

NORTHERN KENTUCKY VIEWS PRESENTS

HISTORY OF
HEBRON EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH
HEBRON, KENTUCKY

Excerpted From

History of the Indiana-
Kentucky Synod

By

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In his story, *A History of the Lutheran Churches in Boone County, Kentucky*, The Rev. H. Max Lentz observed that the year 1854 was "one of the most eventful in the history of the Boone County Charge." One of the developments which prompted that statement was the organization of a new congregation in the northern part of that county. On January 21, 1854, sixteen persons signed the charter of Hebron Evangelical Lutheran Church at the home of John Crigler, near a crossroads which was later surrounded by a city that also took the name "Hebron." The founders of this congregation were former members of Hopeful Church of Florence, a few miles farther south of the Ohio River. They named their church after Hebron Lutheran Church of Madison, Virginia—the spiritual home of many of their parents and grandparents.

A few weeks after organization, the members of the new congregation began to construct a house of worship on a hill near the Crigler house. They cut lumber from nearby trees and made bricks at the building site. The cornerstone was laid on July 15th, and the completed edifice was dedicated on the following December 3rd. A gift of \$500 from Hebron Church in Virginia helped the congregation to pay for the building.

Another event in 1854 which had a significant effect on the ministry of Hebron Church was the establishment of the Synod of Kentucky in Louisville on May 11th. The Rev. David Harbaugh, Hebron's first pastor, was elected to be the new synod's treasurer.

When the congregation was founded, Hebron became part of a two-church parish along with Hopeful Church. Pastor Harbaugh was the first of nineteen ministers who were to serve these two churches over a ninety-three-year period (1854-1947). He occupied a parsonage which was built half-way between these charges in 1854.

From time to time Hebron's 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. From 1861 to 1873 and from 1881 to 1892, that church again shared pastors with Hebron and Hopeful. In 1892, though, Ebenezer was merged with Hopeful Church.

Between 1865 and 1871, Hebron had difficulty maintaining its programs because of a rapid turnover of pastors. The Rev. W. G. Harter served for only a few months in 1864 before passing away; his successor, the Rev. Thomas Drake, stayed for only a couple of years before alienating many of his parishioners because of his Union-oriented political views; and the next pastor, the Rev. A. G. Emerson served only from 1867 to 1869 before friction within the parish forced him to resign. The eight-month ministry of the Rev. Samuel B. Hyman in 1870 was also a stormy one, although the congregation made some noteworthy improvements on their house of worship in that year, installing a pulpit and adding a narthex and bell tower. Then, in 1871, the Rev. W. C. Barnett began an amicable and effective ten-year pastorate at Hebron.

Throughout the 1890's Hebron Church was under the leadership of the Rev. H. Max Lentz, whose account of the development of Lutheranism in Boone County has been mentioned. During his term, in 1895, a new parsonage was constructed closer to Hopeful Church, just outside Florence.

In the first forty-five years of the twentieth century, only two pastors served Hebron for more than four years. They were the Rev. George A. Royer, who began a nine-year pastorate in 1916 and the Rev. H. M. Hauter, who served from 1933 to 1944. Meanwhile, the congregation's house of worship was renovated and modernized on several occasions. One of the most important improvements was made in 1927, when Sunday school classrooms were completed.

By 1947 Hebron had become a sizeable and active church, and it was decided that the congregation should have their own pastor. The following year, while the call committee considered the parish's clerical needs, a parsonage was built near the church, on Limaburg Road. The two-story, frame

residence was first occupied by the Rev. Jesse E. Stomberger, D.D., who began a long and distinguished pastorate at Hebron Church in 1949.

The congregation celebrated their 100th anniversary in 1954. This observance was climaxed by the dedication of a spacious new brick parish house with a fellowship hall, classrooms, office space, and a kitchen.

Soon after the Rev. Charles P. Aylor, S.T.M., assumed his duties as Hebron's pastor in 1962, plans were developed for the construction of a new church building. In 1963 the congregation purchased additional land next to the existing church grounds, enlarging the site of six acres. Two years later architectural drawings for the proposed edifice were approved, and a building fund campaign was initiated. Then, in 1968, the long-anticipated new church home replaced the building which had been used for well over a century. When dedicated on September 22nd, of that year, Hebron's worship center was a source of real satisfaction to the congregation. It was a modern Gothic structure, with a curved roof line and an exterior of variegated brick and glass. Inside, it provided seating space for 300 people in the nave and featured a forty-foot wooden reredos in the chancel. Attached to the parish house, this fine facility increased the value of the church's physical plant to about \$285,000.

But the construction of a church was not the congregation's only accomplishment in the late 1960's. Situated in a rapidly growing community on the outskirts of Cincinnati, Hebron carried on an active program of evangelism and made substantial gains in membership. Between 1965 and 1970, the congregation's baptized membership rose from 415 to 510. In addition, under Pastor Aylor's continuing guidance, the church developed a full complement of educational, musical, and social activities.

Membership as of December 31, 1970: 510 baptized, 369 confirmed, 276 communing.

Previous synodical affiliations: Synod of Kentucky of the General Synod, 1854-1864; Miami Synod of the General Synod, 1864-1920; Ohio Synod (ULCA), 1920-1934; Kentucky-Tennessee Synod (ULCA), 1934-1962.

Pastors who have served this congregation: David Harbaugh (1852-1855), J. G. Harris (1855-1863), W. G. Harter (1864), Thomas Drake (1865-1867), W. A. G. Emerson (1867-1869), Samuel B. Hyman (1870), William C. Barnett (1871-1881), A. J. Douglas (1881-1883), William H. Keller (1885-1888), H. Max Lentz (1890-1900), Samuel E. Slater (1901-1905), Frank A. Dressel (1906), J. H. Walterich

(1907-1909), W. S. Tomlinson (1910-1912), W. F. Wallace (1913-1915), George 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), Jesse E. Stomberger, D.D. (1949-1961), Charles P. Aylor (1962-).