

Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society

Strategic Plan

2024-2025



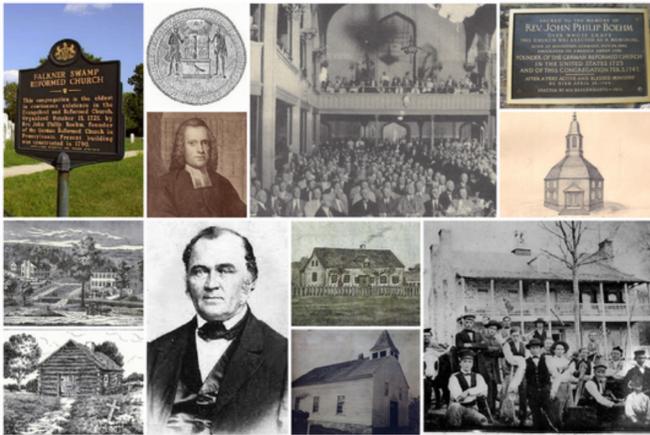
Executive Summary

The Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society was established in 1947 after the formation of the Evangelical and Reformed Church by the merger of the Reformed Church in the United States and the Evangelical Synod of North America. The Reformed Church first established a Historical Society in 1863 during the 300th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism. The Evangelical Synod established a Historical Commission in 1927. The present Society was chartered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and granted non-profit 501(c)(3) status in 1983.

The mission of the Society is to stimulate and cultivate interest in the continuing legacy of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. To do this, we preserve and make available for research the records of the Reformed Church, the Hungarian Reformed Church, the Evangelical Synod, and the Evangelical and Reformed Church. The Society operates in two locations. The central office and archives is located on the second floor of the library building at Lancaster Theological Seminary in Lancaster, PA, and our second location is at Eden Theological Seminary in Webster Groves, MO. In total, the Society holds the official denominational records, records of regional classes, districts, and synods, records of more than 1,000 local churches, and over 350 personal papers collections. The Society also has an artifact collection relating to the denominations and from the mission fields served by them.

The Society could not operate without the generous support of its donors and volunteers. We are proud to share our 2024 Strategic Plan with you as we continue to preserve the past and plan for the future.

Our Mission & Vision



**Preserving the past
to prepare for the
future!**

The mission of the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society is to stimulate and cultivate interest in the continuing legacy of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

To accomplish this we will:

- Collect and preserve historical material;
- Make information and resources accessible to all;
- Provide engaging educational opportunities;
- Foster cooperation with other interested organizations,
- Ensure the Society has the optimal infrastructure and funding to support its ongoing mission.

Our Goals

ERHS leadership believes that effective growth can be achieved with a dedicated focus on **five goals**. These include:

1. Strengthen the overall collection by increasing the number of church record groups, personal papers and manuscript collections, and other relevant works and objects.
2. Ensure that researchers can effectively locate materials in the collection and have access to high-quality digital objects.
3. Increase awareness of the former Evangelical and Reformed Church, its importance and relevance of the ERHS throughout the United States.
4. Engage with related organizations and cooperate with other related libraries, archives, and museums.
5. Achieve near-term financial stability and identify optimal infrastructure for the ERHS.

ERHS is focusing on these five goals for the next two years so that it can financially stabilize in the near term, while advancing its efforts to identify a new facility.



Goal 1: Strengthen the overall collection by increasing the number of church record groups, personal papers and manuscript collections, and other relevant works and objects.

Within the next two years, the ERHS will strengthen the overall collection by increasing the number of church record groups, personal papers and manuscript collections, and other relevant works and objects.

Strategies to achieve the stated goal include:

1. Identify former E&R churches that may be in danger of closing and effectively communicate our services to them.
2. Collaborate with appropriate judicatories (e.g., conference, association, synod, district) to locate materials of closed churches.
3. Engage former E&R clergy in recorded oral histories and to provide a home for their personal papers collection.
4. Communicate with historically related educational and benevolent organizations to solicit materials.
5. Provide the Collection Development Policy and Archival Accessions Policies and Practices on the ERHS website and with interested stakeholders and constituents.
6. Raise additional funds to support collection management.



Goal 2: Ensure that researchers can effectively locate materials in the collection and have access to high-quality digital objects.

Within the next two years, the ERHS will ensure that researchers can effectively locate materials in the collection and have access to high-quality digital objects.

Strategies to achieve the stated goal include:

1. Implement ArchivesSpace as the ERHS collection management application for managing and providing online access to archives, personal papers, manuscripts, and digital objects.
2. Provide weekly uploads to the ERHS library on the Internet Archive.
3. Implement Omeka Classic to provide engaging virtual exhibits and to provide access to digital objects.
4. Provide regular updates on new collections and newly digitized materials via Facebook, Instagram, and the ERHS newsletter.
5. Continue to provide FamilySearch International with access to the church record groups for digitizing and online access.
6. Ensure that library materials are appropriately cataloged in TinyCat, the ERHS online library catalog.



Goal 3: Increase awareness of the former Evangelical and Reformed Church, its importance and relevance of the ERHS throughout the United States.

Within the next two years, the ERHS increase awareness of the former Evangelical and Reformed Church, its importance and relevance of the ERHS throughout the United States.

Strategies to achieve the stated goal include:

1. Continue to network with and educate all former E&R churches through mailings, social media posts, electronic newsletter, and personal contact.
2. Implement engaging virtual programs and webinars aligned to current needs and trends.
3. Participate in speaking engagements and other networking opportunities (e.g., UCC General Synod, CCCC Annual Gathering, EA Convocation, etc.).
4. Develop effective marketing materials.
5. Provide engaging resources for E&R churches to celebrate their unique history within the denomination.



Goal 4: Engage with related organizations and cooperate with other related libraries, archives, and museums.

Within the next two years, the ERHS engage with related organizations and cooperate with other related libraries, archives, and museums.

Strategies to achieve the stated goal include:

1. Identify and vet possible partnerships and other support opportunities.
2. Increase research by establishing collaborations with other related institutions and researchers.
3. Reach out to other libraries, archives, and museums of similar size and mission to learn about successes.
4. Participate in events, celebrations, and speaking engagements of historically related organizations



Goal 5: Achieve near-term financial stability and identify optimal infrastructure for the ERHS.

Within the next two years, the ERHS achieve near-term financial stability and identify optimal infrastructure for the ERHS.

Strategies to achieve the stated goal include:

1. Increase and diversify individual, foundation, and corporate giving.
2. Grow the endowment through new contributions and the reinvestment of earnings.
3. Implement Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs) and provide educational literature via the ERHS website.
4. Engage the Church Building & Loan Fund for renewal campaign feasibility.
5. Prepare the ERHS community for the Renewal Campaign.
6. Conduct an annual appeal of individuals, churches, clergy, and other related organizations.
7. Implement Panorama, a digital fundraising platform and donor management system.
8. Engage stakeholders and constituents in an online auction via Bidding for Good.



Contact Us

Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society at Lancaster Theological Seminary

The primary collection housed on the second floor of the Library at Lancaster Theological Seminary consists of records from the former (German) Reformed Church in the United States and the merged Evangelical and Reformed Church. Some records from the former (German) Evangelical Synod of North America and the United Church of Christ can be found at this location.

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Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society at Eden Theological Seminary

The primary collection housed on the lower level of Press Hall at Eden Theological Seminary consists of records from the former (German) Evangelical Synod of North America. Some records from the (German) Reformed Church in the United States, former merged Evangelical and Reformed Church and United Church of Christ can be found at this location.

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