

HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA

FROM THE GROUND UP – BUILDING THE THIRD ST. DANIEL'S CHURCH

Almost immediately after the December 8, 1976, fire that destroyed St. Daniel's Lutheran Church and the Sunday School building, plans to rebuild were set in motion.

Several sites for the new church were considered, including the location of the destroyed building. However, limited space and the possibility of having to relocate additional graves from the old graveyard made that option impractical. Purchasing land from one of two neighboring farms was also considered, but neither property was available. After extensive discussion and careful consideration of the alternatives, the congregation selected the site of the parsonage on the south side of Big Spring Road, overlooking the borough of Robesonia, with South Mountain providing a beautiful backdrop in every season.

Prior to the fire, the congregation had already approved the sale of the parsonage, as Rev. Edward Cloughen did not wish to reside there. Because the property remained unsold when the fire occurred, the site became a possible location for the new church. In February 1977, the congregation approved selling the parsonage on the condition that it be removed from the property. Mark and Nancy Wolfskill purchased the house and hired a professional moving company to relocate it to their farm on the north side of Big Spring Road. (See the Holy Highlight from September 17, 2026.)

And so, the present structure, the third St. Daniel's church building, is located on the site where the stone parsonage formerly stood. The basement of the parsonage is, in fact, now the basement of the church.

Under the guidance of the Building Committee, Dana W. Gangewere of Wyomissing, PA, was selected as the architect for the new church on January 19, 1977. Preliminary plans were approved by the congregation on April 3, 1977, after which detailed plans and specifications were prepared and distributed for bids. Following the September 1 bid opening, Diller-Plank, Inc., of Willow Street, PA, was selected as the general contractor. A contract for \$706,205 was issued on September 6. The final cost of constructing and refurnishing the church would eventually exceed \$870,000.

Historical note: A June 29, 1977, article in the *Reading Times* reported that Pastor Cloughen and others had attended a Heidelberg Township board meeting to present preliminary plans for the new church. Citing safety concerns, they also requested that a portion of Big Spring Road be lowered by four feet to eliminate a rise in the roadway in front of the proposed building site. Whether this work was ever completed remains

unclear. However, construction photographs in St. Daniel's archives do not appear to show evidence of such a change.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on September 4, 1977. Participants included: Rev. Harold R. Baer, Jr. – Dean of the West Berks District and Pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Sinking Spring; Mrs. Betty Pettit – Assistant to the President, Northeastern PA Synod, Lutheran Church in America; Rev. Edward W. Cloughen – Pastor, St. Daniel's Lutheran Church; Mr. Dana W. Gangewere – Architect, Wyomissing, PA; Mr. Mark A. Wolfskill – Chairman, Building Committee; Mr. Vernon R. Bright, Jr. – President, Church Council; Miss Susan M. Alexander – Representative, Church Youth; Mrs. Dorothy Ravert – Representative, Church Women.

Turning over the first shovelful of earth at the groundbreaking ceremony symbolized a new beginning for St. Daniel's Lutheran Church. Construction was expected to be completed within a year, but Mother Nature had other plans!

An unusually wet autumn in 1977 followed by severe winter weather delayed construction, pushing back the anticipated completion date. Then, on April 1, 1978, a powerful windstorm toppled part of the 37-foot Chi Rho wall, which had to be rebuilt, causing yet another delay. Ultimately, the building was completed in December 1978.

With each passing month, the third St. Daniel's Lutheran Church began to take shape on the hill overlooking Robesonia. The photographs that follow capture more than the construction of a building. They document a congregation that answered Pastor Cloughen's call to "get to work," moving forward with faith, determination, and hope for the future.

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 2 – The Church Grows – Construction of the Third Church 1977-1978.

Additional details from Church Records from applicable years and the 1978 Dedication booklet and bulletin. Photos and articles from St. Daniel's archives and albums owned by Margie Baerncopf and Joyce Hassler.

**#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch
#OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026 #275thAnniversary
#HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #ThirdChurch #Groundbreaking #Construction #Rebuild
#ReverendEdwardCloughen #DanaGangewere #DillerPlank #ALotHappensIn275Years**

Reading Times article
May 26, 1977

Joyce Hassler clipping



Groundbreaking

Rev. Harold Baer, Jr.,
Vernon Bright,
Betty Pettit,
Rev. Edward Cloughen,
Mark Wolfskill

1978 Dedication Booklet

Broken ground
on the hill overlooking Robesonia

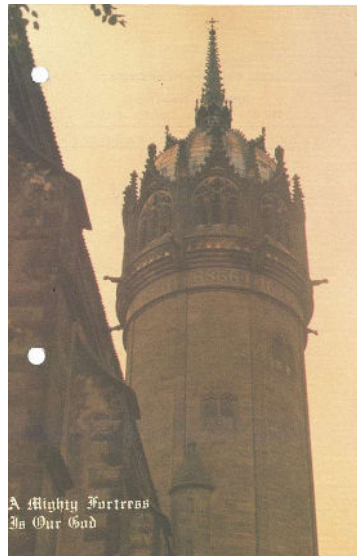
Marge Baerncopf photo



Service of Groundbreaking Bulletin

September 4,
1977

Joyce Hassler
memento



A Mighty Fortress
Is Our God

'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
With God, the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with thee. Amen.

THE INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost.
People: Amen.
Pastor: O Lord, open thou my lips.
People: And my mouth shall show forth thy praise.
Pastor: Make haste, O God, to deliver us.
People: Make haste to help me, O Lord.
Pastor: Except the Lord build the house:
People: They labor in vain who build it.
Pastor: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and
to the Holy Ghost:
People: As it was in the beginning, is now, and
ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

THE RESPONSIVE PSALM - No. 100

Pastor: Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye
laude.
People: Serve the Lord with gladness, come before
his presence with singing.

-3-

Pastor: Let us pray. Accept, O Lord, this place,
and let your blessing descend upon us, that
we may respond to your love with adoration,
thanksgiving and praise. Grant that here
your Word may be proclaimed and your way
revealed, and that this may be your house
and the place where your honor dwells;
Let your gracious benediction ever abide
here and upon all who shall gather here
to worship you; through Jesus Christ, our
Lord.
People: Amen.

Pastor: In the faith of Jesus Christ this work is
begun and this ground is broken: In the
name of the Father, and of the Son, and
of the Holy Ghost. May true faith, the
fear of God and love of the brethren
flourish here; and may this place be set
apart for the invocation and adoration of
the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who
with the Father and the Holy Ghost, lives
and reigns, one God, world without end.

Other Participants, as they turn over three spadec-
fuls of earth: In the name of the Father, and of
the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Pastor: Let us pray: O God, every good thing has
its beginning, and by whom it increases
and advances to greater worth: Grant us,
your servants, that what we have this day
undertaken to the glory of your Name, may,
by the aid of your fatherly wisdom, be
successfully completed; through Jesus
Christ, our Lord.

People: Amen.

Pastor: Bless we the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

-5-

ST. DANIEL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
R. D. #1
Robesonia, Pennsylvania
The Rev. Edward W. Cloughen, Pastor

SERVICE OF GROUNDBREAKING

September 4, 1977



THE OPENING HYMN . . . "THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION"

The Church's one Foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the word;
From heaven he came and sought her
To be his holy bride,
With his own Blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.

-2-

Pastor: Know ye that the Lord he is God:
People: It is he that hath made us, and not we our-
selves; we are his people, and the sheep of
his pasture.
Pastor: Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and
into his courts with praise:
People: Be thankful unto him, and bless his name.
Pastor: For the Lord is good, his mercy is ever-
lasting.
People: And his truth endureth to all generations.
All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and
to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the begin-
ning, is now, and ever shall be, world
without end. Amen.

THE LESSON Luke 6:43-49

GREETINGS

Mrs. Betty Pettit, Assistant to the President,
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Rev. Harold Baer, Pastor of St. John's Church,
Sinking Spring, Dean of West Berks District.

Mr. Dana W. Gangwere, Architect for our new
building.

ORDER FOR GROUNDBREAKING

Pastor: Lord, have mercy upon us.
People: Lord, have mercy upon us.
Pastor: Christ, have mercy upon us.
People: Christ, have mercy upon us.
Pastor: Lord, have mercy upon us.
People: Lord, have mercy upon us.
All: Our Father, who art in heaven . . .
Pastor: The Lord be with you.
People: And with thy spirit.

-4-

THE BENEDICTION

Pastor: The blessing of Almighty God, the Father,
the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you
all.
People: Amen.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome the follow-
ing guests present with us this evening:

Mrs. Betty A. Pettit, Assistant to the President of
our Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Rev. Harold Baer, Pastor of St. John's Lutheran
Church, Sinking Spring, and Dean of the West Berks
District.

Mr. Dana W. Gangwere, architect for our new building.



-6-

ST. DANIEL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH SITE COMPARISONS

EXISTING CHURCH SITE:

- Confined site, sharp drop in grade elevations.
- Possible lengthy court delay due to necessity to move graves.
- + Traditional location, close to existing parking lots.
- More expensive construction than on a more level site assuming desire of grade level entrances= Approximately + \$30,000.
- Possible conflict with governmental agencies due to "right-of-way" of roadways.
- No additional space available for expansion.

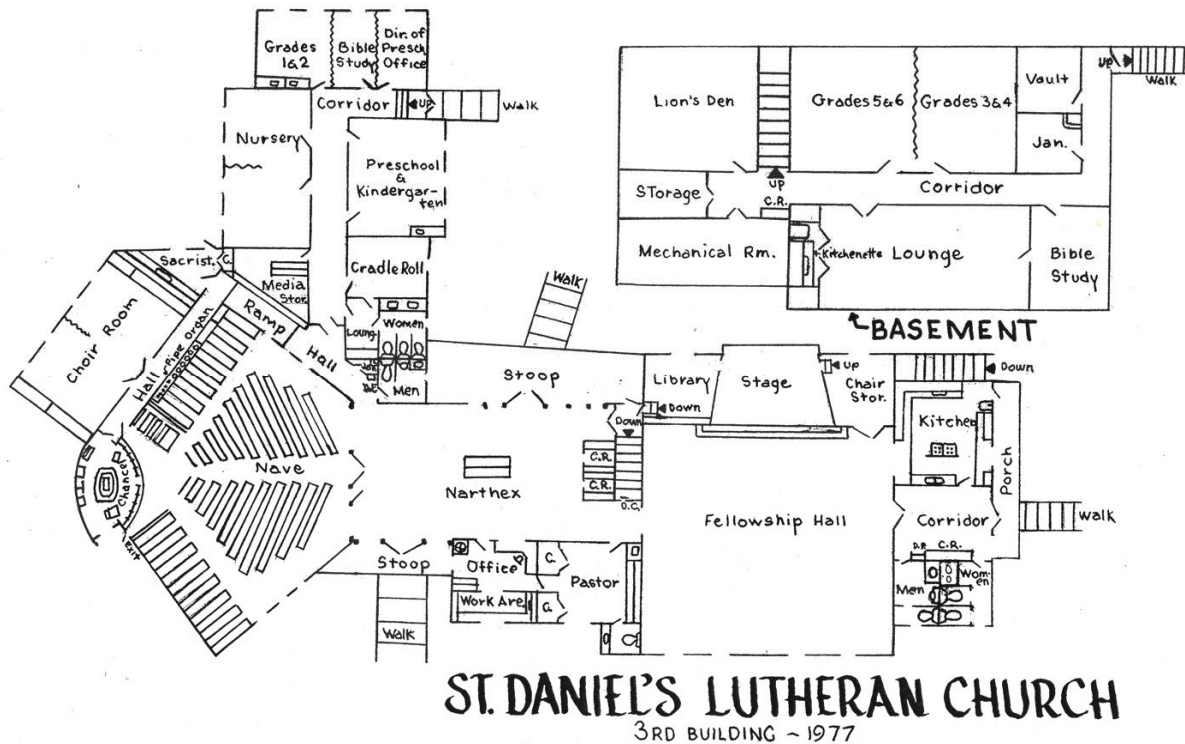
PARSONAGE SITE:

- + More level site with greater available space.
- Possible delay in having parsonage sold and relocated.
- + High elevation with the ability for the spire to be seen from great distances.
- Distance from existing parking lots - parishioners will have to walk farther
- Additional parking area will be needed.
- + Less expensive construction due to site grading.
- + Perhaps could re-use portions of original parsonage (basement areas)
- + Greater possibilities for flexible room arrangements.
- + Additional space available for future expansion.

NOTE:

All five of the architects consulted agreed that this site was the most desirable of the two.

Evaluation of pros (+) and cons (-) for existing church site and parsonage site
From Joyce Hassler's scrapbook



Architect's drawing of proposed church design



Site construction and snow – Nov 1977



Snowy construction of Nave & (original) Social Hall – Feb 1978



Construction continues – March 1978



Construction of Sanctuary and Narthex – March 1978



Post-April 1, 1978 windstorm – 1978 Dedication Booklet



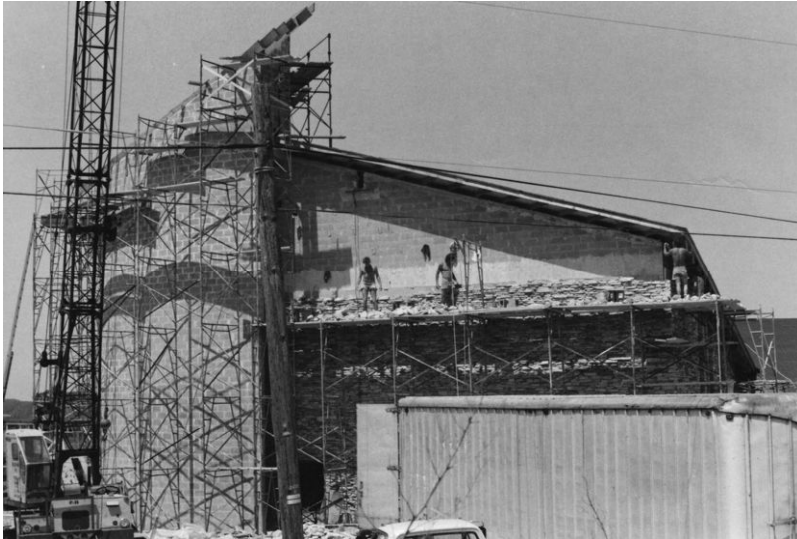
That's a lot of snow! March 11, 1978 – Marge Baerncopf photo



Reading Eagle article – April 3, 1978 – Marge Baerncopf clipping



Chi Rho wall under construction – Spring 1978



Drystack stone on right side of Chi Rho wall – June 1978



Drystack stone on left side of Chi Rho wall
June 25, 1978 – Marge Baerncopf photo



Roof of Chi Rho wall under construction – undated photo



July 1978 – Marge Baerncopf photo



Stucco on the Chi Rho wall – Sept 28, 1978
Marge Baerncopf photo



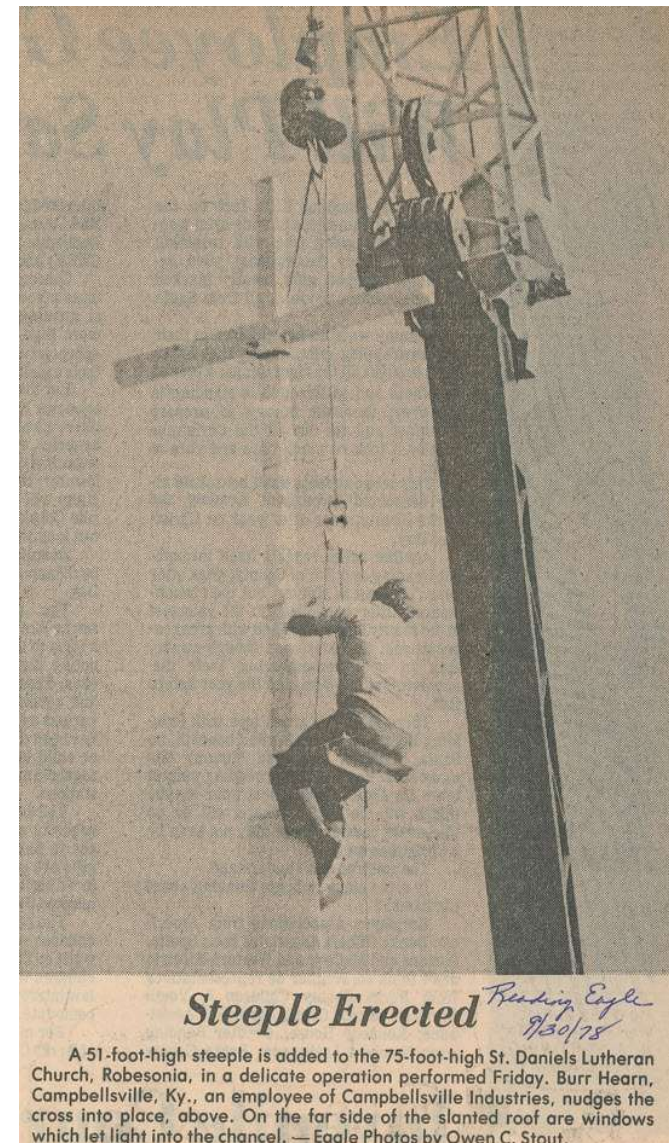
The steeple has arrived! Sept 28, 1978
Marge Baerncopf photo



Yes, that's a man sitting
in a sling holding the cross!
September 1978



Reading Eagle article about the installation of the steeple – September 30, 1978 – Joyce Hassler clipping





Rare side view of the Chi Rho wall
~ around October 1978
Marge Baerncopf photo



Doesn't the Chi Rho wall look strange with no Chi Rho?!
Late October - early November 1978 – Marge Baerncopf photo



Chi Rho sitting in the parking lot ready to be installed
November 1978



This image shows a computer-generated colored version
of the same photo.



Chi Rho being installed – Nov 1978
Marge Baernkopf photo

The red color of the Chi Rho as seen in this
photo must have been a primer color.



Photos of the completed church – 1978 Dedication Booklet
Note the original color of the Chi Rho was light blue with a red pinstripe.