

Union Churches ^[1]

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by David R. Koontz, 2006

Union churches, found in the backcountry or rural areas of early North Carolina, were buildings that housed two or more families or other groups having similar religious beliefs, a common language, and a desire to further the interests of all parties living in an area of scarce economic resources. The single structure helped preserve the limited assets of the groups involved. Union churches with Evangelical Reformed and Lutheran adherents are known to have existed at Pilgrim, Beck, and Bethany Churches in what is today [Davidson County](#) ^[2] in the eighteenth century. St. Luke's Church on the west side of the Yadkin River, also in present-day Davidson County, housed members of both the Anglican and Lutheran faiths. One of the common bonds within these congregations was the fact that their members spoke German. Traveling ministers of both denominations spoke to the groups in German and English. During the mid-nineteenth century, the North Carolina Railroad built a structure in [Company Shops](#) ^[3] (modern-day Burlington) that was used as a union church. The building had as tenants Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians, and it housed a public school on the second floor, as well as a Masonic lodge. This building was called the "Preaching House."

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