

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Transition Team Report

The History

⁸*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* ¹⁰*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 2: 8-10

The arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice.

Dr. Martin Luther King

St. Paul the Apostle

St. Paul the Apostle originally known as **Saul of Tarsus** was an apostle (though not one of the Twelve Apostles) who taught the gospel of Christ to the first-century world. He is generally considered one of the most important figures of the Apostolic Age. In the mid-30s to the mid-50s, he founded several churches in Asia Minor and Europe. Paul used his status as both a Jew and a Roman citizen to advantage in his ministry to both Jewish and Roman audiences.

According to writings in the New Testament Paul, who was known as Saul early on, was dedicated to the persecution of the early disciples of Jesus in the area of Jerusalem. In the narrative of the book of Acts, while Paul was traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus on a mission to "bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem", the resurrected Jesus appeared to him in a great light. He was struck blind, but after three days his sight was restored by Ananias of Damascus, and Paul began to preach that Jesus of Nazareth is the Jewish Messiah and the Son of God. Approximately half of the book of Acts deals with Paul's life and works.

Fourteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament have traditionally been attributed to Paul. Seven of the epistles are undisputed by scholars as being authentic, with varying degrees of argument about the remainder. The authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, already doubted as Pauline in the 2nd and 3rd centuries but almost unquestioningly accepted from the 5th to the 16th centuries, is now almost universally rejected by scholars. The other six are believed by some scholars to have come from followers writing in his name, using material from Paul's surviving letters and letters written by him that no longer survive. Other scholars argue that the idea of a pseudonymous author for the disputed epistles raises many problems.

Today, Paul's epistles continue to be vital roots of the theology, worship, and pastoral life in the Roman and Protestant traditions of the West, as well as the Orthodox traditions of the East. Among that of many other apostles and missionaries involved in the spread of the Christian faith,

Paul's influence on Christian thought and practice has been characterized as being as "profound as it is pervasive". Augustine of Hippo developed Paul's idea that salvation is based on faith and not "works of the law". Martin Luther's interpretation of Paul's writings influenced Luther's doctrine of sola fide [1].

Martin Luther

Martin Luther (10 November 1483 – 18 February 1546) was a German friar, Catholic priest, professor of theology and seminal figure of the 16th-century movement in Christianity known later as the Protestant Reformation.^[2] Initially an Augustinian friar, Luther came to reject several teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. He strongly disputed the claim that freedom from God's punishment for sin could be purchased with money. He confronted indulgence salesman Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar, with his *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517. His refusal to retract all of his writings at the demand of Pope Leo X in 1520 and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521 resulted in his excommunication by the Pope and condemnation as an outlaw by the Emperor.

Luther taught that salvation and subsequently eternity in heaven is not earned by good deeds but is received only as a free gift of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ as redeemer from sin and subsequently eternity in Hell. His theology challenged the authority of the Pope by teaching that the Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge from God and opposed sacerdotalism by considering all baptized Christians to be a holy priesthood. Those who identify with these, and all of Luther's wider teachings, are called Lutherans even though Luther insisted on *Christian* as the only acceptable name for individuals who professed Christ.

His translation of the Bible into the vernacular (instead of Latin) made it more accessible, which had a tremendous impact on the church and on German culture. It fostered the development of a standard version of the German language, added several principles to the art of translation,^[5] and influenced the writing of an English translation, the Tyndale Bible.^[6] His hymns influenced the development of singing in churches.^[7] His marriage to Katharina von Bora set a model for the practice of clerical marriage, allowing Protestant priests to marry.

From 1510 to 1520, Luther lectured on the Psalms, the books of Hebrews, Romans, and Galatians. As he studied these portions of the Bible, he came to view the use of terms such as penance and righteousness by the Catholic Church in new ways. He became convinced that the church was corrupt in its ways and had lost sight of what he saw as several of the central truths of Christianity. The most important for Luther was the doctrine of justification – God's act of declaring a sinner righteous – by faith alone through God's grace. He began to teach that salvation or redemption is a gift of God's grace, attainable only through faith in Jesus as the Messiah. "This one and firm rock, which we call the doctrine of justification," he wrote, "is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, which comprehends the understanding of all godliness."

Luther came to understand justification as entirely the work of God. This teaching by Luther was clearly expressed in his 1525 publication *On the Bondage of the Will*, which was written in response to *On Free Will* by Desiderius Erasmus (1524). Luther based his position on Predestination on St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians 2:8–10. Against the teaching of his day that

the righteous acts of believers are performed in *cooperation* with God, Luther wrote that Christians receive such righteousness entirely from outside themselves; that righteousness not only comes from Christ but actually *is* the righteousness of Christ, imputed to Christians (rather than infused into them) through faith.^[43] "That is why faith alone makes someone just and fulfills the law," he wrote. "Faith is that which brings the Holy Spirit through the merits of Christ."^[44] Faith, for Luther, was a gift from God; the experience of being justified by faith was "as though I had been born again." His entry into Paradise, no less, was a discovery about "the righteousness of God" – a discovery that "the just person" of whom the Bible speaks (as in Romans 1:17) lives by faith. He explained his concept of "justification" in the Smalcald Articles:

The first and chief article is this: Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Romans 3:24–25). He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), and God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). All have sinned and are justified freely, without their own works and merits, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood (Romans 3:23–25). This is necessary to believe. This cannot be otherwise acquired or grasped by any work, law or merit. Therefore, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us ... Nothing of this article can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth and everything else falls (Mark 13:31).

Luther's rediscovery of "Christ and His salvation" was the first of two points that became the foundation for the Reformation. His railing against the sale of indulgences was based on it [2].

The Reformation

The **Protestant Reformation**, often referred to simply as **the Reformation**, was the schism within Western Christianity initiated by Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli and other early Protestant Reformers, lasting from 1517 until 1648.

Although there had been significant earlier attempts to reform the Roman Catholic Church before Luther—such as those of Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, and Jan Hus—it is Martin Luther who is widely acknowledged to have started the Reformation with his 1517 work *The Ninety-Five Theses*. Luther began by criticizing the selling of indulgences, insisting that the pope had no authority over purgatory and that the Catholic doctrine of the merits of the saints had no foundation in the gospel. The attacks widened to cover many of the doctrines and devotional Catholic practices. The new movement within Germany diversified almost immediately, and other reform impulses arose independently of Luther. The largest groupings were the Lutherans and Calvinists (or Reformed). Lutheran churches were founded mostly in Germany, the Baltics and Scandinavia, while Reformed ones were founded in France, Switzerland, Hungary, the Netherlands and Scotland. The new movement influenced the Church of England decisively after 1547 under Edward VI and Elizabeth I, although the national church had been made independent under Henry VIII in the early 1530s for political rather than religious reasons. There were also reformation movements throughout continental Europe known as the Radical Reformation which gave rise to the Anabaptist, Moravian, and other Pietistic movements.^[3]

Although the core motivation behind these changes was theological, many other factors played a part, including the rise of nationalism, the Western Schism which eroded people's faith in the

Papacy, the corruption of the Curia, and the new learning of the Renaissance which questioned much traditional thought. On a technological level the spread of the printing press provided the means for the rapid dissemination of religious materials in the vernacular.

The Roman Catholic Church responded with a Counter-Reformation initiated by the Council of Trent. Much work in battling Protestantism was done by the well-organized new order of the Jesuits. In general, Northern Europe, with the exception of most of Ireland, came under the influence of Protestantism. Southern Europe remained Roman Catholic, while Central Europe was a site of a fierce conflict, culminating in the Thirty Years' War, which left it massively devastated [3].

The Thirty Years War

The **Thirty Years' War** was a series of wars in Central Europe between 1618–1648. It was one of the most destructive conflicts in European history, and one of the longest.

Initially a war between Protestant and Catholic states in the fragmenting Holy Roman Empire, it gradually developed into a more general conflict involving most of the great powers of Europe, becoming less about religion and more a continuation of the France–Habsburg rivalry for European political pre-eminence.^[17]

The Thirty Years' War saw the devastation of entire regions, with famine and disease significantly decreasing the population of the German and Italian states, the Kingdom of Bohemia, and the Low Countries. The war also bankrupted most of the combatant powers. Both mercenaries and soldiers in armies were expected to fund themselves by looting or extorting tribute, which imposed severe hardships on the inhabitants of occupied territories.

The Thirty Years' War ended with the treaties of Osnabrück and Münster, part of the wider Peace of Westphalia [4].

The German American Emigration to Pennsylvania

German Americans are Americans who are of German descent. They comprise about 50 million people, making them the largest self-reported ancestry group ahead of Irish Americans, African Americans and English Americans, although English Americans more than likely form the largest ancestry group in the U.S. due to Americans primarily of English ancestry identifying as simply American or with an ancestry group more recent in their family. They comprise about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the German diaspora in the world.

The first English settlers arrived at Jamestown, Virginia in 1607, and were accompanied by the first German American, Dr. Johannes Fleischer. He was followed in 1608 by five glassmakers and three carpenters or house builders. The first permanent German settlement in what became the United States was Germantown, Pennsylvania, founded near Philadelphia on October 6, 1683.

None of the German states had American colonies. In the 1670s the first significant groups of German immigrants arrived in the British colonies, settling primarily in New York and

Pennsylvania. Immigration continued in very large numbers during the 19th century, with eight million arrivals from Germany. They were pulled by the attractions of land and religious freedom, and pushed out of Europe by shortages of land and religious or political oppression. Many arrived seeking religious or political freedom, others for economic opportunities greater than those in Europe, and others for the chance to start fresh in the New World. The arrivals before 1850 were mostly farmers who sought out the most productive land, where their intensive farming techniques would pay off. After 1840, many came to cities, where "Germania"—German-speaking districts—soon emerged.

Large numbers of Germans migrated from the 1680s to 1760s, with Pennsylvania the favored destination. They migrated to America for a variety of reasons. *Push factors* involved worsening opportunities for farm ownership in central Europe, persecution of some religious groups, and military conscription; *pull factors* were better economic conditions, especially the opportunity to own land, and religious freedom. Often immigrants paid for their passage by selling their labor for a period of years as indentured servants.

Large sections of Pennsylvania and upstate New York attracted Germans. Most were Lutheran or German Reformed; many belonged to small religious sects such as the Moravians and Mennonites. German Catholics did not arrive in number until after the war of 1812.

German Americans established the first kindergartens in the United States, introduced the Christmas tree tradition, and originated popular American foods such as hot dogs and hamburgers. Like many other immigrants that came to the United States, an overwhelming number of people of German or partial German descent have essentially become Americanized.

German American celebrations are held throughout the country, one of the most well-known being the German-American Steuben Parade in New York City, held every third Saturday in September. Also traditional Oktoberfest celebrations and the German-American Day are popular festivities. There are major annual events in Chicago, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and other cities.

The tide of German immigration to Pennsylvania swelled between 1725 and 1775, with immigrants arriving as redemptioners or indentured servants. By 1775, Germans constituted about one-third of the population of the state. German farmers were renowned for their highly productive animal husbandry and agricultural practices. Politically, they were generally inactive until 1740, when they joined a Quaker-led coalition that took control of the legislature, which later supported the American Revolution.

The Germans, comprising Lutherans, Reformed, Mennonites, Amish, and other sects, developed a rich religious life with a strong musical culture. Collectively, they came to be known as the Pennsylvania Dutch (from *Deutsch*). Etymologically, the word Dutch originates from the Old High German word "diutisc" (from "diot" "people"), referring to the Germanic "language of the people" as opposed to Latin, the language of the learned. Only later did the word come to refer to the people who spoke the language. From names in the 1790 U.S. census, historians estimate Germans constituted nearly 9% of the white population in the United States [5].

New Hanover Lutheran Church

The beginning of the New Hanover Lutheran Church goes back to a little band of Germans who settled in New Hanover, PA more than 290 years ago. From 1694 – 1700 many Lutherans, largely from the Palatinate region of Germany, came to the New World to escape religious persecution. Most of these Lutherans upon reaching the New World settled in Pennsylvania. Many of the new arrivals made their way up the Schuylkill River Valley and settled in an area which they named “New Hanover” in honor of the city and province of Hannover, Germany, from which many of them had come. These settlers were for the most part devout Christians. Most of them had sought the shores of the New World for the sake of religious freedom.

About the same time, Daniel Falckner, a German theological student, came to America as an agent for the Frankford Land Company. In the course of surveying, selling land to new comers and promoting the colonization of the land between the Schuylkill River and the present Pennsburg, Falckner came into close contact with these new settlers. Falckner, who had been ordained as a minister of the Gospel while on a visit to Germany shortly before 1700, ministered with Word and the Sacraments to these scattered Lutherans and organized them into a congregation. It was not long before the first house of worship was erected.

One of the most trying experiences of the settlers was coping with the Indians. Most of their relationships with the Red Men were friendly, but occasionally the settlers were compelled to endure the wrath of natives whose ordered lives were interrupted by the persistent advance of the settlers. There is still in existence a petition pertaining to threat. It follows in the style of the original:

“To His Excellency Patrick Gordon Esqr. Governor General in Chie(f) Over the Province of Pensilvania And the Territoris Belonging Benbrenors Township and the Advacences Belonging May ye 10th 1720

We think It fit to Address your excellency for Relief for your Excellency must know That we have Sufered and Is like to Sufer By the Ingians they have fell upon ye Back Inhabitators about Falckner Swamp & New Goshahopin Therefore We the humble Petitioners With our poor Wives and Children Do humbly Beg of your Excellency to Take It into Consideration And Relieve us the Petitioners hereof Whose Lives Lie at Stake With us and our poor Wives and Children that Is more to us than Life Therefore We the humble Petitioners hereof Do Desire An Answer from our Excellency By ye Bearor With Speed So no More at present from your poor Afflicted People Whose names are here Subscribed (A list of sixty names follows... all men)”

A second petition was written eight years later. It is very similar in content and bears the name of Rev. Henckel among the signers.

Early accounts tell us that worshippers came to church at New Hanover from miles around. Some were known to start for services on Saturday night and arrive about ten the next morning. Even on such a peaceful mission as attending church, the rifle was a constant companion. Though perhaps seldom called into use, its presence discouraged any attacks along the way. Chief among their hardships were those imposed by the elements. When services were held there were few

hindrances other than sickness that could discourage attendance by the faithful. A heartwarming sight pictured by the historians is a group of worshippers walking barefoot to worship who, when in sight of the church, would put on their shoes... a practice intended to conserve shoe leather!

The regular pastor, John Christian Schultze, went to Europe in the fall of 1733 with the delegates, Weissiger and Schoener, from the Providence and Philadelphia congregations to seek a pastor for the New Hanover congregation. Rev. Schultze remained in Germany.

Ten years elapsed between the first petition to Halle, Germany, for a minister to serve the three United Congregations, and the date when that request was granted. Halle was the center from which missionaries were sent to establish mission congregations in the New World. The youthful Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, born in Einbeck, Hannover, Germany, was presented with the call and after careful thought set sail for America.

Muhlenberg arrived in Philadelphia on November 25, 1742. His destination was the United Congregations, New Hanover, Providence, and Philadelphia. The call he carried included the following provisions:

1. Muhlenberg was to go to Pennsylvania for three years on trial.
2. He was to receive his travelling expenses.
3. Expenses and salary were to be paid out of funds collected by Dr. Ziegehagen of London.
4. The official call was to be extended to him in London.

Arriving late in the afternoon in Philadelphia, Muhlenberg at once set out for New Hanover. He was informed by the proprietor of a local hostelry that the congregation had already engaged a certain N. Schmidt as minister and that his trip probably would be in vain. A horse was procured as well as a travelling companion, Philip Brandt, who was to leave that evening for New Hanover. The two arrived at their destination late in the evening of November 26. The next day, Saturday, Muhlenberg called together some of the Church Council and presented them his credentials and the call which they had sent to Germany. Would the church have two pastors! Muhlenberg was adamant. It was decided that he should preach the following day.

His initial sermon was preached on the First Sunday in Advent, November 28, 1742. This was the first formal sermon that Muhlenberg preached in America. For his text he chose II Corinthians 5:19, 20. Following the service, he presented his credentials to the congregation. There was a perceptible joy among the members; he was immediately accepted by the congregation. The following week, Muhlenberg returned to Philadelphia to preach on December 5, 1742.

He was received at Trappe the next week. Thus did Henry Muhlenberg become the pastor of the three United Lutheran Congregations.

Rev. Muhlenberg did not return to New Hanover until Christmas. He administered the Lords' Supper for the first time at the Festival Service. The same evening he met with the council and entered into a formal agreement with them as a lawfully ordained minister of the Gospel.

The first Lutheran Synod in America was organized August 15, 1748, in Philadelphia. Pastor Muhlenberg became the first president. The New Hanover Congregation was prominently at this first meeting and through the years was a faithful member of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania.

On five different occasions during the early years of the Synod's life, the New Hanover Church has served as host to the assembly. The first meeting of the Synod held in this church was June 16-18, 1754, before the present building was erected. Thirteen delegates were present. Again on November 6 & 7, 1768, the Synod met here to share in the dedicatory services of the new church built in 1767. The Ministerium met at New Hanover during two successive difficult years of the Revolutionary War. These meetings were held May 25, 1777, and October 4-6, 1778. At this latter meeting, a significant action was taken – the first constitution of any Lutheran Synod in America was adopted. Again in June 19-22, 1791, the Synod met at New Hanover for the last time. The significance of this meeting was the presentation of a memorial to the Synod asking that lay delegates be “accorded a seat and vote in every meeting of the Ministerium.” The Synod decided to grant this right. This important action changed the whole form and constitution of the body to a free representative body of the entire church.

A congregational meeting was held on May 29, 1765, in the church at New Hanover at which time the constitution drawn by Rev. Muhlenberg was presented to the members and adopted by them. That same year, the congregation elected Matthias Hollenbach, Adam, Wartman, Matthias Reichard and Tobias Juerger as overseers in the erection of the proposed new church building.

For eleven years, the congregation was served by John Ludwig Voigt, a Halle graduate. He came to this church in December 1765 from the Barren Hill pastorate. The present church building was erected during this period. The stone church was begun in 1767 and completed in time for the dedication service on November 6, 1768. This was considered of sufficient importance to have the Synod meet at New Hanover and to take part in the service.

The invitation to the Synod was signed by the pastor and the following persons: Michael Weygel, Adam Wartman, Georger Burkhart, George Beck, Adam Kurtz, Ludwig Bickel, Moses Binder, Valentin Stigler, Casimir Schweinhard, Jacob Kop, Conrad Gilbert, and Johannes Schweinhard. It read as follows:

“Honorable President and Members of the Ministerium Reverendum of the United Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in Pennsylvania, etc.”

“The building of a new church, begun by the congregation of New Hanover, in the name and reliance upon the assistance of Him who can do more than we ask and understand, has, through the strength of the omnipotent, been accomplished with such desired progress that we will soon see the completion. Hallelujah...”

For the accomplishing of so exceedingly important a purpose, we extend our most obedient request to the Reverend Ministerium, to consecrate our newly built church to the service of Immanuel by prayer, intercession and thanksgiving, and to bring into it, by the proclamation of the saving doctrine of Jesus Christ, glowing coal to enkindle a fire that may burn with fervor and

blessed devotion, in our hearts, as well as in the hearts of our posterity. (The writer then suggests the XXIII Sunday after trinity, November 6 as the proper time.

“With readiness and the offering of all possible love, we who sign this remain, Honourable Paraeses and Members of the Reverend Ministerium.”

Your most obedient

Lewis Voigt

New Hanover

September 10, 1768

The dedication service was held as planned. People came from far and near. The Master Builder, Michael Stoflet, and the schoolmaster who carried the keys to the building, led the procession to the church. Four deacons followed carrying the sacred vessels. In the procession were the synodical delegates, elders from the local congregation and from Providence, together with representatives from the congregations in Philadelphia, Germantown, barren Hill, Lancaster, Reading, Tulpehocken, Richmont, Weidental, Earltown, Warwick, Macunshy, Upper Milfont, Saccum, Jordan, Heidelberg, Peikstown, and others.

Muhlenberg offered the first motto for the new church. It was Luke 10:5,6 “And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house, and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.” Other mottos were suggested by ministers who participated in the service.

Rev. Jacob Miller studied for the ministry in Philadelphia and was called to become pastor at Falckner Swamp (New Hanover) Goshenhoppen, Boyer’s (apparently Boyertown) and Hill Church in 1809. He served the church for twenty years. From here he went to Trinity Church, Reading. It is through the work of Pastor Miller that the church at New Hanover considers St. John’s Boyertown, a daughter congregation.

A brother of Pastor Miller, Rev. Conrad Miller, succeeded him as pastor of the New Hanover parish which now included Boyertown, Hill, Sassaman’s, and Heeler’s. Rev. Conrad Miller served as President of the Synod from 1841-1844. His pastorate at New Hanover was terminated by death. He and Dr. J.J. Kline are the only pastors known to be buried in the church cemetery. His grave and monument are located just to the rear of the church.

In 1820, a council resolution specified that a collection was to be taken at every service held in the church except at the harvest festival, days of prayer and fasting, at preparatory services, and at funerals held on weekdays. On April 22, 1826, after public notice from the pulpit, the congregation met in the schoolhouse to take action on proposed repairs to the church. It was resolved:

1. That the brick be taken out of the church and a floor laid.
2. That the windows be changed

3. That the church be painted, new doors put in and other improvements made.

From 1853-1857, the Rev Nathan Jaeger was pastor of the congregation. On March 12, 1853, it was decided that he be permitted to preach in the English language occasionally. At a congregational meeting on October 15, 1852, it was decided by a vote of 33 to 1 that one-half of the church woodland and the field adjoining it should be sold. The sum realized from the sale was to be used to erect a house as the residence of the schoolmaster or organist. Matthias Kurtz was elected unanimously by the council on June 18, 1854, to be master builder for the new residence.

The last pastor to serve the congregation who was born in Germany was Rev Henry Wendt. He entered the ministry in 1851 and first came to America as a missionary from the institution at Basle to serve in Texas. In 1858, he moved to Pennsylvania and assumed charge of the New Hanover parish, still consisting of New Hanover, Keeler's, Boyertown, Hill Church and Sassamansville. The Rev. Conrad Miller, the Rev Nathan Jaeger and the Rev Henry Wendt were also the first three pastors of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Sassamansville and this is where our recent history begins [6].

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Henry Sassaman, a German emigrant of the Reformed faith, arrived in Philadelphia in 1773. First belonging to the Faulkner-Swamp congregation, at the age of 85, he joined forces with leaders in the process of forming the Niantic congregation which would be closer to his home.

In the spring of 1836 after a decision to build a church, plans were made to select pastors for the Lutheran and Reformed congregations that were to worship in the new building. During this selection process, a disagreement arose within the Reformed congregation. Rev. Lewis Herman, the candidate Henry Sassaman supported was defeated and Mr. Sassaman stated he would provide a church for Rev. Herman.

Since Henry Sassaman owned land in Douglass (now known as Sassamansville) he chose to build the church at the intersection of Sassamansville and Hoffmansville Roads. The structure was begun in May of 1837 and the cornerstone was laid on June 20, 1837. The church, costing about \$8,000 to build, was utilized by both the Reformed and Lutheran denominations, and became known as Sassaman's Church. Mr. Sassaman's relationship with the Lutheran congregation was entirely self-limited to simply permitting them the right to use the building he erected. Later in the year, Rev. Conrad Miller was chosen to serve as the first Pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran congregation. At this time St. Paul's was annexed to the Swamp or New Hanover Lutheran parish, composed of St. Paul's of Boyertown, Hill Church, and Keeler's (now St. Luke's, Obelisk) congregations.

The Rev. Miller served from 1837, the "cradle days" of the congregation, to 1852, when he died of typhus at the age of fifty four. He was born in Upper Hanover Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on March 17, 1796. He studied with his brother, Dr. Jacob Miller, and then pastor of the Swamp charge. He was examined at the Synod meeting held in 1818, received a license and was ordained in 1820. His first parish was Amityville, Longswamp and Hill Church.

The Rev. Nathan Jaeger served St. Paul's from May 5, 1853, to 1857, when he moved to Bethlehem. He died seven years afterward as a result of a traffic accident. He was born in Bucks County on March 20, 1830, received his training in the Preparatory Department of Pennsylvania College, Gettysburg, and then studied for the ministry under the Rev. J.P. Hecht in Easton, Pennsylvania. He married the daughter of his predecessor, Pastor Conrad Miller, and had a large family. In the old St. Paul's Register is a report of interest that "he was a good preacher, and an excellent catechist," but while he was at New Hanover, "misunderstandings arose between him and his people which were of a serious nature."

The Rev. Henry Wendt was the third pastor in succession. He served the congregation from 1858 to the close of 1862 or beginning of 1863 when he became superintendent of the Germantown Orphans' Home in Germantown, Pennsylvania. He was a native of Germany. He entered the ministry in 1851 and came to America as a missionary from the institution of Basle to serve in Texas. In 1858 he came to Pennsylvania and assumed charge of the New Hanover parish, still consisting of Boyertown, New Hanover, Keelor's, Hill Church and Sassamansville. In the old Parish Register is a comment that "after a few years he gave up Hill Church and Sassamansville." It is also reported that because of some wrongdoing as the superintendent of the Orphan's Home he was tried and dismissed from the Synod and sentenced by the court. "It certainly was a sad ending of a promising career, the man certainly was gifted," ends the report in the Parish Register.

The Rev Josiah Fox supplied the church in 1863. He was a native of the community born and raised on his parents' farm in Congo. In the same year, beside Rev Fox, the Rev A.D. Croll, the pastor of Hill Church, is also mentioned as a supply to the congregation. The Rev G.A. Struntz served from 1863 to 1866. He was a native of Germany. The Rev. J.E. Fleckenstein, the pastor of St. Paul's from 1866 to 1868 was a native of Germany, too, and the information on him is also very brief. The Parish Register notes that "he served only two years."

The Rev. W.B. Fox, a son of the congregation, became the pastor of St. Paul's in the fall of 1868 and served it faithfully until the spring of 1904, thirty-five long and effortful years. He died as the pastor of the parish, and his long ministry marked him as the man of God who was "faithful unto death."

He was the son of John Fox and his wife Susanne, born Beiteman. He was born October 21, 1837, and grew up on his parents' farm in Congo. He married Elizabeth Mack who was also from the community of Sassamansville. He graduated from the Gettysburg Seminary and came to Sassamansville after serving the Berwick parish, Pennsylvania. At that time St. Paul's was included in the Sumneytown parish together with Keelor's, Pennsburg and Sumneytown churches. During his pastorate the Church grew and flourished in many ways.

The union worship relationship with Sassaman's Church continued until 1895 when, during the pastorate of Rev. Fox, the Lutheran congregation actively began making plans to build an exclusively Lutheran church in Sassamansville. A committee was appointed to work out all the preliminary details regarding the building site. This committee consisted of the following members: Charles Z. Erb, Jacob Hoffman and Amos Fry. The committee reported on a site and a

vote was taken. The majority was in favor of the site on the hilltop of the Sassamansville community a short distance from old Sassaman's Church.

The land for building the church was given by Isaac Linsenbigler and his family, members of the congregation. Then a building committee was appointed consisting of John F. Renninger, Irvin Erb, Isaac Jones, Isaac Linsenbigler and Milton Hoffman. The church is proudly described in 1937 by the Centenary Committee in this sentence: "On May 20, 1897 this beautiful house of Worship, a monument of the faithful work of Rev. W. B. Fox and the liberality of the congregation, was dedicated as the Evangelical Lutheran St. Paul's Church, Sassamansville, Pennsylvania" (from the 1937 Century Celebration Committee publication). The new building was completed "at the remarkably low cost of \$6,397."

The first Sunday Schools in the community were organized in Mack's School House, Douglass Township and in Hoffmansville School House (still standing today). The Mack's Union School was organized as the first on May 16, 1852. On May 6, 1877, these two schools were moved to Sassaman's church. Here the Sunday Schools continued as a Union Sunday School until 1897, when the Lutherans moved into their new church building and, naturally, organized a Lutheran Sunday School, providing religious education for St. Paul's children.

On May 4, 1901, a special meeting was held by the congregation to select a suitable place for a burial ground, since the lots in the old cemetery were sold out. The church purchased a field of about three acres of land and a driveway from the church to the cemetery from Curtis Heffner for the sum of \$ 425.00.

On June 1, 1901, the congregation held a special meeting to decide whether the St. Paul's Lutheran Congregation should be incorporated or not. Upon this question a vote was taken. The result was eighteen in favor and seventeen against. The official incorporation, as recorded in the Constitution and Bylaws of the St. Paul's Lutheran congregation of Sassamansville, Pennsylvania (1947) and became effective October 21, 1901. Since then the congregation has been incorporated.

The Rev J.J. Cressman supplied St. Paul's from 1904 to 1906. He was born in Northhampton County, Pennsylvania, studied in Pennsylvania College at Gettysburg, was ordained for the ministry in 1867, and was a public school teacher before his call of ministry.

The Rev. Melvin Kurtz was the pastor of St. Paul's from May 6, 1908 to October 1, 1915, when he accepted a call from the Church of the Redeemer, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Rev Kurtz was born in East Greenville, within the area of the parish. He graduated from Muhlenberg College and the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. In his time the main charge consisted of St. Paul's Sassamansville and Niantic Lutheran Church.

The Rev. Robert H. Ischinger, Ph.D. served from 1916 to 1919. He was born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1893 and came to the United States in 1905. He received his education partly in Germany and in this country completed his studies in Wagner College, New York and the Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia. He left Sassamansville for Reading. The Parish Register gives him praise as "the best pulpit orator... beloved by all of Sassamansville." In his personal life and in his relationship with the Synod he was not as fortunate.

The Rev. Wesley Renner served the congregation from December, 1919 to 1926. He was a graduate of Muhlenberg College and the Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia. He left Sassamansville for Jordan-Lowhill parish in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania.

The Rev, George W. Fritch Ph.D., was the pastor of St. Paul's from 1926 to 1938. He was born in Virginsville, Berks County. He was a son of a physician. He was preparing for college at Kutztown State Normal School. He graduated from Susquehanna University in 1900 and from the Lutheran Theological School in 1903. Rev. Fritch took a post-graduate course in philosophy, psychology and history of doctrine and received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1917. He was ordained at Sunbury in 1907 and accepted the call of the Danville German parish, which also included St. John's Church at Pen Argyl. In 1913 he received a call from the New Ringgold parish of the Pottsville conference in 1916 from Macungie. In 1926 he became the pastor of the Niantic-Sassamansville parish.

Dr. Fritch was hit by a car and fatally injured while on his way to hold a Sunday evening service at the Trinity Lutheran Church, Bechtelsville on October 3, 1938. The accident happened at one of the four churches he served namely, Trinity Lutheran, St. Luke's Lutheran, Gilbertsville, St. Paul's Lutheran, Sassamansville and Christ Lutheran Church Niantic. These churches composed the Niantic-Sassamansville Parish and at the time of his departure had considerably more than one thousand communing members.

Here are some of the lines of tribute paid to Dr. Fritch by his fellow pastors of the area and printed in the local newspaper on the occasion of his death: "Who can properly at this time, evaluate the worth of the services rendered by our kind co-worker and fellow Pastor, the Rev. George W. Fritch, Ph.D. as he brought the story of Christ into the hearts and lives of men. Dr. Fritch was a firm believer in the Word and preached that Word with power and effectiveness." "As a colleague, he was always broad-minded and tolerant, easy to get along with – not insisting on his way alone. He was handicapped with partial deafness, but this did not prevent him from preaching good, substantial sermons." "He was a faithful pastor, devoted in his ministrations to men and women in all walks of life. He was a genial personality whose friendship was enjoyed by many within and without the membership of his own congregation." Dr. Ernest Pftatteicher, the president of the Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania, said these words at the funeral service: His definite relation between his work and Christ was an inter-relationship in which I was interested extremely." The text on which the president of the Ministerium based his funeral service on was Ephesians 4:4-7.

One cannot help but think that with the close of the service of Dr. Fritch a glorious period of the history of St. Paul's came to an end, a period to be compared only with that of the service of the Re. W.B. Fox.

The Rev George W. Fritch, Jr., the son of Dr. Fritch, accepted the call to serve the church after his father's death, and he served from December 18, 1938 to December 15, 1946, when he went to his new field of service at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Over a period of years there were changes in parish relationships. In 1946, at the end of the year, the parish of four churches was divided – Trinity Lutheran Church, Bechtelsville and Christ

Lutheran Church Niantic became one parish, and St. Paul's Lutheran Church Sassamansville, and St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Gilbertsville (which was started as a chapel of St. Paul's) became another separate parish.

The Rev. William L. Shaud was called by the congregation and served from December 21, 1947 to August 30, 1956. It was his first congregation to serve after his graduation from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. In his time of ministry at St. Paul's the new parsonage was built and the church sanctuary was partly remodeled. He left for St. John's Lutheran Church in Pottstown.

The building of the parsonage was started in November 1949, and finished in 1950. It was dedicated in September of the same year. The building committee in charge was LeRoy Erb, chairman, William F. Moyer, Ere B. Sell and Waldemar Standhardt. The building lot of the size of 90 X 180 feet was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Waldemar Standhardt, active members of the church. The house was completed at a cost of \$ 14,000.00 and the garage at the back of the parsonage was built by some St. Paul's members at the cost of \$ 1,381.00 in 1951.

The rev H. Oscar Schlessman, Jr. was the pastor of St. Paul's from November 18, 1956 to June 15, 1960 and he came from St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Applebachsville Pennsylvania where he was a supply pastor. He left for St. John's Lutheran Church in Jim Thorpe Heights.

On August 10, 1958, the Sassamansville-Gilbertsville Lutheran Parish voted to divide into two separate congregations, each with its own pastor and program of congregational development, effective Advent Sunday, November 30, 1958. Since that time St. Paul's Lutheran Church is an independent congregation in its own church building, with its own pastor, its own decisions and responsibilities and its own history.

The Rev. Valdis Mezezers, S.T.M. began his service on August 22, 1960. He was born in Latvia. A graduate of the University of Riga, he lived in Germany for several years and was editor of a literary-religious monthly for displaced persons called "The Way" which was published under the sponsorship of the U.S. Military Government. For a few years he taught D.P. College and published two books. His wife Erika, a laboratory technician and pharmacist, worked in a military hospital. They both arrived in America in 1949. After training under the Board of American Missions of UCLA he received a call to become pastor of Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Stoney Creek in Baltimore Maryland – a newly started mission. Within three years after accepting the call from that church, he organized another church in the neighboring vicinity called the Magothy-Chelsea Community Lutheran Church. He came to St. Paul's from Maiden creek-Tuckerton parish which became two independent churches in two years of his service. In the spring of 1961 he received his S.T.M. degree from Temple University in Philadelphia after three years of graduate studies.

He is also author of these books published in America: "God and Man," and "The Great Light," as well as his thesis in the New Testament field: "Jesus' Concept of Poverty and Wealth" (Temple University).

He was installed on December 11, 1960 by the secretary of the Ministerium Rev. Claude E. Schick, D.D. (the president of the Ministerium Dr. Charles Cooper sent greetings) at a service attended by 232 members and a few guests from the churches he served before. Dr. F Ernest Stoeffler a professor at Temple University and the pastor's teacher preached the sermon on the theme, "Build up the Walls of Jerusalem."

The council and the pastor planted a St. Paul's oak on the property line in front of the church on the eve of the installation and upon moving into the parsonage, the pastor and his wife, who worked at Montgomery Hospital in Norristown, planted ten birches in a row on the parsonage property line as well as a number of white spruces and white pines.

In February 1960, Pastor Mezezers started to send to the families of the congregation a mimeographed letter "as often as it is felt necessary." In 1961, this letter, in the form of a good sized news bulletin and called the Epistle, began to reach the members of St. Paul's regularly every month and is published by the pastor and the church council. It brings to the members messages from the pastor and updates on church activities. The design of the original letterhead was by Leonids Linauts, the famous stained glass artist, a friend of Pastor Mezezers.

The Lutheran Church burned down on June 1, 1962, just three weeks from observing the 125th Anniversary of the life of St. Paul's congregation. For two years the congregation had to return to its roots and worship in Sassaman's Church until the new facility was completed. After intensive planning, a new church was approved for construction by the congregation on June 30, 1963. Ground was broken on July 7, 1963 for a new modern Gothic style church building for an estimated cost of \$317,979. Additional land was purchased to the rear of the property and the cornerstone was laid on Sunday, November 3, 1963, and a service of dedication was held for the completed new church on Sunday, September 20, 1964, at 10:15 A.M.

The St. Paul's window, the artistic part of the Narthex screen and the composition of the colored glass windows in the chancel (on both sides of the altar) is the creation of the earlier mentioned Leonids Linauts in consultation with Rev. Mezezers. They were both born in Latvia. After finishing his formal education in the Academy of the Fine Arts of Riga, Linauts studied Medieval French, German, and English stained glass art in various places in Europe. A very well-known artist in Pennsylvania and other states in Europe, his Art Studio was located in Mohnton, near Reading Pennsylvania.

The spirit of worship in the Sanctuary is greatly toned by the large stained glass window designed by Linauts and located in the West Front and above the main entrance. It is a piece of art, rich in colors and ornamental designs, with the symbol of St. Paul in the center. The symbol consists of an open bible and a sword behind it; the inscription in the bible is in Latin "Spiritus Gladius (the sword of the Spirit).

The symbol draws its meaning from the Apostle's own words: "Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the

spirit, which is the Word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication.” (Ephesians 6:14-18)

The Altar – designed by the architect, Dana W. Gangware, (as are all of the church furnishings) – the most sacred place and object in the sanctuary, is made of marble, with six massive candlesticks on it. Candles were being used since early days in worship of the church. The light of the Altar candles serves to remind us of the very words of Jesus Christ our Savior, the Great Light: "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12). The six candlesticks are symbolic of the six days of creation (Genesis 1), with the great Cross above representing in all of its symbolism the great Seventh Day, the day of Redemption. When building the new facility, a used pipe organ from a Lutheran church in Easton was installed. Many improvements have been made over the years.

The Rev. Glenn C. Reichley was pastor of St. Paul's from 1965 until 1971. He was born on April 19, 1927 and was the son of Daub and Florence (Reese) Reichley. He married Evelyn Clarke on June 17, 1950 in Philadelphia, Pa and had three children Daryl, Richard and Phyllis.

He did his undergraduate work at Muhlenberg College (1947) and received his Master of Divinity degree from the Philadelphia Seminary where he also did graduate work. He was ordained by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in June of 1950. Before his call to St. Paul's he served Spies-Oley Parish in Oley PA. (1950-1955) St. Paul's in Hawley PA (1955-1959), Old Goshenhoppen in Woxall, PA (1959-1963) and was assistant pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church Lansdale, PA (1963-1965). After leaving St. Paul's he went on to serve the Lebanon parish in Cleveland (1973-1978) the New Bethel Church in Richfield (1978-1987) and the Upper Frankford Parish in Newville PA (1987-1989) He also served as vice pastor to various organizations in North Carolina before retiring in Salisbury.

He was on the Board of Inner Missions of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, and the Board of the Social Ministry of the Southeast Pennsylvania Synod. He served the Boy Scouts of America in both Pennsylvania and North Carolina and was a teacher of physically handicapped children in Norristown, PA.

The Rev. Luther E. Johnson served St. Paul's from 1972 until 1994. In 1981, during Pastor Johnson's tenure, the organ was rebuilt at a cost of \$72,000.

The Rev Paul Jann served St. Paul's from 1994 until 1998

The Rev. George M. Harpel was installed as pastor of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, at 7 p.m. on Sunday December 6, 1998. A dinner preceded the services at 5 p.m. in the fellowship hall. The Rev. Roy Almquist, bishop of the Southeast Pennsylvania Synod, presided at the service. Other clergy participating in the service include Rev. Lee Hebel, former Pastor at St. Paul's Rev. Luther E. Johnson, and Rev. William Fluke. Allen Heydt, president of the church council, welcomed our new shepherd and turned over to him the keys of the parish.

Pastor Harpel was called to St. Paul's on Aug. 9, 1998. He attended Temple University, the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and served three years in the Army. He was pastor

of the Burkettsville Charge in Burkettsville, Md. for the past 21 years. He and his wife Linda, have two children, Daniel and Rachel. Pastor Harpel is renowned for his preaching of the Gospel and led the St. Paul's congregation during its recent celebration of its 175th anniversary in 2012. Under the leadership of Pastor Harpel the St. Paul's choir was reconstituted under the direction of Music Director Lili Sanderlin.

St. Paul's has been blessed to have eight sons of the congregation become ordained and go into the Lord's ministry. These included Rev. Josiah Fox, Rev William Fox, Rev. Josiah S. Renninger, Rev. Henry A Frederick, Rev. Jonathan R. Erb, Rev Earl S. Erb and the Rev George W. Fritch, Jr. The last pastor to go into ministry, Rev. Dr. Dwight D. Shellaway, was ordained in 1974.

Over the years, some twenty pastors have shepherded St. Paul's; some for only a brief period. In 2014 we commenced our current search for a new shepherd to lead our flock. The rural countryside surrounding St. Paul's has been experiencing increased population. Our hope is that with new leadership and through the work of the Holy Spirit new residents will be directed to St. Paul's and the Lord's ministry will continue to grow [6,7].

Pastors of St. Paul's

Conrad Miller	1837 – 1852
Nathan Jaeger	1853 – 1857
Henry Wendt	1858 – 1862
Josiah Fox	1863 – 1863
G. A. Struntz	1863 – 1866
J. E. Fleckenstein	1866 – 1868
W. B. Fox	1868 – 1904
J. J. Cressman	1904 – 1906
Melvin Kurtz	1908 – 1916
Dr. Robert H. Ischinger	1916 – 1919
Wesley Wenner	1919 – 1926
Dr. George W. Fritch	1926 – 1938
George W. Fritch, Jr.	1938 – 1946
William Shand	1947 – 1956
Oscar Schlessman	1956 – 1960
Valdis Mezezers	1960 – 1964
Glenn C. Reichley	1965 – 1971
Luther E. Johnson	1972 – 1994
Paul Jann	1994 – 1998
George Harpel	1998 - 2014

References:

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation

[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years%27_War

[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_American

[6] New Hanover Township 1741-1991 Volume 1

[7] 125th Anniversary Sassaman's United Church of Christ and St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Sassamansville, Pennsylvania

Henry Sassaman was a very determined man but was unsuccessful in coping with the feelings of his congregation against the preaching of the supply pastor, Rev. Lewis Herman, who he had appointed. He was finally compelled to give in to the wishes of his congregation. On the Lord's Day the only persons present at the divine service besides the pastor was Henry Sassaman and the organist. As a result, he agreed to turn elsewhere for a pastor for the Reformed congregation of which he was a member.