

HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA

FALL FEST – A TRADITION OF FELLOWSHIP, FUN, AND COMMUNITY SINCE 1991

In 1991, Rev. Ronald Weir expressed concern that not enough people in the surrounding community knew about St. Daniel's Lutheran Church. He envisioned an annual event that would welcome visitors to the church and introduce them to the congregation.

Terry Williams, then serving on Church Council, took that idea and ran with it. Noting that many neighboring churches held strawberry or peach festivals and other events during the spring and summer, he suggested something different: an autumn festival featuring crafts, a flea market, and entertainment. When Terry approached Pastor Weir with the idea, he responded, "If we do this, we need to do it right." And so, St. Daniel's Fall Fest was born! Thirty-some members attended the first organizational meeting, bringing an abundance of enthusiasm and ideas. Plans quickly took shape for what would become a major undertaking involving nearly every corner of the church property and a considerable number of volunteers.

The inaugural Country Fall Fest in October 1991 featured nearly 50 craft spaces and a flea market filling the east parking lot, handmade goods, antiques, pumpkins, chrysanthemums, children's games, face painting, and musical entertainment. There were even demonstrations of traditional skills, including broom making and apple butter cooking over an open fire. Visitors could purchase everything from handmade braided rugs to trees and shrubs -- and apparently even encounter a Rainbow vacuum cleaner salesman!

Of course, food was an important part of the festivities from the very beginning. Breakfast, homemade soups, sandwiches, and baked goods quickly became favorites. Terry Williams recruited the St. Daniel's Quilters (already known for their excellent needlework AND cooking skills) to prepare apple dumplings, beginning another Fall Fest tradition.

The Quilters contributed more than their culinary talents. They also provided a handmade quilt each year to be raffled as a fundraiser. The first quilt, featuring a pattern called *Lancaster Rose*, helped raise \$450 in 1991. The annual quilt became a cherished feature of Fall Fest for many years, continuing until the Quilting group eventually came to an end.

Among the more amusing memories from those early years is a story involving Pastor Weir himself. His wife, Barbara, donated a set of dishes from their attic to the flea market without his knowledge. While browsing the sale, Pastor Weir spotted the dishes,

purchased them, and proudly brought them home, telling Barbara how much they reminded him of the dishes from which he had eaten at his grandmother's house!

Beyond the fun and fellowship, the first Fall Fest was a financial success, generating a profit of \$3,420. Proceeds were designated to support youth and children's ministries, with funds from that first year helping to purchase sturdy wooden tables and chairs for the Sunday School classrooms. Over the years, Fall Fest proceeds have also supported St. Daniel's Preschool and other church activities and needs.

As the years passed, Fall Fest grew into one of St. Daniel's most anticipated annual events. Food, craft vendors, a flea market, children's activities, and entertainment drew crowds from throughout the surrounding area. At its height, attendance was so strong that visitors parked at the nearby Conrad Weiser school and rode shuttle buses up the hill to the church.

New attractions were added along the way. A balloon-animal clown, cotton candy, and soft pretzels appeared in 1999. The following year brought a disc jockey and master of ceremonies, along with demonstrations by the Quilters. During St. Daniel's 250th anniversary celebration in 2001, the Ringgold Band performed at Fall Fest. Later years brought additional attractions, including an antique car cruise-in from 2009 through 2011, while the Silent Auction and Chinese Auction also became popular fundraising activities.

Another particularly popular attraction was the indoor flea market held in the church Narthex. Throughout the year, members brought donated household items, which volunteers collected, sorted, and organized for sale. Much of the merchandise was offered through bargain-priced "Fill-A-Bag" sales, while more valuable items were individually priced. It was a favorite destination for bargain hunters, but the tremendous effort involved in collecting, organizing, selling, and ultimately disposing of unsold merchandise made it one of Fall Fest's most labor-intensive activities.

By 2002, the enormous amount of work required to organize Fall Fest had begun taking its toll on the volunteers. With fewer people willing to assume planning responsibilities, the committee considered scaling back the 2003 event. The suggestion did not go over particularly well! Some members argued that scaling back simply wasn't "St. Daniel's style." Others emphasized the importance of Fall Fest to the surrounding community. One member pointed out that people had the third Saturday in October marked on their calendars from one year to the next. And, regarding the abundance of things to do at Fall Fest, one concerned member asked, "What do you want to take away???"

Ultimately, a full Fall Fest was held in 2003, with only some of the live entertainment reduced. But the committee's concerns were real. The same dedicated people had been carrying much of the workload year after year, and additional volunteers were desperately needed. It was a challenge that would remain familiar in the decades to come.

Fall Fest continued through the years, adapting to changing circumstances. There were beautiful fall days and others filled with rain and wind, when vendors and activities were moved indoors wherever space permitted. Eventually, the event moved from the typical third Saturday to the first Saturday in October, in hopes of enjoying warmer weather.

The COVID pandemic interrupted the tradition in 2020, marking the only year since 1991 that Fall Fest was not held. When the event returned, some of its former activities did not. The large Narthex flea market, for example, was discontinued as the enormous volunteer effort it required became increasingly difficult for a smaller, aging congregation to sustain. Yet Fall Fest continued. The annual event remained an opportunity for members to work together, welcome the community, and support the ministries of St. Daniel's. And its appeal has extended well beyond the immediate neighborhood. Some families and friends have made Fall Fest such a treasured annual tradition that they travel from New York to attend!

This past Saturday, October 3, 2026, St. Daniel's welcomed visitors once again for a day of food, fun, fellowship, and community spirit. Many familiar traditions were still going strong: breakfast and lunch, homemade soups and sandwiches, baked goods, jellies, pumpkins, and fresh produce. Craft vendors and community organizations joined individuals selling their wares at the outdoor community flea market. Children enjoyed games, cookie and pumpkin decorating, and a hay bale maze, while the longstanding Silent Auction was joined by the return of the Chinese Auction after an absence of several years.

Fall Fest 2026 was also part of St. Daniel's year-long 275th anniversary celebration, providing another opportunity to recognize the traditions, fellowship, and community connections that have shaped the congregation's history.

Looking back over 35 years, keeping such an event going has never been easy, and the dedication of those who have planned, prepared, worked, donated, and supported Fall Fest through the decades cannot be overstated. But perhaps the most remarkable part of the story is how closely Fall Fest continues to reflect the original vision of Pastor Weir: bringing members together for a common purpose, welcoming neighbors and friends to St. Daniel's, and providing support for the church's ministries.

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 6 – Christian Fellowship – Fall Fest. Additional details from Church Records from applicable years. Images and photos from St. Daniel's archives or as noted.

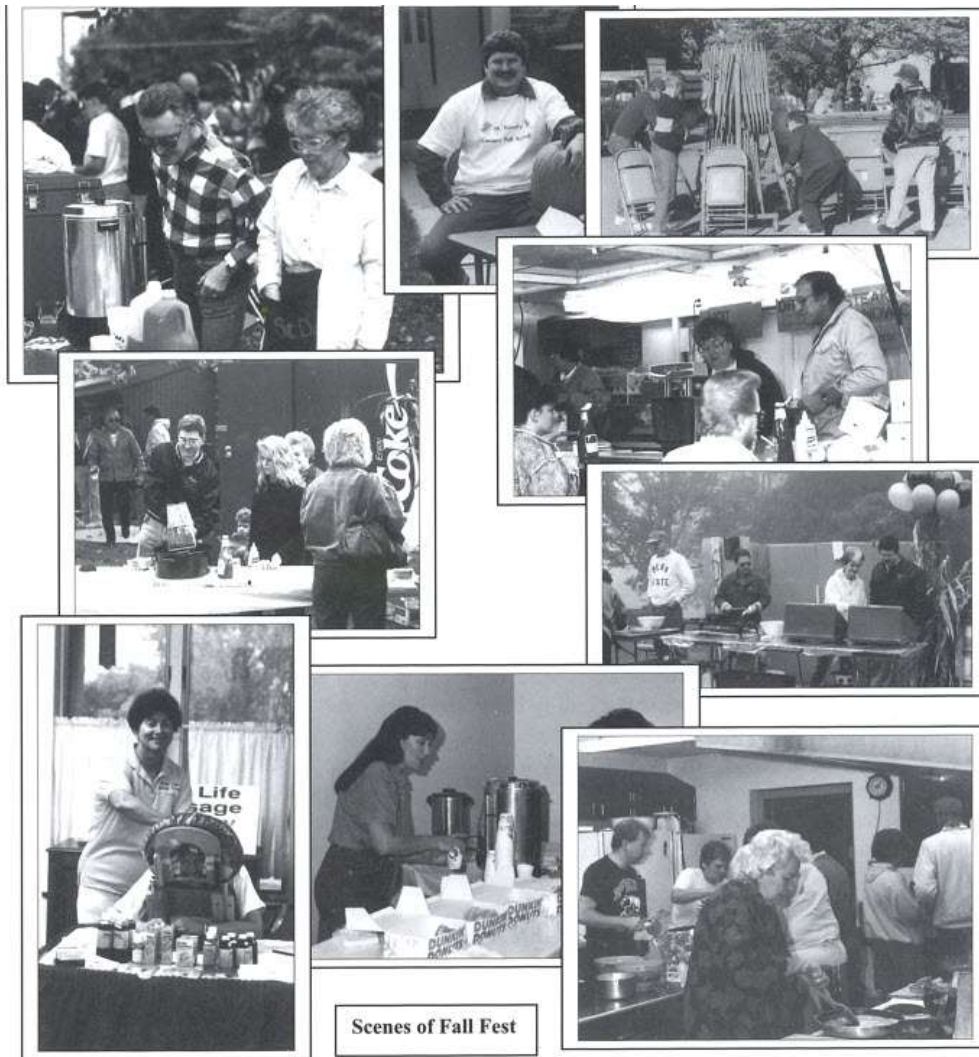
**#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch
#OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026
#275thAnniversary #HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #FallFest
#PastorRonWeir #TerryWilliams #ALotHappensIn275Years**



1993 poster



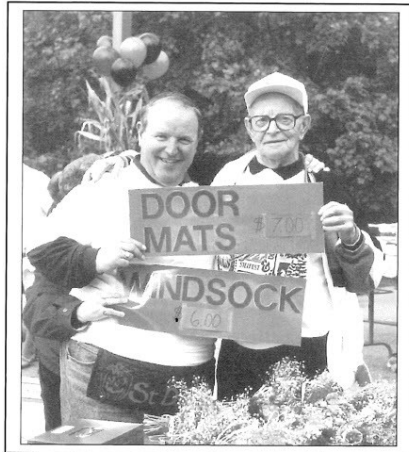
1995 announcement for the congregation



Top row: Jay and Carole Schmehl, co-chairs, Michael Zerbe sells pumpkins, Work Crew sets up: Harold Ranck, Jay Schmehl, Unidentified, Larry Bashore, Brian Yoh. 2nd row: Brian and Kelly Yoh make fries, Naoma and Merlyn Witzke operate food stand, Robert Preston, Charles Duffy, Linda Preston, Kenneth Noto make funnel cakes. 3rd row: massage by Carol Aullenbach, Susan Pyles runs the doughnut stand, kitchen crew prepares food: Thomas Kearse, Patricia Seidel, Freida Schmeck, Linda Preston, Robert Preston.

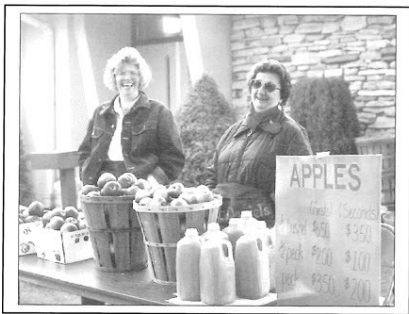


Children enjoy a magic show by Tigger and Trixanne and a hayride by Calvin Yoh.

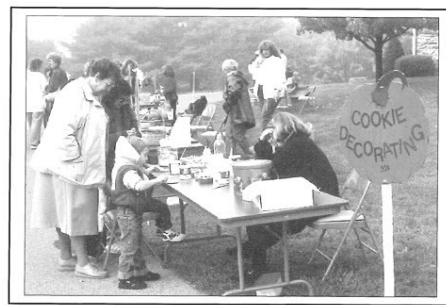


Above: face painting by Kathy Pachuiolo.

Left: Thomas Miller and Herman Klopp peddle their wares.



Luan Mundell and Harriet Mease sell apples.



Activities and crafts for children



Face painting by Jan Phillips – 1998



Rita & John Henning selling tickets with NY friend Anita Quynn (middle)



South Heidelberg Township Police brought K-9 Aldo for a visit in 2025 and 2026!

~ Photo courtesy South Heidelberg Police Department



Handmade quilt donated by St. Daniel's Quilting group for Fall Fest 2015



Stephen Phillips & Brad Small clowning around at Fall Fest!



Kenny & Geneva Berger – 2023



Pat Bechtel & friend Peg Kiebach – 2023



Produce – 2023

2025 Photos by Kim Henning



Frances & Phyllis Luft – Food Sales
2025



Baked Goods
with Joy Kline & Jill Narducci – 2025



Randy Yarnall & Pat Bechtel
make pancakes – 2025



Dishwashing by Dave & Sam Bright
with their granddaughter – 2025



Joyce Hassler &
Bonnie Thomas behind her bows – 2025



Soup & Sandwiches with Nan & Don and
Carolyn Feeg – 2025

2025 Photos by Kim Henning



Kids Activity Area with our Preschool teachers, Lorelei Lewis & Jan Miller – 2025



Attendees enjoying the day – 2025



Fearless leader Ron O'Brien and John Schittler at the produce stand – 2025

2026 Photos by Kim Henning



Produce with John Schittler and Pearl & Barry Wurst – 2026



Some of the kitchen crew & Kathy Yarnall – 2026



The return of the Chinese Auction – 2026