

St. Paul UCC Hermann, MO Celebrating 175 Years

In November 2019 St. Paul United Church of Christ in Hermann, Missouri will mark its 175th anniversary. These days, when so many congregations are dying and closing their doors forever, St. Paul is blessed still to be a vibrant faith community that is having positive impact not only in the Hermann area, but also in such faraway places as Ghana, West Africa. Several events during the year are planned to celebrate this significant milestone.



The church's history is rich, providing the St. Paul congregation and others with an opportunity to learn from what has gone before and to apply what has been learned to future action.

In May of 1839, only eighteen months after the first settlers arrived in Hermann, lots were selected for a Catholic and an Evangelical church. At that time there were two Protestant congregations in Hermann: The Evangelical Congregation of Hermann and Surrounding Territory and the General German Church, sometimes referred to as the Universal Church.

In 1841 each of the two Protestant congregations bought a lot, adjacent to one another, for \$112.50. In March 1844, Friedrich Hundhausen was hired as pastor for the Evangelical Congregation. He worked at merging the two Protestant congregations.

November 1844 is considered the birthday of St. Paul, as it was at that time that the decision was made to construct a building. A constitution was drawn up and signed on November 24, 1844. There were 50 signers from a mixture of religious backgrounds: Lutheran, German Reformed and rationalistic or "free thinker" backgrounds.

The congregation was to be called a German Evangelical Christian Congregation or Protestant Evangelical Christian. It was to be known as St. Paul Church because it was said to be built on the truth of the Gospel of the Apostle Paul, its guiding principle coming from one of Paul's letters to the church at Corinth.

On December 5, 1844, the cornerstone of the church was laid. The building had no steeple, just a cupola. A copper rooster topped the cupola, as it does to this day, reminding us of Peter's and our denial of Christ. Remember Jesus' words from scripture, ". . . before the cock crows this night you will deny me three times."

Several significant events have occurred over the last 175 years, including –

In 1851 the congregation received \$320 in mission money from the church in Germany through the Basel Mission Society.

In 1855 the ladies of the congregation were invited to form a "Frauenverein" or Ladies Association or Ladies Aid.

In June 1861 the congregation opted to dissolve because of financial problems. However, almost immediately a new congregation was organized, and two weeks later a constitution was signed which was an exact copy of the former constitution.

A Sunday school was organized at St. Paul in the 1890's.

The church choir was organized in April 1899.

In 1901 St. Paul Church made the decision to join the Evangelical Synod of North America.

In June 1907 the cornerstone was laid for a new church building.

In 1909 permission was given to mothers to start a Sunday school class for pre-school children.

A volunteer Bible Class was organized in 1910 for the purpose of involving adults in Sunday school.

Up to this time ALL church services were conducted in German. In 1910 the congregation decided to have one English service per month to be held on the third Sunday in the evening.

In 1912 the longest pastorate in the history of the church began when Rev. Rudolph Kasmann became pastor. Rev. Kasmann served until his death on March 18, 1944 – a period of 32 years.

The confirmation class of 1923-24, consisting of 18 members, was the last class to receive its instruction entirely in the German language.

In 1934 the nationwide merger of the Evangelical Church and the German Reformed Church took place. The church changed from St. Paul Evangelical Church to St. Paul Evangelical and Reformed German, informally St. Paul E&R.

In 1946 members of Bethel Evangelical Church at Case joined St. Paul and in April 1947 a merger of St. James Evangelical Church of Big Spring and St. Paul became official.

A merger of the national Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Church was completed in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ. Homer Helmich, a member of St. Paul Church, was a delegate to the historic meeting at which this merger was finalized.

In September 1958 approval was given to employ a lay or non-clerical assistant to the pastor.

Building renovation and expansion of the church was completed in 1961.

A Scholarship Aid Fund was approved in 1962 and was later expanded into a student loan program open to all students who are members of the congregation.

In September 1990 a fire, set by an arsonist, did major damage to the church office and educational building portion of the church complex. Reconstruction of the damaged portions of the church was completed in September 1992.

This year St. Paul will give thanks and reflect on the faith, witness and generosity of its ancestors, who have made it possible for the church to do much of what it is able to do today. The Church's mission continues to be "sharing God's love by serving others".