

St. Michael's

St. Michael's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sellersville, celebrated its 100th Anniversary September 14, 1969.

Travelers passing through Sellersville invariably pause to admire the beautiful edifice of St. Michael's Evangelical Lutheran Church, as do visitors who attend its services. All are impressed by its chaste architecture, its sturdiness and pleasing proportions. Those who live within its shadows are sharing with others a building of rare charm and good taste.

St. Michael's interior, as well as its exterior, has long stood for the fulfillment of the desires of all Christian men and women to enjoy a place set apart for worship, education, inspiring fellowship and, to no small extent, as physical evidence of the victory of God within their community.

Sellersville was an established community in 1738. It was without a church for 130 years until the St. Agnes parish of the Roman Catholic Church erected their first church on North Main Street in 1868. A suggestion was made to build a Protestant church convenient to South Perkasio (then known as Bridgetown), Perkasio (which was known as Comleysville), and Sellersville. The building site considered was at Fifth and Walnut Streets in Perkasio. However, in 1868, the men of Sellersville decided to purchase three acres of land from William S. Schlichter. This was divided into cemetery lots and sold. The proceeds were to be used as a building fund. In less than two years, the proceeds warranted the erection of a union church.

In 1869, St. Michael's Lutheran Church was finally organized by the Reverends Berkemeyer and Walz. The successful efforts of these two men were realized. On September 13, 1869, St. Michael's received its charter and officially became a working Lutheran church in the community and active in the Ministerium of Pennsylvania.

It should be remembered that during the early years at the Walnut Street meeting place, as well as in the new building, members of the Mennonite faith conducted their services. They left here for services elsewhere in 1888.

The joint trustees decided to build a beautiful church structure using native stone quarried in a field adjacent to our church cemetery. Due to insufficient funds originally, only the first floor was built. This was completed in 1870, and all joint services were immediately conducted in this section.

A year later, plans were made for a complete edifice, not by a professional architect, but by Mr. Lewis J. Sellers, who conducted a box factory at North Main and Noble Streets. Mr. Sellers was an active member of the Reformed congregation. The exterior of the original church measured only 44 feet by 70 feet. The laying of the cornerstone was held on May 28 and 29, 1870. These services were conducted by the Reverends Berkemeyer and Walz (Lutheran) and Reverend Fisher (Reformed). The first class of catechumens was confirmed on November 3, 1872.

Our young congregation recognized the need for a permanent pastor. A call was extended to the Reverend Samuel Ziegenfuss to serve St. Michael's and also Christ Church, Towamencin. Reverend Ziegenfuss, then a student at the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia was elected in March, 1873, and installed the following July 27 by Reverend F. Walz and Reverend F. Lazarus. His first communion was held on June 27, 1873, with 46 members participating.

Formal consecration of the completed church took place on May 2 and 3, 1874. Pastor Ziegenfuss served until October, 1876, when he resigned to accept a call to the Bath-Howertown charge in Northampton County.

During Reverend Ziegenfuss' pastorate, St. John's of Ridge Valley was added to the parish and brought into the Ministerium. His successor, Reverend J. L. Becker, who was

installed on August 12, 1877, served our parish for more than eleven years. During his ministry, he began preaching in Lansdale, which resulted in the organization of the Trinity Lutheran Church in that borough. In the Fall of 1888, our parish was divided at the recommendation of the Norristown Conference. Pastor Becker resigned his pastorates at St. Michael's and St. John's to accept a call to serve the new Trinity congregation in Lansdale. Towamencin was added to the Lansdale parish.

Reverend John H. Waidelich, then a student at the Mt. Airy Seminary, was called and installed June 23, 1889, by Reverends J. L. Becker and H. S. Fegley. For the next fifty-two years, the history of St. Michael's centers around the activities and leadership of Dr. Waidelich.

In 1900, St. Michael's purchased the half interest of the Reformed congregation. The original building was enlarged and remodeled, and a pipe organ, a gift from Andrew Carnegie, was installed. Redecorating plans included the installation of fine art stained glass windows made by the world famous artist Nicolai D'Ascenzo, paintings in the main church auditorium and refurbishing of the Sunday School rooms. A clock was built into the steeple.

Sons of the Congregation in the Ministry: Rev. David U. Druckenmiller +; Rev. Titus V. Druckenmiller; Rev. Merwyn L. Shelly; Rev. Russell M. Swartley +; Rev. Gunars Ansons, A.M., Ph.D.

Organizers of St. Michael's: Rev. F. Berkemeyer, A.M. +, 1859-1873; Rev. F. Walz, D.D. +, 1863-1873.

Pastors of the congregation: Rev. S. Ziegenfuss, D.D. +, 1873-1876; Rev. James L. Becker, D.D. +, 1877-1888; Rev. John L. Waidelich, D.D. +, 1889-1941; Rev. Ralph S. Kerstetter, 1942-1944; Rev. Robert E. Horne, S.T.M., 1945-1950; Rev. Elwood W. Reitz, S.T.M., 1950-1962; Rev. Laurence G. Horn, S.T.M., M. Ed., 1963-1968; Rev. William E. Dennis, S.T.M., 1968-.

+ Deceased

Borough Hall, formerly the high school, across from St. Michael's

