

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church

Author unknown

www.nkyviews.com

BETHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The roots of Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church began in 1931 when Rev. O. H. Schmidt, Pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, encouraged the Central District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) to begin mission work in Northern Ky. In 1933 the district awarded a \$1100 grant and asked candidate Victor Selle to begin the mission in Covington. The first worship service was held September 24, 1933, and Bethany was officially organized on April 12, 1934. Rev. Selle accepted the new congregation's call, and was ordained June 10, 1934 at Concordia, Cincinnati. The new fellowship worshipped in the upper floor of a funeral home at 2214 Madison Avenue. Bethany grew rapidly, and in 1935 the Central District Mission Board suggested erecting a portable chapel. A site was located, but city zoning regulations halted the project. In 1936, using a \$3000 gift from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League and a \$7000 loan from the Central District Church Extension Fund, land was purchased at 2201 Madison Avenue for \$2500. Construction began in June 1937. The cornerstone was laid August 29, and the building dedicated on November 28, 1937. After serving Bethany for eight years Pastor Selle accepted a call from St. John's Lutheran Church, Vincennes, Ind.

Pastor Carl H. Toelke, Bethany's second pastor, was installed August 9, 1942. During his pastorate Bethany purchased its first parsonage at 2223 Scott Street, which was close to the church. In 1945 Pastor Toelke received and accepted a call to Grace Lutheran Church in Akron, Ohio.

Pastor Gustave Schramm was installed as Bethany's pastor in 1945. During his pastorate Bethany joined the Federation of Lutheran Churches of Greater Cincinnati. A Baldwin electronic organ was purchased for \$2650, replacing an old foot-pump organ. In 1949 Pastor Schramm accepted a call to Emmaus First Lutheran Church of Alhambra, Calif.

Rev. William J. Wollenburg was installed as Bethany's third Pastor on July 31, 1949. In 1950 he accepted a call to Faith Lutheran Church, Jefferson City, Mo.

Rev. Albert J. Dundek was installed in 1950. During his ministry the congregation became self-supporting. The parsonage was sold in October 1950, and a newer residence at 4604 Church Street in Winston Park was purchased. An electronic bell machine was installed and recorded hymns were played two or three times a day. It also sounded the call to worship. In addition, an air-conditioning system was installed. In 1956 Rev. Dundek accepted a call to become a hospital chaplain in Cleveland, Ohio.

Rev. Alfred R. Lueders was installed on January 6, 1957. Bethany celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1959. During Pastor Lueder's ministry, the parsonage at 505 Dudley Road, Edgewood, was purchased. In 1966 Pastor Lueders accepted a call to serve two congregations near Offerle, Kan.

During the latter part of Bethany's first 25 years, changes were taking place over which the congregation had little control. The automobile became readily accessible and the suburban movement began. Parking became a problem at Bethany, with temporary relief provided by local businesses allowing parking in their lots. The migration to the suburbs affected Bethany as it affected other churches in the older cities of Northern Kentucky.

Pastor Gregory A. Otte was installed as Bethany's pastor in 1968. In the early 1970's a committee was formed to seek a new parsonage. Suburban growth had made Dudley Road a major traffic corridor. Following the committee's report, the congregation purchased property at 3501 Turkeyfoot Road in Erlanger. Bethany soon decided to use the new land

for a new sanctuary. The Madison Avenue property was purchased by a Free Pentecostal Church which is still using the facilities. During the construction of the new sanctuary services were held at Turkeyfoot School. The building was dedicated December 1, 1974, with Rev. Arthur Ziegler, president of the Ohio District, delivering the sermon.

During Rev. Otte's ministry a nursery school and kindergarten were established using the church basement for a classroom. The pre-school is still in operation for 3 and 4 year-olds, with Mrs. Shirley Hacker and Mrs. Jerri Steward serving as teachers. The farmhouse, which is a 19th century log cabin located in front of the church building, was converted into a parish house that today is used for Sunday School, office space, and meetings. Pastor Otte left Bethany in 1975, accepting a call to teach at a Lutheran high school. He presently serves a church in Orange, Calif.

Rev. Donald Johnson was installed as Bethany's pastor on August 16, 1976. During his ministry the bylaws and constitution of the congregation were revised, the nursery school was officially received as part of Bethany's ministry, and the new hymnal, "Lutheran Worship," was introduced. Bethany also joined with other churches in the community to form Erlanger-Elsmere United Ministries, which operates an emergency aid and referral center.

Pastor Johnson accepted a call to Titusville, Fla. in April 1990, and in December of 1990 our present pastor, Rev. Robert Hullinger, was installed. When Pastor Hullinger accepted the call to Bethany he already had his own residence in Cincinnati, so there was no need for a parsonage. Thus the congregation sold the parsonage at 505 Dudley in Edgewood. Pastor Hullinger was pastor at Prince of Peace Church in Cincinnati and then took a sabbatical to work full time in the support group that he and his wife, Charlotte, founded: "Parents of Murdered Children." One of Pastor Hullinger's interests is journalism and he serves as editor for the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod's, Ohio District News. This has led to his developing the newspaper ministry in the form of the Bethany Bulletin which is sent to everyone in a mile radius of Bethany Lutheran Church.

New community activities at Bethany include a Boy Scout Troop, which meets Monday nights, and RoseMarion Thompson Dance Studio, which meets Thursday afternoons in the church basement. A major contact with the community Bethany's annual yard sale.

One of Bethany's major assets is the number of children who attend, and many of the activities are planned around the children. We have a KIDS' Group that meets once a month at the church where the children are involved in storytelling, crafts, outside activities, etc. All children, whether members of Bethany or not, are invited to join in this group. Several Bible studies at Bethany include: Sunday School for all ages; Sunday evening at 7 p.m., Third Tuesday of each month at Stringtown Restaurant at 6 - 7:30 p.m.; women's Bible study third Tuesday of each month at 10:30 a.m.; and a mother's group on Wednesday mornings at 10:30. Anyone is invited and encouraged to join in these groups. Call the church office at 331-3501 for information.

For the first time this Fourth of July Bethany was part of the Edgewood Parade. We had two decorated vehicles in the parade, bike riders, and walkers, and had a great time, followed by a picnic in Presidents Park. We hope to be able to be a part of this parade every year.

Bethany celebrated its 60th Anniversary in September 1994. A complete refurbishing of the sanctuary from painting to installation of a new heating system to new carpeting were some of the things that were accomplished. Also this year, Bethany was blessed with air conditioning, after many years of hot summer worship services.