

# THE HISTORY OF ST. STEPHEN'S

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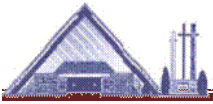
- 1894 – 1896** In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this area of Bethlehem was known as Hottlesville. To gauge an interest in the residents receiving Christian instruction and guidance, George Wartman, Thomas Deibert and Reuben Jaxheimer canvassed the residents in the neighborhood.
- October 11, 1896** It was determined there was an interest in Christian education and the first Sunday School class was held in a private home at 1400 Center Street with 49 people in attendance. A collection of \$1.66 was taken.
- March 28, 1897** The Sunday School was so popular and so great was the interest in holding regular services, **St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church was founded by 19 dedicated members.** A charter was granted and construction began on a church building at the northeast corner of Center and Hillmond Streets. Shortly thereafter, Bethlehem incorporated Hottlesville into its borders and the church building became part of the expanded city.
- May 17, 1897** **The cornerstone of the original church building was laid.**
- October 17, 1897** The original church building was fully occupied for the first time. The original church building's main outline still remains today and the building is occupied by Batten Architects.
- 1898 – 1901** St. Stephen's was part of a multiple parish, including the Friedensville and Eastern Salisbury congregations. Five seminary students served St. Stephen's during this period: Marvin Stettler (Jun-Sep 1898), Howard A. Kunkle (Sep 1898 – May 1899), Archibald C. Schenk (Jun-Sep 1899), William H. Fehr (Jun-Sep 1900), and George K. Rubrecht (Jun-Sep 1901).
- February 21, 1902** **Rev. Edwin H. Eberts was appointed the first part-time Pastor of St. Stephen's** and served until July 1, 1903. Rev. Eberts was succeeded by **Rev. Howard A. Kunkle** (September 1, 1903 – March 1, 1907) and **Rev. Charles D. Cooper** (September 1, 1907 – August 1, 1922). Both were also part-time Pastors for St. Stephen's.
- 1912** With an expanding congregation and an eye on the future, the congregation purchased land for a future church building at the corner of Center Street and Washington Avenue for \$2,000.
- August 1, 1922** **Rev. Luther F. Hartzell, St. Stephen's first full-time Pastor,** was installed and served until October 10, 1925.



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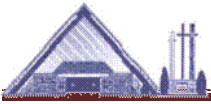
- 1925** A parsonage was completed at the corner of Center Street and Washington Avenue for a cost of \$13,137. There was enough space remaining on the property for a new church building.
- December 3, 1925** **Rev. David H. Frederick** accepted the call to St. Stephen's and served until 1957.
- February 1958** **Rev. Jacob A. Longacre** was installed as St. Stephen's third full-time Pastor.
- 1960** After many years of planning, the congregation began a fundraising campaign for the new church. While it is difficult to date the beginning of the movement leading to the construction of the new building, the "Greater St. Stephen's Building Fund" was first mentioned in 1939, spearheaded by Bible Class teacher Harvey F. T. Wartman. One of the first donations came from the Catechetical Class of 1940.
- However, because of the City of Bethlehem's plans to widen Washington Avenue, they had to abandon their original plan to build at the corner of Center Street and Washington Avenue. Instead, a new plot of land was purchased at the corner of Main Street and Washington Avenue. Everett Associates was chosen as the architects for the church building.
- October 29, 1961** On Reformation Sunday, the land was formally dedicated.
- October 28, 1962** The ground breaking ceremony was held for the new building.
- October 6, 1963** **The cornerstone was laid for the new church.**
- April 12, 1964** The building's dedication service was led by The Rev. Samuel Kidd, President of the Eastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America. On the Sunday prior to the dedication, the congregation processed to the new church building with each member carrying something from the old church building.
- 1970** **The first preschool program in Bethlehem was established at St. Stephen's** with an enrollment of 22 students and a staff of two: Doris Pieorg and Betty Jane Sigley. Upon Sigley's retirement in 1993, Maria Bevan assumed the duties as Preschool Director.
- May 1978** **The Rev. Werner M. Koch** was called to serve as the church's first Assistant Pastor. St. Stephen's was Pastor Koch's first call to service. Pastor Koch was promoted to Associate Pastor in 1981.
- March 13, 1988** **Upon the retirement of Rev. Longacre after 29½ years of service, Rev. Koch became the sole Pastor at St. Stephen's, and continues in that capacity today.**



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- March 20, 1988** The congregation approved the sale of the parsonage and surrounding property at 1547 Center Street, the site of the original church building. The property was sold to Joseph DiGiacomo, Jr. for \$225,000. An endowment trust fund was established to preserve the money for the good of the congregation.
- January 12, 1996** A building renovation project was undertaken under the auspices of a Building and Renovation Committee, architect Wayne Batten, contractor Harold Blacker, and financial consultants Kairos and Associates. The project enlarged the narthex, completely renovated the worship area with new furnishings and air-conditioning, and enlarged the parking lot.
- October 13 & Nov 24, 1996** Two special Dedication Worship Services were held to celebrate the completion of the renovation. Guest preacher was the Rev. David Stroble, Bishop of the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod of the E.L.C.A.
- 1998** The congregation held a surprise dinner and worship celebration honoring Pastor Koch on his 20<sup>th</sup> year of ordination and 20 years of service to St. Stephen's.
- June-Sept 2001** Additional renovations were made in the lower level: new lighting, ceiling tiles, dividing curtains, new cabinet doors and air-conditioning was installed. A new furnace was installed and the upstairs back section of the building was air-conditioned. As before, Wayne Batten was the architect and Harold Blacker was the general contractor.
- June 25 to July 3, 2006** A Youth Mission trip was undertaken to the Bahamas. In their seven day mission, six youth and three adults ministered to the very poorest areas of the islands, living amongst the people in simple village huts.
- August 3-8, 2008** A second Youth Mission Trip sent thirteen youth and three adults to the "Fishtown" area of Philadelphia where they sorted donations at the Philabundance Food Bank and St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store, worked with youth at Journey Home, and visited the elderly North Broad Street Center. Each day they also worked at Youthworks Kids Club, reading stories, creating crafts, singing songs and playing games.
- October 5, 2008** In honor of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination and his 30 years of dedicated service to St. Stephen's, the congregation recognized Pastor Koch with a special worship service. Pastor Ray Hittinger was the guest preacher. After the service, a luncheon was held in the Fellowship Hall at which Pastor Koch was presented with very generous and thoughtful gifts: a written proclamation from the City proclaiming October 5 as "The Reverend Werner M. Koch Day" in the City of Bethlehem, an all-expense paid trip to Germany (including visiting the town where he was born and walking in the footsteps of Martin Luther), and an all-expense paid trip to Green Bay, Wisconsin to see his favorite NFL team, the Green Bay Packers, play.



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- January 2011** The Church Council requested action be taken on capital projects which were prioritized by the congregation on receipt of \$275,000 bequeathment monies.
- June 3, 2012** After several informational meetings discussing options for the capital project, a special congregational meeting was held at which was approved the building of an addition to the east side of the church. The addition provides new offices for the Pastor, Secretary and the Preschool, an elevator, an ADA entrance from Washington Avenue, and a unisex handicapped-accessible bathroom on the lower level. As with our previous building projects, Harold Blacker was the general contractor.
- July 29–Aug 2, 2012** Mission trip to Steubenville, OH, by eight youths and three adults.
- August 2012** A "Tranquility Garden" was created at the back entrance to the church by church member Jason Siegfried in fulfillment of his Eagle Scout project. Bricks were purchased by church members in financial support for the project. The garden was dedicated in memory and honor of those who have died in Christ or are present with us today.
- March 2013** The building addition project was completed and a dedication service was held.
- September 27, 2015** Dedication of the new maroon Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymnals was held during the worship service. The hymnals were dedicated in loving memory of Elsie W. Hamel.
- January 31, 2016** During the worship service, a special meeting was held at which the congregation voted to purchase a new Allen Organ model L-228. The organ was installed on May 3 and dedicated on May 8, 2016.
- August 2017** Maria Bevan retired after 24 years as the Preschool Director. Rebecca Barger, a St. Stephen's Preschool teacher for 15 years, took over the director responsibilities.

St. Stephen's has a great past! We thank God for the foundations our forefathers laid. St. Stephen's has a great present! Again, we thank God for the chance to share His Work now. St. Stephen's has a great future! We pray that God may lead us in greater challenges and spiritual adventures in the years ahead! The great and exciting history of St. Stephen's ministry in the name of Jesus Christ continues on!