

The History of Mt. Zion United Church of Christ

Compiled by Carlton Spangler for Rally Day – October 19, 1997

MT. ZION REFORMED (UCC) CONGREGATION

In this age of electronics and mounds of data and paper, it is hard to realize that the actual beginning of the Mt. Zion Reformed Congregation is hidden in antiquity. It is believed that early pioneers in this area met on the Lord's Day in their homes for worship before any active congregation was organized.

However, the minutes of an adjourned meeting of Zion Classis held in the Timble Springs Church on June 21, 1852, state, "Daniel Byert and William Spangler laid before Classis a document stating the Rev. F. W. Vandersloot had organized a congregation four and one-half miles northeast of York to be called Mt. Zion Church." After the organization, the congregation held an election for Pastor, which resulted in choosing the Rev. F. Vandersloot. The commissioners present requested Classis, in the name of the Congregation, to confirm this action and constitute the Mt. Zion Congregation a part of the Windsor Charge.

"After mature deliberation, Classis resolved; that, in as much as there is no regular report before us from the Committee appointed by Classis at its last annual meeting on May 9, 1851, to effect said organization, the commissioners' request cannot be complied with." Accordingly, the congregation must have been informally organized prior to May 9, 1851.

At the next meeting of Classis, held in Hanover on May 20, 1853, Rev. Samuel Gutelius, who was a member of the committee appointed by Classis to see the organization of the Mt. Zion Congregation, reported that the congregation had been officially recognized by him on April 29, 1853, and that the Rev. Vandersloot was chosen as pastor; Daniel Byert, Elder; and William Spangler, Deacon. This action was confirmed by Classis and the Mt. Zion Congregation was attached to the Windsor Charge, consisting of Staleys, Freysville, Saddlers and Bleimeyers in addition to Mt. Zion.

The following persons are named in the minutes of Classis as entering into the organization: Michael Dietz and wife, Nancy; Daniel Byert; Adam Docherty and wife, Lillian; Zacharias Spangler; George Corm; Henry Picken and wife, Catharine; and Zacharias Miler and wife, Catharine.

The Rev. F. W. Vandersloot remained as pastor until 1860 when, at the annual meeting of Classis at Newport, May 11, 1860, Mt. Zion became a part of the Liverpool Charge, consisting of Quickel's Starview, Freysville, New Salem, and Mt. Zion. The Rev. David Bossler was pastor.

Still later, the churches were realigned by Classis; and at its annual meeting, May 13, 1867, Mt. Zion together with Quickel's, Starview, New Salem, and Zeiglers were constituted as the Trinity Charge. This charge was served by the Rev. P. Smith. The Mt. Zion Church was incorporated on September 9, 1867. Very few records are available for the time period from 1860 to 1870, probably due to the upheaval of the Civil War.

Although Mt. Zion remained a part of the Trinity Charge until 1882, the congregation was supplied from 1870 by the Rev. Dr. Aaron Wanner, he being appointed yearly by Classis. This relationship continued until May 30, 1882, when Mt. Zion requested to be attached to the Kreutz Creek Charge, at which time Dr. Wanner labored faithfully until his death on June 23, 1894.

The Rev. Gideon P. Fischer became pastor of this Charge in 1895 and remained until 1901. He was an incessant worker with an optimistic spirit, and with his persistence and pluck he strengthened the Charge. During his ministry, the Mt. Zion Church, which had been struck by a cyclone and greatly damaged, was rebuilt, painted outside, beautifully frescoed inside, and paid for. According to his pastoral record, he added 74 members to the roll at Mt. Zion. So, we can see that Mt. Zion had its high plateau, as well as its low points.

On December 1, 1901, the Kreutz Creek Charge elected the Rev. William Korn, Ph. D., as pastor. During his pastorate, Dr. Korn was very active in the work of Classis, serving as Chairman of the Reconstruction Committee and on Missions within the bounds of Classis. He resigned as pastor of this charge on January 19, 1907, to accept a call from the New Oxford Charge.

The Rev. Edwin M. Sando succeeded Dr. Korn and began his work on May 16, 1907. He resigned in May 1913 when he took up his work in Trinity Church at Tamaqua, PA. However, he accepted a second call to the Kreutz Creek Charge on July 20, 1913, and was installed in the Mt. Zion Church on September 7, 1913. Rev. Sando served faithfully and efficiently until January 5, 1915, when Classis detached from Mt. Zion from the Kreutz Creek Charge and joined it with Jacobus, Salem, Quickel's, and Starview to be known as the Mt. Zion Charge. The Rev. John J. Stauffer served as the pastor until March 20, 1920, when he submitted his resignation effective May 1, 1920; however, he continued to serve until a new pastor could be found. Several candidates were interviewed, and in December 1920, the Rev. Clark W. Heller preached trial sermons and on February 10, 1921, began his work at Mt. Zion.

During Rev. Heller's ministry, the Charge purchased parsonage at 212 W. Jackson Street, York, PA, which was used until June, 1942. Rev. Heller served the charge diligently until February 28, 1929. He was succeeded by the Rev. Paul I. Kuntz who served during the Depression years until June 1, 1939, when he was forced to resign.

On August 1, 1939, the Charge called the Rev. Arthur L. Grove and under his leadership the Charge again began to grow both physically and spiritually. In 1942, Salem and Jacobus withdrew from the Charge, leaving Quickel's, Starview, and Mt.

Zion and with this change, Rev. Grove resigned on April 30, 1942, to accept a call from Zion Church, York.

Since Mt. Zion was near the Seminary in Lancaster, a number of middler students supplied the Charge until the Rev. Robert Olewiler was named the regular supply pastor. He served in this capacity until February 15, 1945, when he resigned to accept a call from the Lock Haven Reformed Church.

The Rev. Marlin T. Schaeffer was called to the Charge on March 4, 1945. With his coming, the Charge purchased the parsonage at 1818 North Sherman Street at a cost of \$8500. Rev. Schaeffer served well until November 1, 1947, when he resigned.

At this time, the Rev. C. L. Osenbach, Tower City, was extended the call and became pastor of Mt. Zion Charge. The best remembrance of his pastorate is the softball rivalry between the churches of the community. During his pastorate, Mt. Zion celebrated its 100th Anniversary with special services and ground was broken for the addition of Sunday School rooms to the Mt. Zion Lutheran and Reformed Church. Rev. Osenbach resigned on April 15, 1952, to accept a call to Salem Church in Roherstown, Lancaster County.

The Rev. Jack Busler assumed the pastorate of Mt. Zion in 1952, and during the week of June 1st to 5th, the new addition to the Mt. Zion Lutheran and Reformed Church was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies. After serving about a year, Rev. Busler resigned due to dissension in the Union Church and the financial difficulties being encountered by the Reformed Congregation. Several months after his resignation, Rev. Busler was fatally injured by a hit and run driver while directing traffic around a tree that had fallen during a storm.

The years of 1953 and 1954 were years of rumors, meetings, bitter feelings, and a turning point in the congregation's history. In the early part of 1953, because of the imbalance in membership in the Union Church, the Reformed Congregation had financial difficulties and talks of a merger were rampant. However, Synod stepped in, and in the absence of a spiritual leader, appointed Rev. Grove to act in its behalf.

In November 1953, the Commission on Welfare of the Union Church was called in and the process of the dissolution of the Union Church began. On April 29, 1954, after many meetings, some of which were rather heated, the consistory voted to place the subject of the dissolution to a congregational vote. The balance of 1954 was spent in determining the equity of each congregation and terms of settlement.

On January 17, 1955, the congregation voted to dissolve the Union Church at Mt. Zion and became a full time congregation on its own in the Hively's area. Acting with Rev. Alfred Robinson of Faith Reformed Church and the Board of National Missions, as well as the Rev. Moyer, Mt. Zion Charge was also dissolved with Mt. Zion being one congregation and Quickel's and Starview being the other congregation. Mt. Zion congregation purchased the parsonage at 1818 North Sherman Street.

While all these negotiations were in process, the spiritual needs of the congregation were met by a young man from the seminary named Rev. Ted Saylor. Despite the fact that he was also a student with studies, he did an excellent job and served the congregation well.

At this time, the Trustees of Hively's Sunday School granted the congregation permission to use the Chapel for Worship Services until it secured its own building. Several sites in the community were studied, namely; the Charles Cunningham home on the corner of Sherman Street and Ridgewood Road, the Clayton Spangler estate on Ridgewood Road and the Ralph Hoover farm, where the Commonwealth Fire House is now located.

On November 6, 1955, a call was extended to the Rev. Gerald F. Kummer of Attica, New York, to become Mt. Zion's first full-time pastor. The call was accepted and on February 1, 1956, he began his duties. In February, a used organ was purchased for the sum of \$650 and was stored for later use. On March 31, 1956, the Clayton Spangler tract was purchased and May 19th was designated as a work day to remove the log house which stood on the property.

Clarence Forrer was hired on April 26, 1956, to draw up plans and specifications for a new sanctuary and on August 4, 1956, the congregation accepted the plans for the new building. The building committee proceeded to advertise for bids to erect the building with ground being broken on December 30, 1956, and construction beginning in March of 1957.

After watching things take place for approximately nine months, on Christmas Eve 1957, Mt. Zion Congregation worshipped in their new sanctuary for the first time. Dedication of the \$102,000 building was held during the week of January 5 to 12, 1958, with many of the former pastors returning for the milestone in our history.

Under the leadership of Rev. Kummer, the congregation experienced a growth in membership as well as spiritual well-being. In September 1958, Rev. and Mrs. Kummer started a Kindergarten for children five years old to allow them to adjust to being with other children and to provide them with religious training. This school continued until the Central School District started their own program, at which time the age was lowered to four years old. The preschool still continues to function today.

On September 30, 1959, Rev. Kummer resigned his pastorate and moved to Levittown, PA to establish a UCC Mission Church followed by an administrative position in the Cleveland hospital.

After Rev. Kummer's resignation, the search committee issued a call to Rev. J. William Anderson, a native of Lancaster, PA and pastor of Salem Church in Columbia. This call was accepted and in January 1960, he assumed his duties. Most of us will look back on his pastorate as those years where Mt. Zion, under God's grace and providence, as well as his leadership, attained its most prosperous status and a large growth in its membership.

June 2, 1968, in just a little over ten years, the \$60,000 indebtedness that incurred during the erection of the sanctuary was paid in full, and a mortgage burning ceremony was held. In October, 1968, the Dickison property adjoining the church was purchased for expansion, part of which was later resold.

On June 7, 1964, the Mt. Zion congregation experienced a first in its long history. James B. Livingston became the first son of Mt. Zion to be ordained into the Ministry.

Not to take anything away from "Jim," but mention should be made that a man who grew up as a lad in the Mt. Zion Church served the Lord well over fifty years as a Minister of the EUB Church. He is the Rev. Martin B. Heiland.

When Rev. and Mrs. Anderson expressed the desire to own their own home, and later purchased a home on Eden Road, the parsonage at 1818 North Sherman Street was sold. Many improvements were made to the church property during this time, such as paving the parking area and carpeting the sanctuary; however, the crowning achievement was the installation and dedication of the stained glass windows in the front of the sanctuary in 1974.

After serving Mt. Zion for almost fifteen years, the longest time of any pastor except Dr. Wanner, Rev. Anderson submitted his resignation in September 1974 to become the Administrator of the McDowell Home in Hanover, PA.

The retired Rev. Clair Rhodes served as Interim Pastor until Rev. James Keough was installed in January 1975. Rev. Keough will best be remembered for his dynamic sermons; however, he resigned in April 1976.

The Rev. Robert Achtermann served as Interim Pastor, laboring diligently to bolster the sagging faith at Mt. Zion, until Rev. James M. Walters began his duties on October 10, 1976.

During the twenty-one years of Pastor Walters' ministry at Mt. Zion, the congregation continued to grow in faith. In 1983, under the leadership of Rebecca Hester, our first female Council President, the Church Council formulated our present Purpose Statement: "The purpose of Mt. Zion United Church of Christ is; to accept Christ as our Savior, to share His love, to meet and grow in Christian Fellowship, and to serve the community and the world in His name." Also in 1983, Mt. Zion began to offer two Christmas Eve services, which was expanded to three services in 1995 to meet the needs of our growing congregation. During the year of 1983-1984, Mt. Zion began to offer two Sunday morning worship services.

In 1982, the congregation began to consider an expansion project. A group was organized to study our needs for present and future growth. In the Spring of 1985, the results of the study and the recommendation to secure an architect to design a proposal for expansion was approved by the congregation.

The York architectural firm of BASCO Associates was contracted, and in January 1986 final plans were approved by the congregation. A Capital Funds campaign was

organized in January 1986 and \$167,690 was pledged to our building expansion. Ground breaking took place Easter Sunday 1986. Official construction began in May 1986 and on February 15, 1987, the 529 member congregation held a service of dedication. The \$550,000 expansion/renovation project provided 100 additional seats in the sanctuary, a choir room and church parlor, enlarged the fellowship hall, classrooms for the Sunday School and Preschool programs and a chair-lift to improve accessibility for the disabled.

In the Fall of 1993, Mt. Zion called for the first time in its history, an Associate Pastor. On June 26, 1994, the congregation experienced another first as a daughter of Mt. Zion, Cathy Hogentogler Sherry, was ordained into ministry and installed as Associate Pastor of Mt. Zion.

Our heritage clearly reflects our growth in love and commitment to God. Today, our congregation has grown to 658 members. We have, in the past five years, adopted long-range goals, which has led us to a long-term commitment and direct involvement with the Big Brother/Big Sister program in York. We sponsored our first work camps, which involved eleven of our members traveling to South Dakota to work with the Lakota people in the Summer of 1996. We have offered additional worship opportunities and in 1996, Mt. Zion chose to add *The New Century Hymnal* to its worship resources.

Mt. Zion United Church of Christ is a spirit-filled church. Today, we celebrate those who took the step in faith to build our present church and we remember all who have contributed to our ever-growing faithfulness to follow Christ. We pray that we may continue to be blessed with the oneness in the Spirit of our Lord, with God's Divine Guidance, and that we may continue to share Christ's love and serve the community and world in His name.

MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED MT. ZION CHURCH

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Rev. F. W. Vandersloot | 1851-1860 |
| Rev. Dr. Aaron Wanner | 1870-1894 |
| Rev. Gideon P. Fisher | 1895-1901 |
| Rev. Dr. William A. Korn | 1901-1907 |
| Rev. Edwin M. Sando | 1907-1915 |
| Rev. John J. Stauffer | 1915-1920 |
| Rev. Clark W. Heller | 1921-1928 |
| Rev. Paul I. Kuntz | 1928-1939 |
| Rev. Arthur L. Grove | 1939-1942 |
| Rev. Robert W. Olewieler | 1942-1945 |
| Rev. Marlin T. Schaeffer | 1945-1947 |
| Rev. Carl L. Osenbach | 1947-1952 |
| Rev. Jack Busler | 1952-1953 |
| Rev. Gerald F. Kummer | 1956-1960 |
| Rev. J. William Anderson | 1960-1974 |
| Rev. Clair Rhodes | 1974-1975 |
| Rev. James Keough | 1975-1976 |
| Rev. Robert Achtermann (Interim) | 1976 |

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| Rev. James M. Walters | 1976-2008 |
| Rev. Cathy H. Sherry | 1994- |
| Rev. Danielle E. Neff (Assoc. Pastor) | 2009- |

SIGNIFICANT DATES IN THE LIFE OF MT. ZION

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| 1851 | Mt. Zion Charge Organized |
| 1890 | Union Church Built |
| January 1955 | Union Church Dissolved |
| February 1955 | Mt. Zion calls Rev. Klummer, first Full-time Pastor |
| June 1956 | Purchase of Land- Ridgewood Rd. |
| December 1956 | Ground breaking |
| March 1957 | Construction begins |
| May 1957 | Cornerstone laying |
| December 24, 1957 | First Service |
| January 1958 | Weeklong Services of Dedication |
| 1974 | Stained Glass Windows added |
| April 1986 | Ground breaking for new expansion |
| February 1987 | Dedication service for Addition |