

**St. John United Church of Christ
St. Charles, MO
Celebrates its 150th Anniversary!**

Like many sister congregations throughout the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the UCC, St. John was started by a group of Germans in 1868 in St. Charles, MO. Voting to split off from Friedens UCC, St. John started in a small frame building on property the congregation purchased at 5th and Jackson Streets, and soon after constructed the sanctuary in which today's congregation still worships. During this time, St. John also had a school that remained a vital part of the congregation until its closing in 1930. This was the result of many of the church's families opting to send their sons and daughters to the local public schools. In 1884 St. John purchased ground at the corner of Booneslick and 6th Street for use as the cemetery.

St. John's sanctuary was first constructed with four windows on each side and was enlarged twice to accommodate the growing congregation, first in 1900 with the addition with fifth window on each side and again in 1930, which saw the addition of the transepts with two large windows on each side, a choir loft, new pews, pipe organ, all windows changed to stained glass, and new Italian marble altar. In 1925 The congregation replaced the weathervane in the form of a rooster* with the current cross. In 1997 the sanctuary underwent a major renovation with new wiring, new marble in the chancel, choir loft redesigned to be moveable for concert set up, new sound and lighting system, organ enhancements, paint, and carpeting. In subsequent years, the stained-glass windows have been refurbished and had protective glass installed on the exterior, the sanctuary doors were replaced with new solid oak doors, and the Wicks organ was refurbished and enlarged to its current 34 ranks.



Like most churches at the time, St. John was the social nucleus for most of the congregation, so in 1911 St. John installed St. John Hall (SJH), a two-story facility with a recreation area and stage on the 2nd floor and a two-lane bowling alley on the main floor. In 1929, SJH was enlarged to meet the needs of the growing congregation. The building has been remodeled twice since 1929, with a total rehab being completed in 2008.

In 1934 St. John's Evangelical Church became St. John's Evangelical and Reformed Church (E&R) with the merging of the Evangelical and Reformed Denominations.

At the end of WW2, St. John began to experience many weddings (101 in 1946) followed by major growth from both the “Baby Boom” and with migration from St. Louis City and County due to the construction of I-70.

In 1952, a fellowship hall with kitchen, classrooms, and office area was constructed. This was followed by a reconfiguring of the Chancel area in the sanctuary to accommodate the growing choirs.

In 1957, St. John became part of the United Church of Christ, with the merger of the Evangelical and Reformed and Congregational Christian Church.

During the 1960’s St. John saw its Sunday attendance grow to be the largest in the Missouri Conference at the time, with an average Sunday attendance of 775. To accommodate the attendance there were three Sunday morning worship services at 7:30, 9:00 and 10:30, in addition to the radio broadcast of the 10:30 service that continues today on AM 730/FM 95.1. The growth resulted in the construction of a larger Fellowship Hall with classrooms, elevator, and nursery along with the narthex.

From its beginnings, St. John has been a strong musical church. During the 1960’s the Youth Choir Trip began. During the mid-1980’s through the mid 2000’s, St. John witnessed its Youth Choir grow from 17 to one of the largest in the US: at its height it had 95 youth in grades 8-12. That strong musical tradition continues in different ways today; currently, St. John as a Chancel Choir of approximately 60 voices, two hand bell choirs, youth choir, community concert series, and youth performing arts camp. Music remains an important and vital part of St. John.

Today St. John continues to be a vital congregation in the heart of St. Charles City, Missouri.

* Some congregations chose to place weathervane in the form of a rooster on top of their steeples as a reminder that Peter denied Christ three times.

