

Interview with Reverend David Owens

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Interviewed by John LeDoux and Mark Stone

LeDoux: Okay, this is an interview being conducted for the Central Minnesota Historical Center. The date is Monday July 24, 1978. Today we're at Reynolds Baptist Church in rural Long Prairie and we're talking to the Reverend David Owens. Okay, and Reverend Owens has been the minister here for about three years. Okay, Reverend, would you start out maybe by giving us a little of your family background, ah going back -- and now you mentioned an interesting thing before we started the tape about your great, great grandmother I believe it was. Could you repeat that then for us?

Owens: Well, we always say that they're -- that we're full-blooded Welsh, but there is a little trace of Scotch way back and also whatever the Bonaparte's were, but they came from Corsica. And did you want me to relate that? Should I say it again?

LeDoux: Yeah, sure.

Owens: Well, during the French and English War in about 1804 when France was having war with England, Louis Bonaparte, brother of Napoléon Bonaparte... His daughter was captured by the English and taken to the British Army, and while there married a Welshman and became my great, great grandmother. And otherwise, all my grandparents came right from Wales.

LeDoux: Okay. Now, as far as your parents -- were they born in this country?

Owens: Yes, my father was born in – he was an old gentleman – he was born in 1861 in St. Louis Missouri. And being a northerner, a Union man, he had to get out at night. So he took his family, just shortly after my father was born, and settled in Wisconsin and later in southern Minnesota – Garvin. My father name the town of Garvin.

LeDoux: Oh, uh-huh.

Owens: And him and his brother was in the Post house next door there. And so my other was born out of Mankato – Lake Crystal, in a Welsh community just north of Lake Crystal.

LeDoux: Okay, and could we have the date of your birth then for the record?

Owens: I was born May 26, 1915.

LeDoux: Okay. And you were born in Garvin you said?

Owens: No, I was born in North Dakota.

LeDoux: North Dakota.

Owens: North – Central North Dakota – Roulette, North Dakota.

LeDoux: Roulette?

Owens: Roulette.

LeDoux: Okay. And you went to school in Roulette or did you move too?

Owens: No, my father lost his land there and then we moved from here and there and I finished high school at least in North Dakota. And took one year of college at Moorhead State, and then went to the Montana Institute of the Bible then located at Billings.

LeDoux: The Montana Bible Institute?

Owens: The Montana Institute of the Bible.

LeDoux: Institute of the Bible in Billings.

Owens: Yes.

LeDoux: Okay. And you said you had one year of college at Moorhead and then you went to the Bible -- the Institute of the Bible, and that was for how long now?

Owens: Three years.

LeDoux: Three years.

Owens: It was -- it was on a junior college level.

LeDoux: Okay. And those would have been, let's see, during the '40s you were there? Is that the way it was?

Owens: No, no -- my wife and I were saved in 1953 and then in '56 we sold the farm and went out to Bible school.

LeDoux: Okay. You were farming then for a number of years?

Owens: Oh yes, all my life.

LeDoux: In North Dakota also?

Owens: Yes.

LeDoux: Okay.

Owens: And then, I taught school two years in South Dakota, and then also from there I taught at the Indian Bible School – Mokahum Indian Bible School at Call Lake for three years.

LeDoux: What was the name of the Bible school then?

Owens: Mokahum – that’s Indian. Mo-kah-um.

LeDoux: Could you spell that for us?

Owens: M-O-K-A-H-U-M. Chippewa meaning sunrise. And from there, we pastored the Evangelic Free Church of Black Duck. Then, one year at Evangelical Free Church in McKinley. Then coming to Frazee – we were there almost five years at first Baptist Church in Frazee before coming here.

LeDoux: Uh huh. You came here then in what year – 1975 was it?

Owens: Yes, February of ’75.

LeDoux: Okay. Ah, you mentioned that you’d – you’d served at the Evangelical Free Church. Now, I was wondering if you could clear something up for me? Is the Evangelical Free Church an offshoot of the Baptist Conference or--

Owens: No, it isn’t.

LeDoux: That’s a totally independent church?

Owens: No, no – that’s a Scandinavian church that came out – Evangelical type of church came out. Well, it’s Swedish and Norwegian.

LeDoux: Is that ah kind of a carry over, do you think, from the Swedish State Church – or is that a totally an American institution?

Owens: No, it's totally different from the State Church – Sweden or Norway.

LeDoux: Do you know any -- could you tell us maybe a little bit about the, oh the beliefs of the free church or how they differ from the Baptists?

Owens: Well, ah, they're minor things that are different from the Baptists. For instance, in baptism, they will accept baptism in several ways, while the Baptist Church is only my immersion.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. I see.

Owens: --scriptural, right by immersion.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: But -- ah and then, of course, the Bible school, the Indian Bible School at Cass Lake has its Christian Mission Alliance, and they're much the same. And -- but they do not accept only baptism, but members by immersion.

LeDoux: Is that the basic difference?

Owens: Mainly.

LeDoux: Now, does the Evangelical Free Church has Conference of sorts, or is it -- is each church totally independent?

Owens: Oh yeah. No, they have a Conference. Their headquarters – here in Minneapolis.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: And ah, for -- I think their -- I believe the national headquarters - there in Minneapolis.

LeDoux: And that's predominantly Scandinavian – or is Scandinavian?

Owens: No, excuse me, it's not in Minneapolis – Deerfield, Illinois is their headquarters.

LeDoux: Okay. So would it be just Scandinavian in this state or is it a Scandinavian institution pretty much.

Owens: It's a Scandinavian institution pretty much. But of course, like all -- the United States is a great melting pot.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: Like this is a Swedish Baptist Church and they've got a Welsh pastor.

LeDoux: Yeah, I was going to ask you about your own beliefs in changing from the Evangelical Church to the Baptist Church. Now, do you have to ah -- do you find yourself switching your beliefs on the subject of baptism at all?

Owens: No, ah I never changed at all. They accept what I can teach and that's it – right from the Scriptures.

LeDoux: Okay.

Owens: Usually you have, in all the churches you have a difference between the local church and the headquarters. There may be some of the headquarters that have big eyes ahead – they

might be turning modern and not accepting some of the Scriptures. But your local church might be true right to the word, see.

LeDoux: Okay. So in other words, there was quite a bit of leeway in the Evangelical Free Church for an individual—individual minister to operate in. In other words, there were -- there were allowable differences.

Owens: Well, their points of doctrine of theology, and that must be born again, and be—then be baptized. But the free church doesn't look upon sprinkling for instance, as acceptable. But their main... I think it is about 85 percent of their pastors were not accepted.

LeDoux: Oh.

Owens: So you see, it's kind of an individual--

LeDoux: Decision there--

Owens: Yes, as far as that is concerned.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: But for the new birth—to be—accept Christ as their personal savior to be born again. Then you see, that's all through the Church.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. Is this unusual for ah now you -- did you ah -- did you come into the faith as a Baptist preacher? Or ah, I'm kind of confused as to-- You went to this Bible Institute—was that a denominational institute?

Owens: That was an inter-denominational -- new thing in Montana. If you've ever been to Montana, you'll find many bible churches with no denomination of affiliation.

LeDoux: Oh.

Owens: The Association of Bible Churches—they call them there in Montana. And this Montana Institute of the Bible came out of the affiliation of the Bible Churches in Montana.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: So it's not inter-written by a denomination. But we were saved in the Baptist Church in Fargo.

LeDoux: I see. So in coming then from the Evangelical Free Church to the Baptist here, there weren't any problems with ah -- in other words, they didn't say, "Well you've been in the Free church for so long" -- there were no problems of qualifications or anything like that?

Owens: Well, the deacons came up to see at Frazee. And of course, we questioned in all this area of doctrine.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: And, so there was a complete understanding as far as my view of things and theirs was -
- ____ and ____.

LeDoux: Okay. Do you think this is fairly unusual or is this fairly common for someone to go to an inter-denominational Bible Institute and serve in both Baptist and Free Churches? Is this common or is this fairly unusual?

Owens: That's very common.

LeDoux: That's very common.

Owens: That's very common because the Montana Institute of the Bible is sold Scripture. And so you see, the other churches accept it.

LeDoux: So, the institute was like a -- could have been a basis for almost any Protestant denomination?

Owens: Ah well, not any. Because the Bible Institute stands solid on baptism by immersion and you must be born again, accept Christ as your personal savior before you're baptized, and all the things -- like the reign of Christ, and we have so many things. Its vague -- it was vague to me, and yet after studying the Bible, it's just a commonplace with us. But as far as, for instance, do you want me to mention other denominations, for instance Lutheran.

LeDoux: Certainly.

Owens: We do not accept anything with regard to the institute of the Lutheran teaching -- that's salvation by baptism. You must reach the age of accountability, and that means the age that you're accountable for your soul's destination for eternity. And if that life is changes, then the pastor is willing to baptize him, and so forth. And from there on, you accept Christ as your personal savior. Your life is changed. And then of course, it's nurture and their teaching from there on.

Stone: Okay. I was raised a Presbyterian until the age of thirteen and then my parents became Baptists. I was baptized by sprinkling as an infant. Now, would the Baptist Church have accepted me, or would they have required -- or would the Free Church have accepted me or would they have required either immersion or sprinkling at an age of accountability?

Owens: In the Free Church, it depends upon the pastor. As far as the Free Church headquarters, they would accept you. But the individual pastor, 85% of them at least, would not. And the Baptists would not because we don't accept... ah recognize infant baptism because it's not in the Word – it's not in the Bible. Now, for instance, my wife was baptized as an infant by as Presbyterian minister. She was confirmed in the Lutheran Church. Her – she's Norwegian. And then she was saved in the Baptist Church in Fargo. Well, she was baptized over again. Out three oldest children -- we went to a Lutheran Church in Fargo, south of Fargo – in a little country church, and each one of those children, the oldest ones, were baptized as infants. But then as we got saved, and went out to Bible Institute, and they were all baptized all over again. Now, Baptists are known for baptizing over again because they do not recognize infant baptism. And not only that, we had a deacon in our church in Frazee that was baptized as a young boy. They were having a Baptism and his uncle asked him, "Why don't you go and be baptized?" "What's that?" he said. "Well, it's baptizing and joining the church."

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: And there, when they're baptized, they automatically became members of the church. Well, when I was there, I just frowned on that because I told the people that should not be. Because some people want to be baptized after they're saved, and still do not want to join the church—they may move soon, see. So, I had to... I persuaded them to change that.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: But anyways, in the case of Erv, he was unsaved, and went out into the world and just, you know, lived life—for the devil. And later on, he and his wife were saved, and he said, "I want to be baptized all over again because it didn't mean anything before." So, in that way you

see, that baptism didn't mean anything to him because he wasn't even saved. See, all the Bible—always says, “Be saved and then be baptized. Believe and then be baptized.” Never the reverse.

LeDoux: Okay. Now the -- this conference that the church belongs to, is it generally referred to as the Swedish Baptist Conference?

Owens: Has been in the past, but now it's the General Conference.

LeDoux: The General Conference.

Owens: Uh-huh.

LeDoux: How does this conference differ from other Baptist conferences?

Owens: Well, I was with the Conservative Baptists at Frazee when I came here, and every group feels they're a little bit better, perhaps, than the other ah, I mean many times.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: But actually, there isn't too much difference. The main difference, for instance, is that the Conservative Baptists will pool for Northwestern, while General Conference, they pool for Bethel.

LeDoux: I see.

Owens: See, their own schools—their own institutes. That's the main thing--

LeDoux: Are there any minor theological differences between the conferences—beliefs—that kind of split them?

Owens: Not on the written doctrine or documents.

LeDoux: How about the Southern Baptists Conference? Now, there are some churches in Minnesota who belong to the Southern Baptist.

Owens: Yes, ah the Southern Baptists, 'course they vary quite a bit just like many of the others.

LeDoux: In what ways would they vary—just in the--

Owens: Well, for instance there's some ah...some of their churches would accept smoking in their members. We would not. And the—some of the Southern Baptists would not, see. And others too. And another thing, the Southern Baptists are very string on separated swimming—bathing separate.

LeDoux: Oh, I see.

Owens: They're very strong on that.

Stone: Uh huh. Okay, ah, I wonder if you might mention something about the way your church relates to the Conference—ah, mainly the suggestions or the declarations that the conference makes.

Owens: Responsibilities, and so forth?

Stone: Yes.

Owens: Well really, every Baptist church is an independent church. This is the same as the Evangelical Free.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: Now, it isn't so much that way with the Alliance. The Alliance is pretty well linked with the headquarters.

LeDoux: Now when you say the Alliance, just the--

Owens: Christian—Christian Missionary Alliance.

LeDoux: Christian Missionary Alliance.

Owens: Right.

LeDoux: Okay.

Owens: Which has headquarters in St. Paul, here from Minnesota, and whatever state is with now, I don't know now. But as far as we are concerned, we are independent, but we feel responsibility and they appoint-- Now for instance, the Conservative Baptists with their mission work—they send their missionaries to get their—their support. And in other words, we call that deputation. Here in the General Conference, they have their missionaries, and they have them guaranteed a certain salary. And they appoint certain missionaries to certain churches. Now, for instance, we have two missionaries that are appointed with us—ah, the Al Gustafson's of -- yeah, they're ministering in Argentina. And then the Glen Swanson's in Japan. So we have those responsibilities, but your support that goes in is thrown in a big basket, and so forth. But for the interest of the Church, they have an appointed—certain missionaries. So we can pray for them, and write to them and they write to us, and so forth. It's a general contact.

LeDoux: Now, does the congregation here pay your salary?

Owens: Yes.

LeDoux: Okay. So financially then, how independent is the church here, is it totally independent as far as money for--

Owens: Oh yes. Uh-huh, entirely.

LeDoux: Now, we were over talking to a woman who is the treasurer, I believe, of the Dalbo Baptist Church. They were ah, telling about the independence of each Baptist Church also, and they mentioned they had something like a three-fourths rule in their particular church to agree on a pastor because they couldn't quite get the three-fourths rule. Now, is there something like that here where there's ah--

Owens: Many times you'll face that among the Baptist churches.

LeDoux: Uh huh.

Owens: But if there is a majority—a great majority, for instance—if 75, 80, 85 percent—they'll call for a unanimous vote, and they'll, then they'll go through.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: Now, many times, this ah -- perhaps the approach may not be exactly right. I don't know sometimes—in some churches.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: Now, for instance, as I mentioned the deacons came up to see me at Frazee and they were satisfied, so they recommended me to the church. We came down candidate, and then they had a meeting. But if they ah, they have a different approach, for instance the Alliance, the

Alliance usually lines up three—at least three men. And I speak of Alliance—Christian Missionary Alliance.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: And then after these men speak in the church, they have a vote, which is kind of a competitive thing. As far as I'm concerned, is not really right because a young fellow coming out of college, he wants to learn.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: How's he going to compete with a man that's been on the field for 10, 15, 20 years, you see? They should have their mind made up what kind of a man they want, and choose that man when he comes along. Now with the Free Church, it's more or less all -- like them—the Baptists. You—you are recommended or -- usually by someone else, and you go and have an interview. Then you're speaking in the church, and then they call or they don't call.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: This seemed like the Bible churches in Montana; they work the very same way, only here it was more convenient because the deacons could drive up to see me, but I , for instance, I've been in-- I've known a case where a man had called way up in the Northwest—Washington. They called a man from way down in Florida and he went up to Canada; they called him—they moved his belongings all that ways—distance. Unusual, but there is cases.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Stone: Uh-huh.

LeDoux: Now does every Baptist Conference have about the same degree of independence—every church in every conference? Or is it largely the General Conference that ah--

Owens: I think the General Conference and Conservative Baptists Conference, and then there's the Minnesota Baptist, which is a smaller group. They're a good group and -- but I think the Southern Baptists—they're more closely related.

LeDoux: Ah, now you're affiliated with this conference, do you see this as a definite advantage to the independence of each church, or do you feel sometimes there might-ah they might benefit from a closer degree of interrelatedness, or how do you feel about that?

Owens: Oh, I feel this is the right way because I believe in democracy.

LeDoux: Oh, okay.

Stone: Ah, I wonder if you might give us your opinion or your feelings about well... Mostly concerned with the rural churches that you have either been a member of or pastored – ah your feeling about the children of the members of the church over the years – has there been a lot of movement to the larger cities and away from the smaller churches, or do you feel there's more movement back?

Owens: Well, ah, you cannot take a hard core line in decision on that. Now, for instance, the Free Church at Black Duck – there's been a moving back, and that church has grown with the young people coming back. Of course, there's an attraction there because these young people have been living there -- and their people have been living there -- and their lumber mill -- and they go back. That's their life; they like working wood. Now in the church in North Dakota, that church in a small town was closed and moved to another little larger town. And here, there is a

thing here of course – we face it. We just have to admit it. There is a tendency for people to move to the larger places because of employment, and because of the higher cost of living, and so forth. But the people here have been determined to – to see through with it and it's been holding its own, or even growing see, in some areas.

LeDoux: Okay, so for the future of the church then in this area, ah, do you feel concerned about that – does that kind of worry you over the--

Owens: Oh yes, yes – very definitely.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: Yes, we're very much concerned about it, and ah, there's many people that won't – do not go to church at all right here.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. I wanted to go back a little bit to the beginning of the church here. First of all, the – what was formally called the Swedish Baptist Conference – was this kind of a carry-over from the state church kind of, or rather a reaction to the state church in Sweden, do you think or--

Owens: Ah, when you speak of the state church, you're speaking of the Lutheran Church evidently.

LeDoux: Ah, yeah.

Owens: Because that was the state church.

LeDoux: Right, uh-huh.

Owens: No, it is not. There's a group of believers – born again believers – in Sweden, and they came over and established these churches.

LeDoux: But it was kind of a reaction then to one – a dictation of one faith then?

Owens: Oh, yes.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: Very definitely Baptist, as far true to the word. We talk about Baptist churches, in fact its doctrine, but it's the word of God that counts.

Stone: Uh-huh. Ah maybe this would just be speculation on the intent of people moving over here from Sweden, but do you think that the move from Sweden was as much for the freedom of land, political freedom, as it was for religious freedom – or do you think one was overriding the other?

Owens: Well, I think that ah -- the same thing with these -- Sweden as well as Norway and many of those countries, for instance. My grandparents came from Wales because there was no room for them to farm or -- added upon it as the population increased, they had to look forward to somewhere else to go, and this was – this was the immigration to the United States that was wide open, and ah no doubt that was the main purpose, and they were glad, many of them, to get out of the state church. For instance, the Welsh, more or less they had a straight line church too. 'Cause there was the Welsh Revival, and many of them were saved there, but that didn't affect the world, 'cause they kind of kept it to themselves.

Stone: Uh-huh.

Owens: but I think the main thing was to be able to better the standard of living. And of course when they were saved over there, and they came over here, and that's what they looked forward to – the church at that time.

LeDoux: How are we doing on time, Mark?

Stone: This interview will be continued on the other side.

Stone: --I – we didn't see anybody.

Owens: No.

LeDoux: Okay, ah I wanted to ask you – is it your impression that -- would it have been a little bit difficult for – in the early days of this church – for oh, like a Frenchman or a German or someone who was Polish or something, to get into a Swedish Baptist Church? Because some of these communities often were quite tight-knit in their church such as that. Was your impression that this area was totally Swedish or--

Owens: Well, that I couldn't quite answer really with the education I -- might say. But I know among the Welsh out of Lake Crystal, it would have been difficult. But with those at Garvin, it would be no problem, see. My father was Congregational; my mother was Presbyterian. So you see, it just depends upon the local church. Now, ah they wanted quite -- for quite some time to change this church from Swedish Baptist -- It was -- the name was Swedish Baptist at first.

Stone: Uh-huh.

Owens: So it took some time before they were able to change it Reynolds Baptist, which is a township.

LeDoux: Now, originally it was called – what was the original name exactly? Do you recall?

Owens: I'd have to look it up there, but I think it's the First Swedish Baptist Church.

LeDoux: Okay, and when did this change then? Do you have any idea, approximately what decade or what year?

Owens: No, I'd have to look it up on the records, but I suppose it's ah – it's 25 years ago.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. And ah, did the name at that time change then just to Reynolds Baptist?

Owens: Yes.

LeDoux: And that's been the only name changes here now?

Stone: Where would you say most of the parishioners of this church are – are they ah, or members of this church – are they from the Long Prairie or from the Sauk Centre area – or would you say it's pretty much equally divided?

Owens: It's – all of them here get their mail out of Long Prairie.

Stone: Uh-huh.

Owens: As far as I know. No, excuse me, there's one... Osakis.

LeDoux: What is the approximate size of this church in membership right now?

Owens: Well, we have about 70 members.

LeDoux: Has it been your impression that this has been fairly constant over the years or has it – has there been a growth or kind of a down thing or what?

Owens: Oh, about ah – it would be around 15, 16 years ago – we had a real full house here. And that's how they made this addition on. But right afterwards, just a matter of a few years, it

seemed like people began moving away to the cities and different areas, and so it went way down.

LeDoux: This would have been about, oh 1962-63?

Owens: 19 – somewhere right in that area – '62.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. And it was largely a matter of – there was a movement to the cities you said during that time, into what – Long Prairie then?

Owens: Ah, some went to Long Prairie and some went to different cities for employment and--

LeDoux: Do you think this might have been the year of just bad crops and moving off the farms then, or what?

Owens: Well, they said there were quite a number of young people, and so when they grow up, they have to go elsewhere.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: --farms, small farms here, see. I call it small, 'cause its 80 acres and 160 acres to a farm, where out in North Dakota we had – talked about sections.

Stone: Oh, yeah.

LeDoux: Okay. Ah now is the predominant occupation of this area farming, then – or of the congregation?

Owens: Dairy farming.

LeDoux: Dairy farming.

Owens: Uh-huh.

LeDoux: How is the land around here for--

Owens: Very good.

LeDoux: --for regular farming?

Owens: It's real good; it's heavy here. Its real good soil, I think. 'Course there's a lot of low, swampy land too, taken out of it.

LeDoux: Okay. Ah, I wanted to go over a little bit of the early history of the church. Ah, we can talk to this other gentleman, but you can answer what you can – throughout the years to your knowledge – this area? And is it in fact now pretty solidly Swedish?

Owens: You mean the members are mainly Swedish?

LeDoux: Yeah, has that remained fairly constant through the years?

Owens: Yes, yes – mainly Swedish. But ah, they're not, they do not look down any other nationalities at all.

LeDoux: Okay, in the early days of the church – ah you said it was founded in about 1896, 97 – something like that?

Owens: Yes, according to the records there.

LeDoux: Ah, do you know enough about the early history of the church for example, did they meet in homes, or did they – how was the church established? Do you have knowledge of that?

Owens: It started in a home.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: The church started in a home. A pastor came up from the First Baptist Church in Alexandria, and started meeting in the homes first.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. And this was a Swedish Baptist or--

Owens: Yes.

LeDoux: Okay.

Owens: Swedish Baptist background.

Stone: And this – this was the mother church in Alexandria?

Owens: Right.

Stone: And what was the name of that?

Owens: That's First Baptist Church of Alexandria.

LeDoux: Were there any other daughter churches to your knowledge started in – around Alexandria about the same time?

Owens: Not that I know of, but later on they had to close – a church at Clotho which is closed now. And that came af -- ah at least the pastor here pastored at Clotho. But that is closed.

LeDoux: Is that a fairly common practice among Baptist churches to kind of, ah, spawn daughter churches after the mother one's established?

Owens: Oh yeah.

LeDoux: There's one – I know down in Dalbo in Isanti County there was – ah they're quite prolific – once a church would start – there'd be like three or four others in there then.

Owens: Oh yes. That's that's the pattern of ah – of, ah, starting churches. Whenever they see a need; there's a desire.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. Who – what would your impression be... now who would start these – these daughter churches – would it be settlers in the area that would ask the mother church or would the mother church send out mission – missionaries kind of to ah find locations or--

Owens: It's ah – the procedure is used both ways. Many times people will come and ask and other times, ah the church will take a little bit of survey and then they realized the need there. They'll find some – someone that is interested and then they'll work on it from there.

LeDoux: What was the--

Owens: Same as--

LeDoux: What was the plan here then, do you think? Have you ever heard – if it was this case of settlers asking for a church or whether it was just founded by the mother church?

Owens: They called Alexandria First Baptist Church as the mother church, so perhaps no doubt, the Swedish immigrants here wanted to start the -- they went to Alexandria and asked the pastor to come out, and that's the way I feel that it started.

LeDoux: Okay. Now, the services would have been in Swedish until about what year do you think – 20s or 30s?

Owens: I think they had one service in Swedish up until the latter part of the 30s or even the 40s, I think.

LeDoux: That late?

Owens: I think so.

LeDoux: Hmm, what -- do you feel, or was it your impression that there was any resistance or any disagreement with switching from Swedish into English among some of the -- is that with some of the older people in the church.

Owens: Well, you'll find that amongst some. Yes, oh yes.

LeDoux: Well, do they--

Owens: Well, any nationality, you'll find that.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: In -- among the Welsh, yeah in Lake Crystal they were. This -- this thing of moving into a different area. It's hard for them to accept.

LeDoux: Hmm--

Owens: And I suppose there was some that ah -- that did. I know among the _____ at Billings _____ that was -- that was settled by German people. And they had their German congregational churches. And even when we were out there, the church was changed from German Congregational to the Congregational Church of so and so.

LeDoux: So there might – there is a feeling even today, a little of, like some of the older people, kind of a longing for the old language or has that pretty much died out?

Owens: I think it's died out.

LeDoux: Are there still members that you know that can speak fluent Swedish then?

Owens: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

LeDoux: Ah, in a case where there's a change over from ah, foreign language to English. Do you think this could be largely because the fact that children were learning English in schools and they were – they wanted them to be confirmed, or baptized I should say, in – in immersion. Was there a fear that they might lose some of the children if they did not switch over to English or--

Owens: It's interesting. Some people – some parent feel, they want their children to know the language of their homeland. I just don't. I was -- for instance, my wife that was, had Norwegian parents – they never taught her any – any Norwegian. Just like my parents never taught us children – only, I only know very few words and phrased in Welsh. But, no doubt, the school had the big influence, and for that reason, the children playing with other children. They didn't want to know – mix Swedish or Welsh, whatever there was – in with the conversation.

Stone: Uh-huh. Are there other large groups – like Swedish people in this area – like Germans, Irish, any large settlements of different ethnic backgrounds?

Owens: Well, ah, south of 27, you'll find Norwegians. There's the Swedes, and I understand there's a number of Germans out of Long Prairie and different areas.

Stone: Uh-huh.

Owens: And ah that's ah – that's all I can say. I'm not well acquainted, like in the Dakotas, I can quote quite a few different areas and different nationalities.

LeDoux: Okay. Ah, have there been women's groups active in the church throughout the years then, or is there only one active today.

Owens: Yes. For instance, Lady's Aide.

LeDoux: Right, uh-huh.

Owens: It's going along real good.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: And my wife has started a women's Bible Study – she has on Tuesday morning – it's been real encouraging. I think there's as high as 16 ladies that attend the Bible Study and they start it at 10, and dismiss right at 11, so they can go home to make dinner for their husbands and their working families and so forth. So, it's disciplined in that way so that it won't take any – away from any of the work that is responsible to the family.

Stone: What kind of projects recently have – has the Lady's Aide group been into – any community things or--

Owens: Not so much community as it is missionary projects.

Stone: Now, does that involve visitation to people around here or you mean foreign missionaries?

Owens: Oh, yes. They have – they’ve had their visitation to the sick and so forth, and in that area, and then of course with the missionaries there’ll be some projects like some things that the missionaries need on the field, or that people on the field need where they are ministering.

Stone: Uh-huh.

LeDoux: What youth groups – are there any of those active in the church?

Owens: Well, of course, every year afterschool, the regular school, we have _____ Bible School for one week. And then there is two of the organists – pianists, him and his wife have _____ girls and boys _____ during the school term.

LeDoux: Okay. I wanted to get back just for a moment to the Conference name change, when it changed into the General Conference. Would it be your impression that the change might have been accomplished because of a desire, oh possible, to get away from the purely Swedish aspect of the churches? For example, among many groups there’s a desire to kind of Americanize, to drop the – all the trapping of ah, ethnic. Do you think that was partly one of the reasons?

Owens: Well, it could have been as far as that – there could have been some influence there, but I think mainly it was -- people move and come in, and want to come into the church. And ah, there was -- well we, as we have related some of this before and becomes a barrier sometimes to their growth. And if they would go out into a community, and for instance, that would be a mixed community, and start Swedish Baptist Church, might make a little bit of a sour taste in their mouth, you might say.

LeDoux: So it might have been an effort to kind of broaden – get more members?

Owens: I think one of the main things is the growing out – and reaching out into different areas.

LeDoux: Okay. Are there any customs – Swedish customs or services that are still observed in this church, that would be Swedish in origin?

Stone: Such as a Christmas service or--

LeDoux: --any holidays or any customs, native foods still observed at bake sales – anything like that?

Owens: No.

LeDoux: Okay.

Owens: We do not have any regular suppers or anything to raise funds whatsoever.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Owens: And of course, we have a regular Christmas program (Indiscernible).

LeDoux: There are no trappings of Swedish left?

Owens: No.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. Okay. I was going to ask you – do you have any knowledge of some of the... a little bit of history surrounding some of the other area churches – other country churches in this area.

Owens: In this area – no I do not.

LeDoux: Okay. Alright, Mark, did you have any other questions?

Stone: No.

LeDoux: Okay. Is there anything you'd like to add Reverend that we have not brought up, or something you'd like to add on tape?

Owens: Well, it's kind of quick, right off, but I can't really relate – only I would say that as far as the General Conference is concerned – very good cooperation among them, even if I came from another group. The cooperation is real good – friendly and so forth, and a real warm welcome.