

Trinity History

As German emigrants began arriving in Horse Prairie in the early 1830s, they also brought with them their religious beliefs. The first German settlers here were Charles and Ernst Schrieber, Henry Moehrs and Henry Beier.

The Lutherans here founded Trinity Church in 1842 and started giving their children a Christian education. In 1843 the congregation called Pastor Gotha to serve, and he served until 1845. He conducted services every two weeks and also taught school.

In 1844 Mr. Moehrs donated an acre of land to the congregation to be used for the site of a church and a cemetery. The first log church was 25 x 18 feet. The modest house of worship cost about \$50.

The first baptism was administered when William Martin Schrieber was baptized on Oct. 10, 1843 by Pastor Gotha, and Charles Matthew Schrieber was the first to be baptized in the log church on May 12, 1845 by Pastor Balzer.

In the fall of 1845, the first resident pastor was called by the congregation. He was Rev. Martin Stephan who served until his death in February of 1846 and was among the first to be buried on Trinity Cemetery.

During 1847, nine members severed their connections with Trinity and joined the Evangelical Church of Horse Prairie (located on what is now the August Burmester farm). Others from the area also joined. It was disbanded in 1859, and the members joined Trinity.

A larger church was built and completed in 1851. The frame structure was 40 x 28 feet. Both a German and English dedicatory sermon was preached. The cost was approximately \$1,000.

Up until this time, the pastors did not serve for very long periods of time. Pastor Frederic Erdmann was called and ordained here in 1853. He remained at Trinity until 1894, when he retired after 40 years of faithfully serving the congregation as pastor and teacher. He died the following year.

It was during Rev. Erdmann's tenure that the present church was built. The members undertook the project for this house of worship in 1867, and in May of 1868, the cornerstone was laid. The contract was given to Frederick Voss I. His grandson, Fred III, related that his grandfather had six men working with him, plus many from the local congregation.

This 75 x 43 x 29-foot building, with a 120-foot steeple, was dedicated on Dec. 3, 1868. It was completed at the cost of \$14,200. It is the house of worship for the members today.

The church that had served for several years was now converted into a school house. During the existence of the old church (1851 to 1868), 444 children were baptized, 166 confirmed and 84 marriages solemnized.

After 27 years, the church interior was redecorated and a large mural was oil painted on the wall behind the altar. The cost was \$700. During 1918, the church was redecorated again. A crowd of 1,500 attended the afternoon rededication. Three services were held. At both the morning and afternoon, the seating capacity of 800 was too small, and the number of listeners outside of the building was as large as that inside. Another renovation took place in 1937, as well as in 1952 and 1987.

The old school began showing signs of wear and tear, so the congregation erected a new one in 1903. The two-story, three-room school cost \$2,572. For many years, the enrollment exceeded 100 students under one teacher. It educated a lot of students. In 1960, a new school was built, due to the deterioration of the old school building.

A new organ, the one currently used, was purchased in 1908 for \$1,800 and dedicated on Dec. 6. Following an inspection in 1992, the inspector reported that there was no other organ like the one here in southern Illinois.

Also in 1918, the young people of the congregation purchased an electric light plant which was used until 1938 when the power lines came through here.

Trinity Hall was built and dedicated in 1941. It had a meeting room with a stage on the main floor and a kitchen, playroom for children and bowling alley in the basement. When it became in dire need of repair, it was decided to demolish it in 1982.

In 1967, there was a month-long celebration of the 125th anniversary of Trinity. A pageant was presented by the members of the Mission Society and drew a huge crowds.

An addition to the church and a new parsonage were constructed in 1974. In 2003 rooms were added to the school to accommodate the preschool, kindergarten and a meeting room.

The 150th anniversary was celebrated in 1992 as members proclaimed the "Three in One." The 175th anniversary was celebrated in 2017 and the church building was 150 years old in 2018.

. During these years, people have come to Trinity Lutheran Church to sing, praise, pray and receive unending joy and peace within its walls. May the hearts and minds of future generations be filled with the same dedication, as those of the past.