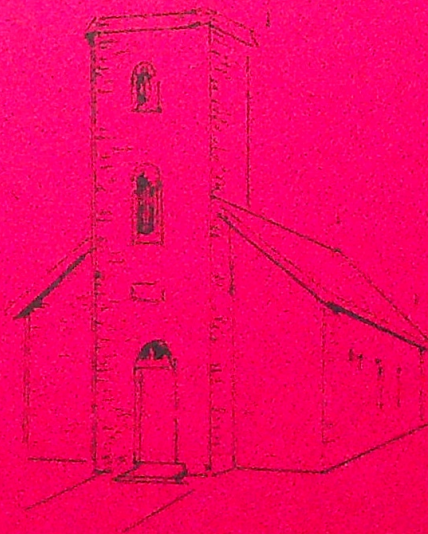


A CELEBRATION OF FAITH



1848 - 1988







HISTORY OF ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Whitestown, Indiana

As the settlers came to this area, a little group of Lutherans from the southeastern states began worshipping in a small log cabin. As the number of this group increased, they needed a larger place to worship. The men built a log cabin on a hill in the woods about one mile north and 1-1/2 miles east of the village that later became Whitestown. To this church settlers came on foot, horse-back and in wagons to hear the word of God by Rev. E.S. Henkel, an early Lutheran Circuit Rider. This hill where they worshipped is now Union Lutheran Cemetery.

In 1835 Rev. Ezra Kaller was sent into this area by the first Lutheran Synod in America. Reporting to the Synod he wrote, "I went to Boone Co. where I found a number of Lutherans from East Tenn. settled about six miles Southeast of Lebanon. These people have been visited occasionally by Rev. E.S. Henkel. I preached to them in a cabin." The first known written record, beginning in 1838, shows the congregation grew to such an extent it was necessary to divide it. An offer from a new Campbellites to unite with them in forming a church in the village was accepted. This group was known as Newtown Church, and their place of worship was in a frame building just east of the main intersection in present Whitestown. Traveling ministers preached at Newtown Church until 1866 when Rev. Miles J. Stirewalt became its first regular pastor. The written records of this Church in 1868 show the frame structure of the congregation was worshipping 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 and 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 met 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; the walls spread into a dangerous position, making it necessary to rebuild the walls and roof. This repaired structure served the congregation until 1903 when the congregation voted to build a new church, as the cost of repair was almost as much as building a new church.

In the spring of 1904, the old church was torn down and excavation of the basement begun; on June 24, 1904 the cornerstone was laid at a special service. On January 29, 1905, the new church was dedicated, free of debt, and is still serving the congregation, though many changes have been made during the years. Twenty-eight pastors have served this congregation as of this year, 1988.

Condensed from 1973 record by  
Mary Louise Laughner Hancock



Pastors Who Have Served St. Mark's:

Travelling Pastors - 1834-1866

Rev. E. S. Henkel  
Rev. J. P. Rudisell  
Rev. John Livengood  
Rev. D. P. Groundt

Full Time Pastors - 1866 -

Rev. Miles J. Stirewalt - 1866-1869  
Rev. Jacob Wesner - 1870-1874  
Rev. J. G. M. Hursh - 1876-1877  
Rev. W. C. L. Lauer - 1878-1880  
Rev. Isaac Hursh - 1881-1882  
Rev. J. C. Barb - 1883-1894  
Rev. J. J. Stirewalt - 1895-1897  
Rev. S. P. Fryberger 1897-1900  
Rev. D. L. Reese - 1900-1905  
Rev. C. L. Warstler - 1907-1909  
Rev. S. D. Myers - 1909-1911  
Rev. C. L. Warstler- 1911-1917  
Rev. B. L. Westerbarger - 1919-1921  
Rev. W. C. Laughbaum, D.D. - 1922-1923  
Rev. H. Grady Davis - 1924-1937  
Rev. G. L. Kleespie - 1937-1944  
Rev. Raymond Heine - 1945-1947  
Rev. John R. Spangler - 1948-1950  
Rev. Wilford C. Butt - 1951-1953  
Rev. Harry G. Stetser - 1953  
Rev. Richard T. Kraus - 1954-1957  
Rev. John T. Schnabel - 1958-1959  
Rev. James S. Ford - 1961-1964  
Rev. Frank C. Hurst - 1964-1965  
Rev. Howard K. Marken - 1966-1970  
Rev. Dale H. Beutler - 1971-1983  
Rev. John W. Kost - 1983-1986  
Rev. George Zornow - 1987-



Of Special Interest

by Mary Louise Laughner Hancock

The frame Newtown Lutheran Church had a partition 4 or 5 feet high through the center that divided the men's seats from the women's seats. Newtown Lutheran became St. Mark's in 1869. The bell for the first St. Mark's Church cost \$112.00 and is in the present church.

The Bible for first St. Mark's cost \$12.00.

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

Carpenter work by Olive and Wall for first St. Mark's was \$425.00.

Bricks and laying of same furnished by Bragg and Ditzenbarger at a cost of \$8.50 per thousand, but no record of total cost.

William George did the plastering for \$91.50.

The painting was done by Henry Sumners 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 are lost.

For a time, St. Mark's was a member of a 5-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. Mark's continued as a parish until September 1950, when St. Mark's became independent.

August 5, 1871 - St. Mark's congregation appointed a committee to buy or erect a parsonage in Whitestown.

February 6, 1875 - The congregation elected one of its members to serve on a board of trustees with one member from Salem, New Augusta and one from St. James, 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 was given.

September 4, 1875 - St. Mark's council talks of selling parsonage, but no record they did so.

October 7, 1876 - At a congregational meeting, mention was made of paying off parsonage debt; deacons of St. Mark's instructed to hire sexton for \$1.00 per month.

March - 1876 - J. G. M. Hursh called to St. Mark's; salary \$225.00, more or less, in installments as pastor desires.

August 12, 1878 - St. Mark's calls Rev. W.C. L. Lauer; salary of \$500.00, in installments as he desires.

May 1, 1886 - Hired 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 mention 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 2-1/2 years work, in January 1903 (this later became known as L.C.W. and is now known as the WELCA).



October 28, 1903 - Congregation voted to build new church.

Spring of 1904 - Old church torn down and excavation of basement begun. Tuesday, June 21, 1904, the cornerstone was laid with special services.

January 29, 1905 - New church dedicated free of debt. The dimensions are 48 x 70 with a seating capacity of 400. The bell, organ and some of the seats from the former church were placed in new church. The dedication service was opened with the clergy and vestry going through the ceremony of bearing the Bible and sacred vessels into the Church. Total cost of St. Marks (present building) was \$9,847.39, but no itemized list. I find no records of purchase or gifts of communion set or silver baptismal fount.

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

April 1, 1919 - Purchased parsonage located at north edge of town from William Lane for \$4,000.00.

December 1922 - Christmas Cantata presented with a chorus of 60 under leadership of Mrs. W.C. Laughtenbaum. At one time there was an orchestra of 16.

1923 - During the year the pulpit and choir areas 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. Mark's; he served the longest period of time for any of our pastors - 13-1/2 years.

January 16, 1925 - At the annual congregational meeting, the Dorcas Society (now WELCA.) destroyed the note of \$670.11 on parsonage. Note: Parsonage paid in full; church free of debt.

June 4, 1925 - Our parsonage and two other homes were destroyed by fire. Present parsonage built on original foundation.

May 1926 - Home Builders (young marrieds) organized Sunday School class; this class responsible for many improvements.

February 7, 1928 - Council granted Dorcas Society permission to have a door cut from kitchen to furnace room.

August 1928 - Floors and benches in church refinished and outside window frames painted; cost about \$291.22; rededication was September 2, 1928.

April 1929 - Home Builders class bought material for purple paraments (\$8.47); 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 material purchased at Needlingers Grocery Store. Choir to wear new robes on Dec. 18, 1932(?) at 10:30 a.m. service, if possible, however, I find a record they were worn for the first time on April 16, 1933. Rev. Davis was director of the choir. The Cassocks were black, surplice white. It was during the years some time 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 WOWO at Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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

1939 - The Christian Workers Class was organized in 1939, and was composed of young marrieds and a few single persons. They were responsible for several projects including organizing a Junior 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 p.m. services were for the year 1939; however, I remember we had had early Christmas Day services as early as 1924 or 1925 before the Christmas Eve services were started.

November 6, 1940 - Railing in narthex of church had been installed and council asked Adelbert Neese to put railing to basement. No record of costs of these.

June 20, 1941 - Home Builders 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 C.O. Laughner to ask Mardelle Kouns to play for church. Mardelle did start playing in February 1942.

July 12, 1942 - Council voted to discontinue the annual fish fry for duration of World War II.

January 5, 1942 - Council sends letter of thanks to Mrs. Mary Harr Kern for new cross and candlesticks, given in memory of William and Eliza Harr, her parents. Until then the wooden cross was used.

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

1946 - Russell & Son installed new furnace at St. Mark's at a cost of \$1,232.00.

1947 - Floors and pews refinished and interior repainted.

1948 - New carpet and organ installed; St. Mark's celebrates 100 years with Musical and Pageant on Friday night, October 1, 1948. On Saturday, October 2, a movie, "The Salt of the Earth" and songfest held; refreshments served in basement. Sunday, October 3rd, Sunday School at 9:30; Communion Service at 10:30; and Centennial Dinner at noon, and One Hundredth Anniversary Service at 2:30 p.m.

1950 - One restroom installed; St. Marks and Salem sponsor Robert Shipkus family (Mr. and Mrs. Shipkus and three children); only one child spoke English.

1951 - The first time women elected to Church Council; namely, Mrs. Goldie Hine and Mary Louise Hancock.

1952 - St. Mark's signed contract for town water for parsonage and church.

1954 - Council and congregation vote to convert furnace from coal to gas; boy scouts under direction of Stanley Clemmens; placed Nativity scene on lawn and first advent wreath.



1954-1958 - Records have apparently been lost - I know that 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 he served from 1954 to 1957. Also, when Harry G. Stetser was pastor in 1953, Council gave permission to have pouring lip put on chalice so he could pour wine into small communion glasses.

1958 - New red hymnals purchased at a cost of \$3.85 each.

1959 - Dorcas Society and Missionary Society merge.

1960 - Bradshaw Brothers start remodeling basement (new cabinets, sink, etc.)

1961 - Lutheran Church Men bought two new robes for Acolytes; new light fixtures given.

1963 - Public Address system installed (\$500.00); mercury lights given for parking lot.

1965 - Church window repaired at a cost of \$369.25; Cox & Pipes painted the parsonage for \$100.00.

1966 - Council adopts church seal on February 1st.

1967 - Council votes to pay fee of \$13.00 to incorporate; received their papers June 6th; Rev. Howard Marken volunteered to take paint off windows and refinish them; he finished this in early December; congregation voted to lower ceiling in church; paneling donated for pulpit walls by Mr. and Mrs. Noble Beck.

1969 - Outside wood frames of church windows painted.

1970 - Congregation changes time for Annual Congregational Meeting from 4th Thursday night in January to 4th Sunday, after church with pitch-in dinner before meeting; new small brass vases given (cost \$65.00) in March; in August, stone edge along west side of roof repaired and bell tower painted; in September, Darcy Faith Bates started playing organ for services; in December, the LCW made 25 robes for children's choir.

1971 - Cathy Fleener hired to clean church; paid \$6.00 per week; choir loft repaired with new ceiling tiles and Vickie Bates repainted bulletin board. In July, Rev. Dale Beutler began as our Pastor. August found the church men tearing out the old, crumbling south steps and cleaning up the yard. New Acolyte crosses were given by Flora Laughner, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Etter, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kouns, and Mr. and Mrs. Joel R. Hancock, Sr.

1972 - Denise Rose was first female to usher for services; the parsonage was rewired; the council gave permission to combine Bible School with Methodist Church which was very well attended, and closing had overflow crowd; the building fund was established, with LCW giving \$250.00; in September there was a Community Service, which found the Methodists and Lutherans walking to Lions Club Park singing Onward Christian Soldiers. Also in September, 1972, Myron Cragun and Joel Hancock, Sr. climbed up in the attic of church at 2:00 a.m. to find the source of rain coming in to ruin the choir loft; after the roof was patched, new ceiling tile were installed. It was also during 1972 that the 8:30 a.m. service was started, and 12 year old Debbie Etter started playing for Sunday School in the Children's Department.



1973 - A telephone was installed at church; the council approved that a church directory be made and B. Miller started taking pictures of members and friends of the congregation; the men of the church reroofed the parsonage; the louvered panels were installed in the bell tower ... after several years of silence, the bell in the tower rang again. In September, St. Marks, the Methodist Church of Whites-town, and St. Alphonsus Catholic Church of Zionsville worked together in a food tent at the Farm Progress Show. Everyone from the congregation responded and the project was a great success: 6,318 ham sandwiches, 4,065 hot dogs, 1,690 hamburgers, as well as drinks, pies, etc. were served. St. Mark's share of the profit was \$3,022.66. In October of 1973, a Unified Sunday School with the Methodist Church was approved by Council.

1974 - The stained glass windows were releaded, and a protective shield was installed behind the pulpit window at a cost of \$1,180. At a special Congregational meeting, council was given permission to borrow money for needed repairs, not to exceed \$7,000: The old furnaces were torn out and replaced, aluminum siding and new gutters were put on the parsonage, a new church sign was placed in front of church.

1975 - A new roof was put on the church, new church directional signs were made by Bill Spencer and Placed east and south of Whitestown; Debbie Etter started playing the offertory and one hymn for church services.

1976 - The paneling in the basement was finished, as were the window repairs, at a cost of \$1,782.75, most of which was paid for with a gift; the bricks were sandblasted, at a cost of \$5,000, and "Lutheran Table Talk" began on Radio Station WNON, co-hosted by Pastor Dale. In June there was a service of rededication.

1977 - The porch lift fund was established, as was a fund for storm windows.

1978 - A metal fire escape was installed on the north side of the church at a cost of \$279, and in their time of need, a donation was made to Grace Lutheran Church, Gas City, Indiana. In 1978 new hymnals were purchased, and Judy Goodwin started playing organ and as choir director.

1979 - The storage shed was completed and storm windows were finished. A new sidewalk was poured in front of church at a cost of just over \$2,000.

1980 - At a special congregational meeting, a committee was named to explore Sunday School expansion, or combining with Whitestown Methodist Church. Council reported that a porch lift had been ordered.

1981 - The floors and pews in the church were all refinished; new carpet was installed; the ceiling fans installed; and the fence at the parsonage was finished.

1982 - The Church Planning Committee was still meeting and discussing building to provide more Sunday School space, a multi-purpose area, and expanded kitchen facilities; the alley behind the church was officially closed, and the water-proofing was completed.

1983 - The parsonage garage, including wiring, was completed and paid in full; a new sign was put in front of the church; and in July Rev. Dale Beutler resigned effective August 15th; and later in the year St. Mark's issued a call to Pastor John Kost, who accepted our call and began as Pastor on November 1st. After many years of collecting recipes, the "Favorite Recipes" cookbook was put together by the LCW and sold at the annual Pioneer Days celebration.



1984 - First Seder Meal at St. Mark's was served on April 19, 1984; the altar was moved; there was an organizational meeting in Zionsville concerning a new Lutheran Church to be located in Zionsville.

1985 - Two cemetery lots at Union Lutheran Cemetery were given to St. Mark's; the Community Sunday School with Whitestown Methodist Church was renamed "Cooperative Sunday School"; Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Merrillville gave St. Mark's an organ after which a service of dedication was offered in September; a new copier was purchased with monies from the Memorial Fund.

1986 - The parsonage roof was completed, all with labor provided by the men of the church; a new public address system was installed in the sanctuary; the Cooperative Sunday School with the Whitestown Methodist Church was discontinued; the kitchen stove was renovated by Lowell Van de Mark and twelve ton of stone was put on the parking lot, also donated by the Van de Marks; Farm Bureau leased a lot from St. Mark's for the nominal fee of \$1.00 per year; and the resignation of Pastor John Kost was accepted, effective November 1st.

1987 - Pastor George Zornow accepted a call to St. Mark's and started leading worship in March; the nursery was refinished into an office and the Pastor's office was moved from the parsonage to the church.

1988 - 140th Anniversary - A Celebration of Faith. Serving on the Anniversary Committee were Mardelle Kouns, Goldie Hine, Victorene Bates, Sue Habegger, Nelda Rohrbach, Debbie Etter, Tom Pauley and Pastor George. Special thanks to Mary Louise Hancock for poring over volumes of history and condensing it, to Judy Eggert for editing and typing the history, and for all the members of St. Mark's who contributed to the success of the Celebration.



