

“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”  
Lamentations 3:22-23

## Celebrating 35 Years How Did It All Start?

**H**ow exactly does a church come into existence? As we celebrate 35 years of ministry in Broken Bow and Custer County, I want to take a trip back in time to see just how the Broken Bow Evangelical Free Church came into existence. Hopefully this story of God’s faithfulness will be encouraging to you as we seek to add new chapters to the story.

Planting a new church is not as simple as it sounds. The common statistic used amongst church planters is that 80% of new church plants fail within the first year. I don’t know how accurate that statistic is, but it’s pretty safe to say that more church plants fail than succeed. So as we celebrate 35 years, we celebrate a church plant that not only exceeded but has continued to thrive and grow for several years.

It all started in 1976. Do you remember the year 1976? Gerald Ford was the President and the United States was celebrating its Bicentennial Anniversary. That was also the year that 5 families began to gather as a Bible Study to pray about a dream that God had given them. Those 5 families included Gib and Ethel Bowman, Don and June Albin, Terry and Bev Jensen, Keith and Vicki Sherman, and Garry

and Barbara Morgan. The group decided to partner together with the Evangelical Free Church denomination because of its sound doctrinal statement and many ministries.

Midwest District Superintendent Chuck Crabtree of Aurora and Midwest District Church Planter Lewis Wimberley of Norfolk were instrumental in the early stages of the church plant. Under the direction of Wimberley, five Evangelical Free Churches within the district agreed to be a “Mother Church” for the Broken Bow project. Those churches were from Sumner, Kearney, Lexington, Ord, and New Hope (Gothenburg). The “Mother Churches” provided leadership and financial

support to Broken Bow until the church was able to be self-supporting.

The small group began to grow and they hired their first Pastor, Gordon Langlie and wife Helen. The same year they also agreed to purchase the First Christian Church building located on N. 10<sup>th</sup> Ave (now the Iverson Funeral Home). The Christian Church was in the process of building a new church on the Southeast side of town. The two churches shared the same building until the new Christian Church was completed. The Christian Church had services in the morning and the Free Church in the evening. The first church service of the Broken Bow Evangelical Free Church was held on Oc-



First BB-EFC Pastor - Gordon Langlie and wife Helen

## Celebrating 35 Years How Did It All Start? Cont'd

tober 6, 1976.

The Evangelical Free Church congregation took sole possession of the church in June 1977 and purchased the building for \$12,000. The Church Building was dedicated on Sep 25, 1977. The church continued to grow and quickly became self-supporting. In February 1979 the Broken Bow Evangelical Free Church was granted "Autonomy" at the Midwest District Annual Meeting held in Grand Island. It was stated that the Broken Bow Church was the first church to graduate under the "Mother Church" program.

Pastor Langlie served until September 1979. Russ Epley (and wife Flossie) served as interim Pastor for part of the next year. (We still currently support the Epleys as missionaries in Japan.) Then in July 1980 Pastor Rick Ensrud (and wife Lana) was installed as the next pastor of BB-EFC. Under Pastor Rick the church continued to grow and flourish. They had to be creative in the use of their facility to make room. They added a second Sunday morning service. They would rent the Broken Bow High School Activities Building for AWANA game time. They rented the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Church for additional classroom space on Sunday morning. They also hired Pastor Bill Hyatt as their first Associate Pastor.

The congregation decided that a new and bigger facility was needed to continue the mission of reaching people for Jesus Christ and teaching them to be disciples. In 1986 the congregation bought a piece of property on the west edge of town on Memorial Drive and began to construct a new facility at a cost of \$250,000. John Reier was the building chairman. The members of the congregation did most of the work on the building, and it was able to be completed without taking out any loans. The new building was dedicated on Oct. 19, 1986,



**Original church building on North 10th Avenue**

which corresponded with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church.

The church has continued to grow and change over the years. Others that have served as Sr. Pastors are Pastor Bill (and Louanne) Hyatt (1988-1992), Pastor Kent (and Elizabeth) McElroy (1992 -1994), Pastor Bob (and Priscilla) Winn (1996- 2005) and Pastor Scott (and Jennie) Harvey (2006- present.) There have been three Associate Pastors: Pastor Kent McElroy (1991-1992), Pastor Bruce (and Julianna) Boehmer (1997-2004), and Pastor Brant (and Susanne) Taylor (2010 – present). There has also been three interim pastors: Jim Purcell (1994-1995), Al Magnuson (2005-2006), and Russell Kauffman (2006). An addition containing a multipurpose room and classrooms was added on in 1999.

Beyond the building and pastors, the history of the BB-EFC is about the people that make up the church. Many of the original members of the church have either passed away or moved away. Martin and Priscilla Shafer have the distinction of being the members of the church for the most years. Although they were not

one of the original 5 families, they were founding members of the church when it began in October of 1976. Several families have come and gone over the many years, but the mission still remains the same.

That mission has prompted the church to be involved in many ministries and programs over the years. Children's and Youth ministries have always been important to the church. Our church has been operating AWANAs since 1983. Long-time members will remember past events such as the Labor Day Bash and Valentine Banquets. The Church has always been very missions-minded as they have supported many missionaries, hosted missions-conferences, and went on several short-term missions projects.

As we look back on 35 years of ministry, we give all the honor and glory to God. We couldn't have done it out of our own strength and resources. We now look forward as we continue to carry out the same mission in which the church started. As we do, we will continue to rely on God's faithfulness as the next chapter is written. - Pastor Scott Harvey

# 35th Anniversary Agenda

## Friday, September 23rd

### Food and Fellowship

6:00 PM  
Tomahawk Park

Hamburgers, hotdogs, chips  
and games

## Saturday, September 24th

### Men's Breakfast

7:00 AM  
Tumbleweed Café

### Tour of Broken Bow

9:00 AM  
For Visitors  
Meet at the Church

### Ladies Brunch

at the Church  
11:00 AM

### Celebration Barbeque

at the Church  
5:30 PM  
Special Music by the Shoemakers

## Sunday, September 25th

### Coffee and Rolls

9:00 AM

### Prayer and Praise

9:30 AM

### Celebration Worship Service

10:45 AM  
Special Music by Rick & Lana Ensrud



Pictures of new church building during and after construction in 1986.



#### Finding Friends, Following Christ

The Evangelical Free Church  
P.O. Box 544  
Broken Bow, NE 68822  
Return Service Requested

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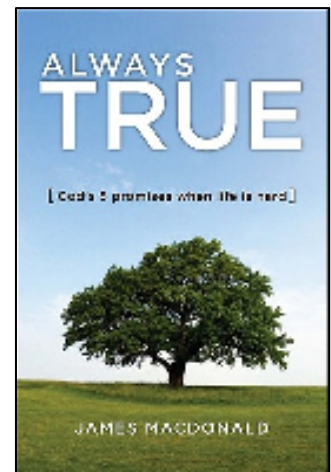
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Associate Pastor:  
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Secretary:  
Geri Johnson  
[secretary@bowefc.org](mailto:secretary@bowefc.org)

## New Sermon Series - When LIFE Gets HARD....

**W**ould you say that life is hard or easy? Most of us would answer life is hard. Some of you might even say it is extremely hard. So what do we do when life gets hard? Where are we supposed to go? Who do we turn to? That's when we turn to God and lean on his promises for life. Over the next 5 weeks we'll look at some of the promises that God gives to us so that we can hang on during the tough times. We'll not only learn about the promises, but we'll see how some of the key figures in the Bible had to trust in God's promises when life got hard for them. This sermon series is based on a book called "Always True" by James McDonald. So come and join us as we learn how these promises can turn a HARD LIFE into a BLESSED LIFE.



October 2  
October 9  
October 16  
October 23  
October 30

Promise #1 – God Is Always With Me  
Promise #2 – God is Always In Control  
Promise #3 – God is Always Good  
Promise #4 – God is Always Watching  
Promise #5 – God is Always Victorious