MOUNT ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
1851- 2026

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175th

A History of
Mt. Zion Lutheran Church

A scene on a typical Sunday morning at Mt. Zion Lutheran will include a composite of many people from different backgrounds with a conclusion that not all are natives of York County. Many of our families today have lived in many areas of the country, thus, giving a different feeling from the usual, where in small rural churches members are born and bred in the same area.
This was not always the case.
In 1844, farmers in the area began having worship in their homes, inviting others, discussing options of forming a worship center for spiritual nourishment. During these worship opportunities. Martin, a Lutheran minister, came teaching prayer and giving Bible study. This process began the life of what is now Mt. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church. Today, there are still some members who are among those descendants of the families who came to the farms to hear of God's word. But, for the most part, the evolution of the congregation has brought many backgrounds to hear the Word of God.
Years following the initial Lutheran ministry by Rev. Martin, a Reformed minister visited the area with a similar purpose. Together with the Lutherans, they built a church which they shared. The cornerstone for this wooden structure was laid in 1851. In 1852, the Lutheran faction became a part of the West Pennsylvania Synod. This congregation shared Lutheran ministry with three other churches: Quickel's, Wolf's and Paradise (Jacobus). Along with Mt. Zion, these churches became Quickel's charge under the shepherding of the Rev. C.J. Deininger.

Drawing of the original wooden frame church

Pastor Deininger led worship services at each church, rotating accordingly. Pastor Deininger was known for statistician work, keeping record of all ministerial acts.
We are extremely thankful for his work as those records have assisted us through generations. He was indeed a cornerstone for the building of our congregation. He was pastor at Mt. Zion for 33 years, during which more than 200 people were added to our membership.
Deininger Road was named after him when the township asked the church to suggest a name for the road by the cemetery.

Rev. Constantine I. Deininger
1852-1885

The Rev. J. Henry Leeser succeeded Pastor Deininger and served Mt. Zion for five years. He was remembered as an exceptional catechist and preacher. During his pastorate, plans were discussed for a new church building which was to be of brick construction.

A temporary wooden tabernacle was constructed at the end of the cemetery on the present Deininger Road across from the entrance to the picnic grove. This wooden building was used for Sunday School and worship services until the new brick building was completed.

Rev. J. Henry Leeser
1885-1890

The Rev. Adam Stump succeeded Pastor Leeser on December 21, 1890. Being a native of York County, Pastor Stump was very familiar with the surrounding area. Before he came to Mt. Zion, he had left York to become a Home Missionary in North Platte, Nebraska, where he did Heroic work among the pioneers. In a 1953 article in the York Dispatch, his niece gave the report of his rugged experience on the Western frontier. Numbered among his personal friends was “Buffalo Bill” Cody who helped to finance the building of a church where Pastor Stump served.

Rev. Dr. Adam Stump
1890-1922

With the coming of Pastor Stump, a new church edifice of brick material was completed at a cost of $10,000 and paid in full at its completion. The bell in the belfry, manufactured in Baltimore, weighed 954 pounds. It was the largest in the county and was rung on Sunday mornings one hour prior to Sunday School and Worship. A cyclone damaged the northwest corner of the building in 1890 but was quickly repaired. Ten years before his death, Pastor Stump noticed that the four point parish system was a bit large for this area. After his departure on March 18, 1922, the four-church parish was divided into two with Quickel's and Mt. Zion staying together as one with worship services on a bi-weekly schedule.

The Rev. J.C. McCarney was called to serve the Quickel's charge parish. During his tenure, coal lights were replaced with gas lights, stained glass windows were placed, and our first electric organ was purchased. After electricity replaced gas, the interior of the church was redecorated. At the harvest, the congregation would have a wonderful display of fruit and vegetables in the church. The display was given to the pastor to help compensate for the low salary. During Pastor McCarney's pastorate this changed because he grew his own vegetables. Instead, the congregation began giving the display to the Tressler's Orphans Home in Loysville, PA, and later to the Children's Home of York. Ill health caused Pastor McCarney to resign in 1944.He is remembered by his sincere dedication and the work of his devoted wife.

Rev. J.C. McCarney
1922-1944

Rev. Emmanuel J. Hoover began his ministry at Mt. Zion in 1944. He was a graduate of Gettysburg College and received his Masters of Sacred Theology from Gettysburg Seminary in 1945. He received his Doctor of Sacred Theology from Temple University in 1951. During his tenure, membership was the highest ever at Mt. Zion. Weekly church bulletins, Christmas Eve and Easter Sunrise services began around this time. Dr. Hoover was instrumental in organizing the Cemetary Association with board members representing Mt. Zion UCC and Mt. Zion Lutheran, the present organ purchase and the use of choir gowns. Further remodeling of the Church was done to help facilitate the rapid church growth that was partly due to the major baby boom after World War II.

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel J Hoover 1944-58.

On January 1, 1956, Mt. Zion became a solo congregation, thus separating from Quickel's charge. Dr. Hoover then became the sole pastor at Mt. Zion. The Reformed Congregation (Mount Zion United Church of Christ) relocated to a new church on Ridgewood Road.

After 105 years, Lutheran worship services were conducted every Sunday. A parsonage was built on the grounds at the corner of Mt. Zion and Deininger Roads which served until 1974. In 1946, Dr. Hoover married Thelma Irene Arvin, a member of the congregation. It was the largest wedding ever at the church. In August 1958, Dr. Hoover resigned as Pastor. His aggessive leadership and moving messages are remembered by those who were fortunate to be touched by his work at Mt. Zion.

The Rev. Gerald Moorehead assumed the pastorate in November 1958. During his ministry, the church debt was greatly reduced and plans were discussed for a new church building. A memorial gift of a Paten and a Ciborium was dedicated for use at the Eucharist, and the singing of cantatas by the choir at both Easter and the Christmas seasons was again enjoyed by large congregations during his tenure. Pastor Moorehead resigned from the Mt. Zion ministry in 1961.

Rev. Gerald Moorehead 1958-61

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The Rev. Charles A. Snyder, Jr. assumed the pastorate in November 1962. Plans for a new church building were initiated. Ground was broken in 1964, the cornerstone was laid in 1965, and the dedication was held Jully 24, 1966.

Rev. Charles A. Snyder

1962-1986

Much was implemented during Pastor Snyder's twenty-four-year tenure. The church moved from the use of grape juice to wine as part of the elements at the Eucharist. Holy Communion went from quarterly to monthly. The Lutheran Church of America published a new hymnal in 1978, and Mt. Zion began using lay assistants during worship. Worship services were taped and sent to shut-in members of the congregation. Community services with Mt. Zion UCC and Pleasureville United Methodist started for Good Friday, Memorial Day and Thanksgiving. Adult choirs combined from each of the churches to help lead those services. Many fellowship groups were formed such as the Lutheran Church Women and the Sewing Bee. Pastor Snyder resigned from Mt. Zion in May 1986.

Before Pastor Snyder's resignation, through a major stewardship campaign, an acknowledgement was met realizing the need for an associate pastor. Through this Mt. Zion called The Rev. Bradford Wallace as their associate pastor April 1980. In addition to the regular pastoral duties, Pastor Wallace was instrumental in the re-formation of a strong youth ministry program. Two Sunday Services were implemented during his five-year tenure. He resigned his position in June,1985. Rev. C. Wayne Peterman became the next associate pastor when Pastor Snyder resigned in 1986. Pastor Peterman was a dear soul whose wife Dorothy did the children's sermon every Sunday and was the catalyst in finally moving the altar to a free-standing position.

Rev. Bradford Wallace
1980-1985

Rev. C. Wayne Peterman
1985-1986

In February 1987, The Rev. Henry E. Herbener began ministry at Mt. Zion. Pastor Herbener's tenure included many implementations pertaining to worship that aligned Mt. Zion with traditional Lutheran standards. In his thirteen years of tutelage, weekly communion at both services was completed, mid-week Advent services using Evening Prayer and regular Thursday services were scheduled. Pastor Herbener was the first to chant the Sunday liturgy on a regular basis. He also instituted monthly communion visitations to the shut-ins. The leadership of Pastor Herbener brought in field education students and interns from seminary, bringing new and innovative leadership as students were assisted in the learning process as workers in the wider church. Fellowship events like Senior Luncheon, children's activities and couples' group were implemented. A yearly pig roast began in 1991 as part of a congregational picnic. Pastor Herbener resigned January 2000.

Rev. Henry E. Herbener 1987-2000

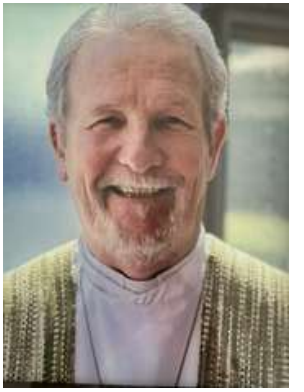
In March 2001, Pastor Brian McClinton was called to be Mt. Zion's pastor. Pastor McClinton was an intern and a youth director before his calling. In the early days of his ministry at Mt. Zion, one of his focus areas was youth ministry. The youth attended local, regional, and national events. Music was also one of the points of Pastor Brian's ministry. He added his unique musical abilities to worship each week, and the congregation was able to expand in its use of music in the worship services. Under Pastor Brian's time, groups were continued or created- i.e. Men's and Women's groups, Young Adult's group, Knitting Group, Children's Group, etc.- which helped to expand the life of the church. In the second half of his ministry, the Music Series was introduced. Not only did the McClinton family perform, but other groups came throughout the year to perform community concerts. Groups like the Hershey Handbell Ensemble, folk music, gospel groups came to share their musical talent with the community. A food pantry was also developed in the last years of Pastor Brian's ministry. This food pantry started off small but allowed the church to service the community even during the pandemic.

Rev. Brian A. McClinton
2001-2023

At the beginning of Pastor Brian's ministry, Sister Megan didn't regularly attend Mt. Zion. She was playing organ for other congregations. As Sister Megan decided to leave those other congregations, she began to be involved more in Mt. Zion. She worked on the Christian Education Committee and was the substitute organist when she was needed. Sister Megan also spearheaded the creation of a Bell Choir at Mt. Zion. When Susan Hoffheins decided to retire from the Ministry of Music position, Sister Megan stepped in. She played the organ weekly. She directed the Bell Choir and the Senior Choir, and she worked with Pastor to select music for services. Shortly after this, Sister Megan discerned her desire to be a Deaconess, and she began to work through the process. When she finished and was ordained a Deaconess, Mt. Zion voted to call her as a ministry partner. Sister Megan then assisted Pastor Brian at Christ Lutheran Starview when it became a partner congregation with Mt. Zion.

Pastor Brian and Sister Megan worked together in ministry within Mt. Zion. Sister Megan was ordained just a few weeks before the COVID Pandemic. Together they worked to keep religious activities flowing during that year as we adapted and emerged from the pandemic. Pastor Brian and Sister Megan moved on from ministry at Mt. Zion in March of 2023.

Pastor Robert “Bob” Burkhart began his ministry with Mt. Zion in May 2023 as an Intentional Interim. Pastor Bob’s role was to guide Mt. Zion through the pathway to searching for a new pastor. He organized events where Mt. Zion could look back on who it was and who it wanted to be in the future. He began a weekly Bible study group for the study of the Gospel with texts by his favorite author, William Barclay. Pastor Bob was able to pastor the church until we were able to call a new pastor to Mt. Zion.



Rev. Robert Burkhart
2023-2025

Rev. Debbie Mahady
2025 -

Pastor Debbie Mahady was called in November 2025 ending the long run of gifted and long-term male pastors serving Mt. Zion. She brings a unique female perspective of both nurture and spirituality. Bible study on the upcoming Sunday’s Gospel has continued under her spiritual leadership. Committees have become more active, and the food pantry remains a priority as well as other outreach activities.

Under her leadership, a monthly “Fiber Group” has been established, which has been tasked with crafting crotched bunnies for the shut-ins for Easter. The music ministry has continued with the Hershey Handbell Choir and hosting a Polka Mass. Pastor Debbie initiated several opportunities for worship and fellowship with our neighbors at Mt. Zion UCC over the last several months and hopes to keep us engaged in inter-denominational dialogue and community building. She has encouraged our work in separating out the house and the cemetery from the church deed, and in addressing the costly building repairs to our church building. Concurrently, she supports our discernment for the future and prays often for our courage to move according to God’s direction, even if that means literally moving to a new location. Her prayer is for God to lead us to a suitable place where we can live out our mission to spread the Gospel in accordance with God’s plan by ministering to the spiritual and human needs of all people through our gifts, talents, and our love in Jesus Christ.

The large stained-glass window in the nave was presented by Mrs. Emma Dietz to the 1890 building. The placement of this beautiful window in the nave was made possible largely through the efforts of Councilwoman Beth Myers who spent many hours planning for its placement. Beth was also untiring in her efforts to have small pieces of the other stained-glass windows from the 1880 church made into jewelry which was proudly worn by many members of Mt Zion. Several pieces are in the display case to the rear of the sanctuary, along with other artifacts from the church through the years.

In 2001, Mt Zion was blessed with the gift of two sculptures by our member the talented Norman L. Baughman. When Norm retired from the construction business, he took up sculpting as a hobby. These sculptures grace our narthex.

The bell which hung in the belfry of the 1880 building was placed on brick mounting in front of the current building, dedicated on Nov. 6, 1977, as a memorial to all members who had worshipped at Mt Zion and the flowers blooming around the base are a living memorial to Beth Myers who at the early age of 26 was called to serve our Lord in Heaven.

In Memory -
Susan (Sue) Hoffheins served as organist and choir director from 1976 – 2014 (and only missed one service in those 38 years!) She was a gifted musician and teacher. The adult choir fondly remembers her warm-ups and her soft spot for Hal Hopson's music.

The Special Blessing of Long Time Members

Joan Brenner
Leroy Hauer
Neil Hess
Dudley Fink
Lou Ann Leibensperger
Joseph Bruggeman
Holly Myers
Kathy Crone Eberly
Norma Jean Seigman
Dean Seigman, Jr.
Karen Shermeyer Healey
Dean Seigman, Jr.
Roy Brenner

Mount Zion began in 1851 with a membership of twelve. The years have seen many changes and the future is yet to be determined but the mission remains the same: To spread the Gospel in accordance with God's plan by ministering to the spiritual and human needs of all people through our gifts, talents and our love in Jesus Christ.

175th Anniversary Committee

Kathie Boop
Pat Brame
Terese Euculano
Kathy Gable
Ellen Gibb
Holly Mitchell
Kollene Stauffer
Tom & Carol Trainor
Susan Daugherty
Beth Hollingworth
Marilyn Lesser
Jessica Nolt
Cheyanna Snyder

Mount Zion Lutheran Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Debbie Mahady
Sexton: Rod Robles
Administrative Assistant: Kathy Gable
Treasurer: Kathy Swords
Financial Secretary: Brian Hinderer