

A History of the
Evangelical Lutheran Peace Church
at Arnheim, Ohio



Celebrating 175 Years
1832 — 2007
With Praise & Thanksgiving to God

Cover Photograph:
The Evangelical Lutheran Peace Church congregation after the
last worship service in the Old Brick Church on August 25, 1912.

Contents

Preface	4	Parish Hall	25
Origins	5	1968 – 1974 ♦ Rev. Nolte	26
United German Evangelical		1975 – 2003 ♦ Rev. Hare	26
Protestant Congregation	6	Old Brick Church Memorial	27
1832 ♦ Rev. Gerhardt	6	ELCA Merger	27
1832 – 1835 ♦ Vacant	7	Access Improvement Facility	27
1835 – 1838 ♦ Rev. Diefenbach	7	2003 – 2004 ♦ Rev. Place	28
1839 – 1843 ♦ Vacant	8	2004 – 2007 ♦ Rev. Lawrence	28
1844 – 1846 ♦ Rev. Mosebach	8	2007 ♦ Rev. Kraus	29
German Protestant Peace Church	9	Auxiliary Organizations	
1846 – 1855 ♦ Rev. Anthes	9	Within the Church	29
1855 – 1856 ♦ Rev. Kissel	11	Peace Sunday School	29
1856 – 1857 ♦ Vacant	11	Ladies Aid and Missionary Society	31
1857 – 1860 ♦ Rev. Seipel	11	Dorcas Circle	32
1860 – 1861 ♦ Rev. Gilles	11	Youth Groups	32
1862 – 1868 ♦ Vacant	11	Stephen Ministry	33
1869 – 1870 ♦ Rev. Mantz	11	Music	34
1870 – 1872 ♦ Rev. Deichman	11	The Constitution of 2005	35
1873 – 1874 ♦ Vacant	12	Church Finances	36
1874 – 1875 ♦ Rev. Maltzhan	12	General Checking Account	36
1875 – 1877 ♦ Vacant	12	Building Reserve Fund	36
1877 – 1882 ♦ Rev. Betzler	12	Campership Fund	36
1882 – 1886 ♦ Rev. Reif	12	Cemetery Funds	36
1886 – 1888 ♦ Rev. Lieb	14	General Fund	37
The German Evangelical		Mission Fund	37
Lutheran Peace Church	14	Remembrance Fund	37
1888 – 1896 ♦ Rev. Juilfs	14	Scholarship Fund	38
1896 – 1897 ♦ Rev. Dettmer	14	2007 Congregational Report	38
1897 – 1903 ♦ Rev. Braun	15	Outreach Projects at Peace	38
1903 – 1906 ♦ Rev. Harman	16	Appendix A – 2007 Officers	
1906 – 1907 ♦ Vacant	16	and Lay Leaders	39
Evangelical Lutheran Peace Church	16	Appendix B – Memorable Dates	40
1907 – 1913 ♦ Rev. Albrecht	16	Appendix C – Pastors	41
The Old Brick Church	17	Notes	41
1914 – 1968 ♦ Rev. Frey	22	“...My Dear Old Church”	
100 th Anniversary Celebration	23	Childhood Memories	
Parsonage	24		

Preface

Anniversary celebrations usually call for a history, but Peace Lutheran seems to have avoided this tradition until the current church building was dedicated in 1913.¹ The brief history written in that year was updated in 1957 for the congregation's 125th anniversary. These two publications provide an outline and some interesting fragments of information, but we can only speculate about the early personalities and events that shaped our congregation.

This history, in honor of the 175th anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Peace Church, adds a few details to the 1913 and 1957 publications and sketches in some of the activity at Peace during the last 50 years. The narrative is arranged by years, corresponding with the tenure of each minister who has served the congregation. The notation "vacant" is used for the years when there is no record of a pastor.

Many individuals, both within and outside of the congregation, contributed a substantial amount of time and effort to prepare this update of our

history. Special thanks to John Baker, Jean Schweickart, Dan Wagel, Miriam Wagel and archivists at several seminaries and libraries. Thanks also to the Anniversary Committee – Jim Creighton, Donna Johnson, Pastor Lawrence, Martha Rutherford, Jean Schweickart, Dan Wagel and Chairman Fred Wagel – for their support and work in coordinating the 2007 celebration.

Much of our past remains hidden in early church records, hand-written in German and still waiting to be translated. The rest of the story may be in letters, photographs and newspaper clippings squirreled away in attics, trunks, closets and other out-of-the-way places.

In a few short years our own way of life will be ancient history, and if those who follow are as curious as we are, even a brief narrative like this one may help them understand where they came from and possibly even give them some encouragement.

Lee Schweickart



Origins

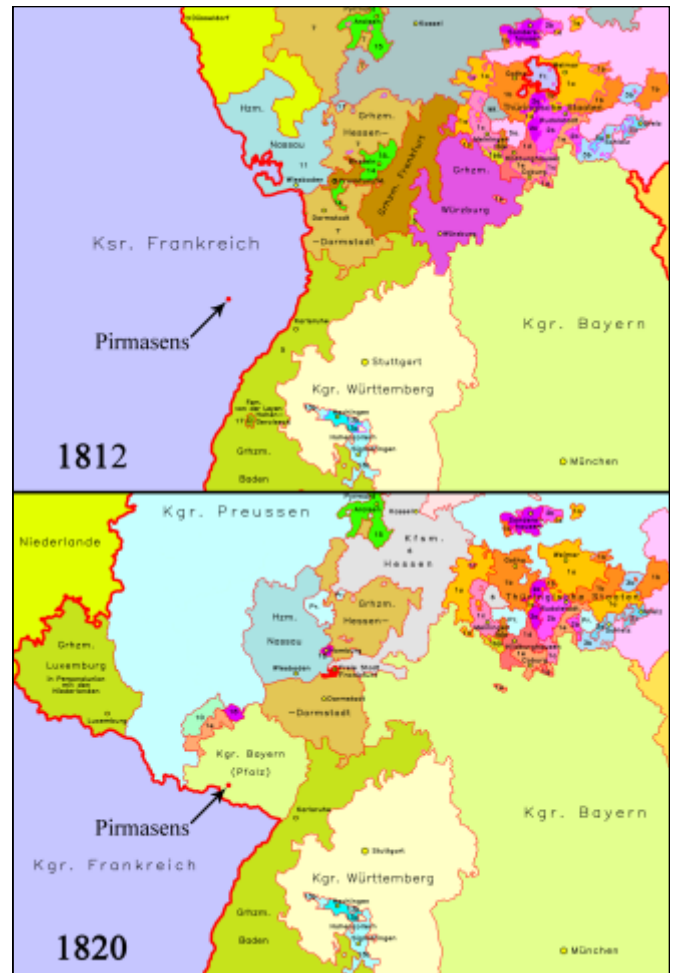
Sometime during the early 1800s a small, largely German, settlement on Straight Creek in Franklin Township, Brown County, Ohio, became known as Arnheim, or “Arn’s home,” named for Jacob Arn, who was one of the early settlers in the area.

Among the first to come to this community were George Bohrer and Frederic Faul who settled in the vicinity of Arnheim in 1826. Michael Ziegler and Philip Faul came in 1828. In 1830, Frederic Neu, Jacob Arn, John Kautz and their families, and Mrs. Kautz with her sons, George and Sebastian, and three daughters arrived. George A. Kress, John A. Kress, Philip Miller, Balthazar Yecho (Yockey), George Bohl, Peter Schatzman, Peter Berry, John Lauth, Jacob Gross, Valentin Dahl, Conrad Bauer, Lewis Weaver, Frances Hauck and their families arrived in 1831. Among those who came in 1832 were Adam Bohl, Frederic Gwinner, John J. Stephan, Christian Reissinger, George Biehn, Charles Hanselman, Frederic Henges, John Ferdinand, Frederic Handman, John Weissbrodt and Matthias Arn.

Why were these farmers, shop-keepers, craftsmen and laborers willing to give up their homes and their friends, uproot their families and abandon the only life they had ever known to start over in a remote corner of the Ohio wilderness?

Western Europe was in a state of political, social and religious turmoil. Most of Germany was a relic of the middle ages, made up of a multitude of small states headed by petty rulers who were negligent at best, or predatory at worst. Faced with oppressive taxes, military conscription, continual wars, famine, disease, financial instability and religious intolerance, most of the common people saw little or no opportunity for ever getting ahead in their homeland.

To escape this chaos, Germans had been coming to America since the 17th century. In fact, Germans were with the first settlers at Jamestown and with the Dutch at the founding of New Amsterdam. In the early 18th century there had been a large exodus of Amish, Mennonites, Quakers



Maps of Western Europe from 1812 and 1820 showing the changing borders of the German states and the border with France.

and other protestant sects who wanted freedom to practice their own religious beliefs in peace. Many of these groups, influenced by the Quaker leader William Penn, settled in Pennsylvania and became known as the “Pennsylvania Dutch.”

There was a continuous stream of correspondence between these early immigrants and their families in the homeland. Letters from America were passed around to friends and relatives and were often read aloud at social gatherings and in taverns, so those who emigrated later probably had a reasonably good understanding of what they would find in the new world.

The Arnheim Lutheran Church Parish Register is a two-volume translation of the old church records completed by Bonnie Cox Nishimoto in 1988 and 1992. In her introduction to Book I, she includes the following comments.

When locating the towns and villages of Germany mentioned (in) this parish register you will find that most of them will be found very close to each other in a small area around Pirmasens, Pfalz, Germany.² Some of these towns are now on the French side of the border, although they are very German in name and character. This is also why some of the Germans in Brown County listed their birthplace in the 1850 census as Alsace or Elsass, because at the time of their births some of the towns were already under French rule.³

After much research in the records of these German towns, there appears to be a close association of many of these families before they came to Arnheim, and some had relatives already here in America before the Revolutionary War, but the nearly total stoppage of emigration from the Rhineland between 1785-1820, prevented the others from coming until the late 1820s and 1830s.

The America they heard about represented hope for a better life, but leaving their homes and

families to start from scratch in a new country with strange laws, customs and language must have required an amazing amount of faith and courage.

The trip alone would have been a major deterrent. To reach Rotterdam or one of the other Atlantic seaports in the Netherlands required a trip of several weeks down the Rhine River, followed by another eight to ten weeks of difficult ocean travel.

After landing in New York or Philadelphia, it would take several weeks more to reach the cheap land available on the western frontier. After passing through the settled areas along the east coast of the United States, the immigrants faced the arduous trip across the Alleghenies to Pittsburg or Wheeling. The few roads leading west were primitive, but the Ohio River offered comparatively easy access to newly opened lands in the Ohio River Valley.

The fertile bottom lands along the river and its tributaries were claimed by the first to arrive. Those who came later often chose not to venture further westward, and moved inland following the smaller rivers and creeks, which offered relatively easy access to the cheap land the immigrants were seeking. These streams were also a valuable, if erratic, source of power for sawmills and grist mills.

United German Evangelical Protestant Congregation⁴

1832 ♦ Rev. Gerhardt

Our congregation was organized in 1832 by Rev. Gerhardt. Unfortunately, there are very few records from those early years, so we know nothing at all about him. He may have been a missionary of the Reform movement which was very active in Ohio during that period working among recent immigrants from Germany.

In any case, the members of the fledgling congregation bought a $\frac{3}{4}$ acre plot from Louis Weaver, and agreed that each family would furnish two hewn logs for a church building. The site chosen is in our present cemetery near the



The journey along the Rhine River from Pirmasens to the Atlantic seaports.



Photograph of Arnheim in the early 1900s taken from the old parsonage.

Arnheim

When Arnheim was settled in the early 1800s, most of the land south to the Ohio River had already been purchased by homesteaders or by land speculators. The available lands further north of the river were off the beaten track, but would still have been attractive to those who preferred to settle where there was a stable population and some commerce. Newcomers who wanted more desirable land near the river had to travel further downstream, taking their chances in the wilderness with little or no access to goods and services, few neighbors and potential conflict with the Indians as well.

Because travel on the frontier was difficult and time-consuming, Arnheim soon became a business center for the growing local population. The village was laid out in 1837 by John

D. White, county surveyor, who had been U.S. Grant's teacher in Georgetown. According to Beers History of Brown County, in 1883 there were two stores, a blacksmith shop, wagon shop, cabinet maker, undertaker, coffin maker, brewery, distillery, tobacco warehouse, physician, post office and a school.

There were also two churches, St. Mary Catholic Church and our own German Protestant church. Some of the last Indians in Ohio were on the John Abbott farm just north of Arnheim.

On July 7, 1863, a detachment of Morgan's raiders visited the area, and since that bit of excitement the community has remained relatively quiet. The largest number of inhabitants on record in Arnheim was 117 in 1870. In 2007 there were about 15 homes, one store and two churches.

crest of the hill at a spot now marked by a memorial stone. The log church, built in 1834, measured 26 x 30 x 12 feet and was built with the entrance facing north. As was the custom, burials were in the yard surrounding the church. The location of this original log building, and the brick church built in the same location in 1852, is roughly outlined by the oldest grave markers. Some of the gravestones have readable dates of as early as 1834.⁵ Many of the first grave markers were field stones set on edge.

There were about 36 charter members of the

new church which was called the United German Evangelical Protestant Congregation.

1832 – 1835 ♦ Vacant

1835 – 1838 ♦ Rev. Diefenbach

In 1835 Rev. Henry Diefenbach served the new congregation from his home in Highland County. He was an Evangelical Reformed pastor from Pennsylvania and may have been sent to follow up on the work of Rev. Gerhardt. The Reform Church in Pennsylvania sent missionar-

ies and circuit riders to all sections of the wilderness to minister to the settlers, encouraging existing congregations and helping to establish new churches. He came to Ohio with his family in 1825 and for two years served several congregations in Preble County. In 1827 he moved to New Market in Highland County, serving our congregation and four others in the area. He became very active in the Free Reformed Synod of Ohio, traveled widely throughout the state, and served as president of the Ohio Synod in 1830.⁶

Rev. Diefenbach must have done much to help keep the church alive. He performed many marriages, the earliest appearing in the Brown County records in 1834, and the last about 1837. He received \$53.13 for services rendered at Arnheim during 1835.

The first official meeting minutes we have are dated March 3, 1835. This record shows that during the previous year George Kautz had been elder, with Fred Faul and George Bohl as deacons. At this meeting Michael Ziegler, Peter Schatzman and Fred Gwinner were elected for the church vestry. (The vestry was a committee of church members elected to manage the temporal affairs of the church and was roughly equivalent to our church council.)

At a meeting on November 18, 1835, M. Ziegler, treasurer, made a report on the building of the log church. This report was not recorded and the only information we have is that the Auditing Committee – Fred Gwinner, Adam Bohl, George A. Kress, John G. Kautz, George Bohl and Peter Schatzman – had audited the report and found it correct.

The next record is from a meeting held in June 1836 when Henry Biehn was elected treasurer. A short record of another meeting held June 4, 1838, reports that Philip Miller, George A. Kress and Conrad Neu were elected as vestrymen.

There are three other records of subscriptions in 1837, 1838 and one with no date. The first and second are for the building of the church and the third is for the purchase of ground for a building site and burial ground. According to the booklet, *A Brief History*, published in 1913, these lists are "...too lengthy to incorporate in this sketch. They would, however, no doubt be of interest to many of the readers."⁷

With the exception of Rev. Diefenbach, who lived in New Market, there are no records of where our early pastors lived. The lack of a parsonage probably contributed to the problem of finding a full-time minister.

1839 – 1843 ♦ Vacant

From 1839 to 1843 there are no records, and following Rev. Diefenbach's term of service, there is a gap of nearly seven years when the congregation was probably without a permanent pastor.

In 1839 subscriptions were taken to buy a parsonage and burial ground. A record of subscriptions for the purchase of a parsonage, dated February 18, 1839, includes the following entries.

Jacob Sneeder	\$25.00
Fred Neu	12.00
George Yockey	13.00
Jacob Bohrer	8.25
Frederic Gwinner	8.00
George A. Kress	10.00
Christian Miller	6.00
Philip Miller	10.00
Ludwig Friedly	10.00
Fred Handman	8.00
Jacob Arn	6.00
Michael Ziegler	10.50

1844 – 1846 ♦ Rev. Mosebach

On January 26, 1844, the congregation received a deed for 30 acres, purchased from Elizabeth Bender and others, for \$300. This site, about 2½ miles northeast of Arnheim, was the site of the parsonage for the next 33 years. The catechetical school was also held here.⁸

Rev. Henry Mosebach, who served from 1844 – 1846, may have been the first pastor to live in the parsonage. He started a record which gives the membership by families and is in alphabetical order.

The first constitution was adopted on May 27, 1844. In this document the official name was "The United German Evangelical Protestant Congregation of Arnheim, Brown County, Ohio."⁹

German Protestant Peace Church

1846 - 1855 ♦ Rev. Anthes

Rev. Peter Anthes preached his first sermon on March 21, 1846, as a guest. On the following June 1st he preached his second sermon at Arnheim and was unanimously called as pastor. On August 3rd, he moved with his family from Clermont County. They enjoyed the hospitality of Frederic Neu until August 24th, when they moved into the parsonage.

Documented information for these early years is sketchy at best. The most complete records we have begin with 1846. In that year a division occurred in the congregation and about a dozen families withdrew, organized a new German Reformed congregation, and moved to Delhi-Arnheim Road where the German Reformed Cemetery is today. We're told that this split was the result of a dispute over which of two ministers should preach a trial sermon one Sunday morning. The history of Peace published in 1913 gives the following account.

During periods when the church was without a resident pastor an ad would be placed in the newspaper. One Sunday in 1846 two preachers came, both insisting that they had been invited. One shoved the other off the porch and went into the church. This angered some of the members enough that about twelve families

went across the creek and established the German Reform Church which later became the Presbyterian Church and was later dissolved.¹⁰

The following item from the *News Democrat* is dated March 24, 1898.

The Reform Church at Arnheim held a congregational meeting Saturday afternoon at the church. After carefully discussing the matter it was decided by a vote of something like 46 to 6 to petition the June classis to allow them to withdraw from the classis and secure another denominational connection of the same orthodox faith. The desire of many is to change into a Presbyterian Church. The meeting was cordial and harmonious.¹¹

Because of the division, a revised membership role was prepared under the direction of Rev. Anthes. A complete record of official acts by Rev. Anthes was also made. During his pastorate the congregation evidently thrived and prospered.

Realizing that their small log church was no longer adequate, the growing congregation began to discuss building a new and larger church. On January 1, 1852, Rev. Anthes' sermon text was *I Chron. 22:1*. In this message the need for a new church was laid before the congregation, and a building fund was established the same day. At another meeting on February 9th, the congregation voted to build a new brick church.



The carved wooden sign that hung above the entrance to the Old Brick Church. The text translates as *G. P. Peace Church, built A.D. 1852, C. Dardio Builder*. G. P. is likely an abbreviation for German Protestant. This sign now hangs in our entryway.

The dimensions were to be 50 feet by 35 feet with walls 18 feet high. Frederick Neu, Frederic Henges, Jacob Hanselman and Gottfried Ketteuring as treasurer were elected to serve as the Building Committee. Henry Kress was to complete the brick and stone work by September 1852, for \$500. The clay for the brick was dug from the ground near the church and burned at the site.

On April 1st, the Committee contracted with Christian Dardio to do the carpentry work, which was to be completed by October 1st. He agreed to furnish all of the materials, except the shingles, for \$450. On September 23rd he was awarded another contract to build the pulpit and pews for an additional \$130. This work was to be completed by November 12, 1852. Both the congregation and Mr. Dardio must have been pleased with his work, since his name appears on the sign that was placed above the entrance to the new church.

On June 7, 1852, the old log building was razed to make room for the new brick church. The cornerstone for the new church was laid with appropriate ceremony on July 28th. A book containing the names of members and the amount of their subscriptions was placed in the stone. When the old brick church was torn down in 1912 and the stone removed, the book was there but the names had faded beyond recognition.

Dedication day was November 14, 1852. Rev. Anthes was assisted at these services by Rev. Nelson from Cincinnati and Rev. Young from Georgetown. In the following year, 1853, special

services were held on November 13th and 14th to celebrate the first anniversary of the dedication of the church.

Over the next 61 years, many sermons were preached from the pulpit, but it's doubtful that we could understand any of them since nearly all were in German. Some were rather lengthy according to present day ideas. The sermon had to be at least one hour in length or the pastor would be accused of neglecting his duties.

On January 1, 1855, Rev. Anthes presented a new constitution to the vestry. The vestry resolved to hold a congregational meeting on February 5th to discuss the constitution and a call for another pastor. Both the new constitution and the call for a new pastor were approved.¹²



The Old Brick Church served the Arnheim, Ohio, congregation from 1852 to 1912.