

† HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA †

FAITH, FELLOWSHIP, FORWARD THINKING – AND A VOICE THAT DREW A CROWD

Reverend Elmer Leisey was our Pastor from 1940-1957.

Elmer Lebo Leisey was born in a log cabin on June 19, 1892, in West Cocalico Township, Lancaster County. He graduated from Denver High School in 1908; Allentown Preparatory School in 1910; Muhlenberg College in 1914; and the Philadelphia Seminary in 1917. He did postgraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania and received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Muhlenberg College in 1953. He was ordained by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in 1917 at St. John's Church in Allentown. Elmer Leisey and Clara Bard were married on June 26, 1917. They had two sons, William and Vincent.

Rev. Leisey became Pastor of the Womelsdorf Parish and was installed at St. Daniel's on April 28, 1940. From 1940-1943, the Womelsdorf Parish consisted of Zion in Womelsdorf, St. John's in Host, Trinity in Robesonia, and St. Daniel's. Having this number of churches, it was not possible for Rev. Leisey to conduct weekly services at any one church. In 1943, he solved the problem by petitioning the Reading Conference to divide the Parish into two parts. Trinity Lutheran Church and St. Daniel's became the Robesonia Parish, which Rev. Leisey served. When he retired in 1957, the Robesonia Parish came to an end when both Trinity and St. Daniel's became single parishes so each could have its own Pastor.

Rev. Leisey had diverse interests and abilities. He had a Pennsylvania German and farming background, a good sense of humor, and athletic ability, and he took an active role in civic affairs. Fun fact: As a member of the Muhlenberg College football team, he competed against Jim Thorpe, then a member of the Carlisle Indians football squad. Fun story: In an interview for the 250th anniversary, member Daniel Bechtel mentioned that Pastor Leisey had the clock moved to the balcony from its spot near the pulpit because he thought parishioners were watching the clock during his sermon. Rev. Leisey was the founder and first president of the Robesonia Rotary Club, the first president of the Conrad Weiser School Board, and served as president of the Robesonia-Womelsdorf Water Authority. During his first year at St. Daniel's, he conducted a Bible study of each book of the Bible and during his second year, he conducted an every-member visitation program to encourage the use of the bi-pocket offering envelopes. (Based on a count of the 1941 membership roll from the Parish Record, there were 578 members. Some were families, but that is still a lot of people!)

Although it spanned two wars (World War II and Korea) and the start of a third (Vietnam), Rev. Leisey's lengthy pastorate is remembered for being a time of growth, active fellowship, and faithful progress at St. Daniel's. Church suppers, picnics, and entertainment at the Amphitheater fostered both fellowship and the funding for growth. Rev. Leisey was well known as the "Barker" at the Reading Fair Food Stand, calling in the crowds from the midway to purchase meals prepared by St. Daniel's members. Church members recalled that he was quite personable and apt to share a beer or a game of golf with parishioners. During the Leisey years, the church experienced increased giving, increased attendance, growth in membership, construction of the Amphitheater, and construction of an educational building. The Pastor's charisma played a large role in the success of the church. It was stated by the congregation and others in the Robesonia area, "We owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his foresightedness and ability to transform ideas into realities."

Rev. Leisey's wife, Clara, was also a good leader and fostered a thriving Women's Missionary Society (later named the Lutheran Church Women, or LCW) at St. Daniel's. She served as the Society's president, spearheaded many church activities, and was instrumental in the founding of the Women's Club of Robesonia. She was a charter member and president of that community organization.

After the Leiseys retired in 1957, they left the parsonage purchased for them by the church and moved to a farm they owned on the banks of the Cocalico Creek near Ephrata.

Rev. Elmer Leisey died on January 10, 1961, at the age of 68. He is buried in Fairview Cemetery in Denver, PA.

Some other significant events occurred during Rev. Leisey's time at St. Daniel's:

1941 – Worship services began to be held weekly. (As it wasn't something they were used to, apparently not everyone wanted it that often!)

1943 – Withdrawal from the Womelsdorf Parish (4 churches) and creation of the Robesonia Parish (2 churches).

1944 – Purchase of the parsonage located at 105 E. Penn Avenue in Robesonia.

March-July 1945 – Building of the Memorial Amphitheater.

1945 – Sunday School Silver Anniversary.

June 10, 1946 – 1st Vacation Bible School.

January 1951 – Bi-pocket offering envelopes adopted, allowing for splitting the offering amongst 2 different funds.

1951 – St. Daniel’s 200th Anniversary; special services held.

August 19, 1951 – Cornerstone laying of the new Educational Building.

1951-1952 – Construction of the Educational Building and renovation of the interior of the church.

Significant US and world events during Rev. Leisey’s time at St. Daniel’s included:

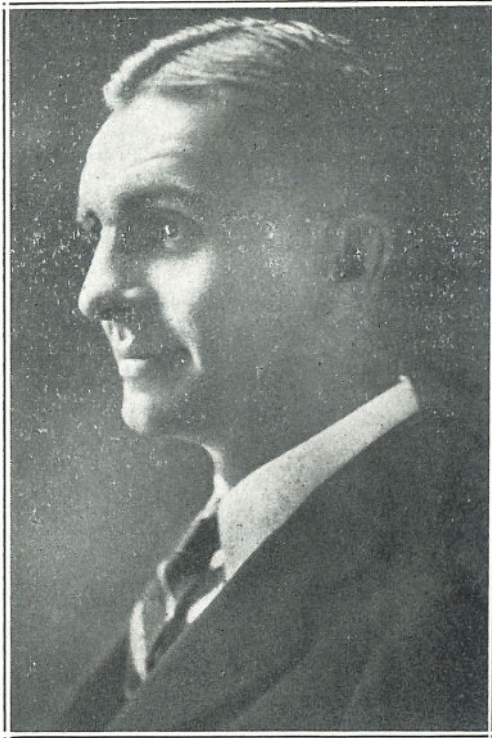
- * December 8, 1941 – The United States entered World War II after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor; WWII ended September 2, 1945.
- * 1945 – Founding of Lutheran World Relief organization.
- * June 17, 1950 – The United States entered the Korean War; the war ended July 27, 1953.
- * June 25, 1951 – 1st color television commercial broadcast; color TVs available for purchase on December 30, 1953.
- * November 1, 1955 – The Vietnam War began; though the United States provided funding, weaponry, advisors, aid, and training in the 1950s, US troop deployment occurred in March 1965.

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 3 – Pastors. Additional details from Parish Records from the applicable years and other archive material. Photos from St. Daniel’s archives.

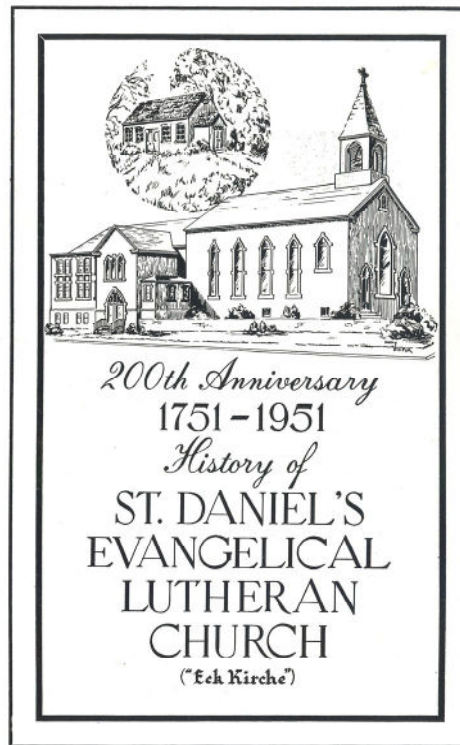
**#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch
#OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonPA #RobesonPA #1751StDaniels2026
#275thAnniversary #HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #ReverendElmerLeisey
#ClaraLeisey #ReadingFairStand #Amphitheater #EducationalBuilding
#WomelsdorfParish #RobesonParish #ParishRecord #ALotHappensIn275Years**



REV. E. L. LEISEY

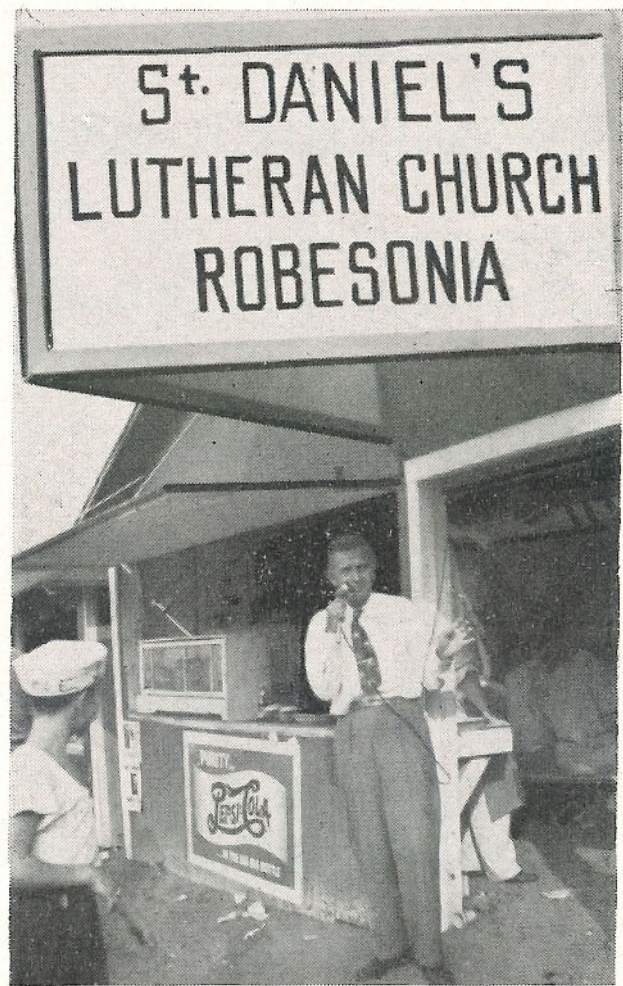


200th
Anniversary
service program





Pastor turned carnival barker for "fair purposes" is the Rev. E. L. Leisey, of St. Daniel's Lutheran Church, Robesonia.



Rev. Leisey acting as the carnival barker for St. Daniel's food stand at the Reading Fair.



ST. DANIEL'S

THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES

ROBESONIA, PENNSYLVANIA

REV. E. L. LEISEY, Pastor

TELEPHONE
WOMELSDORF
77-R-12

PARSONAGE
106 E. PENN AVE
ROBESONIA, PENNSYLVANIA



TRINITY

Sept. 17, 1943

My dear Sir:

The heading of this letter indicates that recently these 2 Robesonia Churches have formed a Parish of their own and I now hold forth regularly at St. Daniel's at 9 o'clock and at Trinity at 6:30 in the evening.

Everything goes well in both churches but we are ofcourse looking forward to the day when you can come back and take your accustomed place in the "old home Church."

I believe this would be a good suggestion. If you would write me a letter part of which could be read in the Congregation. Things that would be interesting for the folks back home, Who your Chaplain is? What your Services are like? Whether the boys in the Service take to religion? Or any such statement as that. In that way I believe I could get the people back home to write to you more and thus everybody would profit.

Please remember that your home Church on a number of occasions remembers you in her prayers and all of us individually pray your safe return from the conflict.

Let me know just what you would like most to receive from your Congregation at home and if it is humanly possible to get it, you shall have it.

Sincerely
your Pastor
Rev. E. L. Leisey.

A letter from Rev. Leisey to the servicemen of the Robesonia Parish (St. Daniel's & Trinity).

OUR BOYS IN THE SERVICE

We remember our boys in Uncle Sam's Service. These gallant men who follow the flag into the far flung seas and islands in the remotest parts of the earth are our representatives. Ours is the gain and theirs the sacrifice. Let us remember them constantly in our prayers and keep sending them little mementos of our appreciation.

We pray to God that all of them shall return safely to take their accustomed positions in our Parish.

From the 1942 Parish Record



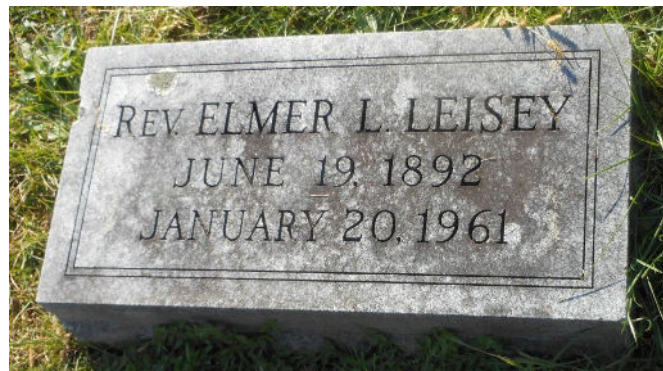
1944 Confirmation Class

GOWNS FOR CONFIRMATION

We depart this year from an ancient tradition. In former years a great deal of stress was paid by the mothers of the Catechetical Class as to what to purchase for confirmation clothing. They will be spared that difficult situation in buying rationed dress ma-

terial by substituting gowns for all those who will be confirmed on Palm Sunday. In that way all will be dressed alike and the emphasis will be placed on the apparel of the soul rather than dressing up the body.

Reflecting war time realities... From the 1944 Parish Record.



It's interesting to note that there is a typo on Rev. Leisey's gravestone, as his Death Certificate (signed January 11) lists his death as January 10.

There is also a typo on Rev. Harry Miller's gravestone!



The Rev. Dr. Elmer L. Leisey and Mrs. Leisey are shown during the Rotary Club tribute to the Robesonia pastor, who will retire soon.

TRIBUTE to the Rev. Dr. Elmer L. Leisey, who is retiring as pastor of the Lutheran churches of Robesonia after 17 years of service, was paid at a "Ladies' Night" meeting of the Robesonia Rotary Club.

More than 100 friends and Rotarians and their wives gathered in the White House restaurant to express their appreciation of the service Dr. Leisey has given to churches and communities in the 40 years of his pastorates.

The "This Is Your Life" program featured the highlights of Dr. Leisey's career as Muhlenberg College athlete where he starred in basketball, baseball and football; pastor of churches in Numidia, New Holland, Danville and Womelsdorf-Robesonia, and service as first president and founder of the Robesonia Rotary Club, first president of the board of the Conrad Weiser Area Schools, and first president of the Womelsdorf-Robesonia Joint Authority.

Friends Attend

AMONG THE FRIENDS who honored Dr. Leisey were Dr. Q. A. W. Rohrbach, president of Kutztown Teachers College; Col. and Mrs. Robert Filbert, Womelsdorf; Charles "Pop" Kelchner, former athlete and coach at Albright College; the Rev. Samuel Kistler, and B. J. Zintak, executive of the Caron Spinning Co., Robesonia.

Warren F. Davis, Rotary director, and Clark D. Snyder, secretary, presented to the guests a pictorial history of Dr. Leisey's career. The family album photographs depicted his student days at Muhlenberg College; his marriage to Clara Verla Bard, Denver, sister of former U.S. Judge Guy K. Bard, and how his pastorates grew under his ministry.

IN APPRECIATION of his service to the community, the Caron Spinning Co. presented Dr. Leisey with a set of golf clubs; Rotary presented a golf bag, a live pig for Dr. Leisey's farm, a "This Is Your Life" memory book, and to Mrs. Leisey a grandmother's bracelet.

Kelchner reminisced about the days when Dr. Leisey, as a member of Muhlenberg athletic teams, played against his Albright teams.

Members of his former parishes relived the days when Dr. Leisey was active in their communities.

To Live on Farm

DR. LEISEY WILL PREACH his farewell sermon June 30 at Trinity Lutheran Church and St. Daniel's Church in Robesonia and then will retire to the family farm near Ephrata. He plans to do supply preaching; lecture on rural sociology; give Pennsylvania Dutch talks, and play golf.

Dr. Leisey was born June 19, 1892, in a log cabin along the Cocalico Creek in Denver and attended Allentown Preparatory School. He was graduated from Muhlenberg College and Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mt. Airy. He was honored with a doctor's degree by Muhlenberg in 1953.

AMONG THE GUESTS were Mrs. Leisey's two sisters, Susan G. Bard, Ephrata, and Mrs. Samuel Newkirck, Denver; Leisey's son, William Bard Leisey, and his wife and four children of Muhlenberg Park; Lillian Herman, Lebanon; Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Lindemuth, Numidia; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Esbenshade, New Holland; Mr. and Mrs. D. E. Edmondson, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Shannon and Mr. and Mrs. Albert Savage, all of Danville; Mr. and Mrs. John Hermann, Womelsdorf; Mrs. J. J. Rocco, Shillington, who served as Dr. Leisey's secretary on the Board of American Missions; the Rev. and Mrs. Samuel Kistler, Palmer Township, near Easton, a classmate of Dr. Leisey at Allentown Preparatory School; Linda Eckert, one of the first children baptized by Dr. Leisey in Robesonia, and Mr. and Mrs. George S. Bleistein, Myerstown.

Photo and article "A Robesonia Farewell" – Reading Eagle June 16, 1957