

## St. John's Lutheran Church

### Historical Highlights

#### 1808

St. John's (part of the New Hanover Lutheran ministry) begins as a preaching point ("Boyers")

#### 1811

Jacob Miller, 1811 – 1829, serves as first pastor; from 1811 until 1872, St. John's shares a church on West Philadelphia Avenue with the Reformed congregation, now the Good Shepherd United Church of Christ

#### 1829

Jacob's brother, Conrad Miller, 1829 – 1852, becomes pastor

#### 1853

Nathan Jaeger, 1853 – 1857, replaces Conrad Miller as pastor

#### 1858

Henry Wendt, 1858 – 1864; during his pastorate services are held once every four weeks

#### 1864

Abraham H. Groh, 1865 – 1866; St. John's, with New Hanover, is constituted a parish

#### 1866

Abraham's cousin, Leonard Groh, 1866 – 1891, becomes sixth pastor

#### 1867

English begins to be used in some church services

#### 1868

Pastor Groh moves to effect separation from the Reformed group

#### 1871

Lot on North Reading Avenue (church's present location) is purchased for \$3,000

#### 1872

The present sanctuary is built for a total cost of \$23,700 (building-\$20,200, organ-\$2,400, bell-\$600, furniture-\$500)

#### 1882

A steeple is added to the church at a cost of \$2,000 (the 172 foot steeple is removed in 1933 as unsafe; the present steeple, 45 feet high, is erected in 1985)

#### 1886

St. John's completely separates from the mother church in New Hanover

#### 1887

Pastor Groh conducts English services every fourth Sunday; other services are in German



**1889**

St. John's forms its first choir

**1890**

The first Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws are authorized and printed; "The Young People's Luther Alliance" (later Luther League) is formed

**1891**

Charles C. Boyer, 1891 – 1893

**1892**

The women of St. John's begin a Ladies' Aid Society

**1893**

Adam W. Weber, 1893 – 1926, is elected to replace Pastor Boyer

**1895**

The Constitution and By-laws of a Senior Luther League were adopted

**1896**

A vesper service in English is adopted

**1897**

A Junior Luther League (later called the Light Brigade and then the Children of the Church) was organized

**1898**

A parsonage is built on North Reading Avenue for \$3,840

**1901**

The pastor was granted 2-weeks vacation a year

**1908**

A disastrous event occurs on the night of January 13 when the Sunday School presents a tableaux on the Scottish Reformation at the Rhoads Opera House on East Philadelphia Avenue: a sudden fire breaks out, panic ensues, and 173 lives are lost; many are congregation members and relatives; the community and country are shocked; this event leads to many reforms in building procedures and fire codes in Pennsylvania and the U.S.

**1911**

Centennial services are observed with three living pastors attending: Leonard Groh, Charles C. Boyer, and Adam M. Weber

**1912**

English services are held every other week

**1918**

The church steeple was repaired, small turrets were removed and closed-up

**1919**

The Duplex envelope system is introduced; church council meets monthly rather than quarterly; the Common Service Book was adopted, German services are held only on the second Sunday of the month



**1922**

A Son-of-the-Congregation, Rev. C.H. Swavely, goes to India to serve 35 years there as a missionary the Adult Bible Class begins; the choir secures vestments for the first time

**1923**

Individual communion cups are used for the first time; an Intermediate Luther League was started, the first Christmas Day Dawn Service is held

**1926**

David F. Longacre, 1926 – 1954, begins his call as pastor

**1927**

A 60 by 72-foot brick Sunday School addition at the rear of the church building at the cost of approximately \$30,000 is completed

**1928**

The first Vacation Bible School begins, alternating for several years between St. John's and Good Shepherd

**1930**

A new three-manual Wurlitzer church organ was dedicated

**1931**

St. John's and Good Shepherd begin observing Community Thanksgiving Day services

**1933**

The church steeple declared unsafe and removed, the tower was renovated

**1936**

The congregation celebrated its 125th anniversary

**1938**

All German services are discontinued (German services of Holy Communion at Christmas and Easter are added later)

**1943**

356 church members serve in the armed forces during World War II (98 in World War I); a monthly newspaper, St. John's Speaks, is produced by the congregation for them

**1950**

The second floor sanctuary, basically as it exists today, is refurnished and renovated along colonial lines for a cost of \$150,000; the former three-sided balcony is replaced by one balcony above the rear of the nave

**1953**

John Hassler, 1953 – 1955, is called to assist Pastor Longacre

**1954**

Pastor Hassler serves as interim pastor following Pastor Longacre's tragic death

**1955**

Fred S. Blank, 1955 – 1963, is elected pastor; a church secretary is hired

**1956**

Air conditioning is provided for the church sanctuary

**1957**

Kneeling benches are installed; a two-year program of catechetical instruction is adopted; pastor's classes for new members are started

**1959**

Richard L. Miller, 1959 – 1961, is called as assistant pastor, the Service Book and Hymnal was introduced

**1961**

St. John's celebrates its 150th Anniversary, the basement was converted into a social room, the church library was renovated with new shelving and furniture

**1963**

The position of Director of Christian Education was established

**1964**

Clyde I. Fry, 1964 – 1991, comes to St. John's; the Boyertown Golden Age Club is organized

**1966**

David U. Druckenmiller, 1966 – 1970, becomes assistant to the pastor; St. John's has its first pictorial directory

**1967**

The Geiger property on the north side of the church is acquired for \$25,000 as the church embarked on an extensive building program

**1969**

The present Parish Building (including elevator) and complete renovation of the church building are completed at a cost of \$483,000 and dedicated on June 15th

**1970**

Gary G. Scott, 1970 – 1974, begins work at St. John's as associate pastor; the first issue of St. John's Eagle appears; a Pre-Kindergarten School begins

**1971**

Harold G. Deisher, 1971 – 1988, replaces Pastor Druckenmiller as assistant to the pastor; a three-manual Schantz organ, presently in use, is dedicated in October at a cost for the organ and renovations to the organ chambers of \$65,000

**1972**

Pre-Kindergarten expands to three classes; a 66-passenger bus is donated

**1973**

The position of Children's Choir Director is established

**1974**

St. John's celebrates a Mortgage Burning Service as the church becomes debt-free; a second sexton is hired; Sister Millicent J. Drake, 1974 - , joins the staff as Parish Deaconess; the Blood Donor Program begins; monthly healing services and weekly prayer circles begin

**1975**

Jeffrey H. Bortz, 1975 – 1984, replaces Pastor Scott as associate pastor

**1976**

Extensive repairs to the exterior of the church building are completed; five stained glass windows depicting symbols of St. John, St. Paul, and St. Peter are donated, as is the dossal; the second pictorial directory is produced; the Bauer apartment building next to the church is purchased for \$120,000



**1977**

An audio tape ministry begins for shut-in members

**1978**

Bauer Apartments are demolished and the present parking lot for 42 cars is completed

**1980**

An assistant church secretarial position is established

**1981**

An eight foot brass cross is suspended above the altar; the telephone prayer ministry begins; the gift of a carillon is presented to the church; the radio ministry, SHARING HIS LOVE begins each Saturday morning at 7:15 on WBYO

**1982**

A sanctuary lamp is installed to burn continually as a vivid reminder of the Living Lord among His people; a 15-passenger van is given for church use

**1983**

The parsonage on North Reading Avenue is sold for \$44,537; a new parsonage on College Street is purchased for \$68,000 (later sold in 1992); the first KIDS PRAISE is the Rally Day hit

**1984**

The present Lutheran Book of Worship (green book) is introduced; an Endowment and Trust Fund is established, the position of Youth Director was established

**1985**

Lee E. Angstadt, 1985 - , begins his service as associate pastor (he becomes senior pastor, 1991; co-senior pastor, 1992-1995; and then St. John's visitation pastor, 1995-1997; and then Pastor Emeritus); a three year capital improvement program in the amount of \$210,000 was approved and leads to a number of donations to the church, including a new 45-foot steeple, a new sound system used in the church today, updated air conditioning, and new side entrance doors in the lower narthex; Pastor Fry is chosen the Boyertown Jaycees Man of the Year.

**1986**

St. John's third pictorial directory is completed; a commemorative plate is issued in observance of the 175th Anniversary of the church; the Pre-Kindergarten program expands to seven classes

**1987**

A church-wide goal, One in Mission, begins and is completed in 1994

**1988**

Storm windows are installed over all stained glass windows; the fire alarm system is updated

**1989**

The Stephen Ministry is started as part of the church's care-giving team

**1990**

St. John's choirs receive new gowns, crosses, and cinctures; the air conditioning unit in the church is replaced; the telephone system is updated; new carpeting is installed and the conference room is renovated

**1991**

John A. Jorgenson, 1991 - 1992, comes to St. John's as interim staff pastor; the Music and Fine Arts Series begins

**1992**

John G. Pearson, 1992 - is called to St. John's; the Order of Worship as it is presented in the Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) officially begins

**1993**

The chapel-level handicapped ramp with power-assisted door, a ramp on the second floor of the Parish Building leading toward the sanctuary, and more accessible and modernized restrooms on the first floor are dedicated; Scott W. Lingenfelter, 1993 – 1996 is called to be Associate Pastor; the sanctuary receives a new piano as a memorial gift

**1994**

Communion begins on a monthly basis; the Saturday Evening Contemporary Worship Service at six p.m. begins; the parish nurse committee is formed and monthly blood pressure screenings become available after Sunday morning services; a Pre-Kindergarten Play Group is established for two-year-olds; a new set of hand chimes is provided; a wheelchair space is created in the sanctuary

**1995**

The automation of the library with donated computer is completed; 56 air-conditioning/heating units are purchased and installed in the parish house, nursery, and second-floor classrooms; a new Capital Funds Campaign begins; the Keim property next to the church parking lot is purchased; the demolition of the Boyertown Casket Company building behind the church leads to improved parking conditions; work starts on a new kitchen for the Parish House so meals can be better provided for Youth Club and other activities

**1996**

The fourth pictorial directory marks another decade in the life of the church; this is the 125th Anniversary of the construction of St. John's church building

**1997**

Carl A. Wenzel, 1997 - , is called to be Associate Pastor; the parking lot shared with Good Shepherd U.C.C. and National Penn Bank is completed

**1998**

Sister Millicent Drake, 1974-, is honored on her 40th Anniversary of Consecration; Pastor Harold Deisher, 1971-1988, faithful Assistant to the Pastor, died at the age of 92; the church newsletter takes on a new format as The Eagle Messenger; landscaping around the parking lot is enhanced with a number of memorials and is cared for by the Landscape Committee; Mary Etta Mest is hired as Service Musician for Saturday at Six; position of Youth Director is approved; Kids Praise remains a September highlight

**1999**

Leroy Remp, Organist and Music Coordinator, retires after 12 years of service to St. John's; Pastor David Foulk, 1999 - is called as Parish Visitor; a wheelchair-accessible restroom is completed; Time and Talent sheets encourage members to select ministry opportunities

**2000**

St. John's celebrates with Pastor Pearson his 25th Anniversary of Ordination; J.T. Ellenberger is appointed as Organist and Music Coordinator; the annual Palm Sunday Breakfast was initiated; a number of youth attend the National Youth Gathering 2000 in St. Louis

**2001**

Pre-Kindergarten completes its 30th year; the third annual Center Court Festival is held in May; a capital campaign begins to raise funds to refurbish and enhance the Schantz organ

**2002**

St. John's receives a substantial bequeath from the estate of Mrs. Marguerite L. McPeak. The Trust is in memory of her parents, Warren and Elizabeth Leaver. The areas funded from the Leaver Trust Fund are educational, medical, church community, charitable, and religious categories - financing positions of Parish Nurse (Darlene Dunn, RN), and a part-time New Member Coordinator. A 14-passenger minibus was also purchased

**2003**

Pastor Clyde I. Fry, 1964 - 1991, pastor of St. John's for 27 years, passed to Life Eternal on March 23rd; St. John's begins a Hand in Hand Initiative to strengthen the church; the chancel organ was removed in June and returned – bigger and better – in September; dinner returns as a part of weekly Youth Club

**2004**

Ranee Reitz comes to St. John's as Organist and Music Director; the youth begin a Puppet Ministry program; the fourth annual Christmas Day Meal, after Christmas morning service, continues to grow and thrive

**2005**

The Property Committee and the church battle wet insulation and mold that lead to new basement flooring, re-insulation, installation of vents, and a great amount of unexpected cleaning and painting; St. John's commits to a 40 Days of Purpose Campaign; in place of the 30-year tradition of monthly Sunday afternoon Healing Services, prayers for healing are incorporated into regular services once a month

**2006**

The third annual Blessing of the Animals is a growing addition to St. John's services; the youth attend the ELCA National Youth Gathering in San Antonio

**2013**

Daniel Burris is called to St. John's as Associate Pastor

**2015**

Dr. Robert Machamer is called to St. John's as Senior Pastor

**2017**

A renewal project is completed including installation of an elevator with direct access to the sanctuary, revitalization of the sanctuary and chapel, refreshing of the Parish House, secure entrances for the preschool, and ADA compliance for the facility.



The dates in this brief history serve as “mile markers,” while the “road markers” along the way are the members, past and present, whose lives of faith, devotion, and service have brought St. John's Lutheran Church into this new century.