

175 years



Zion Evangelical Church

117 West White St

Millstadt, Illinois 62260

(618) 476-1778

Serving in Christ's Name since 1835

INTRODUCTION

From time to time, one can see the invisible hand of God move across the landscape of His creation and His people. As the oldest of the German Evangelical congregations east of the Mississippi River and south of Michigan, we see today from a distance, the Triune God who called our forefathers into a relationship with Him through the means of mere men: the German Evangelical missionaries. It was through these missionaries we understand the reconciling and spiritually unifying Gospel of God.

Our church is a product of the Great Reformation that led us out from the grips and human traditions of Rome. Yet, our forefathers saw the elation and triumph of the Reformation quickly turn to sorrow as the church splintered. The Reformation started bloody wars between our peoples and tore apart Christ's church. Meanwhile three separate communions broke out within the great reformers. The Lutherans stood staunchly over their view of the Lord's Supper as did the Reformed and the Zwinglians of their "Memorial" view. However, as God would move, there were sympathizers within the camps that saw little need to split over the small differences.

Nearly three hundred years after the Reformation, separate churches and camps remained. In 1817, a German king who was Reformed and a queen who was Lutheran, could not commune together, yet both confessed the efficacy of Christ. This royal family sought to reunify these two communions under the banner of the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. They knew that they could never again call themselves either Lutheran or Reformed, hence the name "Evangelical", meaning "of the Gospel" came to be. The Evangelicals understood what the Holy Spirit had Paul write when the Apostle stated "we see dimly in the mirror." (I Corinthians 13:12) Meaning we cannot fully grasp all things of Christ. The Evangelicals sought to repair and reunify the glorious parts of the Reformed beliefs without sacrificing the essentials of Christianity.

Many of the Evangelical missionaries were called out of the comforts of a more modern Europe to an undeveloped wilderness complete with disease, low wages, hostile Native Americans and hostile men

to the Good News of Christ. It was the latter two God called them to, although they were not exempt from the former. Our own founding pastor, the Reverend Johann Jacob Riess, succumbed to death at the early age of 44. We owe a great deal to these men who persevered under austere conditions that we can only imagine today. But we owe an even greater debt to the One who called them.

No doubt, many Evangelicals were on fire to spread the Gospel of Christ. Johann Riess was quick to understand his call under unusual circumstances. During a thunderstorm, his grandmother and several other relatives were killed by a lightning strike. His grandmother Riess had been a strong religious influence in his life since childhood. He states in his diary, ***“The Lord had awakened him and he would dedicate his life in spreading the Gospel where it had never been preached before.”***

When the Evangelical missionaries met in 1840 near Gravois, Missouri, and periodically thereafter, they began to develop their doctrine. They wrote in their “Protocol Book” their key statements of faith such as the one in 1848 “We Recognize the Evangelical Church as that communion which acknowledges the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God and as the sole and infallible rule of faith and life, and accepts the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures as given in the symbolic books of the Lutheran and Reformed Church, the most important being: the Augsburg Confession, Luther’s and the Heidelberg Catechisms, in so far as they agree; but where they disagree, we adhere strictly to the passages of Holy Scriptures bearing on the subject, and avail ourselves of the liberty of conscience prevailing in the Evangelical Church.” They confessed to both their Lutheran and Reformed roots in that the members may have liberty in either Lutheran or in the Reformed Faith, but where the two Catechisms disagreed, the Bible was to be the ultimate deciding factor.

As the German Evangelicals merged with German Reformed churches, the written doctrines remained largely unchanged and unnoticeable to the average member. As they merged with the Congregationalists, they wrote for us in “The Faith We Proclaim” by Eden’s History Professor (Rev. Elmer F. Arndt) in 1960: the E&R denomination adheres to the Augsburg Confession, Luther’s Catechism, the Heidelberg Catechism,

the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and Apostle's Creeds, and the Council of Chalcedon. The Catechisms, Creeds, Confessions and ecumenical Councils, all stood for Christian orthodoxy – indicating our forefather's confession of the orthodox faith.

The Evangelical and the Evangelical and Reformed (E&R) Churches grew in numbers every year in their existence. From 1940-1959, the United States grew in population by 36 percent, and the E&R grew by 23.6 percent, but the E&R churches were represented in only 13 of 48 states at the time. Just as Christ had told us, we were known by our fruits. Our fruit was a good one all because of our great faith in Him who bought us with His precious blood.

Over time and in this new merger with the Congregational Christian Churches, it became noticeable and evident the theology had developed into apostasy, or a falling away from the historic Faith. The new denomination, the United Church of Christ, lost members nearly every year of their existence. We as Evangelicals ourselves could no longer bear the burden of liberalism in our midst, both sadly and joyfully in the Lord, we voted out of that communion in 2005. Meanwhile, however, liberalism had its impact on our numbers and us for worship participants dwindled.

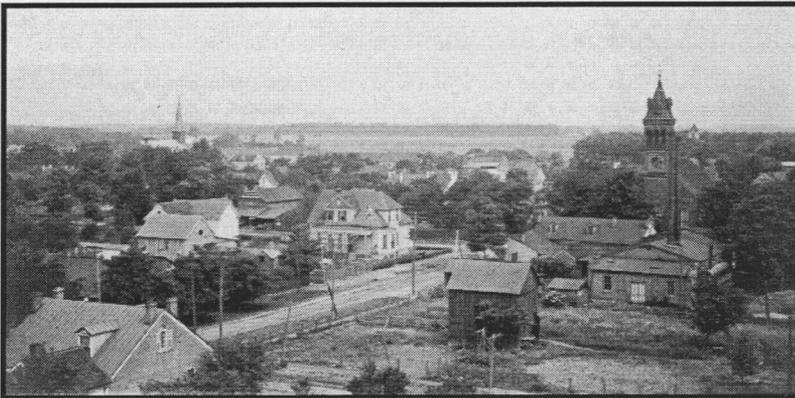
Yet God speaks through His Word and moves freely amongst His people as we bore witness to the One who is forever faithful to His covenant. God gave us the Reverend Darrell Weber, a faithful man of Evangelical Heritage. Under Brother Weber's ministry and in less than five short years, our worship numbers grew by more than 30% and our Bible study attendance is ever growing. We have been renewed on Eagle's Wings and God's glory has returned to Zion.

As part of this historical team effort, we sought also to give tribute to some of our founding fathers and families whose faith was a guiding light to us. As the Old Testament's two books of Chronicles note the genealogies available in the temple, most of the historical team sifted through church records from the founding timeframe to present day. They gave innumerable hours in a quest to locate the lineage of the founding families – we stand in awe of the founder's faithfulness to Christ.

Ultimately, we recognize it is to Him who is able to keep us from falling that we humbly submit this report...for if Christ Jesus had not first loved us, we could not fully show our appreciation to this His Church, Zion Evangelical Church. To Him be honor, glory and majesty forever, Amen and Amen.

Respectfully,
The 175th Anniversary Historical Committee
Betty Keller-Timmer
Marge Frommel-Wachtel
Earl Doerr
Stacy Woelke
Bill Saverig

We gratefully acknowledge the use of the pictures located in this publication to the Millstadt Historical Society and Zion Families who were so kind to allow their use in this document.



Millstadt in the 1910s with Zion
Evangelical Church in the
Foreground on the Right

THE EXODUS: LET MY PEOPLE GO

When the early Christian church began, it was against the backdrop of a conquering army and oppression. The Jewish people lived under the tyranny of the Greek-speaking Roman Empire when Christ stepped down from His Heavenly Throne to rescue mankind.

Yet, it was through this adversity the church flourished because a common language was established by the conquering armies. The Apostle Paul, inspired by God's Holy Spirit, was a Roman citizen as well as Jewish, he spoke both Greek and Hebrew – thus the Christian church flourished under this common Greek language. The Good News of Christ eventually came to our homeland of modern day Germany through the efforts of the faithful – often amidst adversity.

In much the same way, we can look back and see God moving in history and amidst war, oppression, and depravation that moved our forefathers to this great land of America. America had herself been in wars before our Germanic peoples came here. Yet, America set forth something the rest of the world had not seen in many ways: land and freedom. The Lewis and Clark expedition of the Louisiana Purchase broke new ground for much of what was to be the German Immigration in the Greater St. Louis area. Meanwhile, the Napoleonic Wars devastated much of Europe, leaving wide spread poverty and want in its wake. Yet, to paraphrase Joseph, although mankind meant war and depravity for evil, God meant and used it for good. It was this scenery across God's landscape that set the stage for a great migration from Central Europe.

They came by way of ship with many stopping in New Orleans. From there they moved slowly upstream on the Mississippi to the St. Louis area. They settled in towns which were once named "Horse Prairie", "Long Prairie" "Prairie Du Long" only to give them German names in due time. They moved into places like Dutch Hill, Dutch Hollow, New Hanover and Centerville. The latter is now known as Millstadt.

THE PIONEER LIFE:

IN THIS WORLD, YOU WILL HAVE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

We see how God had prepared our great, great, great grandparents for this life through the enduring hardships they must have lived out in war-torn Europe. Like God's first creation, Adam, they became simple farmers to make ends meet and provide for their budding families. Toil and labor was what Adam was told to do. These new immigrants, in order to till the ground, had to clear acre upon acre of densely wooded land – not with modern chain saws, but by hand saw. Being industri-

ous, the wood was used at every sight and corner for furniture, horse drawn-carts, tool handles, and of course, homes. Houses were little more than one or two rooms put together with hand-sawn boards or logs. Mothers spun their own yarn and made their own clothing. Furniture was wood yet, crude and simple. By today's standards, life was hard and uncomfortable. Although they found happiness in their newfound homeland, something remained missing.

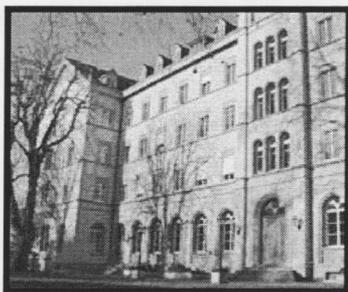
THE QUEST FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP ON THE FRONTIER: LEAD ON O KING ETERNAL

As God's people cried out in the Old Testament for a King to lead them, so our people cried out to God and their homeland for Spiritual Leadership. Many were used to their Lutheran and Reformed upbringing in the Motherland and were steeped in personal piety in their walk with Christ, yet they knew they lacked Christian shepherding. One letter perhaps best summed up the Spiritual landscape: "Our children are growing up like pagans, in absolute ignorance of the Gospel, not knowing whether they have a Savior, nor who He is, nor how to come to Him." As the Prophet Isaiah reported, they knew the sheep would go further astray without pastoral leadership.

THE FOUNDING OF ZION:

I SHALL BE THEIR GOD AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE

The Basel Missionary Society in Western Switzerland was used by God to answer the prayers of the German immigrants. The Basel Missionary Society was active in missions to Russia, Africa and the American Indians – not really were they too concerned about those of a native tongue as they were those who had never heard the Message of Christ. Nonetheless, Romans 8:28 reports "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."



Basel Mission Haus as it Exists Today in the Original Building

“...Ask and it shall be given unto you:” God made provisions for our people and Basel responded to this plea: “We are getting along very nicely here in a material way but we are sorry to say that we have no opportunity whatsoever to hear the Word of God or to enjoy the blessings of the church, to which we were accustomed in the old country. We ought to have a faithful shepherd and pastor in our midst in order that true Christianity, which I am sorry to say has sadly languished, might again be revived among us. Can’t you – won’t you, please send us a pastor who, in a simple manner, would preach to us the pure Gospel, one who would seek wholeheartedly the welfare of immortal souls?”

Peter Baumann who penned that letter in 1835 had his prayer answered when Reverend John Jacob Riess arrived in Centerville on November 22, 1835. Basel had intended Riess should also “serve the poor Indians helplessly wandering about his vicinity” but soon found all his time ministering to the German community. It should be mentioned that Pastor Riess didn’t stop planting churches and establishing elders at Zion but also founded other surrounding churches in Belleville, Turkey Hill (Freeburg), Salem church (3 miles Northwest of Centerville), Hecker and Burksville (south of modern day Waterloo) in addition to preaching stations.



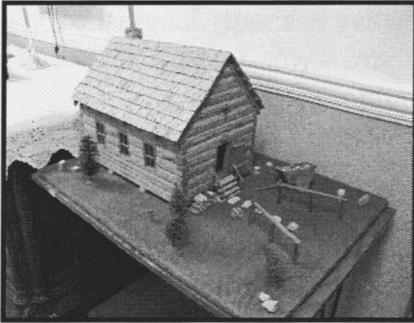
Johann Jakob Riess
Drawing from 1835 Courtesy of Basel Mission

Riess used the Apostle Paul’s model of establishing churches by appointing spiritual men (Elders) of the congregation to lead in his absence. Meanwhile, The Reverend went about planting other churches nearby. Zion’s first Elders were noted in the early church record as: Johannes Freivogel, George Henckler, William Probst, and George Seibert, Sr. Reverend Riess spent time over the next months confirming more than 30

people into the Christian faith, including adults. Initially, the Reverend preached once a month at Zion and later twice monthly. They worshiped in the shade of the forest trees during warm weather and at

Elder Freivogel's home during inclement weather.

ZION'S HOUSES OF WORSHIP:
I WAS GLAD WHEN THEY SAID UNTO ME,
LET US GO INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD



A Model of the Original Church

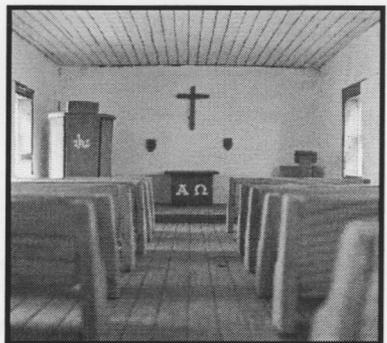
The people set out with all their heart to raise a modest sum to purchase a log church for an apparent cost of \$500 dollars. In the spring of 1837, enough had been raised to start the building.

On June 26th, the dedication services were held with a large congregation of Evangelical Christians in attendance. The first church was

located about 1 ½ miles south of Millstadt on Saxtown Road. Church services were held at Zion every Sunday beginning in 1840. However, the congregation continued to support Riess' missionary activities in his 30-mile circuit so he could continue to minister to the other German communities located at each stop.

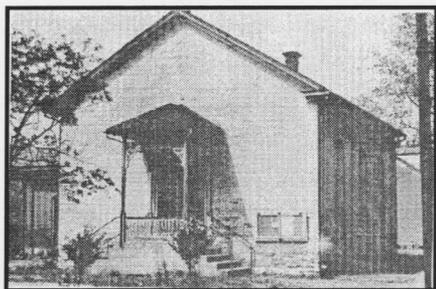
“Ye shall know them by their fruits:” As Zion began to flourish and grow, it acquired property in town to support the school. Government provided learning institutions were not established and thus parochial schools under Pastoral and church leadership became a necessity for families wanting to educate their children.

With the school located in town, it was decided to acquire property and build a sanctuary there as well. The second church was built in 1850 and with her centralized location, many new members were won and attendance increased. The continued growth forced another decision in short order. In April of 1863 and amidst the Civil War, Zion's congregation reached new



Model of the Original Sanctuary

heights and began planning for another building project. The design had dimensions of 40 by 60 feet but the height of the building was imposing by any standard in its day. It was built on the spiritual foundation of the Apostolic testimony with Christ being the Chief Cornerstone and we have used its physical foundation for the past 137 years.



Zion's second Sanctuary as it appeared in the 1930s

Meanwhile the Log Church was sold in February of 1864 and the second church was also disposed of for village use. The latter served as a public school building, a Village Hall, an assembly hall for civic organizations, and now serving as the Millstadt Police's Headquarters.

As the Psalmist notes: **unless the Lord builds the house, we would labor in vain.** Zion continued to see the good favor of the Lord's hand. In 1865, Zion focused her energies on building a new schoolhouse, indicating in less than 30 years 4 major building programs were necessary to support the congregation's growing numbers. In 1866, Zion began to reach spiritual maturation as they began a Bible Study hour from Advent through Pentecost and mission services were held specifically to promote the Christian faith in various settings. In 1867, the congregation added a room onto the parsonage for the teaching of confirmation, and in the same year added a pipe organ for a more worthy expression of musical worship.

Zion continued her run for the prize our Lord promised us. In 1871, the old steeple that had set as a "rider" atop the sanctuary was taken down and a magnificent tower built from the ground and pointed us toward our heavenly home. By 1889, two new bells were purchased through the efforts of the Ladies' Society. Also added during the same time frame were a steam heating plant, new pews and the laying of cement walks were also amenities that were added. Continued evangelism efforts resulted in the additional side galleries in 1891.

As the Zion congregation grew in the Grace and Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, additional ministries were added. This meant more activities supporting the Great Commission and by 1894, a new larger



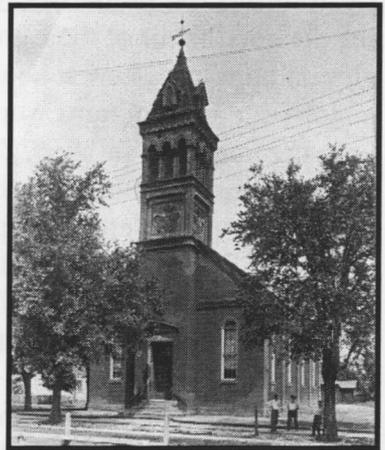
The Sanctuary in 1911

and more modern school building was erected to support the expanding ministries, parochial school and Christ-centered activities.

Throughout this growing and adapting period, the people continued to improve the ascetics of the church. By 1902, the sanctuary's ceiling was vaulted, an art glass window installed and newly

decorated walls were added to continue to Honor and Worship our Lord in the beauty He so rightly deserves. Continued improvements also happened in 1906 with the front doorway of the church rebuilt and an attractive art glass transom placed above the doors.

In honor of the congregation's 75th anniversary in 1910, Rev Knauss' son gave the beautiful marble baptismal font in memory of his parents. This instrument of the Lord's Sacrament of Baptism remains in wonderful condition and is still in use today in the sanctuary. In 1912, a new Kilgen pipe organ was installed replacing the previous. By 1914, the old tower was in need of structural repair as it had become unsafe. It still stands today along with a community clock that was installed at that time. A slate roof atop the church was also added in 1914, with both the tower and slate roof maintaining their stately place nearly 100 years later.



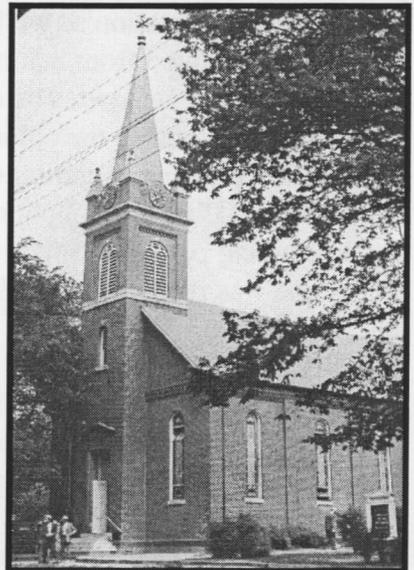
Zion Evangelical Church pre-1914

No further property improvements were noted until 1928 when new pews were placed in the church auditorium. This construction hull was not to last long however. In January 1929, a five man Centennial and Building Committee was established. The reason for renewed construction was continued congregational growth.

As David noted to God that the King of Israel dwelt in a fine palace, God too should have a fine place to dwell with His people in Millstadt. In September 1934, the congregation decided to completely remodel, modernize and enlarge the church building. It required the assistance and direction of a general contractor. Zion added 40 feet to her length as well as a basement dugout from underneath her existing foundation. Volunteers with dirt scrapers pulled by horses withdrew all the dirt from under the church except from beneath the tower. The basement provided a spacious assembly and dining hall, a modern kitchen, indoor restrooms, and an enlarged and a new heating system. The upstairs' added length allowed for needed Sunday School Classrooms as well as adding to the worship space. The new space stayed in harmony with the previous space, keeping her beautiful colonial style and design. In using the space effectively, a choir loft was added above the chancel and the Kilgen Organ was later installed adjacent to the choir. This monumental effort was dedicated on December 15th, 1935 just in time for Zion's 100th anniversary.

Much like King David's design of the Temple wasn't realized until his son Solomon assumed the throne, a new education building was envisioned during Reverend Limper's pastorate but was not realized until 1956 by his successor. This added much needed classroom and office space for the young people and the staff. Today, we are beginning to see the classrooms filling to capacity as we reach the next generations for Christ's Kingdom.

Continuing to improve the visual worship of Christ, the congregation envisioned an alteration and refurbishing of the sanctuary in 1963 in order to accommodate the recently donated pipe organ. The renovated sanctuary and new pipe organ were dedicated in October 1965 with the sanctuary now accentuating her "Cruciform" identity with the addition of colonial railings. Some minor changes to the chancel



Zion Evangelical Church 1945

area occurred during the tenure of the 150th anniversary that added a rug behind the Cross in addition to the redecorations in and around the sanctuary.

There were no significant changes to the buildings between the mid-1980s and the new millennium with the exception of the occasional repair or replacement of the boiler, air conditioner, roof, and other things needed of continual maintenance.

In preparation for the 175th anniversary and in 2009, the sanctuary again saw minor changes to the front of the sanctuary and chancel area: removal of the railings and pews in the choir area, removal of the front pews, sitting the altar upon castors. These changes will better facilitate those confined to wheelchairs, as well as make room for the bell choir



2009 Chancel Changes

and choir's presentation as well as the Worship Together Team. The carpet was removed from behind the Cross and back lighting for the Cross replaced the carpet. The chancel area added painted poplar wood paneling to accentuate the colonial style throughout the sanctuary. The 175th Anniversary Decorating Committee in 2009 also oversaw new carpeting installed throughout the sanctuary and narthex, which matches the existing pew upholstery. Finally, the refrigerator in the kitchen failed and was replaced in 2009.

The Z-team's "Maintenance Ministry" accomplished much in preparation for the 175th celebration. They assumed the leadership roles and performed various levels of work: Tuck Pointing and Sealing of the Church and Education Buildings in 2006; the 2007 refurbishment of the Rose Window and Boiler System as well as the new carpet in Reiss Hall; the 2008 replacement of the emergency lighting and exit, air conditioners in the basement and East Roof as well as the 2009 central air and heat installation in Reiss Hall.

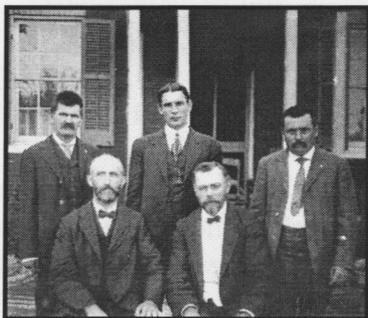
In 2010, the congregation plans to replace the carpeting on the front steps and repair the concrete as they lead to the narthex area as well as to replace the roof on the parsonage in order to employ a student pastor from Covenant Theological Seminary to support anticipated blessing and growth from the Lord's provision.

ZION'S MINISTRIES

"...THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE..."

Many groups were formed over the years and served the people and families in the Name of Christ. Some Ministries came and went, some adopted a new name and adapted ministries, but all came to serve. Some of these ministries were/are mentioned as follows:

- Parochial school
- Churchman's Brotherhood became the Churchmen's Fellowship and later became the Men's Fellowship
- Ladies Aid Society, Martha Sewing Circle and Benevolent Society combined to become the Ladies guild. Today they are known as the Women's Fellowship. They have spawned such groups as the Zionette Kitchen Band, the Sunshine Committee and Bereavement Committee to name just a few.



Zion School Board 1911

- The Happy Hour Club
- YoAdS (Young adults)
- The Prayer Team began in 1995 and prays daily for those who express their need for intercessory prayer on their behalf.
- The Young Ladies Society
- Youth Fellowship, currently known as "Changed Youth"
- Z-Team – While the aforementioned ministries all have small



Zion Church Council 1911

descriptions in the previous Anniversary Booklets, we would be remiss if we didn't mention this "Maintenance Ministry." They were formed in 2006. This group meets weekly on Tuesday mornings for fellowship and service to Christ's church.

- The Consistory or the Council – Is the governing board of the church.

External Ministries Supported include, included:

Healing Ministry: Memorial Hospital; Deaconess Hospital and Nursing School

Indigent Ministries: Kinder Kottage, Hoyleton Children's Home, Crop Walk, and Blanket Sunday

ZION'S SHEPHERDS

"HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS"

Many have come to lead Zion's flock and we are deeply appreciative of each of them, their families and their gifts as they served in the Name of the One who sent them:

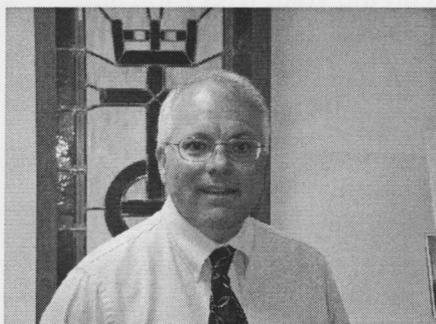
- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Pastor John Jacob Riess | 1835-1846 |
| • Pastor Jacob Knauss | 1846-1866, served again 1871-1881 |
| • Pastor Albert Zeller | 1866-1871 |
| • Pastor Al Neuhaus | 1881 |
| • Pastor Andreas Mueller | 1881-1889 |
| • Pastor Henry Buchmueller | 1889-1901 |
| • Pastor John Bruse | 1902-1904 |
| • Pastor Paul Wendt | 1904-1924 |
| • Pastor B.H. Heithaus | 1925-1930 |
| • Pastor A.E. Limper | 1930-1951 |
| • Pastor Armin J. Maronn | 1952-1966 |
| • Pastor Frank E. EDOM | 1966-1981 |
| • Pastor Gerald E. Senn | 1982-1992 |

- Pastor Randy Heckmann 1994-2002
- Pastor Darrell Weber 2005-Present

Sons of Zion who entered the Ministry:

- Helmut Friz
- Paul Schoeppe
- Armin Limper
- Lyle Weible
- John Burke
- Terry Rehling
- Tom Rehling
- Earl Schuff

A NOTE ABOUT OUR PRESENT PASTOR



Reverend Darrell Weber

In years past, there was accompanied a small write-up for each of the pastors that often included comments from the congregation and visitors. We would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge The Reverend Darrell Dee Weber. Pastor Weber was born into the likewise historic Freeburg (Turkey Hill), Illinois congregation. He was raised in an Evangelical and Reformed family.

He graduated from Freeburg Community High School in 1974 and attended the University of Missouri Rolla majoring in Aerospace Engineering and graduated in 1979. He became employed by McDonnell Douglas as an aerospace engineer and went on to finish his master's degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1989. It was in the late 1980s and early 1990s, God began to work on Brother Weber's heart. Darrell began to take classes at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis and served as a student pastor at St. Paul UCC Creve Coeur in North St. Louis. At Covenant Seminary, he earned graduate degrees both in Theology and Divinity in 1995. He has both a pastor's and a servant's heart – always caring for the needs of the Lord's people. His

Christian faith is refreshing and of an old Evangelical approach to worship. Many have commented this is the faith they remember and is the faith they want their children and children's children raised in. Pastor Weber is married to the former Marjorie Clepper also of Evangelical and Reformed heritage and faith. The Reverend and Mrs. Weber have three grown children: Melissa, Joshua, and Rachel. The Webers have faithfully served congregations in St. Louis, Missouri, Garner, Iowa, and now here in Millstadt, Illinois.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF ZION SINCE 1985

Uneasiness within the congregation came to a head in 2002 with the liberalism becoming more and more evident within the United Church of Christ (UCC). This uneasiness carried over and a student minister outside of the denomination was called. In June 2003, Zion held a town hall meeting with the UCC Conference Minister and Staff. The situation continued to be problematic with the yoke with Zion and the UCC and the student pastor was relieved in 2004. A UCC interim was placed however, many noted this man had liberal tendencies. This person was likewise relieved and the Reverend Darrell Weber called in 2004 and arrived in April 2005. In 2005, the UCC blatantly jettisoned Scriptural admonishments and affirmed unbiblical doctrines, thus forcing Zion to recoil and re-visit her relationship within the UCC. In December of 2005, Zion left the denomination. This certainly was one of the most difficult and unhappy times of our existence – yet we had to be faithful to the One who called us out of the world and into His sheepfold.

And so as we close, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with Zion's congregation, now and forever. Amen and Amen.