

The following “Early History of The Old St. John’s Church” was paraphrased and condensed by Richard E. Larson, Charter Member of The Church on the County Line, for a publication made available at a Church open house on May 22, 1988.

It was late in the autumn of 1877 that a small group of Fullersburg farmers, who were members of the Proviso Lutheran Church, situated at 22nd Street and Wolf Road, decided to meet at the Fullersburg schoolhouse occasionally for preaching services. After meeting there for nearly a year, these consecrated men organized the Vereinigte Evangelisch St. Johannes Gemeinde (United Evangelical St. John’s Congregation). The first Council consisted of Elders W. Ostrum, H. Timke, and H. Heinke. At this time, St. John’s was a German-language church, but it was a free church, not affiliated with any denomination.

The first regular Meeting of the Congregation was held on February 19, 1879, at which time the Elders announced that a place of worship had been purchased: five acres, from the Fox brothers, for \$400.00, which was to be paid off in four years at 6% interest. The location was Washington Street just south of Spring Road in Fullersburg, now Oak Brook. They also announced that the cemetery would begin in the southwest corner of the property, and that two rows of trees would be planted around the land to add to its beauty. The church building was to be 28 feet by 40 feet and 14 feet high. Late in 1881 the building was dedicated. In a meeting on January 9, 1894, it was decided to build a tower at a cost “not to exceed \$200.00.” The first Pastor was the Reverend Friedrich Boeber, who was also a physician.

Fewer than 500 persons were living in Hinsdale when it was incorporated in 1873, but within a few years a German settlement sprang up in the area, most coming from the Province of Hanover. In 1888 the Lutheran Missouri Synod organized the Zion Lutheran Congregation and erected a church building at the corner of Second and Vine Streets; but many of the Germans chose the St. John’s Church instead. Reverend Frederick Braun was then Pastor.

In those days, transportation was mainly by wooden sidewalks, but they stopped at Ogden Avenue. Later they were extended as far north as the St. John’s Church.

In 1892 a schoolhouse was built close to the Church, with living quarters upstairs for the Pastor. About the same time, the Church became a member of Die Evangelische Synod von Nord Amerika. The local Church was named Die Evangelische St. Johannes Gemeinde.

From the early nineties through the long pastorate of the Reverend Albert Dreusicke, ending in 1943, the Church “served as a real community center. Here, families were begun with matrimonial blessing; here, newly-born infants were baptized into the fellowship; here, children were instructed in the parochial school, where they were also taught the essentials of the Christian Faith; here, grief-laden souls were comforted and joys were shared; and here, departed loved ones received the last tender rites and were interred on top of the quiet hill.” In all this, the Ladies Aid Society and the Men’s Brotherhood took the lead.

In the early twenties, the Church was remodeled, being made both higher and wider—and with a new basement. In 1952 a new parsonage was built and a remodeled chancel was dedicated. But, though the Church was prospering, as older members passed away and as younger ones moved away, attendance declined. Eventually it was decided to merge with the Burr Ridge United Church of Christ.

On September 10, 1972, the first Service of Worship of The Church on the County Line was held in the St. John’s building. Later, the building was purchased, and we have been holding our services there ever since.

The following "Early History of The Church on the County Line" was provided by Dr. Millard Scherich for a publication made available at a Church open house on May 22, 1988.

The first service of The Church on the County Line was held at The Hinsdale Community House on February 5, 1967. A "Blinding Blizzard" was racing that Sunday, but 23 people managed to attend. Although the weather continued to be "rough", the following Sunday, February 12, 1967, 40 people managed to get there.

After many months of meeting and worshipping together in various homes, the participants decided to start their own independent church. A doctrinal statement and a set of by laws were discussed in meeting after meeting and finally adopted to the satisfaction of all participating. Then came the first regular service referred to in the paragraph above.

On March 2, 1967, The Church on the County Line was incorporated, duly registered in DuPage County, and a charter soon thereafter received from the State of Illinois.

In the early history of the Church, many ministers preached from one to several times. Among them were Peter Beecken, Bill Cowell, Harold Finley, Paul Haik, James M. Lower, Willis E. Mayfield, Arthur Mercer, Vernon D. Miller, David H. Pottie, Samuel J. Schultz, Irving E. Strangland, and Evan Welsh.

For nearly a year, beginning on September 17, 1967, Reverend Richard V. Beesley, a professor at Wheaton College, served the Church regularly as Pastor.

On April 1, 1969, a regular Pastor was called, Robert E. Donaldson, but his term of service extended for less than a year.

Dr. Millard Scherich's service began in the fall of 1969. During the Wheaton College academic year he served the Church intermittently until the fall of 1970, when he began serving rather regularly, but on a Sunday-by-Sunday basis.

Perhaps as crucial a time as any in the history of the Church was the spring of 1972. Concern had been expressed about the wisdom of continuing the holding of services in the Community House. There were various and frequent distractions, and it was clear to all that no one, unless expressly told, would suspect that a Church service was being held in that building on Sunday morning. It was agreed that we should discontinue holding our services in the Community House.

Providentially, a concerned member of the Board, William R. Wallin, found out and reported to the Board that the Saint John's Church might be available for our use. Largely through his efforts, arrangements were consummated for our meeting in the Saint John's building, and the first service was held there on September 10, 1972. An event that both enlarged and united our fellowship on a broader scale occurred on June 17, 1973, when 15 former members of the Saint John's Church became members of The Church on the County Line.

1974 proved to be an especially eventful year. In this year we received the "right of first refusal" for the purchase of the Saint John's Church. Actual purchase of the Church property, parsonage and cemetery was not consummated until March 17, 1979.

On September 1, Dr. Millard Scherich, who had just retired from his professional duties at Wheaton College, became the regular full time Pastor of The Church on the County Line.

Once we contracted to buy the property, restoration and rehabilitation plans were made, and work on same was begun. On October 2, 1983 we celebrated "the payment in full of all indebtedness to the previous Church property owners and to the bank holding our mortgage." At the same time our project of building restoration and improvements was moving right along. The new Rodgers Organ was installed as a memorial to Charter Member Alfred Abrahamson, The Hoffman Room was finished and dedicated to the memory of Charter Member, George D. Hoffman, and we were using new pew Bibles dedicated to still another Charter Member, Donald V. Murgatroyd. We were also broadcasting on WTAQ Radio

“Heralding the Gospel of Jesus Christ”, a weekly program begun January 6, 1976 but cancelled after 1983 due to radical changes of the radio station operations.

We have been mightily blessed. Many of our members have toiled hour after hour after hour for weeks, months and years as we have moved ahead in restoration projects. Contributions from members and friends have been great and gratefully received.

We ought always to acknowledge that all things are under the glorious sovereignty of Almighty God. All that we are and all that we use we are and we use by God’s grace. Let us, then, be thankful to God for all His gifts; for the world in which we live and move and have our being, for our life, for Jesus Christ, for the Gospel, for the Scriptures whereby we know of Christ and the Gospel, and for the hope set before us through God’s personal and written Word. And let us commit ourselves and the Church to His Lordship. May we ever pray for God’s will to be done within us, among us, for us, and through us.