

## The People

Rev. J.F. Grove, then pastoring the German Evangelical Congregational Zion Church at 9th and D Streets, left Zion to plant a new mission in the southeast area of the South Bottoms where a number of Volga German families had recently moved.

On August 16, 1915, a group of men and women, along with Rev. Grove, met to form the new congregation. The group selected German Ebenezer Evangelical Congregational Church as the name for the new church based on I Samuel, 7:12: "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us." H.J. Amen, Henry Yost, J.A. Wiederspan, Henry Weber, and Fred Gies were elected to serve as the first trustees and Peter P. Pabst, William Weber, Conrad Hock, and J.J. Hill to serve as the first deacons.

Ebenezer was affiliated with the Conference of the German Congregational Churches of Nebraska. The Congregational churches merged with the United Church of Christ (UCC) in 1957; and Ebenezer joined the Nebraska Conference of the UCC on September 15, 1963, at which time the name of the church was changed to Ebenezer UCC.

The founding members of Ebenezer were Volga German immigrants primarily from the villages of Balzer, Frank, and

Walter but also from Beideck, Grimm, Huck, Hussenbach, Kolb, Norka, Shilling, and Wiesenmueller.

## The Buildings

Land was purchased at 801 B Street, and a 42 by 32 foot frame structure was erected and furnished at a total cost of \$4,540. The church was dedicated on Sunday, February 15, 1916. As the original church building took up less than one-half of the lot, fruit trees were



grown on the north side of the building in a fenced-in area. The church was organized by young families, so it was not unusual to see baby buggies parked in the back of the church during services.

It wasn't long before the little church was bulging at the seams, and the congregation elected to build a new, larger building on the same lot. Alfred W. Woods, a prominent Lincoln architect, was hired to design the building; and H.G. Grasmick was hired as the general contractor. Woods designed many churches, homes, and other buildings in Lincoln (including Fairview, home of William Jennings Bryan, First United Methodist Church, and Tifereth Israel Synagogue) and throughout the midwest. He drew up plans for a brick building in

the Gothic Revival style popular in the U.S. from the late 1800s through the 1940s. It was completed in 1927 at a cost of approximately \$26,500.

Some similarity can be seen between Ebenezer and the church in Walter, Russia. Built in the 1880s, the Walter church still exists today, although it has been allowed to decay. Ebenezer's bell tower, which never held bells, incorporated elements used in many Volga churches: the three-level tower capped by a dome and cross rather than a pointed steeple.



The Ebenezer sanctuary originally had two aisles rather than a central aisle. This arrangement was changed in the 1970s when a middle and two side aisles were created with two rows of pews. The wood altar rail was also removed at this time to give easier access to the chancel area.

The interior of the church contains many of the elements common to Gothic Revival churches, including the open, spacious nave; an emphasis on light with windows which span the full height of the walls; and the lack of obstructions between the speaker and the congregation.

The beautiful stained glass windows were created at the Lincoln Art Glass Works owned by John “Jack” Teysman who was in business from 1919 to 1940. While the architecture contains many of the elements of Gothic Revival, the stained glass was created in the Arts and Crafts style popular in the 1920s. There are two great windows on the east and west sides



composed of three lancets in geometric patterns of squares, rectangles, and diamonds with a center medallion. The medallion on the east window contains an open Bible, while the west medallion contains a cross and crown. The other tall, lancet-style windows with pointed arches are comprised of the same geometric patterns as the east and west windows along with a stylized rose bud. Slag glass, opaque pressed glass with colored streaks, was used in colors of green, amber, yellow, purple, and blue. Also known as “marble” or “art” glass, it was very popular in the early 1900s. Incredibly, an invoice from Lincoln Art Glass Works lists a cost of \$500.

The pews, lectern, altar table, pulpit, and chime screens all incorporate the pointed arch indicative of the Gothic Revival style. Some of the wood elements in the chancel area were created by members of Ebenezer. The pulpit, baptismal font,

lectern, and altar table are original to the construction of the building and were made by either the general contractor or an unknown member. The kneeler was built by Buddie Hansen. The large wooden cross was created by Leroy Walter and Harold Schwabauer.



The clouds painted on the ceiling of the choir area are original to the building as are the sanctuary’s light fixtures. The hanging fixtures incorporate the classic American “schoolhouse” style of white glass globe with a painted decorative design.

## Historical Records

The church records, consisting of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and funerals, are currently being computerized. The church also has confirmation pictures for almost all of the years in which confirmations took place. If you are conducting research and have questions regarding these records, please send an email to: [pat.worster@gmail.com](mailto:pat.worster@gmail.com).

## Ebenezer United Church of Christ



Located in the historic South Bottoms area of Lincoln, Ebenezer first opened its doors in 1915. Ebenezer recognizes the Bible as the one true guide to faith and worship, and scriptural teaching is at the core of all services. Music has always had a special place at Ebenezer and is an integral part of each worship service, incorporating both traditional and contemporary forms. The education of children and youth is a core value at Ebenezer, and children are encouraged to participate not only in Sunday School but in all services and activities.

If you are seeking a loving environment in which to grow and strengthen your relationship with God, we hope you will visit us. Ebenezer is located just minutes from downtown at 801 B Street. Check out our web site at:

[www.ebnzr.org](http://www.ebnzr.org)

**Sunday School:** 9:15 a.m.

**Sunday Morning Worship:** 10:30 a.m.