

† HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA †

SUNDAY SCHOOL ORCHESTRA – MAKING A JOYFUL NOISE

The Sunday School Orchestra grew out of the inspiration of a young man, Ira Angstadt, who sat alongside the piano and accompanied the pianist with his trumpet during the singing of hymns in the Sunday School service. Following Ira's example, other Sunday School members also began to bring their instruments and join in the music. When it became evident this was becoming an ongoing activity, the group formally organized in 1931. Mr. Homer L. Landis, a local public school teacher who was also a member of and former organist at St. Daniel's, started directing the improvised Orchestra and regular practices began. Homer also hand-copied a great deal of music to provide the needed parts for all the various instruments.

By the late 1940s, the Orchestra had grown to 28 members. Every Sunday, they played an overture at the opening of Sunday School at St. Daniel's, 2 hymns before classes began, then a piece for dispersing to classes, plus a closing hymn and a march following the benediction.

The proficiency of this group reached the point where it was engaged to play concerts at functions held by religious and other organizations in many parts of Berks, Lebanon, and Lancaster counties. In the earlier years, they played at Trappe Lutheran Church in Trappe, PA and Olive Leaf Chapel at Fritztown. A bandstand was built next to the Pavilion for orchestra performances, and they were regularly featured at the programs in St. Daniel's Amphitheater during the 1940s and 1950s. These performances at the Amphitheater included Pennsylvania German Fersommlings and Pennsylvania German plays. The Orchestra was a main attraction on the program held in the Amphitheater for the 200th Anniversary of St. Daniel's in 1951 (a program attended by Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, head of the Lutheran Church in America). Other engagements included: Sunday School Silver Anniversary day, July 22, 1945; the Lutheran Rally of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States held at Old Trappe Church on June 27, 1948; an hour-long concert preceding the Annual Lutheran Rally of the Reading Conference held at Belleman's Church on June 18, 1950; and the 25th anniversary of Vinemont Community Lutheran Sunday School on November 22, 1953.

St. Daniel's Orchestra enjoyed a consistently high profile and was a thriving ministry of the church for more than 60 years. The success of the Orchestra, in addition to its longevity, can also be measured by the number of people participating, both young and old.

At least 50 St. Daniel's members played in the Orchestra. With apologies to anyone whose name may have been missed, throughout the years membership included:

ACCORDION: Calvin Yoh

BARITONE: Dorothy Bright Ravert, Robert Bright, Kevin Borkert, Miriam Borkert, Lucille Koch Shearer

STRING BASS: Helene Koch Lutz

BASSOON: LeRoy Werner

CELLO: Anne Koch, Rachel Koch Stump

CLARINET: Shirley Bechtel Lowry, Cathy Bright Sheetz, May Coleman Burkert, Warren Davis, Frances Eckert Yoh, Linda Eckert Rentschler, Howard Harting, George Koch, Barbara Noecker Cook, Joan Texter Schaum

FLUTE: Debra Bright Hinkel, Marie Noecker Reber

FRENCH HORN: Kim Bright Hinkle

MARIMBA: Robert Yoh

OBOE: Byron Stump

PIANO: Corrine Eckert, Frances Eckert Yoh, Helene Koch Lutz, Edith Spohn

ALTO SAXOPHONE: Donald Koch, Iris Koch, Leroy Koch, Robert Koch, Patricia Yarnall Hershey

SOPRANO SAXOPHONE: George Koch

TROMBONE: Doris Eckert Ketner, Howard Koch, Stuart Koch, Rolf Kugel, Robert Manbeck, H. Theodore Stump, David Wartluft

TRUMPET: Randall Bright, Robert Bright, Steven Bright, Lillian Brossman Fish, George Koch, Robert Koch, Jr., Mildred Manbeck Ciboroski, Donald Noecker, Gregory Stump, Calvin Yoh

TUBA: Alvin Harting, Donald Koch

VIOLIN: Leland Behm, Barbara Borkert, Neil Borkert, Homer Landis, Mrs. Homer Landis, Carl Lutz, Herbert Stump

XYLOPHONE: Robert Yoh

During the course of its existence, the orchestra had five directors: Homer Landis, LeRoy Werner, George Koch, Donald Koch, and Herbert Stump.

HOMER LANDIS – he was the son of Reuben Landis, who was organist at St. Daniel’s from 1877-1882. Homer himself was the Choir Director and organist at St. Daniel’s from 1908-1919. He was also the Director and Conductor of the Sunday School Orchestra from 1931-1952. Homer Landis was a composer as well as a performer and director and was considered one of the finest musicians in Berks County. He wrote two marches for St. Daniel’s Orchestra: *The 25th Anniversary March* for the Sunday School in 1945, and a frequently played march tempo arrangement of the hymn “*Abide with Me.*”

LEROY WERNER – he directed the Orchestra for two years, 1953-1954.

GEORGE KOCH – he was instrumental in keeping the Orchestra alive from 1955 until his death in 1981. During the 26 years of his directorship, George Koch’s enthusiasm helped maintain the fine reputation of the orchestra and a full schedule of appearances. The Orchestra played faithfully each Sunday and even continued to lead the music at weekly worship held at Conrad Weiser High School after the church fire of December 8, 1976. Tragically, most of the orchestra’s music was lost in that fire. Members of the Orchestra recalled that their folders were thick with instrumental music, at least seven overtures and light classical books, at least six march books, plus individual items of sheet music. Following the fire, it was found that the music was out of print and copies could no longer be obtained. Wes Fisher helped to replace musical arrangements after 1976.

After the death of George Koch, DONALD KOCH and HERBERT STUMP assumed the directorship of the Orchestra. Declining membership in the Orchestra of the late 1970s made the task of the directors difficult. However, Donald and Herbert managed to maintain the Orchestra from 1981-1983. The last Orchestra members were Randall Bright playing the trumpet, Herbert Stump playing the violin, Donald Koch playing the tuba, and Frances Yoh playing the piano.

The orchestra contributed greatly to the spirit and quality of the music program of the Sunday School. The musicians were proud of the fact that St. Daniel’s Orchestra was so well-known throughout the area. Their role, fine reputation, and longevity were quite extraordinary, considering the rural location and size of the church. Frances Yoh recalled, “There were few church orchestras, so we were invited to play quite often.” Shirley Bechtel Lowry recently commented, “It was a real joy to be part of the orchestra” and that she would walk from their home on N. Church Street to St. Daniel’s for various practices and

events. Through at least the early 2000s, a vestige of the orchestra remained with the occasional assembling of a Brass Ensemble to provide special music for holiday services.

What an amazing and enduring history we share!

Follow this space throughout the year for snippets of St. Daniel's history from 1751 to 2026.

Historical details taken from the 'St. Daniel's Evangelical Lutheran Church "Eck Kirche" 1751-2001' church history book written by the St. Daniel's History Committee in celebration of the 250th anniversary. More details regarding this topic are found in Chapter 4 – Ministry – Sunday School Orchestra. Additional details from Parish Records from the applicable years and other archive material. Photos from St. Daniel's archives.

**#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch
#OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026
#275thAnniversary #HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #SundaySchoolOrchestra
#Orchestra #SundaySchool #Bandstand #Amphitheater #IraAngstadt #HomerLandis
#LeroyWerner #GeorgeKoch #DonaldKoch #HerbertStump #Music #ParishRecord
#ALotHappensIn275Years**



The Orchestra in the Amphitheater – 1947

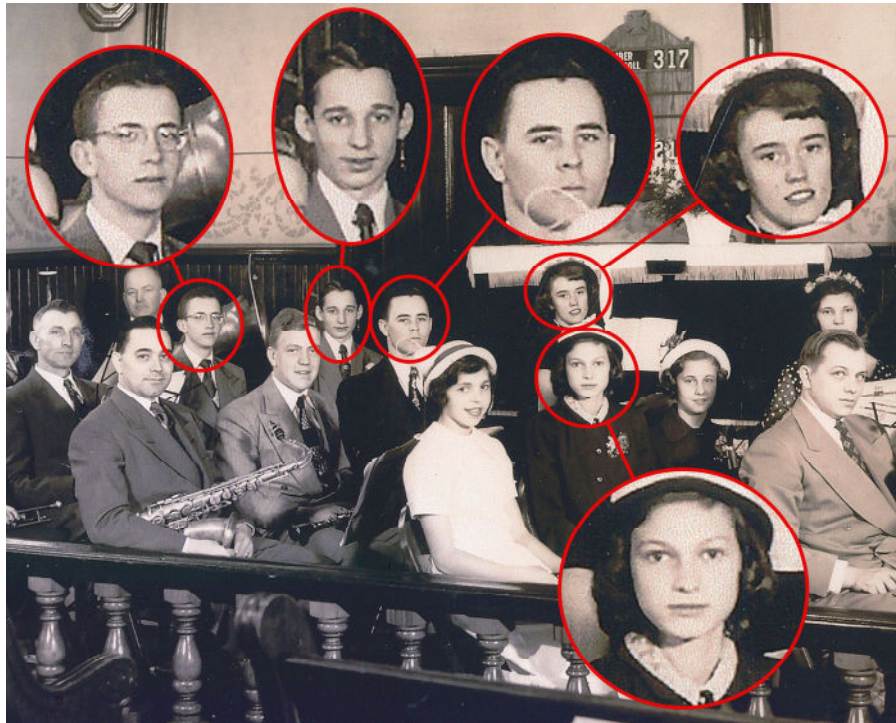


1947 photo from the 1948 Parish Record – captioned “St. Daniel’s Famous 22”



The Orchestra

St. Daniel's Sunday School Orchestra is pictured here in 1951. Left to right, back row are; Robert Bright, Howard Koch, Doris Eckert Ketner, LeRoy Werner, Alvin Harting. 2nd row; Mildred Manbeck, George Koch, Calvin Yoh, Randall Bright. 3rd row; Robert Koch, Howard Harting, Donald Koch, Frances Eckert Yoh. 4th row; Barbara Noecker Cook, Shirley Bechtel Lowry, Joan Texter Shaum, Marie Noecker Reber. 5th row; Herbert Stump, Mrs. Homer Landis and Homer Landis.



Do you recognize our current members / friends?!

Calvin Yoh, Randall Bright, Donald Koch, Frances Eckert Yoh, Shirley Bechtel Lowry



Clearer, larger views of the 1951 Orchestra members!



Sunday School Orchestra on the Social Hall stage – 1980

Left side: Frances Yoh (piano), Donald Koch (tuba), Randy Bright, Steve Bright, Stewart Koch, Miriam Borkert; Right side: Herbert Stump, Barbara Borkert, Iris Koch, Kim Bright; Debra Bright, Cathy Bright



Sunday School Orchestra – 1980

Kim Bright, Iris Koch, Cathy Bright, Debra Bright, Herbert Stump, Steve Bright, Randy Bright, Stewart Koch, Donald Koch, Helene Lutz

ST. DANIEL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
Robesonia, Penna.
The Rev. E. L. Leisey, Pastor

THE CHIEF SERVICE
9:00 A.M.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Prelude Lester Coleman, Organist
Processional Hymn - 164
Chief Service Page 9
Confession and Absolution Introit Gloria
Kyrie Gloria in Excelsis Collect
Epistle Romans 6: 3-11
Junior Choir - "Memories of Galilee"
Gospel Matthew 5: 20-26
Apostles' Creed
Hymn - 212
Address Dr. Q. A. W. Rohrbach
President of Kutztown Teachers College
Offertory Offering
Senior Choir - "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"
General Prayer Lord's Prayer
Hymn - 489
Benediction
Recessional Hymn - 431



This program is dedicated to all our boys in the armed forces.

The flowers today honor the boys in the armed forces. They are placed in the chancel by Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Brown.

We are so happy that Dr. Rohrbach could arrange his busy schedule to be present this morning. He is an educator of whom our state is very proud.

Our 4th of July celebration was a great success. Keep in mind July 22 and 29. Next Sunday is a regular routine service when we catch our breath.

THE CHURCH SCHOOL
10:15 A.M.
Calvin E. Brown, Supt.

July 8, 1945

Orchestra Homer Landis, Director
Hymn - 288
Versicles Page 5
Hymn - 285
Topic: "Why I Can Do Big Things" John 15: 4-9
Hymn - 289
The Lesson
Lesson Hymn - 223
Closing Versicles Page 7



This afternoon is the big Rural Rally when the President of the United Lutheran Church in America speaks. The Ringgold Band plays and Dr. Harry Sykes leads a fine chorus.

This is an Extra-ordinary occasion that comes once in a lifetime of a congregation. No one can afford to miss it.

On July 22 at 9:00 A.M. our Service will be a Sunday School service only in the amphitheatre with five visiting Sunday Schools present bringing their greetings. Let us all turn out to be good hosts to all these guests.

On July 22 in the afternoon our home coming will attract people who have not been here for a long time. Let's shake hands until our fingers get too tired.

Last Sunday the first of our Amphitheatre Envelopes came in. 22 Envelopes yielded the amount of \$172.00 which averages about \$8.54 per envelope.

July 8, 1945 Sunday bulletin



Brass Ensemble, 1996. L to r.: Donald Koch, Kevin Yarnall, Jeffrey Hertzog, Randall Bright.