✝️ HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA ✝️

VOLUNTEERS GO WHERE THINGS ARE GOING! – THE PASTORATE OF REV. RONALD WEIR

Following the remarkable years of recovery and rebuilding after the 1976 fire, St. Daniel's Lutheran Church entered another important chapter in its history with the arrival of Reverend Ronald Weir, who served as pastor from May 21, 1989, until his untimely death on September 3, 1994. Although his pastorate lasted just over five years, his enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment to congregational growth left a lasting impression on St. Daniel's.

Ronald W. Weir was born in Reading on September 15, 1935. He graduated from Reading High School and served in the U.S. Air Force from 1954 to 1958. He earned a bachelor's degree from Kutztown State College in 1962 and a Master of Divinity degree from Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, NJ, in 1967. He was married to Barbara Lynn.

Before coming to St. Daniel's, Pastor Weir gained extensive experience in pastoral ministry, community outreach, youth development, and organizational leadership. He served Methodist congregations in Reading and Philadelphia, where his responsibilities included youth programming, a travel camp, and a day school. He later held leadership positions with the Boy Scouts of America, including service with the Hawk Mountain Council. From 1973 to 1980, he was the first executive director of Greater Reading Area Involved Lutherans (GRAIL), a cooperative ministry that would become the forerunner of the West Berks Mission District. He subsequently served as a national coordinator for Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL), expanding its local branches and strengthening its volunteer network.

Remarkably, Pastor Weir began looking toward St. Daniel's future during his very first sermon in May 1989. He invited the congregation to imagine themselves twelve years later, gathered for a grand celebration of the church's 250th anniversary in 2001. He envisioned a festive dinner, a homecoming of former members and friends, and an opportunity to renew acquaintances and share memories. What began as a vision eventually became a reality. Pastor Weir established the "250 Club," where members contributed to the fund on their birthdays. These donations helped fund the anniversary celebration. Although he would not live to see the milestone, his vision helped lay the groundwork for the festivities that took place in 2001.

Pastor Weir believed that a thriving church needed to be welcoming, active, and engaged with its surrounding community. During his five-year pastorate, approximately 200 new members joined St. Daniel's. His emphasis on outreach inspired creative efforts to introduce the church to new people. Volunteers distributed invitations door-

to-door, while a promotional brochure and video were developed to showcase congregational life. Barbara Weir recalled her husband's belief that if St. Daniel's wanted to grow, it needed to offer the kinds of activities that would bring children and families together. Meaningful worship, an expanding music program, and an emphasis on making visitors feel welcome contributed to the church's growth. In 1990, Pastor Weir's first full year at St. Daniel's, average Sunday worship attendance exceeded that of each of the previous four years.

His approach to ministry was perhaps best captured by signs he had made: ***"Volunteers go where things are going!"*** He felt strongly that no one joins a church to be inactive. Pastor Weir understood that enthusiasm was contagious and that inviting people to participate could strengthen both the congregation and its sense of community.

Children and youth were especially important to his vision. In 1991 he encouraged St. Daniel's to establish its own Vacation Bible School program rather than relying solely on programs shared with neighboring churches. A basement storage area was transformed into the "Lion's Den," a gathering place for young people with table games, refreshments, and space for fellowship. One particularly memorable occasion came near the end of his ministry, when a giant waterslide was set up on the hill outside the church to celebrate the conclusion of Vacation Bible School. Children, parents, and other members joined in the fun, with Pastor Weir and Barbara right in the middle of the excitement. The scene reflected the lively, welcoming atmosphere he worked to create.

Music continued to play an important role at St. Daniel's during these years. A new Saturday morning Choir Club for children ages four through sixth grade provided younger members with an opportunity to develop their musical talents and participate more fully in congregational life.

Pastor Weir's creativity extended well beyond traditional church programming. During his ministry, activities such as Fall Fest and Danny's Follies became important opportunities for fellowship and congregational participation. Pastor Weir was also known for his sense of humor. He appeared as the "Accidental Tourist" and the "Great Karnak" in Danny's Follies, enjoyed practical jokes on Church Council members, and occasionally brought a little levity into worship. After one particularly demanding Beef Supper, he even issued "Permits to Snooze" during the sermon for those who had worked so hard the previous evening! Other creative initiatives included the "Crack of Dawn Crews," which prepared breakfast before summertime Sunday worship services, bringing members together for food and fellowship.

The "Bear Tree" was another memorable tradition that encouraged participation and generosity. Members contributed teddy bears collected during their travels, which were displayed on a Christmas-tree-shaped frame in the narthex. At Christmas, the bears were distributed as gifts to children. Beyond these activities, Pastor Weir encouraged

the continued development of St. Daniel's Preschool, improvements to the church nursery, and thoughtful use of the church property to make the facilities more welcoming and useful to the congregation.

Pastor Weir's sermons consistently emphasized welcoming others, reaching beyond the church walls, and encouraging members to become involved. He had a gift for recognizing needs, finding resources, and bringing people together to accomplish something worthwhile.

Tragically, Pastor Weir suffered a stroke and died a few days later, on September 3, 1994, at the age of 58. He is buried in Forest Hills Memorial Park, Reiffton, PA. His sudden death brought tremendous sadness to the congregation.

Although his time at St. Daniel's was relatively brief, the programs he introduced, the volunteers he encouraged, and the spirit of fellowship he fostered continued to influence congregational life for years afterward. His legacy was not simply one of new activities and increased membership, but of a congregation encouraged to welcome others, work together, and find joy in serving.

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After Pastor Weir's passing, Rev. Raymond Burdick was employed as Interim Pastor at St. Daniel's. Rev. Burdick served for about one year in 1994-1995, between the pastorates of Rev. Ronald Weir and Rev. George Grubb.

Raymond C. Burdick was born on February 13, 1939, in New York City. He grew up in Brooklyn. He graduated from the City College of New York and also earned a master's degree in education from Boston University. He married Susan Rodgers in September 1976. Before entering the ministry, he served in the U.S. Army for 21 years, retiring with the rank of Major in 1981. He subsequently earned his Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and was ordained in 1985. During his ministry, he served several congregations as pastor or interim pastor and worked as a chaplain at Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital and Lehigh Valley Hospital in Allentown, as well as St. Joseph's Hospital in Reading.

Rev. Burdick died on August 21, 2022, at the age of 83. He is buried in Washington Crossing National Cemetery in Newtown, PA.

Some other significant events occurred during Rev. Ron Weir's and Rev. Raymond Burdick's ministries at St. Daniel's:

- 1989 – Elsie Shartle became the first woman to serve as Church Council President.
- August 1989 – St. Daniel's purchased its first computer system.
- September 1989 – The Preschool opened with Nancy Buttimer as Director.
- July 1990 – "Crack of Dawn" breakfasts began.
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- July 1990 – The 250 Club was established; funds would be used for St. Daniel's 250th anniversary in 2001.
- April 1991 – The first production of Danny's Follies.
- October 19, 1991 – The first Fall Fest was held; funds raised would go toward youth and education.
- June 1994 – A new sign was installed in front of the church; it was donated by Robert and Kathryn Koch.
- May 1995 – The Memorial Garden was upgraded with new trees and improved landscaping; it was rededicated in memory of Pastor Ronald Weir in September 1995.

Significant US and world events during Rev. Ron Weir's and Rev. Raymond Burdick's ministries at St. Daniel's included:

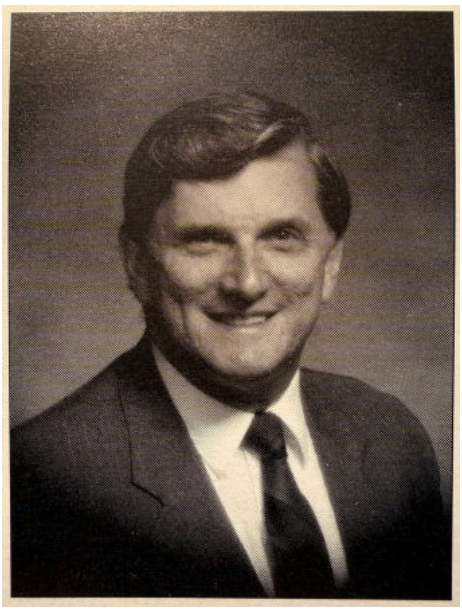
- 1989-1991 – Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web.
- March 24, 1989 – The Exxon Valdez oil tanker ran aground in Prince William Sound, Alaska, spilling millions of gallons of crude oil.
- June 4, 1989 – The Tiananmen Square protest took place in China.
- November 9, 1989 – The Berlin Wall fell.
- October 3, 1990 – The reunification of Germany.
- January 16, 1991-February 28, 1991 – Operation Desert Storm / The Gulf War.

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 – Ronald W. Weir and Raymond Burdick. Photos of St. Daniel's archives.

#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch #OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026 #275thAnniversary #HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #ReverendRonaldWeir #250Club #FallFest #BearTree #DannysFollies #CrackOfDawnBreakfasts #LionsDen #MemorialGarden #ReverendRaymondBurdick #ALotHappensIn275Years



The Service of Installation

for

The Reverend Ronald W. Weir

as pastor of

St. Daniel's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Robesonia, Pennsylvania

August 20, 1989

Portions of the bulletin for Rev. Ronald Weir's installation as Pastor of St. Daniel's

Participants in the Service of Installation

Installing Officer
The Rev. Dr. Harold S. Weiss, Bishop
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Liturgist
The Rev. Byard J. Ebling, Assistant to the Bishop
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Preacher
The Rev. Charles J. Charles, Pastor
Allegheny Evangelical Lutheran Church
Alleghenyville, Pa.

St. Daniel's Congregational Representative Participants
Elsie Shartle, Church Council President
Rod Small, Call Committee Chairman
Patsy Bright, Christian Education Director
Jean Bright, Prayer Group Leader
Carl Lutz, Worship and Music Committee Chairman

Lectors
Daniel Bechtel — First Lesson
Elizabeth Preston — Second Lesson
Randall Bright — Gospel Lesson

Cantor
Shirley Labe

Crucifer
Brad Small

Acolytes
Kelly Snyder
Michelle Patches

Greeters
Robert Koch
Kathryn Koch
Calvin Yoh
Frances Yoh
Suzette Yoh

Ushers
Stewart Wenrich
Head Usher
Dennis Zerbe
Larry Rentschler
Robert Bright
Brian Yoh

A special "thank you" to St. Daniel's Minister of Music, Miriam Borkert, members of the Senior Choir and members and guests of the Tintinnabulators for the beautiful music they provided for today's service.

WILKIM! WELCOME!

We are most happy that you are attending this highlight in the life of our congregation.

You are invited to enjoy a buffet supper in the social room immediately following the worship service, prepared by members and friends of St. Daniel's Church.

A special word of appreciation to visiting clergy and friends from neighboring congregations who shared with us today.

Friends of the Weirs are welcome to tour our facilities and are encouraged to visit with us whenever they are in the Robesonia area.

Kommen Wieder Zurück

Each Sunday: Church School — 9 a.m.
(Classes for all ages)
The Service — 10:30 a.m.

About Our Church

In the year 2001, St. Daniel's Evangelical Lutheran Church will celebrate the 250th anniversary of its founding.

The Sunday Church School was organized on July 4, 1920.

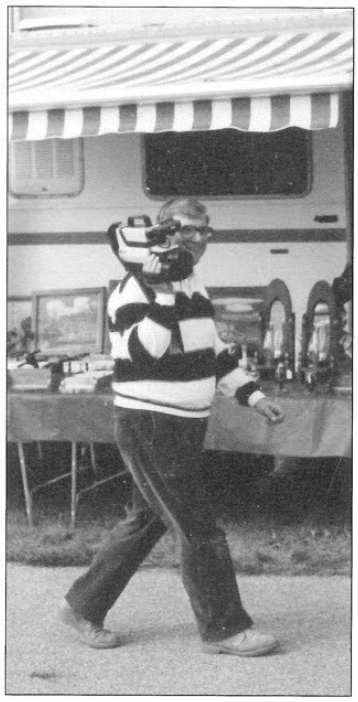
On December 8, 1976, an early-morning fire completely destroyed the church and adjoining church-school building.

On November 5, 1978, the Service of Dedication was held for the current building — the church, educational and social structure we worship in today.

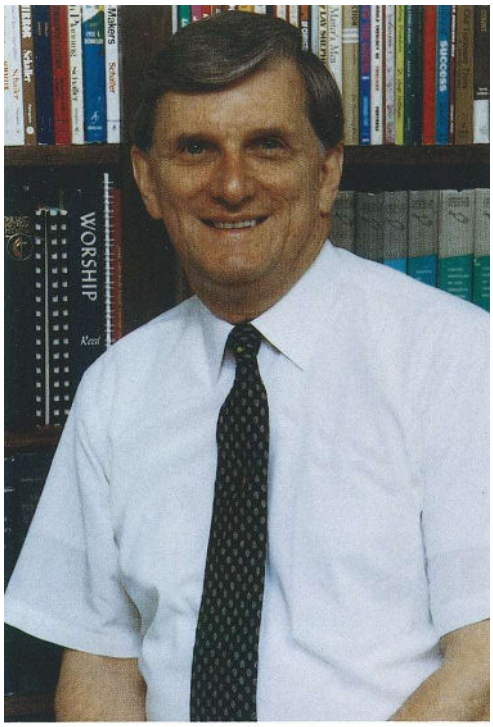
Our Affiliation

St. Daniel's Evangelical Lutheran Church is a member congregation of the West Berks Mission District, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

THE WORSHIP FOLDERS have been graciously provided by the West Berks Mission District, The Rev. Paul H. Spohn, Director.



Rev. Weir records Fall Fest, ca. 1993



Pastor Ronald W. Weir



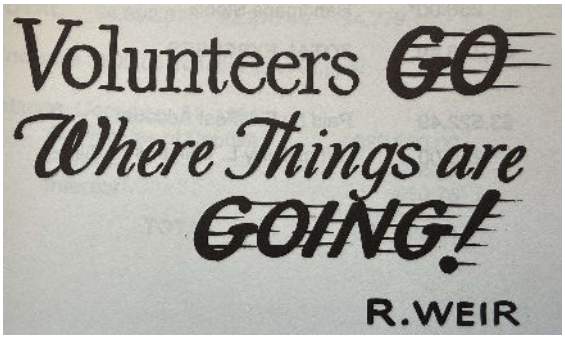
The Weirs and the Yohs at Synod Assembly



Pastor Weir with Robert & Kathryn Koch at the new church sign they gave in memory of Levi & A. Rachel Koch and Michael & Annie Heffner – June 1994



Pastor Weir with his friend, artist Vicki Rhodier, who illustrated “Our Bear Tree” and created artwork for many of his posters and other projects.



One of Pastor Weir's favorite sayings



The Bear Tree in progress, December 1993



OUR BEAR TREE

by

Pastor Ron Weir

Illustrated by Vicki Rhodier

Christmas, 1993



Once upon a time, there was a church located on the top of a hill overlooking a little town.

People came to the church from all over.
They came from a town to the east and a town to the west.
They came from living on farms and from living in homes on the hills that surrounded the valley.



The people that came all were different.
Some were short.
Some were tall.
Some were stout.
And some were thin.
Some were babies.
A lot were children.
And many were young adults and some were older people.

They all enjoyed coming to church because it was a friendly place. And because they wanted to learn about what God had to say to them.



Every Sunday the pastor and the people would say, "Good Morning!"
Smiles would be on everyone's face.
Many would stand around talking and laughing before they went into the sanctuary to worship.
It was a hustle and bustle time. But it was a happy place to be.

And the pastor would remind the people who came of what the Bible says, to Love one another as God has loved you.

One cold January Sunday, the pastor asked Joseph, a carpenter like Jesus's father, to make a bear tree.

The people wondered, "what is a bear tree?"
Others asked, "why do we need a bear tree at this church?"

It was explained that it would be made of a wooden frame on which to hang teddy bears.

And, so... the carpenter worked on the tree for many weeks and presto... when spring came and the flowers began to bloom... the bear tree appeared in the narthex of the church.

The tree looked so strange.



It was made of wooden strips that were attached to round pieces of wood.
But it really was shaped like a Christmas tree.

However, it was very naked because there was nothing on it.

The pastor of the church asked everyone, who was able, when they went on their vacation trips to bring a teddy bear back for the church's bear tree.

The pastor also asked a couple to be the official bear keepers.
It would be their job to place the bears carefully on the tree so that each bear could be seen by everyone.

The very next Sunday, the first bear appeared on the tree.
It was a beautiful angel teddy bear...
...and as children entered the church
they looked up at the strange tree and
saw the lovely angel at the very top.



It wasn't long before other bears began appearing.

Members and friends started bringing a bear back from their summer travels, whether near or far. And all the time everyone smiled and enjoyed looking at the wonderful tree of bears.

There were little bears and big bears.
There were chubby bears and thin bears.
There were fuzzy bears and soft bears.
There were special bears dressed up.
A fisherman bear, a Phillies bear, a NASCAR bear, and so many more.



There were beautiful bears, in pretty dresses ready for a dance.
There was a lovely gray homemade bear. There were three bears that were knitted by one of the older members.

And all the friendly people that were able to give a bear were happy to share their love and joy with others.

That made every bear... special.
And all the bears loved being a part of the church's special tree.

They looked forward to the joyous time when they would be given to a boy and girl, or a baby or a youth that came to the church on Christmas Eve to celebrate the birth of Jesus.



They also knew that some of the bears would be given to children in the hospitals on Christmas Day. So that made them happy, too.

At night, when everyone left the church, and the pastor turned out the lights and went home, it is believed...
That the bears came alive.
They would come down from the tree and dance around in the narthex of the church.



They would tell each other where they were from and about the nice people that brought them back from their travels.

One beautiful white bear from England, would tell the other bears how they celebrate Christmas at her homeland.

The airplane pilot bear from Switzerland would explain the holiday customs of his country.

The bears from the ocean towns, the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, would share how their home areas were filled with children and families enjoying the seashore on their summer vacations.



A green bear would tell what it was like to live in a National Forest in the state of Washington and how important it is to save our trees and protect our environment.

Several bears with a southern accent would explain how the people in their area loved to eat delicious grits and black-eye peas. The tan bear from Alabama would tell of some of the beautiful sights in that state.

The black bears from Montana and Maine described the feeling of what it was like to be on the top of a big mountain. A brown bear from Iowa explained the generous responses of people across the United States when the terrible floods destroyed their homes and farms.

All the bears, from the tiniest to the biggest, were proud to be a part of the church's special Christmas tree.

They all knew that a lot of kind people cared enough to bring them back to share their love with someone else.

And no matter what they looked like.
No matter how big or small.
No matter what color.
No matter if they were dressed up or just plain.

Every bear was special.

Every bear meant...
...that someone cared
enough to love.



Well, finally, Christmas eve came...
... a night that the bears were waiting for.

They each knew that they would be going to live at someone's house and that they would never see one another again.

But they were very happy.

Because they knew that the people who loved Jesus had given a bear so that children and youth would be able to feel that love.

And so on Christmas Eve, the night that the world celebrates God's gift of love for all people.

On the night that an angel said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born... in Bethlehem a Savior , who is Jesus, the Lord."

On the night that we sing,

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mile,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

On that night, Bears were given in love.

And for many years to come, every Christmas Eve, the children would always remember that special night... that someone loved them so much to share a special bear... and how God loved them so much to share His Son, Jesus.



Appreciation

To the many members and friends of St. Daniel's Lutheran Church, Robesonia, who were able to give a bear for our church's Bear Tree.

To Joseph D. Bechtel, carpenter par excellence, the one who built the Bear Tree.

To Irene and Bill Ravert, St. Daniel's Official Bear Keepers.

To Edith and John F. Stump, and Paul A. Adams, friend of St. Daniel's, a "special" Thank You for their generous financial gifts enabling "Our Bear Tree" to be printed.

In Memory of The Rev. Ronald W. Weir

September 11, 1994

Our congregation was blessed with the leadership of Pastor Ronald W. Weir over the past five years. As we grieve together, sharing the untimely loss of our Pastor, we may recall his service of installation in 1989, and the countless ways, during his ministry at St. Daniel's, in which he fulfilled the words spoken by Bishop Weiss:

"Will you preach and teach in accordance with the Holy Scriptures?" Who among us does not remember a message we felt was directed especially toward us? The words of his sermons remain in our hearts to guide us.

"Will you love, serve, and pray for God's People?" Foremost in Pastor Weir's activities were loving and serving his parishioners - his visits, prayers, gestures of kindness, his interest in our comings and goings, and his personal caring - these are not readily forgotten.

"...nourish them with the Word and Holy Sacraments." The time and effort Pastor Weir put into the preparation of a meaningful worship service were always evident; and then there was that special talent he had for inviting each of us by name to receive the Sacraments.

"...leading them by your own example...Will you give faithful witness in the world, that God's love may be known in all that you do?" We came to know his friendly greetings, generosity, sense of humor, his encouraging us to welcome the stranger, and be aware of each other's needs.

"Almighty God, give you the strength and compassion to perform these things." We were all witness to Ron Weir's tireless and conscientious commitment to the work of the church, even his recent passing in the midst of his busyness. In it all, his work personified the word "compassion."

"The God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep,...equip you with everything good, that you may do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight." Pastor Weir fulfilled five years of answers to that prayer. Let us at St. Daniel's continue in the work he has begun.

Just a few passing thoughts to which each of us can add...

...stuffed mailboxes, new members, babies, kommen wieder zurüch, choir booster, Wishbone stories, a camcorder pest, the bear tree, tastetester for "heavenly dishes," new members, quilter companion, a poker-faced Danny's Follies tourist in a Hawaiian shirt, the desk top that extended to the table, that extended to the office floor, the 250 Club, a sweet tooth, the Rainbow Home, World Hunger, advertiser for anything promoting St. Daniel's, a new church sign, train rides, the Lion's Den, frizzed dried beef, Crack-of-Dawn T-shirts and neon baseball caps, more new members, a Bible School water slider...

We can't help but smile. We'll remember Pastor Weir.

CONFIRMED BY REV. RAYMOND BURDICK ON JUNE 14, 1995



Interim Pastor Rev. Raymond Burdick
with his Confirmation Class in June 1995