Congregational Home Missionary Society, and several key churches launched new churches in their own areas. In Massachusetts, those efforts were led by the Boston and Worcester churches; in Connecticut, by the New Britain church; in Rhode Island, by the Providence church; and in the New York area, by the Bethesda church. In all some 45 congregations were planted, bringing the total number of churches to 75.

By the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Missionary Association it counted 41 member churches; five years later that number was up to 59. The largest congregation had almost 500 members, and six others had over 200 members each. Almost half of the congregations had fewer than 50 members. Sunday schools followed a similar pattern. Almost all of the congregations owned their own church buildings, and some even had parsonages.

By the 25th anniversary, in 1915, the EMA had 73 congregations, with a total of 7,200 members. The largest church had 534 members, and twenty others had over 100 members each. Sixty-six churches owned their own building, and fourteen owned parsonages.

The work of the Association extended beyond fellowship among the churches and planting new churches. From the beginning the Mission Friends had taken a keen interest in ministry to sailors and immigrants in the major ports of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. In 1873 the Swedish National Foundation supported work in the ports and several Mission Friend pastors and congregations became involved in it.

In 1881 an immigrant home was opened in New York and Peter Peterson was called as a missionary by the Bethesda church, with the support of the Mission Synod and, later, the Covenant Church. Although the EMA did not directly support Peterson, several Conference churches in the New York City area did. Peterson served as immigrant missionary until 1922, and was succeeded by August Willandt, who served until 1932. Due to the Depression and the greatly reduced flow of immigrants from Scandinavia, the mission was closed in 1932. Mission Friends in Philadelphia conducted a ministry to immigrants in that port as well. Without broader support, however, that work did not endure.

In Boston, however, the ministry to immigrants and sailors prospered. The Evangelical National Foundation had commissioned C. F. Johanson as seamen's missionary in Boston in 1873. Local Mission Friends supported the work. In the late 1870s C. W. Holm recounted that he and others "went up to Boston Common among the sailors and other Swedes who were seated on park benches to distribute tracts and invite them to services." The services were held at "Father Taylor's Bethel," a landmark in the city's North End.

In 1880 the Boston church commissioned Olaus Olson, a former sailor and stevedore, to work as a missionary to seamen. At first Olson was a tent-maker, carrying on the work while continuing to earn a living as a stevedore. The Boston church supported him by hosting events and, in 1884, raising funds to free Olson to work full-time as a missionary. In 1886 the Free Mission assumed support of the work, and in 1887 the Congregational Home Missionary Society added its assistance. That same year, Petrus Vincentius of Boston and Emil Holmblad of Brockton raised funds to provide a small boat for Olson's use. In 1892 the EMA took over the responsibility for the seamen's and immigrants' mission.

When Olson retired in 1895, the Association called another layman, Carl A. Anderson, to the work. He was succeeded by the Rev. Oscar Lindegren in 1900. At the same time, the EMA worked to provide a sailors' and immigrants' home, purchasing a house at 111 Webster Street in East Boston. On July 6, 1901, the Scandinavian Sailors' and Immigrants' home was dedicated. The next day the home admitted its first 14 guests.

In 1901 the EMA elected a seven member board of trustees to oversee the work of the Home. In 1902 it was formally incorporated as a charitable institution, and in 1903 the Home was expanded with the purchase of the adjacent building at 109 Webster Street. In all the Home had four floors and accommodations for 75 people; the chapel could seat 100 people. Two beacons on the roof directed sailors and immigrants to its warm hospitality. The Home was quite busy up to the outbreak of the First World War.

True to their name, Mission Friends in Sweden and America took a keen interest in foreign missions. The Swedish Mission Covenant, founded in 1880, began mission work in Lapland, Russia, and Africa in 1882. Many American congregations supported these works as well. In 1887 the Swedes began a work in Alaska, with the arrival of Axel Karlsson in Unalakleet and Adolph Lydell in Yakutat. In 1889 the Alaska mission was transferred to the American Covenant Church. The following year Hanna Svenson, from Worcester, went to Alaska. In 1885 she married Axel Karlsson and the two worked side by side until Axel's death in 1910. His epitaph reads, "When he came to this village, there was no Christian. At his death, there was no pagan."

In 1890 the Covenant began work in China. The Covenant work in Alaska and China drew some interest from Conference churches, but at this time the most interest and support from our churches was generated by the independent mission established by Fredrik Franson. This was the Scandinavian Alliance Mission, later TEAM, established in 1890. The Pilgrim congregation in New York held missionary training events, and several missionaries went out from Conference churches: Hanna Anderson, Collinsville; Christine Anderson and Anna Nordstrom, Worcester; Gustaf Ahlstrand, Brockton; and William Hagquist; Brooklyn. John G. Nelson was further

supported by the Quincy church. The Alliance Mission expanded its work to Africa in 1892, and South America in the 1920s, again supported by many Conference churches.

The churches of the EMA also extended their mission to the next generation. As mentioned above, they established the first Sunday School Association in the Covenant and continued to support that work. S.S. missionaries – Augusta Lorin and Charlotte Anderson – were engaged to work among the Swedish children in New York City. In 1909 they brought Professor Johannes Norberg from the Covenant School in Sweden to conduct Teacher Training Institutes. By 1900 Sunday Schools had a total enrollment of 4,000 students in 41 churches; by 1920 it had risen to over 7,000 students in 70 churches – a few congregations sponsored two or more Sunday Schools at branch locations.

The churches also established Young People’s Societies and knit them together in Young People’s Covenants in Massachusetts (1895), Rhode Island (1901), Connecticut (1902), and New York-New Jersey (1904). A Conference-wide Young People’s Federation was formed in 1923.

Perhaps the most significant development in the ministry to children was the establishment of a Children’s Home. The need was apparent:

In many of the populous industrial centers on our field, it often happened that the children of Swedish immigrants were found to suffer from the lack of shelter, food, and clothing. They were often forsaken by parents and relatives and left to fend for themselves in a strange environment. The parents were not always responsible for their plight: sickness, death, and lack of employment played a vital part. The curse of the liquor traffic took its toll of victims, as did other sinful pools of iniquity into which the Swedish immigrants often fell. Numerous cases where children were left without proper care came to the attention of our pastors, but they lacked the means to solve these problems within their communities. Thus God led these men, whose hearts he had touched with the tender mercies of the Christian attitude, to seek a way out by means of an institution which could serve as “The Good Shepherd” or “The Sheltering Arms” for boys and girls who were endangered by life in the slums of our great centers of industry.

(Bernard Peterson, 50th Anniversary booklet)

At the encouragement of Rev. N. M. Nilson of Cromwell, Connecticut, A. N. Pierson donated a house and land for the establishment of such a home. The EMA accepted the donation at its annual meeting in 1898 and formed a committee to organize the venture. The Swedish Christian Orphanage was dedicated on May 30, 1901. It was quickly faced with the problem of

overcrowding, so in 1903 the adjacent house was purchased, and in 1907 the Conference raised \$7,000 for an addition.

In 1910 the Conference annual meeting was faced with on-going inadequacy of the orphanage and determined to build a more suitable home. In 1913 a site in Cromwell was selected and a building committee formed. The cornerstone was laid on July 26, 1914, and on January 27, 1915, the new home was ready for occupancy for 40 boys and 32 girls, plus staff. The total cost was \$21,900—a large amount for the immigrant church of the day. The Children’s Home of Cromwell was dedicated on March 7, 1915.

Although not stated in these terms, clearly the Eastern Missionary Association was “on the move” right from its beginning—Multiplying congregations, Orchestrating ministries, Vitalizing congregations, and Empowering leaders. The young association would soon face daunting challenges.

Chapter 5

Doldrums And Storms

In 1915 the Eastern Missionary Association celebrated its 25th anniversary. For the occasion the Rev. C. V. Bowman had written a commemorative booklet, in Swedish of course. There was much to celebrate—7,200 members in 73 congregations; Sunday schools and Young People's Societies; support for missions overseas; the Sailors' and Immigrants' Home in Boston; and the Children's Home of Cromwell. Six years later, in 1921, the Eastern Missionary Association finally united with the wider Mission Covenant Church, assuming its place as a constituent Conference. It was not until 1958, however, that the name was changed from the Eastern Missionary Association to the East Coast Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America.

However, by this time Swedish immigration had slowed considerably, especially with the outbreak of World War I. The expected resurgence after the War's end did not materialize; the pace of immigration slowed through the 1920s and became a mere trickle in the '30s. The EMA had saturated its territory: a Mission congregation had been established in virtually every city and town that had a significant Swedish community. The last new church plant had been in 1907 in Milford, Massachusetts.

The churches were also faced with restlessness among its youth and young adults. By 1920 second-generation Swedish-Americans out-numbered the first generation in all of the region. During the war many of the churches had maintained a spirit of pacifism, but not all. Many young men who had been drafted into military service had been exposed to the wider world outside the Swedish neighborhoods.

In order to strengthen its work among the young, the Eastern Sunday School Association held "Big Sunday" rallies at the Cromwell "Hilltop" in 1919 and 1921. A Conference-wide Young People's Federation was formed in 1923. Several English language periodicals further promoted the work – the Eastern Weekly, The Cromwell Bulletin, and Young People's Beacon.

In 1927 the Conference chose the Cromwell "Hilltop" for its permanent camp site, in conjunction with the Eastern Sunday School Association annual conventions. Over the next decade the development of the Hilltop proceeded apace. In 1928 the Young People's Federation raised \$15,000 to construct a dormitory for 200 guests. In 1930 Cromwell Covenant Properties was incorporated. The large tabernacle, able to seat 2,500 people, was erected at a cost of \$15,000; it was dedicated on the closing Sunday of the convention in 1933. In 1937 a dining hall

for 300 guests was added, at a cost of \$6,000. Beginning in 1932 boys' and girls' camps were held each summer.

This period also saw the formation of societies for women and for men in many churches and districts. The first district women's organization was organized in 1921 in Boston and Worcester. Four years later, a district women's auxiliary was established in the New York-New Jersey area. The Connecticut and Rhode Island districts organized in 1936 and 1937, respectively. Finally in 1943 the Conference Women's Corps was formed; in 1949 it became the Conference Covenant Women's Auxiliary.

The men were slightly behind the women in their organizational efforts. In 1927 and '28 the Pawtucket church sponsored district rallies for men, and in 1929 a District Men's Brotherhood was established. The other districts followed suit and Men's Brotherhoods had been formed in every district by 1947. A Conference-wide organization was not established but the district Brotherhoods remained active for many years.

Another problem facing the Conference was that of caring for older and infirm members. By 1919 half of the \$20,000 needed to establish a home for older adults had been pledged, and the Conference took up the work. The Old People's Home was established in the former parsonage of the Pilgrim Church in Brooklyn and opened to six guests; the Home was dedicated on May 30, 1920. In 1922 a 23-room mansion in Throg's Neck was purchased for \$30,000, and dedicated in September 1924; in 1930 an additional 17 rooms were added. The Home was served by a number of dedicated matrons and superintendents: Augusta Wickstrom, Mr. & Mrs. Oliver Swanson, Anna Dahlberg, Rev. C. R. A. & Christine Blomberg, Rev. N. J. & Esther Wessell, Rev. August & Karin Willandt, Rev. Arthur & Ruth Johnson, and Rev. Oscar & Inez Backlund.

Similarly, the Children's Home of Cromwell continued to serve the needs of children throughout this period, ably directed by several superintendents: Rev. Clemens & Corinne Mortenson, Joseph & Marie Pihl, Anna Hendrickson & Mrs. Hjalmar Johnson, Mr. & Mrs. J. A. Anderson, Mr. & Mrs. Emil Hjerpe, Rev. Joseph & Thera Broman, and Rev. G. Henning & Lillian Erickson.

The Great Depression brought severe financial hardship to all the churches and institutions of the Conference. The Sailors' and Immigrants' Home in Boston was affected the most drastically. There had been a sharp decline in financial support for the mission during and after WWI, as fewer immigrants came to our shores. The Conference attempted to sell the home in 1920, but found no buyers and decided to keep it open. Rev. Oscar Lindegren resigned as missionary in 1921, having served for 21 years. His successor was the Rev. J. E. Seth, who worked hard to reinvigorate the ministry. He died on February 7, 1923, in Spokane, Washington, while on one of many fund-raising tours to support the mission.

Rev. John Nelson served as missionary from 1926-29, during which time the name was changed to the Scandinavian Sailors' Home. In 1929, Rev. J. Waldemar Harald became the chaplain, establishing a routine of ships' visiting, providing magazines and counsel, offering lodging, and caring for those who were ill or in need. By 1934 the mission treasury stood at \$16.27. The Conference again decided to sell the property; before they could, however, a fire destroyed half the structure. Rev. Harald and 20 sailors escaped but the building was a total loss. The property was boarded up and sold in 1936.

The mission arranged to rent space in the Sailors' Haven in Charlestown, and continued its ministry from that location. In 1941, the Seamen's Mission moved with its hosts to new quarters at the Seamen's Clubhouse in Boston's North End. During both World Wars the mission reached out to seamen from Germany and Scandinavia who were interned at the Harbor.

Churches began a long struggle over language – Swedish or English – in Sunday schools and worship services. Sunday schools and Young People's Societies were the first to make the transition. Most worship services continued to be in Swedish well into the 1930s. A gradual transition was made: typically by the beginning of the 1930s one service a month would be offered in English and three in Swedish; by the end of the decade that was reversed. In a few churches the transition was not completed until well into the 1940s. Some pastors, in particular, struggled with the need to be fluently bilingual. In 1940 the 50th anniversary booklet, written by Bernard Peterson, was published in English. Long after the change to English, many congregations were still known as the "Swede" church in their communities.

The increasing "Americanization" of the Church had also exposed it to the theological storms of the day, particularly the fundamentalist-modernist controversies that were raging through American Protestantism in the 1920s, climaxing in the Scopes Trial in 1925. While many were shaken by these developments the Covenant and the Conference maintained their commitment to the values of the Pietist heritage affirming the priority of the Bible, the necessity for new birth, and freedom in Christ.

The outbreak of World War II, and the U.S. involvement in it, brought another kind of storm to the Conference and its churches. For many the war created jobs and opportunities; at the same time a large proportion of the young men enlisted or were drafted into military service. Many congregations proudly displayed the "blue stars" of their servicemen and women, and sadly marked the "gold stars" of the fallen. They supported the servicemen and women, and their families, in many ways.

From 1907 to the beginning of World War II no new churches had been planted in the Conference. During the war a congregation was briefly established in Washington, D.C., but the congregations in Norwood and Worcester (Bethesda) closed, and the Woburn church withdrew

from the Conference. However, the mission of the Conference was extended through its churches and institutions, and auxiliary societies among Young People, Women and Men added strength to the ministry. The Post-War years would bring new challenges and shifting currents.

Chapter 6

Shifting Currents

By the end of World War II the Conference was a thoroughly “American” church, and shared in the challenges and opportunities the post-war years brought to the wider society. The return of servicemen and women spurred economic prosperity and launched the “Baby Boom” and many young families flocked back to the churches; for many congregations the 1950s and ‘60s would be a high tide of church membership. They also flocked to the suburbs and new housing developments. The new mobility generated large population migrations within the country, beginning a long-term shift from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West.

The 1950s saw the rise of a new ecumenical spirit of cooperation among denominations, a new style of evangelism under Billy Graham, and the Evangelical movement. The 1950s and ‘60s also brought the Cold War, two “hot” wars – Korea and Vietnam – the Civil Rights movement, and social unrest. All of these events impacted our churches and institutions in various ways.

One thing was certain: old structures and old patterns were no longer adequate to contemporary needs. One such development was in organizational structure: the Conference needed more cohesion and directive leadership. In 1944 the Conference called Louis Person to the new position of Conference Superintendent. Within just a few months the Executive Board reported to the Conference annual meeting:

Dr. Person has already made a welcome place for himself among our E.M.A. people. He has brought to the new office of Conference superintendent natural executive ability, sympathetic understanding, a vision of greater service, a strong Christian character and Christ-like spirit and because of these qualifications he has won our respect, our loyalty, and affection, and under his able and inspiring leadership, we are moving on towards higher goals of real achievement for our combined tasks.

Person made good use of the stronger district organization that had been created in 1937, comparing each district against the others and challenging all to growth in membership, Sunday school enrollment, and financial support. He pointed out that the churches in the East lagged far behind those in other parts of the country in their per capita giving – e.g., \$2.95 per capita as compared to \$10 per capita average.

The Conference took a renewed interest in home missions as well: In New York, new churches had been planted in Floral Park in 1945 and in Troy in 1950. In 1941 Rev. Eric Norman had been called as a missionary to Maine, primarily in the Bangor area; in 1948 Mildred Johnson was called as a Sunday School worker, first in Maine, and then on Long Island; and in 1949 Chester Pinkham followed Norman as the Maine missionary. Sunday schools and services were held in four locations around Bangor – Glenburn, East Bangor, North Bangor, and Hermon – and a summer camp was held at Lake Sebastocook and Winterport. From these efforts, churches were established in Glenburn in 1949, and Bangor in 1952.

When Louis Person resigned to take a position at North Park College, the Conference turned to one of its own—Rev. C. Leslie Strand, pastor of the New Britain congregation. Strand accepted and began his duties as Superintendent on February 1, 1953. Shortly after taking office, he accepted an offer from the Salem Square church in Worcester, to locate the Conference office there.

In 1956 the Conference published a quarterly, *The Conference Outlook*, to communicate with its members; the name was later changed to *The East Coast Conference News*. Then, in 1961 it became *The East Coast Covenant*, with Rev. Roger Palmquist as editor.

The relationship of the Conference to the Covenant was strengthened, with the Conference Superintendent serving in an important role as liaison. In 1958 a new Conference constitution was adopted along with a new name—the East Coast Conference. In 1961, Cherstin “Chet” Thayer was hired as Conference secretary, a position she would faithfully hold for 25 years.

There were several developments in the area of youth work and Christian education. In 1950, Rev. Luther Ek had been hired to assist churches in developing summer Bible school outreach ministries. In 1958, Rev. Roy E. Olson became the director of leadership training for the Conference. From 1969 to 1976, Rev. Jerome K. Johnson served as the director of Christian education for the Conference. Johnson established the “Order of Barnabas” to train Christian education leaders in churches, and gave general oversight to the youth and education programs.

Perhaps the most significant development in youth and family ministry concerned the summer camp program. Summer activities had been held at the Cromwell Hilltop since 1919. However, it became clear that the facilities were no longer adequate to meet the needs. For example, the pond was small and muddy; three times the dam had crumbled under high water. In 1955 the dam’s collapse left the camp without a swimming hole for the season. In 1956 a committee was formed to find a new property.

At a special meeting in July 1957 the Conference authorized the purchase of two adjacent properties on Swanzy Lake – the Wauwona Lodge and Cottages, and Camp Jewell – at the cost

of \$151,000. An open house was held on the property in October 1957. A naming contest was held and the winner was Pilgrim Pines; the youth camp was named Camp Squanto, and the lodge Mayflower Lodge. The new camp was dedicated on May 24, 1958, and began its ministry that summer. Eric and Ruth Allen were called as the first camp directors, followed by Paul Nelson. Through the years, Pilgrim Pines Conference Center was upgraded and added to several times, and served a vital role in the unity and mission of the Conference.

With changes in population, transportation, suburbanization, and economic development, a number of congregations re-located from cities to suburbs, and new buildings, during this time: East Orange, NJ to Livingston, 1954; the Hartford, CT church to West Hartford, 1960; Manchester, NH, to Bedford, 1963; Fitchburg, MA to Lunenburg, 1965; Cambridge, MA to Lexington, 1966; Providence, R.I. to Riverside, 1968; Milford, MA to Hopkinton in 1976; Brockton, MA to East Bridgewater, 1980; and Bridgeport, CT to Easton, 1982. To accommodate urban redevelopment, the Salem Square church in Worcester moved to the northern edge of the city. More recently, the New Britain congregation re-located to Berlin in 1997 where they were landlocked with no room for expansion.

One church that did not leave the city was Immanuel Covenant Church in the Bronx. Realizing that the neighborhood around the church was changing, in 1974 the church called an African-American pastor, Jerry Mosby. Under Pastor Mosby's leadership the church changed its name to Fellowship Covenant Church, constructed a new building, and grew by leaps and bounds. It was called "the Miracle on Castle Hill".

Other churches merged: Proctor, VT with Center Rutland, 1951; the Covenant with the Plymouth church in Brooklyn, NY 1952 (Covenant had been a merger of the Bethel & Tabernacle congregations in 1937); Bristol, CT with Plainville, 1965; Beverly, MA & Lynn into West Peabody, 1969; Norwalk & Georgetown into Wilton, CT 1975. These mergers were attempts to address declining ministries struggling in changing communities. Of all of these only the West Peabody congregation continues in existence.

A number of churches were not able to make the necessary adjustments in ministry and closed their doors: Collinsville, Danbury, Deep River, Ivoryton, Middletown, and New London, Connecticut; Washington, D.C.; Everett, Lowell, Malden, and Pigeon Cove, Massachusetts; Perth Amboy, New Jersey; Bronx (Bethlehem), Corona, Staten Island, and Watervliet, New York; Rumford, Rhode Island; and Brattleboro and Center Rutland, Vermont.

Two congregations withdrew from the Conference: Chaffinsville in 1960, and Stamford in 1975. In 1964 the Conference had its first "adoption" – the Laurence Harbor, N.J., congregation, which had been formed in 1924. During this same time, new churches were planted in East

Northport, New York (1957); Bowie (1963) and Gaithersburg (1977, closed 1983), Maryland; and Spring House, Pennsylvania (1964, closed 1972).

The shifting currents of the times also affected the other Conference institutions: the Seamen's Mission, the Children's Home, and the Old People's Home.

In 1947, with the decline of the U.S. merchant fleet, the Seamen's Clubhouse closed, and the Scandinavian Seamen's Mission was once again left homeless. They were welcomed to the Sailor's Clubhouse, also in the North End, operated by the Congregational Boston Seaman's Friend's Society. The next year, Rev. J. Waldemar Harald retired as chaplain, and was succeeded by the Rev. Axel Bergstedt. During the 1950s the Mission continued to reach out to Scandinavian seamen, and expanded its ministry to others as well, particularly befriending Displaced Persons from the Baltic States—Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. (This encounter resulted in the establishment of an Estonian Covenant Church in Toronto, Canada.)

Bergstedt retired in 1955 and was followed by Rev. Walter A. Palm, who served until 1965. Revs. Deane Kemper, Robert G. Pearsall, and Goete Bringerud served as interim chaplains until 1968, when Rev. Wallace Cedarleaf was called as Harbor Chaplain, in association with the Boston Seaman's Friend's Society. The rise of containerized shipping and Third World crews brought many changes to the industry and to the ministry.

In 1971 the Seaman's Friend's Society moved its operation from the North End to Park Square, far from the port. The Scandinavian Seamen's Mission found quarters on Commonwealth Pier. The Woman's Seaman's Friend's Society extended their support to Cedarleaf in the new location. The name was changed to the Boston Seamen's Mission in 1973, and a "Member of the Crew" program developed to build support for the ministry.

In 1954, Rev. Raynold & Bernice Johnson became directors of the Children's Home of Cromwell, serving until 1968. Under the Johnsons' leadership the ministry was re-evaluated and the capacity of the facility reduced to 40 children, reflecting a higher standard of care. Parts of the property were sold to the Old People's Home and to the Cromwell congregation.

In 1968 the Children's Home went through a tremendous sea-change – from orphanage to a residential treatment center. R. William Aust became the director, followed by Richard L. Peterson and Carole O'Neal. In 1972 a new modern residential building was erected, and in 1974 a program was established for emotionally and developmentally disturbed children. The new learning center was built in 1980, with the gym added in 1985.

The Old People's Home in the Bronx also stood in need of a new facility. Land was acquired on the Cromwell Hilltop in 1962, groundbreaking was held on March 3, 1963, and the new Pilgrim

Manor was opened in June 1964 for 55 residents. In 1976, Pilgrim Manor was transferred from the Conference to the Covenant Board of Benevolence. In 1977, more land was acquired and construction begun for a new retirement community—Covenant Village of Cromwell. The facility opened in 1981, and the Commons building was completed in 1984.

Leslie Strand retired as superintendent in 1977, but continued to serve the Conference in various ways for many years. He was followed by Rev. Paul A. Johnson, who served one term from 1977 to 1980. In 1977 the Conference office moved from Worcester to the new Covenant Village complex in Cromwell. In 1980, Johnson left to take a position with Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis. In 1984 the Conference offices were permanently settled in the Commons Building of Covenant Village.

The Conference, its churches and institutions had navigated through the often rapidly shifting currents of society following World War II through the 1970s. Although the Conference had not shared in the growth of some areas of the Covenant, it had held its own.

Chapter 7

Fresh Winds

In 1979 Dr. Kenneth Lundberg joined the Conference staff as part-time church consultant, serving until 1989. In 1980, the Rev. Robert L. Erickson was elected as Superintendent. During their tenure the soft breeze of the Holy Spirit began to freshen in the Conference. The fruit of a fellowship group which had been meeting on Cape Cod for many years finally matured. Rev. Tom Nelson was called as a developer pastor and, in 1982, the Cape Cod Covenant Church was born. In 1985, another new church came into being in Essex Junction, Vermont. Erickson resigned in 1986 to take a position at Swedish Covenant Hospital, and the Conference chair, James A. Anderson became acting superintendent. Chet Thayer who had been the secretary of the Conference for decades, serving Les Strand, Paul Johnson, and Bob Erickson retired that year.

In 1986, Rev. George B. Elia became Superintendent, and Eleanor Duey was hired as secretary, forming a formidable team. In 1989, a new position of assistant to the superintendent/business manager was created; Rev. Philip Vincuilla was hired to that role, serving until 1995, succeeded by Rev. Sandra Anderson who served until 1998.

Elia challenged the Conference to commit to the modest goal of planting one new church every year; he also looked to our roots as an immigrant church to reach out to new immigrant groups in the Northeast. Soon those challenges began to bear fruit, in sometimes surprising ways.

In 1986, the Conference welcomed its first Korean congregation in Torrington, Connecticut, and two years later, a second Korean congregation in East Northport, N.Y. Even though these congregations later closed, the seed was planted for more work among other people groups.

In 1987 the Conference welcomed another church “adoption”: Christchurch in Portland, Maine, had been founded in 1975 as an independent congregation and was looking for a denominational affiliation. The pastor and some members knew about the Covenant and found their way into our fellowship.

In 1987 two churches had closed – East Greenwich and West Warwick, R.I. However, their assets were reserved as a legacy to plant a new church in the area. In 1989, the West Bay Covenant Church was planted in North Kingston with people and financial support being sent from Riverside. Later, after a decade of effort and during a pastoral transition this congregation merged with another new congregation, and formed Christ Church, ECC, in East Greenwich,

that was received into the Covenant in 1998. The church grew rapidly and developed extensive ministry in the region.

In 1989 a second new church was established, in Nashua, N.H. Other church plants resulted in new congregations in Keene, NH in 1994, and in Concord, NH in 1996 (closed 2012).

Several adoptions brought new vitality to the Conference: In 1995 a federated church in Lord's Valley, Pennsylvania, The Church at Hemlock Farms, was welcomed into membership. Indian Orchard, which had been founded in 1848, joined in 1997—becoming the newest and oldest church in the Conference. That title was short-lived, however: in 2001, the Conference welcomed a congregation in Greenfield, N.H., which had been founded in 1791.

Nor were older congregations neglected. Beginning in 1994 the Conference and many churches participated in the Vision-to-Action program to bring about change and new vitality.

In 1998, Rev. George Elia retired as Superintendent and was followed by Rev. Robert Dvorak, who served until 2006. Beverly Freeman joined the office staff as administrative assistant. The Rev. Judy Swanberg was called as associate superintendent not long afterward. Under their leadership five more churches were planted and another three adopted: In 2001, the Conference planted an African-American church in New Rochelle—New York Covenant Church. In 2003, the Fellowship Covenant Church in the Bronx planted a daughter church—Brooklyn Covenant Ministries; and in 2004, the Conference planted a multi-ethnic church in Englewood, N.J., and another in Queens (Queenswest, closed 2013). At the same time in Boston, Cornerstone Church, an Asian American congregation was planted independently, and joined the Conference in 2004. In 1999, the Conference welcomed Highrock Church, a young multi-ethnic congregation in Somerville, and they move to Arlington in 2004. In 2003, the Conference also welcomed the Cambridge Community Fellowship, a young multi-ethnic congregation; and in 2004 another young congregation in Clifton Park, N.Y.

In 2006 Rev. Dvorak was called to serve as interim pastor in Omaha, NE. Rev. Swanberg left to serve as chaplain at Covenant Village in Plantation, FL and the Rev. Howard Burgoyne was called as Superintendent, with a mandate to help the Conference envision the future while continuing to plant new churches. In 2007, a “2020 Vision” plan was unfurled, and churches were encouraged to step up and forward. By 2008, church giving had grown 40% to the Conference, and by 2014 has doubled since 2006. The Conference Board structure has been streamlined and reduced from a size of 27 to 12-14 in order to focus governance on moving the Conference forward strategically with clear vision and values. Over the last decade church planting has accelerated. Churches have been planted in Sanford, Maine; Acton, Brookline, Newton, Quincy, and Salem, Massachusetts; Manchester and Rochester, N.H.; Bronx, Flushing, Staten Island, Roosevelt Island, Harlem, E. Harlem, and Manhattan, N.Y.; Providence, R.I.;

Baltimore, MD, Holmdel, NJ; and Fairfax, Richmond, and Blacksburg, Virginia. From the modest proposal of planting one church a year (1986) the Conference has grown in resolve and resources to pursue planting 5 or 6 churches per year going forward, while building the infrastructure to start and strengthen all churches across their span of life and service. The Conference is extending their vision and strategies this year for another decade, towards 2025.

In 2010 Beverly Freeman retired, and Alicia Sturdy was welcomed as our Office and Communications Manager. What were just a few years ago almost entirely paper records and processes have now been mostly computerized. Communications on print, web, and mobile platforms have been upgraded. In many sectors of the ECC it is recognized that our Conference has become a leader in innovation, best practices, and excellence in the development of strategies and systems for ministry support and development.

At the same time, some churches have closed, leaving their assets to be used as a legacy-trust for new churches: Brooklyn, NY; Floral Park, NY; Cranston, RI; Waltham, MA; Plainville and Wilton, CT; and Montclair, NJ. The Conference has engaged Covenant Trust Company for their financial investment management of these legacy funds. At the same time the percentage of the Conference budget dedicated to church planting has grown to 50% of expenses, along with church support for the budget having doubled since 2006. Churches are regularly encouraged to stretch towards giving 5% of their income to the Conference's expanding mission. In 2011, Jason Condon joined the Conference leadership team as director of church planting, enabling the development of a strong base of assessment, training, and coaching support for new churches.

An interesting development has been the adoption of several former United Church of Christ congregations in Pennsylvania. These churches were part of the former Evangelical and Reformed Church – a German Pietist denomination – that have found their way into fellowship with the heirs of Swedish Pietism. Sometimes the wind of the Holy Spirit blows in a circle. These include: Harleysville (founded 1833, received 2007), Hilltown (founded 1804, received 2007), Thomasville (founded 1765, received 2008), Halifax (founded 1788, mergers in 1964, 1968, and 1972; received 2010) and York (founded 1763, received 2006 – now the oldest church in the Conference and the Covenant!) Also, a former Methodist congregation of second generation Korean Americans was adopted in Queens, NY in 2012 (New Vision) with a very active global mission outreach.

The “adopted” and newly planted congregations—young, old, and multi-generational; White, African-American, Asian, Hispanic, Sudanese, Mandarin-Chinese, and multi-ethnic; urban, suburban, and rural—have brought new vitality to the East Coast Conference. As of 2014, 45% of the Conference comprises newer immigrants to these shores. From many different backgrounds, people have found a home in the “Missional Pietism” of the Evangelical Covenant

Church. A denomination founded by Swedish immigrants has found new vigor in reaching out to others, including new immigrants from many places. The Church on earth is beginning to more nearly reflect the Church in heaven, as indicated by the Preamble of the Constitution:

The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, the biblical instruction of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and the great spiritual awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These influences, together with more recent North American renewal movements, continue to shape its development and distinctive spirit. The Evangelical Covenant Church is committed to reaching across boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, and status in the cultivation of communities of life and service.

Considerable effort has been given to strengthening older congregations as well. The Conference has participated in the Covenant's revitalization and vitality programs. In 2012 Kreig Gammelgard was called to be the Conference director of congregational vitality. Numerous churches show signs of ministry plateau and decline; several are at risk. Vitality cohorts have been formed across the region to cluster congregations together for support, accountability and learning. All of the churches have been encouraged to plant new ministries as well as new churches. The Conference has been actively providing seed money to churches to assist in startup costs for ministries among at risk and marginalized populations. The Conference is also participating in the Covenant's racial righteousness initiative and invites congregations and members to get involved. Churches are being encouraged to collaborate on mission projects within the Conference and around the world. Recent examples have included Hurricane Sandy Relief and rebuilding; partnering with an Alaskan village congregation in Koyuk, AK, and in supporting Covenant Kids Congo/powered by World Vision, and the Paul Carlson Partnership work in medical clinic redevelopment.

Conference Agencies & Historic Mission Partners

The fresh winds of the Holy Spirit have blown through our Conference agencies as well...

Pilgrim Pines Conference Center

website: pilgrimpines.org

Pilgrim Pines has seen great improvements, including the construction of the Plymouth units and refurbishing many of the other buildings under the leadership of Bob Poor (dates), Bob DeJong (dates), and Dave Cairns (2005-2015). The Strand Chapel was re-dedicated on July 5, 1998. A

new dining hall at Camp Squanto was completed in 2012 through a multimillion-dollar “Bridging the Generations” campaign connected to the 50th anniversary of the Pines opening. A troublesome real estate tax issue with the town of Swanzev was resolved by court order in 2004, and amicably renewed with the Town in 2014. Happily, the Conference Center is moving forward to provide many more years of service to the Conference and the community. Trends for outreach continue to grow - at present half of all guest campers at the Pines come from outside of our churches.

New England Seafarers Mission

website: neseafarers.org

The Seamen’s Mission has experienced new vitality and enabled many churches to participate in a world mission in their own backyard. In 1982, Cedarleaf became part-time chaplain, and Rev. James O. Lindgren was called as full-time Chaplain/Administrator. The office has moved from Commonwealth Pier to the Charlestown Navy Yard (across the pier from the U.S.S. Constitution), to the Black Falcon Terminal in South Boston. In 1984, the Mission purchased a trailer and established a ministry center on the Municipal Wharf in Providence, Rhode Island.

In 1990 Rev. Andrew Krey, a Lutheran pastor, joined the staff, serving in Providence and Connecticut until 1995. The Seamen’s Mission became the Seafarers Mission in 1994 and has developed a vibrant ministry to the large crews of cruise ships. Rev. Doug Johnson joined the team in 1996. In 1999, Jim Lindgren and Doug Johnson left; Steve Cushing became the new chaplain/administrator, and Ashley Peckham became the chaplain for Providence. Steve brought experience in the marine industry and has carried on the work quite well. In 2014 the long standing Women Seafarers Friends Society dissolved, enfolding their substantial assets and their ministry of providing ditty bags and other gifts for seafarers into the ongoing work of NESM.

Ädelbrook (formerly Children’s Home of Cromwell)

website: adelbrook.org

The Children’s Home of Cromwell was transferred to the Covenant Board of Benevolence in 2000. David Carlson retired as director in 2002, after thirty years of service. In 2004 David Jacobson became director, departing in 2006. In 2007, Garrell Mullaney became CEO/ President, tasked to move the agency towards a sustainable model as the State of Connecticut looked to close residential facilities and reduce costs. In late 2008, after facing losses in 2007 and 2008 of a million dollars each year, the board was faced with the prospect of closing the agency if they could not substantially reinvent the model. President Mullaney urged the board to grant one more year of turnaround, which was prayerfully, albeit anxiously agreed to. By the grace of God and through substantial leadership efforts of the board and staff, the agency was reinvented

again, focusing on serving those with developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. Related to this, the name has been changed to Ädelbrook, as its mission has adjusted to meet these new needs and clients. The agency now operates special educational schools in Cromwell, Manchester, and East Hartford with two Transitional Academies in Middletown, and 15 group homes across CT.

Covenant Village of Cromwell

website: covenantvillageofcromwell.org

At Covenant Village of Cromwell, the population of actively retired residents continues to grow among non-Covenanters. At present Covenant residents and staff are now a large minority of those on campus. The economic melt down of the global economy in 2008-2009 scuttled plans for expansion on the Hilltop as assets vanished, values declined, and retirees created alternate plans for their future. Residency rates fell below 90% and austerity measures were enacted to protect against further economic weakening. The Commons Building was substantially remodeled in 2009 to put a fresh face on hospitality and marketing efforts. Retirement communities are now actively marketing toward the “Baby Boomers” retirement aspirations, which are quite distinctive from previous generations. At the same time the growing ethnic diversity and reengagement in urban centers by the Covenant is challenging CRC to rethink their current model.

After many years of service, Campus Administrator Burt Johnson retired in 2013. Pamela Klapproth was appointed to the position as his successor, and a new management team has been redeveloped over the last year. A new Events Center was built for multiple uses in early 2014, and further improvements skilled care, memory care and the grounds will be finished by spring 2015. CVOC was nationally recognized for excellence in Nursing Care at Pilgrim Manor in 2014.

Both Ädelbrook and Covenant Village of Cromwell remain active partners in ministry with the Conference as agencies affiliated with Covenant Ministries of Benevolence of the ECC.

Epilogue

As the East Coast Conference celebrates its 125th Anniversary, we have more active congregations than at any time in our past, and more are being planted each year. Our budget, and support for the budget, is at an all-time high. Many pastors and congregations are experiencing new strength and vitality. The East Coast Conference is **on the move**.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Paul Day

For a fuller history of the first 100 years, please see *Unity and Freedom: One Hundred Years of the East Coast Conference*, 1990.