

One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary History

OF

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF THE

HOLY TRINITY

Greenville, Pennsylvania

1865 – 1990

Anniversary History Committee

Evelyn Baer

Paul Mueller

Robert Olson, Chairperson

Ruth Packard

Milestones

May 20, 1860	First German Lutheran Service
December 25, 1864	First English Lutheran Service
April 15, 1865	English Lutheran Congregation Organized
April 16, 1865	First Service and Communion of the Newly Organized Congregation
September 25, 1865	Cornerstone of Church Laid
October 13, 1867	Church Dedicated
June 21, 1867	Charter Granted Under Name of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity
May 1, 1889	The Part-Time German Services Were Discontinued
March 18, 1907	Charter Amended
May 28, 1922	Parish House Dedicated
September, 1927	Salem Church Joined Holy Trinity
September 18, 1949	The Old Church Used for the Last Time
July 30, 1950	Groundbreaking for the New Church
May 20, 1951	The Cornerstone Was Laid
November 1, 1953	The New Church Was Dedicated
September 18, 1962	The Pittsburgh Synod Was Reorganized into the Western Pennsylvania-West Virginia Synod
June 14, 1964	An Associate Pastor Was Installed
January 8, 1965	A New Constitution Was Adopted
April 15, 1965	Holy Trinity Became One Hundred Years Old
January 5, 1969	Church Mortgage Burned
February 22, 1970	Pipe Organ Dedicated
September 1, 1973	Clinical Pastoral Education Program Initiated
October 15, 1978	LUTHERAN BOOK OF WORSHIP Adopted
May 3, 1981	Needlepoint Kneeler Project Dedicated
March 9, 1983	Community Food Pantry Established
September 11, 1984	Full-Time Director of Christian Education Called
January 1, 1988	ELCA Established
January 1, 1988	Holy Trinity Joined the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod
May 16, 1989	Director of Mutual Ministry Called
April 15, 1990	Holy Trinity Became One Hundred Twenty-Five Years Old

The First Century

1865 – 1965

By Roy C. Beaver – Condensed by Evelyn Baer

The first Lutheran activity in the vicinity of Greenville began about 1805 when German Lutherans, who had settled in West Salem and Hempfield Townships, were gathered by missionaries of the Ohio Synod into a congregation called Good Hope, about three miles southwest of Greenville. A log church was built in 1816, and German Lutherans from all over the area came here to worship and to receive the sacraments.

A pioneer pastor of Good Hope, Reverend Michael Kuchler, began missionary work at Good Hope in 1826 and then served congregations at Prospect, New Castle, and Erie, returning to Mercer County to continue missionary work at Good Hope, Zion's, and St. John's.

Late in 1859 or early in 1860 Pastor Kuchler extended his missionary activity to Greenville, administering the Holy Communion to thirty-two persons. For the next three years he ministered to this group at services held in the West Greenville Academy building located at the northwest corner of Shenango Street and Louisa Avenue, but no church organization was effected. He held Communion twice a year and recorded seventeen baptisms the first year. Services were held in German.

Activity among English Lutherans in Greenville began in 1863. In October of that year Reverend William F. Ulery, traveling missionary of the Pittsburgh Synod, visited Greenville and was impressed with the possibility of establishing a congregation. At the meeting of the Pittsburgh Synod in May, 1864, he recommended that an organized mission be established in Greenville to minister to Lutherans in the English language; he was assigned to undertake the work, giving half of his time to Greenville and half to other locations in the surrounding area. Pastor Ulery moved to Greenville in November, 1864, and began to gather together Lutherans who preferred services in English; in this he was given encouragement and assistance by Pastor Kuchler who was already ministering to the German Lutherans. Pastor Ulery's first service was held for a small group of people in the West Greenville Academy on Christmas Day, 1864, this being the first English service held in Greenville. Joint services were then held by Pastors Kuchler and Ulery, alternating from Sunday to Sunday in the German and English languages.

The work of the new mission prospered, and on March 14, 1865, it was resolved to organize a congregation and to secure plans and make arrangements to build a church.

On Saturday, April 15, 1865, an English mission congregation of forty members, called the English Evangelical Lutheran Church, was organized, bringing together the English work of Pastor Ulery and the German work of Pastor Kuchler, with Pastor Ulery

as pastor and Pastor Kuchler as associate pastor. The first Communion was administered jointly by Pastors Ulery and Kuchler on April 16, 1865, to thirty-three persons. Services were held alternately in German and English in the Academy building until May, 1865, then in Henlein Hall, and finally in the Baptist Church until the spring of 1866.

In the meantime, the church building project got underway. On April 25, 1865, just ten days after the organization of the congregation, twelve heads of families joined together to plan and underwrite the cost of a church building. A subscription for funds for construction was taken which raised about half the amount needed and the work began.

Construction started in September, 1865, on a portion of the present church site, the part along the Penn Avenue side. This lot, purchased in 1864 by Pastors Ulery and Kuchler for \$550, had been held in trust by them. It was taken over by the congregation in August, 1865.

The cornerstone was laid on September 25, 1865, by the small group who had limited funds but almost limitless faith. Progress was made in the fall of 1865, but no work was done during the following winter. The spring of 1866 found the congregation without a place of worship and with a church building in the early stages of construction with progress being slowed by lack of funds.

The summer of 1866 were the darkest days. Some of the members grew faint-hearted at the size and cost of the undertaking and withdrew their memberships, but the faith persevered. Additional subscriptions among the members and friends of the congregation were taken. Two of the members mortgaged their properties to provide funds to carry on the work. Thus encouraged and with renewed effort the congregation moved ahead. By the end of 1866 the building was roofed and plastered and fitted with seats made of planks laid across nail kegs and with a huge coal stove in one corner. With these simple furnishings a festival service was held in the new building on Christmas, 1866, and the congregation began to hold regular services the first Sunday in January, 1867. Services during the winter were held on alternate Sundays.

In the spring and summer of 1867 pews were installed and the ladies organization provided carpeting, chancel furniture, and a small reed organ. On October 13, 1867, the new building was dedicated. Since there was a large debt remaining, additional subscriptions were taken at this meeting and a large amount was received. The tower and steeple were completed in 1868 and a coal heating furnace installed. The church was then considered complete at a total cost of \$14,350.

At a meeting of the congregation on May 4, 1867, it was resolved to reorganize the congregation under the name of "Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity," to adopt a constitution and to apply to the Court of Common Pleas of Mercer County for

a charter. A form of petition for a charter was drawn up on May 23, 1867, presented to the Court on June 21, 1867, and approved by the Court on June 21, 1867, filed in the office of the Prothonotary on August 20, 1867, and by the Recorder of Deeds on September 12, 1867.

Under the impetus of the new organization and the new church, the congregation began to grow, reaching 167 members in 1870. A Sunday School had been started and services were held every Sunday. The full service of the Lutheran Church was used for the first time on Christmas, 1869. In 1870, the debt was reduced to \$4,000 by a new campaign among the members. But the congregation suffered by loss of the full services of its two founding pastors. Pastor Kuchler retired on May 19, 1867, and Pastor Ulery accepted a professorship at the new Thiel College on September 1, 1870.

After the final flush of activity the congregation settled down to a period which may be called the "period of growing pains," extending from 1870 to 1898. This was a trying time for both congregation and pastors due to the lack of full time pastors from 1870 to 1879, to factions and dissensions which divided the congregation, and to pressing financial matters, all of which made pastoral work difficult. The original church debt was reduced, but new financial problems arose and debt again became a major worry. Some members left the church reducing the membership to 130 in 1875. On the brighter side a small pipe organ was installed in 1870, and the first wedding in the church was held on May 7, 1872.

Pastor Ulery consented to serve the congregation as pastor on a part time basis for another year to October 1, 1871. Then from October 1, 1871, to October 1, 1872, Pastor Ulery, Dr. Henry Warren Roth, President of the College, and Professor David McKee shared the work of supplying the pulpit. From October 1, 1872, Pastor Ulery and Dr. Roth were co-pastors until April 1, 1875, when Pastor Ulery resigned and Dr. Roth continued to serve alone as supply pastor. On February 23, 1879, Reverend Jeremiah Fishburn, who had been serving Good Hope congregation, was installed as full time pastor.

During the pastorate of Reverend Fishburn the spiritual needs of the congregation were well met, but the adverse financial conditions continued. A parsonage was purchased in 1880 but was sold within nine months on account of the supposed inability to pay for it. By 1883 in indebtedness of the church building had been reduced to \$1,900, but other expenses, with lack of sufficient income, kept the church debt growing again. A bright spot was the replacing of the oil lamps in the church by gas lights in 1881. Pastor Fishburn resigned on April 1, 1883, and Dr. H. W. Roth again became the supply, serving until September 1, 1883, when J. A. Kunkelman, D. D., former President of Carthage College, was installed as pastor.

Congregational activity increased during Dr. Kunkelman's pastorate. The Sunday School was reorganized; home and foreign missionary work was intensified; a ladies' sewing society was formed in 1883 which became the Ladies' Aid Society in 1892; a Lutheran League was started in 1891; and many members were added to the church roll. German services which at first were held on alternate Sundays, were in 1883 reduced to one Sunday per month and abandoned May 1, 1889. The church building was improved by finishing the balcony in 1884; new inlaid carpet, chancel railing and new chancel furniture in 1884; and a larger pipe organ in 1892. Most of the funds for these improvements were provided by the ladies' society. However, the old hindrance of financial trouble with the dissension and factions caused Dr. Kunkelman to resign on April 1, 1894. Dr. T. B. Roth of Thiel College then supplied the pulpit and performed necessary pastoral work until October 1, 1894, when Reverend William J. Rehrig, Ph. D., who had been the pastor at St. John's since 1887, became pastor of Holy Trinity.

Dr. Rehrig's pastorate followed closely the pattern of his predecessor's, and the work of the congregation moved forward slowly. The church was repaired and redecorated and steam heating and electric lighting systems were installed in 1896-1897. All this added to the debt. In 1895 the Church Council tried the plan of apportioning the debt among the members of the congregation, but the plan did not meet with favor. By 1898 a larger debt had accumulated, finances grew worse, and factions divided the membership. Dr. Rehrig resigned on January 1, 1898, with 230 members on the church roll and 176 in the Sunday School. Reverend H. J. Croushore served as supply pastor until October 13, 1898, when Reverend Frank C. Oberly was installed as pastor.

With the coming of Pastor Oberly, a new era of prosperity and growth began. He brought zeal and enthusiasm, restored harmony, and established a fine degree of loyalty. All activities took on new life. This included the Sunday School, Lutheran League, and the Ladies' Aid Society. A Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society was formed with a Mission Band for the young people, and the Trinity Circle was formed under the Ladies' Aid Society for the young girls of the congregation. A Men's Brotherhood was started. The financial system was reorganized by installing a weekly pledge and envelope system which resulted in the elimination of the debt, the meeting of current expenses and the payment of Synodical apportionment currently. When the church debt which had reached \$4,000 was finally paid off in 1904, Mr. Andrew Carnegie donated \$1,000, one half the cost of a new and larger pipe organ which was dedicated on April 8, 1904. At this time the church was again repaired and redecorated. The publication of the parish paper, the Trinity Messenger, was begun in 1906. Pastor Oberly resigned on March 1, 1913, with 340 communing members on the roll.

Pastor Oberly was followed by Reverend Walter S. Langhans of Jewett, Ohio, who was installed on August 1, 1913. He followed closely the methods of his predecessor, and the congregation prospered. The annual every member canvass for current expenses and benevolences was instituted in 1916. Raising funds for the new church dominated Reverend Langhans' pastorate, but since it was evident that the congregation was not ready to go ahead with the project, the old church was repaired and redecorated in 1917. Pastor Langhans resigned February 15, 1919, at which time the congregation numbered 440 members. Dr. T. B. Roth again served as supply pastor until August 1, 1919, when Reverend Henderson N. Miller, Ph.D., became pastor.

Dr. Miller also continued the existing policies of the congregation, but his pastorate was dominated by the raising of funds for building the parish house, completed in 1922. This building brought many changes in the life of the congregation and Sunday School. Also of importance was the receiving into membership in September, 1927, of thirty-five members of Salem Lutheran Church located eight miles east of Greenville and which had been disbanded. Dr. Miller resigned October 18, 1929, leaving an active congregation of 589 members.

As early as Reverend Oberly's pastorate, it was realized that the church was being outgrown and that more adequate facilities would have to be provided for the Sunday School. In January, 1911, the congregation resolved to start a building fund, and some funds were gathered. Preliminary sketches for a new church were obtained. However, the project was checked by the resignation of Pastor Oberly and the coming of the First World War. Early in Reverend Langhans' pastorate the project was revived in the form of a new church replacing the old on the same location and with adjoining rooms for the Sunday School. In 1913 preliminary plans for such a church were secured, estimated to cost \$35,000, and some progress was made in gathering funds. The new church plans were abandoned in 1917 when it was realized that they did not meet the requirements of the growing congregation and its Sunday School and parish activities, and that a much larger church plan would be needed for future growth. But the gathering of funds continued. The purchase of six lots and two houses enlarged the property to the present size and provided adequate space for a large church and parish house. Preliminary plans were received for a church running north-south along Penn Avenue on the location of the old church and a parish house running east-west along Trinity Way. In 1920 it was decided to go ahead with the project, but when a campaign for \$50,000 fell short of the mark, it was decided to build only the parish house portion of the project. The raising of funds was intensified, and the Ladies' Aid Society pledged \$5,000. Construction began in March, 1921. The building was dedicated on May 28, 1922. It was equipped with all the necessary facilities for modern parish activities at a total cost of \$60,000. A small

debt remained upon completion which was paid off in 1925, and plans were at once made for the raising of funds to enable proceeding with the church portion of the project.

Reverend William E. Eisenberg became pastor of Holy Trinity on June 15, 1930. He served the congregation during the great industrial depression of the 1930's, a time during which church work was difficult. But the congregation rallied under his leadership and prospered in spite of the depression. The Sunday School and other organizations of the congregation functioned well, current expenses and Synodical apportionments were met, and additions were made to the building fund. In 1938 the Livingston House on Columbia Avenue, the bequest of Mrs. Mary Livingston, was received and remodeled as a parsonage. Pastor Eisenberg resigned on January 16, 1939. During his pastorate the membership of the congregation had increased to 657.

On August 20, 1939, Reverend Peter Brath, D.D., from Mt. Lebanon, was installed as pastor of Holy Trinity. His pastorate was marked by activity in gathering funds for and building the new church along with continued growth and prosperity of the congregation.

After the completion of payments for the parish house in 1925, the congregation began raising funds for the new church. This process required twenty-five years, much longer than anticipated. The cost of the new church was many times the first estimated cost. But the delay was a blessing in disguise, for the church as finally built proved to be much more adequate and beautiful than had at first planned. It had been determined that it would be better to place the new church east-west along Clinton Street beside the parish house rather than north-south along Penn Avenue as originally planned, and the plans were revised accordingly. The last service of divine worship in the old church, which had served the congregation for eighty-two years, was held September 18, 1949, and the doors were closed and locked by the church officers with fitting ceremony. The auditorium of the parish house was used for church services during the construction of the new church. The old church was razed in March, 1950.

Construction of the new church was authorized by the congregation at its annual meeting on January 13, 1950. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held by Pastor Brath on July 30, 1950. Construction began on August 3, 1950, and the cornerstone was laid with proper ceremony on May 20, 1951. The building was erected in stages as funds and materials became available. A final effort to raise funds in 1951 brought in \$50,000 and enabled the work to proceed. The building was dedicated on Reformation Day, November 1, 1953. At last the congregation had the new church, a fine example of Gothic church architecture, for which it had been planning and working for over forty years. Up to the time of dedication the building had cost \$238,000. When dedicated, it was complete for church services, but several things remained to be done. The cloister

connection between the church and parish house was completed in 1959 at which time the parish house was renovated and remodeled to conform to the architecture of the new church. The large room under the church, "Trinity Hall," was not completed but was used for Sunday School and parish purposes and was finished in 1965. The spire has remained to be added at a later time.

Activity under Pastor Brath continued in all departments of church work, and the membership increased to over 800. In 1940 the seventy-fifth anniversary of the congregation was fittingly celebrated. In 1948 a parsonage at 12 Plum Street was purchased. The Men's Brotherhood became "Lutheran Church Men" in 1956, and the women's societies merged into "Lutheran Church Women" in 1958.

In 1964, the congregation took action to acquire the services of an additional pastor, and Reverend George E. Keck was called and installed as Associate Pastor on June 14, 1964.

The congregation celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of Holy Trinity at a series of events in 1965.

(1) Roy C. Beaver, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Greenville, PA, 1865 – 1965.

Beginning the Second Century

1965 – 1990

By Robert C. Olson

Pastor Peter Brath retired on June 30, 1966. His distinguished twenty-seven year tenure was the longest in parish history. As he stepped down, Pastor Brath expressed concern about contemporary indifference toward religion and questions about the church's relevance. He said the church had experienced similar times, however, and would continue to flourish where faith was cultivated. Pastor Brath expressed pride at having served a parish of Holy Trinity's distinction. He had held higher offices in the church, but he hoped people had noticed that his office as parish pastor had been his highest priority. The congregation demonstrated its awareness and appreciation of his intention when nearly 500 persons attended his retirement banquet.

The Reverend George Keck became pastor of Holy Trinity on July 1, 1966. Enthusiastic and energetic, Pastor Keck brought a relaxed style to his ministry, introducing informal worship forms and establishing a close bond with the youth of the congregation. He too warned of growing apathy toward religion and urged the church to

expand its mission to a society in ferment.

The Keck era brought important developments in the area of worship. The 450th anniversary of the Reformation in 1967 was the occasion for a series of festival services. That year also marked the initiation of an every Sunday communion at the 8:15 service and scheduling the rite of Confirmation on Reformation Sunday.

In 1968 the Reverend Eugene Harmony assumed duties as Associate Pastor. He also succeeded David Urness as Organist and Choir Director and continued Holy Trinity's rich musical tradition with organ recitals, use of other musical instruments in the worship service, and a vacation choir school. In 1970 the synod chose Holy Trinity as a pilot congregation for a new inter-Lutheran folk liturgy. That same year pastors and lay assistants donned new garb called albas, and in 1972 first communion was instituted for grade five age group.

The primary building project of this period was the installation of a pipe organ. The electric organ installed at the time of construction was approaching the end of its useful life, and in 1967 the congregation authorized a campaign to secure its replacement. In April, 1967, the membership rejected a proposal to install the new organ at the rear of the nave and instructed the organ committee to proceed with plans for a chancel installation. In February, 1969, the congregation approved the purchase of an organ from Casavant Freres of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec. During installation builders discovered a roof support beam not shown on building blueprints. The discovery necessitated changes in the distribution of the pipes, but the installation was completed successfully and the organ dedicated in February, 1970. Other accomplishments of the era included establishment of a library and archives room in 1968 and liquidation of the church mortgage in January, 1969.

During these years seven standing committees (Worship and Music, Evangelism, Social Ministry, Property, Stewardship, Parish Education, and Finance) carried out the routine tasks of the congregation, and Council authorized greater emphasis on evangelism and social outreach. The Lutheran Church Women responded with an active outreach program and maintenance of seven Bible study circles, and the Social Ministry Committee established a blood bank and a furniture warehouse and participated in the community meals-on-wheels program. The youth group separated into junior and senior high divisions in 1967 and enjoyed a busy schedule of activities, and the Sunday Church School strained facilities with an average weekly attendance of nearly 200. Roy Johnson, a long time fixture in the adult Sunday School program, retired from teaching in 1968. Francis Callahan succeeded Geraldine Moyer, who retired after nine years as Church Secretary in 1970.

The 1960s were fulfilling years in the life of Holy Trinity, but there were some

disquieting notes. The congregation began to experience declines in membership and attendance by the end of the decade. The 1970 budget was the lowest in five years presaging some difficulties in the coming decade.

Pastor Keck resigned effective February 15, 1972. He reflected proudly on many accomplishments in his years at Holy Trinity. He acknowledged some tensions resulting from his style of ministry and reiterated his concern about the evident national apathy toward religion. He reflected the majority view, however, when he observed that God's peace had been on Holy Trinity throughout these years. He left an active congregation of 630 members.

Church Council named Associate Pastor Harmony as Vice-Pastor pending appointment of Pastor Keck's successor. That accomplished, Pastor Harmony also resigned effective August 31, 1972.

The Reverend Robert Smith began a tenure of thirteen years as pastor on September 1, 1972. A strong preacher, Pastor Smith brought experience as a counselor and contributed a rich voice to the choir. He had a strong commitment to education and advocated the concept of a shared ministry within the congregation. His years would be challenging as church attendance slipped and financial strains became more evident, but they would also be characterized by a resilient spirit and continuance of the parish's strong traditions in worship and mission.

The arrival of intern Larry Blue in September, 1973, marked the beginning of a twelve year association with the Clinical Pastoral Education Program. Sponsored jointly by several Greenville churches, the intern program gave seminarians unique, multi-denominational learning/teaching experiences and provided assistance to the participating congregations in worship, education, and youth programs. Holy Trinity ultimately benefited from the participation of many outstanding interns.

Christian A. Michaelson accepted a call as part-time Organist and Choir Director in January, 1974. He was responsible for expanding the role of the processional during worship services including use of the processional cross. A talented artist and musician, he designed numerous banners to decorate the nave and gave regular organ recitals.

The worship service acquired other dimensions. The Easter vigil was introduced in 1976, and the new LUTHERAN BOOK OF WORSHIP was adopted in 1978. When the hymnals arrived in 1979, the congregation spent numerous Sundays learning and practicing the new liturgy. It was sad to abandon the old, familiar liturgy, but the new soon gained wide acceptance. In 1980 came the chanting of the Psalmody and in 1982 formation of a handbell choir and the practice of sharing the peace at communion services. In 1984 the congregation joined Pastor Brath in celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination.

The Church building reached its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1978 and received several improvements during this period. The front entrance steps were replaced in 1977. In 1981 a chair lift was installed at the Clinton Street entrance, and ceiling fans were placed in the nave. The next year Brath Hall received a new roof and new windows, the cost of the latter wholly subscribed by gifts from the congregation. The library room was converted to office space in 1985 and the library moved into quarters across the hall and dedicated in 1986. In addition, the structures at 115 and 111 Clinton Street were razed in 1978 and 1984 respectively and the properties converted to parking space.

The shining accomplishment of this era, however, was the needlepoint kneeler project. Begun in 1975, this ambitious effort combined the talents of nearly three dozen volunteers contributing hundreds of hours to make kneelers for the nave and chancel areas of the church. Chris Michaelson designed each kneeler, and church women stitched the canvasses. The finished project, funded entirely by gifts and memorials, included a picture album with a description of each kneeler. It was a priceless contribution, enhancing worship and pride in Holy Trinity and attracting visitors to marvel at its beauty.

The staff continued to change. Christine Gahagen replaced Francis Callahan as Church Secretary in 1979, and Ruth Witt succeeded Chris Michaelson as Organist and Choir Director. One of Ruth's first tasks was to complete the congregation's instruction in the new liturgy. She was also instrumental in establishing the handbell choir.

Reacting to Pastor Smith's desire for assistance in the areas of education and youth work, the congregation in 1978 hired Carol LaHurd for the new position of part-time Director of Christian Education. She reinvigorated these areas through teacher training, enrichment of the Sunday Church School curriculum, and a Lenten Forum Series. The number of youth in the congregation, however, continued to decline. In 1982 Boy Scout Troop 54 disbanded after twenty-five years at Holy Trinity.

Sandy Blank succeeded Carol LaHurd in September, 1981, and served for one year. At that time the position was expanded to full-time but not filled until the appointment of Chris Gahagen in September, 1984. Lay volunteers and interns from Thiel College filled the role in the interim. Paula Osborn succeeded Chris Gahagen as Church Secretary.

The congregation enjoyed a varied slate of fellowship activities, and its commitment to mission remained strong. Among the favorite social events was the annual pre-Lenten Fastnacht event. In September, 1974, the annual picnic featured the first pig roast, since a tradition. Participation in the community church softball league also began in this period. Responding to needs related to a depressed local economy, Holy Trinity in 1982 utilized a \$10,000 grant from the LCA to establish a community

food pantry. The pantry began operation at the church in March, 1983, and ultimately expanded into an ecumenical effort involving eighteen area churches. Destined to last six years, at its height the pantry assisted nearly 400 persons per month and earned the Mercer County Medical Society's Benjamin Rush award for humanitarian service in 1986.

These efforts belied anxieties stemming from a gradual erosion of attendance and related financial stringencies. Giving regularly lagged behind budgeted needs. The congregation tried a variety of stewardship strategies and adopted a July 1 to June 30 fiscal year in 1983. In 1984 it began the practice of holding semi-annual congregational meetings in January and June. In addition, Holy Trinity entered into a consultation with the synod lasting from 1982 to 1985. The ensuing examination of congregational resources and needs produced an Agenda Planning Committee to assist in improving administrative efficiency and led later to the establishment of a Committee on Congregational and Staff Support to monitor future developments. The consultation reinvigorated the parish's spirit and ended on a positive note.

Pastor Smith resigned effective August 31, 1985. Anticipating his absence as mentor, the congregation ended its participation in the Clinical Pastoral Education Program at the June meeting. Pastor Smith had guided Holy Trinity through challenging times. An American President referred to this period as a time of malaise, and the mood of the parish was possibly a microcosm of the larger national condition. Nevertheless, these had been rewarding years as well. Pastor Smith left a still vital church of 573 active members for his successor.

Following several months of service by supply pastors, Holy Trinity called the Reverend Martin M. Roth who assumed his duties on April 14, 1986. Like his predecessors Pastor Roth brought his own style to the parish. He considered worship, which he described as "the growing edge of faith," to be the core of his ministry. He saw his role as one of helping people understand the importance of the relationship between Sunday's liturgy and their Monday ministries, and he spoke of equipping people for the tasks of that ministry. Worship services became more formal, and trained laity assumed prominent roles in worship services and in other church tasks.

Pastor Roth's orientation hastened adoption of a concept which had evolved under Pastors Keck and Smith and received reinforcement from the synod consultation – that of shared ministry. Upon the recommendation of the Committee on Congregation and Staff Support and other study groups the congregation affirmed "mutual ministry" as the basis of congregational life at the June, 1988, meeting.

Meanwhile, the formation of a new national church affected Holy Trinity in important ways. The Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, and

the American Evangelical Lutheran Church culminated years of discussion by merging to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) on January 1, 1988. Thus Holy Trinity ended its twenty-five year affiliation with the LCA and began an association with a new 5.3 million member national church body. The Western Pennsylvania-West Virginia Synod also disbanded, and Holy Trinity joined the new Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod headquartered in Oil City. Accommodating itself to these developments, Holy Trinity revised its constitution and reorganized its governing structure to address five functional areas: worship, learning, witness, service, and support. Among other changes perhaps the most important concerned the LCW, which reorganized as Women of the ELCA.

There were numerous staff changes in this period. Pamela Luciani replaced Paula Osborne as Church Secretary in 1987. Ruth Witt also ended her successful tenure as Organist and Choir Director that year and was succeeded by Dr. Michael Farris, a talented organist, who in January, 1988, assumed a shared position as Director of Music at Holy Trinity and Assistant Professor of Music at Thiel College. Chris Gahagen resigned as Director of Christian Education in May, 1988. Changing needs and adoption of the concept of mutual ministry resulted in the establishment of the position of Director of Mutual Ministry assumed by Bonnie Massing in May, 1989. Darla Engstrom followed Pam Luciani as Church Secretary in September, 1988. Michael Farris resigned his position in July, 1989. In his place Holy Trinity hired Thiel Assistant Professor of Music, Dr. Dudley Oakes, as Organist and Choir Director and Florence Jowers as Director of Music.

The first quarter of Holy Trinity's second century was both difficult and active. The restive 1960s, and indifferent 1970s, and the unstable early 1980s had impacted upon Holy Trinity as upon other areas of American life. The congregation declined from 727 active members in 1966 to 355 in 1988. Some of the attrition resulted from judicious pruning of the inactive list, but average Sunday attendance also slipped from 272 in 1971 to 174 in 1988.

Nonetheless, the congregation's achievements inspired confidence in the parish's future as demonstrated by programs in education, faith development, social outreach, and commitments to benevolence. In 1987 Holy Trinity inaugurated a Theologian-in-Residence weekend, since an annual event, and adopted the One-in-Mission program in 1988. The annual Lenten Forums continued to attract community interest, and in 1989 the congregation filled a temporary void caused by the closing of the food pantry by assuming a partnership with All Saints Lutheran Church of Bowie, Maryland, a struggling mission congregation. As the end of his first four years Pastor Roth saw the commitment to mutual ministry and the willingness of people to become involved in the

life of the church as good foundations on which to continue to build.

Holy Trinity celebrated its 125th anniversary in the spring of 1990 with church tours and historical displays and capped events with a banquet at the Hempfield Fire Hall on April 29.

The Pastoral Record

April 15, 1865 to Sept. 1, 1870	William F. Ulery	Pastor
April 15, 1865 to May 19, 1867	Michael Kuchler	Associate Pastor
Sept. 1, 1870 to October 1, 1871	William F. Ulery	Supply Pastor
October 1, 1871 to October 1, 1872	William F. Ulery	Supply Pastor
	Henry Warren Roth	Supply Pastor
	David McKee	Supply Pastor
October 1, 1872 to April 1, 1875	William F. Ulery	Co-Pastor
	Henry Warren Roth	Co-Pastor
April 1, 1875 to Feb. 23, 1879	Henry Warren Roth	Supply Pastor
Feb. 23, 1879 to April 1, 1883	Jeremiah Fishburn	Pastor
April 1, 1883 to Sept. 1, 1883	Henry Warren Roth	Supply Pastor
Sept. 1, 1883 to April 1, 1894	J. A. Kunkelman	Pastor
April 1, 1894 to October 1, 1894	T. B. Roth	Supply Pastor
October 1, 1894 to January 1, 1898	William M. Rehrig	Pastor
January 1, 1898 to October 19, 1898	J. J. Croushore	Supply Pastor
October 19, 1898 to March 1, 1913	Frank C. Oberly	Pastor
March 1, 1913 to August 1, 1913	T. B. Roth	Supply Pastor
August 1, 1913 to February 15, 1919	Walter S. Langhans	Pastor
Feb. 15, 1919 to August 1, 1919	T. B. Roth	Supply Pastor
August 1, 1919 to October 18, 1929	Henderson N. Miller	Pastor
October 18, 1929 to June 15, 1930	Various	Supply Pastors
June 15, 1930 to January 16, 1939	William E. Eisenberg	Pastor
January 16, 1939 to August 20, 1939	Various	Supply Pastors
August 20, 1939 to June 30, 1966	Peter Brath	Pastor
June 14, 1964 to June 30 1966	George E. Keck	Associate Pastor
July 1, 1966 to February 15, 1972	George E. Keck	Pastor
July 15, 1968 to August 31, 1972	Eugene C. Harmony	Associate Pastor
Sept. 1, 1972 to August 31, 1985	Robert Smith	Pastor
August 1, 1985 to April 14, 1986	Various	Supply Pastors
April 14, 1986 to August 1, 2009	Martin M. Roth	Pastor

January 1, 1996 to December 31, 2004	Julia Fraser	Associate Pastor
September 1, 2009 to January 15, 2011	Albert Gesler, Jr.	Interim Pastor
August 22, 2009 to January 15, 2011	Derek Rory Nelson	Interim Pastor
February 21, 2011 to June 30, 2017	Lee D. Penvose	Pastor
July 13, 2017 to November 25, 2018	Father Dennis Blauser	Interim Pastor
December 2, 2018 to present	Brenda Martin	Pastor