

Our History

Our Church History



This architectural gem, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, has managed to escape the destruction too many in Charleston have suffered from fire, hurricanes, and war.

In 1841, a group of German Lutherans settled on the 48 Hasell Street site, located in historic Ansonborough. They commissioned nationally renowned architect Edward Brickell White to build the church in his classic Greek revival architectural style. Their leader was Johann Andreas Wagener who was later to become mayor of Charleston.

But 30 years after the church's dedication in 1842, the congregation, then known as St. Matthews Lutheran Church, had outgrown the Hasell Street sanctuary and relocated to King Street. In 1878, a group of 52 Lutherans decided they wanted to return to their "home church." Retention of the German language in the service is said to have been a factor in that decision. The Hasell Street church was purchased from St. Matthews and rededicated as the "Deutschen Evangelisch Luthenschen Sanct Johannes Kirche." The service at St. Johannes continued to be conducted in German until 1910.

As the congregation grew new facilities were added, including the construction in 1927 of a larger parish building on Anson

Street. That construction required that the church's elegant, wood-framed Sunday school building be moved to the back of the extensive property. Miraculously it survived intact. It now serves as a place for quiet contemplation, and is also available for small weddings. The parsonage at 50 Hasell Street, which now is available as a unique Ansonborough wedding venue, was acquired in 1919.

The church facade and interior have had a number of face changes over the years including a new entrance with a marble tile floor and Art Memorial Windows. Visiting members of the Society of Guilders who added 22 K gold gilding to portions of the lectern, altar and pulpit provided one of the most stunning modern-day enhancements.

Over the years the church has retained noted ministers and musicians, from the Rev. Dr. I. E. Long, who served the church for 37 years, to an organist who was in her post for 54 years, and a current member who has marked more than **70** years in the choir!

The church continues to build on its musical heritage and its tradition of hospitality that are dedicated to providing a place for all people to discover the heart of God in the heart of the city. Services in the church are at noon on Wednesdays and Sundays at 10 a.m.