

OVER 150 YEARS OF FAITHFULNESS

Highlights from the Rich History Of Immanuel United Methodist Church

OUR GERMAN-AMERICAN ROOTS

The beginnings of Immanuel United Methodist Church bridge the Ohio River between Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky during the 1830s and 1840s. In 1835, the Ohio Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church appointed Dr. William Nast to work among the flood of German immigrants coming into Ohio, Indiana, Northern Kentucky and Michigan. Dr. Nast had two co-workers, Rev. Ludwig S. Jacoby and Rev. William Engel, under whose vigorous evangelistic efforts the work among the German-speaking people prospered and grew.

Rev. William Engel preached and held class meetings among the German immigrants in Cincinnati, Covington and Newport in the early and mid-1840s. They met in homes and in a small frame schoolhouse on lower Scott Street. In 1848, one such meeting was held in a home with four German Methodist families, they read the Bible in the soft light of a kerosene lamp and had prayer together. The families attending were the Wexelbergs, the Kalensbergs, the Hoffmeyers the Dohrmanns, Mrs. Maria Wendt and Timothy Heineman. On one occasion, after much prayer, they were inspired with the conviction that God had given them a mission of beginning a church to reach their own people. Records indicate that Rev. William Engel was working with these families.

In 1849-1850, the Ohio Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church designated Covington and Newport as regular preaching places. Rev. Christian Vogel was appointed full-time pastor to those communities. A frame chapel located at 717-719 Craig Street was purchased from the Baptists for \$1,100. In addition to regular church services, prayer meetings and class meetings, a Sunday School was organized in 1853. Most services and classes were conducted in German.

During the next five years, both the Covington and Newport churches continued to grow. In 1855, the churches were separated and each became a full-time appointment. Rev. Karl Kessinger became the first full-time pastor of the German Methodist Episcopal Church in Covington which formally began the unique ministry of what is now Immanuel UMC.

By 1866 the German Methodist Episcopal Church in Covington had outgrown its building on Craig Street. In seeking a site for a larger church, a lot was purchased on the corner of 10th and Russell Streets. After a financial campaign, the cornerstone was laid for a new brick church in 1869. The construction was completed and the church was dedicated, free of debt February 20, 1876, with 160 members on the roll.

(Go to page 8 to learn more about German-American Methodism)

IMMANUEL - "God is with us"

With the new church building at 10th & Russell Streets, the ministries of the church expanded. Soon the congregation formally adopted the name "IMMANUEL" in place of the former name "The German Methodist Episcopal Church in Covington."

By 1915, the church membership grew to 429, and the Sunday School had an enrollment of 518 and with an average attendance of 224. By 1933 the membership of Immanuel was 518, and the Sunday School had an enrollment of 644 with an average attendance of 301.

In 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Protestant Methodist Church united to form the Methodist Church. In 1968, The Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church to form the United Methodist Church.

In the early 1940's the neighborhood surrounding Immanuel at 10th and Russell Streets began to change and since many of the members had moved to the suburbs, the congregation began to look for a new location.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. Zimmerman donated a lot consisting of 11 acres, located on Dixie Highway in Lakeside Park, to the congregation. A Building Committee was organized and after a fund-raising campaign, ground was broken for the new church June 10, 1949 at the current location of our main campus.

(For more on church building issues see page 7)

Immanuel established deep roots in this new suburban location building on its rich heritage and over a century of ministry in Northern Kentucky. Her people were committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His saving grace. They were focused on meeting the needs of people in the community and to local and global missions. They reached out into the community to give individuals and families a place to come to Christ, worship Him, and grow into His likeness. They were also committed to growth, change, and fiscal responsibility. Leaders envisioned a growing congregation as they planned and executed a three-phase construction program meeting the needs of the growing congregation.

Immanuel was blessed with Pastors who met the congregation where they were at the time and led them to the next steps in a never-ending journey of discovering and following the will of God for Immanuel's ministry. Each Pastor played an important role in developing disciples and preparing the congregation for the next steps in God's plan.

Over the years, Immanuel has also been blessed by a wonderful blend of lay leadership. There were those who carried the torch from Covington and their families were so important to building sustaining values, setting direction, and providing leadership examples. And, there were new families and servant leaders brought by God to Immanuel. Some of these were only a part of her ministry for a season of their life and others have been able to make Immanuel their church home and family for many years. God has used all of these together for His purposes in meeting the needs in the community - even as the community and the world made sweeping changes over the 60 years that we have been in this location.

Immanuel's people have been resilient, creative, thoughtful, faithful, loving, and caring over that time. They have been continuously committed to prayer, the truth of the Scriptures, life-changing preaching and worship, and Christian education. They have been committed to ministry to children, youth, families, and individuals of all ages. They have been committed to service in the church, community, UM Conference and beyond. They have been welcoming and willing to share responsibility for the ministry with people who are new to our community and church body. Over the years, Immanuel's people have been faithful and generous in meeting identified needs in the church and broader community. They have been mission-minded.

In the past 25 years, Immanuel has experienced significant growth spiritually and in numbers. The church has been healthy and growing in a community blessed by a number of strong, growing congregations in several denominations. Immanuel has continued to pray to discern God's will and to follow it.

Immanuel has provided a nurturing environment where fellowship with each other in God's presence is treasured. Her people have increasingly sought ministry opportunities consistent with their gifts and graces. They have grown in faithfulness and in stewardship. They have grown in their willingness to embrace change and in their personal flexibility. They have been willing to lead and serve in new ministry areas as God calls.

Today, we are blessed with committed and capable leaders for our children and youth ministries. We have a rich and full ministry to children via Children's Worship, Sunday School, Sonshine School, Kid's Club, Vacation Bible School, Music Camp, Children's choirs, the Immanuel School of the Arts, and many opportunities to participate fully in the life of the church. Our youth have a well developed and mature confirmation program which has achieved excellence. The youth are nourished and challenged in weekly worship, education, and Sunday evening meetings, mid-week small groups, spiritual growth retreats, and mission opportunities.

Our people are in service in too many ways to mention here. But, it is worth noting several ministries which have developed as individuals were called to meet needs, lead, and serve. Among these are global missions, local missions, Interfaith Hospitality Network, Prison Ministry, Cinderella's Closet, Child's Own Book, Sewing Ministry, Card Ministry, Heart and Soul Ministry (Parish Nurses), Caring Shepherds, and many others.

Immanuel's people continue to pray and ask what God wants to do through us individually and collectively to fulfill His will at Immanuel. We have been following God's lead in creating and becoming involved in new services, new locations, and new partnerships in ministry. Some of these have taken us back to our roots in urban ministry in a much different way and time. These are highlighted below. We look forward with anticipation to the history God is creating right now!! We can hardly wait to see "What's next?"

NEW SERVICES, NEW LOCATIONS, NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Immanuel maintains a high commitment to continuing excellence in traditional / classic forms of worship in our sanctuary and chapel services. However, in order to reach new people for Christ, Immanuel has expanded its worship offerings and adjusted its schedule several times. In 1999, Immanuel launched a new contemporary worship experience in Wesley Hall called the Crossroads Service. That service evolved into the X-alt Worship Service, and eventually it became known, more simply, as our Contemporary Worship or Wesley Hall Service. As of 2010 our Contemporary service has become one of the main worship opportunities alongside our other traditional worship services.

FOREIGN MISSION PARTNERS

Russia Partnership - In 2000 Immanuel joined the "Russia Initiative" of the UM Board of Global Ministries. This ministry matches UM congregations in the US with Methodist churches in Russia - which are still emerging after decades of persecution and neglect under the former Soviet Union. We are partnered with the congregation of St. Peter and Paul Methodist Church of Voronezh under the leadership of Pastor Igor Volovodov. We help provide financial and prayer support for this ministry and have hosted Pastor Igor on a number of occasions as he has visited the USA. Our relationship includes an annual offering of \$5000 to support the work of Christ in Voronezh, and also to help other churches in Black Soil District, where Igor also serves as District Superintendent. In 2000 and 2005 our church sent members of the church staff, and small groups of church leaders to see first hand all that God is doing there. In the midst of very challenging circumstances, we witnessed effective outreach to youth throughout the region in large Summer camps, weekly worship, Bible studies, Vacation Bible School, Tres Dias (a version of the Walk to Emmaus), outreach to those in prison and orphanages, as well as an extensive ministry to the physically challenged. We value this ongoing relationship and the opportunity to "*make disciples of all nations.*" (Matt. 28:19)

Ghana, West Africa Partnership - In 2002 our church began a special partnership with missionaries Cameron and Anne Gongwer (and daughter Caylor) who serve with the Mission Society in Ghana. They now live in Accra, the capital of Ghana. Our annual financial commitment is \$5000 supplied by special offerings and fund-raisers. Cameron, a physician, also serves as the Field Leader for the Mission Society in Ghana. Anne, a teacher, interacts with local leaders in a literacy outreach that included the development of the Ankasse "Reading Town Library." Our church has coordinated book drives and we sent a container full of books, used computers, and other needed items. We also sent \$11,500 to the Library project as a result of money raised from the 2008 Holy Land Tour. The library, now open, is a huge success and has become a community center as well as place of learning for all. In 2006 a mission team of 13 persons from Immanuel traveled to Ankasse. They helped lead a Bible Camp that averaged 400 children each day for 5 days! On the last day, children were invited to trust Christ as savior and Lord and nearly every child made a decision for Christ! Our team also did leadership development work with 30 leaders from different churches in the area. Our church also helped establish the "Ambassadors for Christ" scholarship program. We hope to plan another mission trip to visit our ministry partners Ghana in the near future.

NEW PLACES FOR NEW PEOPLE (*Grace, Hispanic Ministry, New Hope - and new Ministry Centers*)

In 2001, Immanuel decided to launch a new church plant in cooperation with the New Church and Congregational Development team (NCCD) of the Kentucky Conference. This congregation became known as the "Grace Community" in Independence. A special offering was collected in which over \$115,000 was raised (in a single week) to support this effort. Associate Pastor Rev. Eric Bryant, was sent forth to establish this new ministry along with six "pioneer families" from our Crossroads contemporary worship service. For approximately four years this congregation served its attenders and our community in many wonderful ways. However, the congregation never grew to a point of self-sufficiency or size necessary to become formally or officially chartered as a new United Methodist Church.

In 2003, in partnership with NCCD, Immanuel began to reach out to the growing Hispanic population in Northern Kentucky. Rev. Nelson Figueroa came to Kentucky from Puerto Rico to shepherd this new part of our congregation and to lead a new Spanish language worship service. In 2008, after observing more growth potential in the Florence area, and a more sizable population of Hispanics, this congregation was relocated and sponsorship was assumed by the Florence UMC.

In 2005, Immanuel entered into an operating agreement with the Covington District to operate the building of the former First UMC of Covington (now closed) at the corner of 5th and Greenup. A new vision for Urban Ministry began to emerge and the site was renamed the "Immanuel Ministry and Arts Center" or "I-MAC." A Covington Children's choir was established and we began more outreach to the ethnically and sociologically diverse population of Urban Covington. One of the first ministries was "Sunday Night Live," a free community meal offered each Sunday afternoon with live music, devotions, prayer, and various basic social services. This ministry attracts people from all walks of life including many from the homeless populations of Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati.

In 2005 Immanuel also absorbed (by merger) the former New Hope UMC, a small congregation in Southgate. We took ownership of that facility which became known as the Immanuel New Hope Campus. In 2007 several members of Immanuel, who worshiped at our main campus in Lakeside Park, went as "pioneer families" to help restart a ministry in Southgate under the leadership of Associate Pastor Jim Fant. This ministry now includes weekly worship and small group opportunities, as well as outreach to children and others in the local community of Southgate. This outreach includes Vacation Bible School, summer lunches for children, and a monthly food pantry ministry that serves thousands of families each year. This congregation has become a very close-knit fellowship of growing servant leaders who bless others in each of the ministry sites of Immanuel. It also continues to meet needs and bless lives for Christ in the under-served Southgate area.

In 2005 the former Grace congregation was absorbed by Immanuel and many of those people relocated to the Covington I-MAC building, which was renamed the Grace Campus of Immanuel. With the influx of people from the former Grace congregation, morning worship services, small groups, and other ministries began to be offered in that location. This site is now a key part of the growing Urban Ministry outreach of Immanuel.

In 2008 the Kentucky Conference asked Immanuel to assume total responsibility and ownership of the facility at 5th and Greenup Covington to continue outreach to the Urban areas of Covington and Newport.

The Sunday Night Live ministry (SNL) has continued to grow and it is actively supported by several partner churches from various denominations. In addition to meeting the needs of people in urban Covington, SNL has also become a significant ecumenical missions outreach in Northern Kentucky. It serves as a unique platform for many area churches to get directly involved in urban ministry. Currently partner churches include the Vineyard of Northern Kentucky, the Bridge Community Church, Florence UMC, Hebron Lutheran, Greater Harvest (of Cincinnati), the Biker Church, and UM churches like Oakland, Wesley and Asbury.

Varied spiritual growth opportunities, worship, fellowship meals, food pantries, recovery ministries, ecumenical partnerships, an ethnically and socially diverse fellowship, and community outreach continue to be defining characteristics of our urban ministries in Southgate and Covington.

We are continuing to cope with the unique challenges and opportunities of a multi-site ministry. We are striving, with God's enablement, to increase spiritual and missional unity, to better define the relationship between our sites, and to better manage the unique resources God has entrusted to this church.

Toward those ends, in 2010 we changed the names of our facility in Covington to the "Immanuel - Grace Ministry Center," and our Southgate facility to "Immanuel - New Hope Ministry Center."

2010 - MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

In 2009/2010 church leaders and staff worked together to discern God's Vision for Immanuel for the next 3-5 years. We also spent time revising our mission statement and identifying Core Values and biblical priorities.

OUR MISSION

To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by sharing faith and serving others.

OUR VISION

We believe God has called Immanuel to be:

- Healthy and Growing (*In Breadth and Depth*)
- Praying, Worshiping and Spirit-led
- Sharing Faith and Serving Others
- Raising the Next Generation of Christian Leaders

OUR CORE VALUES

IMMANUEL (proper noun.) 1. GOD IS WITH US; a name and description of Jesus Christ

- G** Growing strong Christians who are biblically faithful and evangelically passionate
- O** Outreach ministry that expresses God's love for all through service
- D** Developing the faith of children and youth
- I** Inspiring and equipping lay leaders and staff for ministry
- S** Showing how faith and the scriptures are lived out in our daily lives
- W** Wesleyan Theology and Heritage
- I** Investing in developing, supporting and enjoying our Christian community
- T** Transforming lives through group study and prayer
- H** High quality and diversity in Worship and Music expressing our love for God
- U** Understanding and building relationships with those who do not yet know Christ
- S** Sending people out to share Christ and grow His church

SENIOR PASTORS

Appointed to Immanuel UMC (and predecessors)

Early Outreach to German Immigrants in Covington, Newport and Cincinnati

Christian Vogel
(Covington, Newport and Cincinnati)
1849-1850

Karl Holwig
(Covington/Newport)
1852-1854

Frederick Schimmelpgennig
(Covington/Newport)
1850-1852

Gustav Bertram
(Covington/Newport)
1854-1855

German Methodist Episcopal Church in Covington

Karl Kessinger
1855-1857

G. Weiler
1874-1877

William Engel
1857-1858

Gottlob Nachtrieb
1877-1879

Henry Dickmann
1858-1859

George Guth
1879-1882

C.G. Fritche, Sr.
1859-1861

John H. Horst
1882-1885

William Eckermeyer
1861-1863

"IMMANUEL" name adopted

E.R. Wunderlich
1863-1864

C.G. Fritche, Sr.
1885-1888

Daniel Maule
1864-1865

F.R. Cramer
1888-1893

Henry Liebhart
1865-1870

Gustav E. Hiller
1893-1897

Herman Herzer
1870-1871

J.H. Schimmelpfennig
1897-1904

C.F. Paulus
1871-1874

John H. Horst
1904-1913

Henry W. Lenz 1913-1918	Kenneth Clay 1961-1971
Frank T. Enderis 1918-1932	Steadman Bagby 1971-1975
Edward D. Edelmaier 1932-1937	Harold F. Gardner 1975-1978
E.W. Elrod 1937-1940	William M. Pope 1978-1985
W. Bruce Strother 1940-1943	Robert Gipson 1985-1992
C. Nevil White 1943-1944	Donald R. Guth 1992-1997
J.I. Meyer 1944-1947	J. Paul Brunstetter 1997-2004
W. Bruce Strother 1947-1952	Barry K. Carpenter 2004 -2007
James A. Shepherd 1952-1961	Kelly McClendon 2007 -

MORE BUILDING HISTORY

In the early 1940's the neighborhood surrounding Immanuel at 10th and Russell Streets began to change and since many of the members lived in the suburbs, the congregation began to look for a new location.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. Zimmerman offered a lot consisting of 11 acres, located on Dixie Highway in Lakeside Park to the church. At a special meeting of the Official Board, held in the home of Mr. & Mrs. James H. Burton, with 47 members present the gift was accepted without dissent (The Burton home became the Immanuel parsonage). A Building Committee was organized and after a fund-raising campaign, ground was broken for the new church June 10, 1949 at the current location of our main campus.

The new church building in Lakeside Park was constructed in four phases.

The first phase was the building of the Fellowship Hall (basement) called the Garden level. The congregation worshipped here until the completion of the Sanctuary. On Sunday, September 17, 1950 the congregation formally moved from the church building at 10th and Russell Streets to the new Lakeside Park location with a parade – with all flags flying. The Worship Service started in the old church and concluded in the new with Mr. George M. F. Taglauer, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, carrying a flame from the altar of the old church to light the flame on the altar of the new church (symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people of Immanuel). Bishop William T. Watkins preached at the formal opening of the new building and consecrated it as a house of worship to almighty God. Immanuel worshipped in the Fellowship Hall for the next 5 years.

On June 17, 1955 the second phase of the building program began with the laying of the cornerstone for the Sanctuary. Placed in the cornerstone were a Methodist Hymnal, some church papers and current copies of the church bulletin. The opening service for the Sanctuary was held on May 13, 1956 as the pastor, Rev. James Shepherd, led the congregation in worship. On the following Sunday the church was consecrated as a house of worship. Then on November 11, 1962, the new church building was dedicated, free of all debt, and the mortgage burned. Rev. Kenneth Clay, pastor of Immanuel, presided at the service while Bishop Walter R. Gumm preached the sermon of dedication.

Phase three was begun April 26, 1964 when ground was broken for the construction of the Educational Annex. This was completed and opened within the year. On December 13, 1964, the building was formally opened for use and Bishop Roy H. Short preached the sermon of consecration. The building now complete and all debts paid, funds were raised to purchase and install a beautiful Wicks pipe organ. It was dedicated on May 7, 1973, with appropriate music.

The 1990s brought a fourth building addition: the new Wesley Hall and kitchen, meeting rooms, choir room and relocated Chapel, begun in 1996 and dedicated in 1998. This \$3.2 million addition provided increased flexibility in space utilization and permitted Immanuel to continue to grow her ministries as well as reach out to the community for additional functions. Wesley Hall is designed to be a multi-function room that can be used for worship, meetings and banquets, and sports of all sorts.

MORE ON GERMAN-AMERICAN METHODISM

As the work of Methodism continued to expand among the German-American people, and as new churches were being established in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and Northern Kentucky, the Ohio Conference, seeking to encourage this work, put all the German-speaking churches together under a separate Presiding Elder. This displeased the German immigrants, who thought they were being excluded and discriminated against. They petitioned the General Conference of 1864 to allow them to form their own Annual Conference. The General Conference concurred with their petition and the Central German Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed.

This Central German Conference included all German-speaking Methodist Episcopal Churches in the four states mentioned above. As Methodism grew among the people, Methodist schools, hospitals and homes were established. Many of our strong Methodist institutions in these four states were begun under the German Central Conference, such as Bethesda Hospital in Cincinnati.

This Central Conference was dissolved in 1933 and the German churches merged into the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church where they were located. Immanuel, being within the bounds of the Kentucky Annual Conference, became a part of this Conference and the Covington District.

The history of German immigrants in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky is worth further study. One resource to explore is the German-American Citizens League of Greater Cincinnati. This is an umbrella association of 29 organizations in the Ohio Valley, with the common bond of interest in German-American heritage and culture. They are custodians of the German Heritage Museum in Cincinnati. They can be found on the internet at - <http://www.gacl.org/>

* Data was collected from the records of the 150th Anniversary Committee. Special thanks to Rae Mitchell for her extensive work on maintaining the historical section of our church library for many years.