

A TIMELINE FOR ST. JOHN'S

- 1814 Organized under the name **German Lutheran Church**² (see note*) by the Rev. Joseph Zesline [Zaeslin]. The first congregation was made up of Protestants and Catholics and met in a school house.¹
- 1818 The Rev. Joseph Zesline died.² The congregation continued under the lay leadership of Jacob Guelich.¹
- 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.
- 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}
- 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. (see note**)
- 1833¹² The first split in the congregation formed the United Protestant Evangelical German St. Peters Church under the leadership of the Rev. Hauser.⁴
- 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. Franz Moritz Raschig became minister in January 1839.¹⁰
- 1839 The name was changed to **German St. John's Church**⁵ through an act of incorporation. **German St. John's Congregation** 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
- 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 is 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**.¹⁷
- 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.
- 1930 Name changed to **St. John's Unitarian Church**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 held at Hanselmann [Masonic] Temple on Clifton Avenue until 1952.
- 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 The Rev. Clarke Wells became minister until 1965.
- 1960 Resor Avenue sanctuary completed and the first service held.
- 1961 The American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America merged to form the Unitarian Universalist Association. St. John's became a Unitarian Universalist church but not by name.
- 1965 Margaret Koehnke became the first woman president of St. John's Church Council.
- 1967 The Rev. David Sammons became minister until 1978.
- 1979 The Rev. Paul L'Herrou became minister until 1987.
- 1988 The Rev. Diana Heath became the first woman settled minister and remained at St. John's until 1994.
- 1996 The Rev. L. Annie Foerster became minister until 2001.
- 2002 The Rev. Dr. Frank Carpenter became minister until 2009.
- 2003 The congregation voted to change the church's name to **St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church**.
- 2013 The Rev. Mitra Jafarzadeh became minister.

Sources of Information:

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. A booklet produced by St. John's *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. No Date
6. *1819 City of Cincinnati Directory*

7. Church Council minutes dated May 27, 1918 document the change of name located at the Cincinnati History Library and Archives in box 1, folder 11.
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. No Date
11. Amendment dated Jan 1930 with State of Ohio recorded on Feb 7, 1930 Certificate of Amendment Feb 7, 1930.
12. Church Council meeting minutes from 1833. Translated from German.
13. Promissory note stored at Cincinnati History Library & Archives dated Aug 1833.
14. 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. Translated from German.
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. Document at the Cincinnati History Library and Archives in box 7, folder 11 states affiliating with the AUA "will involve no change in the manner of worship, of the form of church government, of the constitution, nor even of the name of the congregation, unless that should be deemed advisable.")
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.

Notes:

*Church Name in 1814: What is the correct name? [German Lutheran Evangelical and Reformed Church¹](#) or [German Evangelical and Reformed Church³](#) or [German Christian Society⁶](#) This timeline uses the name in Rev. Zesline's obituary [German Lutheran Church²](#). It was published in 1818 and is the oldest record of the church name. In addition, according to Rev. Zesline's obituary, the Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania sent him to Ohio and Kentucky to act as an evangelical missionary, another indicator that the church was Lutheran.

**There is conflicting information about the date for the church on Third Street between Broadway³ and Ludlow⁸. St. John's 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 described 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 Street east of Broadway in 1824.