

The Emmaus Chapel Hatzfeld, Germany

The Emmaus Chapel is located on a knoll approximately 100 meters west of the Eder River on the southern edge of Hatzfeld. This site is believed to be the location of the first church in Hatzfeld, which tradition ascribes to the monk Cyriac who brought Christianity to Germany in approximately 400 AD. This would explain why the original church was named St. Cyriac. When and why St. Cyriac Church was renamed the Emmaus Chapel has been lost in the mists of time.

During the early Middle Ages (500 to 1000 AD) the church was part of a Patronzium, or patronage of the lords of Hatzfeld. Later, during the 12th century, the church was part of the fortified "Great Court of Lower Hatzfeld" which was the headquarters of the lords of Hatzfeld prior to the construction of the Hatzfeld Castle on Castle Hill. Following construction of the wall around the town of Hatzfeld in the middle of the 14th century, the Patronzium settlement was no longer inhabited. Since then the church area has been the burial site for the citizens of Hatzfeld. A charter for Hatzfeld from 1379 refers to an "old" church, suggesting that the Emmaus Chapel had existed for a long time then.

The church has been modified several times. The west tower dates from the 12th century and is the oldest part of the current building. In the 15th century the west tower was separated from the nave. Probably in the 17th century the north aisle was demolished, galleries erected in the nave and the floor of the nave paved with stones in herringbone pattern. Finally, in the middle of the 19th century, the south aisle was demolished. The Hatzfeld pastor Georg Philipp Lambas succeeded in refurbishing the Emmaus Chapel in 1864/65, after a prolonged paperwork battle with the state bureaucracy. The last major renovation was undertaken in the 1970's.

A historic Rindt organ is in the choir room beyond the altar. The Rindt organ is one of the oldest, still functioning organs in Hessen, and is unique because of its characteristics and timbre. The Hatzfeld community uses the organ for funeral services, the early service at Easter and at the German Memorial Day in November. The Rindt organ has also been used for concerts since the mid-1980s.