

A Timeline for St. John's with notes by Debbie Combs, historian, updated 2023

- 1814 Organized under the name **German Lutheran Church**² by the Rev. Joseph Zaeslin. The first congregation was made up of Protestants and Catholics and met in a school house.¹
- 1818 The Rev. Joseph Zaeslin died.² The congregation continued under the lay leadership of Jacob Guelich.^{1, 18}
- 1820 The congregation met in a two-story wooden building on Arch Street¹, between Broadway and Ludlow⁵, where the floor collapsed during a debate over the need for a new building.^{1, 19}
- 1820 The Rev. Ludwig Heinrich Meyer* became minister until 1835.¹
- 1822 The church was officially named **German Lutheran and Reformed Church**⁹ in a written constitution and article of incorporation.⁵
- 1824^{4,14} A new brick church was built on Third Street between Broadway³ and Ludlow⁸ near the site of old Fort Washington⁵ where the German community lived at the time.
- 1833¹² The first split in the congregation formed the United Protestant Evangelical German St. Peters Church under the leadership of the Rev. Hauser.^{4, 5}
- 1833^{12,13} The Episcopal Society of Christ Church¹³ building at Sixth and Lodge Streets, between Vine and Walnut Streets, was purchased.³ (Eisenlohr's history indicates 1832 but the original promissory note shows 1833 as well as Church Council minutes. The promissory note stored at the Cincinnati History Library and Archives shows the name **German Lutheran and Reformed Church**)
- 1835 The Rev. H.W. Lauer was minister from September 1835 through December 1837.¹⁰
- 1838 The Rev. Wilhelm Moellmann was minister from January through December 1838.¹⁰
- 1838 Second and final split in the congregation formed the North German Lutheran Church with the Rev. Moellmann as minister.^{1,4}
- 1839 The Rev. F.M. Raschig became minister in January 1839.¹⁰ F.M. may stand for Franz Moritz.
- 1839 The name was changed to **German St. John's Church**⁵ through an act of incorporation. **German St. John's Congregation** is the name according to the 1839 Constitution stored at the Cincinnati History Library and Archives.
- 1841 The Rev. August Kroell became minister until his death in 1874.
- 1849 Rev. Kroell helped found the German Protestant Orphans Home, now called Beech Acres.^{3,5}
- 1866 Services were temporarily held at German United Evangelical Church St. Paul's at 15th and Race Streets until 1868. (Rev. Gustav Eisenlohr, father of Hugo Eisenlohr, was minister of St. Paul's from about 1857 until 1879.¹⁵)
- 1868 The congregation moved to 12th and Elm Streets through 1946.
- 1874 The Rev. J. Carl Scholz became minister until 1884.
- 1875 The name was changed to **German Protestant St. John's Church**.^{3, 18}
- 1884 The Rev. Hugo Eisenlohr became minister until 1931. The Rev. Eisenlohr's ministerial training was at the Meadville Theological School established by a Unitarian. He was St. John's first native born minister.
- 1901 Church school began English-speaking classes at Rev. Eisenlohr's recommendation.
- 1912 Began alternating German and English sermons every other Sunday.
- 1914 According to the 100th Anniversary brochure the name listed is **German St. John's Church**.

- 1915 **German St. John's Church** Constitution stored at Cincinnati History Library and Archives.
- 1918 Sermons in English only except when German was requested. Resolved to change the name to **First Protestant St. John's Church.**⁷
- 1924 St. John's became affiliated with American Unitarian Association and the name became **First Protestant St. John's Church, Unitarian.**⁵
- 1924 On March 22 Rev. Eisenlohr applied to the General Unitarian Council, Fellowship Committee for admission to the fellowship of Unitarian ministry. His admission was approved on April 16.¹⁶
- 1928 Installation of Rev. Gladys B. Wheeler as Assistant to the Pastor.¹⁷
- 1930 Name changed to **St. John's Unitarian Church**^{5,11} in an amendment to the articles of the church.
- 1931 The Rev. Julius Krolfifer became minister until 1955. He was St. John's first minister to serve other Unitarian churches.
- 1946 Services were held at Hanselmann [Masonic] Temple on Clifton Avenue until 1952. During that time the congregation looked for a new building site, did fund raising, made the decision not to build the sanctuary and built the remaining portion of the building.
- 1949 Petition signed by 62 women members to have women serve on the Church Council.
- 1949 Resor Avenue property purchased after a \$21,000 gift from member Jacob Haehnle.
- 1952 First service held at Resor Avenue in what is now Krolfifer Hall.
- 1956 Rev. Julius Krolfifer died May 1, 1956.
- 1956 The Rev. Clarke Wells became the settled minister until 1965.
- 1960 Resor Avenue sanctuary completed and first service held.
- 1961 The American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America merged to form the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- 1965 Margaret Koehnke became the first woman president of St. John's.
- 1967 The Rev. David Sammons became the settled minister until 1978.
- 1978 Rev. Robert Lehman became the interim minister.
- 1979 The Rev. Paul L'Herrou became the settled minister until 1987.
- 1987 The Rev Richard Hasty became the interim minister.
- 1988 The Rev. Diana Heath became the first woman settled minister and remained at St. John's until 1994.
- 1990 St. John's became involved in a partnership with the Unitarian Church of Nyárádszentlászló, Romania.
- 1994 The Rev. Barbara Edgecombe became the interim minister.
- 1996 The Rev. L. Annie Foerster became the settled minister until 2001.
- 2000 St. John's became a Welcoming Congregation.
- 2001 The Rev. Barbara Child became the interim minister.
- 2002 The Rev. Dr. Frank Carpenter became the settled minister until 2009.
- 2003 The congregation voted to change the church's name to **St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church.**
- 2006 St. John's members unanimously adopted a congregational resolution calling for a moratorium on capital punishment.

- 2007 In the Spring, the Contemporary Service: Celebrate Life Together! began and ended in the fall of the following year.
- 2008 In response to the UUA's study action question on peacemaking the Congregation unanimously adopted ten proposals in a Peace Initiative Resolution.
- 2010 The Rev. Denise Tracy became the interim minister.
- 2010 The Memorial Garden was created.
- 2012 The Rev. Helen Carroll became the interim minister.
- 2013 The Rev. Amy Shaw was the Contract Minister for about six months.
- 2013 The Rev. Mitra Jafarzadeh became the settled minister until January 31, 2023.
- 2014 St. John's celebrated the 200th anniversary of the congregation. The Peace Pole was dedicated in the Memorial Garden.
- 2016 St John's congregation passed a Commitment to Racial Justice at the annual Congregational meeting.
- 2017 St. John's became part of the UUA Green Sanctuary Program.
- 2022 On September 12, Rev. Mitra Jafarzadeh began her sabbatical, and Rev. Alice Diebel began as sabbatical minister.
- 2023 Rev. Jafarzadeh resigned, with Jan. 31 as her last day.
- 2023 Rev. Alice Diebel was hired as a contract minister, with Feb. 1 as her first day.

Sources of Information:

* Cincinnati City Directories show the spelling as Myer rather than Meyer.

1. *History of St. John's Unitarian Church* by Rev. Hugo Eisenlohr, May, 1934
2. Rev. Joseph Zesline's obituary *The Western Spy* February 7, 1818
3. *One Hundred Fifty Years*, 1964
4. *Cincinnati Historical Society "Genealogy of Some German Evangelical Churches in Cincinnati, Ohio"* January 10, 1988.
5. *History of St. John's Unitarian Church* by Dick Reiman, historian until 2007. Document not dated.
6. *1819 City of Cincinnati Directory*
7. *The Cincinnati Enquirer* July 23, 1918
8. *Cincinnati in 1826* by B. Drake and E.D. Mansfield
9. Constitution of The German Lutheran and Reformed Church dated 1822. Translated from German. Article III names the congregation.
10. *Brief Resume of St. John's Unitarian Church* by Dick Reiman historian until 2007. Document not dated.
11. Amendment dated Jan 1930. State of Ohio recorded Certificate of Amendment on Feb 7, 1930.
12. Church Council meeting minutes from 1833.
13. Promissory note stored at Cincinnati History Library & Archives dated Aug 1833.
14. Translated from German Church Council meeting minutes document money collected by Rev. Meyer for the erecting of a church in 1822 and a deed for old church plot on 3rd Street dated Sept 2, 1823.
15. From http://diggingcincinnati.blogspot.com/2013_04_01_archive.html

16. A resolution from the General Unitarian Council, Fellowship Committee, Executive Officers dated April 16, 1924. Signed by Rev. Curtis Reece, Rev. Fred Lewis and Rev. Walter Hunt.
17. Instillation Order of Service October 14, 1928.
18. Church Council minutes dated July 4, 1875 at the Cincinnati History Library and Archives box 1, folder 11.
19. *The German Immigrant*, "History of the German Evangelical Churches in Cincinnati," by Robert C. Rau, March 1989.

Church Name in 1814: [German Lutheran Evangelical and Reformed Church](#)¹ or [German Evangelical and Reformed Church](#)³ or [German Christian Society](#)⁶ I decided to use the name in Rev. Zesline's obituary [German Lutheran Church](#).² It was published in 1818 and is the oldest record of the church name. It's more likely to be the correct name. Another reason I believe St. John's started as a Lutheran Church is that according to Rev. Zesline's obituary, the Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania sent him to Ohio and Kentucky to act as an evangelical missionary.

There's conflicting information about the date for the church on Third Street between Broadway³ and Ludlow⁸. The 150 Year Anniversary booklet indicates the location but not the year. According to the Rev. Eisenlohr who published a history of St. John's in 1934 "In 1824 the congregation moved into their first church building, having hitherto met in the school house." He describes it as a two story, wooden building. In the book *Cincinnati in 1826* by B. Drake, the church is described as neat brick church on Third Street between Broadway and Ludlow. A diagram in a publication from the Cincinnati Historical Society indicates the church was located on 3rd east of Broadway in 1824.

We have a copy of the 1822 Constitution translated from German naming the church German Lutheran and Reformed Church.

We know the name of German St. John's Congregation from the 1839 Constitution stored at the Cincinnati History Library and Archives.

We have a document from 1918 indicating that the name was changed from German St. John's Church to First Protestant St. John's Church.