

**German Evangelical Church  
Boonville Evangelical Church  
Boonville Evangelical and Reformed Church  
Boonville United Church of Christ**

*7<sup>th</sup> and Spring Streets  
Boonville, Missouri 65233  
Phone: (660) 882-5501*

*Karen Nelson, Pastor  
8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School  
10:00 a.m. Fellowship  
10:30 a.m. Worship Service*

**Township:** T-49-N  
**Range:** R-17-W  
**Section:** 35  
**Latitude:** 38.975951  
**Map:** [Click Here](#)

**Organized:** August 1853  
**Disbanded:** No  
**Active:** Yes  
**Longitude:** -92.740155  
**Updated:** October 6, 2004

**Cemetery:** There is no cemetery associated with this church.

**Area:** Boonville, Missouri

**Records:** All of the church records are stored on the church premises and are available for examination. Early records are in German.

**History:**



Photograph courtesy of H. Stone

**German Evangelical Church in Boonville**

**From "History of Howard and Cooper Counties Missouri", 1883**

The German Evangelical Congregation in Boonville, Missouri - Organized in August, 1853, with the following members: George Vollrath, J. H. Boiler, William Haas, St. Weber, Paul Stegner, Philip Back, William Gemmer, Peter Back, Jacob Seibel, L. N. Schmidt, Otto Koehnke, Adam Stegner, J. G. Blumenroedher, Ernest Stegner, George Debusmann, Gottfried Back, Jacob Thauer, J. E. Hoflander, David Rau, Sophia Hain, Frederica Reinhart, Erk. Hirlinger, Jacob Neef, George Goller, L. Holzmueller, Adam Sandrock, Fred. Metz, J. Mittameyer, Philip Stahl, J. F.

Fickel, J. Lotz. George Vollrath, J. H. Holler, St. Wheeler and William Haas were the first trustees and Rev. John Wettle was the first pastor. In 1854 the present house of worship was built, which was mainly due to the liberality and energy of George Vollrath. In 1857 the congregation erected a School house for a parochial school, and in 1879 a parsonage. Rev. C. L. Greiner, J. Lange and E. Schneider have each served the church successively as pastors until the present pastor, Rev. L. Kohlman.

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### **Boonville Evangelical Church**

#### **From "History of Cooper County Missouri" by W. F. Johnson, 1919**

Boonville Evangelical Church, was organized in 1853. Rev. John Wettle was the first pastor. The first building was erected in 1854 due mainly to the energy and labor of George Vollrath, one of the early members. A school building was erected in 1857 and a parsonage in 1879. The school was discontinued in later years. The present building was erected in 1887 and dedicated by Rev. C. A. Richter, of Jefferson City, Missouri. Rev. R. M. Hinze served as pastor of this church from 1907-1917. During his pastorate the church was refurbished and redecorated in 1908. In 1915 the church was enlarged by the addition of several Sunday school rooms. A pipe organ was presented by Mrs. Doris Gmelich, which was installed at the time of the addition. Early pastors were C. L. Greiner, J. Lange, E. Schneider and L. Kohlman. Original members were George Vollrath, J. H. Boller, William Haas, St. Weber, Paul Stegner, Philip Back, William Gemmer, Peter Back, Jacob Thauer, J. E. Hoflander, David Rau, Sophia Hain, Frederica Reinhart, Erk. Hirlinger, Jacob Neef, George Goller, L. Holzmueller, Adam Sandroock, Fred. Metz, J. Mittameyer, Philip Stahl, J. F. Fickel, J. Lotz.

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### **History of the Evangelical United Church of Christ**

#### **From "Memorabilia of Cooper County", 1990**

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth . . . And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you and with your seed after you."

What the soul is to man, the Church is to the world. Except that in Boonville, Missouri, there was no "German Church" where first and second generation immigrants could worship in custom familiar to the then fewer than forty families who had migrated Westward during the early 1800's.

In 1849 two German circuit riders, the Reverends Rauschenbach and Kroenkle, were in Boonville on a regular but infrequent basis. Then, in 1850, the Rev. Hoffmeister, an Evangelical minister serving Moniteau County, agreed to conduct services twice a month at Boonville. His ministry at Boonville was brought about as a result of the amount of \$250 annually provided by the Presbyterian Church Mission Board's decision to support a church for their German friends.

In 1853 Boonville's population was 2,800 and growing, each year gaining about 139 new residents. There existed a strong sense of need - a church where a German congregation could worship at a time when their "New World" seemed on the verge of collapse. Troubles of earlier years, including 1820, when a Grand Jury indicted eight men for swearing in public, seemed trivial compared to growing unrest - the threat of civil war - that seemed certain would follow the Indian and Mormon wars.

Perhaps remembering Hans Andersen's words, "God permits nothing to happen which is not good for us," and a German proverb: "God gives the milk, but not the pail," the German Evangelicals with gratitude to the Presbyterians, decided to provide the pail.

In August, 1853, the German Evangelical Congregation was organized. The Rev. Johann Wettle regularly led services on alternate Sundays, at a building at Seventh and Spring Streets. The structure was used for Roman Catholic services on other Sundays.

On January 1, 1855 the German Congregation adopted its first constitution and elected a Church Council that consisted of four men. The Rev. Wettle resigned in 1856, the same year that the Presbyterian Church withdrew their financial support after laying much groundwork for Christian growth.

During October, 1856, the German Congregation called the Rev. C.L. Greiner, former missionary to India for 23 years. He was described as a kind man, a stern pastor and teacher. There was at that point in time, no public school or coeducation. Schools were strict. The following regulations were typical in a boys' school: "No student shall get drunk or be permitted to play at cards or other games of hazard. No student shall use profane irreverent or obscene language or be guilty of conduct tending thereunto . . ." The Rev. Mr. Greiner died January 14, 1877, and was buried in Walnut Grove Cemetery. At the time of his death, the German Congregation numbered some forty families.

It was soon after the Rev. N. Large began his pastorate (1877-1878) that the first Sunday School classes were conducted; to be followed a year later with the formation of the first choir.

On March 30, 1887, the cornerstone was laid on the same site where the first church was razed. The building, next door to the then 10-year-old church parsonage, was completed in less than 18 months and was consecrated January 8, 1888.

Until that time, the congregation had been served, in addition to those mentioned, by the following clergymen: H.E. Schneider (1880-1882); L. Kohlmann (1883-1886); X. Pistor (1886-1890).

It also was during those years that the Evangelical Congregation began to expand the church into areas of service in addition to providing the setting for formal worship. In 1880, twenty-nine women formed the first Church-orientated service group. They called themselves the "Frauenverein". During 1887, still another ladies organization was formed, known simply as the "Younger Frauenverein". The latter group apparently became of age during the ten years that followed, for they disbanded in 1907. (The original Fraueverein continued until 1922).

From April 13, 1890, until October 3, 1896, the church was pastored still on a part-time basis, by the Rev. B.H. Leesman. It was during his tenure, in 1892 that the Church's constitution was revised. The Church also became incorporated under the official title, "The German Evangelical Congregation". A short time later the title was amended to, "The Evangelical Church of Boonville, Missouri". It was also during his tenure in 1890, that another choir was formed.

Later, in 1896, the Evangelical Church called as its pastor the Rev. H. Hamphausen. His pastorate was to mark the first time the Church had a full-time Clergyman who could devote maximum time to needs of his flock. He served less than a year when, in 1897, the first Evangelical District Conference was held. Evangelicals from what then were great distances gathered at Boonville for the business meeting.

It was during 1898 that the Boonville Evangelical Church became a member of the "Evangelical Synod". The following year, 1899, there occurred a change in worship that later was to change even more. That was the year that the congregation voted to have one worship service each month conducted in the English language; to be held on a Sunday evening. The Rev. Kamphausen's pastorate ended July 1, 1900.

He was succeeded by the Rev. E.L. Mueller. Like earlier pastors, the Rev. Mr. Mueller was encouraged to spend as much time as possible ministering to the needs of other Evangelicals in nearby churches. Rev. Mueller was the first to institute a class in Confirmation. He also was the first to conduct all Sunday evening services, as well as meetings of the youth organization, in English. It was also during his ministry that the church parsonage was rebuilt.

The new parsonage was dedicated on November 15, 1903 - the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Evangelical Church at Boonville. During the first 50 years benevolent giving had amounted to about \$2,000 an amount that was to increase nearly thirtyfold during the second fifty years.

On January 6, 1907, a call was extended to the Rev. R.M. Hinze. During his first six months in Boonville, the Evangelical Church was renovated and rededicated on July 5, 1908. Meantime, the tempo of life was picking up.

Steel rails had drawn a bandage about the nation's Civil War wounds. With the railroads came a new tranquility, prosperity and the peace that for decades had been woefully lacking. As the Gay Nineties gave way to the Twentieth Century, Boonville had few paved streets and no electricity. Jobs such as bookkeepers, stenographers and typists were held by men whose salaries averaged \$6 to \$8 a week. Potatoes were selling at about 35 cents a bushel, corn about 30 cents, wheat about 70 cents a bushel. Eggs could be purchased at about 12 cents a dozen and a Texas steer was worth about 4 cents a pound at the market place. A dinner at a restaurant was about 20 cents, a man's suit \$13, and gingham was 5 cents a yard.

In 1915, the Evangelical Church of Boonville voted to continue to set the pace of worship by expanding the Church south from the original building. The new cornerstone was laid October 17 of that year with work on the annex completed January 6, 1916.

In the new addition was a new pipe organ, and for the Church there was a new organization, "The Dorcas Society", formed on May 11th. That group absorbed the membership of all previous women's organizations.

Since the earliest days, there had been instrumental music performed in the Sanctuary, first on a reed organ. The original instrument was replaced in 1890 with another reed organ - a gift of Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Gmelich. It was replaced in 1894 with a one manual pipe organ. Then in 1916, it was replaced with the present instrument, a 14 rank vacuum-electric pipe organ - also a gift of the Gmelich family, in memory of the late Lt. Governor of Missouri.

During 1920, the congregation voted to increase its council from seven to ten members, with the council naming committees to assist the pastor in promoting Christianity a tradition that has continued. The Rev. Mr. Hinze served the congregation until 1921 including a brief interruption in 1919, following his resignation and later was recalled.

On November 20, 1921, a call was extended to the Rev. Frederick Stoerker. The World War that was to end wars had been fought and by the Grace of God and brave souls, a nation had been preserved. During Rev. Stoerker's administration all services conducted in the German language were discontinued. A new Church constitution was approved in 1924 that placed great emphasis on providing the community with a "Living Church". During the late 1920's it became evident that there would not be a "chicken in every pot", that the Great Depression, if not already here, was just around the corner. With the collapse of Wall Street and all the hardships associated with it, the congregation remained faithful to the needs of the Church, for it was in 1929 that plans were made to expand the Church's educational facilities.

Between the years 1853 and 1935 the Church had witnessed 1,630 baptisms, 641 confirmations, 571 weddings and 688 funerals.

On April 17, 1935, the Rev. E.F. Abele accepted a call to serve the Church's growing congregation that one year earlier had become The Evangelical and Reformed Church following denominational merges.

With the lingering effects of depression and the realization that another world war was imminent, the congregation, in 1941, voted to again renovate the Sanctuary; to provide a formal chancel area; and to rebuild and relocate the pipe organ. Included with the organ were chimes, a gift from

the late Dr. Alex van Ravenswaay. Cost of the project: \$17,000. Then in 1947, complete in the knowledge that although World War II was history, but also recognizing the fact that conflict throughout the world was to continue, the congregation instructed that a committee be named to plan for additional educational space to be completed and dedicated in 1953 - in observance of the First Hundred Years. The new facilities consisted of the church basement being renovated to provide space for Sunday School rooms, and a stage at the north end of the auditorium.

During the first century of service benevolent giving totaled about \$60,000. Between 1935 and 1953 the membership had increased from 360 to 637. During the same period there had been 445 baptisms, 143 confirmations, 301 weddings, and 541 funerals. In 1953 the Senior Choir consisted of 24 voices. The Girls' Chorus included some 33 members. Other Church organizations included the Youth Fellowship, the Women's Guild, the successor to the Dorcas Society; the Sunshine Society; successor to the Sunshine Mission Society of the Evangelical Church organized in 1910 and the Evening Guild organized in 1951.

One of our outstanding accomplishments during our first century was the remodeled Sanctuary in 1941 at a cost of \$17000 which was met by bequests started in 1929. The last time it was renovated was in 1908 with the organ in the center of the Sanctuary and the large organ pipes surrounded it. The choirs sat on both sides and in front of it. The pulpit and lectern along with the organ was on the

upper level and the altar with tall backed red velvet upholstered chairs on each side on the lower level. A rail holding a brown velvet curtain completed the upper level. The renovated sanctuary has a stained glass window in the center with altar below and organ placed on the east side and the organ pipes concealed in the upper area. The pulpit is on the left of the Sanctuary and the Lectern, stands on the right side. Three steps lead to the altar with panels of walnut on each side in front of the choir.

The stained glass windows have enhanced our Sanctuary for a number of years replacing the red glass windows similar to those still in the local Episcopal Church.

Our stained glass windows are unusual and very meaningful to our congregation as four of them depict highlights in the life of Christ. The window on the West wall shows Jesus and Peter. Jesus is walking on the water and Peter is sinking after trying to walk on the water to Jesus and became fearful of the waves. Jesus is reaching out his hand to save him and says, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt me?" The story is taken from Matthew 14:22-32. This window was given by Mrs. J.F. Gmelich in memory of her husband about 1910. Her granddaughter is Mrs. Charles P. Malone of Boonville. The window in the back on the North, depicts the story of "The Woman at the Well" at which time Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for a drink of water and he tells her she must drink of the "living water, to satisfy her thirst". The story is found in John 4:7-30. This window was dedicated to the memory of Lenard and Margaret Klein by their son, George Klein. The other window in the rear of the church shows Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethseme. It was dedicated to the memory of C.W. Sombart by his sons and based on the famous Hoffman painting. The story is found in Matthew 26:36-46 and Luke 22:39-46. On the East side of the church the window is based on the painting of Bernard Plockhorst of Christ taking leave of his mother, which was his last embrace the evening before the Last Supper.

The windows show dependence on Christ and keeping our faith in him; our needs of "living water" and our reliance upon God through prayer as well as our human need in times of sorrow. It also gives the message that we are all dependant not only upon the Diety but upon each other. The windows are surely a work of art which illuminate our faith and hopefully each Sunday as we worship, our eyes may again be opened and we may see something not seen before.

In the Fall of 1953 started a building fund to construct an educational building south of the Sanctuary. The educational unit was dedicated Sunday, April 24, 1965. Total cost of the project was \$95,673. That same year, the congregation voted an amendment to its constitution. For the

first time in its history, the Church required that a woman be elected to serve on the 12 member council.

On June 1, 1965, the Rev. Kenneth Kuenning succeeded the Rev. Mr. Abele who earlier had announced his intention to retire and to remain a Boonville resident. When the Rev. Abele left the pulpit for the last time, the Church that he had served for so long had a new name, "The United Church of Christ", acquired in 1957 after another denominational merger.

It was during the Rev. Kuenning's tenure that the congregation voted to acquire property immediately west of the Educational Building to be used as an off-street parking lot.

The Rev. Charles Schwantes, on October 24, 1969, succeeded the Rev. Mr. Kuenning. The following January, in his report to the congregation, the Rev. Schwantes said in part, "It is my hope that everyone in the congregation will consider himself a minister, and those chosen for special responsibility will attend to those responsibilities conscientiously. May we have enthusiasm and joy in our work and witness. A year later, January 20, 1971, the pastor whose ill health had been diagnosed as terminal cancer, wrote to the congregation who had gathered for their annual business meeting, these words, ". . . It is with much disappointment that I cannot be with you as your pastor this evening, but there are some things over which we have no control. I am in such a position this evening . . . "

On June 1, 1971, the Rev. Melvin Lichte accepted a call to become pastor of a church that only months before, when all seemed right, found itself caught in the throes of death.

It was with Rev. Lichte's leadership that the congregation approved paving the parking lot at a cost of \$4,200, and in the Spring of 1972, voted to replace an antiquated heating system in the Sanctuary. There also would be summer cooling. Cost figure was \$6,710.04 plus incidental work. During the removal of the old system, slight vibration cause a 250 pound radiator in the church basement to fall from the ceiling, landing where there usually would have been at least one infant in a baby's crib on most Sunday mornings while parents were worshipping in the Sanctuary. Following that could have been a tragedy, it was quickly decided to rebuild the entire area into one large room, what is now known as the Lay Center, to be used for special gatherings. Materials for the project cost \$4,000 with members of the congregation donating labor.

Due to a large amount of memorabilia collected by members of the congregation through the years, it was suggested and agreed to make a History Corner in the Lay Center. It became a reality with the efforts of Gene Branch and Mr. & Mrs. Arthur W. Putnam. It contains the altar and pulpit chairs, and the pulpit that served us around 1910 or before along with the altar scarf and communion set. Charles Jaeger made and donated a beautiful hand carved cross in walnut which hangs behind the altar. We also have some walnut pews. Folding screens of glass framed in wood frames hold a large supply of news articles, pictures and other memorabilia. A large glass paneled cabinet hold two mite boxes, and souvenirs of our 100th celebration, pins and certificates given as awards, pulpit bibles, one being presented to the church by Mrs. Greiner, widow of our first pastor, prayer books and hymnals in English and German as well as other bibles and the most prized is the first record book of the church holding a copy of the Constitution if German with the original signatures of the first Council of our Church and the records of the first marriages, births, deaths and confirmation along with minutes and treasurer reports of our first years. This book has been laminated to preserve it. The cabinet is the top of an old desk that had been in the church for many years. An antique marble top table holds a loose-leafed notebook holding old programs, reports and organization books dating from 1903. Hanging on the wall behind the table is an oil painting of the church painted by Arthur W. Putnam and donated by Mr. & Mrs. Putnam in memory of her parents, Mr. & Mrs. L.O. Schaumburg. The History Corner was dedicated April 23, 1978.

On November 11, 1973, the congregation was again in business session. Constitutional changes included establishing the post of Director of Christian Education, a part-time position as an annual

stipend of \$3,000, or about 38 percent of the pastor's salary. Also approved was a proposal that increased the council to 14 members, two to be under age 21. Also voted was an expenditure of \$14,000 to rebuild the pipe organ that was beginning to show its age by occasionally sounding off, unassisted, with a sour note that occurred often as not in the middle of a prayer or other inopportune time. The Rev. William Smart became Director of Christian Education on June 1, 1974. His duties included overseeing Church School and youth activities. Both he and the Rev. Lichte submitted resignations May 31, 1975.

The Rev. Clifton W. Kerr, on October 1, 1975, accepted a challenge to shepherd the congregation around pitfalls during difficult times. He and his family moved into a parsonage that earlier that year had been remodeled and redecorated at a cost of nearly \$15,000. At the Fall congregational meeting of 1976, the membership voted approval of a completely revised constitution. Contained in that document is the framework intended to pave the way for a people who believe in God, the Church and in themselves. At that meeting, the congregation also voted to invest about \$6,000 to upgrade efficiency to the wintertime heating of the Educational Building. More recent additions to worship include a service for young people preceding Church School, the formation of a Junior Chancel Choir, a Male Quartet and a Women's' Chorus.

Between 1953 and 1978, benevolent giving totaled about \$180,000. Of that amount nearly \$30,000 was contributed, first in the late 1960's and again in the mid 1970's to provide transportation and living expenses, first to D. Kanakaraj, later to include his wife and their two children, while he studied at the College of Agriculture at the University of Missouri at Columbia. During his first visit, Raj, as he came to be known, received a Bachelor's Degree in agriculture. During his second visit Raj earned a Doctorate in Agricultural Education. During the less than ten years between visits, Raj had successfully increased agricultural production in his home community ten fold.

On May 14, 1978, the church celebrated their 125th year, counting their many blessings and on this day of Pentecost, a tribute was paid to God for His undying love.

In the Fall of 1982 Rev. Kerr resigned to accept a position as assistant to the Administrator of Admissions at the Eden Seminary which he had graduated.

Rev. Vernon Quint became our Interim Minister in the Fall of 1982 and on October 16, 1983, the church celebrated 130 years of Faith. Rev. Quint died in the Fall of that year with his funeral services held in the church despite his being a minister of the Four Square Gospel Church for many years.

Rev. Ed. Wulfkuehler, a Chaplain at the Pentagon and a UCC minister in Bakersfield, California, for many years, accepted the call to shepherd the church for five years during which time the church grew in many avenues of love and Christian fellowship and understanding of the Bible's many lessons. Rev. Ed organized a Bible Study Class which met weekly. A young adult group was also organized and which remains very active part of the church activities. There was deep sadness when Rev. Wulfkuehler announced at the semiannual meeting in November, 1988 that he was resigning and would become an Interim Minister at the UCC Church in Kansas City.

The congregation feels very fortunate that Rev. Herbert Wintermeyer of St. Louis accepted the call to be our Interim Minister after leaving his church of 35 years pastorate in St. Louis.

We now look forward to the following message written by Mrs. Hazel Wohlt, a faithful member for many years:

Another year of service, of witness for They love,  
Another year of training for holier works above,  
Another year is dawning; Dear Father, let it be  
On earth - or else in heaven - another year for Thee.

The Missouri River flowed before the settlers came and flows still. The great river of church history flowing long before us will continue to flow in yet uncharted courses, of one source but dividing and ever flowing again together.

by Mary Frances Putnam

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[www.mogenweb.org/cooper](http://www.mogenweb.org/cooper)