

Miller's Hickory

Organized: 1840

County: Catawba

Affiliations: Tennessee Synod, Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, ALC, NC Synod

Status: Active

To find an actual beginning for one of the older Christian congregations in Hickory is a bit difficult but the year 1820, according to existing records, is the year that Miller's Lutheran Church had its beginning although it was not until 1840 that it officially became an organized congregation. About the year 1820, Rev. David Henkel, the founder and theological young giant of the Tennessee Synod, began an afternoon preaching service at the home of Mrs. John Miller, three-quarters of a mile west of St. Stephens and near the home of Mr. Lemuel Miller. In this area the Bolchs, The Cooks, The Deitzes, The Ekards, The Hefners, The Huffmans, The Millers, The Mausers, The Younts, The Bargers, and the Flowers all lived – most of them Lutherans. Here they were contented and happy, except for the fact that they were 8 miles distance from a church of their faith. As a result of this afternoon service, Rev. Daniel Moser organized the congregation in 1837 and the congregation erected a church in 1838, on land donated by Frederick Miller for that purpose. The church was built on the west side of Springs Road where Miller's cemetery now stands. It was a return of the courtesy for the gift of land that the donor requested the church be called Miller's in honor of his name. This first church known as the log church, octagon in shape, was two stories high and contained a gallery floored with loose boards; and with a railing along the edge. The entire church was furnished with seats made from slabs, which were bored and fitted with pegs and legs. The seats were without backs. A temporary stand served as pulpit and the building was entirely without any heating arrangement. Shortly after its erection heating provisions were made. The octagon shaped building served as the house of worship until the present structure was built in 1932. It was completely remodeled, a new pulpit, lectern, altar furniture and pews were added and the interior was redecorated several times. The clapboard exterior of the building was recovered with white stucco.

The congregation known as Miller's, a member of the Tennessee Synod, divided in 1848. One group remained an independent congregation until 1884 when it united with the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States (the present Miller's Lutheran congregation). The other group known as St. Stephens, remained with the Tennessee Synod until it split in the late 19th century and part joined the Missouri Synod. Both congregations however, continued to worship in the same church.

During the 19th century Miller's was served by several pastors. The first officially called pastor was the Rev. George Hunt, who served from 1868-1883. The Rev. D.C. Huffman served for a time in 1884 until the Rev. C.D. Besch was called as pastor in 1892 and remained until 1898. The Rev. J.E. Barb, ordained in 1898 shepherded Miller's during various times until his death in 1932. Serving from 1898-1902, in 1905, 1906 and then again from 1910-1931. The Reverends L.M. Hunt, C.E. Pense, D.E. Snapp, A. Phillips and Professor Walter L. Spielman served

the congregation for brief intervals between the years of Pastor Barb's ministry. It was during the last year of his ministry that Miller's began the erection of a modern stone gothic style edifice, the present church, which was dedicated in 1932. Following the erection of a new building, the church progressed rapidly. On July 3, 1932, Pastor William Toedtman of Baltimore, Maryland was installed. Additional property was acquired for the brick colonial style parsonage which was built in 1934 at the cost of \$2400.00. The church, built at a cost of \$45,000 was debt free by 1941. In 1946 the organ was purchased for \$14,000. The membership increased from 245 to 366 confirmed members from 1932 to 1949. Its pastor was honored with the conferring of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity by Lenoir Rhyne College. Pastor Toedtman served until June 1, 1949 when he accepted a call to Oceanside Lutheran Church in Oceanside, New York. On July 17, 1949 the Rev. Robert Eibling, pastor in New Bedford, Ohio accepted the call to Miller's arriving in Hickory September 1949. During Pastor Eibling's ministry the congregation erected the Parish Hall in 1950 and dedicated it in April, 1951 at a cost of \$55,000, which was completely paid for by October, 1956. Since this building program, a number of improvements have been made. In 1955, a barbeque pit for the use of the congregation was erected at the rear of the Parish Hall. In 1957, the congregation embarked on a \$60,000 program of remodeling its church building. The sanctuary was completely renovated, the chancel enlarged, new altar furniture purchased and air conditioned. In 1960, a pastor's study and church office with a separate heat pump for cooling and heating was constructed in the basement of the church. These improvements made the total valuation of the church property over \$300,000.

After a ministry of 12 years, Pastor Eibling accepted a call to Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. On September 9, 1962, the Rev. John C. Moebius was installed by Pastor S.L. Schillinger of St. Paul's Lutheran, Hickory NC. Having all the facilities needed to serve the congregation, Miller's Lutheran Church in November, 1963 embarked on a new type of building program. The congregation voted to use its good name and equity to borrow \$30,000 for a sponsorship loan to St. Mark's Lutheran in Orlando, Florida. Also during the next six years Miller's gave gifts of encouragement totaling several thousand dollars to American Lutheran Church Mission congregations in Greensboro, Charlotte, and Raleigh. In 1963 the church parking lot was hard surfaced and new seating was installed in the church basement. In 1969 the parsonage next to the church building was moved to provide additional parking space and a new parsonage was built on 24th St. NE, the street adjacent to St. Stephens Elementary School. Pastor Moebius retired in August, 1986. An interim ministry served by the Rev. Albert Keck followed until 1987. In 1987, the Rev. Paul R. Kanupp, a native of Catawba County having served for 17 years as Pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church near Baltimore, MD., was called as Pastor. Pastor Kanupp began his ministry on June 1, 1987, and was installed officially on July 12, 1987.

In 1988, the congregation did extensive remodeling of the Sunday School wing, of the parish hall installing air conditioning, insulation, new interior walls, doors, dropped ceilings, and carpeting. A revised constitution was also adopted that year reflecting membership in the newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The congregation also served as one of the host congregations for the 1988 Synod Assembly for 1988. Presently, the congregation is in the planning stages for the celebration of its 150th Anniversary in 1990 and for the remodeling of the church basement area to provide better offices and meeting space, as well as a choir rehearsal and robing rooms,

classrooms, and new restroom facilities. We are also considering a new covered entrance to the west side of the building.

Pastors

Prior 1840	Adam Miller
	D. Moser
1868	George Hunt
1884	D. C. Huffman
1892-1898	C. D. Besch
1898-1902	J. E. Barb
1902	L. M. Hunt
1905-1905	J. E. Barb
1905-1905	C. H. Pence
1905-1906	J. E. Barb
1906-1908	D. E. Snapp
1908-1908	Arthur A. Phillips
1908-1910	W. L. Speilman
1910-1931	J. E. Barb
1932-1949	William Toedtman
1949-1961	Robert A. Eibling
1962-1986	John C. Moebius
1987-1995	Paul Kanupp
1996-2001	J
	John N
	Wood
	ward
2003-2005	C
	Pierson
	Shaw
2006 –	Robert
Allen	