



History of FeG Mülheim



Welcome to the Free Evangelical Church of Mülheim an der Ruhr!

We are very happy that you would like to find out more about us and our ministry. No matter whether you live nearby, you are passing through, or you are looking for rest and relaxation in our beautiful area - we invite you to get to know us better. Take a few minutes to look at our website. It is just a glimpse at the life of our church. If you want to know more and experience us live, you are very welcome to join our church services or visit one of the groups of our congregation. You can also follow us live on Facebook or on YouTube. We wish you lots of good impressions and experiences.

Romans 8:30

“Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified”.



About Your FeG Mülheim

The origins of the church

The roots of our church go back to the 1880s. This was the time of the rapid growth of coal mining and heavy industry in the Ruhr district. The growing industrial workforce lived in poor conditions both economically, spiritually, and in terms of education. At that time, Styrum was still an independent village. It became part of the city of Mülheim an der Ruhr in 1910.

During the 1880s, missionaries of the Evangelical Brothers Association of Elberfeld (which is now part of Wuppertal) came to Styrum to preach the gospel and care for the people's spiritual health. During the 1890s, they organized several successful evangelism campaigns. Their missionary work led to the foundation of a men's choir in 1892 and the organization of prayer meetings in Schützenstrasse in Styrum. From 1893, children's services, called "Sunday School," were held there. Around the turn of the century, several charitable organizations were founded to support this work, among them the "Evangelical Brothers' Association in Oberstyrum" (Evangelischer Brüderverein Oberstyrum, 1898) and the "Charity Association" (Verein Wohlthätigkeit, 1901). The latter's bylaws of March 10, 1901, stipulate the goals of its activities: the care for the poor and the sick, the dissemination of educational material, the advancement of choir singing and music, and the fight against drunkenness and immorality (Article II).

During the 1890s, the people involved in this work still belonged to the German Protestant Church (Deutsche Evangelische Kirche) which, at the time, maintained close ties to the government. Towards the end of that decade, however, their spiritual estrangement from the German Protestant Church increased. They became convinced that the German Protestant Church had lost her Biblical foundations and that the vast majority of her members lacked a strong commitment to the Christian faith and a truly Christian way of life. As a consequence, they organized their first own worship services. This made it



necessary to seek for an appropriate location. In 1901, the Charity Association bought a property on Feldstrasse with the intention to build an assembly hall and an apartment building. The property on Feldstrasse 87 is still the location of our church today.

On Easter Monday, March 31 1902, the Free Evangelical Church Styrum was officially established. The founding members were 17 men, among them Friedrich Richter, the first preacher. The record of the meeting reads: "All brethren attending the meeting agreed to join a free evangelical church, which was herewith established. It has the name 'Free evangelical Church' and is located in Styrum. Members of the church can only become persons who testify in word and way of living that they are born again and are living members of the body of Christ and who recognize the Bible as the only guideline. The Free evangelical Church has only the Holy Scripture as the foundation of teaching. The Church acknowledges that baptism and the Lord's Supper have been instituted by Christ and are reserved exclusively for believers. Women can become members of the Church, but they have no voice in church meetings. Religious education for children will take place during Sunday afternoons in the home of the teaching brother or preacher. Every first Sunday of a month a church meeting will be held in the afternoon. It will be followed by the breaking of bread." Soon afterwards, on August 3rd, 1902, the Free evangelical Church moved to her new location in Feldstrasse 87.

In 1905, the church became a member of the Association of Free Evangelical Churches in Germany, which had been founded in 1874.

The new church grew. During 1902, 28 additional members joined the church. In 1908 membership reached its highest level with 138 members. In addition to the Sunday services, the Bible studies and prayer meetings, the church had a large choir, and women's, young men's and children's groups.

FeG Mülheim Today

We are currently a congregation of approximately 70 members. Among the members and regular attendants are people of all ages, from newborns to well above 80 years. There are many families with children, from kindergardeners to high-schoolers. All ages are welcome. Many of our members hail from countries other than Germany, such as Cameroon, Ghana, Iran, or Nigeria. Our senior pastor knows well what it is like to live in a foreign country: He and his family lived in the United States for many years. All nationalities are welcome. In our worship services and events, we speak German, English, and French.



What "Freie evangelische Gemeinde" Stands For

„Gemeinde“ is the German word for church. We are a *church*. A church is a body of Christian believers. As a Christian church, we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the head of our church and the Lord and Master of our lives. As a body, the church is more than a random assembly of people believing in Christ. It is a body created by Jesus Christ and ruled by Him. It is a group of people who are committed to living together as Christian believers, to serving the Lord Jesus Christ and one another out of love. We are therefore responsible for one another and accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ and to one another. We worship together regularly, we care for one another, we take



responsibility for each other, and we build each other up. Together we try to build up the church by bringing new people to Jesus.

We are a church. We believe that every congregation of believers in Jesus Christ, where the Word of God is taught and preached truthfully and where the holy sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are properly administered, has the full meaning and means of a church according to the New Testament and the teaching of the reformation. In particular, it has the gifts of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, we acknowledge that we are not *the* church. That is, we agree that other churches exist together with us and we seek unity with them.

We acknowledge that different churches emphasize different aspects of the Christian faith, of the life of a Christian and the life of the church, and that this is acceptable as long as it is within the limits of what the Bible teaches. We maintain good brotherly relationships with churches of many other denominations in the area and cooperate with them in the Evangelische Allianz (Evangelical Alliance) Mülheim.

“Evangelisch” is the German word for protestant. Theologically, we stand on the Apostolic Creed and the tradition of the reformation with its four main propositions:

- *Christ alone (Jesus is our only savior);*
- *Faith alone (we are saved by faith not by sacrifices or works);*
- *Grace alone (we are saved by the grace of God, that is, by His initiative and sovereign will);*
- *Scripture alone (the Bible as composed of the Old Testament and the New Testament is the only binding standard of our faith and teaching).*

Within the space opened by these four propositions, we tend to rely more on reformed teaching in the tradition of John Calvin than on Lutheran teaching. This implies an emphasis on *personal faith*, on the necessity to be born again, on God's sovereign grace, and on spiritual growth and holiness, i.e., the willingness to subject ever larger parts of our lives to the will of God as we find it in the Biblical commands and the teaching of our Lord Jesus.

We practice the baptism of believers (usually at least 12 years old and capable of expressing their faith in Jesus Christ), although we acknowledge the validity of a believer's infant baptism if he regards it as his true baptism. We do not require re-baptism.

We celebrate Holy Communion as a meal for believers only and, therefore, practice the “fencing of the table,” that is, we tell nonbelievers to stay away from it.

“Frei” means independent from the national and state government and from the former state churches in Germany, the Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands and the Roman Catholic Church. We receive financial support neither from the government nor from other churches. Our church is supported by the gifts and offerings of her members and attendants.



Church Membership

Every Christian believer sharing our principles of faith can be a member of the Freie evangelische Gemeinde Mülheim. He or she must have confessed his or her faith publicly in baptism and he or she must be in good standing in his or her previous church if applicable. By becoming a member, he or she accepts and acknowledges the authority of the elders of FeG Mülheim and commits to respecting it. Before he or she is admitted, he or she is examined by the pastor or an elder in a personal meeting. The Board of Elders takes a decision concerning the admission of new members. New members are admitted in the presence of the church.

Membership includes the commitment to support the church, to participate in its activities, and to take an active part in its life. Membership ends with death, or by a decision of the Elders Board to recommend a member to another church, to excommunicate a member, or to take his or her name off the membership roll because it has not been possible to contact him or her for a long time. Before the decision to end a membership is taken, the Elders seek to hold meetings with the member concerned.

Every believer who has been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is a member of the global and eternal church of Jesus Christ, the “invisible church” of all believers at all times and everywhere. The invisible church has its visible manifestation in local churches. This gives believers the freedom to choose a church where they worship the Lord and have fellowship with other believers.

The benefits from joining a local church are that the believer has brothers and sisters in Christ who know him, care for his physical and spiritual wellbeing, and help him grow in the Christian faith. The duties from joining a local church are to care for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the brethren, to help in the work of the church, and to support the church financially if possible. The expectation is that all who have joined a local church take part in its life regularly, attend the services, and take Holy Communion with their brethren. Members are expected to submit to the elders and to the teaching of the pastor. The pastor and the elders offer membership classes on a regular basis.

Church Finances

FeG Mülheim depends and relies entirely on the financial support of their members. We do not take membership fees nor do we get “church taxes” collected by the German government or any other support from the government. Members are free to decide how much they give to the local church. “Tithing” (ten percent of your income) is a good principle to guide individual decisions in this regard. As a legally recognized charity organization, FeG Mülheim has the privilege that the government allows members to deduct their contributions from their taxable income.



Pastor Jürgen von Hagen
Senior Pastor



Pastor Daniel Aborah
Associate Pastor

Church Government

Freie evangelische Gemeinden are „congregationalist.“ This means that every local church governs herself in accountability to the Lord. We have neither bishops nor any other hierarchies.

The local church is governed by the Assembly of Members and the Board of Elders.

- The Assembly of Members takes all decisions of fundamental importance for the church. It decides by the principle of “unity in spirit”, formally expressed by the rule that decisions should be taken by unanimous vote or at least a two-thirds majority. The Assembly of Members extends the call to the pastor and decides the annual budget.
- The elders of the church are elected by the members for renewable terms of four years. Elders are bound by the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, although FeG Mülheim does permit women to be elders. The Elders are responsible for leading the church in all spiritual affairs. The Board of Elders also decides all current business of the church on the basis of the budget approved by the Assembly of Members.

The position of elders is a spiritual office of the church which has existed since the early church in Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul told his disciples Timothy and Titus to appoint elders in all churches and gave them a list of spiritual criteria elders must meet to qualify for this office (1 Timothy 3:1-7). We regard the appointment of elders as a spiritual process, not a democratic election. Our Lord calls a person into the office of elder. That call finds its expression in two ways. The person himself “desires” the office. The church prays for guidance by the Holy Spirit and confirms the person’s calling by casting its vote. The vote should reflect a broad majority as a sign of unanimity of the church.

The Senior Pastor is a member of the local church and of the Board of Elders during the time of his office. He chairs the board meetings but apart from that his position is not superior to that of the other elders. FeG Mülheim practices church discipline in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament, in particular Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians. Church discipline aims at preserving the purity of the church and at keeping all members on the path to salvation. According to Romans 13, FeG Mülheim accepts and honors the laws and the authority of the government of our country, state, and city.

Association of Free Evangelical Churches Germany

Bund Freier evangelischer Gemeinden

FeG Mülheim is a member of the Bund Freier evangelischer Gemeinden Deutschlands (Association of Free evangelical Churches in Germany), <https://feg.de/>. The Association provides administrative services for the local churches and maintains a Theological College where our pastors are trained.

It has a foreign missions branch called “Allianzmission” and runs a few homes for the elderly.

The association takes decisions at its annual meetings and by its leadership, but, in line with the principle of congregationalism, these decisions are not directly binding upon the local churches. This implies that the Association does not have its own doctrine or teaching in religious or other matters. Of course, as members of the denomination, we share a common ground, but with many local differences.

The Association is organized in four large “regions” and many church counties. We are part of the church county “Ruhr” which is part of the “West Region.” The other churches in Ruhr county are Bochum Mitte, Bochum Langendrehr, Bottrop, Castrop-Rauxel, Essen Katernberg, Essen Kettwig, Essen Kray, Essen Mitte, Gelsenkirchen, Wattenscheid. See <https://ruhr-kreis.feg.de/>. We maintain good relations with the other churches of our county and region. The Association maintains relations with several associations of free evangelical churches worldwide, among them in the US, Canada, and several European countries.

Until the middle of the 19th century, church membership in Germany was regulated by law. There was no religious freedom. Every person was required to be a member of the church his prince belonged to. As a result, every German was either Roman Catholic or German Lutheran. Other denominations existed only in very small parts of Germany. Only in 1848, religious freedom and the freedom of setting up independent (or “free”) churches were granted to the German people. This freedom only took full effect in the 1920s.

Because every German had to be a member of the Catholic or the Lutheran church before, the spiritual state of these two large churches was generally bad. Membership was often purely formal. This was in clear contradiction to the Biblical model of a church as a body of true believers. There were movements within the Lutheran church to form smaller groups of true believers such as the Pietists, but this was difficult to realize within the larger organization.

In the 1850s, a business man from Wuppertal, Hermann Heinrich Grafe, became acquainted with independent protestant churches in France. He brought the idea back to his home town. His main concern was that, in view of 1 Corinthians 11:27ff., he could not accept sharing the Lord’s table with people who were flagrant unbelievers. At first, Grafe asked his Lutheran pastor for permission to form a group of true believers as a community for Holy Communion within the Lutheran church, but the Lutheran church refused this idea. In 1854, Grafe and a few fellow Christians founded the first Freie evangelische Gemeinde in Wuppertal. From there, the movement spread quickly to other parts of Germany.

In 1874, 22 Freie evangelische Gemeinden formed the Bund freier evangelischer Gemeinden. Today, about 470 churches in Germany belong to it. They have a total of about 40000 members.