

Zion United Church of Christ in Florissant, Missouri
Celebrating 150 years
(1868 – 2018)



Zion United Church of Christ was formed in the fall of 1868 by a group of ten German immigrants who wanted a church home close to where they lived. Pastor Andrew Mueller was called to be the first Evangelical minister and head of the parochial school. In the early days, the church had twenty-one active members. The Ladies Aid Society, now the Women's Fellowship, was formed in 1869, the first of many organizations begun within Zion. After three years, Zion had outgrown their original building and purchased land at 25th and Benton for \$25,000. The cornerstone of this new building was laid in May of 1872. This same year, Zion's second minister, Reverend F. W. Koewing, began serving the congregation, which had grown to thirty-five members.

Although still small in membership, Zion had mighty dreams. In 1883, fifty acres west of Wellston was purchased to form Zion Cemetery, which is still in operation today. That same year, one of our most prominent pastors began serving Zion, Reverend John Baltzer. By now, the congregation had grown to eighty-six members. Reverend Baltzer went on to lead the Evangelical Synod of North America in 1914, but served Zion until 1918. His service to Zion totaled thirty-five, years, which is the longest term any pastor has served the church's history.

Zion joined the Evangelical Synod of North America in 1887. Much like the UCC of today, Zion was concerned with social progress. For instance, women were admitted as voting members of the congregation in 1912, a full eight years before the Nineteenth Amendment granted women the right to vote in the United States. However, due to immense racial pressure at the beginning of World War I in Europe, German was dropped as the official language of the church during church meeting in 1914. IN that

same year, Sunday School enrollment reached 390, and in 1915 membership reached 1,450. Our first Zion Echo, the church monthly newsletter, was published by the young People's Society in 1914 in both German and English.

What's in a name: Zion Evangelical Church became the Zion Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1934. More changes came the next year when the German language was dropped from all worship services except for Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter. Zion E & R Church became Zion United Church of Christ in 1957.

The city of Saint Louis was also changing. IN previous decades, many members lived near the church. Now, they were moving out to the suburbs. In 1968, Zion's members voted to move the church building to the suburbs as well, and property in Florissant was purchased in 1969 for \$54,000. The church at 25th and Benton was sold for \$33,000. The first service at the new site was held July 11, 1971. In 1987, lighting struck the old church at 25th and Benton and it was destroyed by fire.



In 1996, Esther Rohmoeller gave Zion a bequest that became the Zion Endowment Fund, which is still providing for Zion's needs today. The bequest also provided funding for the Zion Labyrinth, which was installed in 2005. In 2014, Zion called its first minority pastor in Phiwa Langeni. Phiwa announced their status as genderqueer (their preferred term) while

serving Zion. Shortly thereafter, on Valentine's Day 2016, Zion voted to become Open and Affirming. Zion voted to use its currently vacant Parsonage as a spirituality center and Peace Tree was born in 2014.

Zion has a vibrant future in Florissant. Our current Pastor Reverend Jacquelyne Tyler, Mdiv., was called in August 2017. Our church's plans include more outreach into the community, with increased usage of our facilities as: a community VBS, temporary homeless shelter, and food pantry. The cemetery is investigating green burials and has plans to install a columbarium. Peace Tree is scheduling at least one activity per month under its current leadership of Reverend Jessica Gazzola and Anne Knight. Zion's spirit remains vibrant and fresh even after 150 years, and its members look forward to many more years of service to the community.