



The congregation of English Settlement United Methodist Church was founded in the summer of 1842, when the area around present highways A and J was settled by about twenty families from Huddersfield, Yorkshire in the north of England. Some of their names, still familiar in the community, were Noble, Sheard, Squire, Bottomley and Gooder. Services were held in members' homes until the building was completed in 1848 on land purchased from Alexander Stenhouse, the first settler in the area.

The original thirty by forty-foot structure stood surrounded by the cemetery until 1916, when the building was moved closer to the road and placed on a new foundation. It was then remodeled inside and out and fitted with a portico and new stained

glass windows. The original hand hewn oak and hickory beams that formed the framework of the building are still in place, making it the oldest church building still in use as a church in Racine County.

One of the favorite services held every year is "Christmas in the barn", a nativity play produced by the church as a special Christmas gift to the community. Audience members sit on straw bales and sing carols as the Christmas story is read from the Bible. Live farm animals and a real baby in Mary's arms bring the story to life. Held on the John Squire farm, this Christmas Eve tradition has grown from one service with one hundred people attending in 1969, to nine services with over 1,300 in attendance in 1997.

*Liz Noble*