

Billingsville Evangelical Church
Billingsville Evangelical and Reformed Church
St Johns United Church of Christ

*14191 Billingsville Road
Boonville, MO 65233*

*Phone:
Church -- 660/838-6457
Parsonage -- 660/838-6396*

Pastor: Rev. Mary Harris

*Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Church Service: 10:30 a.m.*

Township: T-48-N
Range: R-17-W
Section: 21
Map: [Click Here](#)

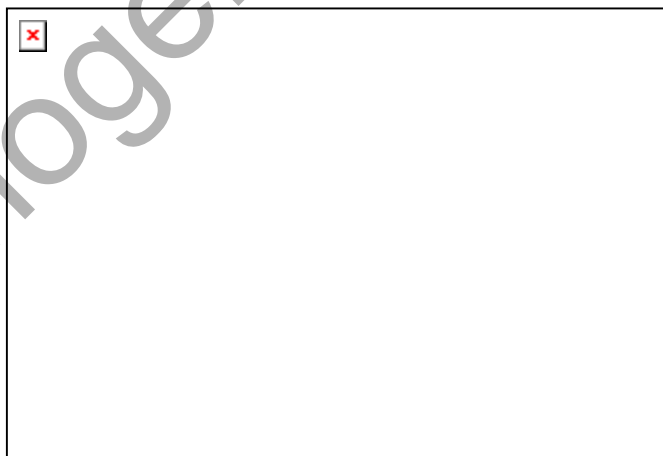
Organized: 1855
Disbanded: No
Active: Yes
Updated: July 19, 2005

Cemetery: There is a cemetery associated with this church.

Area: Billingsville, Missouri

Records: It is known that part of the church records (1885 - 1951) have been microfilmed and are available at the Western Historical Manuscript Collection - Columbia Campus.

History:



Photograph courtesy of H. Stone

Billingsville Evangelical Church

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

The first meeting of the originators of the Billingsville Evangelical Church was held in 1855 at the home of J. E. Hoflander. Those taking part were as follows: John E. Hoflander and wife; two sons, Joseph and Paul and two daughters, Mary and Christina and one son, August; and John

Paul Stegner and wife. Mrs. Hoflander led in prayer and read the scriptures while John Peter Stegner led the singing.

These meetings were held regularly each Sunday until the Civil War. Sunday services were resumed in 1866 and were held in the Oak Grove Schoolhouse and were led twice each month by Father Greiner; who was at that time pastor of the Evangelical Congregation of Boonville.

Frederick T. Kemper, founder of Kemper Military Academy, each Sunday conducted Sunday School Services in which all the young people of the community took part. A building was erected at Billingsville in 1879, at a cost of \$1,100. A parsonage was built in 1895 and W. F. Herman was installed as the first pastor in 1896. The present beautiful building was erected in 1916, at a cost of \$7,000, under the leadership of E. W. Berlekamp.

St. John's United Church of Christ (Billingsville)
From "Memorabilia of Cooper County", 1990

St. John's United Church of Christ is located about 3 miles south of Interstate 70 on Highway 5. The area is known as "Billingsville", once a small rural town whose livelihood depended on the railroad and the area farmers. After the railroad left and farmers had access by better roads to other shopping, the small town died away to leave only a few homes and a small white church. It has remained one of the few active rural churches in Cooper County. St. John's has its beginnings in the Sunday afternoon religious meetings of a small band of German settlers. The first such meeting was held in the spring of 1855 at the home of John Ernest Hoflander. Hoflander's family and the families of John Peter Stegner and John Paul Stegner comprised the 13 persons in attendance.

These in-home services were discontinued during the Civil War. However, in the spring of 1866 regular Sunday worship services were instituted again, this time in the Oak Grove District School, about 1 mile northeast of the present site of Billingsville. "Father" Greiner, pastor of the Evangelical congregation in Boonville traveled south twice a month to conduct these services. Frederick T. Kemper, who founded the Kemper Military Academy in Boonville, held Sunday School each Sunday for all the youth in the community. In 1868 the congregation purchased the school building for \$50.00. Charter members were John Zchirpe, George Helmreich, John Hoflander, John Paul Stegner, John Peter Stegner, and George Rentschler. "Father"

Greiner served the congregation until his death in 1877. In 1879 "Father" Greiner's dream of building a new church came to fruition. A plot of ground in Billingsville was donated by George W. Helmreich and the new building was completed and furnished for \$1,100.00. In 1895 a parsonage was built and the congregation became self-supporting. By 1916 the congregation, then under the leadership of Rev. E.W. Berlekamp, had grown to such size that a larger building was needed. The present beautiful building was erected for \$7,000.00, a high sum to raise in that time. The interior of the church was remodeled in 1956.

The Evangelical church in Billingsville accepted the union of the Evangelical Synod and the Reformed Church in 1924 and became a part of the growing ecumenical movement. In 1959 the merger between the Evangelical and Reformed church and the Congregational Christian church was completed and the Billingsville congregation officially became St. John's United Church of Christ.

In 1980 the congregation decided an educational building was needed and began an annual fall event to raise money for this purpose. In addition to funds raised by the congregation, many memorials were given to help bring this dream into reality. In 1986 an addition was added on the south side of the church, including an enlarged fellowship hall and new kitchen in the basement and several classrooms and office upstairs. Completed at a cost of over \$100,000.00, the addition also made both the basement and the sanctuary handicapped-accessible.

The church now has 110 members in a very active congregation. Although the early congregations were comprised of the farm families who lived close to the church, the present congregation consists of persons of diversified occupations and from a larger geographical area. Unlike many churches in the 1980's, St. John's continues to have many children in its numbers and supports a large Sunday School and a yearly Vacation Bible School. The annual event established primarily for the adding of the educational area has been continued and each year many persons look forward to attending the annual Harvest Festival and Homecoming.

Although the community of Billingsville exists only in old photos and memories, the church established by the early German settlers continues to grow and thrive, keeping the name of Billingsville alive.

by Mary Bail

St. John's United Church of Christ
From "Cooper County Church Sketches" by F. Chesnutt, 1993

Although the town of Billingsville exists only in old photos and memories, the church established by early German settlers continues to grow and thrive, keeping the name of Billingsville alive.

On a Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1855, a small band of recent German settlers met at the home of John Ernest Hoflander. His family, and the families of John Peter Stegner and John Paul Stegner comprised the thirteen persons in attendance. This was the beginning of the Saint John's Evangelical congregation.

These in-home services were discontinued during the Civil War, as were most organized religious services in the county. At the end of the hostilities, in the spring of 1866, services were instituted again, this time in the Oak Grove District School, about a mile northeast of the site of Billingsville. "Father" Greiner, pastor of the German Evangelical congregation in Boonville, traveled over muddy and dusty roads twice a month to nurture this fledgling congregation. Frederick T. Kemper, founder of the Kemper Military Academy in Boonville, made the trek each Sunday to hold Sunday School for all the youth of the community.

In 1868 the congregation purchased the school building for fifty dollars. Charter members were: John Zhirpe, George Helmreich, John Hoflander, John Paul Stegner and John Peter Stegner, and George Rentschler. The beloved "Father" Greiner served the congregation until his death in 1877, and in 1879 his dream of a new church building came to fruition. A plot of ground in Billingsville was donated by George W. Helmreich and the new building was completed and furnished for \$1,100. In 1895 the parsonage was built and the congregation became self-sufficient. The present building was built in 1916, at a cost of \$7,000, a formidable sum to raise in that time.

The town suffered at the loss of the railroad and the popularity of the automobile, but the Church grew, through the merger of the Evangelical Synod and the Reformed Church in 1924. In 1959 the Congregational Christian Church joined the merger and the Billingsville congregation became officially St. John's Church of Christ.

In 1980 it was determined to construct an educational building. Through fund raising activities and generous memorials the large addition was added to the south of the Church. It included a new kitchen, classrooms and office space and was completed in 1986.

Each fall many persons from near and afar look forward to attending the annual Harvest Festival and Homecoming.

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