

St. Paul Lutheran Church of Zelenople

A Brief History

St. Paul Lutheran Church was organized September 12th, 1821 by a group of early settlers meeting in the home of George Henry Muller at "Benvenue", led by Bishop Johann C. G. Schweitzerbarth.

The Rev. Schweitzerbarth, the first resident minister of Zelenople, came here from Germany on June 5th, 1819. He was sent here by Dettmar Basse, founder of Zelenople, to establish and build a church in Zelenople. He was a young University graduate at the time.

Some forty Lutheran churches in Butler, Beaver, Lawrence, and Armstrong counties today trace their origin to Zelenople and St. Paul Church- the pioneer work of Rev. Schweitzerbarth. His pastorate comprised the years of 1820-1852.

Charter of incorporation of St. Paul Lutheran was in effect as of February 20th, 1822; by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania February 28th, 1823. A later date of incorporation was March 5th, 1907.

About five years after the founding of St. Paul Church, Philippe Passavant and his wife, Zelig (daughter of Dettmar Basse) donated land for a church (one acre) and cemetery (four acres). They also gave the stone and furnished much of the labor. The Church building contract was signed April 10th, 1826.

The original small church measured 46 feet in length and it has been said that St. Paul could be the "first Gothic church in America".

The Church parsonage was built in 1858 and the North and South wings added in 1907. The educational building was erected in 1960 and is now known as Strobel Hall. The Cemetery Association was formed in September 1910.

It is noted that William Alfred Passavant (1821-1894), youngest son of Philippe and Zelig Passavant (founders of St. Paul Church) was baptized and confirmed in this church. Dr. Passavant was a Lutheran pastor and founded more than 40 hospitals and institutions. A plaque in his memory is near the front of the church.

Pastor William Brewer's Bio

The current pastor, the Rev. William W. Brewer, Jr., came to St. Paul on August 1st, 1989. He is the 15th pastor to serve the church.

Pastor Brewer was born September 1943 in Erie, PA. He came to Wexford with his family as a child and graduated from North Allegheny High School in 1961.

Pastor's interest in music led him to Carnegie Melon University where he graduated with degrees in Music Performance and a Master's Degree in Education. He has written many anthems, including the Anniversary Hymn, "For the Many Years" for St. Paul Lutheran Church's 175th Anniversary in 1996.

In preparation for the ministry Pastor Brewer attended Gettysburg Seminary 1966-1970 and was ordained June 7, 1970. His first parish was St. Mark's, Jeannette, where he served four and a half years. That summer of 1970 he married his wife, Joy, of Allison Park.

Pastor's second parish was in the Leechburg-Vandergrift area for eight and a half years. His third call was to St. Paul in Carmichaels and St. Jacob's in Masontown, serving 6 years.

Pastor came to his present parish St. Paul, Zelienople in August 1989. The Brewers have three children; Gretchen, Kimberly, and Nathan.

American History and St. Paul Lutheran Church Timeline

1643 – Pennsylvania first settled by the Swedish

1681 – Pennsylvania chartered

1682 – First purchase of land from Indians

1776 – Declaration of Independence

1789 – George Washington inaugurated first U.S. President

1796 – First Settlers in Butler County

1802 – Zelienople founded by Dettmar Basse

1821 – St. Paul Church organized

1826 – Church cornerstone laid

1861 – American Civil War until 1865

1914 – World War I

1921 – 100th Anniversary of St. Paul Lutheran Church

1950 – Korean War until 1955

1961 – Vietnam War until 1975

1989 – Pastor Brewer became 15th pastor of St. Paul Church

1996 – 175th Anniversary of St. Paul Lutheran Church

2007 – You could be a member of our family and a part of history!!