

THE SESQUICENTENNIAL SOUVENIR HISTORY OF

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

229 SOUTH BROAD STREET

JERSEY SHORE, PENNSYLVANIA

APRIL 29TH

1867-2017

Compiled and Edited by
Susan Ely, William Ely, Jr.
& Reverend Dr. Kerry Aucker

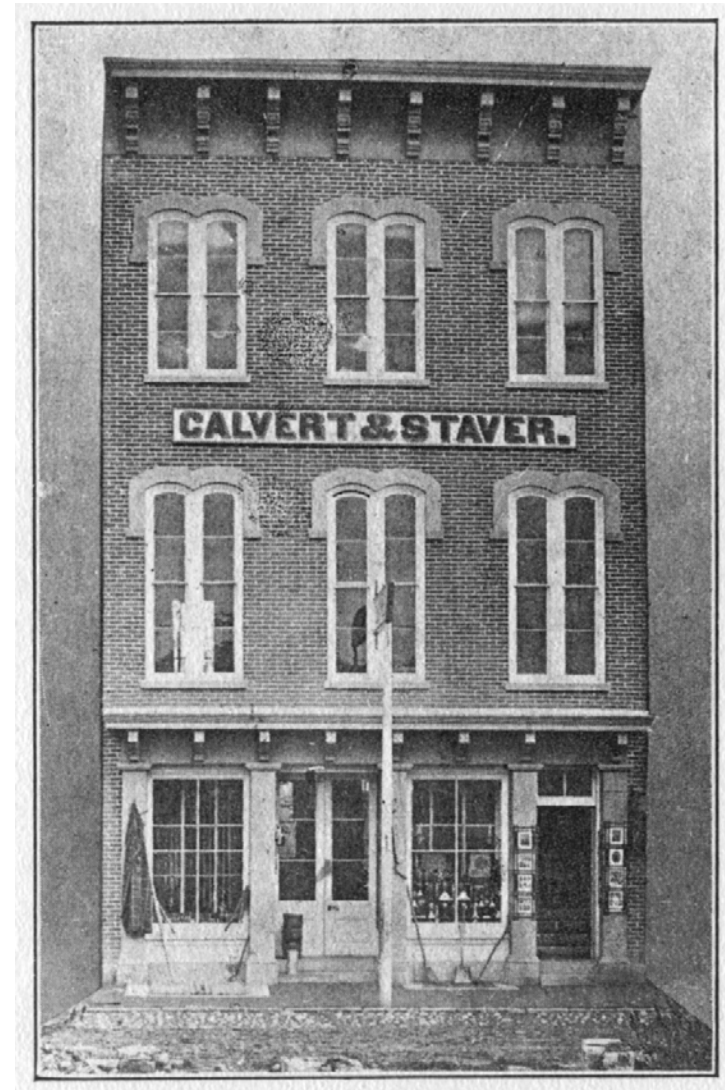
Designed by Kelly Kolak

“The organization of the St. John’s Lutheran church of Jersey Shore, April 29th, 1867, was made possible, largely through the pioneer and pastoral efforts of such early Lutheran ministers as the now sainted Reverend Messrs. Schultz, Frederick Augustus Barnitz, Joshua Evans, Samuel Yingling, Thomas M. Flint, Peter Bergstresser, A. P. Fahs, Brother Heisler, Studebaker and Winton. These fathers of our church in their successive order, organized and served the Lutheran churches of Nippenose Valley, Pine Creek Township, and Lock Haven.

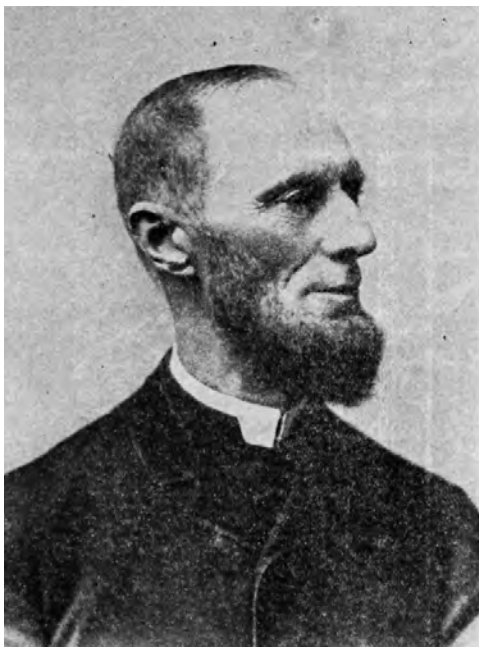
Naturally, in time, many of these country members moved to or near the town of Jersey Shore, and sighed for a Lutheran church nearer their doors. In part, this need was met by Reverend Dr. Heisler, who was then pastor of the county charge in the early sixties (1860’s), through preaching an occasional sermon in the old Engine House of the town.

It remained, however, for Reverend H. B. Winton, who in turn, became pastor of this large and flourishing country field in the spring of 1866, to manifest aggressive interest in the Lutheran constituency at Jersey Shore. In the autumn of that year, Reverend Winton began the holding of services in the Staver Hall on South Main Street.”

– Reverend Arthur E. Cooper



STAYER HALL



REVEREND H. B. WINTON
April 29, 1867 – November 1869

31 CHARTER MEMBERS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>JOHN SHADLE</i> | <i>MRS. CATHARINE BAILEY</i> |
| <i>MRS. JULIE SHADLE</i> | <i>SUSAN ROTHARMEL</i> |
| <i>JOHN STAVER</i> | <i>MRS. ELIZABETH NORTON</i> |
| <i>MRS. MARY STAVER</i> | <i>SOPHIA DAUBNER</i> |
| <i>LIZZIE STAVER</i> | <i>MRS. SARAH E. WINTON</i> |
| <i>CARRIE STAVER</i> | <i>ANTONETTI WINTON</i> |
| <i>JOHN KNEPLEY</i> | <i>ARBELINE WINTON</i> |
| <i>MRS. MARY KNEPLEY</i> | <i>GEORGE M. HEISLER</i> |
| <i>JOHN LENTZ</i> | <i>HENRY BARNER</i> |
| <i>MRS. CATHARINE LENTZ</i> | <i>MRS. LUCY A. BARNER</i> |
| <i>REBECCA BARTO</i> | <i>MARY MILLER</i> |
| <i>JOEL KLINE</i> | <i>CHARLOTT MILLER</i> |
| <i>MRS. MARY E. KLINE</i> | <i>EDWIN SHENK</i> |
| <i>FRANCES L. KLINE</i> | <i>CATHARINE SHENK</i> |
| <i>ELIZABETH ROTHARMEL</i> | <i>CATHARINE CARPENTER</i> |
| <i>SARAH A. FARLEY</i> | |

As pastor of the Nippenose Valley–Pine Creek, Reverend H. B. Winton, began with the charge of the Lutheran churches of the General Synod, and then organized St. John Lutheran Church of Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania on April 29, 1867. St. John was first known as the English Lutheran Church of Jersey Shore, and in Synod records as Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jersey Shore.

The first prayer service was comprised of four followers and was held in the pastor’s home at 152 South Main Street, Jersey Shore. On April 29, 1867, a congregation was organized with 31 charter members being received by letter with the first services being held at Old Staver Hall located on South Main Street. In the autumn of the same year a meeting was called to consider the advisability of building a church. This resulted in the purchase of a double lot on the corner of Broad and Thompson Streets at the sum of \$650 where the present day St. John stands.

During the spring of 1868, the church was built firing clay from the building site in a kiln erected where the current Educational wing now stands. There were 234,000 bricks made and used. The cornerstone was laid the beginning of August 1868.

Also in August of 1868, the councils of the Nippenose Valley, Pine Creek, and Jersey Shore churches met and amicably agreed to divide the charge as one pastor could not cultivate the field properly. The two churches of Nippenose Valley; St. James (Rauchtown) and St. Peters (Oriole) were constituted one charge, while Jersey Shore and Pine Creek the other, with Reverend Winton pastoring the latter. 84 members were received into church fellowship during Reverend Winton’s three-year pastorate, meeting in the lecture room for two years until the construction was complete.

A short two years later, plaster was completed on the church, the spire was completed, and the new parsonage was occupied by the pastor and his family. Then in March of 1871, the church walls were frescoed, which was the first fresco paint application to occur in Jersey Shore. The pews were placed, the pulpit and choir furniture arranged, church membership increased considerably, and in June 1871, the Susquehanna Synod held its session there with a dedicatory sermon being preached. At the end of the build, the cost of constructing St. John came to the total of \$10,809.63. Reverend Steck stated, "The beautiful church edifice at Jersey Shore stands, as a monument to the church love, liberality, energy and the toil of Brother John Staver." John Staver was a charter member who was not only a liberal contributor, but solicited subscriptions, collected funds, superintended the building, and met the indebtedness as it occurred.



REV. J. M. STECK, D. D.
Jan. 1870 – 1875



REV. A. W. LENTZ
1875 – Mar. 1878



REV. J. A. BRIGHT
Apr. 1878 – Feb. 1882



REV. W. H. SCHOCH
Apr. 1882 – Apr. 1891

January of 1879 brought an earnest revival service which resulted in a spiritual awakening and added 49 new members to the fold. Around this time, the first young people's society was organized as well.

In the midst of this time of growth, a congregation was organized and a church built at Salladasburg, and in 1885 it was added to the charge. The Pine Creek church, which was destroyed by fire in 1888, was also rebuilt. In addition, a Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society was organized along with a Young People's Mission Band. On another positive note, St. John's building debt was paid off during these years.

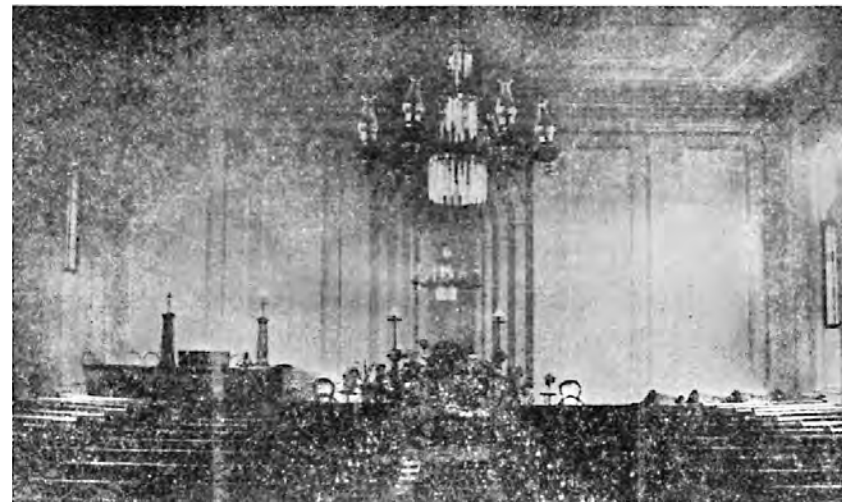
John Staver, in addition to several others with the given name of John, contributed so greatly to the church during the early membership of the congregation that in later years (around 1907), that became the chosen name for the church, St. John.

Following the resignation of Reverend Schoch, the church at Jersey Shore withdrew from the combined charge with Pine Creek and Salladasburg. A few days before Thanksgiving in 1891, a severe windstorm toppled the tall church spire carrying it across the parsonage roof, dropping it through the kitchen ceiling, narrowly missing Mrs. Gladhill who had just stepped into an adjoining room minutes before. Though the spire was never rebuilt, new art-glass windows were added, the exterior was painted, and numerous interior improvements were made including the installation of gas to replace some of the coal-oil lighting. A commendable first also occurred, the Synod received the churches benevolence apportionment in full.

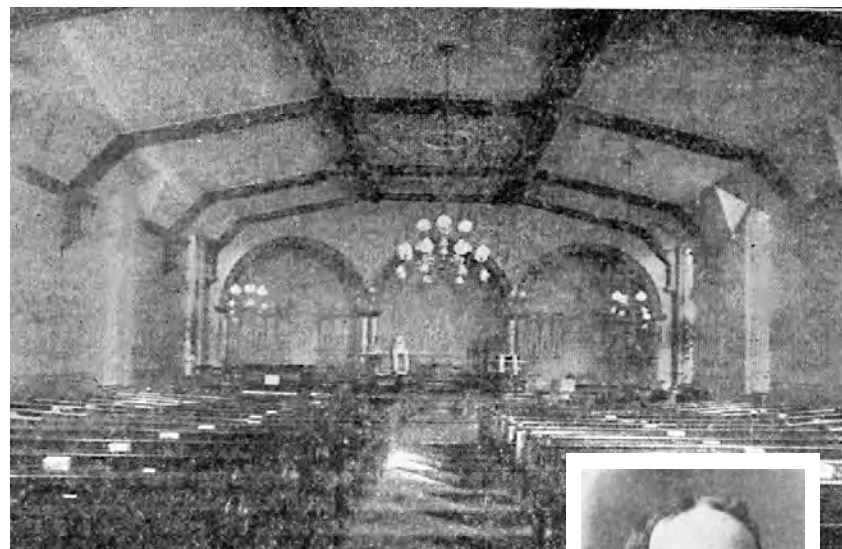


REV. J. T. GLADHILL
1891 - Oct. 1898

1891 FALLEN SPIRE



INTERIOR BEFORE 1900 OF ST. JOHN



1900 INTERIOR OF ST. JOHN

Between 1898 and 1900, numerous interior updates were made including three large arches built at the rear and sides of the pulpit, and pillars were added. The chancel and choir platforms were rebuilt and the floor inclined.



REV. J. C. FASSOLD
Oct. 1898 - Nov. 1900



FRESCOED INTERIOR DURING HARVEST SUNDAY

(below) **BROTHERHOOD CLASS**



REV. CHARLES F. FICKINGER
Dec. 1900 – Jun. 1911



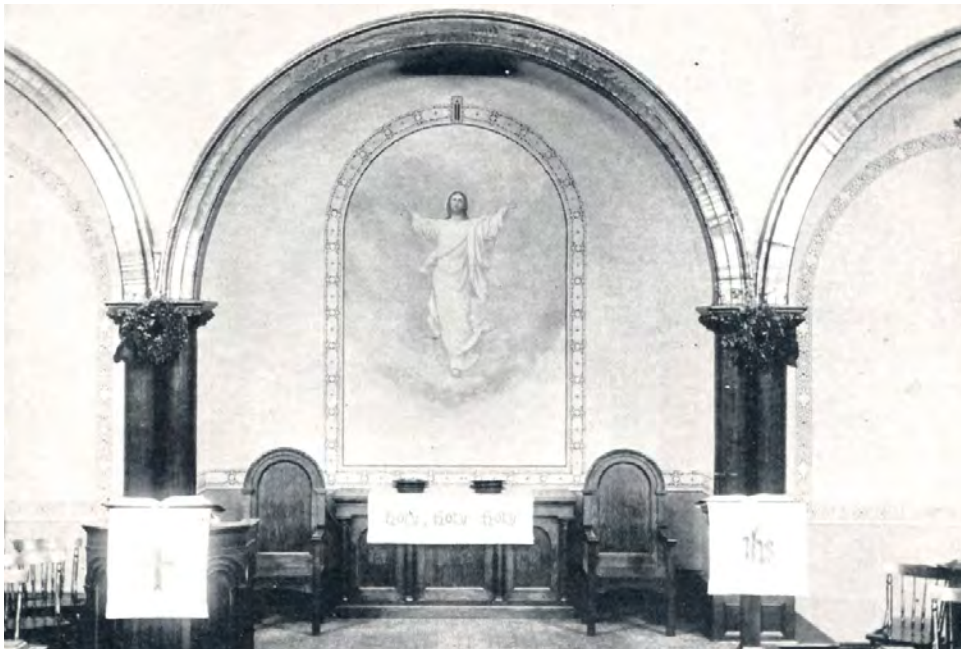
REV. ARTHUR E. COOPER
Sept. 1911 – Dec. 1920



1910 SAINT JOHN CAGERS

Continuing improvement, between 1900 and 1911, many minor but necessary property repairs were made, such as the church's exterior walls being painted and penciled. Then, the parsonage roof was repaired, walkways were laid, and furnaces were purchased and installed in both the church and the parsonage.

Towards the end of 1911, improvements to the church and grounds were being paid with treasury funds and no longer solicited from membership. For the first time in the congregation's history, the membership enrollment was reported to Synod as "500 souls" thus becoming one of the strongest and substantial churches in the synod. During this time of membership, a large Junior Young People's Society was organized and St. John began supporting missionaries in India. Worship was greatly influenced by Reverend Cooper who published many prayers, wrote hymn lyrics to be used on special occasions, and even submitted a potential Pennsylvania State Anthem song. With the thriving attendance, the first discussions regarding the need for a new Education Building were initiated and would be a recurring topic for years to come.



1924 ASCENSION SCENE AND NEW PULPIT FURNITURE



THE NEW INTERIOR



1925

Between 1921 and 1926, the church parsonage was fully renovated and excavation began for a new church basement to be used for Sunday School, with most of the labor being performed by the Brotherhood Sunday School Class and other church members. Plumbing improvements included adding toilets, lavatories and a fountain, and the church was equipped with a kitchen servicing over 200 people. Additional lighting was installed in the Nave and the existing combination gas fixtures were replaced.

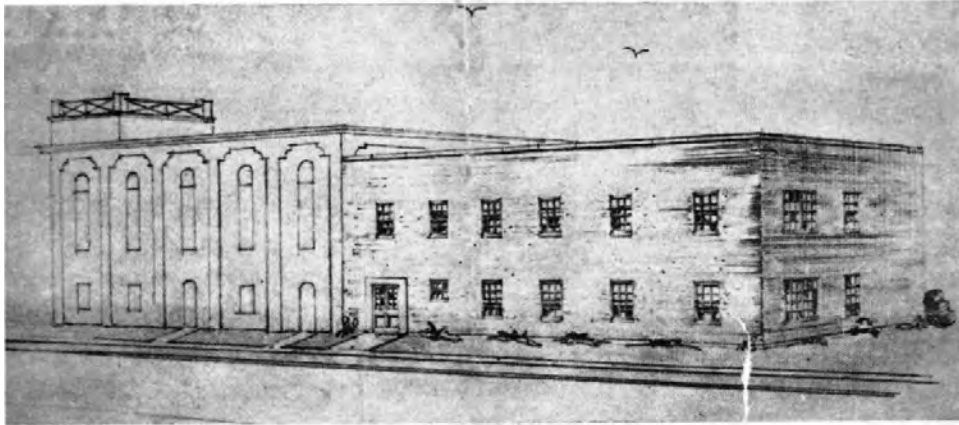
Many other improvements were made, such as new windows, pews, and opera chairs for both choir platforms, as well as adding 50 new church hymnals. As the frescoes were renovated, the church received the gift of the Ascension Scene painting in the center arch and was also gifted new pulpit furniture.

St. John honored its World War I Veterans with a service on Armistice Day of 1925. An Honor Roll containing 48 veterans and members of the congregation was presented and is still hanging inside the Broad Street entrance.



REV. PARK W. HUNTINGTON
Mar. 1921 – Nov. 1926

Community involvement continued to grow with the first Boy Scout Troop appearance at the church and membership increased with the confirmation of 95 members during the 1926 Easter season.



ARCHITECT'S SKETCH OF PROPOSED CHURCH ADDITION

While discussion of adding a Christian Education Building continued into the 1930's, a new pipe organ was dedicated on Sunday, November 27, 1932. Around the same time, the New York Central Shops moved from Jersey Shore to Albany relocating many families from the community. The need of a new Christian Education Building was discussed and tabled on numerous other occasions until January 20, 1954, when a motion was made and passed at a congregational meeting to conduct a campaign to raise funds and build the Christian Education Building.



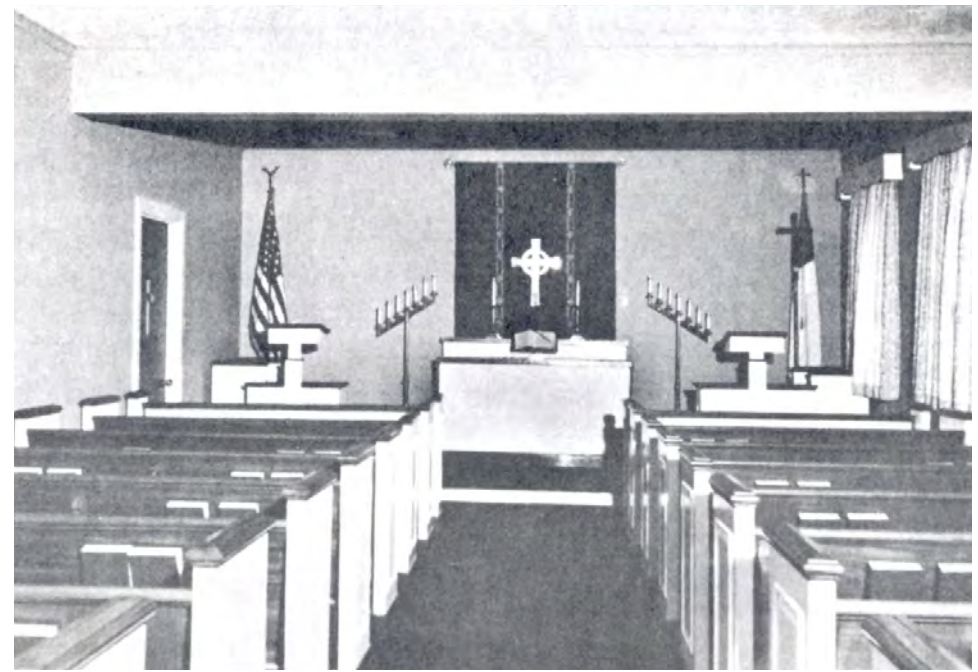
REV. W. R. FITZGERALD
Sept. 1927 – Mar. 1954



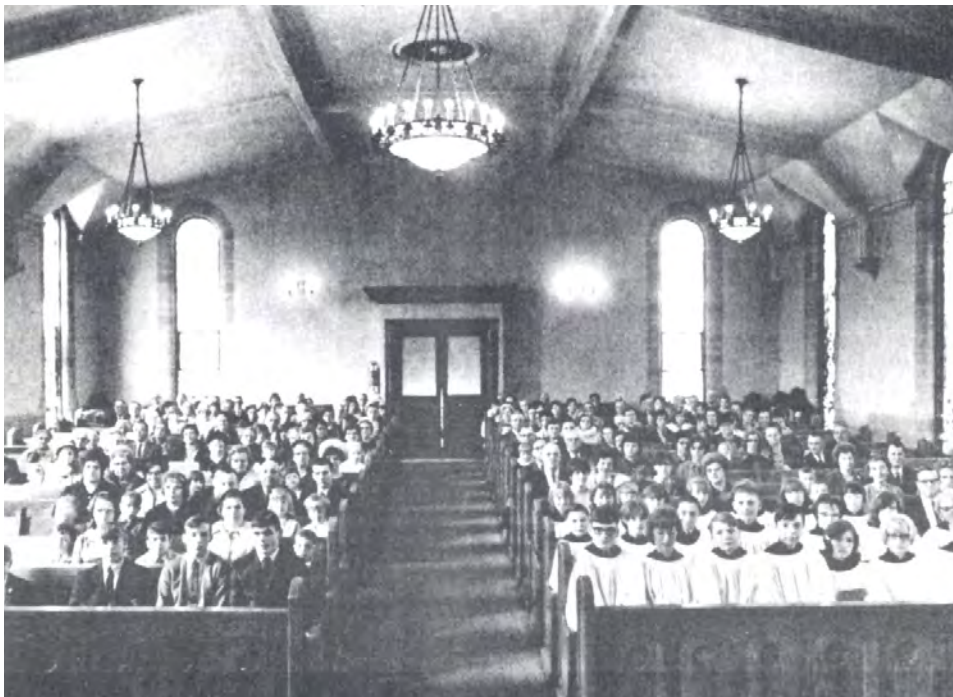
REV. ROY A. GUTSHALL
Jun. 1954 – 1966



**1954 GROUNDBREAKING SERVICE
FOR THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BUILDING**



CHapel COMPLETED IN 1966



1967 - CENTENNIAL

From 1954 through 1966, St. John saw many drastic physical changes. The kitchen was enlarged and modernized, a two car garage was built and two new rooms were added to the parsonage. Finally in 1966, the dream of years was realized and the Christian Education Building with a Chapel was completed. New vestments were obtained for the Junior and Youth Choirs and the basement was modernized for Luther League's Intermediate and Senior Departments to use. The Chapel now served as a location for Children's Church during summer months along with baptisms and weddings. Around 1967, a teen recreation room was also added to the basement of the Christian Education Building.

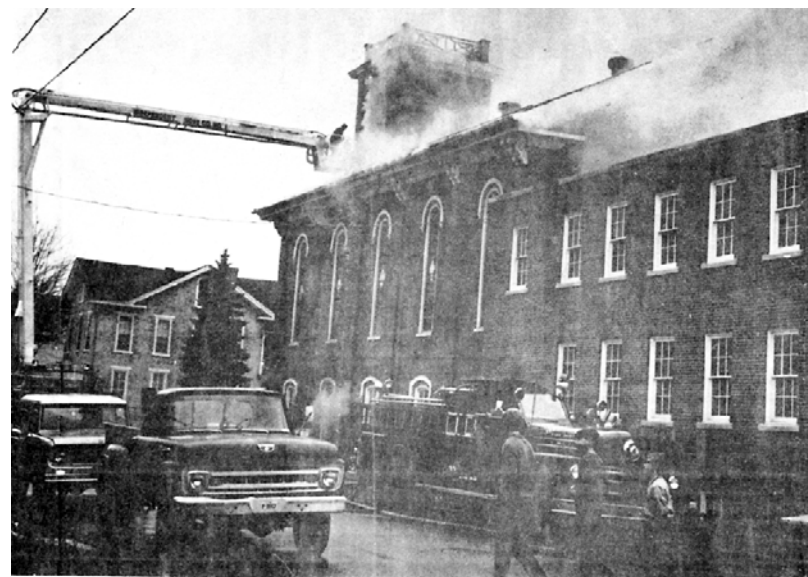


**REV. R. J. SEILHAMER
Sept. 1966 - 1968**

On October 24, 1970, the sanctuary was remodeled and dedicated. Only 8 weeks later on December 13, the church was severely damaged by a fire located primarily on the first floor, but smoke and water damage was found throughout the church. The first floor and Nave would need to be remodeled again but fortune had it that the new organ had not yet been installed. The re-dedication of the second remodeling, the piano, and the new organ was held on August 8, 1971.

Then, in June of 1972, Hurricane Agnes flooded Jersey Shore and water destroyed the basement, first floor, and parsonage. This third remodel included the custom glasswork design in the front doors of the church and the Nave layout, both designed by Pastor Lauffer.

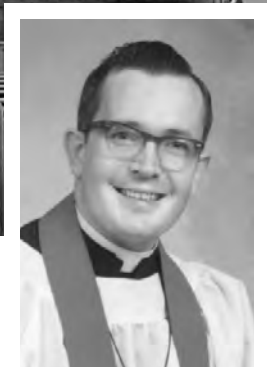
It was around this time that the church made a conscious decision to drop the apostrophe "s" at the end of St. John, as it was seen both with and without it up to this point.



1970 Fire



(top) Prior to Remodel
(bottom) 1970 After Remodel



REV. JOHN C. LAUFFER
Dec. 1968 – Aug. 1976



1971 ORGAN INSTALLED

Pastor Motter served as Vice Pastor until full-time leadership was called to St. John in 1977. During the same year, there was much discussion to determine if the Pastor was authorized to decide where he or she would live. Due to the parsonage being located in the flood plain, it was approved to give the Pastor a housing allowance and demolish the parsonage with future plans to use the property.



REV. ALTON MOTTER, D.D.
Sept. 1976 – May 1977



REV. DONALD G. NICE
Mar. 1977 – Oct. 1998



NEW PAINT SCHEME AND ORGAN PIPES FACADE

Over the next 10 years, the church saw many updates to the building including asbestos control and energy conservation measures, ceiling fans in the Nave, removal of the bell tower railing, and repairing and weatherizing the Nave's stain glass windows. In 1988, a ramp was added at the Canal Street entrance of the church in order to better accommodate the handicapped. The furnace was replaced and air conditioners were placed in the classrooms and the Chapel. Then in 1989, major restoration and remodeling occurred in the Nave including a new piano and the organ was improved to have two ranks of pipes and two new stops. At the same time, the Nave received a new paint scheme including a highlight of teal and a new ceiling. The façade of organ pipes was added to the front of the outer arches, a new sound system was installed, and the very first talks of the addition of an elevator began and a fund was established.

Continuing the upgrades onto the first floor, the Chapel was painted, new draperies added, a new Chapel organ was purchased, and the church nursery received a total makeover that included a beautiful full wall mural of Noah's Ark, completed in 1990 by Debbie Ingraham.

As the years went on, more and more community groups began using the building for their meetings and events, including Red Cross, Boy Scouts, Family & Children Counseling Services, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Weight Watchers.

In 1983, an Altar Guild was established and a Director of Religious Education was hired. An additional 8:15 AM service was added to the third Sunday of each month and held in the Chapel, and was so well received it was quickly changed to occur every Sunday. Keeping up with modern technology, the church office purchased its first computer in 1991.

Though St. John had several Pastors who assisted during the next transition of leadership, Pastor Christopher Milarch filled many of the church's needs between 1998 and 1999. Following this transition, the church initiated involvement in several youth programs and, in 2001, played an instrumental role in restarting the Jersey Shore Summer Recreational Program. Around the same time, an after-school program was held at the church until 2011 when the public schools began a remediation program of their own.



1989 CHAPEL



1990 NURSERY MURAL



REV. CHRISTOPHER MILARCH
1998 – 1999



REV. KERRY AUCKER, D.D.
Sept. 1, 1999 – Present



2001 RISING ANEW GROUNDBREAKING SERVICE



2001 ST. JOHN FACADE WITH ELEVATOR TOWER AND PARKING LOT

The most recent large scale building project occurred in 2001 when the church Council enacted the Rising Anew Capital Campaign which included the installation of an elevator, paving the parking lot, renovating the kitchen and several bathrooms, and relocating the church office and nursery. The campaign enabled all four levels of the church to be accessible for all.

In 2007, a partnership was formed with St. Wunibald Evangelical Lutheran Church in Heidenheim, Bavaria, Germany as a companion synod relationship with the Ansbach-Wurzburg Kirchkenkreis. This companionship allowed St. John and German youth to visit and learn about each other. The church youth also frequently attended Camp Mount Luther in Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania, in addition to sponsoring and maintaining one of the cabins at the camp.

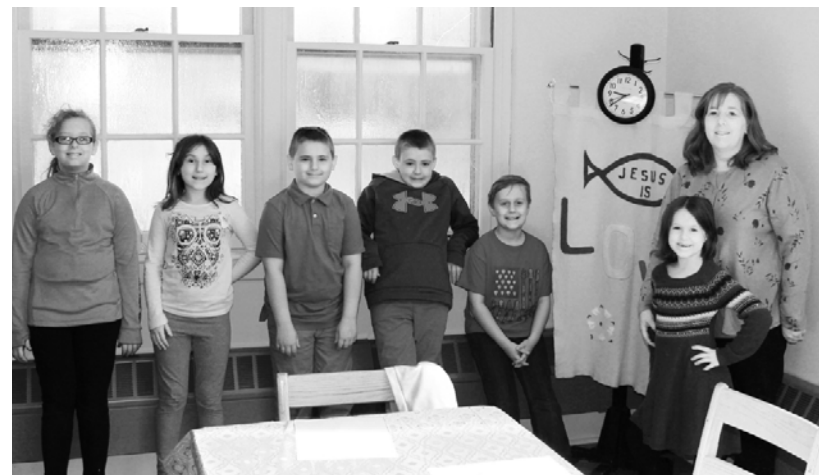
Several other missionary trips have occurred between 2007 and 2013 including travel to: Pine Ridge, South Dakota; Biloxi Mississippi; Virginia and New Jersey after Hurricane Sandy; and Espy, Pennsylvania after local flooding.

Locally, the church participated in Family Promise from 2007 through 2017 by providing housing to the homeless in the church, alternating with other churches one week at a time. Other organizations who held regular meetings at St. John included two Alcoholics Anonymous groups, Narcotics Anonymous, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Modern Agers, Weight Watchers, a Suicide Support Group, Healthy Starts, and more.

Additional local endeavors included the formation of SALT (Shore Area Lutherans Together), organized by Pastor Aucker in 2011, which encouraged regular communication and unification among the five Lutheran Churches of Jersey Shore.

In 2013, Trinity Lutheran in Avis, Pennsylvania chose to close and its members showed interest in merging into St. John's congregation. On August 25, St. John voted to approve the merger agreement and September 29 was Trinity's last day of worship. Trinity sold their building and all assets and funds went into a Trinity Lutheran (in Avis) Endowment Fund which in part supports college scholarships, the Avis Borough for Recreation, the Avis Fire Company, and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.

Then on October 1, 2014, the New Love Center Food Pantry, run by Jersey Shore Ministerium, moved locations to the church basement. Food was constantly restocked by donations from the area churches, individuals, and organizations as well as the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. Over the past 150 years, St. John has become an integral addition to the town of Jersey Shore and continues to change, grow, and contribute to the community surrounding it.



ELEMENTARY SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES



CATECHISM CLASS



PRE-KINDERGARTEN SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS



CHANCEL CHOIR

