



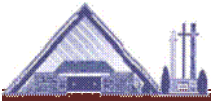
# OUR HISTORY AT ST. STEPHEN'S

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By Nelvin Yeakel, St. Stephen's Archivist

## ST. STEPHEN'S TIMELINE

- 1894 – 1896** In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this area of Bethlehem was known as Hottlesville. To gauge an interest in the residents receiving Christian instruction and guidance, George Wartman, Thomas Deibert and Reuben Jaxheimer canvassed the residents in the neighborhood.
- October 11, 1896** It was determined there was an interest in Christian education and the first Sunday School class was held in a private home at 1400 Center Street with 49 people in attendance. A collection of \$1.66 was taken.
- March 28, 1897** The Sunday School was so popular and so great was the interest in holding regular services, St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church was founded by 19 dedicated members. A charter was granted and construction began on a church building at the northeast corner of Center and Hillmond Streets. Shortly thereafter, Bethlehem incorporated Hottlesville into its borders and the church building became part of the expanded city.
- May 17, 1897** The cornerstone of the original church building was laid.
- October 17, 1897** The original church building was fully occupied for the first time. The original church building's main outline still remains today and the building is occupied by Batten Architects.
- 1912** With an expanding congregation and an eye on the future, the congregation purchased land for a future church building at the corner of Center Street and Washington Avenue for \$2,000.
- 1925** A parsonage was completed at the corner of Center Street and Washington Avenue for a cost of \$13,137. There was enough space remaining on the property for a new church building.
- 1960** After many years of planning, the congregation began a building fund campaign for the new church. However, because of the City of Bethlehem's plans to widen Washington Avenue, they had to abandon their original plan to build at the corner of Center Street and Washington Avenue. Instead, a new plot of land was purchased at the corner of Main Street and Washington Avenue.

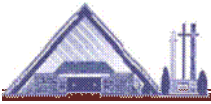


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- October 1961** On Reformation Sunday, the land was formally dedicated.
- October 1962** The ground breaking ceremony was held for the new building.
- October 1963** The cornerstone was laid for the new church.
- April 12, 1964** The building's dedication service was led by The Rev. Samuel Kidd of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the E.L.C.A.
- 1970** The first preschool program in Bethlehem was established at St. Stephen's with an enrollment of 22 students and a staff of two: Mrs. Doris Pieorg and Mrs. Betty Jane Sigley. After Mrs. Sigley's retirement in 1993, Mrs. Maria Bevan assumed the duties as Preschool Director and continues in that capacity today.
- May 1978** The Rev. Werner M. Koch was called to serve as the church's first Assistant Pastor. St. Stephen's was Pastor Koch's first call to service. Pastor Koch was promoted to Associate Pastor in 1981.
- March 13, 1988** Upon the retirement of Rev. Longacre after 29½ years of service, Rev. Koch became the sole Pastor at St. Stephen's, and continues in that capacity today.
- March 20, 1988** The congregation approved the sale of the parsonage and surrounding property at 1547 Center Street, the site of the original church building. The property was sold to Joseph DiGiacomo, Jr. for \$225,000. An endowment trust fund was established to preserve the money for the good of the congregation.
- January 12, 1996** A building renovation project was undertaken under the auspices of a Building/Renovation Committee, architect Wayne Batten, contractor Harold Blacker, and financial consultants Kairos and Associates. The project enlarged the narthex, completely renovated the worship area with new furnishings and air-conditioning, and enlarged the parking lot.
- October 13 & Nov 24, 1996** Two special Dedication Worship Services were held to celebrate the completion of the renovation. Guest preacher was the Rev. David Stroble of the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod of the E.L.C.A.
- 1998** The congregation held a surprise dinner and worship celebration honoring Pastor Koch on his 20<sup>th</sup> year of ordination and 20 years of service to St. Stephen's.



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- June-Sept 2001** Additional renovations were made in the lower level: new lighting, ceiling tiles, dividing curtains, new cabinet doors and air-conditioning was installed. A new furnace was installed and the upstairs back section of the building was air-conditioned.
- June 25 to July 3, 2006** A Youth Mission trip was undertaken to the Bahamas. In their seven day mission, six youth and three adults ministered to the very poorest areas of the islands.
- August 3-8, 2008** A second Youth Mission Trip sent thirteen youth and three adults to the "Fishtown" area of Philadelphia where they worked helped out at the Philabundance Food Bank, Jouney Home, North Broad Street Center, St. Vincent DePaul Thrift Store, and Youthworks Kids Club.
- October 5, 2008** In honor of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination and his 30 years of dedicated service to St. Stephen's, the congregation recognized Pastor Koch with a special worship service. Pastor Ray Hittinger was the guest preacher. After the service, a luncheon was held in the Fellowship Hall at which Pastor Koch was presented with very generous and thoughtful gifts: a written proclamation from the City proclaiming October 5 as "The Reverend Werner M. Koch Day" in the City of Bethlehem; an all-expense paid trip to Germany; and an all-expense paid trip to Green Bay, Wisconsin.
- July 29–Aug 2, 2012** Mission trip to Steubenville, OH, by eight youths and three adults.
- August 2012** A new building project was begun on the east side of the building, with Harold Blacker as the general contractor.
- A "Tranquility Garden" was created at the back entrance to the church by church member Jason Siegfried in fulfillment of his Eagle Scout project. Bricks were purchased by church members in financial support for the project. The garden was dedicated in memory of those who have died in Christ or are present with us today.
- March 2013** The new addition was completed consisting of an elevator, new offices for the Pastor, Secretary, and Preschool Director, and a unisex bathroom on the lower level.
- September 27, 2015** Dedication of the new maroon Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymnals was held during the worship service. The hymnals were dedicated in loving memory of Elsie W. Hamel.
- January 31, 2016** During the worship service, a special meeting was held at which the congregation voted to purchase a new Allen Organ model L-228. The organ was installed on May 3 and dedicated on May 8, 2016.