

Church History



Very early in the history of York County, German Lutheran and Reformed settlers had come into the Seven Valleys area and established churches. The settlers were soon followed by ministers who organized congregations. At first the settlers were few and widely scattered. They had great faith that God was leading them, and the two denominations combined in almost every instance to erect shared suitable church buildings for the worship of God.

As time went on, the number of inhabitants increased. The few scattered churches no longer reached all the people, and the communities which were rather distant from the established churches planned houses of worship of their own.

On April 24, 1859 which was Easter Sunday, the people of the Neiman's community in Codorus Township felt the need to organize and build a church of their own. A small group of interested men and women organized a Sunday School in the old schoolhouse that stood just inside the gate to the cemetery, on ground that was on the farm of Mr. & Mrs. Jesse Schaefer, now the Violet Shaffer homestead farm. This was along the Patapsco Road, one of the main transportation arteries from York to Baltimore.

As the Sunday School grew the log schoolhouse became too small and classes were held in the woods of Mrs. and Mrs. Lewis S. Brenneman, the present site of the Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bupp's home. After about two years, steps were taken to organize and plan for a church building to house both congregations. The building was erected and dedicated on October 20, 1861. The building was named "Zion's Lutheran and Reformed Church"; each congregation had about fifteen members. The first Lutheran pastor was Rev. Peter Scheurer, the first Reformed congregation was Rev. William Vandersloot. The first Articles of Incorporation were formulated in 1870--in German. Many of the leading families of the congregation had first arrived in America in the 1740's--over a century and a quarter later they were still speaking and writing in their native tongue.

The original church building that was erected in 1861 became too small for the growing congregations and Sunday School and in the year 1882 extensive alterations were made practically rebuilding the original church. On August 11, 1894, the church bought a tract of land across the road from the old graveyard to use for burial purposes for a cost of \$300.00.

In 1909, the 50th anniversary celebration of the Sunday



School brought great rejoicing because of the success achieved during those fifty years. The records of the church from 1909-1924 have been lost and little is known about that period. However, we do know that during this time the picnic grounds were purchased and improved upon. The original bandstand cement work is dated May 27, 1921.

The church underwent several improvements completely changing the chancel and expanding the Sunday School area in 1937. The next ten years brought more growth to the congregation. In 1950 basement was excavated in order to house the primary department of the Sunday School which had outgrown its quarters--and to install indoor plumbing. The privies were turned into a utility shed. During the 1950's a yearly Vacation Bible School was held for the young people, a tradition that continues to this day.

The 1970's brought forth a time of change and reflection for the members of both congregations of Zion Shaffer's Union Church. The Lutheran congregation bade farewell to Kenneth Ehrhart, its pastor of 34 years who had followed his father's 33 year pastorate. This retirement precipitated the breakup of the Jefferson Lutheran Parish, which had consisted of Zion (Shaffer's); Trinity, Codorus; St. Jacob's (Stone) Brodbeck's; and Bethlehem (Steltz). The Reformed congregation had a shared ministry with Christ, Codorus; and St. Jacob's (Stone) Brodbeck's. As in the early years, both congregations combined to sustain a suitable place for the worship of God. In 1981, the two congregations were united, thus bringing about its current status as Zion (Shaffer's) **United** Lutheran Church. The merger was completed on Pentecost Sunday, 1981. The congregation's first full-time Pastor was the Reverend Clarence C. Moore.

The early years of merger brought great excitement as the united congregation experienced an exclusive, full-time ministry for the first time in one hundred twenty years. Attendance and financial support rose allowing the construction of a two-story addition onto the rear of the nave. This 1986 addition expanded the narthex, added second floor offices, and placed a modern kitchen in the basement.



On September 19, 2010 the congregation took its first vote on leaving the ELCA. At its 2010 Annual Meeting the congregation voted unanimously to affiliate with the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). On December 19, 2010, the congregation took its second vote "to disassociate with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to affiliate with the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ". The congregation was dismissed from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the Council of the Lower Susquehanna Synod

on February 26, 2011. Zion (Shaffer's) United Lutheran Church continues to be a member of LCMC.

Pastors of Zion (Shaffer's)

1861 - 1867 - + Frederick William Vandersloot - Reformed
1861 - 1876 - + Peter Scheurer - Lutheran
1867 - 1880 - + Jacob D. Zehring - Reformed
1876 - 1903 - + William H. Ketterman - Lutheran
1880 - 1883 - + Silas F. Laury - Reformed
1884 - 1900 - + Franklin A. Gauth - Reformed
1901 - 1915 - + Nathan W. Sechler - Reformed
1903 - 1934 - + William H. Ehrhart - Lutheran
1915 - 1919 - + John L. Guth - Reformed
1919 - 1920 - + Irwin S. Ditzler - Reformed
1920 - 1954 - + Paul D. Yoder - Reformed
1934 - 1969 - + Kenneth S. Ehrhart - Lutheran
1955 - 1971 - + George A. Heisey - Reformed
1969 - 1980 - William H. Beck - Lutheran
1972 - 1977 - + Glenn K. Flinchbaugh - Reformed
1977 - 1981 - + Thomas L. White - Reformed
1980 - 1980 - + Bonnie Seitz (Interim) - Lutheran
1981 - 1989 - + Clarence C. Moore
1989 - 2014 - J. Thomas Shelley
2014 - 2015 - Matthew H. Stillman (Interim)
2016 - 2017 - John W. "Jack" Dyson, Jr. (Interim)

+ of Blessed Memory and the Church Triumphant