

St. James

Newton

St. James Lutheran Church is located in Catawba County, about two miles southeast of Newton, North Carolina. It appears that this congregation was first started in what was known as the Haas Church, a log building which stood one mile south of the present St. James Church.

According to information compiled from authoritative writings of Dr. Luther Hodges, Maiden, NC, about the year 1749, Simon Haas with Peter Eiger came from Pennsylvania to what is now Catawba County. Haas settled just north and Eiger just south of the present highway from Newton to Maiden.

About the beginning of the Revolutionary War, a young Patriot, Issac Wise, of the South Fork Region, son of David Wise, a noted Tory, was captured by a party of South Fork Tories (about one mile south of the site of the Haas Church) and hanged from the limb of a large oak tree.

This being on the land of pioneer Simon Haas, he, according to custom, took the body down, carried it to his home and prepared it for burial and interred it on a beautiful level spot of land. This was in 1776 and three years later the body of Simon Haas was found laying face downward in a small branch that crossed the road a mile from his home. It was supposed a heart attack caused his death.

According to his request, he was buried by the side of the young patriot. Other burials followed and by 1825 a cluster of several graves was in a small area around the graves of Simon Haas and Issac Wise.

In February, 1834, George Haas son of the old pioneer, conveyed by deed to George A. Ikerd and David Haas as trustees, a tract of one and one half acres of land containing the burial ground, and provided under the terms of the trust that it was to be used to provide the interest of the Gospel and to encourage the building of house of public worship, that the Gospel might be preached by all and every minister of every denomination whose standing is good in their respective churches, also for a school house and burial ground.

Two congregations, Reformed and Lutheran were organized or, as told by many, had been organized prior to this date with services conducted in the homes of the community.

In Johann Gottfried Arends Register, in which he recorded his ministerial activities, is a record of a Lord's Supper in August 1776 with the name of John Haas in it. In one held in 1779, among the males is Simon Haas and females Moriah Haas and Susanina Haas. The list is marked "South Fork" The Simon Haas above could have been Simon, Jr., a Revolutionary soldier.

About 1852, when the Reformed people built a church building in Newton, the congregation of that faith left the church at Haas, while the Lutherans continued there until after the close of the Civil War, holding regular services until 1866. The last communion service held in the Haas Church was on September 24, 1866. The winter of 1866-67 the congregation of St. James Lutheran Church was organized, and in May 1867 the first communion was administered to the newly organized congregation.

Such a thing as a resident, full time Pastor was unknown to most people in those early days. The pastoral services consisted in a traveling preacher, or deacon as often called, who traveled through this section of the state and offered pastoral services while in the community. The real exciting story of this work can be found in the new History of the Lutheran Church in North Carolina, which is being read in our congregation. But though the people of Haas and St. James saw their Pastor only a few times a year, they were faithful men and regularly sent men from their parish to the meetings of the Tennessee Synod, of which they were a part. And so, for instance in 1840, Henry Ingold went representing Haas, St. John, St. Peter, and Friendship churches. In 1844 George Smyer went for Haas, St. Paul, and St. John. For a number of years, beginning in 1858, M. M. Huit represented the Haas Church and was still very interested in the Synod's work after he helped to establish St. James.

The first delegate from St. James was Logan Smyer, who went to Synod in 1868. The meeting was held in Salem Church and minutes of the meeting show that St. James paid \$1.00 for apportionment that year.

Where the first communion service was held or the location of a place of worship for the congregation is not known. It was probably in the old school located in this section or in a private home. The Rev. P. C. Henkel had been Pastor of Haas church and it was he who administered the first communion at St. James. Records show that Henry Goodman had served the Haas Church in 1851 prior to Rev. Henkel.

Late in the year 1869, or early in 1870, the Rev. J. M. Smith became pastor. In 1870 the minutes of Synod give his parish as consisting of St. Peter's, St. John's, St. Paul's, and St. James. In 1876, Zion, Friendship, and St. Stephen's had also been added. A house of worship is a must, especially for Lutherans. A parcel of land, about 2 and $\frac{3}{4}$ acres, was given by M. M. Huitt, and it was not long before the members had a church building under construction; It was recalled by Mr. J. M. Ballard that a church was under construction in the late fall of 1867.

In addition to the parish relations given for the earlier history of St. James, we have also had these churches in our parish: St. James-Ebenezer-Mt. Calvary, St. James-Beth-Eden, St. James-Ebenezer-St. Paul's and St. James-Ebenezer.

The grant of land by M. M. Huitt was soon to contain a cemetery for the final resting place for the people of this community. The first wife of Mr. Huit, Rhonda Frye Huit, passed away on August 22, 1869 and became the first to be buried in St. James cemetery.

On Sunday, the first day of June, 1872, the Rev. J. M. Smith assembled a group of young men and women for the first Confirmation Class in St. James Lutheran Church. We have in Rev. Smith's own hand, the names of the first St. James Confirmation Class. Mrs. Lizzie Huitt Sigman (Mrs. George A. Sigman) was the first organist when the church was organized. She was the daughter of Moses M. Huitt who gave the land for the church.

Also of interest, Mrs. Lizzie Sigman made the bread and wine to be used in the sacrament of Holy Communion until the change from the use of bread to the wafers. The Rev. P.C. Henkel administered the first communion at St. James, according to old church records. The school, or Academy as sometime called, had been located on several sites in this community and we do not know exactly at what date it was moved to the St.

James property. In those early days the school was operated as a subscription school. That is, interested members of the community would get subscriptions from pupils to attend the school and if enough money was raised, the teacher would be hired. There was apparently no trouble in securing pupils for a teacher at St. James School. At one time in its life this school was known as Grady's Academy. First records of the Catawba County Board show that on September 7, 1885, the St. James School was a part of the system. It was in District 15 and the following men served as the School Committee: P.E. Frye, D. E. Sigmon, and George P. Seitz. Also R. A. Yoder pastor of St. James was the secretary of the school board. George Rabb served as treasurer for the Catawba County School Board. It is noted that Silas Smyre and Logan Smyre, year after year, went under a \$15,000 bond for George Rabb while he served as treasurer.

St. James School was part of the following system. There were in the county 55 schools for white people in 1885. The average term for a school year was 12 and 3/10 weeks. The actual salary for the male white teachers was \$25.86 per month. For white female teachers about \$1.25 less. In this year St. James enrolled 64 pupils. The last year of school at St. James was in the spring of 1927, after which consolidation with Balls Creek took place so in the fall the pupils went to Balls Creek.

Some amusing tales have come from some of the older members of incidents that happened during their school days at St. James School. The students would snowball the teacher so bad that he decided to go out through a window once to avoid this. The window fell down and caught his coattail so that he hung out of the window giving the students the chance to really snowball him. Another story goes that winter time brought new temptations. Two of the students went off tracking rabbits in the snow on the way school. One of the boys fell into a well near the present Duan Club House. The other boy went on to school, leaving him there. During the day he remembered his friend in the well and got help to go get him out. Fortunately the well was dry and nobody was hurt. Ralph N. Sigmon also went off tracking rabbits on the way to school. He caught his with a whack across the back. Of course he couldn't leave the rabbit, even if it was dead, so he tucked it in his book satchel and went on to school. He had great fun but caused much uproar in the classroom, by letting the rabbit stick his head out of the book satchel during the lessons.

The first church building was under construction in the winter of 1867. It was a frame structure built by the men of the community and served for the worship of the congregation until the present building was constructed. The story goes that the original church site chosen was about a mile east. With all the lumber being hauled by horse and wagon, the horses became tired and stopped to rest at the present church site. The men driving the horses decided that this would be a more acceptable location so they constructed their church here.

Rev. J. L. Cromer was pastor at St. James 1896-1900, followed by Rev. R. A. Yoder, 1901-1905. St. James was growing out of the small beginning of her worship needs. Construction was begun in 1908 on a new home for the congregation to worship in during the pastorate of J. Allen Arndt who served 1906-1909. This building was constructed of large cement blocks all of which were made at the construction site. A bill of sale shows that 2 rail-cars of cement were used and uncounted tons of sand in the making of blocks. When the floors were laid, dirt was filled in so that a concrete floor could be made. Many men of the congregation brought their horses and drove them round

and round on the dirt base in the church to pack it down. It is said that was a popular bad weather pastime until the dirt was packed. The concrete floor was later covered with the pine flooring.

The new church building was dedicated May 8, 1910 by Pastor W. D. Wise, who served 1909-1912. Dr. W. J. Boger, then president of the Tennessee Synod, assisted him in the dedication service. Early church records show that the work of the church was carried on by many faithful 5 and 10 cents pledges per week. Some few larger contributors gave 50 and 75 cents each week. The pastor received a salary of \$100.00 to \$124.00 per month, depending on the contributions of the members. Pastor Wise was followed at St. James by Rev. C. I. Morgan, 1913-1917. Rev. W. J. Boger was at St. James, 1918-1936 until his retirement. Rev. Leo Smith supplied for a period in 1936.

In 1929 an Education Building was added to the physical property of the congregation. This building is two and one-half stories with about one quarter basement. This addition has served the Sunday School needs of the congregation well. At one time the kitchen was located in one of the rooms on the second floor. Also, in the basement of this building went a wood burning furnace which was the central heating system for both the church and the educational building.

Beginning about 1936 a number of valuable improvements were made in the church building. A fine musical instrument, a pipe organ, was installed; a wood floor was laid over the concrete floor; carpet was laid in the aisles and chancel of the church; robes were provided for the choir, a new supply of Common Service Books were purchased; and the H. B. Barringer family installed a set of chimes for the organ. These improvements were made during the pastorate of E. R. Lineberger, 1936-1947. In more recent years, the inside of the church has been remodeled, ceilings and walls repaired, new lighting fixtures installed, a new heating system installed, and a Baptismal Font and Altar Reredos were presented as gifts. This work was completed in 1951 and services of rededication and blessing were held on August 5, 1951, by Dr. F. L. Conrad, then President of the North Carolina Synod.

A new brick parsonage with eight rooms, two baths, and basement was built in 1948, soon after the Rev. Garth Lee Hill became pastor. He served 1948-1954. Rev. Pat C. Cloninger came to St. James following Rev. Hill and was installed in July, 1954. He served until March 15, 1957, when he accepted a call to Trinity Lutheran Church, Vale.

William Franklin Milholland, at the time a seminary student, served as supply at St. James during the summer of 1957. Rev. Keller Younce Huddle came to St. James on October 28, 1957 and was installed on February 9, 1958. He served until June 30, 1962 when he accepted a call to Christ Lutheran Church, Stanley, North Carolina. While under his leadership, the congregation of St. James voted on September 13, 1959 to build a brick fellowship building on the northern portion of the church property. The ground was broken on September 27, 1959 and construction began soon after. The men of the church did most of the construction themselves with the exception of the brickwork, and pouring of the cement floors. The building is 80 by 80 feet on the first story and 80 by 20 feet on the ground floor.

In June 1962 the mortgage on the building was paid off and the note was burned. The building was dedicated at the Homecoming Service in 1962.

Rev. Lawrence Hugh Bollinger became pastor of St. James on January 1, 1963 and served until April 1963 when he left the ministry for other work. Rufus Moretz, seminary student, served as supply at St. James during the summer of 1963.

Rev. John David Lindler came to St. James on June 16, 1963 and served until June 30, 1973 when he accepted a call to Shiloh Lutheran Church, Lewisville, North Carolina.

In 1967 an outdoor altar, constructed of rock and concrete, was built east of the fellowship building by William Earl Seitz, Jr. and Philip Smith Seitz as part of their project working toward their Pro Deo Et Patria Award in scouting. A lectern of rock was built in 1973 by Clell Feimster Seitz at the same site as part of work for the award. New Sanctuary pews were dedicated on September 15, 1968, being paid for with contribution from various members of the congregation.

In August 1966 a portrait in memory of Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Bost was placed in the North Carolina Lutheran Home in Hickory. Mr. and Mrs. Bost, members of St. James, were very generous in contributions for the support of St. James as well as the Lutheran Home during their lives.

The outdoor rock bulletin board was dedicated on September 21, 1969. This was given in memory of Mrs. Zoe Sigmon Seitz and in honor of Mr. Ernest Seitz by Mr. and Mrs. Merritt Smith and Family.

An outdoor, brick water fountain was constructed at the rear of the educational building in May 1970. This was given in memory of Mr. Eual Sigmon by his family. In 1971 a piano was purchased for the church sanctuary. New red choir robes were purchased for the choir in 1972.

A much needed church bus was purchased in 1973 and paid for by donations from the members of St. James.

A Sanctuary Light was given in 1973 in memory of Mrs. Edna Parlier Sigmon, Fred Earl Sigmon, and Bobby Dean Sigmon by the Luther Sigmon Family. Dr. Walter T. Nau professor at Lenoir Rhyne College, Hickory, North Carolina, served as vice-pastor at St. James during the vacancy from June 1973 until June 1974. Rev. Donald Brantley Loadholdt came to St. James on July 1, 1974 and was installed on August 11, 1974. Prior to his arrival at St. James the parsonage was renovated and a room in the educational building was refurnished to be used as a pastor study.

A two-car brick garage and storage building was constructed in 1974. In December of 1975 an architect, William Reinhardt, presented plans to the congregation for a major renovation and expansion of the church. The congregation voted to go ahead with this project which was begun in the spring of 1976. This included bricking of the outside of the church and completely updating the inside as follows: additional pews in the newly expanded part to accommodate 100 more worshipers; a kneeling rail; new altar; new light fixtures, carpet, and heating and air conditioning; rest-rooms; additional storage space; and larger and improved seating for junior and senior choirs. Roger Issac & Sons was awarded the general contract for the project.

This major project of the congregation is being paid for by individual contributions, memorials, a bazaar and supper, and other fund raiser carried on by the different organizations of the church. Much of the labor was done by various men of the church.

The first service in the newly renovated church was held on October 17, 1976. The rededication service was on November 28, 1976 with Dr. George Whittecar, President of the North Carolina Synod guest minister for this special service. In this Bicentennial Year, 1976, we are grateful to God for helping to keep St. James Lutheran Church a growing, flourishing church, serving the spiritual needs of many. May the faith of those dedicated men and women who have led St. James in the past continue in those who are here now and will be here for generations to come.

Pastors

1867-1869	P. C. Henkel
1870-1879	J. M. Smith
1879-1896	R. A. Yoder
1896-1900	J. L. Cromer
1901-1905	R. A. Yoder
1906-1907	J. A. Arndt
1908-1912	W. D. Wise
1913-1917	C. I. Morgan
1918-1936	W. J. Boger
1936-1947	E. R. Linegerger
1948-1954	Garth Lee Hill
1954-1957	Pat C. Cloninger
1957-1962	K. Y. Huddle
1963	Lawrence Bollinger
1963-1973	John D. Lindler
1974-1994	Donald Loadholdt
1996-2003	Malcom A Lerch
2006-	Michael E Collins