

A Brief History of St. John's Lutheran Church, Pusheta Township

St. John's Lutheran Church, Pusheta Township, graciously served as host for the May Gravestones for Novices workshop. Workshop attendee and congregation member Dianne Knipp presented a history of the church, which we have reprinted, in part, here.

On September 1838 Friedrich Wyneken, a 28-year-old missionary from Germany, was en route from Pennsylvania to Fort Wayne on horseback. He came upon a small settlement of German pioneers in what would become Auglaize County. Moved by their dire spiritual hunger, Wyneken tarried with them, preaching and baptizing. Thus a worshipping community in Pusheta Township was formed. After first meeting in private homes, the growing group constructed the first church, a log building located on Cemetery Road. It sat two miles northwest of the present site, where the old cemetery still marks the area.

The congregation adopted the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, and became known as St. John's German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Fryburg. In 1848 the church appealed for a pastor to the Fort Wayne Seminary of the newly-founded Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. In February 1848 the Reverend Paulus Heid was installed.

The steadfast Lutheran group continued to worship in the log church until 1858, when the congregation acquired land the present location on Pusheta Road and built a small church there, just east of the current parsonage. No further information is available about this building.

The current church building was dedicated on November 11, 1888. Through the years the building has had its improvements and renovations: the steeple was removed, a basement dug, new siding and roof added, as well as a modern fellowship and entry area.

"During these 159 years the congregation counts as its greatest blessing the shepherding it received from its twenty-six faithful pastors. Many have been the opportunities to hear the proclamation of God's gracious Gospel from its pulpit, and to be comforted, forgiven, and renewed at its altar."

Workshop participants,
including St. John's Church
trustees, level a tombstone.

