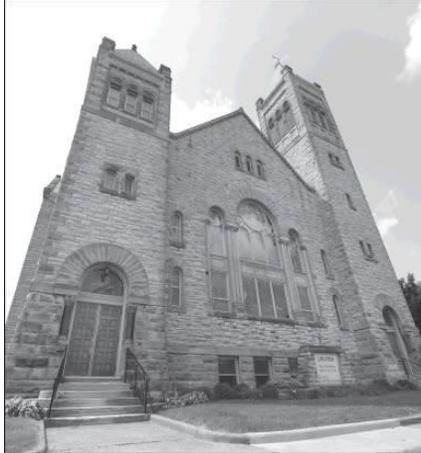


# Zion Lutheran Church's history

September 1, 2018 - By CAITLIN NEARHOOD, Sandusky Register

SANDUSKY



Zion Lutheran Church has a solid Sandusky history.

The congregation was established in the mid-1800s, but its current building wasn't constructed until about 1898 at Columbus Avenue and Jefferson Street. George Feick, a church member, helped design and build the church. The church had two previous locations in Sandusky.

"The church was built from limestone in the Victorian Romanesque style," according to the Sandusky Library history blog. "Many early German immigrants worshipped at this church, whose congregation formed in 1847. Well into the twentieth century, there was a German language service held here every Sunday. Zion Lutheran Church served as a mother church for several other Lutheran churches in the area."

Zion Lutheran Church was dedicated Nov. 12, 1899. It cost about \$45,000 to build, according to church historian Judy Mears. Before that, Feick designed and built a Lutheran school at Decatur and Madison streets, which was dedicated Sept. 24, 1899.

"The lot for the school had been purchased for \$1,000, and the schoolhouse was built for \$6,000." The last year that there were students at the Lutheran School was 1923. In 1927, the board of education of Sandusky Schools purchased the former Lutheran School, and it became a part of the Junior High School, known for many years as Jackson Junior High School. The former Lutheran school was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. The Ohio Historic Places Dictionary states that the Lutheran school was significant because of its role in the education of Protestants of German descent."

One of the church's first pastors was Jacob Dornbirer. Born in Switzerland, he immigrated to the U.S. in 1855 and lived in Fremont. "For a time he worked at the June Engine Works, where he met the Rev. Henry Lang." "Rev. Lang encouraged him to enter the Lutheran ministry. In 1858, Rev. Jacob Dornbirer was ordained as a Lutheran minister, and in the same year he married Elizabeth Trott. In his early ministry, Rev. Dornbirer served at churches in Thompson Township, Bellevue, Venice and Loudonville."

Dornbirer was Zion Lutheran's pastor from 1879 until his death in 1891 when the church gathered at the former Beatty Church in Washington Square. During his many years of ministry, Dornbirer "preached over one thousand sermons, baptized 1217 infants, confirmed 530 young people, married 315 couples, and officiated at 397 funerals." He's buried in Oakland Cemetery.

Dornbirer's interest in ministry became a family affair. "Two of Rev. Dornbirer's sons became Lutheran pastors, and four of his daughters married Lutheran pastors." "He was the maternal grandfather of Rev. Theodore Stellhorn, Jr., who served in the Lutheran ministry for more than sixty years. Rev. Stellhorn was assistant pastor of Zion Lutheran Church from 1928 to 1949, main pastor from 1949 to 1955, and senior pastor of Zion from 1956 to 1969.

Zion Lutheran contains many stained glass windows, which were crafted by the Von Gerichten Art Glass company of Columbus. The windows depict pictures of Jesus, Martin Luther, and other Biblical figures.

The church underwent numerous improvements, too. For decades, the church had two aisles but was renovated in 1997 to have only one main aisle. A baptismal used in Zion Lutheran's early days remains in use today. The church's nursery was recently upgraded as well.

Get to know Zion Lutheran Church

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