✝️ HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA ✝️

SACRED GROUND – THE MEMORIAL GARDEN

When the devastating fire of December 8, 1976, destroyed the second St. Daniel's church, it left behind more than the ruins of a building. For generations, this had been a place where families gathered for worship, children were baptized and confirmed, couples were married, loved ones were remembered, and a congregation grew in faith and fellowship. Although the congregation would rebuild at a new location 'on the hill overlooking Robesonia,' the ground where the former church stood has remained an important part of St. Daniel's history.

Even as plans were underway for the construction of the new church, the congregation recognized the significance of the former church site and, in March 1977, approved plans to establish a memorial where the destroyed building had stood. Work on the Memorial Garden began on April 29, 1978, with the goal of creating a place that would honor the past while offering a peaceful setting for reflection and remembrance.

Among the remnants recovered from the fire was approximately one-third of the bell that had hung in the former church tower since December 1911 during the pastorate of Rev. Oscar Pflueger. The original 1,800-pound bell had been purchased from Meneely and Company of West Troy, NY, for 31 cents per pound.

Church members Frederick Davis and Bonnie Thomas designed the memorial to incorporate the salvaged portion of the bell, suspended within a kiosk and surrounded by a brick walkway, benches, trees, and shrubbery. A wooden cross crafted by fellow member Joseph Bechtel was erected as the first phase of the project, placed at approximately the same location where the altar of the destroyed church had stood. A commemorative plaque recorded important dates in St. Daniel's history. All materials were donated by members and friends of the congregation, and volunteers performed all the work.

In May 1978, while regular Sunday worship services were still being held at Conrad Weiser High School, members gathered at the former church site for a special Rogate Sunday service and blessing of the fields. Dogwood trees were planted at the memorial, continuing the transformation of the grounds into a place of beauty, reflection, and renewal.

The completed Memorial Garden was dedicated on June 25, 1978, in a ceremony led by Pastor Edward Cloughen and attended by members and guests, including the Rev. Dr. Wilson B. Touhsaent, President of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Memorial Garden took on additional significance following the sudden passing of Rev. Ronald Weir, who served as pastor of St. Daniel's from May 1989 until his death in

September 1994. On September 24, 1995, the garden was rededicated as a living memorial honoring his life and ministry. The special worship service included a procession to the garden led by bagpipers Winifred Stanley and Sara Kent, dressed in traditional Highland attire. St. Daniel's choirs and congregation members participated in the service, celebrating Pastor Weir's life and ministry.

In preparation for the rededication, the garden underwent extensive restoration. Overgrown plantings were removed and replaced with new perennials and trees. Church member Terry Williams coordinated the landscaping, with some work completed by fellow member Timothy Feeg as part of his Eagle Scout project. The bell housing was sandblasted and repainted, the brass historical plaque was refinished, and the surrounding stone wall was repointed. Congregation members contributed more than $3,000 toward the project.

A copper beech and five weeping beech trees, representing Pastor Weir's five years of ministry at St. Daniel's, were dedicated along with a sign commemorating his service. The bulletin for the rededication included these especially meaningful words: *"Peace, tranquility, beauty, and love are found in a garden. As a living memorial to Ronald W. Weir, may each tree, flower, shrub, and living creature grow and burst into life, touching and renewing the inner spirit of all who come here to share in Ron's love for life."*

Over the years, the Memorial Garden continued to serve as more than a historical landmark. Easter sunrise observances included draping the wooden cross with white cloth to symbolize Christ's resurrection. Blessings of the fields and Memorial Day observances also brought members back to the grounds where earlier generations had worshiped.

Sadly, in 2015, the brass commemorative plaques were stolen from the garden, leaving behind only the concrete bases on which they had been mounted. Their loss also meant the disappearance of historical information that helped visitors understand the significance of the site.

Although the surrounding St. Daniel's Cemetery continues to attract visitors researching their family histories, the Memorial Garden itself has received less attention over the years. Its location at a busy intersection, with limited visibility for those crossing from the church parking area, has also made group gatherings more challenging. Yet the importance of this ground has never diminished.

As St. Daniel's celebrates its 275th anniversary in 2026, renewed attention is being given to the Memorial Garden and its place in the congregation's history. During a volunteer workday in July, members trimmed, weeded, and edged the grounds, taking an important first step toward restoring the garden's appearance. The original sign is also being restored, and there are hopes of replacing the missing plaques with durable,

historically appropriate markers that will once again tell visitors the stories behind the salvaged bell and wooden cross. Additional restoration and maintenance will help ensure that this meaningful place continues to receive the care and respect it deserves.

It is remarkable to stand in the Memorial Garden today and imagine that an entire church and Sunday School addition once stood on this seemingly small site! But the Memorial Garden is not simply a reminder of the buildings lost in 1976. It marks ground that witnessed generations of congregational life, the heartbreak of devastating loss, and the determination to begin again. It is also a place where the memory of a beloved pastor continues to be honored. Nearly fifty years after the fire, the salvaged bell and wooden cross remain tangible connections to those who came before us. They remind us that while buildings may be lost and time may pass, the faith and dedication of those who came before us remain part of who we are today.

Preserving the Memorial Garden is more than caring for a historic site. It is a way of honoring the generations who helped build St. Daniel's and ensuring that their story continues to be remembered.

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 – Memorial Garden. Photos and articles from St. Daniel's archives and albums owned by Margie Baerncopf, Nan Feeg, Joyce Hassler, and Nancy Wolfskill. Present day photos by Kim Henning.

#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch #OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026 #275thAnniversary #HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #ChurchFire #ReverendEdwardCloughen #MemorialGarden #ChurchBell #ReverendRonaldWeir #ALotHappensIn275Years



LEFT: A reminder of the size and location of the 2nd church building and Sunday School addition before the fire on December 8, 1976.

BELOW: The cleared site in March 1978.
(The white patch is snow.)

Photos: St. Daniel's archives

NOTICE THE STONE WALL THAT REMAINS







LEFT: 1978 – Marge Baerncopf photo
ABOVE: November 5, 2026 – photo by Kim Henning



74 Reading Eagle, Sunday, May 7, 1978

Church Volunteers Building Memorial

Volunteers of St. Daniel's Lutheran Church, Heidelberg Township, have begun construction of a memorial on the site of the former church, Robesonia R.D. 1.

The original church was destroyed by fire Dec. 8, 1976.

The first phase of the project was the erection of a cross at the site of the destroyed altar.

Plans include a walkway around a kiosk, on which the remaining section of the old church bell will be suspended.

Seats will be placed around the walkway.

Dogwood trees, replacing the ones destroyed by fire, will be planted at the memorial site next Sunday at 10:15 a.m. The Rev. Edward W. Cloughen, pastor of the church, will conduct the service.

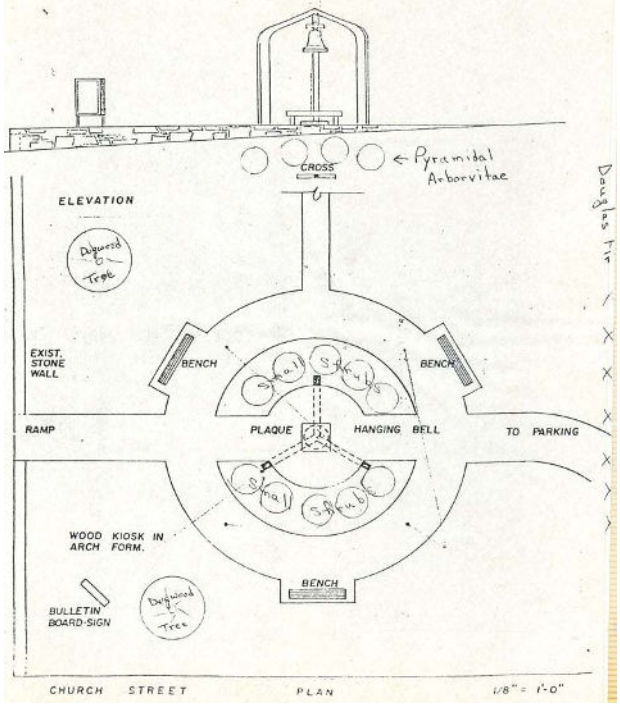
Vernon Bright, church council president, reported that all the work for the memorial will be done by volunteers and all materials have been contributed by church members and friends.

FINISHING TOUCHES — Richard Hassler maneuvers his tractor into place for the heavy work, as Howard Marderness, with a little help from 5-year-old Christopher Meredith, paints the cross, which is part of a memorial being built on the site of the former St. Daniel's Lutheran Church, Robesonia R.D. 1. The church was destroyed by fire in December, 1976.



HELPING HANDS — Volunteers erect the cross, the initial phase of the project, which eventually will include a bell suspended from a kiosk, benches, a walkway, shrubbery and dogwood trees. — Eagle Photos by Owen C. Stout.

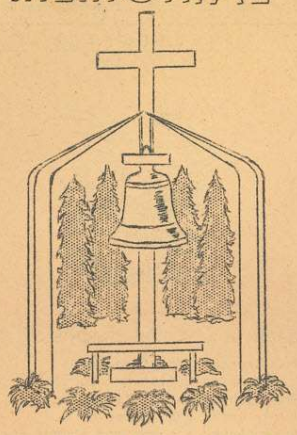
ABOVE: *Reading Eagle* photos
by Owen C. Stout
May 7, 1978
Joyce Hassler clippings



LEFT: Drawing of planned layout of the Memorial Garden, with side and overhead views.
Marge Baerncopf scrapbook

Posted to Facebook by Kim Henning
November 5, 2026

MEMORIAL



DEDICATION

June 25, 1978
3:00 p.m.
St. Daniel's Lutheran Church
Robesonia, Pennsylvania

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

MEMORIAL DEDICATION SERVICE
June 25, 1978



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.

People: *Praise him according to his excellent greatness.*
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.*

Pastor: The Lord be with you.
People: *And with thy spirit.*
Pastor: Let us pray. O God, who has commanded every person to offer unto you in response to your love a portion of our many blessings, be pleased to accept, we pray, this memorial, the result of our sacrifice and labor. Grant that it may recall to our minds and hearts the faithfulness of our forbears here at St. Daniel's, and with that recollection may we be continually inspired to follow their examples in lives of faithfulness and service. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.
All: *O Heavenly Father, by whose word all things are made holy and new, pour out your benediction upon this memorial, so that whoever in thanksgiving unto you shall make use of it according to your purpose may glorify your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose words we now pray:*
Our Father, who art in Heaven . . Amen.

THE CLOSING HYMN . . . . . "ON OUR WAY REJOICING"

On our way rejoicing
Gladly let us go;
Conquered hath our Leader,
Vanquished is the foe.
Christ without, our safety;
Christ within, our joy;
Who, if we be faithful,
Can our hope destroy?

This memorial is the result of the generosity of the following members of our congregation:

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Stump - 2 Dogwood trees.
Mr. and Mrs. Carl Himmelberger - Shrubs.
Mr. and Mrs. Fred Davis - Douglas firs.
Mr. and Mrs. John Stump - Kiosk supporting bell.
Mr. Carl Labe - Bricks for walkways.
Mrs. Elsie Shartle - Bronze Plaque (to be installed when completed).
Bechtel Families and Harriet Mease - Wooden Cross.
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Ranck - Benches.
Mr. and Mrs. Randall Bright - Stone, gravel, macadam, etc.
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hassler - Felt and peat moss.
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Wolfskill - Decorative stone, sand, and mortar.
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Koch - Shrubs.
Mr. and Mrs. Miles Risser - Providing and maintaining sign board.

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In addition, we wish to extend sincere thanks to the many members whose donated labor and skill made possible the construction of this memorial. The combined efforts of donors and laborers made possible this memorial without expense to St. Daniel's.

* * * * * *

Select pages from the bulletin for the Memorial Dedication. Author's highlight.



A piano was moved to the site for the dedication!
ABOVE: Nancy Wolfskill photo



Memorial Dedication – June 25, 1978



ABOVE ROW: Marge Baerncopf photos



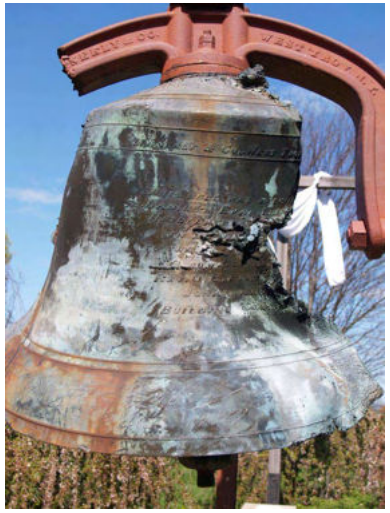
Pastor Edward Cloughen



Church Memorial Dedicated Reading Eagle 6/26/78

Dedication ceremonies were held Sunday by the congregation of St. Daniel's Lutheran Church, Robesonia R.D. 1, for the memorial at the former site of the church which was destroyed by fire in December 1976. Taking part were left to right: Mark Wolfskill, building chairman; Vernon Bright, council president; Richard Hassler, a member of the memorial committee; the Rev. Edward Cloughen, pastor, and the Rev. Dr. Wilson E. Touhsaent, president of the Northeastern Synod. — Eagle Photo by Owen C. Stout.

ABOVE: *Reading Eagle* photo by Owen C. Stout – June 26, 1978
Joyce Hassler clipping



LEFT: The bell in Spring 2015.
A portion of the yoke has come off of the bell since it was originally hung at the Memorial.

Photo: St. Daniel's archives

RIGHT: June 24, 2024
Photo by Kim Henning





The brass plaque displayed on the concrete base under the bell, before it was stolen in 2015.



Tim Feeg – 1995 Eagle Scout project
Nan Feeg photo



Service of Blessing & Dedication of the Memorial Garden in memory of Pastor Ronald Weir. Bagpipers, Tim Feeg, Pastor George Grubb, and Terry Williams.



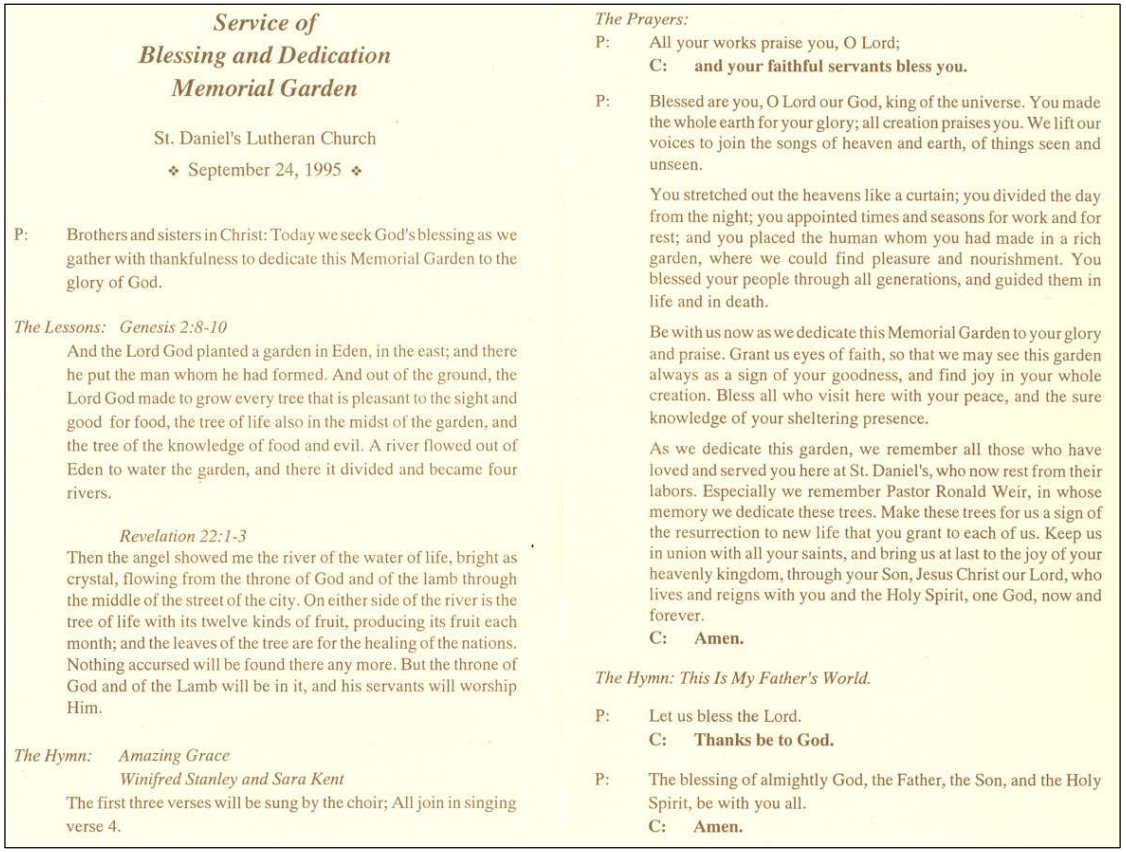


In Appreciation

Many Thanks To: Terry Williams who has coordinated the development of this Memorial Garden; to Timothy Feeg, for making the Garden his Eagle Scout project; to Vicki Rhodier, for her beautiful design for our bulletin cover; to Winifred Stanley and Sara Kent for sharing their talents on the bagpipes; to our choir and soloists; and to all who contributed to the development of the Garden, including the following people who provided financial gifts:

Dwayne and Donna Boyer
Naomi Brigel
Vernon and Patricia Bright
Donald, Nan and Timothy Feeg
Robert and Kathryn Koch
Ronald and Mary Catherine Leeper
Lutheran Brotherhood Insurance (matching funds)
Jerry and Luan Mundell
Saint Daniel's Lutheran Church Women
Saint Daniel's Lutheran Senior Choir
Saint Daniel's Lutheran Quilters
Harriet Mease
Carl and Marie Peiffer
Harold and Lois Ranck
Jay and Carole Schmehl
Kevin and Cynthia Snyder
Terry and Susan Williams
Calvin and Frances Yoh
Michael and Karen Yoh
Michael and Susanne Zerbe

St. Daniel's Evangelical Lutheran Church
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Robesonia, PA 19551
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Service of
Blessing and Dedication
Memorial Garden

St. Daniel's Lutheran Church
❖ September 24, 1995 ❖

P: Brothers and sisters in Christ: Today we seek God's blessing as we gather with thankfulness to dedicate this Memorial Garden to the glory of God.

The Lessons: *Genesis 2:8-10*

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground, the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of food and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.

Revelation 22:1-3

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship Him.

The Hymn: *Amazing Grace*
Winifred Stanley and Sara Kent

The first three verses will be sung by the choir; All join in singing verse 4.

The Prayers:

P: All your works praise you, O Lord;
C: and your faithful servants bless you.

P: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe. You made the whole earth for your glory; all creation praises you. We lift our voices to join the songs of heaven and earth, of things seen and unseen.

You stretched out the heavens like a curtain; you divided the day from the night; you appointed times and seasons for work and for rest; and you placed the human whom you had made in a rich garden, where we could find pleasure and nourishment. You blessed your people through all generations, and guided them in life and in death.

Be with us now as we dedicate this Memorial Garden to your glory and praise. Grant us eyes of faith, so that we may see this garden always as a sign of your goodness, and find joy in your whole creation. Bless all who visit here with your peace, and the sure knowledge of your sheltering presence.

As we dedicate this garden, we remember all those who have loved and served you here at St. Daniel's, who now rest from their labors. Especially we remember Pastor Ronald Weir, in whose memory we dedicate these trees. Make these trees for us a sign of the resurrection to new life that you grant to each of us. Keep us in union with all your saints, and bring us at last to the joy of your heavenly kingdom, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C: Amen.

The Hymn: This Is My Father's World.

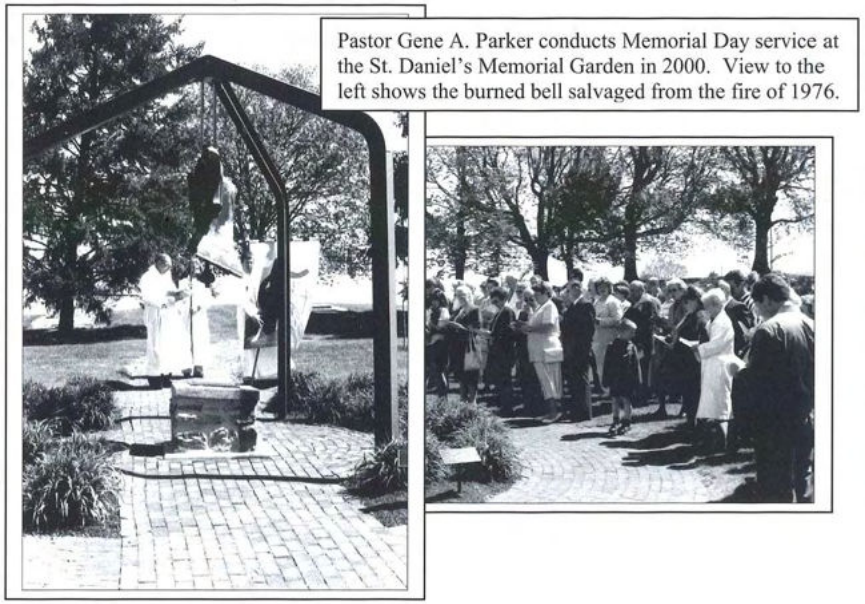
P: Let us bless the Lord.
C: Thanks be to God.

P: The blessing of almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you all.
C: Amen.

Service of Blessing and Dedication of the Memorial Garden,
in memory of Pastor Ron Weir
September 24, 1995

St. Daniel's archives

Posted to Facebook by Kim Henning
November 5, 2026



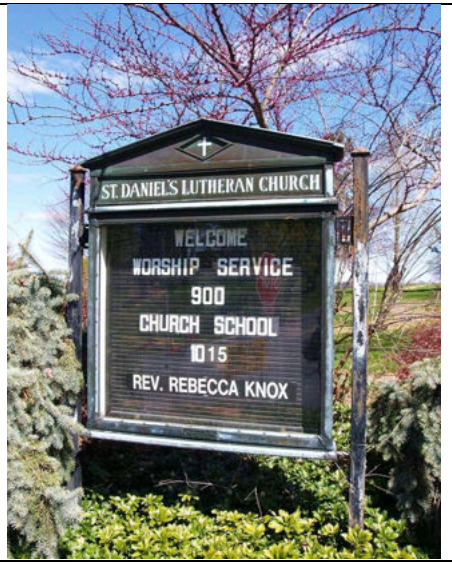
Pastor Gene A. Parker conducts Memorial Day service at the St. Daniel's Memorial Garden in 2000. View to the left shows the burned bell salvaged from the fire of 1976.



Easter
April 5, 2015

The sign is currently being restored.

Photos:
St. Daniel's archives











Memorial Garden
July 21, 2026

Photos by Kim Henning