

## The ECCB Celebrates Its 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 2008

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Our partner church in the Czech Republic will turn 90 years old on December 17th, 2008.

However, the history of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren actually extends all the way back to the work of Jan Hus who was condemned to death in 1415 for leading a movement that became known as the Czech Reformation.



In the 1500's, Martin Luther acknowledged his debt to Hus, and after being forced into exile in 1621, John Amos Comenius became an international voice for the pacifist branch of the Czech Reformation that called themselves the Unity of Brethren.

In the wake of harsh Counter-Reformation policies, Protestantism became something of an underground movement in the Czech lands from 1621 until 1781, when the Edict of Toleration finally permitted Lutheran and Reformed congregations to be established. The descendents of Hus' Utraquists and Comenius' Unity of Brethren blended into the two denominations that were permitted by the Edict.

However, they never forgot their unique roots, and this underlying heritage may have contributed to the fact that Czech Lutheran and Reformed churches first explored the possibility of becoming one united body as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus, less than two months after the Republic of Czechoslovakia was formed on October 28, 1918 following the end of the First World War, representatives of Lutheran and Reformed churches in the Czech lands came together and unanimously voted to become a single denomination.

This historical snapshot leads me to conclude that whether the ECCB is over 600 years old or is only celebrating its 90th birthday, its rich heritage and its unparalleled unity surely merit congratulations and emulation.