

A History of St. Martin Church High Ridge Celebrating 150 years 1868-2018

Although we have no records of the first meetings, many say that August is the anniversary month of our church. The first transaction in our records was the purchase of the present church property. On the 11th day of September 1868, an agreement was made between Sarah Boly and Martin Hauser, Wilhelm Nollmann, and Henrick Hoffmeister, who are listed as the trustees of the German Evangelical Protestant Church, to purchase 40 acres of land for \$300. For a small group of meager means, this was a sheer act of faith. The deed was made and entered into the 13th day of December 1868. Apparently, by the early part of the fall, the log church had been built. Each member was supposed to have brought two logs to erect the church, a boiling 24 x 30 feet.

The first constitution, adopted December 1, 1868, began as follows:

*"The Constitution of the Protestant Evangelical Independent Congregation of Jefferson County.
"We, the undersigned of the Independent Congregation, give the following laws and regulations, and everyone who signs is committed to hold to the same. The purpose of our organization is to serve the honor of God by Pure Christian teaching, and further to instruct the young in school and confirmation."...*

The church and cemetery were dedicated on Sunday, May 2, 1869, and given the name St. Martin's. Pastor August Roeder of St. Louis, who officiated, took as his text for the sermon of the day Psalm 84. He also ordained and installed Pastor Fehlhaber as "preacher" the same day. Pastor Roeder was a well-known German pastor who at that time apparently was not affiliated with any denomination.

In 1902 St. Martin congregation painted the outside of the church and wallpapered and painted the inside. A new carpet and new cloths for the altar were purchased.

That same year our church became an official member of the German Evangelical Synod, sending August Nollman, Sr. as official delegate to the Synod meeting held at St. Paul's Evangelical Church, St. Louis. On November 16 St. Martin Church celebrated becoming a member of the German Evangelical Synod with a special church service. Pastor Allrich of St. Charles, President of the Missouri District of the Synod, was present. On June 10, 1910, early in the evening during a thunderstorm, lightning struck the framed-over log church, burning it to the ground. Pastor Goebel was attending a conference at the time of the fire. Mr. Henry Delbruegge, who lived across the road, ran and rang the church bell until it fell from the tower, to try to summon help, but by the time enough persons came to help, the building was too far gone. They were very concerned that the parsonage might also catch fire, but were able to protect it. There was a loss of many valuable articles such as hymnals and furnishings, as well as all the Braille books and materials of Karl Goebel, which had been stored in the balcony of the church. Fortunately, Pastor Goebel had removed the church records to the parsonage before he left for the conference and they were saved. Many persons today have a piece of the melted church bell, which they salvaged from the ashes.

At the congregational meeting in January 1912, two of the laymen suggested that the congregation try one English service a month. Up to this time, all worship was in German.

On a beautiful day in September 1929, the cornerstone was laid with the following ministers taking part - Rev. H. T. Bahnsen, Trinity Church, delivered the sermon; Rev. F. J. Langhorst addressed the assembly; Rev. Richard Gadow, St. Luke's Church, Glaze Creek; and Rev. A. Rinne, St. Martin

Church, Ditter, had part in the liturgy. The chairman of the building committee also took part. The architects and contractors were introduced. Then the actual cornerstone laying took place with the ministers, the building committee, and the board of elders participating. The cornerstone contains the following items: 1) The membership list, 2) A list of those who pledged and promised contributions toward the new church, 3) A copy of the church constitution, 4) A copy of the constitution of the Evangelical Synod of North America, 5) A copy of the Friedensbote (Messenger of Peace), the Evangelical Herald, and the Light-Bearer, 6) A catechism, 7) A program of the dedication of the old church in 1911, and 8) A copy of the contract with the architect. On April 27, 1930, St. Martin congregation was proud to dedicate their new church with a service, in the morning in German, an organ recital, an afternoon service, and an evening service, plus a dinner and supper. As quoted from Rev. Amacker's notes, "Though it was raining in the morning, the church was filled to capacity."



By 1961, St. Martin Church School had really outgrown the church facilities, every possible space being used for classrooms, and with several classes even meeting in the parsonage. A Building Committee was appointed to devise a plan to complete the basement addition constructed in 1954. They presented a proposal with preliminary approval, but it was later rejected because the congregation felt that this addition would not provide adequate space for future growth.

As one enters the church sanctuary, the beautiful stained glass windows awe one. The first window, which appears, is the window over the altar area entitled "The Good Shepherd". The side windows each depict a particular incident in the life of the Christ. Beginning on the South side at the chancel end of the church, they are "The Birth of Christ", "The Boy Christ in the Temple", "Christ Saving Peter", and "Christ Raising Lazarus". On the North side, beginning at the chancel end, they are "Christ Blessing the Little Children", "Christ with Mary and Martha", "Christ Forgiving Mary Magdalene", and "Christ in Gethsemane".

The last window in the balcony contains the symbol "Agnus Dei, the Lamb of God" bearing the banner of victory. The windows are made of leaded antique cathedral glass. The total cost at the time they were purchased was \$1,060.50. Now they would probably exceed ten times that amount.



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