

Enola Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church History

Research by: H. M. Hoover, June 6th, 1948

In the early history of The West Pennsylvania Synod of The Lutheran Church in America, there is a brief sketch of the beginnings of our Zion Lutheran Church. This sketch states that the first communion was held in 1803 and the congregation formally organized in 1804. It became a member of the first Lutheran Synod in America, which synod was organized by Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. He came to America in 1742 for the purpose of supervising the early Lutheran Congregations and to organize them into a synod. This first synod was called the ministerium because its members were the Lutheran ministers of the congregations. Our congregation withdrew its membership from the ministerium and became a member of the West Pennsylvania Synod in 1825 which was the year that synod was organized.

During the early years after 1804, our congregation had no church building of its own. Worship was first held in the homes of the members then in The Old Lantz School House, and later in the Observatory School House on the present cemetery grounds. Adjoining said Observatory School House the trustees of our congregation, Michael Livingston, Phillip Lantz and Peter Boyer purchased a small plot of ground from Jacob Kuntz in 1831. This plot was used as a graveyard. In 1834 our first church building was erected and was known as The Old Brick Church. The plot of ground on which it stood was purchased in March of 1834 for \$15.00, from Jacob Kuntz. Services were held in this old brick structure until 1927 in which year our present church was completed and dedicated on September 25. The Old Brick Church structure was sold at auction on Saturday October 29, 1927 for \$475.81.

The congregation did not have a pastor of its own until 1906. Until that time it was served by pastors who covered many congregations in one charge. The Reverend John Herbst, pastor of The Cumberland County Charge in 1804, first served our congregation as it worshipped in the homes of its members. Records of pastors are incomplete. In 1834, the year in which The Old Brick Church was erected, The Reverend Augustus H. Lockman, minister of the Harrisburg Charge East of The Susquehanna River, also served our congregation. Other pastors from 1836 to 1867 were: Reverends Height, Bubb, Staver, Utman, Herring, McHenry, Seidel, Felty, and Nicholas.

From 1867 to 1869 The Reverend Solomon Dasher served Zion Lutheran as one of several other congregations in his charge until 1872. In the year 1869 of that pastorate, the people of West Fairview who had been members of our congregation and who had worshipped with us, withdrew to form their own independent congregation and to build their own church building, and were known hence as St. Mark's Lutheran. However they were still served by this same Reverend Dasher and they were in his charge known as The Cumberland County Charge. Other pastors of record until 1906 were: Reverend Herren 1872-73, Reverend Dutt 1874-75, Reverend Irvine 1875-76, Reverend Tressler 1877, Reverend S.M. Henry 1881, Reverend Fulton 1882-83, Reverend Lingle 1884, Reverend Nichols 1890, Reverend Solomon Dasher returned in 1896 and served until 1901, Reverend W. A. Wolgemuth 1902 to 1906.

In 1906 Zion Lutheran of East Pennsboro Township withdrew from the West Fairview Charge by resolution adopted by our congregation on March 11, 1906. This was concurred in by a resolution of St. Mark's of West Fairview on March 31, 1906. On April 16, 1906 the Reverend T. T. Evertt D. D., President of West Pennsylvania Synod met the Joint Councils of Zion Lutheran of East Pennsboro and St. Marks of West Fairview and verbally sanctioned the withdrawal. This was verified in writing by him in his letter of April 17, 1906. The West Pennsylvania Synod agreed to this withdrawal by act of the Synod which met in York, May of 1906.

The Reverend W. A. Wolgemuth resigned the pastorate of the West Fairview and New Market Charge in 1906, and was called by our congregation as its first pastor. He served until 1910 and resided at 147 Summit Street which was the first parsonage and in which Reverend Wolgemuth married some of our present members.

On December 25, 1910, at a congregational meeting The Reverend M. S. Sharp was elected as the second pastor of our congregation. On January 9, 1911, he accepted the call. The record of his first council meeting was February 20, 1911. He served until 1933, the longest term of any of our pastors to this writing. During his pastorate we raised the funds and built the present church and parsonage.

In a congregational meeting on November 6, 1910, on motion by C. E. Weirick, it was agreed to build a parsonage on the North East Corner of the cemetery grounds (the present corner of Columbia Road and Altoona Avenue). These cemetery grounds had been purchased in 1906 from the Enola Realty Company for \$2500. However, at a special meeting of the church council on November 13, 1910, it was agreed unanimously to postpone building said proposed parsonage. Again on October 1, 1912 it was deferred until the spring of 1913. The erection of the parsonage was begun then, and completed in May of 1914. Our present parsonage is that ten-room house which was constructed that year. Part of the money was raised by activities of the Ladies' Aide and by loan of \$2200.

During the years 1920 to 1926 under the pastorate of Reverend M. S. Sharp, funds were raised for the erection of a new church building. In 1926 C. J. Lapley was engaged as architect. After much discussion, and after several changes, one of the plans submitted by Mr. Lapley was agreed upon. A contract for the building of the same was given to Jacob Foose for \$59,709.48. Mr. Lapley, architect, was paid 3% of this amount for his services on the project. Work on the new church began June of 1926. The corner stone was laid July 1926. Funds from many money-raising activities, gifts, and some early loans were sufficient to keep the work moving and to pay all bills. However, in order to complete the work it was necessary to make a loan from the Commonwealth Trust Company of Harrisburg. With this loan the council paid off the previous small loans and the Commonwealth Trust Company took a first mortgage on all church property including the cemetery properties. The final cost of the new church was \$82,000. The difference between this amount and the original \$59,709.48 in the contract was due to some minor changes in plans, and for pews, organ, carpet and other items of equipment not included in the building contract.

Between August 1, 1927 and 1936 the congregation paid \$2500 on the \$45,000 debt in addition to the interest at 5%. This left a balance of \$42,500 in 1936. Since this was in the midst of the depression our members were hard put to carry the burden. No payments on the principal were made and no interest was paid. As a result our debt in July of 1937 was \$42,500 plus \$5200 back interest or a total of \$47,700.

A special agreement was made with the bank to reduce the interest on this debt to 3%. However this agreement was to last only to June 30, 1941. By that time, through a special insurance plan on the lives of some of our members, the debt was reduced by \$6200. This left a balance of \$41,500 in 1941. We had also met interest payments at the new 3% rate out of moneys raised for the building fund.

Still we were unable to make any substantial payments on the principal, and the interest rate which had reverted to 5%, took most of the money raised. Our creditors, who were now various persons who had purchased participating certificates in our mortgage, agreed, through The Capital Bank and Trust Company of Harrisburg (formerly the Commonwealth Trust Company), to settle the \$41,500 indebtedness for 53% of this amount less the back accumulated interest or \$5200. This meant that we could settle the debt for \$19,239. This was in the summer of 1943. In November of 1943 we negotiated a loan from the Lemoyne Trust Company who agreed to pay our creditors and lift their mortgage certificates. This they did and they now held the mortgage against our properties but it was now only

\$20,000. The balance between the \$20,000 and the \$19,239 required was used to make small repairs and to paint the interior walls of the church. At this time, also, we had some money in the building fund which was used for repaying the persons who had advanced moneys on the insurance plan mentioned above. Some of these persons forgave the amounts due them. It was considered as a contribution to the cause, and was greatly appreciated. Pastors between 1932 and 1943 were Reverends Rice and Trostle.

Since November of 1943, under the pastorate of Reverend E. G. Colestock we have worked hard together and in those few years we have paid off the \$20,000 plus interest at 5%. Today, approximately 21 years after the dedication of this church building, we are debt-free and we give thanks to all the good people of our congregation and those of the community for their tireless efforts and generosity, and above all to our God who sustained us in our efforts.

Note:

Our Congregation was not chartered at its beginning in 1803. However, by law of the General Assembly, we had to incorporate and did so on September 4, 1883. In that Charter the name of our congregation is Zion's Lutheran Church of East Pennsboro Township. At the beginning of our history we were known as Zion Lutheran Church of East Pennsboro Township, Cumberland County, according to early church records and some deeds.

The name Evangelical as used with our church name today was not legally adopted at any time as far as can be learned. The Lutheran Church is Evangelical in nature of creed, so many church congregations have merely added the term by common adoption and for common usage.

In 2003 our congregation celebrated 200 years in existence.