

Trinity Lutheran Church Historic District

Russellville, MO



U.S. Department of the Interior-National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places

History of Trinity Lutheran Church, Russellville, Mo

The history of the Evangelical Lutheran Dreieinigkeit Gemeinde (Trinity Parish) Church, Russellville, Missouri, dates the congregations beginning with the first service held September 1, 1895. Trinity began under the leadership of Reverend J. Paul Franke serving as Pastor from 1895-1897. The early history of the church was recorded by Reverend Franke and thereafter by Reverend Conrad Schaff, 1910-1923. The first funeral and baptism in the congregation was in October and November 1895. The first church, a 24' x 36' frame building costing \$640.00, was located on Marion Street and dedicated September 13, 1896. In 1899, the congregation made the decision to build a parsonage on that same site at a cost of \$485.00. In 1907, the congregation purchased four acres of land south of the Marion Street location at a cost of \$1,049, as the future site for a new parsonage and church. As Trinity parish quickly grew and reached a membership of two hundred fifty a new parsonage was built and dedicated October 1, 1911. That parsonage is still in use today on the current site of the Church campus. The cornerstone for the new church was laid October 22, 1911. The cost for the church was \$6,600.00 to be completed in 155 days. The contractor was Ben Inman for the brick work and Oliver Sprouse for the woodwork.

On August 4, 1912, a farewell service was held in the old church after which the congregation processed the new church for the dedication. The morning service was conducted in German, and in the afternoon, in English. Attendance for the dedication was estimated to be 1,200 to 1,500 according to an article in the *Russellville Weekly Rustler* with attendees from the surrounding communities as well as Jefferson City. The cost for the church and additional buildings was \$11,525.00.

A one-room schoolhouse was built and dedicated on October 20, 1912. This school served as the German school with instruction from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Classes were conducted in German. There was also a barn constructed, not unusual in a rural setting as the minister would have maintained a garden and some livestock. The *Russellville Weekly Rustler*, in an article dated April 7, 1916, referred to the Church as "...this magnificent structure stands as one of the best and most substantially constructed country churches in Missouri." Land for the Parish Hall was donated by the estate of Michael Schubert. The Parish Hall cost \$4,209.00 and was dedicated May 11, 1940. The Parish Hall remains as a center of parish life as there is a basement and a main floor with an auditorium including a stage for performances. Grounds for the Parish Cemetery purchased in 1896 are located approximately one-half mile from the church.

May 21, 1914, Trinity joined the Iowa Synod. Articles of Incorporation for the Church were filed with the State of Missouri June 17, 1914. Membership continued to grow over the years. In 1945 John Jacob Habraecker became the pastor at Trinity and the congregation grew to three hundred and eleven by 1955.

Trinity is a twin-tower brick church more typical of the Romanesque Revival Style. Most examples of this type are associated with skilled builders or architects. Trinity benefited from both, with its design by Ben H. Linhardt, and construction by master builder Oliver Sprouse. Sprouse led the construction on Trinity.

In 1947 the interior of the church was re-dedicated after painting the sanctuary with visual religious art of images and symbols. Above the chancel arch, facing the nave, is the painting of Heinrich Hoffman's "Christ's Ascension." Hoffman, a German painter is well known for his paintings depicting the life of Christ, most noted of which is "Christ in Gethsemane." The artists for the church are listed as C.A. Christiansen and Mr. Stensby. Those original paintings remain today. The apse holds the dove window as well as the symbols depicting the Christ Star and the Eucharist with images of grapes and wheat along with the chalice. The early silver chalice is

engraved in German “Von den Frauen der Luth. Gemeinde, Russellville, Mo (From the Women of the Lutheran Parish, Russellville, Mo.

The interior of Trinity has a number of significant features, having retained virtually all of the original furnishings. The Octagon Baptismal font and pulpit were donated by early members of the church. The altar, the focal center of the church with the “Christ Blessing” statue was furnished by St. Luke’s Institute of Milwaukee, Wisconsin for \$100.00. The triple windows of the narthex containing the “Heilige Schrift,” Holy Bible symbol were donated by Louis Schneider and Mike Schubert who also gave the art glass windows throughout the church. The chandeliers in the Nave are originally B & H Co (Bradley and Hubbard Manufacturing Company) a company noted for such furnishings. Also noteworthy to Trinity is the Hinners Organ purchased for \$1,675.00 in 1931 from the Hinners Organ Company of Pekin Illinois, a company that manufactured organs especially for rural congregations.

On the 125th Anniversary of Trinity Lutheran (13007-13013) Route C, Russellville, Cole County, Missouri, the Church and attendant structures dating from 1911-1939, including the one room schoolhouse, parsonage, Parish Hall and grounds was designated a Historic District by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service.