

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Hopeful Lutheran Church

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Hopeful Lutheran Church

Hopeful Evangelical Lutheran Church is the oldest Lutheran Church west of the Allegheny Mountains. The first worship services were held in 1805, with the first congregation being organized on Epiphany Day, January 6, 1806. The first colonists came from Hebron Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madison County, Virginia. They were of German descent, their ancestors having emigrated from the Palatinate area of Germany and Alsace in the early 1700's.

In 1804, the Rev. William Carpenter, pastor of Hebron Church in Virginia, made a missionary trip to Kentucky. His impressions must have been favorable, because the next year a group from his congregation moved to Boone County, Kentucky. Members of this small group who came first were: George and Elizabeth Rouse, John and Millie House, Frederick Zimmerman, Ephraim and Suzanna Tanner, John and Nancy Rouse, and Elizabeth Hoffman. At that time, most of Northern Kentucky was wilderness. There was no city of Florence, and Burlington, the county seat, had only a few houses with a log court house and jail. Covington was merely a farm and an orchard. All these pioneer families built their own cabins, with the exception of George Rouse, who pitched his tent not far from where the present Hopeful Church building now stands.

The first religious meeting was held at the homestead of George Rouse. Worship services were conducted in German, including hymn singing, prayers, and sermons read by Ephraim Tanner. Mr. Tanner corresponded with Rev. Carpenter on the settlers' religious activities. Rev. Carpenter sent a constitution and urged the settlers to organize a congregation. This they did on January 6, 1806.

The first church was built on land given by George Rouse. It was a cabin church built of unhewn logs. The roof and doors were made of clapboards; the floor of puncheons, and the seats were made of saplings. The windows were openings cut in each side of the building and had neither panes of glass nor sashes. There was no source of heat, yet the congregation continued to meet for worship during the winter.

From time to time the Hopeful-Hebron parish also included Ebenezer Lutheran Church, another Boone County congregation. Ebenezer joined the parish for the first time when it was organized in 1856, but withdrew three years later. The church building was located on what is now called Mt. Zion road (off U.S. 25) near Florence. From 1861 to 1873 and from 1881 to 1892, that church again shared pastors with Hebron and Hopeful. In 1892 Ebenezer was merged with Hopeful Church.

The Rev. A. G. Emerson (1867-1869) was able to bring some growth to the church. Rev. Emerson was succeeded by Rev. S. B. Hyman in the year 1870. Rev. W. C. Barnett came to Hopeful in 1871 and led the church for ten years. From 1881 to 1883 the Rev. A. J. Douglas was pastor of Hopeful. His son, Lloyd C. Douglas, author of several books, related in one of his short stories some of the happenings in his youth at Hopeful.

Except for the pastorate of H. Max Lentz (1890-1900), the period from 1881 to 1916 was one of short terms of clerical service at Hopeful Church.

During the nine-year pastorate of Rev. George A. Royer the present brick church building was erected in 1917 at a cost of over \$12,000.

At the end of the Rev. J. Paul Rimmer's pastorate the Hopeful-Hebron joint parish was dissolved and each church became independent. A new brick parsonage was built beside Hopeful Church in 1949, during the pastorate of the Rev. Herman V.J. Andres. A new educational unit was added to the church in 1956, as the church celebrated its 150th anniversary during the pastorate of the Rev. Wilford C. Butt.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Robert C. Richter, who has diligently and faithfully served the congregation since 1963, Hopeful Church continues to grow.

From the first, the congregation resolved to have an ordained minister come at least once a year to administer the sacraments. Rev. Carpenter came from Virginia at least twice for that purpose, and in October, 1813, he moved to Florence to become Hopeful's first regular pastor.

Both a new constitution and a new church building were added during the pastorate of Rev. Carpenter. At a congregational meeting on January 6, 1815, a new and much longer constitution (written in German) was proposed and adopted. It expressed a spirit of devotion and piety, and deep and abiding loyalty to the Lutheran Church. Pastor Carpenter also moved the congregation to build a better church in 1823 when, in an emotional outburst, he said, "All build good houses and let God live in a tent!" The new building was a twenty-five-foot, square log church with an end gallery and a high pulpit.

On July 10, 1832, Pastor Carpenter wrote to the Rev. Jacob Crigler, urging him to come to take care of the congregation at Florence. Pastor Carpenter died in 1833, and Rev. Crigler arrived from Berlin, Pennsylvania in April, 1834.

Pastor Crigler was a faithful, active, and progressive pastor serving Hopeful from 1834 to 1842. He was heartily in favor of English services, Sunday schools, missionary activity, temperance, and Sabbath observance. During his pastorate, in 1837, a thirty-five by fifty foot brick church was built from bricks made near the church. Much work was donated, and the final treasurer's report listed only \$1,587 in expenses.

In 1854, Hebron Evangelical Lutheran Church was founded in Hebron, Kentucky. The two churches immediately formed a joint parish and built a parsonage for the pastor on a lot near Limaburg. Also in 1854, the first history of Hopeful Church was written by its fourth pastor, the Rev. David Harbaugh.

The Rev. W. G. Harter began his work at Hopeful in early 1864 with great promise. But, after a brief illness, he died on July 31st, serving the congregation as their pastor for only a few months.

After a short vacancy, the Rev. Thomas Drake was called in 1865. During the Civil War he had served as Provost Marshal of Fairfield County, Ohio. The prevailing sentiment was strongly in favor of the South, and Pastor Drake left after two years of fruitless effort.

MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED THIS CONGREGATION

William Carpenter	1813-1833
Jacob Crigler	1834-1842
John Surface	1842-1851
David Harbaugh.....	1852-1855
J. G. Harris	1855-1863
W. G. Harter.....	1864-1864
Thomas Drake	1865-1867
A. G. Emerson	1867-1869
S. B. Hyman.....	1870-1870
W. C. Barnett.....	1871-1881
A. J. Douglas.....	1881-1883
William H. Keller.....	1884-1887
H. M. Lentz.....	1890-1900
S. E. Slater.....	1901-1905
Frank A. Dressel.....	1906-1906
J. H. Walterich.....	1907-1909
William S. Tomlinson	1910-1912
W. F. Wallace	1913-1915
George A. Royer.....	1916-1925
Guy M. Lubold.....	1925-1929
Frank B. Heibert, D.D.	1929-1931
Harlow Haas.....	1931-1933
H. M. Hauter	1933-1944
J. Paul Rimmer	1945-1947
Herman V. J. Andres	1948-1953
Wilford C. Butt.....	1953-1962
Robert C. Richter.....	1963-

Two men from Hopeful congregation who were ordained into the Lutheran ministry are: the Rev. Harold Beeman, (deceased) who served churches in Indiana and Michigan, and the Rev. Charles P. Aylor, now serving Hebron Lutheran Church, Hebron, Kentucky.