

**The history of St Mark's Lutheran church Whitestown Indiana by Mary Louise (Laughner) Hancock.
These notes seem to have been written in 1988**

Transcribed from the written notes May 30, 2022 by Mike Hancock & Cheryl Hancock

As the settlers came to this area, a little group of Lutherans from south eastern states began worshiping in a small cabin. As the number of this group increased they needed a larger place to worship. The men built a log cabin on a hill about 1 mile north and 1½ miles east of the village that would later become Whitestown.

To this church settlers came on foot, horseback, and in wagons to hear the word of God by Rev. E.S. Henkel, an early Lutheran circuit rider. This hill where they were they worshipped is now Union Lutheran Cemetery.

In 1835 Rev. Ezra Keller was sent into this area by the first Lutheran synod in America. Reporting to be sited he wrote "I went to Boone County where I found a number of Lutherans from East Tennessee settled about 6 miles south east of Lebanon. These people have been visited occasionally by Rev. ES Henkel. They preached to them in a cabin." The first known written records beginning in 1838 shows the congregation grew to such an extent to it was necessary to divide it. An offer from a few Campbellites to unite with them in forming a second church of the village was accepted. This group was known as Newtown church and their place of worship was in a frame a building just east of the main intersection in present Whitestown.

Traveling ministers preached at Newtown church until 1866 when Rev. Miles Stirewalt became its first regular pastor. The written records of this church in 1868 show the frame structure the congregation was worshiping in was badly in need of repair. After several meetings they voted to build a brick church. Ground was bought from Ambrose Neese and the building was started in the fall of 1868. Completed in the spring of 1869. The site selected for the new church was a lot on which the present church stands.

On Saturday, July 31 1869 the congregation that for reorganizing and a committee was appointed to draft a constitution. Thursday, August 12, 1869 the congregation adopted the constitution as presented by the committee and voted to change the name of the church from Newtown church to St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran church with Rev. Miles Stirewalt as their pastor.

Several years later this brick church settled and the walls spread into a dangerous position making it necessary to rebuild the walls and the roof. The repaired structure served the congregation until 1903 when the congregation voted to build a new church as the cost of repairs was almost as much as building a new church.

In the spring of 1904 the old church was torn down an excavation of the new basement begun. June 24, 1904 the cornerstone (for the new building) was laid at a special service. June 29, 1905 the new church was dedicated free of debt and is still serving the congregation though many changes have been made over the years. 28 pastors have served this congregation as of this year 1988.

Of special interest as compiled by Mary Louise (Laughner) Hancock.

The frame of Newtown Lutheran church had a partition four or 5 feet high through the center that divided the men's seats from the women's seats.

Newtown Lutheran became St. Marks in 1868.

The bell for the first saint mark's church cost \$112 and is in the present church.

The bible for the first saint mark's cost \$12.00.

The stove (to heat the church) cost \$24.50.

Carpenter work by Olive (?) and Wall for the first St. Marks was \$425.00.

Bricks and laying same furnished by Bragg and Ditzenberger at a cost of \$8.50 per 1000 (bricks), but no record of total cost.

William George did the plastering for \$91.50.

The painting was done by Henry Summers for which he was paid \$55.00.

The above was recorded in the first record book which was started in 1868. If there were records before this time, they were lost.

For a time, St. Mark's was a member of a five-church parish which included Salem, New Augusta, Union church in Union township, St. James of Darlington, St. George of Shelby County. After several changes in parish, Salem and St. Marks continued as a parish until September 1950 when St. Mark's became independent.

On August 5, 1871 St. Marks congregation appointed a committee to buy and erect a parsonage in Whitestown.

February 6, 1875 the congregation of St. Marks elected one of its members to serve on a board of trustees with one member from Salem, New Augusta, St. James of Darlington to hold in trust the parsonage used in common by the above-named churches. The parsonage was located in Whitestown but no definite location is given.

September 4, 1875 St. Mark's council talks of selling the parsonage but no record they did, for on October 7, 1876 at a congregational meeting mention was made of paying off the parsonage debt.

October 7, 1876 deacons of St. Marks are instructed to hire Sexton for \$1.00 per month.

March 1876 J.G.M. Hursh is called to St. Marks with a salary of \$225.00 more or less in installments as Pastor desires.

August 12, 1878 St. Marks calls Rev. C.L. Lauer. Salary of \$500 in installments as he desires.

May 1, 1886 hire Sexton for \$16.00 per year.

February 22, 1891 Sexton hired for \$24.00 per year. He is to furnish oil for lamps, brooms and lamp flues.

June 15, 1895 Sexton hired for \$30.00 per year.

January 7, 1903 the first mentions of Dorcas society. We have no record when it was first organized but know they were meeting in the year 1900 for the council accepted their report for 2 ½ years work on January 1903 (this in later years became known as LCW (Lutheran Church Women)).

October 28, 1903 congregation voted to build a new church.

Spring 1904 the old church is torn down an excavation on the new basement begun.

January 21 1904 the new cornerstone was laid the special services.

January 29, 1905 new church dedicated free of debt. The dimensions are 48 by 70 with a seating capacity of 400. The bell, organ, and some of the seats from the former church were placed in the new church. The dedication service was opened with the clergy and vestry going through the ceremony of bringing the bible and sacred vessels into the church.

Total cost of St. Marks present building to build was \$9847.39 but there is no itemized list.

(Mary Louise Hancock says) I find no records of purchase or gifts of silver communion set or baptismal fount.

1913 hardwood floors were laid in the church proper at a cost of about \$291.22.

April 1, 1919 purchased parsonage located at north edge of town from William E Lane for \$4000.

December 1922 Christmas cantata with a chorus of 60 voices and orchestra of 12 under the leadership of Mrs. W.C. Laughbaum. At one time there was an orchestra of 16

1923 during this year the pulpit and choir platform were enlarged and a back door made to the church basement. About this time electric lights replaced the carbide lights.

May 1, 1924 Rev. H.G. Davis was called to St. Marks and he served the longest period of time for any of our pastors at 13 ½ years.

January 16, 1925 at the annual congregational meeting that Dorcas society (now LCW) destroyed the note for \$670.11 on the parsonage. Note, parsonage paid in full church free of debt.

June 4, 1925 our parsonage and two other homes were destroyed by fire. Parsonage was rebuilt on original foundation.

May 1926 home builders (young married) organized S.S. class. This class responsible for many improvements.

February 7 1928 council granted Dorcas society permission to have a door cut from the kitchen to the furnace room.

August 1928 floors and benches in church refinished and outside window frames painted cost \$291.22. Rededication was September 2 1928.

April 1929 home builders class bought materials for purple parchments. Cost \$8.47 but no mention of who made them.

May 14, 1929 Rev. Davis and council discuss robing the choir but I find no record just when they were made but remember the women of the church made them with a material purchased at Neidlingers grocery store. The choir to wear the new robes on December 18, 1932 at 10:30 AM service if possible however I find a record they were worn for the first time on April 16, 1933. The Rev. Davis was director of the choir. The Cassocks were black and surplice white.

It was during the years sometime before 1931 the early Easter services were held, but the first time I find record was March 16, 1931. Quite possibly started in 1925 for I remember my first communion was on Easter Sunday 1925 at an early service. I will never forget the bright sun shining on the window behind the altar.

December 21, 1933 the choir sang over radio station W.O.W.O at Ft Wayne Indiana.

The fish fry started in 1936 and was held annually for several years.

The Christian workers class was organized in 1939. This class was composed of young married and a few single persons. They were responsible for several projects including organizing the choir and buying material and making robes for the choir. They were blue in color.

The first record I find of Christmas eve 11:00 PM services were for the year 1939, however I remember we had a very early Christmas day service before the Christmas eve services were started. This was as early as 1924 or 25.

November 6, 1940 railing in narthex of church had been installed and council asked Adelbert Neese to put railing to basement. There is no record of the cost of these railings.

June 20, 1941 homebuilders class paid \$171.20 to Mr. Boyd for drilling well and in early 1942 the water was piped to new kitchen sink. The pump for the well was bought from Fred Neidlinger for \$18.13.

February 3, 1942 council appoints Adrian Cline and Clyde O. Laughner to ask Mardelle Kouns to play for the church. Mardelle did start playing in February 1942.

July 12, 1942 council voted to discontinue the annual fish fry for the duration of the war (World War 2.)

January 5, 1942 council sends a letter of thanks to Mrs. Mary Harr Kern for new cross and candlesticks.

June 6, 1944 council appoints committee to make plans for our church one 100th year anniversary. Chairman Sam J. Sonders, Lillie Jackson, Alva E. Hine, Bertha Hine, Charlie B. Laughner, H.G. Etter, Opal V. Etter, Mary Louise Hancock, Mardelle Kouns, Virginia McKennas.

Notes made by Mary Louise Hancock

Why did I jump from 1954 to 1958 or have they been lost?

I know the wood cross that we use during lent and decorate for Easter was made by Adelbert Neese and Luther Laughner when Rev. Krause was pastor and served from 1954 to 1957

When Harry G. Stetser was pastor in 1953 council gave permission to have a pouring lip put on the chalice so he could pour wine into small communion classes.

When I asked opal Etter when she started playing for SS and church, she said "I don't know, seems I have always played".

Things that I remember but find no record of by Mary Louise Hancock

The year went cross was first used?

Who gave silver communion set with trays and small glasses, and when?

Bertha (Laughner) Millikan gave the wood baptismal, but when?

Samuel Sonders gave the brass collection plates, but when?

LCW made Christmas decorations, but when?

The silver flagon, chalice, bread plate, and baptismal (with grapes on them) have been at St. Marks as long as I can remember but I found no record of who gave them or when or even if purchased.

Dates of interest

In 1946 St. Marks installed new furnace at a cost of \$1232 installed by Russel and son.

In 1947 floors and pews were refinished and interior repainted.

1948 new carpet and the organ installed.

1948 St. Marks celebrates 100 years with musical and pageant on Friday night October 1, 1948.

October 2, 1948 Saturday, a movie "The Salt of the Earth" and songfest- refreshments were served in the basement.

Sunday, October 3, 1948 with 9:30 AM Sunday school, 10:30 AM Service and communion-centennial dinner at noon and one 100th anniversary service at 2:30 PM.

1950 One restroom installed.

1950 St. Marks and Salem sponsor Robert Shipkus family-Mr & Mrs. Shipkus & 3 children-only 1 child spoke English

1951 The first time women elected to church council namely-Mrs. Goldie Hine and Mary Louise Hancock.

1952 St. Marks signed contract for town water for parsonage and church

1954 Council & congregation vote to convert furnace to gas (up until this time the furnace burned coal)

1954 boy scouts under direction of Stanley Clemmens placed nativity scene on lawn and first advent wreath.

1958 new red hymnals purchased \$3.85 each.

1959 Dorcas society and a missionary society merge.

1960 Bradshaw brothers start remodeling basement. New cabinets, sink, etc.

1961 Lutheran church men bought new robes (2) for acolytes.

1961 new light fixtures given.

June 29, 1963 PA system installed \$500.

August 14, 1963 mercury lights given for parking lot.

1965 church window repair \$369.25.

1965 Cox and Pipes painted parsonage for \$100

February 1, 1966 council adopts church seal.

February 7, 1967 council votes to pay a fee of \$13.00 to incorporate. Received these papers June 6, 1967.

August 1967 Rev Howard Marken volunteered to take paint off windows and refinished them. He finished this in early December 1967.

1967 congregation votes to lower ceiling in church.

1967 paneling is donated for pulpit walls by Mr. and Mrs. Noble Beck

1969 outside wood frames of church windows painted. I find no record of men of church digging ditch south of church but do find record dated March 10, 1970 stating insurance will not cover the damage to basement because of water.

January 1970 congregation changes time for annual congregational meeting from fourth Thursday night in January to fourth Sunday after church with pitch in dinner before meeting.

March 1970- 2 new Brass small vase is given cost \$65.00.

August 1970 stone edge along west side of roof repaired and bell tower painted.

September 6, 1970 Darcy Faith Bates started playing organ for church services.

December 1970 LCW made 25 robes for children's choir.

January 11, 1971 Cathy Fleener hired to clean church for \$6.00 per week.

April 1971 choir loft repaired with new ceiling tiles and Vicki Bates repainted the bulletin board.

July 1, 1971 Rev. Dale Beutler begins as our pastor.

August 18, 1971 church men tear out old crumbling south steps and clean up yard.

October 17, 1971 new acolyte crosses given by Flora Laughner, Mr. & Mrs. Harry Etter, Mr. & Mrs Charles Kouns, Mr. & Mrs. Joel R. Hancock.

February 1972 first time for female usher (Denise Rose).

March 23, 1972 rewiring of parsonage completed.

March 1, 1972 surveying of Whitestown and Worth township begins.

February 1972 council gives permission to combine bible school with Methodists. This was held week of July 10-14 very good attendance though terribly hot with over flow crowd.

August 1, 1972 building fund established off with LCW giving \$250.

September 1972 congregation of Methodists and Lutherans walk to Lions club park singing "onward Christian soldiers" for community services.

March 31, 1972 Tenebrae service with Methodists and at St. Marks. This is St. Marks first Tenebrae service.

June 1972 the 8:30 AM service is begun

Early 1972 men of church finish office for pastor and then finished paneling nursery in September of 1972.

September 28, 1972 at 2:00 AM. Myron Cragun and Joel R. Hancock Sr. climb up in the attic of church to find a source of rain coming in to ruin one choir loft. It was found and roof was patched by these two men on October 1, 1972.

Late 1972 after roof was patched new ceiling tile was placed in choir loft ceiling.

December 1972 artificial Christmas tree was given to St. Marks by Mrs. and Mrs. Velma Statgill (Myron Craguns mother-in-law).

January 21, 1972 Debbie Etter (12 years old) started playing piano for Sunday school in children's department.

March 6, 1973 a telephone has been installed at church.

March 6, 1973 council approves a directory to be made.

March 11, 1973 Betty Miller started taking pictures of members and friends of congregation.

April 22, 1973 7:00 AM Easter services with breakfast and egg hunt after services.

June 14, 1973 Debbie Etter played organ for LCW guest night; Methodist ladies were invited. Unusual Madonna pictures shown.

June 1973 men of church roofing parsonage.

June 14, 1973-three louvered panels were installed in bell tower by Mike Copeland and John R Cline. These louvers cost \$240 and were donated by Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Harvey.

August 4, 1973 after several years of silence, the bell in tower is ringing again.

August 7, 1973 it was announced that Jack Hoffman of Dial Glass in Lebanon Indiana will start repairing of church windows the last week of August.

September 25, 26, 27, 1973 St. Marks, the Methodist church of Whitestown, and St. Alphonsus catholic church of Zionsville working together in food tent number 2 at farm progress show. This project was very successful and the entire congregation responded, helping to serve sandwiches, pies, drinks, etc. 6,318 ham sandwiches, 4,065 hot dogs, 1,690 hamburgers, were sold along with countless pies, donuts, pop, milk, coffee. The profits were shared by the three churches. Saint mark's share was \$3002.66

October 1973 unified Sunday school with Methodists approved by counsel.

1974 releading of stained-glass windows finished and protective shield behind pulpit window installed at a cost of \$1180 with Flora Laughner paying \$300 for the protective shield.

April 28, 1974 special congregational meeting gives council permission to borrow money for needed repairs not to exceed \$7000. Edna Steffey, in memory of her husband, gave \$500 on the purchase of new furnaces.

June 29, 1974 the old furnaces torn out by pastor Dale Beutler, Myron Cragun, H. Gene Etter, and John Hancock.

July 16, 1974 sewage system for church connected to town sewage system by Jim Kendell at cost of \$311.50

August 1974 D.g.P.g Sheet Metal Company installed new furnaces.

September 4, 1974 Lloyd Rohrbach hooked gas to new furnaces.

September 13, 1974 John Hancock and Joel R Hancock Sr. installed electric controls for furnaces.

September 15, 1974 new furnace is used for the first time.

September 1974 a new church sign was placed in front of St. Marks.

October 1974 aluminum siding and new gutters installed on parsonage by Lowell Hull at a cost of \$2495.85.

January 1975 new roof on church at cost \$3203.80 and work was done by Mike Copenhaver.

May 1975 three basement windows block of by Ray Snow at cost of \$382.00

June 15, 1975 Debbie Etter started playing piano for church services, playing offertory and one hymn.

October 1975 church directional signs made by Bill Spencer cost \$93.43 to be placed east and south of Whitestown.

March 1976 paneling in basement and window repair finished and paid for \$1782.75 (I believe \$1000 of this was a gift from the Habegger family).

1976 sandblasting of bricks by mid-continental cost \$5000

June 1976 "Lutheran table talk" on radio station WNON in begins with Pastor Beutler and the pastor from Trinity Lutheran in Lebanon.

June 13, 1976 service of rededication.

1977 porch lift fund established and storm window fund started.

May 5, 1978 metal fire escape installed north side of church at cost \$279.00

April 1978 \$200 given to Grace Lutheran Church in Gas City Indiana in their time of need.

June 20, 1978 special council meeting to discuss possibility of pastor buying the parsonage. Appraisal of \$27,500 needs approval by congregation. Congregation did approve.

September 1978 bought new hymnals.

October 1978 pastor Beutler reports they won't be buying parsonage although loan had been approved.

1978 Mrs. Judy Goodwin is church organist and choir director.

June 5, 1979 storage shed completed at cost of \$800 and storm windows are all in.

September or October 1979 new sidewalks in front of church at cost of \$2014.67.

September 2, 1980 council meeting reports porch lift has been ordered. No mention made of install date.

October 26, 1980 special congregational meeting. A committee is named to explore Sunday school expansion building or to combine with Methodists.

May 5, 1981 council meeting. Thanks to all workers for refinishing floors, pews, and to Merle Dahl for donating the polyurethane for floors.

June 2, 1981 new carpet has been installed.

July 7, 1981 fence at parsonage finished cost approximately \$350.

August 1981-four ceiling fans are here.

May 6, 1982 the alley behind church closed at 7:30 PM, Kent Frandsen lawyer. Church planning committee still meeting and discussing building for more Sunday school space.

September 7, 1982 waterproofing completed during August.

February 1983 parsonage garage and it's wiring are completed and paid in full.

March 1983 carpet runner for vestibule \$45.00.

April 1983 council gives approval for a quit claim to Vonda Kouns so Rick Turley can complete his purchase of the property.

June 1983 new sign for front of church.

June 5, 1983 pastor Dale Beutler resignation given to council to be effective August 15, 1983.

August 2, 1983 constitution committee reports the new constitution is finished and ready for council approval.

St. Marks calls John W. Kost with call to be effective November 1, 1983.

October 14, 1984 John W. Kost accepts call to St. Marks.

February 1984 first seder meal to be on April 19, 1984

April 1984 moving of the altar.

May 1984 council approves of purchase of one Kerry candle which burns olive oil-one is to be free. These replace the candle we have been using. Used first October 1984.

May 14, 1984 meeting at Zionsville town hall concerning new Lutheran church at Zionsville.

November 1984 the LCW delivered a quilt to Dale and Sue Beutler.

December 1984 family night and hanging of the greens.

December 12, 1984 church bylaws completed.

January 16, 1985 lawsuit dismissed against St. Marks from the Joe R. Norman lawsuit.

January 1985-two Union Lutheran cemetery lots given to St. Marks by Marlene a Harman Hipponsteel and in February 1985 the church council decided to keep the lots until someone has need of them.

January 1985 joint Sunday school with Methodist renamed the cooperative Sunday school.

April 1985 Immanuel Lutheran church of Merrillville Indiana gives organ to St. Marks.

August 1985 repair and installation of organ.

September 28, 1985 new organ dedicated with Janet Williams as organist.

November 1985 new copier purchased with money from memorial funds.