

homes and there, on a large hill they met in the forest.

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"When in the darkling woods,
Amid the cool and silence, they knelt down
And offered to the "Mightiest" solemn thanks
And supplication."

Soon after this change of meeting place death came to one of their number: one Daniel Buck, who was buried on this same hill where they were worshipping. The date, as shown by the tombstone which is still standing in the little cemetery, was April 5-1840

After this sorrow came to this little group they saw the need of a regular church edifice, so this group, consisting of Lemuel White, William J. Laughner, Ambrose Neese, Jacob Ottinger, John Neese and others built a log cabin there, near the new grave. This first church building was very small. As time rolled on the group grew larger and needs grew with it, till the members saw that a larger structure was needed. After the removal of the little cabin a larger building, one about 15' x 24' was erected. To this church the settlers came on foot, in wagons, or by whatever means were available. Here, in this little church in the woods, the settlers met, read the Scriptures, sang songs and offered prayer. Here they had their children catechised. And it was to this little church that Rev. E. S. Henkel, their first pastor, came on different visits.

Each visit of Rev. Henkel was a red-letter day for the congregation. The people assembled at the little church early in the day, and there they enjoyed a sermon in the morning, then

...mer, then another sermon and communion. Often it was late evening before the day's program was completed by baptism of the children.

In 1835 Rev. Ezra Keller visited this little congregation. He was sent to this region by the Missionary Society of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania as a missionary explorer. In his report he wrote of visiting this group, " number of Lutherans from East Tennessee settled Southeast of Lebanon." He also stated, "I found the roads in this part of the country so exceedingly bad that I could not travel more than ten or twelve miles per day."

As the Church grew rapidly the members soon felt the need of a larger meeting place, and one situated more nearly in the center of their homes. The village had begun to grow and had received the name of Germantown. Just at this time an offer was received from a few Campbellites to unite with them in forming a Union Church in the village. Since this seemed to answer the need for both a larger, and a more centrally located church, after due consideration it was decided to accept the offer. From this was to come the Newtown Church, which was built near the center of the village, *just East of present intersection* and in which these worshipers met from about 1852 to 1869.

Newtown Church, 1852 - 1869

Apparently very little written material exists regarding the period during which the members of this congregation worshiped in the Newtown Church. This building was a frame structure erected on the South side of the Street, just a short distance East of the present main road intersection in the middle of Whitestown. Ministers who preached for this group in the Newtown Church were Revs. Sabe Henkel, J.P. Rudisel, John P. Livengood, D. P. Groundt, and Eusebuis S. Henkel and John Good. It seems that no regular pastor was called until 1866, when Rev. Miles J. Stirewalt received a call from this group.

One of St. Mark's present members, Mrs. Sarah Laughner, nee Goodwin ~~who was baptised~~ who received the ~~baptism~~ sacrament of holy baptism from Rev. Henkle, was the first infant baptised in the Newtown Church.

Later other groups of children were catechized and taught by the pastor Rev. M.J. Stirewalt. *Under his labor this group soon out-grew this place of worship and plans were made to build another house of worship.*

One item of interest regarding the Newtown Church is the few details regarding the meeting of the Indiana Synod at the church in November, 1859. It was at this meeting that this Synod was dissolved and a new Union Synod of the Evengelical Lutheran Church was organized.

Another interesting fact garnered from Synodical records was that Whitestown had been selected as the site for a proposed college to be established by the Synod. In 1865 the Synod adopted a constitution for the embryo college, adopted a definite plan for the erection of suitable buildings, and selected Whitestown as the location.

A committee report in 1866 shows a decline in the interest in the institution and after a proposition made in 1869 to transfer to the Synod Alimo Academy, Alimo, Indiana, was declined, the effort of the Union Synod to Establish a college came to an end.

Established at Whitestown

The first minutes on local records of the Lutheran body at this place was of a meeting held on the 11th day of April, 1863, Bro. Wm. J. Laughner presided as chairman of the meeting and Bro. Joseph Etter served as secretary. Rev. Stirewalt opened the meeting. Preliminary steps were taken to build a new church building since the old frame structure was badly in need of repairs. This meeting adjourned to reconvene on the 4th Sunday in April, 1863, and at this second meeting further discussion was held concerning the proposed new building. On motion it was decided to build a brick building 50 ft. long, 36 ft. wide, and with 16 ft. ceiling. Wm. J. Laughner and Ambrose Neese were appointed to take subscriptions. Bros. Ambrose Neese, John Neese, Phillip Ottinger, S. J. Laughner and Wm. J. Laughner were appointed to select a location upon which to erect the new building, and to report at the next meeting, set for May 9, 1863.

At this meeting on May 9 the finance committee reported that work was moving along nicely. The Location Committee reported that they had selected a site owned by Ambrose Neese, located in Whitestown on the East side of Main Street, running North and South, about 200 ft. South of the LaFayette and Indianapolis Railroad. The Congregation accepted the committee's report and Bro. Ambrose Neese agreed to sell the lot to the church. On Motion Bros. S. J. Laughner, Phillip Ottinger, Andrew Groundt, Moses Neese and Jacob Ottinger were appointed Trustees and were authorized to transact such business as was necessary for the erection of the new church. They were authorized to make such changes in the dimensions as seemed best. Bros. Wm J. Laughner, Ambrose Neese and Joseph Etter were appointed as the building committee. At this meeting it was decided that the new building was to be built under the name of the "St. Marks Evangelical Lutheran Church."

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At a congregational meeting on July 11, 1868, the Trustees reported a change of dimensions of the building from the original plans to: 56 ft. long and 32 ft. wide, and a change from plain to arch style for the ceiling. The new building was begun in the Fall of 1868, and finished in the Spring of 1869, with the first sermon in the new church being preached by Pastor M. J. Stirewalt on the 3rd Sunday in July, 1869.

On July 31, 1869, a congregational meeting was called for the purpose of reorganization. Bro. Joseph Etter acted as chairman of this meeting, and Pastor Stirewalt served as secretary. Bros. Wm. J. Laughner, Jacob D. Ottinger and Pastor Stirewalt were appointed to draft resolutions for reorganization. Up to this time the congregation had had no constitution and no by-laws and was not considered a legal organization.

The committee's report, which contained resolutions for the government of the congregation was received and adopted by the congregation at a meeting held on August 12, 1869. At this meeting the change of the name from "Newtown" to "St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church" was made legal.

After the new organization had been completed the following officers were elected as the first legal officers of the new church; Elders: Devault M. Sigman and Ambrose Laughner; Deacons: John E. Isenhour and Chas. P. Miller; Trustees: Samuel J. Laughner, Moses Neese, Phillip Ottinger and Jacob Ottinger. Forty one (41) signed the constitution to constitute the membership of the new church. The above officers were installed by the Pastor M. J. Stirewalt, August 13, 1869.

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Sunday, August 15, 1869, the new church was dedicated to the worship of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, by Pastor M. J. Stirewalt, assisted by Revs. E. Rudisel, E. S. Henkle, J. L. Stirewalt and J. E. Wesner. The sermon was preached by the Rev. J. L. Stirewalt.

During the latter part of 1869 and first of 1870 the congregation had no minister. In 1870 a call was given to Rev. Jacob Wesner and he accepted the position. During the time of his pastorage the walls of the church building seemed to spread, and it was put in first class condition in the fall of 1871 by taking off the roof and straightening the walls. Rev. Wesner remained as pastor until the fall or Winter of 1874, serving the congregation a little more than four years.

From the time of Rev. Wesner's resignation no record or information can be gathered until Feb. 6, 1875, so no doubt the parish was vacant. At the meeting on Feb. 6, 1875, Rev. M. J. Stirewalt presided and signed the minutes as pastor, probably serving temporarily. On March 14, 1876, a call was extended to J. G. M. Hursh, who accepted and served as pastor of St. Marks until March 31, 1877, when he resigned the parish in order that he might continue his education at Thiel Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church at Philadelphia. Rev. Hursh, however, continued to preach every four weeks until fall. In mid-November, 1878, a call was extended to the Rev. W. C. L. Lauer and after due consideration he accepted the call on Nov. 28, 1878. Rev. Lauer continued the work of the congregation faithfully until Dec. 15, 1880, when, feeling that God was calling him to a greater work, he tendered his resignation to take effect March 15, 1881. As the congregation could secure another pastor immediately he was released earlier, ending his labors at St. Marks on January 15, 1881.

With the resignation of Rev. Lauer, a former pastor, Rev. J. G. M. Hursh, was called and he took up the work earnestly and served the congregation until July 9, 1882, at which time his resignation was

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~~considered~~ and refused. However, owing to his searching for more scriptural knowledge he gave up the congregation. Between the minutes of July 9, 1882, and Oct. 30, 1883, nothing has been recorded but there seems to be authority that Rev. J. C. Barb preached his first sermon on May 13, 1883. The first minutes Rev. Barb signed as pastor was under date, Oct. 30, 1883, but he probably was called to St. Marks Church early in the Spring of 1883. Rev. Barb's work was successful in every respect during the twelve years he served the congregation. The membership and communicant list was almost doubled during his pastorate. On Dec. 26, 1894 he submitted his resignation to take effect March 1, 1895. It was with regret that the congregation released him and allowed him to return to Tennessee, the state he loved. Bros. S. M. Good, Wm. Harr and A. G. Laughner were appointed to draft resolutions regarding his stay with the people.

Rev. J. J. Stirewalt served the parish from the Spring of 1895 until Jan. 2, 1897. Rev. Stirewalt, who had worked hard in the early part of the congregation's history, had returned once more to lead the people in the right way. At this time he was getting old and his health would not allow him to work like he once had.

Following Rev. Stirewalt was Rev. S. P. Fryberger who was properly called and served the parish until Feb. 17, 1900, at which time Rev. D. L. Reese was called. Rev. Reese accepted the call and began his labors on April 22, 1900.

On Jan. 2, 1903, at a congregational meeting the matter of remodeling was discussed and finally the meeting adjourned to reconvene on Jan. 7, 1903, for further discussion. At this meeting there was a small attendance on account of the bad weather, so it was decided to call another meeting for the same purpose, for Jan. 17, 1903, and to urge the membership to be present.

At the Jan. 17 meeting 61 members answered roll call. It was decided

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~~remodel~~ the Old Church and a committee was appointed to make preliminary arrangements. From this meeting until Fall nothing was done. At a meeting held on October 29, 1903, it was decided to build rather than remodel, since the reported cost of remodeling would be almost as much as that for building a new structure. The building was to be made of brick, trimmed in stone, and should cost about \$7000. The size was set at 48' x 70'. Rev. D.L. Reese and Bro. Chas B. Laughner were appointed to raise funds for the building.

While the new church building was under construction regular church and Sunday School services were held in the lower north-east room of the school house. At this time the Sunday School took new life and increased considerably in size. In the Spring of 1904 the old church was torn down and excavation of the basement was begun. The foundation was laid in May, and about the middle of June the Corner Stone was laid, with suitable services conducted by the pastor. Rev. A. H. Arbaugh of Frankfort preached the sermon at this special service.

The construction progressed in a good manner until finished for occupancy. The officers who were responsible for the Church at this time were; Elders: J. H. Laughner, Albert Laughner; Deacons: Ora Ottinger, R. O. Laughner; Trustees: Andy G. Laughner, O. S. Taylor, W. H. Witt, R. O. Laughner and Ora Ottinger. The Trustees constituted the building committee, and superintended the construction.

The new church, when completed, was a handsome commodious structure with basement, built out of red brick trimmed with stone. It fronts the west and has two approaches, one through the square door at the north-west corner, the other through an alcove at the south-west corner. On the main floor is the auditorium with a seating capacity of 400, handsomely frescoed and with windows adorned with Arch Glass. The window at the rear of the pulpit represents Christ pruning the vine. In the basement are the dining room kitchen and furnace rooms. The church was

equipped with an up-to-date gasoline lighting system. The total cost of the new building and furnishings was, in round numbers, \$10,000. The Bell, Organ and some of the seats of the old building were preserved and placed in the new structure.

The Church was dedicated on January 29, 1905, with the following consecration services:

- Dedicatory Service 10:30 A. M.
- Childrens Service 3:00 P. M.
- Evening Service 7:00 P. M.

Consecrators: Revs. Hiram Peters, Decatur Ill., President of Synod
A. H. Arbaugh, Frankfort, Indiana
W. J. Seiberling, Mulberry, Indiana
J. L. Reese, Pastor.

Rev. H. Peters preached the dedicatory sermon, taking for his texts I Peter 2, 4, and 5. Preceding the sermon the ritualistic service was held, it being conducted by Rev. Arbaugh of Frankfort. The Choir of the Frankfort Church provided the music for the service. In the Evening Rev. Seiberling delivered a sermon, taking for his theme, "My Father's House," and discussed fully the sacred use of the sanctuary.

A beautiful Children's Service was conducted in the Church at 3:00 P. M. under the direction of J. T. Frank Laughner, Superintendent of the Sunday School.

Rev. Reese handed in his resignation in 1905. At this time his health was such that it would be impossible for him to carry on the work as it ought to be done. His resignation was accepted and took effect at once.

After Rev. Reese's resignation the Parish had no minister for some time. The faithful work of the church council in providing services kept the congregation in good condition however. For four months during the winter of 1906 - 1907 Rev. M. L. Stirewalt of Mulberry supplied the

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congregation regularly every two weeks. Other ministers who assisted during the vacancy were: Revs. H. Peters, Frankfort, Ind; W. J. Seiberling Mulberry; R. Foster Stone; C. Edw. Derr of Indianapolis; Resident of Syn of, Luther Hogshead; P. C. Wike; Milberry; Dr. G. H. Gerbing, G. F. Ghere of Chicago and Student C. E. Reid of the Chicago Lutheran Seminary.

A call was sent to Rev. C. L. Warstler of St. Paul, Minn. and after due consideration he accepted the call and took up his work at St. Marks Church on April 1, 1907. During his pastorate of more than two years twenty (20) accessions added to the church. A confirmation class of twelve (12) was received on April 4, 1909.

Rev. Warstler resigned to take up a more needed work at St. Marks Church in Chicago. His resignation was refused by this congregation but since one congregation in the parish accepted the resignation he was allowed to go, and his labors for the Whitestown congregation ended on May 15, 1909. In token of love and faithfulness a reception was given him, his wife and daughter, and a gift of appreciation was presented them from the congregation. Mrs. Warstler had been of immense help in the Sunday School and Luther League work.

Between May 15 and Aug. 15, 1909, the parish was vacant, but a call was extended to Rev. S. D. Myers of Vandalia, Illinois, and he began his labors here on the later date, Aug. 15, 1909. On Oct. 17, 1909, Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held and the church was decorated with the bounties of the land. As there was still an indebtedness on the church of \$424.00 an effort was made to receive offerings of any amount at this service. About \$500.00 was raised and the Church was assured freedom from debt, and on Dec. 29, 1909, the note was paid in full.

On March 20, 1910, a confirmation class of twenty (22) was received into the church. Communion was the largest in the history of the congregation up to that time, with 120 communing. On June 19, 1910, baptism services were held for thirteen children.

Following Rev. Myers' release by the parish, the work here was again undertaken by Rev. Warstler who had served the congregation from the Spring of 1907 till May, 1909. In his report at the annual Congregational Meeting, held on January 15, 1913, Rev. Warstler lists the following as having given sermons and addresses before the congregation: Dr. Takemaye, Rev. L.M. Kuhus, Rev. A. H. Arbaugh, Rev. H. N. Thompson, Rev. C. L. Hunt, Rev. A. E. Renn, Student C. L. Grant and Rev. B. F. Hoefler, President of the Synod. During this period a hardwood floor was put down in the Church.

Eleven accessions to the church were reported in Rev. Warstlers' annual report, given in January, 1914. Seven of these were by confirmation, 1 by letter, 1 on renewal of faith and 2 were by adult baptism. Rev. Warstlers' report gives the following as having been guest speakers during the year: Rev. Arbaugh, Rev. Dr. Sigmund, Rev. Reed, Dr. Telleen, Rev. Davis, and Rev. Boyer. Sixteen special evening meetings were held for workers in the Sunday School. The Dorcas Society and Luther League each continued quiet active in the work of the Sunday School and Church.

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Jan. 1, 1911, Roll Call Meeting at 10:30 A. M. Hainy morning.

Pastor Myers Preached new year's sermon.

The secretary J. T. Frank Laughner called the roll and 75 members answered. Rev. S. D. Myers came to this congregation and parish from Vandalia, Ill. where he served a congregation six years. He took up his new work here, Aug. 15, 1909. He served us successfully. He was always ready to go among his people. It was with regret that he left us. ~~to go among his~~ During his pastorate 41 members were added to the church by adult baptism, confirmation, letter, and restoration. He baptised 23 twenty-three children. He conducted (10) ten funerals of which (8) eight were members of the church. During his pastorate the communion has been the largest in the history of the congregation. Near the close of his pastorate he felt that God was calling him to a new field of labor. He handed his resignation to the Joint Council. This congregation voted not to accept the resignation but owing to the other two congregations voting to accept the Joint Council was compelled to accept his resignation. His work terminated here on the 15th day of May 1911. He took up his new field of work at once at Doylestown, Ohio.

C. L. Warstler's Report at Annual Congregational meeting, Jan. 15, 1913.

Dear Bretheran in Christ: We have again passed through another year and meet for our annual congregational meeting. We have reason to thank God for the many blessings of the past year and to begin the new year with hope and courage. We have had a blessed year. The gospel has been preached regularly at the church services. The scriptures have been studied in the Sunday School. Subjects of interest to us as Christians have been studied with more or less interest in the Luther League. One of the largest classes in the Sunday School has taken a forward step by arranging to meet one hour a month to study missions.

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visitors: Our congregation has been favored with sermons and addresses by a number of visitors who have given glimpses of the outside world. Dr. Takemaye, Rev. L. M. Kuhus, Rev. A. H. Arbaugh, Rev. H.N. Thompson, Rev. C.L. Hunt, Rev. A. E. Renn, Student C. L. Grant and Rev. B. F. Hoefer, President of Synod.

Improvements: The congregation at a special meeting some weeks ago decided to put down a hardwood floor. The work is being done now and will soon be completed. I am sorry to report that there have been no accessions within the past year. We trust that all of us may make this a matter of prayer and of effort that we may be more fortunate in the present year. Let us also keep in mind that it is our duty to make christians not merely members and build them up and develop those who are already in the church.

Societies: Our Sunday School has done good work and is well organized. The attendance has not been as good as might be desired but we trust will be better this year. The Dorcus Society has met regularly and has contributed liberally toward the new floor. The Luther League gives promise of increased activity and usefulness.

Study: I feel however that in addition to what we have we ought to have a series of study meetings in week day evenings for study of doctrine and other subjects. I would be glad to conduct such studies at any time should any desire it. As Christians we ought to know what we believe and why. We will be less likely to be led astray. This is especially necessary for those who hold office or teach in the Sunday School and elsewhere.

Detailed Report: In the past year the pastor has conducted eight funerals under the auspices of this congregation, only one however an active member, Br. Leland Groover. Four couples were married, 299 calls were made. 47 sermons were preached. 23 in the morning and 24 in the evening. Services were conducted on week day evenings during Lent. Four special services were conducted by the Sunday School, League and others. In conclusion permit me to thank you for your cooperation and many kind-

nesses during the past year. Let us together pray that God may build us up in numbers and in faith and life that we all may be better and more faithful followers of Christ.

Rev. C. L. Warstler's report at Congregational meeting, Jan. 1914.

Dear Bretheren in Christ: Accoriding to the constitution of our congregation we have gathered to hold our annual congregati onal meeting. Let us then hear what has been done, Thank God for our blessings, pray his forgiveness for our shortcomings during the past year and plan for the year on which we have just entered. Permit me to give a summary of the official acts of the past year. Within the year there were 24 morning services, 23 by the pastor and one conducted by two laymen of the congregation. There were 24 Sunday evening church services, 17 by the pastor, 2 by Rev. Arbaugh, 1 each by Rev. Dr. Sigmund, Rev. Reed, Dr. Telleen, Rev. Davis, Rev. Boyer,... Rev. Seiberling spoke at one week evening meeting. There were 8 week evening services and 8 week evening meetings for workers in the Sunday School. There were 3 funerals conducted within the bounds of the congregation. Bro. J. H. Laughner, Bro. Jos. L. Harr, and Mr. Berne Witt. One Infant was baptized. There were 11 accessions, 7 by confirmation 1 by letter, 1 on renewal of faith, 2 by adult baptism. 258 calls were made. With your permission I will discuss in a general way some features of our work. The first in order, and next in importance to the regular church services is the work of the Sunday School. The school has done good work throughout the year. In addition to the report we have heard I will mention the series of meetings held for the study of different phases of Sunday School work. Similar meetings might be held with profit from time to time. The Dorcas Society has been active thoughout the year as has been heard in its report. The Luther League has also had a good year. In addition to the regular Sunday evening meetings, business and social meetings have been held oncea week in the homes of members. Early in the year a hard wood floor was put in the church at a cost of about \$291.22. This

has added

added much to the appearance of our auditorium. Permit me to make a few general recommendations. In order that we may have a deeper piety among our people I would recommend that blessed institution of family worship. Surely time could be found in every home each day for the reading of a short scripture lesson and a prayer. I know by experience that this custom is very helpful. Of course there should be a regular attendance at Sunday School and all church services. Another practice that faithfully observed would add much to strengthen our congregation is our catechetical instruction. This systematic instruction is good for the individual and also helps to make intelligent workers in the congregation. There are many good christians who have never had such instructions but the testimony from every part of our church and from many workers in other churches is that this is one of the strong features of our church work. Parents ought to see that their children have this instruction for the sake of the children and of the church. Systematic instruction is just as necessary in religion as in anything else. In addition to this, let us be more active in personal work, for our Sunday school and church. A few sundays ago the presbyterian church at Lebanon, without any special services received 54 new members, all the result of personal work. If they can do that much surely we can do something if we try. Inclosing permit me to say that although what has been accomplished in the year does not entirely satisfy any of us, nevertheless, we have many reasons to thank God and take courage. Personally I thank you for your kindly cooperation and the many courtesies you have shown me during the past year. Praying that God may bless us as individuals and as a church in the ensueing year, I am your servant in Christ,

C. L. Warstler.

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Rev. B. L. Westenbarger started his work in this charge on April 1, 1919, after accepting a call extended to him in January of that year. At a called congregational meeting in June, 1919, the congregation decided by unanimous vote, to purchase a parsonage. The trustees were instructed to purchase the Wm. E. Lane property in the North Section of Whitestown. The purchase price was \$4000.00. On May 15, 1921, Rev. Westenbarger held his last service in St. Marks, having resigned this parish to accept a call to the Portland charge. Communion Service was held in the morning and a sermon, using I Cor. 2:1-5 as the text, was given in the afternoon.

Concluding a sixteen year pastorate at Nevada, Ohio, Rev. W. C. Laughbaum, D. D. began his pastorate at Whitestown and New Augusta on May 15, 1922. During his pastorate of one year and five months the work was confined mostly to routine matters. However, Twelve members were added to the church on Easter, 1923, and changes and improvements to the church property included the enlarging of pulpit and choir platforms, the making of a rear doorway to the church basement, and the payment of about \$500 on the parsonage debt. A permanent endowment fund was started in 1923, the first contribution being a bequest of \$216.66 by will of Mrs. Lavina Shelburn, deceased. Among the special services held in the church during this period were the Christmas Cantata given by the Community chorus of sixty voices and a 12 piece orchestra under the leadership of Mrs. Laughbaum and the Missionary Pageant given under the direction of Mrs. Delbert Neese and Mrs. Laughbaum during the Woman's Synodical Convention in the Fall of 1922.

Rev. Laughbaum gave up the Whitestown pastorate on Oct. 15, 1923