

HISTORY OF THE
ALLEGHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD
OF PENNSYLVANIA

TOGETHER WITH A TOPICAL HANDBOOK OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ITS ANCESTRY, ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

By REV. W. H. BRUCE CARNEY

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ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

WELLERSBURG, PA.

The Zion Church, in Wellersburg, Somerset County, Pa., was originally built of logs, probably in about 1815, but the time is by no means certain. It was to be conjointly used on alternate Sundays by the Evangelical Lutheran and the Reformed congregations. The relationships existing among their members and their associations were so intimate that they held the church property in common and in the main recognized but one form of government.

Some time between 1820 and 1825, this building gave place to another also of logs. This church was as near as possible a perfect cube, with galleries on three sides and a very high pulpit. In the forties it was weather-boarded inside and out at a cost, perhaps, of \$1,000, which added not only to its appearance but also greatly to the comfort of the worshiping congregations. For years it has been used by the borough as a schoolhouse and perhaps for other purposes. It stands on the southeastern corner of a plot of ground of about an acre, which has been used for many years as a cemetery and in which the dead are still buried.

On the western side of this plot in 1856, the present church was erected. It is a brick building, 38 by 50 feet, with a basement, tower and bell, and is said to have cost \$2,500. Within the last few years stained glass of fine quality has been placed in the windows by loving ones in memory of departed friends. Two

of these windows are in honor of two former pastors who were then living, Rev. Christian Lepley, of the Lutheran, and Rev. Benjamin Knepper, of the Reformed Church, and a third one is "in memoriam" of Rev. M. L. Young, Ph.D., who was pastor of the church at the time of his death. The old tower has been replaced by a new and very tasteful belfry, and the whole of the exterior of the building painted and penciled at a cost of about \$600. All has added greatly to the attractiveness of the church.

The Wellersburg Lutheran Church dates its origin on or



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about the year 1803, and is, therefore, one of the oldest congregations in Somerset County. As the records for the first dozen years were not kept at all or have been lost, the history of the first decade of its existence is wholly dependent upon very unreliable tradition. It is said that the Rev. Mr. Hanker preached here in 1803, but whether he preached only occasionally or was the pastor for a number of years is not known and cannot now be determined. Equally uncertain is the tradition that the Rev. Philip Mockenhaupt, who passed for a Lutheran minister

but was a member of no Synod and kept no records of his ministerial acts, preached for the congregation during the two years of 1814 and 1815.

At first Wellersburg was connected with the Cumberland Lutheran Church and was one of the many stations that belonged to that pastorate, and was served by the ministers who had charge of that congregation. The Rev. C. F. Heyer was pastor from 1818 to 1825. In speaking of his constantly increasing labors Mr. Heyer declares that his appointments from east to west extended to about eighty miles; that frequently he was absent from home a whole week at a time and that generally he attended to ten or eleven appointments before he returned.

The other pastors who came from Cumberland, Md., were, viz.:

Rev. Henry Haverstick, from 1829 to 1832; Rev. John Kehler, from 1833 to 1839; Rev. Jesse Winecoff, from 1840 to 1842.

During the year 1841, a new pastorate was formed consisting of Frostburg, Md., Wellersburg, Kennells Mills, Comps, Fairhope, Greenville, etc. Of this pastorate the Rev. Christian Lepley took charge in 1842 and consequently became pastor of the Wellersburg congregation in that year and served it till his resignation of the Frostburg charge in 1857, a period of nine years. Up to this time the Wellersburg Church belonged to the Maryland Synod. All her pastors, five in number, were of that reverend body. All Synodical reports were made to it and will be found in the records of that Synod.

In 1851, the Wellersburg pastorate was formed consisting of six congregations, Wellersburg, Comps, Kennells Mills, Fairhope, Greenville and Mt. Carmel, a new congregation organized in 1844 by Rev. Christian Lepley while pastor of the Frostburg charge. On application the new Wellersburg charge was taken under the care of the Alleghany Synod and thus became a member of the Somerset County conference, and has remained an integral part of that body up to the present time.

Fifteen ministers have had charge of the congregation since the year 1851, viz.:

Rev. Peter Nellis, from 1852 to 1853; Rev. Charles Witmer, from 1854 to 1857; Rev. Christian Lepley, the second time, from 1857 to 1859; Rev. Alexander Cupp, from 1860 to his death,

1862; Rev. Isaac Augustine, from 1863 to 1864; Rev. J. H. A. Kitzmiller, from 1865 to 1869; Rev. A. M. Strause, from 1870 to 1872; Rev. W. E. Crebbs, from 1873 to 1874; Rev. M. F. Pfahler, from 1876 to 1884; Rev. J. P. Schnure, from 1886 to 1889; Rev. Emile Schultz, from 1889 to 1890; Rev. O. H. Gruver, from 1893 to 1895; Rev. S. J. Ulrich, from 1896 to 1899; Rev. M. L. Young, Ph.D., from 1890 to his death, 1904; Rev. E. S. Johnston, D.D., from 1905 to 1915.

On August 18, 1814, John Korns conveyed a parcel of ground in the Borough of Wellersburg, containing sixteen and one-half acres to the Evangelical Lutheran and the German Reformed congregations. During the pastorate of Rev. Jesse Winecoff in 1840, these congregations were incorporated by the legislature of Pennsylvania under the name and title of "The Lutheran and German Reformed Corporation." Charles Uhl and Samuel Gaumer, in behalf of the Lutherans, and Peter Riber and John Kennell, in behalf of the German Reformed, were the charter trustees. These trustees or their successors have had control of the church property from that time to the present.

In January, 1842, the trustees called a public meeting of both congregations. At this meeting the Rev. Jesse Winecoff was chosen president, and Samuel D. Witt was selected as secretary. By a majority of seventeen votes it was:

Resolved first, That certain lots be disposed of at public sale.

Resolved second, That no whole lot shall be sold for less than \$50.

Resolved third, That if the lots cannot be sold for \$50 or more they shall be leased or rented for a term of years.

By the authority thus given the trustees have at different dates since disposed of a certain number of lots by sale or by lease for the term of ninety-nine years. The money thus secured has been used by the trustees for the repairs or the betterment of the church property as the congregations order or the circumstances require.

By the will of William Troutman, a life-long and much-beloved member of the Lutheran Church and who entered upon his heavenly reward April 18, 1906, the Lutheran congregation of Wellersburg, Pa., received a legacy of \$300, the interest of which is to be used toward the pastor's salary. And John G.

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Witt, who, from young manhood to old age, was a devoted, honored and beloved member of the same church, and who with Mr. Troutman had witnessed its multitudinous and varied experiences and who survived him but a few days over a month, left to the same congregation and on the same conditions a bequest of \$250. These bequests, amounting to \$550, were duly paid over and are now fulfilling the wishes of their kind and long-to-be-remembered donors.

During the sixty years in which the Wellersburg Church has been a member of the Somerset County Conference they enjoyed



JOHN A. WITT



WILLIAM TROUTMAN

the privilege of entertaining that body but twice, the first time on July 12, 1881, when Rev. M. F. Pfahler was the pastor, and the second time on April 23, 1901, when Rev. M. L. Young, Ph.D., was the pastor. The church and the community do not remember what the Conference *did* or *said* or *resolved* while they were holding their sessions in Wellersburg, but such a body of Christian men, ministers of Christ, preachers of the gospel and heralds of salvation to the lost could not fail to leave an influence for good upon all with whom they came in contact. The only regret is that they could not have come oftener, for

while they were here they taught the church what a grand thing it is to work for Christ and for the good of humanity, and when they were gone Christian men must have found their own souls strengthened and all the energies of the Church multiplied.

In 1899, Comps reported ten members, Kennell Mills nine and Fairhope fifteen; nothing for benevolence and nothing for local expenses. Being so few in membership and some of these ready to move away as soon as they could elsewhere better their financial condition; frequently without preaching for months at a time, and with no prospect whatever of ever being more able to sustain these organizations, even at their present poor dying rate, they were advised to connect themselves with the neighboring congregations and give up the effort. There has, therefore, been no regular Lutheran service in these places since 1900, and it seems that these churches no longer exist. A few of them have connected themselves with the Wellersburg and Mt. Carmel Churches, some of them have died, others have moved away and a few, perhaps, have gone into other churches.

The Greenville Church, which was an integral part of the Frostburg pastorate, formed in 1841, and sometimes wrongly called the Wellersburg charge, became a part of the Salisbury charge in 1849, and has remained a member of that pastorate to the present time.

For the last ten years, therefore, the Wellersburg charge has consisted of but two congregations, Wellersburg and Mt. Carmel. Though few in numbers, if these churches will continue to build their hopes on faith in God and make His glory and the welfare of men the great object of their being, they will find as the years hurry by and the wheels of time move onward that that influence is ever widening and that their work is not in vain, in the Lord.