

HISTORY OF THE EBENEZER MORAVIAN CHURCH

The first German immigrants arrived in Jefferson County in the early 1840s. Many of them, like the Moravians, came from Brandenburg and Pomerania, Germany, and were attracted to the area by enthusiastic letters and reports of good land that they received from relatives and friends who preceded them. In Watertown the Germans soon outnumbered all other nationalities. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

By 1852, four years after Wisconsin became a state, Watertown with a population of 2,362 was the second largest city in Wisconsin, although it was not officially incorporated as a city until 1853. In the spring of 1853, the Rev. John G. Kaltenbrunn left New York City for Jefferson County to minister to a group of German immigrant families who had requested a pastor from the Moravian Church.

In the fall of 1853 the members built a one room log cabin that served as parsonage, house of worship, and schoolhouse. That same year Kaltenbrunn started a German day school, which continued to hold classes until 1925. A man of incredible vision and energy, Kaltenbrunn traveled the surrounding area by horse and wagon and established numerous preaching places, some of which eventually became organized congregations, for example, Watertown, Lake Mills, and Deforest.

As membership increased the members of Ebenezer decided to build a new brick church in 1856 with about \$500.00 that Kaltenbrunn had raised from congregations in the East. Originally incorporated as “the Moravian Church in the Town of Watertown,” the name was changed to Ebenezer after the church building was dedicated on October 5, 1856. The name derives from the Watchword for that day, 1 Sam. 7:12. “Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and called its name Ebenezer, for he said, ‘Hitherto the Lord has helped us.’” The current church edifice, built in 1890 of yellow Watertown brick after the congregation outgrew its first building, has undergone numerous structural changes and modernizations over the years. In 1950-51 the church was enlarged to include a new chancel area and Sunday school room in the basement. In 1966 the Christian Education wing was added and in 1987 a major construction project added a new narthex that provided handicap access, renovated the area below the sanctuary, and redecorated the interior of the church.

During its 156 years 24 pastors have served Ebenezer. The church also has been blessed by many dedicated lay leaders, teachers, and musicians. From its beginning Ebenezer has had an active Christian education program for all age groups and music has played a significant role in the life of the congregation. The church has always had a choir and a band. Members of Ebenezer are also known for their enthusiastic hymn signing. Until the church could afford to purchase a pipe organ, the church band

accompanied the singing of hymns. Even today a band plays at all major church festivals.

In 1905 the church purchased a custom built tracker-action pipe organ for \$1045.00 from the Hinners Organ Company in Pekin, Illinois. Now, over 100 years old and one of just a few surviving intact Hinners organ, this instrument is still often played for services today. On June 15 2003, Ebenezer Moravian Church celebrated its 150th anniversary as one of the oldest Protestant churches in the greater Watertown area.