

Evangelical United Brethren Church

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The Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Church was formed in November 1946 through the merging of the former Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church. These denominations were born almost simultaneously and developed side by side through 150 years before this union.

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ resulted from the efforts of Philip William Otterbein, then pastor of the Second Reformed Church in Baltimore, and Martin Boehm, a Mennonite bishop living in southern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Otterbein, imbued with the Reformed pietistic spirit which he inherited during his student days at Herborn, was so favorably impressed by a sermon preached by Boehm at Long's barn, near Neffsville, Pennsylvania, about 1767, that he threw his arms about Boehm's neck and said, "We are brethren!" whence the name "United Brethren." For a long generation, Otterbein, Boehm, and other pastors with similar pietistic and evangelistic inclinations continued their work in their respective denominations. By 1800 the work was sufficiently distinct to warrant the calling of the first general conference, at which time Otterbein and Boehm were named bishops. The first rules and order were printed in 1815.

This denomination stressed the observance of "footwashing" during the earlier years of its history and permitted the practice of baptism by immersion, though prescribing no one form. Through differences of opinion about the constitution of the church, a small faction left the denomination in May 1885 to form the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (Old Constitution).

The Evangelical Church was founded by Jacob Albright in 1800 in eastern Pennsylvania. Upon his death in 1808, his associate, George Miller, drafted the first Discipline (rules and order) of the denomination, which was printed in 1809. The first general conference of the denomination met at Linfield, Pennsylvania, in 1816 and established a printing press at New Berlin, Pennsylvania.

A division in the denomination gave birth to the United Evangelical Church in 1894. Most of the clergy and members of this denomination were reunited with the Evangelical Church in October 1922; a small group continued as the Evangelical Congregational Church.

Both constituent groups of the denomination have been closely related to the Mennonite and other Anabaptist groups. Baptism by immersion was permitted, occasionally members wore "plain" clothes or partially "plain" clothes, while the observance of footwashing had practically disappeared at the infrequent observances of the "lovefeast."

The Evangelical Church was significant to the Mennonites as it, more than any other movement, mediated the revivalist spirit and methods of the Methodists to the Germans in Mennonite communities, including those in Ontario, Canada. Many Mennonites were drawn into the movement while others reacted against it.

A majority of the Evangelical United Brethren Church in the United States merged with the Methodist Church in 1968 to form the United Methodist Church. The Canadian Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church joined the United Church of Canada on 1 January 1968.

Those that did not merge included the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, which voted in 1967 to secede from the parent body due to their opposition over the upcoming merger with the Methodist Church. They believed that the Methodists were too liberal on issues of Biblical authority, social activism, and the doctrine of Entire Sanctification. They formed the Evangelical Church of North America on 4 June 1968. By the end of June the new conference included 70 congregations. In 1969 they were joined by the Holiness Methodist Church and in 1977 by The Wesleyan Covenant Church.

Another group of EUB churches that did not merge with the Methodist Church in 1968 were a number of congregations in western Canada. They eventually reorganized under the name of The Evangelical Church in Canada. In 1982, it united with the Evangelical Church of North America to form The Evangelical Church.

Eventually the Canadian churches formed their own conference, the Evangelical Church of Canada, and they in turn merged with the Missionary Church of Canada in 1993 to form the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada.

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Additional Information

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United Church of Canada (<http://www.united-church.ca/>)

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