The Beginning

November 8, 1862 marked the official beginnings of the Church of the Nativity in South Bethlehem. It was on this day that a small group of Episcopalians formed a temporary vestry as the first formal step toward establishing a parish church.

It began with a small group of Episcopalians meeting in store fronts and living rooms saying the daily offices. William H. Sayre, Robert H. Sayre, William H. Sayre Jr, Tinsley Jeter and his sister Miss Susan Richardson were among the first group to pursue establishing a congregation.

Expansion

The 1880’s brought the expansion of industry and therefore people to South Bethlehem. The focused mission of Nativity on education, healthcare, and worship gave birth first to Lehigh University (1865), St. Luke’s Hospital (1873), and a thriving Sunday school which was for all children in the area. Nativity had outgrown its space, was meeting in the basement as an expansion took place.

A Transition in Leadership and a Time of Challenge (Early 1900’s)

The beginning of the new century brought with it some challenges for this congregation. Many of the founders and leaders of the parish would come to the end of their lives. Robert and William Sayre Jr, who were driving forces in leadership, would die as well as other parish leaders. Many on the parish roles were not participating in worship or in the decision making of the congregation and with major benefactors dying, financial support was strained.

Two mission congregations, St. Joseph’s in lower South Bethlehem and St. Mary’s in Fountain Hill, were not able to support themselves with people or money. A parish meeting held was attended only by two members other than the vestry.
Interestingly, in 1905 Mr. Frank Martenis was “hired” by the vestry as solicitor and collector of parish financial giving. It was his job to visit and secure financial support, his payment, 10 percent of the giving. An interesting approach to Stewardship! The first world war would find a way to bring people’s attention to Church.

**Opportunities and Challenges (A world war, a booming industry, a Great Depression, a gift that keeps on giving).**

WWI presented a spiritual awakening for some and institutional challenges for the Church. The iron industry boomed in response to the demands of a building war machine. This brought more people to South Bethlehem of all ethnic variety. This led to more churches, overcrowded housing markets, and tensions. The vestry and clergy of Nativity took a lead in trying to ease tensions, call people to common community ideals, and moral living.

Nativity also was faced with continued financial struggle as resources were thin through the war years. A short burst of prosperity roared in with the twenties, renewed leadership directed a re-connection with members of Nativity. Mrs. Rose Parker was placed in the position of the Parish Visitor. Her ministry was to visit members in their homes. This together with renewed emphasis on community building, and the first ever “every member canvass”, led to a well resourced parish for ministry that included the support of a missionary to Liberia.

The great depression of course brought again then struggles for the parish! Yet even in the midst of it one gift was given that keeps giving today. In 1902 Dr. T. Edgar “Pop” Shields arrived as organist and choir member. Even through difficult times “Pop” Shields built a strong ministry with young people through the ministry of music. Mr. Shields created the first boys choir and established the first choir camp, we believe somewhere around 1914 or 15. The ministry of music and the ministry of camp for youth continues to this day as a centerpiece of spiritual vitality of this congregation.

WWII and the years that followed would be years of faithfulness and explosive growth. A generation of builders and heroes emerged in response to WWII. The steel industry boomed in response to the needs of the war. A generation sacrificed, came home from war and set about an era of building and organizing all things!

This included church. Mainline churches all over the country boomed as a result of an enormous gratitude of a generation. At Nativity, a plethora of organizations came into being. Women’s Auxiliary, United Thank Offering, Young People’s Fellowship, Mother’s groups, etc.

Some terrific mission took place in addition to the creation of a solid home of spiritual renewal for so many families. In 1947 Nativity collected tons of food and clothing as part of the Church World Service ecumenical response to help rebuild Europe following the World War.

A church council was established as a parallel to vestry, so that the many organizations (committees) within the church that had come into being would have more voice and coordination in Parish Life. One of those groups was the Business and Professional Women’s Club. To this time a women had yet to serve on the vestry.

The first known Refugee ministry also took place in these years following WWII. Nativity sponsored and helped re-settle an East German family who made their home in Fountain Hill. The spirit of refugee ministry still lives at Nativity with families from Eastern Europe and the Middle East having come to Bethlehem with Nativity’s love and support.

The congregation of nativity now lives into its 155th year. 155 years of prayers, baptisms, confirmations, mission ventures in education, health care, and reaching out to neighbors near and far.

The place of Church in society has certainly shifted since the boom years following World War II, yet history will teach us, that the call to witness to Christ remains the same regardless. How the Church lives the gospel necessarily must be aware of the challenges and opportunities before us. In this day what remains true as the day this congregation was founded is this; We love our Lord, We love our children, We lift beautiful praise in song and worship, We lift a hand and heart to serve others.
The Parish Visitor

United Thank Offering Ingathering
November 18 & 19, 2017

What are you THANKFUL for this year? I am thankful for my new job, for my fabulous granddaughter and for the ministries of this parish. On November 18th and 19th we will have our annual United Thank Offering (UTO) ingathering. This is an opportunity for all of us to show a visible sign of our thanks by making a donation to UTO. As a ministry of the Episcopal Church, the United Thank Offering donations are granted to support mission and ministry throughout the Episcopal Church and the world. Please consider making a habit of offering daily thanks to God by donating your coins. Please pick up a “Blue Box” in the back of the church and begin a tradition of being thankful. — Cathy Bailey UTO Chairperson
Donations Needed – for November 19th

**Thanksgiving baskets:** stuffing, cranberries, canned vegetables, instant sweet potatoes, gravy, turkey

**Homeless Ministry Gift Bags:** This year we will collect for both men and women. Please consider donating any of the following items:

- Hat (men and women)
- Gloves (men and women)
- Socks (men and women)
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Lip Balm
- Hand sanitizer
- Deodorant (men and women)
- Moisturizer
- Disposable Razor
- Toothpaste
- Soap (small travel size)

Please consider donations of food for Thanksgiving baskets and/or items for Christmas gift bags to the Homeless Ministry guests. Items are needed at Nativity Cathedral on November 19th when we will assemble food baskets and gift bags after the 8:45 321 Eucharist.

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**Thanksgiving Evensong**

Sunday November 19, 2017 at 4 PM

St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church
3900 Mechanicsville Rd.
Whitehall, PA 18052

Please bring canned food item.

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I just had to turn on my heat for the first time, so you know what that means? Yep. The Past and Present Annual Cookie Exchange will be coming up and we wanted first dibs on your December calendars. This is a luncheon we always particularly look forward to as it launches December in a happy way. Sarah is winging her way to California even as I type, so we haven't had the opportunity to discuss a 'theme'. The important thing is that you plan on coming on Friday, December 8th. Our social time/ program will begin at 11:00. Rumor has it that yummy menus are being contemplated and someone is trying to convince someone else to play the piano... [after all, it's a long flight] for the lunch at noon. There will be more information via Nativity Notes and the Sunday bulletins as we progress through November. Looking forward to seeing you all.

~~Pam Bayliss [& Sarah Norwine, the aforementioned flyer].
FROM DEACON RODNEY

This is the second part of the background of the diaconate in the Episcopal Church.

The Episcopal Church began to see a resurgence in the diaconate in the early nineteenth century. Since that time, deacons have come, as Ormonde Plater described, in four types or “waves”. The earliest were missionary or indigenous deacons and were exclusively male, next deaconess (females), perpetual deacons (males) and the deacons we know today being both male and female. All of this came as an evolution as individuals and the church heard what the Spirit was calling them to do. It should be noted that other traditions have viewed the role of deacon differently, and while the deacons of the Roman Catholic Church function similarly, their historical development is very different.

From the 1840s through to the first few decades of the 20th century, deacons and some priests were ordained on an ad hoc basis to fill the void on the frontier of the United States of Episcopal clergy. It wasn’t until 1871 that General Convention took up the subject of the diaconate and developed canons to cover their formation and ordination. From that time until 1904, deacons were ordained for missionary work or as indigenous clergy for ethnic communities, predominantly Native American. These deacons often functioned alone often not seeing a priest or their bishop for long periods of time. For that reason, they often acted more as a priest than deacon except for presiding at the Eucharist.

The deaconess movement was a result of the 19th century church wanting to mobilize women to care for the poor and the sick. In Europe, the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars coupled with the Industrial Revolution left many without means to care for themselves. A general evangelical revival in Christianity, and particularly the Oxford Movement in the Anglican Church drew the attention of Christian social reformers to the plight of the poor.

In 1831, German Lutherans founded a training institute for women based on the New Testament model of the diaconate. Lutheran deaconesses visited the sick and the poor, educated children, and staffed an infirmary for the sicker children. Anglicans in the US and England attempted to mimic this model. In 1862, Elizabeth Ferard was admitted to the office of deaconess by the laying on of hands by Bishop Archibald Campbell. While the US church was interested earlier, it wasn’t until 1885 that Bishop Richard Hooker Wilmer, 2nd Bishop of Alabama “instituted” without laying on of hands two deaconesses, Mary W. Johnson and Mary Caroline Frizzell. In 1889, General Convention passed Canon 10 “On Deaconesses” which stood until repealed in 1970.

After World War II, the Episcopal Church grew rapidly. The General Convention of 1952 restored the diaconate for men and they were referred to as the “perpetual deacons.” This order proved moderately popular with 517 men ordained between 1952 and 1970 when the canons were changed again to include women and to change the nature of the order. Perpetual deacons were mostly older men, chosen by their priest and locally trained. These deacons functioned more closely to permanent curates in the parish in which they were raised up.

In 1970, we saw the beginnings of change on how the church viewed orders and the role of women in the church. The diaconate along with the priesthood underwent significant changes during that time. The modern diaconate will be covered in the next installment.
Come Celebrate Christmas 2017 With Us

Sunday ~ December 3 ~ 3 PM Advent Lessons & Carols
Advent is the beginning of our Church Year, and its signs and symbols remind us that we are in a season of preparation and waiting. Filled with tradition, the universal symbol of lighting a candle reminds us that though we live in a dark world, at the heart of the Christian Gospel is the message of hope.

Sunday ~ December 17 ~ Christmas Pageant
10:30 AM Come and hear the story we love and treasure told by the children of the Cathedral.

Tuesday ~ December 19 ~ 7 PM Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
Cathedral Choir and Friends choral music from ancient to 21st century, punctuated by harp and flute.

Sunday ~ December 24 ~ Christmas Eve
◆ 10 AM IV Advent Holy Eucharist
◆ 5 PM Festive Eucharist, Special Music, and Children’s Sermon
◆ 10 PM Music from the Rood Screen
◆ 10:30 PM Candlelight Festival Eucharist

Monday ~ December 25 ~ Christmas Day
◆ 10 AM Holy Eucharist with Music
◆ 3 PM Organ Noëls with Stephen Williams

Saturday ~ December 30 ~ 5 PM
Celtic Christmas, Candlelight, Live Celtic Christmas Music

Sunday ~ January 1 ~ First Sunday after Christmas
◆ 10 AM Holy Eucharist

Sunday ~ January 8 ~ Celebration of the Epiphany
Services Saturday at 5 PM
Sunday at 8 AM, 8:45 AM, 9:15 AM Epiphany Breakfast & 10:30 AM

Sunday ~ January 28 ~ Parish Annual Meeting & Breakfast
8 AM Holy Eucharist, 9 AM Sunday School & Annual Meeting, 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist
November & December Adult Forums:

November 5: Celebrating the Saints – Nativity Now and Then - The Very Rev. Anthony Pompa

November 12: Developing World Medical Missions – Dr. Marian McDonald & Renee Acconciamessa – Learn about the work done in Peru and how our parishioners are advancing medical care throughout the world.

November 19: Intergenerational Event: Thanksgiving Food Collection & Gift Bag Assembly. Fellowship and activities of thanksgiving as we assemble collected food and holiday items for the men and women at the new shelter site.

November 26: St. Paul’s Within the Walls Mission Trip Rome – Dean Pompa and Mission Group participants will share the mission trip experience

December 3: Intergenerational Event – St Nicholas Party, come to Sayre Hall for Advent activities that will prepare us for the coming of the Christ child; everyone is welcome; activities for all ages

December 10 & 17: DACA the Impact to our Colleges, Students, and Country - Dr. Erika Sutherland, professor Muhlenberg College

December 24 – No Adult Forum

THE PARISH REGISTRY
Parish Register
As of October 25, 2017

Marriages
09/22/2017 – Kasey Groiss and Michael Muzyka

Deaths
08/25/2017 – Edwin V. Strohl
09/23/2017 – McGehee Isaacs

Transfers In
Richard and Barbara Lampe from St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, Pennsburg, PA
Joseph and Nancy Hall from All Saints’ Episcopal Church, Millington, NJ
St. Nicholas Party

Sunday December 3 at 9:15 AM
Community Breakfast
Visit from St. Nicholas

Come to Sayre Hall for Advent Activities that will prepare us for the coming of the Christ Child.

Everyone is welcome.
Activities for ALL ages.

Vestry Snippets

The Vestry met on October 17, 2017

- Mentoring has started at Fountain Hill Elementary School
- Pipe work has been completed. Paving will start soon.
- Mission trip to Rome – 11/5 to 11/13 --Tony is taking 19 people to the Joel Nafuma Refugee Center

Next scheduled meeting November 21, 2017.