

Clippings from the *Boyertown Area Times*, October 9, 1986

Trinity Lutheran, Bechtelsville, notes 100th anniversary

In 1886, three separate congregations, a Lutheran, a Reformed, and a Mennonite, laid the cornerstone for a "Union Church" to be shared by all three.

The land was received as a donation by Henry Geist, who was a Reformed church member on the Building Committee. In October of that year the basement was dedicated to be used for services until the sanctuary could be completed. Rev. J.J. Kline was appointed as Trinity's first minister. His first confirmation class was confirmed in November, 1887.

Following Kline's 30 year pastorate, Rev. Robert Ischinger was named pastor. He served from 1916 to 1920, when Rev. Wesley E. Wenner took the pulpit. His goal was the purchase and installment of a pipe organ. His dream was realized in 1923. Two years later an adjoining lot was purchased and the entire front of the sanctuary was renovated.

In 1926, George W. Fritch was named pastor at Trinity. He organized the church's first Lutheran Youth Society. Upon his abrupt death in 1938, he was succeeded by his son, George Jr., who initiated a Luther League for the youth at Trinity.

In 1947, under the pastorate of George B. Pifer, many physical improvements were made to the church. Also, services were changed from evenings to mornings, and Trinity's first student assistant pastor was named. Seminarian Richard Schaefer was later appointed summer supply pastor upon the death of Rev. Pifer in 1952, while a nearby resident, retired Lutheran minister, Rev. Henry Harms, performed official duties during the winter months.

Union dissolved

In December of 1953, the Niantic-Bechtelsville parish voted to install Richard Schaefer as pastor upon his graduation from seminary in May, 1954. Also in 1954, the first Boy Scout troop was organized at Trinity. Three years later, the Reformed congregation gave, as a gift to the Lutherans, their share of the grounds and building. In 1959, Trinity, Bechtelsville and Christ Lutheran, Niantic, voted to dissolve the two-church parish arrangement and to install separate pastors.

Donald B. Landis was named Trinity's minister in March of 1960. In June of that year, bids were opened for the construction of a new parish hall. Ground was broken in June

of the following year, and the facility was completed and dedicated in April of 1962.

Following the sudden death of Aaron Rohrbach in July, 1963, Warren and Thelma Yerger took over the position of church sextons, a position they serve to this day.

Pastor Landis left Trinity in January of 1965, and the committee in charge of finding his replacement met with a great deal of trouble due to the fact that the church had no parsonage. So, a lot on Franklin Street in Bechtelsville was purchased and a parsonage erected. Its Open House was held in December of 1966.

Supply pastor Carl Koppenhaver was replaced with a full-time minister, Rev. Paul A. Hirth, in 1965. Two years later, Trinity was one of six churches that became instrumental in the forming of a Golden Age Group for senior citizens in the area.

In 1969, Rev. Burlington Latshaw III was installed as pastor. The following year, all church indebtedness was paid.

During the destruction caused by Hurricane Agnes in July, 1972, Trinity members helped Wilkes-Barre residents by preparing and distributing food supplies in that area.

In September of 1974, Rev. John J. Deisinger began his ministry at Trinity. In the fall of 1976, Trinity recorded a large turnout for their first Confirmation Classes Reunion.

Bells toll for hostages

Between December, 1979 and January of 1981, the bells at the church tolled each day as a reminder of the American hostages being held in Iran. Trinity enjoyed a personal happiness at the release of the hostages; one of them was U.S.A.F. Colonel Thomas Schaefer, brother of former Trinity pastor Richard Schaefer.

A Youth Center was established in the basement of the parish hall in 1980. That same year, Trinity accepted its first pastoral intern, Robert Breon. The following year, John Kost became the second. Around this time a conference-call system was installed at the church to make possible telephoned worship services for shut-ins. In 1982, Trinity's third pastor intern, Richard A. Whitesel, was received.

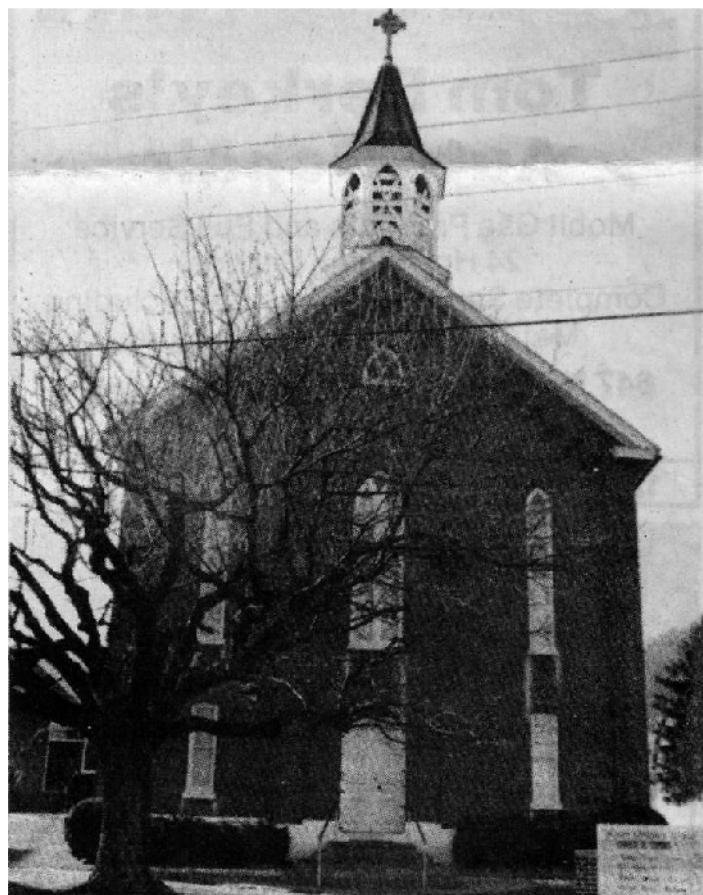
Pastor Deisinger resigned in November, 1983, and Rev. Jeffrey Bortz, then assistant pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Boyertown, served as Trinity's vice pastor.

In September of 1984, Rev. Wayne R. Kaufman was elected to the pastorship, where he continues to serve.

Trinity is especially proud of its contributions to scouting. Robert Eshbach served as Scouting Coordinator for 32 years. The local troop produced several Eagle Scouts including: Dennis Fronheiser, William A. Rohrbach, Robert C. Rohrbach, Russell Gheer, Scott Leister, and Timothy Schwager. Barry Leister is present scout leader.

Special Service

In celebration fo their 100th anniversary, a special Confirmation Class Reunion will be held October 12 at the church beginning a[t] 10:15 a.m.



Happy anniversary — The Trinity Lutheran Church, Bechtelsville, celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. Rev. Wayne R. Kaufman is pastor.

Submitted by [Betty](#).

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