

Celebrating 290 Years – A History of Muddy Creek Lutheran Church

In this year, 2022, Muddy Creek Lutheran Church is blessed to be able to celebrate its 290th anniversary. Founded in 1732, our church has a rich history. Over the span of 12 generations, its countless participants have striven to be faithful in their living witness to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For the last 290 years, our congregation has been a constant presence at this location near Little Muddy Creek between Denver and Adamstown.

We want to acknowledge a special debt of gratitude to H. Martin Lausch for writing a book 40 years ago about the history of Muddy Creek Church, for what was then the church's 250th anniversary. A considerable portion of this material is taken from his book.

Our history at Muddy Creek begins with the coming of German immigrants to Pennsylvania. But of course, they were not the first people in this area. That distinction belongs to people who lived in this area for 15,000 to 20,000 years. They are the indigenous Native American peoples who lived in this area, including such peoples as the Susquehannocks and the Conestogos, but especially right here in Cocalico Township, the Nanticokes and the Ganawese.

Back in Europe, there was a war going on from 1702-1713 in the Palatine Region of southern Germany along the Rhine and in northern Switzerland. French forces had devastated the region as they invaded and tried to lay claim to it. To top it off, there was a horrible winter in 1708-1709, and a severe famine for three years from 1710-1712. Many of these Germans, or "Deutsch" people (later in Pennsylvania to be known by the mistranslated title of "Pennsylvania Dutch" instead of "Pennsylvania Deutsch") began to flee the Palatine Region. As refugees, they crossed the Atlantic Ocean on ships to Philadelphia. This choice of destination was promoted by pamphlets that were distributed in the Palatine region urging people to come to America, and to come specifically to Pennsylvania, where the founder of the colony, the Quaker William Penn, had opened up his colony to all refugees and to all who were fleeing religious persecution. Included among the fleeing Germans from this area were also Anabaptist people, such as the Amish and Mennonite, who were indeed suffering from religious persecution in addition to the warfare, cold, and famine. From 1727-1775, 65,000 Germans arrived in Philadelphia, soaring in number until they made up half of the population of Pennsylvania. They pushed westward from Philadelphia into Chester and Berks counties, and then into Lancaster County where they were told there was extremely fertile farmland because of the rich limestone soil. Some of those German people came to settle in the area in Lancaster County around Muddy Creek, which flowed into the Conestoga River. The Pennsylvania Dutch called Muddy Creek "Mode Krick" in their dialect, and if you look at the cornerstone right outside this doorway, it spells our church, Muddy Creek, as "Mode Krick". It was near a branch of Muddy Creek, the Little Muddy Creek, on the main road between Lancaster and Reading, that German Lutherans and German Reformed together built a union church, because they shared the same language and culture.

One of the oldest Lutheran congregations in Lancaster County, Muddy Creek Lutheran Church was founded in 1732, with the first baptism recorded already in 1730. There is a record of a baptism from 1728, but the little girl, Maria Eve Krim, was apparently baptized at sea traveling across the Atlantic, before the family settled at Muddy Creek. She was baptized by a layperson

by the name of Alexander Zartman, who then later became an elder at the Lutheran Church in Brickerville.

In 1730, a Reformed Pastor, Rev. Peter Mueller, stepped up to help perform the first Lutheran baptism at Muddy Creek, because the Lutherans didn't have a pastor yet. Peter Mueller would become the very first pastor of the Reformed congregation which made up half of the Muddy Creek Union Church. Peter Mueller would soon become infamous, for a reason we will talk about shortly.

In 1731, Muddy Creek Reformed Congregation began, and in 1732 Muddy Creek Lutheran Congregation began. 1732 –2022: 290 years ago this year!

The original Muddy Creek Lutheran and Reformed Church was a log church built on a site in what is now the lower parking lot. It had a dirt floor, fires were built inside in a pit on the ground to keep warm in winter, and sometimes people kept watch with firearms for fear of possible attacks by Native Americans. It turns out, ironically, that Native Americans had much more to fear from the Europeans than vice versa.

While the Lutherans at Muddy Creek were looking for a pastor, a Lutheran pastor from Trappe, Pennsylvania, by the name of Johann Christian Schultze baptized several children at Muddy Creek during 1732-1733, including his own son in 1733. Schultze's church, Augustus Lutheran Church in Trappe just north of Philadelphia and King of Prussia in Montgomery County, would become famous in Pennsylvania Lutheran history.

Muddy Creek is tied for being the third oldest Lutheran congregation in Lancaster County. Only Holy Trinity Lutheran in the city of Lancaster and Emmanuel Lutheran in Brickerville (now Brickerville United Lutheran Church) are older, founded in 1730 and 1731 respectively. That's only one to two years before Muddy Creek. Trinity Lutheran in New Holland is the church that we are tied with as third oldest, with New Holland's first baptism occurring also in 1730, just like Muddy Creek.

If you look at a map of Lancaster County, and you will see that those four churches are located in a ring around Ephrata. The church in the city of Lancaster (Holy Trinity) is to the south of Ephrata, Brickerville (Emmanuel) is to the west, New Holland (Trinity) is to the west, and Muddy Creek in Denver is to the north. That is significant, because the founding of Muddy Creek Lutheran Church was not the only event to happen in 1732. In 1732, a dynamic 7th Day Adventist by the name of Johann Conrad Beisel settled in Ephrata and began the Ephrata Cloister, a religious community. Under Beisel's leadership, the Ephrata Cloister quickly grew into a major religious force in Lancaster County, rapidly gaining converts. Among them was the first pastor of Muddy Creek's Reformed congregation, the Reformed Pastor Peter Mueller whom, as was previously mentioned, performed Muddy Creek Lutheran Church's first baptism. Mueller converted to the Ephrata Cloister in 1735, and was re-baptized. As he left Muddy Creek Reformed church, he took with him ten Reformed and Lutheran families to the Cloister, which shook both Muddy Creek congregations to their core. To make his exit as dramatic as possible, Mueller staged a book burning of the Reformed Catechism, the Lutheran Catechism and thirty-six other books. One of the people that helped him burn the books and leave for the cloister was

Conrad Weiser, a farmer who would become a prominent soldier, judge, and diplomat in the area, and who would end up having a school district named for him in western Berks County – the Conrad Weiser School District.

Enter now the first pastor of Muddy Creek Lutheran Church, the renowned Pastor Johann Stoever. Coming from the Palatine in Germany like the other Germans, Stoever was ordained by Pastor Schultze in Trappe. Pastor Schultze, as was mentioned before, had just baptized several children at Muddy Creek Lutheran church. Johann Stoever began immediately to tirelessly work planting new Lutheran congregations. Pastor Stoever moved to New Holland, which back then was called Earltown, in 1730.

From there, Pastor Stoever founded Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Lancaster City and Trinity Lutheran Church in New Holland. He also helped support the Brickerville congregation. In 1733, the 26-year old Johann Stoever agreed to become the first Pastor of Muddy Creek Lutheran Church. When his Reformed counterpart Pastor Mueller abandoned Muddy Creek Reformed Church for the Cloister two years later, Pastor Stoever worked actively to counter the influence of the Ephrata Cloister. By then, the Cloister was threatening to single-handedly overshadow all the other churches of any denominations in Lancaster County. Pastor Stoever worked relentlessly and strategically, cooperating with Reformed, Mennonite, and other denominations in Lancaster County to compete with the Cloister. He vigorously defended Lutheran teachings against the Cloister, and won many converts to the Lutheran Church with his missionary activity. In particular, Stoever strengthened the ministry of the four fledgling Lutheran congregations that ringed the cloister within a 10 mile radius – Muddy Creek, New Holland, Brickerville and Lancaster. Through Pastor Stoever's efforts, it is now the irony of history that while Lutherans still thrive in Lancaster County, the Cloister is now long gone. Pastor Stoever is credited in his pastoral career with planting 40 new Lutheran congregations in Lancaster, York and Lebanon Counties, and another 10 in Maryland and Virginia.

Johann Stoever would serve as pastor of Muddy Creek for 13 years, from 1733-1746, performing over 300 baptisms. Take a look at this list of baptism names from the time of Johann Stoever and you will see many names that are still associated with Muddy Creek to this day: Graff, Kissinger, Hoffman, Pfauts, Frey, Myer, Weidman, Kern, Brunner, Schmidt, Haller, Lutz, Schneider, Hornberger, Brendel, Heft, Stober, Schupp, Franckhousser, Massner, Rupp, Roth, Hartung, Schaub, Zerbe, Lied, Harding, Kegereis, Kramer, Beck, Becker, Zinn, Weinhold, Hartinger, Lausch, Weber, Adams, Muller, Grill, Dietrich, and Wolf.

In 1742, the German Lutheran Church officially sent a young evangelist to work in Pennsylvania, in response to Count Zinzendorf of Moravia founding Moravian churches in Bethlehem and Lititz. The evangelist's name was Rev. Dr. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, and he would go on to be extremely influential in Pennsylvania Lutheranism. A Lutheran College in Allentown, Muhlenberg College, is named in his honor, as well as the former Muhlenberg Hospital in Bethlehem. Muhlenberg took over from Schultze as the pastor at the Lutheran Church in Trappe. Working out of his church in Trappe, Henry Muhlenberg traveled extensively in Pennsylvania, Maryland and New York State, and even as far away as Georgia, ministering primarily to German Lutherans, but also to English and Dutch Lutherans. Wherever Muhlenberg

went, he set up Lutheran churches and installed ministers. These 111 historic congregations are commonly called “Muhlenberg Churches”, 81 of them in Pennsylvania alone. (The argument could be made that the 50 historic congregations which Johann Stoever founded could just as well be called “Stoever Churches”). Additionally, Henry Muhlenberg founded the very first Lutheran Synod in the Americas, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania.

Muhlenberg also put together a uniform liturgy and hymnbook for Lutherans in Pennsylvania. Three of Muhlenberg’s sons went into the ministry. One, Henry Jr., became the pastor of Holy Trinity in Lancaster. Another, Frederick, was a pastor at Brickerville, then moved to New York City. Frederick Muhlenberg then went into politics and became the very first Speaker of the House in the U.S. Congress. Another son, Peter Muhlenberg, famously left the ministry to become a Major General in the Continental Army fighting the Revolutionary War. And a fourth son, Henry Ernst, became the first president of Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster.

But as Henry Muhlenberg became successful and renowned among Lutherans in the area, the one person he came into conflict with Pastor Stoever, the pastor of Muddy Creek, and the first church planter in the area before the newcomer Muhlenberg arrived. Muhlenberg regarded Stoever as untrained and self-appointed. Meanwhile, Stoever viewed Muhlenberg as a young usurper, and resented him. Their disagreements led to friction between them, and the two strong personalities butted heads. When Muhlenberg founded the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, he pointedly did not invite Stoever to be a part of it. Conrad Weiser, who I mentioned earlier, and who was also Muhlenberg’s father-in-law, stepped in to reconcile the two men. Eventually after 15 years, in 1763, Stoever joined the Ministerium, long after having left Muddy Creek in 1746, moving to Lebanon and serving the church at Brickerville and other churches in Lebanon and York counties. Johann Stoever died in 1779, collapsing in the middle of leading a confirmation service at a church in Cleona, Lebanon County.

In 1744, two years before Pastor Stoever left Muddy Creek, the church officially bought the nine and a half acres which became the grounds for the church, the cemetery and the grove. Muddy Creek was purchased and deeded the site from the two sons of William Penn, Richard and William Penn, for the sum of one pound, eight shillings, and eleven pence. Jacob Fry of the Lutheran congregation and Henry Haller of the Reformed congregation signed the deed. Even though the land was bought in 1744, the deed was not actually delivered until 1762, 18 years later.

In 1748, Muddy Creek began to build a new church building out of stone to replace the log church, again on the site of our lower parking lot. It took three years to build, and had a brick or tile floor. That church building would stand for 100 years, holding services for both the Lutheran and Reformed congregations, who alternated Sundays. In the middle of the building program, in 1749, Muddy Creek Lutheran’s second pastor arrived, Tobias Wagner. Pastor Wagner would serve Muddy Creek for 6 years until 1755.

Pastor Wagner was followed by a pastor who had an interesting history himself. His name was John Schwerdfeger. Schwerdfeger was an orphan who was raised in an orphanage in Bavaria, Germany. While visiting Holland, he was kidnapped by slave traders and put on a ship to

Maryland. Some Lutheran men from York, Pennsylvania, freed him, and Schwerdfeger then became committed to the Lutheran Church and was eventually ordained as a pastor. Samuel Schwerdfeger served Muddy Creek for 5 years until 1763.

During Pastor Schwerdfeger's time, the two congregations of Muddy Creek, the Lutherans and the Reformed, signed an Article of Agreement to give both congregations equal rights and privileges over the church and the property. The Article of Agreement was signed by the Lutheran elders and trustees Jacob Fry, Philip Shober, Casper Lutz, and Valentine Schneider. From the Reformed side, the agreement was signed by elders and trustees Henry Haller, Christopher Shupp, George Hefft, and Marcus Egly. The deed for the land which had been purchased from the Penn brothers then finally officially arrived from England the next year, in 1762.

The next pastor, William Kurtz, served Muddy Creek for 18 years. Pastor Kurtz had been Rev. Dr. Muhlenberg's secretary before being ordained as a pastor. Following Pastor Kurtz came Pastor Johann Schroeter, from 3 years from 1781 to 1784. Pastor Schroeter lived in Manheim and served the Lutheran Church there, but also served Muddy Creek, New Holland and Bergstrasse in Ephrata (founded 1752), leading one service a month at each location. The Manheim Lutheran Church requested of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania that Schroeter relinquish his other three churches in order to have him at Manheim full-time. However, the delegate from Muddy Creek exhorted the Ministerium to let Pastor Schroeter stay at Muddy Creek and the other two churches because they were "thoroughly satisfied with him", and the Ministerium agreed that Schroeter would continue to serve all four churches. The Ministerium also assigned Pastor Henry Muhlenberg Jr. of Holy Trinity, Lancaster, the task of visiting all four churches to promote peace and harmony.

After Pastor Schroeter, came another pastor with an interesting history. His name was Frederick Melsheimer. On June 1, 1776, Melsheimer landed in Quebec, Canada, as a chaplain to the German Hessian troops. The German Hessians had been hired during the Revolutionary War by the British to help fight against the Americans. A year later in the battle of Bennington, Frederick Melsheimer was wounded in the arm and taken prisoner by the Americans. He ended up in Bethlehem, married a Moravian and had 11 children. He studied to become a Lutheran pastor. Then Melsheimer came to Lancaster County to serve Muddy Creek Lutheran Church for four years from 1785 to 1789. Along with Muddy Creek, Pastor Melsheimer's parish also included New Holland and Bergstrasse in Ephrata.

Pastor Melsheimer was also a distinguished scientist and entomologist, studier of insects. He has been called the "Father of American Entomology", and was renowned for classifying 1,363 species of beetles and publishing the book, "The Melsheimer Collection of Insects". He was an intimate friend of Henry Ernst Muhlenberg, the first president of Franklin and Marshall College. When Franklin and Marshall was founded, Melsheimer was one of the college trustees and was also became a professor there of Latin, Greek and German. In 1788, Melsheimer was elected as the second president of Franklin and Marshall College, succeeding his friend Muhlenberg, and it was then that he left Muddy Creek. During the time that Melsheimer was at Muddy Creek, Bergstrasse and New Holland, he convinced the New Holland Church to donate the land to build

the first free public school in New Holland, a two-story school building which became the forerunner of the modern Eastern Lancaster County School District.

Melsheimer was followed for 5 years by Pastor Heinrich Moeller, who served from 1790-1795. In addition to the three churches that Melsheimer served, Pastor Moeller also added the Allegheny and Strasburg churches – 5 in total. Moeller was followed by Pastor Peter Benz, who lived in Mt. Joy and served Mt. Joy, Muddy Creek and Manheim for 3 years – quite the geographic spread!

Then a pastor was called to Muddy Creek who had been once been a catechism student of Pastor Henry Muhlenberg Jr. at the church in Lancaster, Pastor John Plitt. Pastor Plitt served Muddy Creek for 13 years from 1799 to 1812. Plitt was highly regarded in the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. At its assembly in 1805, Pastor Plitt was secretary of a committee chaired by Pastor Frederick Melsheimer, former pastor of Muddy Creek. The Committee was charged with the task of deciding whether or not churches in the Ministerium of Pennsylvania would allow service in English as well as German, and Melsheimer and Plitt's committee decided that all churches should remain conducting services only in German. Pastor Plitt's parish consisted of Muddy Creek, Swamp, New Holland, Bergstrasse, Allegheny, Forrest and Octarara – 7 churches in all! Pastor Plitt was succeeded for ten years by Pastor Peter Filbert, whose parish consisted of Muddy Creek, Swamp, Bergstrasse, Allegheny and Forrest. Pastor Filbert was one of the ones who voted in 1821 to have the Ministerium of Pennsylvania join together with other Lutherans in North America to become the General Synod. Over time, Lutherans in the United States kept merging together until we finally get to our modern Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or ELCA, of which we are a part today.

The next two pastors at Muddy Creek each died soon after being called to Muddy Creek. The first was Johann Engle, who actually grew up at Muddy Creek under Pastor Plitt. But Pastor Engle died after only serving Muddy Creek for 5 months. Then came Pastor Carl Rutze, who died after serving Muddy Creek for only two years. When Pastor Rutze was sick before he died, his close friend John Reickert supply preached at Muddy Creek. After Pastor Rutze died, Pastor Reickert was persuaded to accept what was called "The New Holland Charge" – consisting of New Holland, Muddy Creek, Bergstrasse and Allegheny. Pastor Reickert was a grandson of Rev. Dr. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the evangelist who had come into conflict with Muddy Creek's first pastor, Johann Stoeber. Pastor Reickert served Muddy Creek for 7 years before moving on to be a pastor at the church in Trappe (his grandfather Henry Muhlenberg's former congregation and the church originally founded by Johann Schultze who had baptized some of the first people at Muddy Creek), then at St. Michael's in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and then at Trinity, Reading, where he, ironically, died in the middle of leading a funeral service. Pastor Reickert was succeeded by Pastor C. F. Weldon and then Pastor Charles Miller, each serving for four years. Pastor Miller served Muddy Creek and Brickerville, where he lived.

In 1842, Muddy Creek sent two of their members to the Synod meeting in Lancaster to find a new pastor. They ended up choosing Pastor Christopher Gottlieb, who also lived in Brickerville like Pastor Miller did. Pastor Gottlieb served for 7 years in a parish consisting of Warwick,

Manheim, Muddy Creek, Swamp, Kisselberg and White Oak. This was called the “Warwick Parish”.

It was during Pastor Gottlieb’s time that Muddy Creek built a new church building. In 1847, Muddy Creek’s second church building which had stood for 100 years was torn down. A new church building built of antique sandstone was put up on what is now the site of our upper parking lot, next to the cemetery directly across the road from our current church building. It cost \$1,910 to build it, and it became known as the “Old Stone Church”. This beautiful and artistic building was dedicated in 1847. It featured a wrap-around balcony for the men and a lower level for the women, all centered on a magnificently tall pulpit with an ascending staircase, two pot-belly stoves, and an organ that had to be pumped by hand. The men were seated up in the balcony while the women were down on the main floor . It is said that the young men would sit on the upper left balcony so that they could see the young women seated in the pews in the lower right main floor. People walked and rode in their buggies to worship at the Old Stone Church, and a large extended horse shed existed across the street in the Church Grove to shelter and feed the horses during church.

The Old Stone Church building stood for 91 years. Two items from it have been incorporated into our current church building. The first is its cornerstone, now part of the wall to the right of the main entry doors. The cornerstone reads, in Pennsylvania Dutch, “Mode Krick und Cocalico Deutsche Reformiche und Lutherische Kirche, 1847” (translated as “Muddy Creek and Cocalico German Reformed and Lutheran Church, 1847). The second item from the Old Stone Church is the historic church bell, cast by T. I. Dyre of Philadelphia in 1850, which was moved to our current church tower where you can still hear it rung every Sunday morning during the praying of the Lord’s Prayer (an ancient tradition from Germany so that homebound people on Sunday morning could hear the church bell and pray the Lord’s Prayer simultaneously with the worshipers inside the church). Muddy Creek’s bell is one of only three remaining Dyre bells in the United States, the other two historic Dyre bells being located in the Tower Clock of the Madison County Courthouse in Huntsville, Alabama, and in the Skinner Museum of Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts.

The hand-pumped pipe organ which was used at the Old Stone Church, was moved to the bottom level of our current church, where it was played for many years for Sunday School worship. Subsequently, it was moved and installed in a church in New York State.

Pastor Gottlieb was succeeded by Thomas Jaeger for three years, Charles Riess for 4 years, and Reuben Wagner for 2 years. During this time, the Lutheran Church in Lincoln, Ephrata was added to the Warwick Parish.

In 1859, Pastor Simon Boyer came to Muddy Creek and the Warwick Parish, and at his request, an important realignment of the parish happened. In 1860, The “Hinkletown Parish” was formed with Boyer as its pastor, and it consisted of Muddy Creek, Salem Lutheran, Reamstown (founded 1817), St. John Center East Earl (founded 1777), Bergstrasse, and Vogansville. Lincoln was added to the parish two years later. In 1863, Kissel Hill in Lititz joined the parish, and was

swapped out for Swamp in 1866. Pastor Boyer's salary was \$560 a year, of which Muddy Creek's share was \$115. In 1868, Vogansville Church was damaged in a severe windstorm, could not afford their share of the salary and asked to leave the parish. Reamstown and St. John Center also came up short with their contributions. Pastor Boyer submitted his resignation.

In 1869, Reuben Wagner, who had been the pastor of Muddy Creek and the Hinkletown Parish before Pastor Boyer returned a second time to serve Muddy Creek, Reamstown, St. John Center and Bergstrasse. It was at this time that the hand-pumped pipe organ was installed in the Old Stone Church.

A few years earlier, in 1860, Muddy Creek began a tradition that became famous all throughout Lancaster and Berks counties – the annual Muddy Creek Picnic! Because Muddy Creek was located across the road from the stop on the trolley line between Lancaster and Reading, huge throngs would take the trolley to arrive for the several-day event. Think of it as the modern-day Denver Fair and Adamstown Fair all rolled up into one. A large brass band would kick off the event, and the opening day crowd would follow the band marching in a parade from our grove past the cemetery down to the Muddy Creek Picnic fairgrounds at what is now the present-day Peace U.C.C. church, the successor to Muddy Creek Reformed Church. The crowds would listen to community bands perform, eat chicken corn soup and enjoy other delectable picnic foods. By 1894, 5,000 people were attending the picnic, which remained as a major community event for 107 years until the last picnic in 1967.

Now, back to Pastor Wagner. In 1872, a conflict arose which would rock the very foundations of Muddy Creek. At that time, the Reformed and Lutheran congregations had a joint Sunday School every Sunday, even though worship alternated every other week between the two denominations. A group of 15-20 people from the Union Sunday School secretly decided to form one single congregation instead of having two, Muddy Creek Lutheran and Muddy Creek Reformed. Without the knowledge or consent of the pastors and other members, this group went to the Court of Lancaster County and submitted an Independent Charter to form a Union Church, which was granted. Pastor Wagner resigned when he found out, and was replaced in 1873 by Pastor Samuel Henry, who had no idea what he was walking into.

When it came time to install the new council members, Pastor Henry installed the council members of the Muddy Creek Lutheran Congregation but would not install the council members selected by those who had obtained the Independent Charter. The Independent Charter group then went up to the altar and tried to grab the book out of Pastor Henry's hands. On June 28, 1874, the Charter Group blocked the church doors and refused to permit Pastor Henry to enter. Two weeks later they came to the church parsonage on a Saturday and handed Pastor Henry a notice that he should never again enter Muddy Creek Church, and if he did, he would be driven away or carried away and suffer the consequences.

The next day, on Sunday, they locked the church doors and refused entrance to the Pastor and other members. Two weeks later, the churches of the Hinkletown Charge met and condemned the actions of the independent group known as the "Charter Party", saying that they did not recognize them and that they were behaving in an unchristian manner. The Lancaster County

Court then intervened in the dispute and ordered that the Charter group not cause any more disturbances. Six years later, the dispute still raged at Muddy Creek, and in 1880, Pastor Henry reported to an annual meeting of the Hinkletown Parish that all the churches in the parish have peace and harmony, except for Muddy Creek which had mixed his official duties with sorrow and grief ever since he arrived seven years ago. A committee met and found that Pastor Henry had acted only honorably, but two years later he decided that 9 years of this conflict was enough and he resigned. He was succeeded for three years by Pastor John Umbenhen. During Pastor Umbenhen's time, the parsonage in Hinkletown was sold and a new one bought in Reamstown, and the name of the Hinkletown parish was changed to the Reamstown Parish.

Finally, some stability came back to Muddy Creek with two pastors who served Muddy Creek in long, distinguished pastorates, one for 35 years and one for 30 years. The first was Pastor Benjamin Welder, who came in 1886. In 1892, he led the congregation in purchasing land adjoining the church to increase the size of the Muddy Creek Cemetery. In 1901, Muddy Creek built a building to house the Sunday School. It was a beautiful sandstone building which they called "Grace Chapel". It also doubled as a Social Hall for dinners and events. The building, which still stands, is located just down Muddy Creek Church Road adjacent to the cemetery. Paul Shober, a member at Muddy Creek who died in 2021 at the age of 100, said that his father personally hauled the sandstone in a wagon from the quarry in order to build Grace Chapel. The Chapel was used for Sunday School classes and church dinners by our congregation for 116 years until it was sold in 2017 by us to a private individual. Pastor Welder served Muddy Creek for a total of 35 years. During his tenure, he also helped Muddy Creek Lutheran and Reformed congregation members from Adamstown to form their own church, St. Paul Lutheran and Reformed, in 1911.

The next long-term pastor was Pastor Ambrose Leibensberger, who would serve Muddy Creek for 30 years from 1921 to 1951. His parish included Muddy Creek, Adamstown, Reamstown, Bergstrasse, St. John Center and Bowmansville. During this time, it was evident that Muddy Creek had outgrown the Old Stone Church and that a new building must be built to accommodate the burgeoning congregation. The Old Stone Church was torn down in 1938, and as a new church was being built, the congregations temporarily worshipped in the Grace Chapel. With much fanfare in 1939, the fourth and present church building was dedicated. Notably, this beautiful church building was generously built by the people of Muddy Creek at the end of the Great Depression! The building cost \$59,000, and was built in a Gothic style with a native red sandstone base and a red brick superstructure trimmed with Indiana cast stone. On February 26, 1939, the current church building was dedicated. The congregants of Muddy Creek Lutheran and Reformed Church streamed in and were awestruck by the magnificent stained-glass windows, in particular the "Transfiguration" window above the altar.

Pastor Leibensberger's distinguished career at Muddy Creek lasted for 30 years. Near the pavilion in the grove across from Muddy Creek Lutheran Church is a plaque beside a memorial tree for Rev. A.W. Leibensperger. Following him, Pastor Celo Leitzel served Muddy Creek for 5 years from 1953-1958. When Pastor Leitzel left in 1958, Muddy Creek decided to call its own pastor full-time, and no longer be in the Reamstown Parish together with Salem, Reamstown, Bergstrasse, Ephrata, and St. John Center, East Earl.

Pastor John Rice then came and served from 1959-1969. Pastor Rice helped to found Luther Acres Retirement Community in Lititz, and it was he who personally suggested the name of “Luther Acres”, since it was being built on farmland. During Pastor Rice’s time, Muddy Creek’s Lutheran and Reformed congregation began to consider dissolving the union and going separate ways, since they had each grown so large. Talks began in 1965 and in 1966, Muddy Creek United Church of Christ (formerly Muddy Creek Reformed Church) and the Adamstown United Church of Christ (formerly St. Paul’s Reformed Church, which had been in a union church arrangement with St. Paul Lutheran Church in Adamstown) joined together as one congregation, Peace United Church of Christ (Peace U.C.C). In 1970, the Union Church formally dissolved, and the U.C.C. congregation left this building to dedicate their new church, Peace U.C.C., at the site of Muddy Creek Picnic fairgrounds. It was decided that the Lutherans would keep the cemetery property, but it would then be cooperatively operated by the two congregations through a joint Cemetery Board.

In 1970, Muddy Creek Lutheran Church added a wing to its building for offices and a fellowship hall. Several of the stained-glass windows formerly located on the west wall of the church were relocated to the new western wall. Also in 1970, Pastor John Kammerer came to serve Muddy Creek for a 13-year pastorate. He was followed by Pastor William Martin, who had an illustrious career at Muddy Creek from 1984-1999. Pastor Martin passed away in 2018. In 2000, Pastor Jeffrey Lott then came from Wisconsin to serve Muddy Creek for 3 years. Pastor Lott passed away in 2021, while serving a church in Tennessee. He was followed by Pastor Paul Smeltz in 2005. Pastor Smeltz served Muddy Creek for 6 years until he retired in 2011. In 2014, Pastor Peter Schwabe-Fry, the current pastor, and Pastor Nancy Schwabe-Fry began their ministry at Muddy Creek. Pastor Nancy Schwabe-Fry retired in 2020.

So, here we are in 2022, together celebrating 290 years of Muddy Creek Lutheran Church. What a long and richly wonderful history! Where will we be in 10 years as we might celebrate 300 years? Well..., that’s more history waiting to be written!

Compiled and written by Pastor Peter Schwabe-Fry, March, 2022