

Red Hook Public Library

**HISTORY OF
ST. PAUL'S (ZION'S)
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
RED HOOK, NEW YORK**

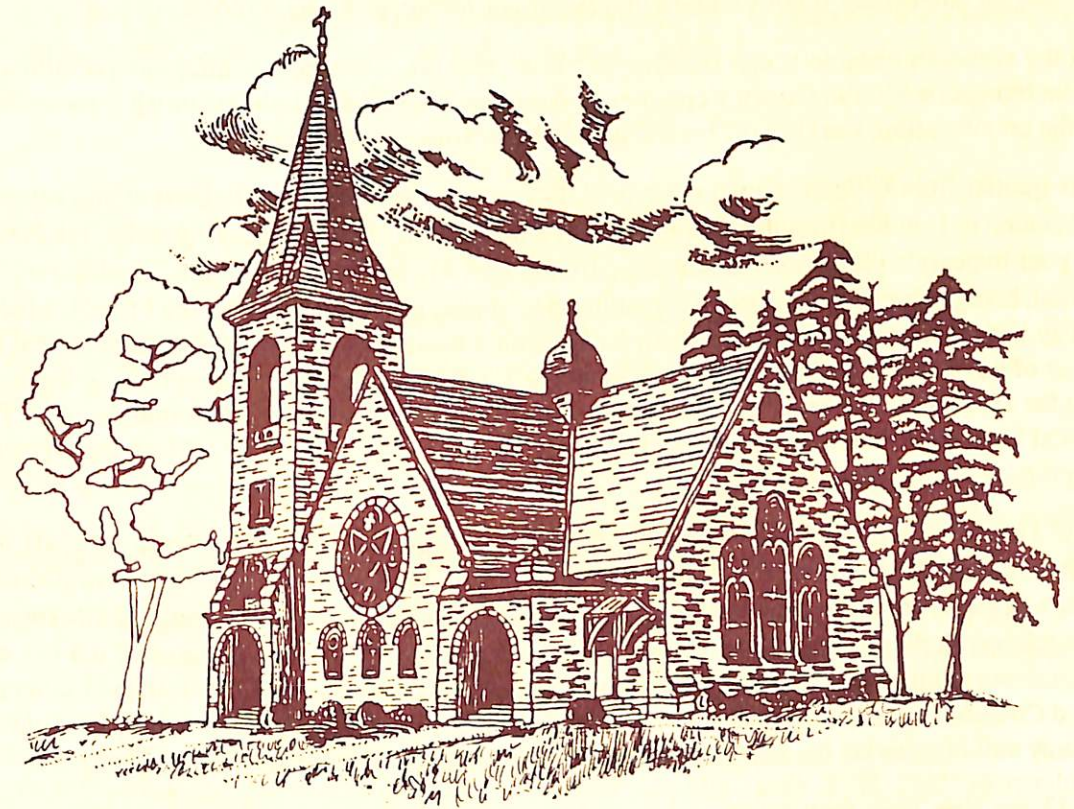


THE REVEREND RICHARD B. HOLZER, *Pastor*

1715 - 1990

"St. Paul's Church dates back to 1715 when Lutheran and German Reformed Palatines united to build a log church at Pinck's Corners. In 1729, the two congregations separated and the Lutherans build the 'Stone Church' at St. Peter's. Zion's Reformed later relocated at the present site and became Lutheran in the mid 1800's. The present red brick church building was dedicated in 1890. Twenty-nine Lutheran pastors have served the congregation since 1715. In 1988, St. Paul's was selected to be the first "Bishop's Church" in the Metropolitan New York Synod ELCA."

Drawing of the church by Stephen Bucala



1715 - 1990

PART I

What we have here is a moment of time - our 275th year - in a continuum. On Sunday, January 14, 1990, 102 people were in church for the Kick-Off Celebration of the 275th anniversary of our congregation. The oral history that was presented that day had been gathered from old newspapers, church booklets, council minutes, and church records. The history of St. Paul's Lutheran Church is a story of people and their faith. As we pause to reflect upon the 275 years of our history, let us be grateful to our predecessors who in their turmoil founded our congregation.

More than two and a half centuries ago, the German people were victims of conquest and persecution in the name of King Louis XIV of France. The German refugees came from the beautiful and fruitful Rhine Valley, called the Palatinate. Many of them fled to England and Holland, but wherever they went they carried their religion with them. So many of these refugees fled to England and located in London that Queen Anne (whose reign was 1702-1714) and her authorities were faced with the necessity of administering an emergency relief program that taxed her resources to the utmost.

When the situation became acute, the Queen's ministers proposed that as many as possible of the refugees be transported to the Crown's colonies in America where they might establish themselves and develop the country, thus working off the debts they had caused the Queen.

This is quoted from official British records of 1709: "The Rev. Joshua Kockerthal and other poor Lutherans came to London from the Lower Rhine Valley area of Germany praying to be transferred to some of your majesty's plantations in America; in number, 41, 10 men, 10 women, 21 children; in the utmost want, being reduced to the miserable condition by the ravages committed by the French, when they lost all they had. It is proposed to settle them on Hudson's River where they can be made useful in the production of naval stores and as a frontier against the French and Indians." It was these refugees who settled in the Hudson valley and their descendants who were responsible for the founding of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Red Hook, Dutchess County, New York, whose 275th anniversary we now observe.

In 1715 a union church was formed under the ministry of the Rev. J.D. Haeger of the Reformed Church, and the Rev. Joshua Kocherthal of the Lutheran Church. This union Church was located in Rhinebeck, N.Y., among a group of Palatines who were settled on land granted by the Queen to Judge Henry Beekman. A log church was built on what was known as "Pinck's Corners" in 1716. In 1721 more Palatines settled in this community and Judge Beekman leased four acres of land on March 25th, 1721, to the Lutheran and Reformed Churches to be used jointly for church and cemetery purposes. What remains of the old burial ground may still be seen on the east side of Route 9, just north of the intersection of Route 9G.

In 1932, the New York State Education Department put a marker among the few remaining graves at the original site of what is now the church of St. Paul's that reads: "Old Rhinebeck, original location of the village of Rhinebeck, site of the oldest church in the northern precinct of Dutchess County." Historians today now grant that we are the oldest church in the entire county.

And so therefore, the official history of the congregation of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Red Hook goes back to 1715 with the descendants of the refugees who settled in the Hudson Valley. The Church was known as the "German Church of Ryn Beck."

By 1718, there were 35 families of 140 people in Rhinebeck, whose area went north to the Columbia County line and south to Staatsburg. The church also served as a school. A small village grew around the church which was the focal point of the community. Then contention arose between the two congregations, and on December 10th, 1729, the Reformed Church paid the Lutheran Church twenty-five pounds for their interest in the building and the Reformed Church continued to worship there until 1796. The Lutheran group acquired a new site and built a church which they called St. Peter's, now known as the "Stone Church," just north of the former church and burial ground, but on the west side of the road

The members of the Reformed Church incorporated on September 6th, 1784, under the name of the German Reformed Zion's Church. Under date of July 1st, 1796, they purchased a five acre plot located in Red Hook from General John Armstrong, paying thirty pounds, according to the deed. This is the site of our present church. On this site they erected a frame church which was severely damaged in a wind storm and replaced with a stone church in 1834. A marble tablet in the basement of the present church was salvaged from the old church and bears the following inscription:

German Reformed

ZION'S CHURCH

Rebuilt in the year of our Lord

1834

How amiable are Thy Tabernacles

O Lord of hosts!

Psalm 84th—Verse 1st

In the cemetery, there are some graves of the pre-revolutionary period. And fifteen soldiers who died in the Revolution are buried there so the cemetery has been declared an Historical Cemetery by the local D.A.R. chapter. Over the years, the cemetery has been enlarged on the north and east sides.

For the first one hundred years of the congregation, the service was conducted in German. It wasn't until Pastor Rudy's time (1823-1835) that the service was conducted in English and German on alternate Sundays.

The history of the church during the next few years appears to have been rather turbulent if we may judge from an account given in the "History of Dutchess County, New York, 1683-1882" from which the following quotations are taken.

"About this time (1841) the old German Reformed Church of this place was converted into the present Lutheran Church. Quite a number of its members and congregation became dissatisfied, and instead of

resolving themselves into the Lutheran Church, some of them united with the Methodist (who built their church in Red Hook in 1840).

The German Reformed Church died out gradually, some congregations united with the Dutch Reformed, and this church at Red Hook being largely affiliated with the Lutherans by association and intermarriage, became a Lutheran Church during the pastorate of the Rev. Dr. N. W. Goertner at St. Peter's and has since connected with that denomination. The church building is a large substantial stone edifice, with a fine parsonage, lecture room, cemetery and ample sheds."

These words of explanation and description were written in the year 1881. A picture of the "large substantial stone edifice" appears in this booklet.

Further light on the change from a Reformed to a Lutheran Church may be gained from entries in the Church register in use at that time, from which we quote:

"Nicholas Westerman Goertner—called to Red Hook, N. Y., in conjunction with church in Rhinebeck, Jan. 1, 1841." Since Pastor Goertner was educated for the Lutheran ministry and had been serving St. Peter's Church in Rhinebeck from 1837, this indicated that he was the first Lutheran pastor called to serve what had been the Reformed Church or the Reformed element in the union church founded back in 1715. Pastor Goertner resigned the pastorate of these two churches and preached his farewell sermon on November 2, 1845, and was succeeded by the Rev. Charles F. Schaeffer, D.D., who began his ministry in January, 1846. Almost immediately after Dr. Schaeffer arrived on the scene, steps were taken to affiliate the church with the Lutheran denomination as is witnessed in the following entries in the church records.

"Lower Red Hook, Feb. 28, 1846

"A public meeting of the congregation having been held today in the church, agreeably to previous notice from the pulpit, Mr. John Shook was appointed Chairman, and Mr. Jacob Benner, Secretary.

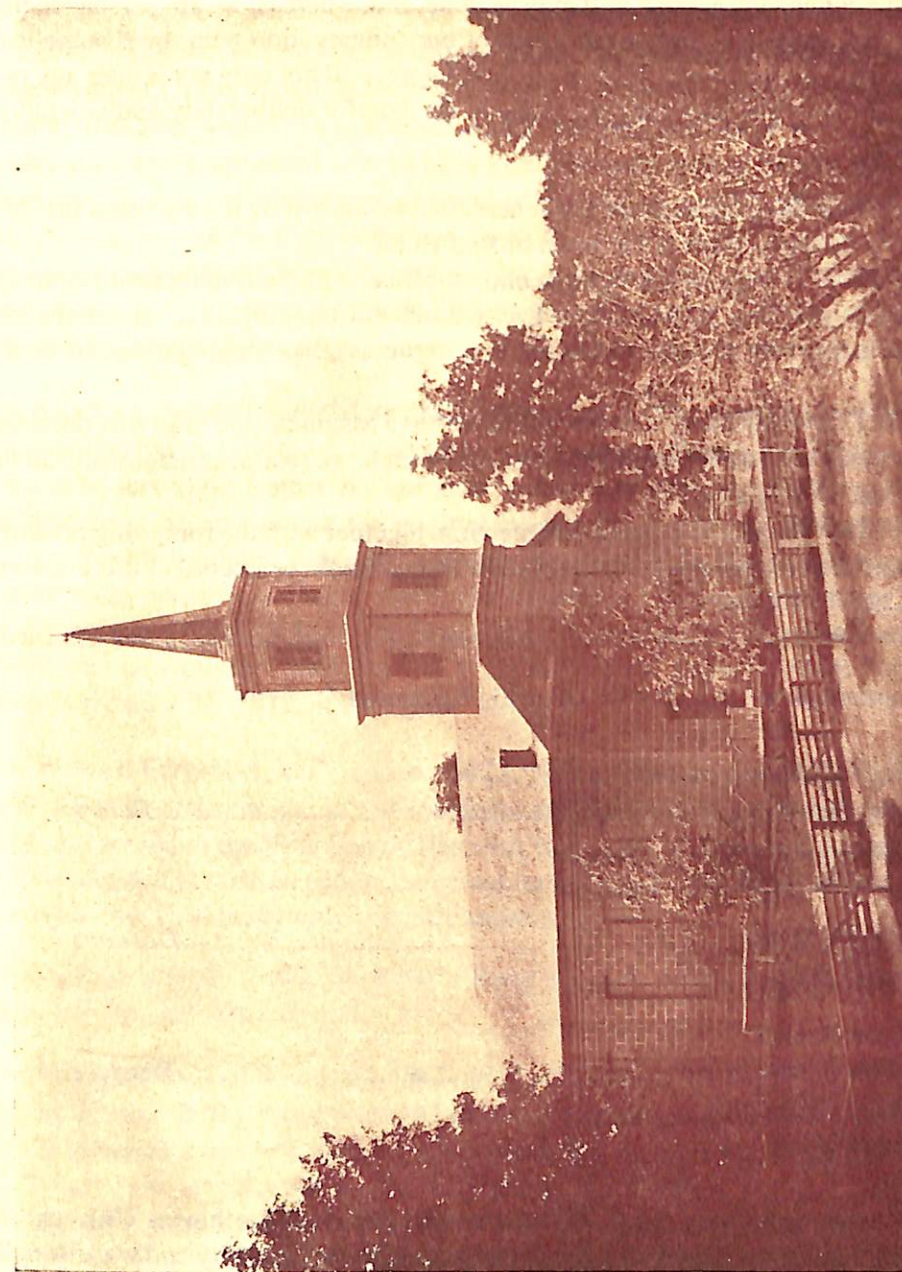
"The subject of forming a union with the Evangelical Lutheran church was discussed and in view of the inability of the congregation to sustain a German Reformed pastor, and of the fact that the pastoral services of a Lutheran clergyman have been obtained for some time past, by an arrangement with Ev. Lutheran church of St. Peter of Rhinebeck, as well as on account of other consideration, it was

"RESOLVED, That a committee consisting of Mr. Jacob Benner and Rev. Charles F. Schaeffer, be appointed to draft a preamble and resolutions expressive of the sense of this meeting, and that said committee report at an adjourned meeting to be held on the 7th day of March, 1846.

"March 7, 1846

"An adjourned meeting was held today in the church, agreeably to a resolution adopted at the last meeting. Mr. John Shook, Chairman, Mr. Jacob Benner, Secretary. The following preamble and resolutions were submitted by the Committee appointed for that purpose.

"WHEREAS, We, the members of the German Reformed Congregation of Lower Red Hook, Dutchess



Exterior of Church Built in 1834

County, N.Y., having been unable to sustain a Pastor of the German Reformed Church, and having been unconnected for some time with any Synod or other ecclesiastical body, now deem it proper and necessary to re-establish such a connection as soon as it may be done, and, whereas, we are persuaded that a change of our name and a full, entire and permanent union of our congregation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church, while we retain all our church property as heretofore, will not only not impair any of our rights, but be productive of many and important advantages, do therefor deliberately and solemnly adopt the following resolution:

"1. *RESOLVED*, That this congregation shall, hereafter, be known by the style and title of "The First Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of the town of Red Hook.

"2. *RESOLVED*, That We apply, through the church officers, to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of New York at its next meeting, to be received as a Lutheran congregation, under the care of said ecclesiastical body, in the same manner, and on the same terms as other congregations are connected with it.

"3. *RESOLVED*, That under the new name which we have assumed, and after this decision by which we become incorporated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church, we retain, as heretofore, all the property now belonging to the congregation.

"4. *RESOLVED*, That the proceedings of this meeting, together with the foregoing preamble, and the resolutions appended thereto, shall be entered into the Church Book, or Record of this congregation, and be signed by the Church officers.

"The above preamble and resolutions having been severally read, discussed and assented to, it was

"*RESOLVED* unanimously that they be adopted, Adjourned."

(Signed) James Adams

John Shook *Elders*

Peter V. Moore

Anthony Straat

John G. Schultz *Deacons*

Henry W.(?)

Jacob Benner

Jacob Barringer *Trustees*

Philip Allendorph

Jonas Mowl

In September of this same year, 1846, "The First Evangelical Lutheran Church" applied for membership into the New York Synod which met that year in New York City and was formally received by that body.

Since Red Hook had become a separate town in Dutchess county in 1812, the church was now known as the First Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of the town of Red Hook, Dutchess County.

PART II

FIVE GENERATIONS have made the history of the Church from its founding in 1715 until it came under the leadership of Lutheran pastors beginning in 1841. We have already related the events which led to the transition from a Reformed to a Lutheran Church. The five years from 1841 to 1846, when the Rev. N.W. Goertner ministered, appeared to have been a probationary period. During this time the congregation satisfied itself that it had nothing to lose and something to gain by affiliating with the Lutheran Church. Rev. Goertner went from Rhinebeck and Red Hook to Lockport, N.Y., and a year later entered the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. In his later years he was pastor of the College Church at Hamilton College and he was recognized as a church leader by Union College, which conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

The Rev. Charles F. Schaeffer ministered in Red Hook from 1846 to 1851 when failing health of Mrs. Schaeffer compelled him to relinquish his work here and move to Easton, Pa. He was a man of scholarly attainments and he served the Lutheran Church as Professor of Theology at Gettysburg Seminary from 1856 to 1864 when he became one of the original members of the faculty of the Lutheran Theological Seminary located at Philadelphia, where he was also Professor of Theology. His name is perpetuated in that institution today where the chapel called the Schaeffer-Ashmead Memorial Chapel stands as a testimony of the esteem in which he was held. He translated numerous German theological works into English and made many original contributions to the theological literature of his day. He was called to his reward on November 23, 1879, at the age of 72 years.

The Rev. William E. Strobel, D.D., succeeded Dr. Schaeffer as pastor in Red Hook and served from 1851 to 1860. Like his predecessor, he was interested in Christian education and previous to coming to Red Hook he had served as the Principal of Hartwick Seminary. When he relinquished his pastorate in Red Hook, he undertook to raise an endowment fund for Hartwick Seminary, but due to the Civil War his efforts resulted in that fund being only partially subscribed.

A historical side note: In 1860, St. Peter's Stone Church, which had started out linked to our congregation, left the New York Synod.

At the beginning of the Civil War, 1861-1863, the Rev. Nathan H. Cornell served as pastor. Concerning his ministry, he wrote, "during those years of intense civil commotion, it was difficult to engage men's hearts or hands in building up the Redeemer's Kingdom. But we were not altogether without prosperity. "The Rev. Cornell was responsible for the erection of the "Lecture Room," later called "Chapel." Considering the times, this was a great undertaking and from its successful completion, we may judge that this pastor must have had considerable influence during his brief ministry here.

In 1864 the Rev. Joseph H. Barclay came to Red Hook. He served for a period of four years, during which the name of the congregation was changed to St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Red Hook. The church building and also the organ were remodeled and improved during his pastorate.

In 1868, John Griffin Schultz, who attended Sunday School and Church in Red Hook at St. Paul's where he was a deacon, donated land and labor to build Memorial Lutheran Church in Rock City where he was a native. Rock City joined the Synod in 1873.

The Rev. William H. Luckenbach entered upon his ministry in 1869 and served until 1872. What progress was made during this time the records do not reveal. It is likely that efforts were directed toward reducing the indebtedness incurred in the extensive renovations under the previous pastorate, for a committee was appointed to solicit for that purpose. The Rev. Luckenbach later became President of the New York Synod, which would indicate that he was a man of outstanding qualities.

The Rev. Thomas T. Everett succeeded Pastor Luckenbach in 1872 and relinquished his pastorate here at the end of 1874. Before entering the ministry he was a journalist for more than a decade, writing for several New York and Pittsburgh dailies. Upon leaving Red Hook he assumed a pastorate in Dayton, Ohio, later entering the ministry of the Methodist Church, and 1887 he was given the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Washington and Lee University.

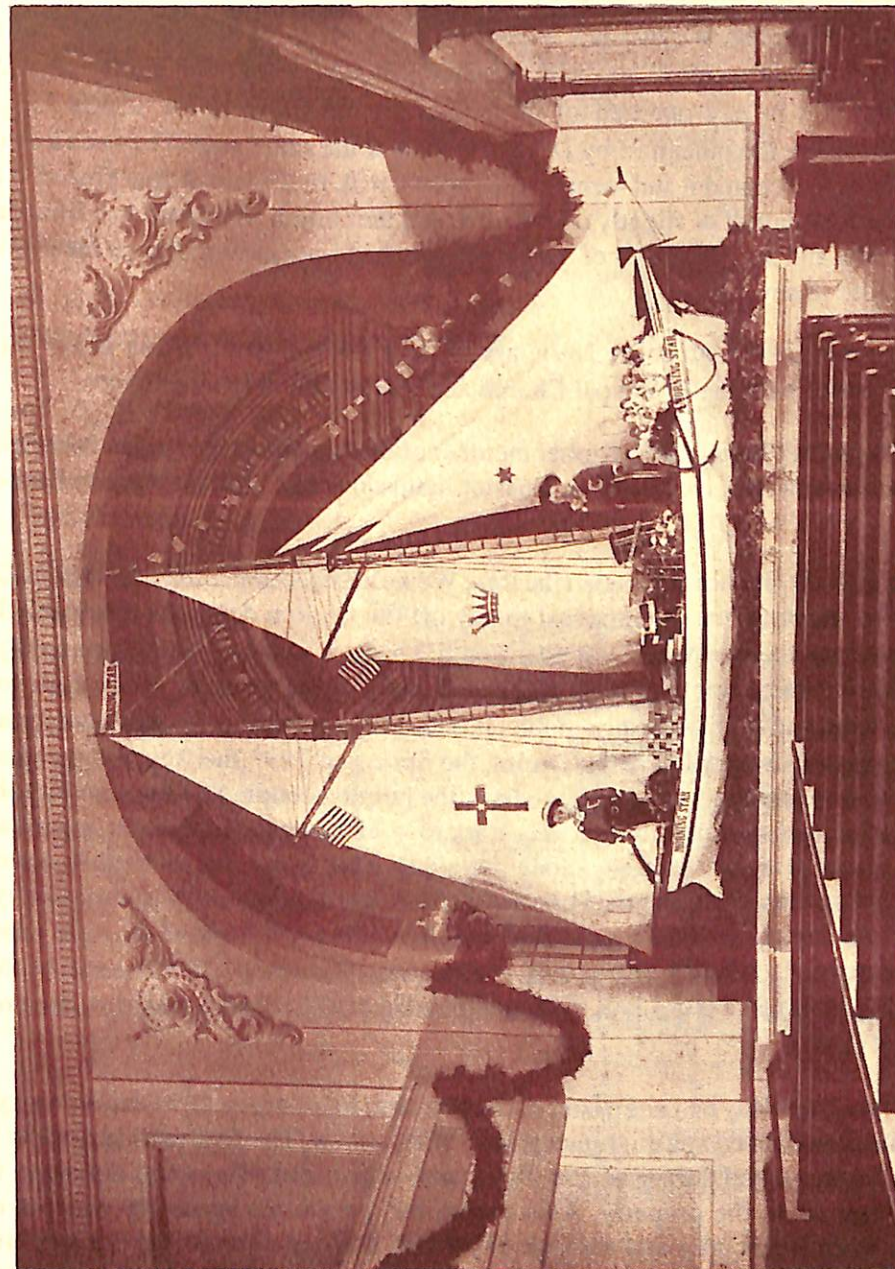
The congregation then called the Rev. George F. Stelling, D.D., who began his ministry August 1st, 1875. Services that were conducted by our pastor were held during this time in both Rock City and Barrytown in the Sylvania Chapel. A fund to secure a new organ was oversubscribed and the surplus funds were used to erect a new fence in front of the church and parsonage. Dr. Stelling stayed in Red Hook only two years, leaving in 1877 to accept a call to a church in Ohio.

The Rev. John Q. McAtee was called in the Fall of 1877 and began his ministry early in 1878. During his pastorate of about two years, a constitution was adopted; however, no such document can be located in the church records. The pastorate terminated in 1880.

After several brief pastorates, the congregation was blessed in the ministry of the Rev. Samuel A. Weikert who served from 1880 to 1890. These were ten years of intense activity on the part of both the pastor and the congregation. After his first year's ministry, the Rev. Weikert had so won the good will and co-operation of the congregation that they enlarged and repaired the lecture room and put a basement under it. Spurred by this achievement, and by the growth of the congregation, in April, 1884, the parish Hall, as we know it today, replaced the Chapel at a cost of \$2,300. The contract for this building is filed in the church records.

The need for repairing or replacing the church building became pressing in 1886, and the pastor was authorized to solicit funds for a new church. Over a period of two years he labored for a new church, and when the congregation met on August 8, 1888, he reported that he had raised the sum of \$10,500. Immediately the congregation voted to erect a new building at a cost not to exceed \$11,000. The building, however, cost \$19,207.63 when completed. The cornerstone of the church was laid on Sunday, August 4, 1889, and a full account of that event was published in the Red Hook Journal under date of Friday, August 9th. The paper devoted a column and a half to the ceremonies, from which the following facts were gleaned:

More than a thousand people gathered for the corner stone laying at 3:00 P.M., and the order of service



Interior of Church Built in 1834

is given in detail. The sermon was delivered by the Rev. W.H. Luckenbach, D.D., former pastor, who was then President of the New York Synod. The text was taken from Ephesians 2:20, "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone". The corner stone weighed 600 pounds and was hollowed out to contain a lead box in which were placed, beside the Bible, documents, papers and articles too numerous to mention. Sixteen clergymen were present, three of them making the trip from Pennsylvania.

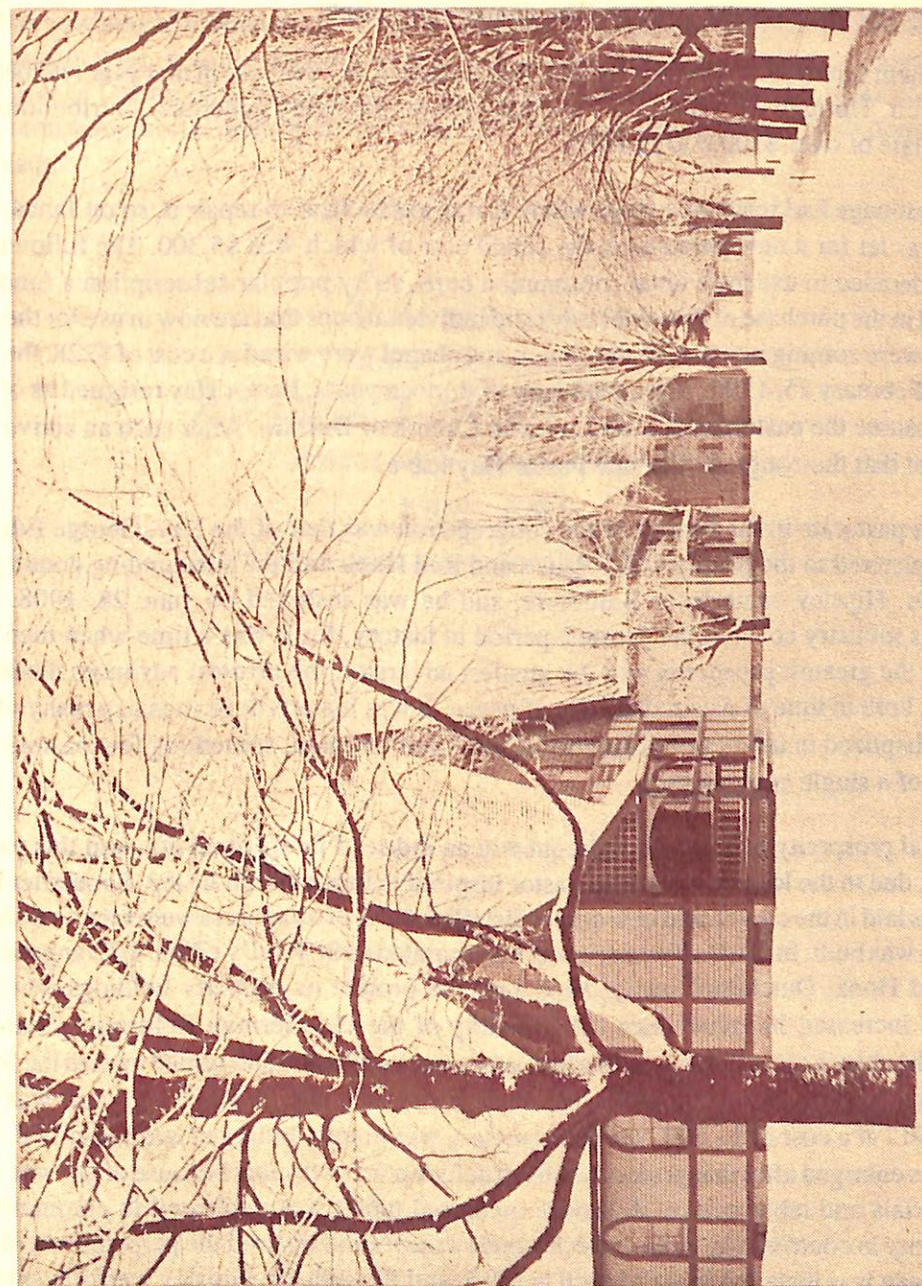
The Church was dedicated, Wednesday, September 12th, 1890. By December 1st, 1891, less than a year and a half after the corner stone was laid, the church stood free of debt. On October 28, 1891, Mr. Edward Martin offered to pay one-half of the remaining indebtedness of \$6,038.33, provided the congregation would raise the other half by December first of the same year. This was a challenge to the congregation, and they accepted it and went to work with a will. In the month that preceded the deadline, the congregation raised its half of slightly over \$3,000 and the church was again free from debt, a mighty testimony to the faith and the generosity of the people who had been giving of their means steadily to the church over a period of several years.

Pastor Weikert resigned March 29, 1891, asking that his resignation take effect on April 27th. Subsequently he united with the Episcopal Church and was ordained to its ministry.

On October 20, 1891, Philip Cole, a former member of St. Paul's, was ordained in the ministry of the Reformed Church in America. He served as a pastor in upstate New York settling in Rome from 1907-1940.

The Rev. Simon Peter Hughes succeeded the Rev. Weikert, accepting a call tendered on October 28th, 1891. It was at this meeting that the proposal to pay off the Church debt was made and the campaign launched to have the church free of debt within a month. The Rev. Hughes began his ministry in 1892 and concluded it in 1893. During this period the church roll was revised to include only those members who were at the time in an active relationship to the church. The cemetery also expanded by acquiring, by purchase, some lots and developing them. During the Spring of 1893 the Rev. Hughes became ill and during his absence arrangements were made to have the pulpit occupied by the pastor of the Methodist Church of Red Hook, that church finding it necessary to worship elsewhere while their new church was in process of erection. The two congregations got along well under the temporary arrangement, the Methodist congregation taking the offering one Sunday and the Lutheran congregation taking the offering the next. Upon the completion of the Methodist Church building, the Methodists were presented with a pulpit by the members of St. Paul's as a gesture of Christian fellowship. Continued ill health compelled the Rev. Hughes to tender his resignation, effective January 1, 1894, and it was with deep regret that the congregation accepted it.

The Rev. Edward Grier Hay became pastor of the church in February of 1894. His ministry was marked by advances in the material and spiritual state of the congregation. The Ladies' Aid Society was founded on September 12th, 1894, and during its first five years contributed a thousand dollars to the church in cash and improvements to the property. Also during this period the cemetery was put on a steadily improving basis, both financially and through expansion and regular care of the property. Mr. W.S. Massoneau was for many years the chairman of the Cemetery Committee and he spared no time or effort to advance the interest of the cemetery.



CIRCA 1900

On July 7, 1900, the fire department had to be called to extinguish a blaze in the church steeple when it was struck by lightning during a storm. The damage was slight.

An endowment fund was authorized by the church council in 1902 and in that year two bequests were left to the church. Through the years, this fund has grown with many generous contributions, including the Wildey Estate of over \$100,000 in 1988.

The old parsonage had reached a stage where it was impractical to repair it, so on January 18, 1903, the contract was let for a new parsonage, the actual cost of which was \$5,300. The following year the congregation decided to use individual communion cups, so by popular subscription a fund was raised which resulted in the purchase of the silver trays and individual cups that are now in use for the Sacrament. Electric lights were coming into use, so the church and chapel were wired at a cost of \$228, the work being completed on February 25, 1906. After a ministry of thirteen years, Pastor Hay resigned as of September 22, 1907, to assume the pastorate of Zion Lutheran Church of Buffalo. After such an active ministry, it was with regret that the congregation saw Pastor Hay leave.

The longest pastorate in the history of the congregation was that of the Rev. George Edgar Hipsley, D.D., who ministered to the people of St. Paul's and Red Hook and the surrounding country for thirty-three years. Dr. Hipsley came from Baltimore, and he was installed on June 28, 1908. Everything considered, his ministry covered the greatest period in history, for it was a time when men's faith was challenged by the greatest prosperity and the greatest adversity, the greatest advances made by science and invention, both in time of war and in time of peace. It was his privilege to marry many of the people whom he had baptized in infancy, and later to baptize their children, something few pastors ever live to see in the life of a single congregation.

The material prosperity of a church is frequently an index of its spiritual life, and this pastorate was richly blessed, due to the loyalty which the pastor inspired in those whom he led. Soon after his coming, a new floor was laid in the church and new carpet installed. Gifts of altar brass were received and dedicated and a new barn was built. In 1918, the church was incorporated as St. Paul's (Zion's) Evangelical Lutheran Church of Red Hook, Dutchess County, New York, to protect its property holdings which had been expanded and increased in value since the founding of the old German Reformed Church which it superseded. The church records from the earliest times were collected and turned over to the State Library for safe keeping, and photostatic copies were made for church use. A receiving vault was built in the cemetery in 1917 at a cost of \$1,000, and the cemetery was greatly enlarged and beautified. In 1919 the Parish Hall was enlarged after that project had been deferred for two years because of the war which made building materials and labor scarce. A bronze memorial tablet was dedicated to commemorate those whose generosity in contributing to the church's endowment fund insured the perpetuation of the church. A new pipe organ was installed in the church in 1915, and through Dr. Hipsley's efforts, one-half of the cost of the organ, \$1000, was a gift of the late industrialist Andrew Carnegie.

The choir was vested and during this period the services of Mr. Percy R. Barnes were secured as organist and choir master, and he served alongside of Dr. Hipsley for twenty years. In the last year of his

ministry Dr. Hipsley joined with the other local pastors in teaching a weekly class in religion in the high school, and he saw sound motion pictures introduced into the Sunday School as a teaching medium. In view of these activities, it is not difficult to understand why Hartwick Seminary conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1915. Following his death on March 10, 1941, the congregation dedicated a bronze memorial tablet to his memory inscribed with the message, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

*To the glory of God
and in memory of
REV. GEORGE EDGAR HIPSLEY, D.D.
Pastor of St. Paul's Church
1908 - 1941
"Well done thou good and faithful servant".*

Pastors of Zion Reformed Church

From Its Founding in 1715 Until it Affiliated With
The Lutheran Church in 1841

1. Rev. John Frederick Haeger	1715 - 1730
2. Rev. George Michael Weiss	1730 - 1735
3. Rev. George Wilhelm Mancius	1735 - 1742
4. Rev. George Michael Weiss	1742 - 1746
5. Rev. Casper Ludwig Schnorr	1746 - 1748
6. Rev. George Wilhelm Mancius	1748 - 1755
7. Rev. Johann Casper Rubel	1755 - 1759
8. Rev. George Wilhelm Mancius	1759 - 1762
9. Rev. Johannes Casparus Freyenmoet	(?)
10. Rev. Gerhard Daniel Koch	1763 - 1791
11. Rev. Johann Daniel Schaefer	1794 - 1799
12. Rev. Valentine Rudiger Fox	1802 - 1823
13. Rev. John Rudy	1823 - 1835
14. Rev. Cornelius Gates	1836 - 1840
15. Rev. Jacob William Hangem	1840 - 1841
16. Rev. Nicholas Westerman Goertner	1841 - 1845



Pastors of St. Peter's Lutheran Church (Stone Church)

From the Time of the Union Church's Founding
In 1715 Until 1845

1. Rev. Joshua Kocherthal	1715 - 1719
2. Rev. Justus Falckner	1720 - 1723
3. Rev. William Christopher Berckenmeyer	1725 - 1733
4. Rev. Johannes Spahler	1733 - 1736
5. Rev. William Christopher Berckenmeyer	1736 - 1746
6. Rev. John Christopher Hartwick	1746 - 1757
7. Rev. John Frederick Reis	1760 - 1783
8. Rev. George Heinrich Pfeiffer	1784 - 1798
9. Rev. Frederick Henry Quitman	1798 - 1828
10. Rev. William John Eyer	1828 - 1836
11. Rev. Nicholas Westerman Goertner	1837 - 1845

PART III

THE CLOSE of Dr. Hipsley's pastorate coincides with the close of the first century of St. Paul's history as a distinctly Lutheran Church in Red Hook. The congregation extended a call on March 13, 1941, to the Rev. Walter J. Bielitz of Germantown, N.Y., who had occupied the pulpit for several months during the illness of Dr. Hipsley in addition to his pastorate in Germantown. In preparation for the new pastor's settlement in the community, the congregation voluntarily made extensive renovations in the parsonage.

Pastor Bielitz entered upon his ministry on June 1, 1941, and was installed on June 18th. In April of 1941 the Rock City Congregation expressed the desire to be released from its affiliation with St. Paul's and this release was granted. In December of that year the congregation voted the adoption of a new constitution and by-laws, thereby changing the church council from 6 trustees, 4 elders and 4 deacons to 12 councilmen with no distinctive titles. Twelve new councilmen were voted upon at the annual congregational meeting held January 9, 1942. Rev. Bielitz also wrote the first history booklet of St. Paul's, and much of his information is the basis for this booklet.

In May of 1942 the American Red Cross was granted permission to use the northeast Sunday School room in the Chapel, to be fitted by them, as an emergency room for the duration of World War II. Pastor Walter J. Bielitz resigned as pastor to report for active duty as a Chaplain, 1st Lieut. in the Army of the United States, effective October 30, 1942.

After several candidates, a call was given on December 26, 1942 to the Rev. Herman F. Vespers of St. John's Lutheran Church, Canajoharie, N.Y., to become our next pastor. Pastor Vespers preached his first sermon on February 21, 1943. Due to the war fuel shortage, only the church was heated and Sunday School met regularly there. In 1945 the Dodd house on the south side of the church, which had been purchased earlier, was extensively remodeled and became the home of the cemetery superintendent. During this time the annual turkey dinner, for which St. Paul's became well known throughout the county, was still being held in November. A strawberry festival was held in June as well, and these contributed greatly to the church treasury. Another revenue source was when the Red Hook Central School rented out rooms for the kindergarten when the population grew rapidly.

The Luther League was formed in 1947 and became a vehicle for service and fellowship for the youth of the church throughout the years.

During the year 1947 extensive repairs to the church property, both the Parish Hall and church proper, were completed, including the electrifying and complete overhaul of the pipe organ and the building of a new chimney on the church. A special offering to the building fund, as well as a donation from the Ladies' Aid Society, helped defray the cost. The fuel shortage continued into 1948 and again the Parish Hall was left unheated. The situation became so acute that year, however, that the heat was turned off during the week in the church as well. But as ice formed in the church, and the interior paint and furnishings were in danger of deteriorating, the heat had to be turned on again.

Rev. Thomas T. Everett

1872 - 1874



Rev. George F. Stelling, D.D.

1875 - 1877



Rev. Samuel A. Weikert

1880 - 1891



Rev. Simon Peter Hughes

1892 - 1893



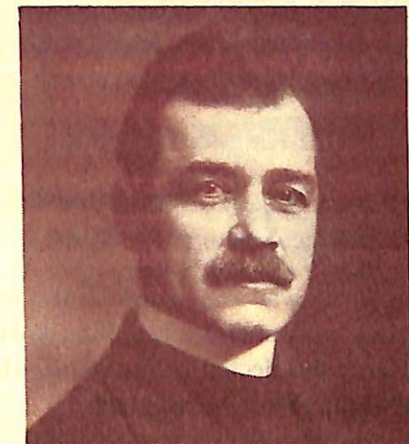
Rev. Edward Grier Hay

1894 - 1907



Rev. George Edgar Hipsley, D.D.

1908 - 1941



Over \$15,000 was expended to repair and improve the church properties in anticipation of the rededication of the church and the 235th anniversary of the congregation in 1950. The interior of the church was painted, new lights were put in the chancel, new carpeting was installed, a new choir curtain was purchased, brick repair work was completed, and many memorial donations were gratefully accepted. These donations included a red velvet dossal, kneeling cushions, a light at the chancel, bronze floor lamps, arm chairs, a wooden table, chancel chairs, and a vase. Many of them were given in memory of Pastor Hipsley.

Pastor Vespers terminated his pastoral duties on January 1, 1954, when he accepted a call to serve St. Paul's Lutheran Church at Terryville, Connecticut.

A call was issued to the Rev. Paul E. Henry, Sr. of Middleton, N.Y., and he was installed as Pastor on May 23, 1954. During his ministry the week-day school for religious training for all Protestant children in the area was begun. A public relations campaign was launched, including the sign outside the church and those placed at the entrances to town, which resulted in increased membership and commitment. The free will Thanksgiving offering was substituted as a replacement for the annual turkey dinner. The offering totaled just \$15 less than the best income for the dinners and so the fifty year old turkey dinners came to an end.

Many indoor and outdoor improvements were completed with congregational enthusiasm. Outdoor lights and spotlights were installed and the parking lot was expanded. The altar candles in the church were changed from electric candles to real candles and the acolyte system was introduced. Candlelight was added to the Christmas Eve service.

We celebrated our 240th anniversary in September, 1955, with a special service and the Rev. Dr. David Jaxheimer was the anniversary speaker. The year 1957 saw the arrival of 200 red hymnals containing the new Order of Service adopted by the United Lutheran Church of America. The will of Mrs. Juliana Kort provided the means to modernize the area beneath the church into a finished room for a church time nursery, a choir vestment room, and two bathrooms. Dedication of the Kort Room was held on May 10, 1959.

The electronic Allen organ, which we use now, replaced the pipe organ. The pipes of the old pipe organ were all removed from behind the pipe screen, and sound boxes were put there.

When the Rhinecliff-Kingston Bridge was dedicated in 1957, Pastor Henry led the invocation.

Pastor Henry's son, Paul, Jr., was the first child to live in the parsonage. He is also the first, and so far only, son of the congregation to be Ordained as a Lutheran minister.

While Pastor Henry was here, a new Synod was formed within the Lutheran Church. The "Lutheran Church in America" was created when three and one-quarter million members merged from four church bodies. Pastor Henry was elected to the executive board of the New York Synod and helped St. Paul's write their new constitution before he resigned.

Pastor Henry left on June 1, 1963, to accept a call to Zion's Lutheran Church in Syracuse, New York



Exterior of Church Built in 1890

as other pastors from St. Paul's had done before him. He served on the board of trustees at Hartwick College from 1952-1972, and in 1987, Hartwick College conferred upon him the Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

The next pastor at St. Paul's was the Rev. William Feickert, who preached his first sermon on January 26, 1964. Under his pastorate, the church proper underwent extensive remodeling. In 1967, while the interior of the church was painted, the congregation commissioned an artist, Mr. A. Hohensteiner, to paint the chancel walls and ceiling and the baptismal font wall with religious symbols. New red carpeting was installed as well as new lighting fixtures and a hanging eternal light in the chancel. This added greatly to the total beauty of God's house.

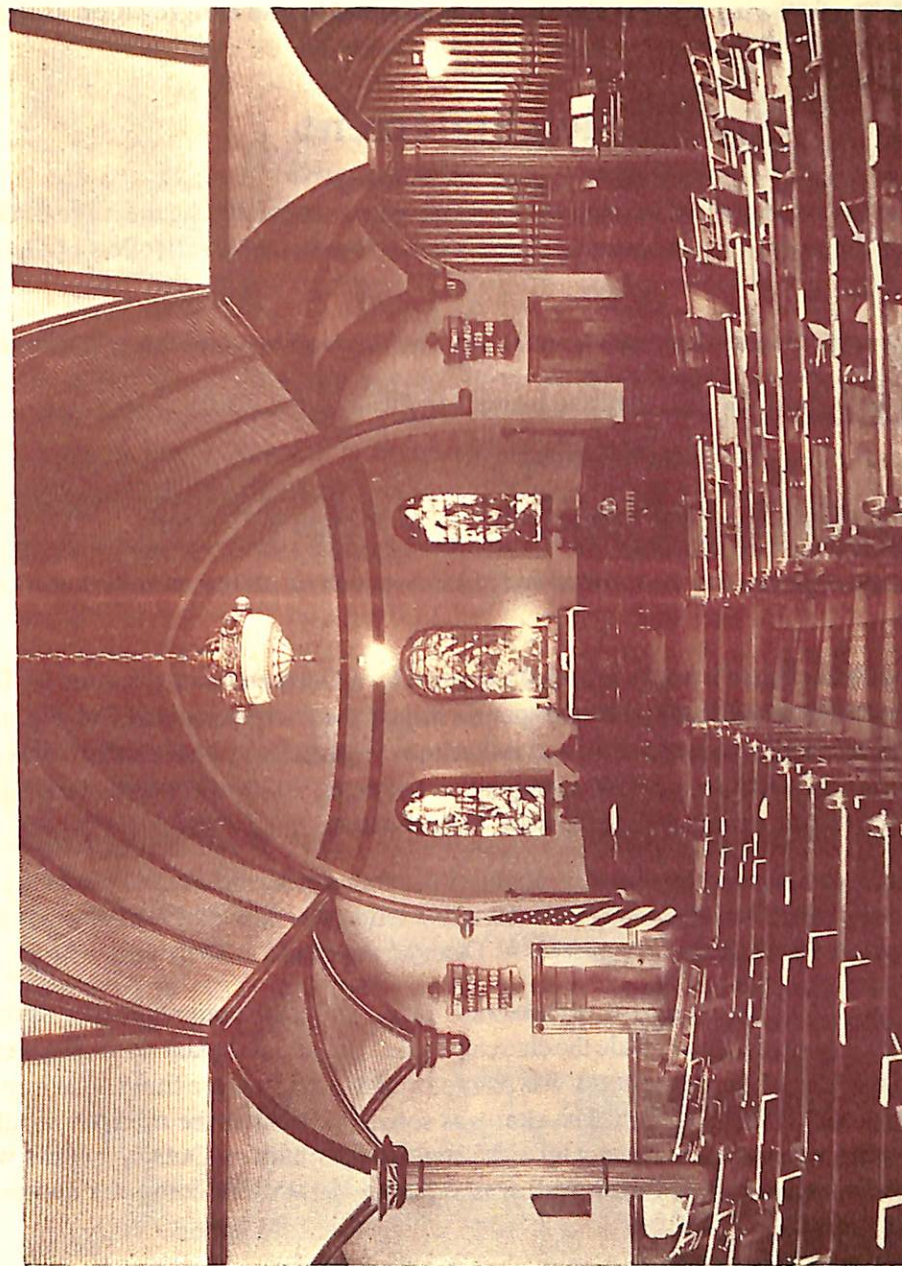
The 250th anniversary of St. Paul's was celebrated in 1965 with special events from May to December. Worship services with the three former pastors - Pastor Bielitz, Pastor Vespers, and Pastor Henry - commemorated the event. There were also special services with the Rev. David Gaise, .D.D. of Kingston who is now the Synod Historian, and Rev. Robert Hershey of New York City. The President of the New York Synod, the Rev. Alfred Beck, D.D. led the Anniversary service in September. Pastor Feickert left St. Paul's in 1970 and returned to Ohio. In September of 1985, Pastor Feickert had the honor of offering the opening prayer at the First Session of the 99th Congress of the United States in the U.S. House of Representatives as the visiting Chaplain.

The church was without a Pastor for almost one year. On December 13, 1970, the congregation accepted the Rev. Ferdinand K.W. Haase as its pastor. Once again there were changes in the properties and in the congregational life.

The cemetery committee working under the able leadership of Warren Rockefeller developed and landscaped part of the existing property behind the superintendent's house. The exterior of the Parish Hall was painted in 1975 by volunteer help and the Luther League painted the interior. In 1976, a roof fund was set up and donations were received to have a new asphalt shingle roof installed on the church, replacing the original slate roof. The cost was \$8,900. Improvements were also made in the interior of the parsonage.

In the fuel crisis, to save money, the parish hall was used only for Sunday School and special functions. The Kort Room was used for church meetings. The green hymnals that we still use now were ordered. A pouring chalice was dedicated for communion, and the eternal light was installed.

In 1972, Mrs. Madeline Schoelpple was the first woman elected to serve on the church council, paving the way for many other women to follow. A church scholarship fund was established and a scholarship committee formed to administer this fund. Ten percent of the interest from endowments is added each year to this fund to aid deserving students in obtaining an education, and thus far, about twenty-five students have received scholarships.



Interior of Church Built in 1890

The Parish Life and Ministry Program was adopted by the congregation and the shepharding program was first initiated. The following mission statement was adopted by the congregation as the goal of St. Paul's:

Mission Statement

St. Paul's Lutheran Church is a joyful fellowship of people who, reached by the message of God's Grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit, respond to Christ's call to service as a reflection of God's love. Its purpose shall be:

1. To preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and worship God by celebrating His love and glory.
2. To enable and assist individuals to seek and practice the will of the Lord.
3. To revitalize itself through renewed fellowship.
4. To witness to Christ's love and redemption, verbally and through our actions.
5. To be sensitive and responsive to the spiritual and physical needs of all our members, our community, and the world.

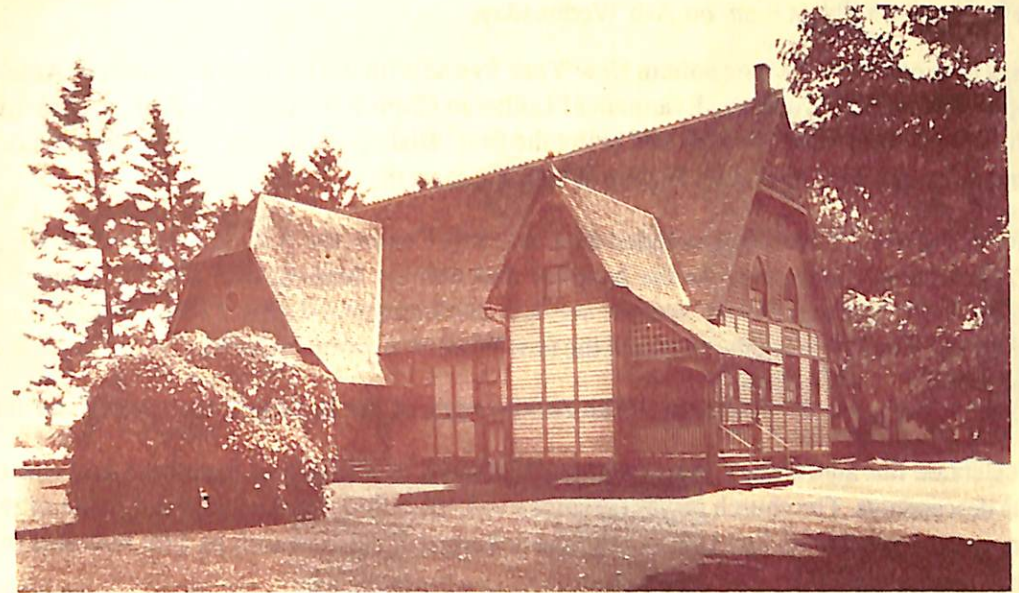
Outreach during Pastor Haase's tenure included a concert by a German band, a lecture by Dr. Kubler-Ross, help with the Boat family in Red Hook, and sponsorship of the Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts who met in the Parish Hall. Services were started at the local skilled nursing homes and hospitals. It was with regret that the congregation accepted Pastor Haase's resignation for June, 1979 to accept a call to the Church of the Reformation, a German/English congregation in Rochester.

Accepting a call in February, 1980, the Rev. Richard B. Holzer became the 29th pastor to serve St. Paul's. In February this year, we celebrated Pastor Holzer's tenth year in Red Hook as part of the 275th anniversary celebration. Pastor Holzer also serves as Dean of the Hudson District.

It seems there are always property repairs to make and in the 1980's the congregation responded to the need once again. Much work was done inside the church proper. The stained glass windows were covered with lexan for \$7000. The interior of the church was painted and the floors were finished at a cost of about \$13,000. Fans were installed in the church. The altar was separated so that the minister would face the congregation. Beautiful wooden rails were put up at the steps to the chancel. Outside gutters were added and the parking lot was repaved. The Parish Hall was sided for \$9,950. A computer and copier were purchased.

To help with these costs, fund raisers were many and varied. There were auctions, bazaars, special dinners, and much extra giving on the part of the congregation. Besides raising needed funds, these activities afford much fun to willing workers.

Changes have taken place within the spiritual life also. Weekly communion is celebrated. Ashes are



Chapel Built in 1884
Enlarged in 1919



Parsonage Built in 1903

now used for those who want them on Ash Wednesday.

A change took place in the Metropolitan New York Synod with the Lutheran Church in America when it was part of the merger to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. A new constitution was created. In 1988, St. Paul's had the honor of being the first "Bishop's Church" in the new Synod. Special services and meetings were held with Bishop William Lazareth.

Community use of the Parish Hall included the Latch Key Center, the A.A. group, and the River Valley School. Choir festivals, visitations to the hospital and nursing homes, and the Christmas Tea have continued. In 1985, a banquet and special service commemorated the 270th Anniversary of the congregation. The women of the church joined the new Women's group in the ELCA, called the WELCA.

On August 6, 1989, we celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the laying of the church cornerstone.

As we celebrate this anniversary year, membership stands at 150 active members and some of them are Palatine descendants. The church property, valued at \$1,500,000., makes St. Paul's one of the largest landholders in the township of Red Hook. The yearly budget for the church in \$68,806 and this year's Benevolence pledge is \$8000.

The year is now 1990, the 275th anniversary of the congregation of St. Paul's. Special activities have been planned for each month and include commemorative services and festive parties, musical events, a tree planting ceremony led by the Sunday School, a Homecoming, and anniversary banquet. Returning to participate are Pastor Henry and Pastor Haase, and invited guest pastors who will help us celebrate are Pastor Paul E. Henry, Jr., Pastor David Gaise, D.D., and the Rev. Dr. William Lazareth, Bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod of the ELCA.

The year began with an oral history and birthday cake. A beautiful display cabinet given in honor of Lucille Braig by Patsy and Craig Vogel is set up with memorabilia of times past. The church has a commemorative plate for sale and special bulletins that have a sketch of the church on the cover.

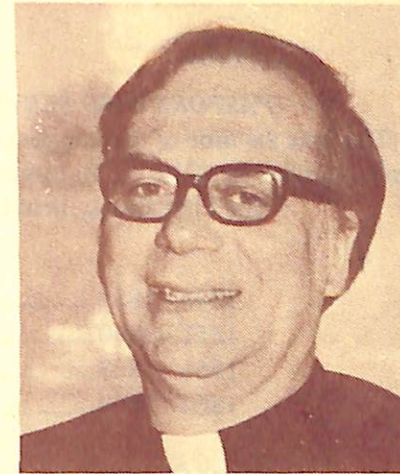
About eleven generations have come and gone and St. Paul's still moves forward. We are a church of people engaged in a continuous ministry of God's word and sacraments. When searching the church records, one can see that St. Paul's has been a growing church, in material ways as well as spiritual ways. The congregation of St. Paul's is proud to be a part of a community rich in Lutheran history as well as American history.

Contributors for this history booklet:

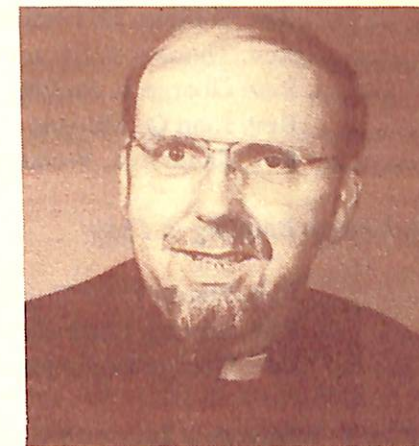
Rev. Walter Bielitz, 1941
Warren Rockefeller, 1976
Helen Rockefeller, 1976
Lucille Braig, 1976
Barbara Delamater, 1976
Lorraine Strandberg, 1990



Rev. Herman F. Vespers



Rev. Ferdinand K.W. Haase, S.T.M.



Rev. Richard B. Holzer



Rev. Walter J. Bielitz



Rev. Paul E. Henry, Sr., D.D.

PASTORS WHO SERVED THIS CHURCH ON THIS SITE SINCE 1845

(This was the time of the merger of St. Peter's Lutheran Church with Zion Reformed Church)

Name Changed: In 1846, the Reformed Church joined the Lutheran Synod of New York and became
The First Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of the town of Red Hook

1846 - 1851Rev. Charles F. Schaffer, D.D.
1851 - 1860Rev. Charles E. Strobel, D.D.
1861 - 1863Rev. Nathan H. Cornell
1864 - 1869Rev. Joseph H. Barclay

Name Changed: St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Red Hook

1869 - 1872Rev. William H. Luckenback, D.D.
1872 - 1874Rev. Thomas T. Everett, D.D.
1875 - 1877Rev. George E. Stelling, D.D.
1878 - 1880Rev. John Q. McAtee
1880 - 1891Rev. Samuel A. Weikert

New Church Building in 1889

1891 - 1894Rev. Simon Peter Hughes
1894 - 1907Rev. Edward Grier Hay
1908 - 1941Rev. George Edgar Hipsley, D.D.

Name Changed: St. Paul's (Zion's) Evangelical Lutheran Church of Red Hook,
Dutchess County, New York

*PASTORS WHO HAVE SERVED ST. PAUL'S (ZION'S) EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF RED HOOK, NEW YORK, SINCE 1941*

1941 - 1942Rev. Walter J. Bielitz
1943 - 1954Rev. Herman F. Vespers
1954 - 1963Rev. Paul E. Henry, Sr., D.D.
1964 - 1970Rev. William Feickert
1970 - 1979Rev. Ferdinand K.W. Haase, S.T.M.
1980 -Rev. Richard B. Holzer