

HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA

HARVEST HOME – BLESSINGS GATHERED, BLESSINGS SHARED

For well over a century – and quite possibly much longer – the arrival of autumn at St. Daniel's has brought with it a familiar tradition: Harvest Home.

The earliest reference to Harvest Home found so far in St. Daniel's archives dates back to the pastorate of Rev. Oscar Pflueger. He began the practice of publishing an annual Parish Record documenting activities of the previous year. The very first edition of the Parish Record shows that Harvest Home took place at St. John's (Host) in the Womelsdorf Parish on September 7, 1902. St. Daniel's is specifically called out as having held a Harvest Home celebration on August 16, 1903, resulting in \$10.00 in benevolent contributions. So, we know the congregation has observed this tradition for *at least* 123 years.

For a congregation founded in 1751 among the farming families of the Tulpehocken Valley, the harvest was far more than the seasonal imagery we associate with autumn today; it was central to daily life. The success of the fields and orchards directly affected the lives and livelihoods of many of the families who worshiped here. A plentiful harvest was truly something for which to give thanks. And so, a celebration such as Harvest Home would have been especially meaningful to the generations who worshiped at St. Daniel's when this was a much more agricultural community.

Over the years and in old and new church buildings, the sanctuary has been transformed for the occasion with the fruits of the harvest and other symbols of God's abundance. Produce from gardens and farms, apples and other fruits, canned and packaged foods, flowers, corn stalks, pumpkins, and other reminders of the season have surrounded the altar as the congregation gathered in worship and thanksgiving. While the result has always been a beautifully adorned sanctuary, Harvest Home has never been simply about decorating it. The items gathered represent both gratitude for what has been received and a willingness to share that abundance with others.

A few notable historical details pertaining to this longstanding custom:

- In earlier years, the Harvest Home contributions were given to charity and to the minister and his family. When the minister no longer received this benefit, for many years, the proceeds were given to the Lutheran Hospice in Reading or the Caum Home (a Lutheran elderly care home) in Reading. Later – and continuing to the present day – the food items have been donated to the Conrad Weiser Food Pantry.

- In 1925, it was recorded that the German language was now only used during a part of the worship services at Harvest Home and Communion Sundays. All other services were held in English.
- Over the years, preparing the Harvest Home celebration has been the responsibility of various groups of the church. In at least the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was the responsibility of the Adult Bible Class. The Social Ministry Committee has overseen this activity since around the mid-1970s.
- In August 1961, a new Pennsylvania State Health Department regulation barred church homes, nursing homes, and other institutions from accepting home-canned food. After that, members of the congregation were urged to bring fresh fruits and vegetables or commercially canned goods for Harvest Home. (That regulation was overturned just a few months later, in November 1961, though there are present-day restrictions regarding commercial consumption of home-prepared foods.)

In more recent years, along with the produce and foodstuffs, another striking feature has become part of the Harvest Home scene and ministry: handmade quilts. Quilting for Lutheran World Relief (LWR) started at St. Daniel's around 2012. As the quilting efforts grew, the quilts began to be displayed during the Harvest Home celebration before being packed up and delivered to the LWR dropoff site. From there, they are distributed where needed, both in the United States and around the world, bringing warmth, comfort, and care to people whose lives have been disrupted by natural disasters, war, and other crises. This year alone, 122 quilts made by St. Daniel's Active Social Ministry sewing team draped the altar rail and front and back pews. Another recent addition to Harvest Home is the creation and display of school and personal care kits for distribution through Lutheran World Relief.

Together with the food and produce placed around the altar, the quilts and care kits create a beautiful setting for worship. But the beauty tells only part of the story. All of these gifts will bring nourishment, comfort, and care to others. In Harvest Home, the blessings gathered at St. Daniel's become blessings shared.

The world surrounding our congregation has changed tremendously since 1751. Most of us no longer depend upon the success of our own fields for the food that will carry our families through the winter. But the message of Harvest Home remains unchanged: recognize the blessings we have received, give thanks for them, and share from that abundance with those who have less.

Many thanks to the countless dedicated members of St. Daniel's over the years who have contributed time, talents, and treasures to this beloved act of stewardship!

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 – Spiritual Life of the Church. Additional details from Parish Records and The Corner Church News from the applicable years. Photos from St. Daniel's archives or as noted.

**#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch
#OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026 #275thAnniversary
#HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #HarvestHome #SocialMinistry
#ActiveSocialMinistry #ALotHappensIn275Years**



Photo from the 1942 Parish Record with the caption: The “Horn of Plenty” filled with God-given foods, intensified the meaning of the Harvest Home services in St. Daniel's Church September 14, 1941. Photo by Owen C. Stout; St. Daniel's archives.

From St. Daniel's archives:



Harvest Home – circa 1952



Harvest Home – undated photo

THE CORNER CHURCH NEWS

**FESTIVAL
OF
HARVEST HOME**

SEPTEMBER 9th, 1962
10:30 A.M.

HARVEST HOME SUNDAY

On September 9th, we shall celebrate the festival of Harvest Home at St. Daniel's at 10:30 A.M.

For a number of years the Adult Bible Class has been responsible for setting up the display for Harvest Home. May we remind the members that can plan to be at the church on September 8th.

This year as in the past, our Harvest Home supplies will be given to one of the Lutheran Homes. We are grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Howard Koch for the splendid job which they do each year in seeing that the display gets to one of the homes. Their job is not an easy one and we wish to thank them for their untiring efforts.

From
The Corner Church News
August – September 1962



Nancy Wolfskill, Rita Henning, Carole Schmehl,
Marsha Walmer, Linda Preston
Harvest Home setup – September 21, 2013



Harvest Home setup – September 21, 2013

Photos by Kim Henning



Harvest Home setup – September 16, 2017



Harvest Home – September 22, 2019



Harvest Home setup looked a little different during the COVID-19 pandemic – September 26, 2020
 Jim & Christine Griesemer, Rita Henning, Carole Schmehl

Photo by Kim Henning

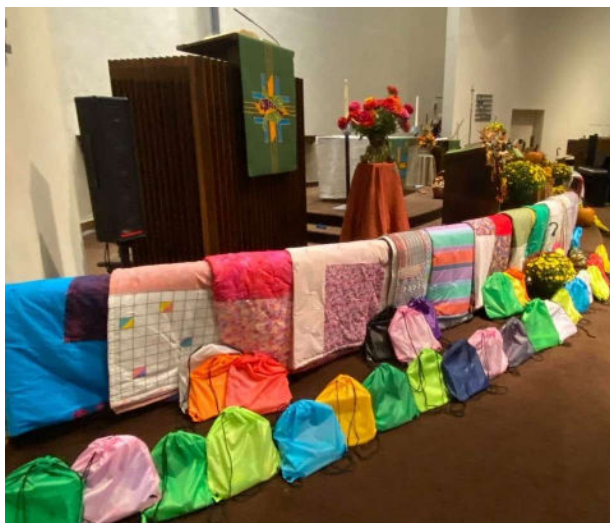


From St. Daniel's Archives:
 Active Social Ministry Committee
 members honored for their work
 and dedication
 October 1, 2023

Left: Deanie Yoh, Betsy Althouse,
 Linda Preston, Bonnie Thomas,
 Bonnie Duffin (hidden), Pat
 Bechtel, Marie Peiffer (hidden),
 Christine Griesemer

Right: Rita Henning, Joyce Hassler





Harvest Home
October 1, 2023

School Kits for Lutheran World
Relief

Photo from St. Daniel's Archives

Harvest Home
September 27, 2026

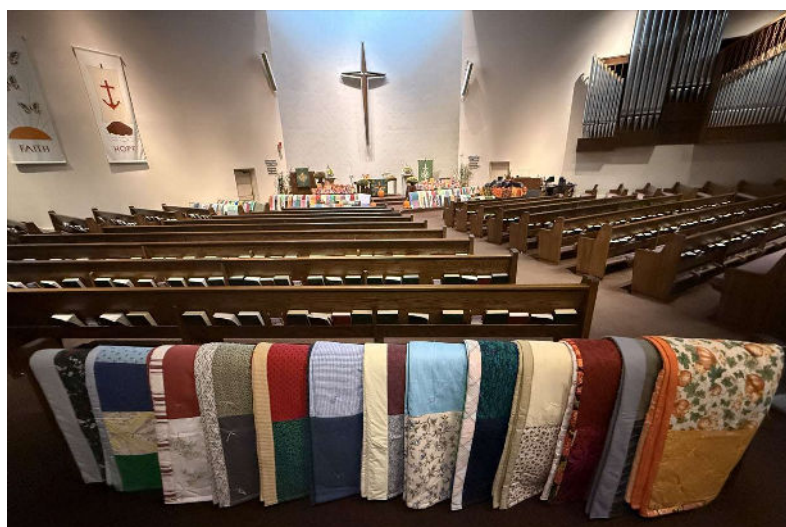
Personal Care Kits for Lutheran
World Relief

Photo by Kim Henning



Harvest Home – September 21, 2025

Photo by Kim Henning



Harvest Home
September 27, 2026

Photos by
Kim Henning

