

HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA

ONE CONGREGATION, ONE PASTOR – REV. JAMES B. MILLER

FIRST FULL-TIME PASTOR; LAST PASTOR TO SERVE AS COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Reverend James Miller was our Pastor from February 23, 1958, until May 31, 1976.

Rev. James Miller holds the distinction of being St. Daniel's first full-time pastor. Prior to that, St. Daniel's shared a pastor with other churches in the surrounding area as part of the Tulpehocken Charge, then the Womelsdorf Parish, and finally the Robesonia Parish. Rev. Miller led the congregation during the sometimes-challenging times of transitioning to an independent church parish.

James Bulmer Miller was born on March 25, 1926, in Lansford, Carbon County, PA. He graduated from Lansford High School in 1943. He received a BA degree in Psychology and Religion from Muhlenberg College in 1946 and his Master of Divinity degree from Mt. Airy Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia in 1949. He was ordained by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania on May 18, 1949, at Buck Hill Falls in the Poconos. James Miller and Mary Jane Showalter were married on October 23, 1949. They had one son, James Dana.

Rev. Miller was installed at St. Daniel's on February 23, 1958. Fellowship was very much a part of St. Daniel's church life during the time of Rev. Miller's leadership. Some of it was the result of a continuation of already established activities. The Young Adult Bible Class met socially once per month, Luther League was active, and both men's and women's groups were strong. There were church recreational teams, dart leagues, and men's and women's bowling leagues, with enough interest to support three separate women's bowling teams. Church suppers were popular events, and congregational meetings were well attended. The music program also continued to thrive during Rev. Miller's pastorate.

There were also new developments and changes. Introduction of the new "red" *Service Book and Hymnal* brought about changes in both worship and music. In an interview for the 250th Anniversary, Rev. Miller stated, "We conducted two worship services for a time [starting in 1959], each served by its own choir, and we experienced an increase in attendance, but we also found that it split the congregation and split the fellowship. We felt strongly enough about it to change back to one service [in 1962]." A first set of hand bells, a gift from Mabel Davis Koch in memory of her husband, Howard, started a new music program that continued up until the 2020 COVID pandemic altered our worship practices.

In 1958, the congregation built its own parsonage for the Millers that was located on the site of the current church. There is a **lot** more to share about the final parsonage of St. Daniel's! More details on that in a future edition!

Throughout his pastorate, Rev. Miller filled many roles. He worked in an era in which the church had no paid staff to assist. Rev. Miller handled all visitations and administered Holy Communion to homebound and hospitalized members. He handled all secretarial duties, typed and folded worship bulletins (later recruiting the youth to fold the bulletins), and began a monthly newsletter, "The Corner Church News," personally taking it to the printer each month. He compiled the annual Church Record booklet and solicited advertising to pay for the printing. Rev. Miller gave credit to volunteers for doing much work. He recalled, "Workers came out in force on weekends, and were prepared to do whatever was necessary," no matter the task.

During catechetical instruction, Rev. Miller stressed learning the significance of parts of the worship service as well as the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creeds. Passionate and earnest, he was deeply committed to encouraging faithful Sunday morning attendance, frequently using the *Corner Church News* to remind and challenge the congregation.

Alongside his demanding work with the church, Rev. Miller was also active in other organizations. He was a member of the Conrad Weiser Lions Club, Robesonia, and Conference secretary from 1954-1957; chairman of the Commission on Welfare of the Union Church; treasurer of Lutheran World Action; and United Lutheran Church in American convention delegate at Toronto, Canada. He served on the boards of the former Central Pennsylvania Synod and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. He is listed in *Who's Who in the East*, *Who's Who in Religion*, and *Platform Speakers of America*. Rev. Miller had done graduate work at Penn State University, Gettysburg College, and the University of West Virginia.

After leaving St. Daniel's, Rev. Miller served Christ Yocom's Lutheran Church in Grill and Vinemont Community Lutheran in Fritztown until his retirement in 1996. He also served as visitation Pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sinking Spring for 10-1/2 years. On May 18, 2023, Rev. Miller observed the 75th anniversary of his ordination.

Rev. James Miller died on September 30, 2023, at the age of 97. He is interred in Fairview Cemetery Annex in Denver, PA.

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Reverend John Keener was our Pastor from July 1, 1976, to October 1, 1976.

Rev. Keener served St. Daniel's in the capacity of Vice Pastor from July 1, 1976, to October 1, 1976, between the pastorates of Rev. James B. Miller and Rev. Edward W. Cloughen.

John D. Keener was born on August 8, 1909, in Strausstown, PA. He graduated from Muhlenberg College in 1932 and the Mt. Airy Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia in 1935. He was ordained by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania on July 21, 1935, in Reading, PA. Six days after his ordination, he married Esther Klopp of Reading. The Keeners had six children: Doris, Kathryn, Rev. Thomas, Lois, Robert, and Ruth.

In addition to his church duties, Rev. Keener was active in the Lutheran Church at large. He served for seven years as statistician of the Wilkes-Barre Conference, several years on the stewardship committees of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Ministerium of Pennsylvania, and was Dean of the West Berks Mission District. He was active as a delegate to the United Lutheran Church in American conventions in Cleveland and Kansas City.

Rev. John Keener died on October 12, 1989, at the age of 80. He is buried in the Altalaha Lutheran Cemetery in Rehrersburg, PA.

Some other significant events occurred during Rev. James Miller's and Rev. John Keener's ministries at St. Daniel's:

- \* November 23, 1958 – Dedication of the St. Daniel's parsonage.
- \* May-September 1964 – Renovations to the church building, partially funded via an "Improvement Fund Campaign". Rededication services held September 27 - October 4.
- \* 1966 – The Reading Fair Stand was sold for \$50, after St. Daniel's operated it from 1941-1961.
- \* 1966 – The Pavilion was sold for \$893.90 and removed from the church property, after which the basement area was filled in.
- \* 1967 – Renovations to the Sunday School building basement. Dedication held October 1.
- \* 1972 – Joyce Hassler was the first woman to serve a full term as an elected member of Church Council, 1972-1975.
- \* 1974 – Complete rebuilding of the church organ with some new stops added. Rededication of the Moller Organ and new console held March 31.
- \* 1975 – First set of handbells dedicated.

- \* May 11, 1975 – Burning of the church organ debt of \$21,000.00.
- \* 1976 – St. Daniel's 225th Anniversary; special services held in May.
- \* June 6, 1976 – Church Constitution amended to have the Council President elected from members of Council rather than have the Pastor as President.
- \* September 12, 1976 – Joint service celebrating the 100th Anniversary of St. Paul's UCC and the 225th Anniversary of St. Daniel's.

Significant US and world events during Rev. James Miller's and Rev. John Keener's ministries at St. Daniel's included:

- \* 1958 – *Lutheran Service Book and Hymnal* (the "red" hymnal) was published.
- \* 1960 – The American Lutheran Church (ALC) was established.
- \* April 12, 1961 – Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit Earth.
- \* February 20, 1962 – US astronaut John Glenn became the first American to orbit Earth.
- \* November 22, 1963 – President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, TX.
- \* March 1965 – U.S. ground troops first deployed in Vietnam.
- \* April 4, 1968 – Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, TN.
- \* July 20, 1969 – US Astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first human to land on and walk on the moon.
- \* 1974 – Word processors began to replace typewriters in business offices.
- \* August 9, 1974 – U.S. President Richard Nixon resigned in disgrace.
- \* April 30, 1975 – The Vietnam War ended.
- \* 1976 – Bicentennial (200<sup>th</sup>) Anniversary of the United States of America.

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

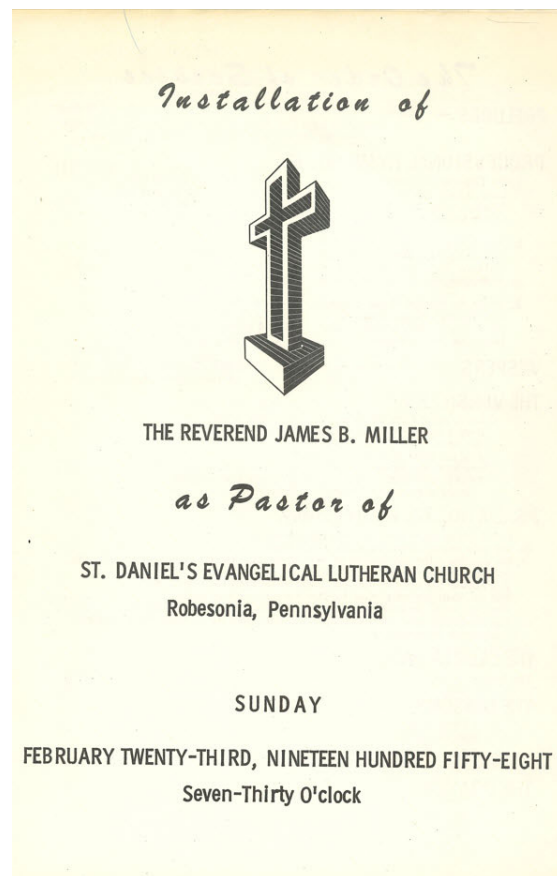
celebration of the 250th anniversary. More details regarding this topic are found in Chapter 3 – Pastors. Additional details from Church Records and The Corner Church News from the applicable years. Photos from St. Daniel’s archives.

**#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch  
#OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026  
#275thAnniversary #HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #ReverendJamesMiller  
#FirstFulltimePastor #ChurchRecord #CornerChurchNews #ReverendJohnKeener  
#ALotHappensIn275Years**



THE REV. JAMES B. MILLER, A.B. B.D. PASTOR

Photo from the 1958 Church Record



Bulletin cover for the installation of  
Rev. James Miller as Pastor of  
St. Daniel’s Lutheran Church  
February 23, 1958

# The Corner Church NEWS

Vol. I

January, 1960

No. 1



ST. DANIEL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Robesonia, Pa.

The Rev. James B. Miller, A.B., B.D., Pastor  
Mrs. Helen M. Smith, Organist & Directress

#### SERVICE SCHEDULE

Worship Service ..... 8:00 A.M.  
Church School ..... 9:15 A.M.  
Worship Service ..... 10:30 A.M.

## THE CORNER CHURCH NEWS

Dear Members of St. Daniel's:

This is the first issue of our newsletter that will come into your home each month during the coming year. Your Pastor has looked forward to this for some time. I think it is quite imperative that the members of our church should be informed of what goes on in the church. Your Pastor has also felt the need of a newsletter in letting the sick, aged and shut-in members of our church in on the news. If it serves no other purpose than keeping them informed, we feel that it has done the job.

We are indeed grateful to our advertisers for making our newsletter a reality. We trust that you will patronize them. All of our advertisers were very much enthused by this project; we only hope that it will be received as well by our members.

I shall need the help of all the organizations in getting their news to me each month for this letter. I trust that you shall not let me down.

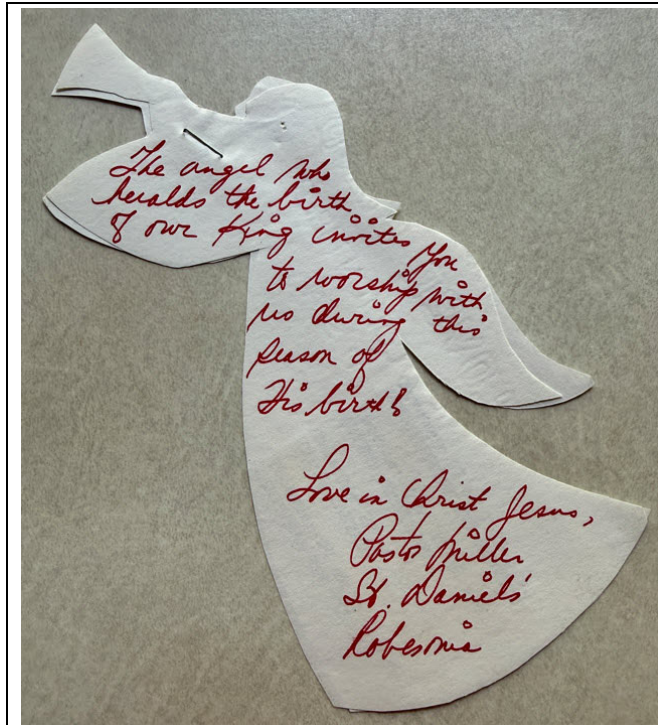
This letter will also go to our young men and women in college as well as in the service of our country. Please keep the pastor informed of any change of addresses. We would also like to have their reaction to this project, or any news that they would like to send to us.

I should like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very prosperous and Blessed New Year. With God's strength and His help we shall continue to grow.

Yours In His Service,  
Pastor Miller

Cover of the 1st edition of the  
Corner Church News, published by  
Pastor James Miller,  
January 1960.

Introduction and welcome to the 1st  
edition of the Corner Church News,  
January 1960.



*"The angel who heralds the birth of our King invites you to worship with us during this season of His birth! Love in Christ Jesus, Pastor Miller, St. Daniel's, Robesonia."*

- Angel greeting found tucked in the Church Council minutes from the 1960s.

#### CHURCH ATTENDANCE

It will not be too long until we get into the season of the year when we are more apt to stay at home rather than go to church. Some members evidently have already felt the bed to be more comfortable than the church pew. St. Daniel's is your church. It was built so that you and I could worship God regularly and that God's Holy Word would help to strengthen our lives. I am confident that it isn't asking too much to have you give one hour a week to the Lord. We have so much time for other things in our lives and such little time for God and His Church. I don't believe that God ever meant or hoped that we would have to beg people to come to hear the Gospel or beg people to give some of their time to the church and its work or beg people to contribute to the furtherance of the Gospel. The members of St. Daniel's have absolutely no excuse for not attending church services. With two services each Sunday morning there is no reason whatsoever that you cannot attend other than illness. If only more people of our congregation could catch some of the spirit of worshipping God. Won't you out of a love for God make a special effort to attend more regularly?

Blurb from the June 1960 edition of the Corner Church News.

#### PALM SUNDAY — EASTER SUNDAY SERVICES

Our Palm Sunday and Easter services were attended in great numbers. This is the way the church ought to be filled every Sunday of the year. There is nothing more heart warming and more inspiring than a church filled with worshipers raising their voices in song to Almighty God.

If only we the members of St. Daniel's could really get in the spirit of worship. If only we could feel the real need of Christ and of worship.

Of course our whole attendance at the services depends upon YOU. Either we don't feel the need of Christ or of Worship or we just don't care. You are the one to supply the answer. It is not enough to worship just on Christmas and Easter. Our Lord is not an Easter or Christmas God who only functions on those occasions. He is a God to whom we must turn daily in thanks and in our praise.

Why not get into the spirit of worshipping regularly? If you are willing to be honest with yourself you owe it to HIM.

Blurb from the April 1961 edition of the Corner Church News.

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| <p><b>DID YOU REMEMBER?</b></p> <p>Starting the first Sunday of September our Church School hour is 9:15 A.M., and our Worship Service is held at 10:30 A.M.</p> <p>Now that we are starting the fall season I sincerely hope that we shall immediately begin to become more concerned about our attendance at Worship services. During the summer months we have enjoyed vacations, picnics, etc. Now its time to place a little more emphasis on the spiritual aspect of our lives.</p> <p>If you haven't been regular in your attendance over the Summer months why not begin now to worship regularly.</p> <p>See you in Church!</p> <p><b>IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER</b></p> <p>Sept. 6th - 10:30 A.M. - Harvest Home.</p> <p>Sept. 6th - 7:30 P.M. - Nominating Committee meets.</p> <p>Sept. 27th - Promotion Day in our Church School at 9:15 a.m.</p> <p>Presentation of Attendance Awards.</p> <p>Oct. 4th - World Wide Communion Sun. Service and Communion at 8 and 10:30 A.M.</p> <p>Oct. 11th - Rally Day in our Church School at 9:15 A.M.</p> <p>Oct. 11th - Quiet Hour Communion at 2 P.M.</p> <p>Oct. 19th - Finance Committee meets to begin Budget for 1971, at 7:30 P.M.</p> <p>Oct. 25th - Reformation Sunday.</p> | <p><b>WORLD WIDE COMMUNION SUNDAY</b></p> <p>October 4, 1970</p> <p>Two Worship Services<br/>8:00 A.M. - 10:30 A.M.</p> <p>Will YOU be among those faithful servants of the Lord who shall partake of the Sacrament?</p> <p><b>WORLD WIDE COMMUNION SUNDAY</b></p> <p>On October 4th at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. we shall celebrate World Wide Communion Sunday at St. Daniel's.</p> <p>It is our sincere hope and prayer that all members of St. Daniel's will join in with fellow Christians throughout the World in the Celebration of this Sacrament of the Altar.</p> <p>There will be two services for your convenience, one at 8 a.m., and the other at 10:30 a.m., on October 4th. There is no reason why every member of the church shouldn't be able to attend one of these two services. May we urge all members to be sure to make this a must.</p> <p>In our busy and daily routine of living, too little emphasis is placed on the Church and on Spiritual values. It is time for all of us to begin to really live for what we say we believe in. If we are as proud of our faith and our church as we say we are, then it's time to show it with our presence in the House of God.</p> <p>What better way could we show our confidence and faith in the Lord than by our presence at His table.</p> |

Blurbs from the September-October 1970 edition of the Corner Church News.

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| <p><b>ARE YOU ATTENDING CHURCH REGULARLY?</b></p> <p>We would like very much to see more of our members in church every Sunday. Why not begin now? Does your church and your Lord really mean a great deal to you? The family that worships together stays together.</p> | <p><b>CHURCH ATTENDANCE</b></p> <p>Where is everyone? This is a question that is asked quite frequently by many of those in church. We have yet to find the answer. There certainly is no excuse for not attending since you have two services from which to pick. This will not continue long however unless some of those who were complaining all the time get out of their beds and easy chairs and realize that there is a God to whom we owe a little of our time and energy. What about YOU? Have you been in church lately?</p> |
| <p>Blurb from the February 1960 edition of the Corner Church News.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Blurb from the January 1960 edition of the Corner Church News.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

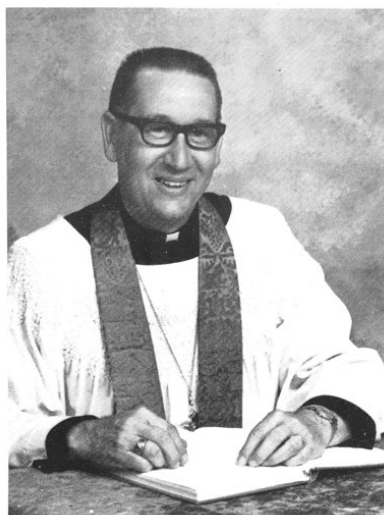


Nina Mary Hartman  
Teresa Ann (Wolfskill) Kissling  
Donald Allen Feeg  
Debra Jean (Bright) Hinkle  
Daphne Elizabeth Polson  
Lisa Marie (Zechman) Mahaffey  
Mark Franklin Wolfskill  
Joseph Scott Baum

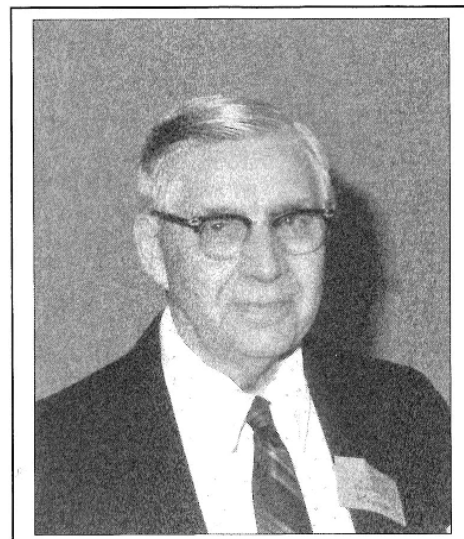
Ralph Edwin Mountz  
Craig Alan Matthew  
Suzanne Kay (Hassler) Ellefson  
Judy Eileen Strunk  
Scott Michael Speicher  
Carolann Grace (Merkel) Reiver  
Robert Michael Grimes

Steven Todd Ranck  
Roger Lee Feeg  
Carol Anne (Ravert) Heydt  
Amy Lizabeth Harrison  
James Allen Bright  
Nancy Ann Dreibelbis  
Timothy Carl Rentschler

April 11, 1976: Rev. Miller's last Confirmation class, which was also the last group to be confirmed in the old church before the December 8, 1976 fire.



Rev. James Miller  
from the 1971 church directory



Rev. John Keener  
Vice Pastor: July 1-October 1, 1976