

HISTORY OF SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH

The first gathering of "Lutheran Fellowship at Deep Creek Lake" took place July 4, 2004 at Will O' the Wisp. A group of about fifty individuals began worshipping together for worship, mutual support and Bible study. Soon they explored the necessary steps for the formation of a new mission congregation. An intense study and application process culminated Saturday, October 16, 2004, when the Synod Council of the West Virginia-Western Maryland (WV-WMD) Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted unanimously to establish "Lutheran Fellowship at Deep Creek Lake" as a Synodically-Authorized Worshipping Community. The Synod Council also voted to be supportive of "Lutheran Fellowship" as the first mission congregation in the synod since the merger of the ELCA in 1987.

Although called a "Fellowship," the group established the permanent church name of "Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church" in December, 2004. According to Dr. Ralph W. Dunkin, Bishop of the WV-WMD Synod, "This name really describes who and where you are". The goal of the new congregation was to minister to all, with special emphasis on providing worship opportunities for newcomers and tourists, as well as reaching out to the 50% of Garrett County citizens who have no church home. The social dynamics of a growing resort community brought new challenges to evangelism to which Shepherd of the Hills hoped to respond.

Mission status as a developing congregation was determined by the national organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America January 16, 2005. According to Mission Director, Helen R Harms, "It is the desire of the ELCA that God will open the hearts of people in the community to respond to the witness of the congregation . . . and that God will help the ministry grow in numbers and faith."

Many generous visiting pastors from the WV-WMD Synod have given of their time to lead the new ministry in Word and Sacrament before (and after) Reverend Claude C. Villemaire served as Mission Developer from September 25, 2005 to January 31, 2007. The Reverend Donald R. Thomas was installed and commissioned Sunday, November 11, 2007 and currently serves as the pastor of Shepherd of the Hills. During times of his absence, local resident Rev. Paul Blank preaches and presides at communion. Shepherd of the Hills also has a unique relationship with Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, PA in which seminarians are given the opportunity to preach in the mission congregation once each quarter of the year.

The congregation began worshipping on Sunday afternoons at Will O' the Wisp, originally to accommodate the schedule of visiting pastors. In 2006, the congregation chose to move to Sunday morning worship in order to better meet the needs of young families and visitors to the area. Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church held its first worship service at Garrett Eight Cinemas Sunday, May 14, 2006.

Under the leadership of Rev. Donald Thomas, Shepherd of the Hills continues to celebrate its niche ministry of serving newcomers, tourists and the un-churched. 2010 saw a total of 526 visitors, averaging 10.12 visitors per service.

March 26, 2012 - Pastor Don Thomas and Beth Johnson (Leadership Chair) had a conference call with Helen Harms, Assistant to the Bishop, Dr. Ralph Dunkin, Bishop of the WV-WMD Synod, and Reuben Duran, Director of New Congregational Development of the ELCA, who told them that although there is talk about needing membership strength of 100-120, SOTH's worship attendance is not unusual for our Synod. Many congregations are even smaller. What are important are the work and the life of the community of faith. According to Duran, "becoming a congregation is not about numbers. It is about quality. It is about our members saying "Yes, We understand...and are committed to mission and to our vision for the future." Harms and Dunkin have kept an eye on our mission, outreach, and activities, noted

that our average membership attendance is increasing, and have invited us to consider becoming a full-fledged congregation of the ELCA.

Sunday, June 24, 2012, the congregation voted to move ahead in faith and begin the process of becoming a full-fledged, constitutionally-approved “Congregation” of the ELCA. Once all of the pre-organization paperwork is ready (hopefully by Christmas), a meeting is called of the membership to adopt and formalize the work.

March, 2013 - Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church moved to a new location. Shepherd of the Hills took over a lease on the property in the Zip-eez complex, as of March 1, 2013 and began worshipping at the new location March 17, 2013. The property is located on Route 219 at Sand Flat Road (17863 Garrett Highway - Unit D). God prepared a gift that will suit our needs to be able to respond to His call.

*The Visionary Action Plan, adopted by the congregation Dec. 2, 2012 states
“Having a facility of our own is vital to our ability to grow God's Kingdom.
A place of our own would allow for Sunday morning worship as well as Saturday evening worship, Sunday afternoon and evening activities, mid-week activities, community events, office and storage space. There would be no limit to how we could respond to God's call.”*

April 7, 2013 - The congregation of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church welcomed Dr. Ralph W. Dunkin, Bishop of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Church in America (ELCA) and Helen Harms, Assistant to the Bishop, on Sunday, April 7, 2013. On the special day, the mission congregation voted to join together as a “full-fledged” congregation of the ELCA. Following a year-long organization process, the congregation adopted their new constitution and by-laws, as well as a “Visionary Action Plan to Grow God’s Kingdom” (a resource and guide, which is a concerted effort by the congregation to discern God’s will, to carrying out His mission in this community).

May 31, 2013 – SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS was presented for membership as a full-fledged congregation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) during the Synod Assembly, May 31, 7:15 p.m. at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 309 Baldwin Street, Morgantown. Eleven of our members were present at the Synod Assembly worship service and were called to the front to respond *on behalf of Shepherd of the Hills* that we would be faithful to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, faithful to the God's mission, and would accept the rites and privileges attendant to membership in the ELCA, all with God's help.

The other assembled Synod members then responded with a pledge to support and encourage us in the common mission to which Christ has called us.

The evening concluded with a reception in honor of “our newest congregation”, sponsored by the people of St. Paul. We are most grateful for their kindness!!

The ELCA currently has 340 mission starts--- “oops, 339, now that Shepherd of the Hills is a full-fledged congregation”!!

Praise and thanks be to God for allowing us to come this far, and prayers for continued guidance as we pursue His mission.

The vision of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church is that it will continue to be a church that welcomes newcomers with liturgical, inspiring worship; is active in the community; and provides opportunities for learning, service and leadership. God's purpose for Shepherd of the Hills is to live as a community of faith in Christ Jesus, reaching out to all to share God's love and forgiveness.

December 31, 2014

Reverend Donald R. Thomas retired as pastor of Shepherd of the Hills. He served Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, part-time, since his Installation and Commissioning November 11, 2007. During the final six months of his service, the congregation council completed their profile papers, and began working with the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod to begin the call process for a new full-time pastor.

February 1, 2015

Richard T. Egtvedt was called as pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, and will begin leading the flock on Sunday, February 15, 2015.

Ordination and Installation will be held Saturday, February 14 at 2:00 p.m., at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Bittering, MD. The entire community is invited to attend. Rick's ordination sponsors are Reverend Mark Combs, St. John's Lutheran Church, Zanesville, OH and Reverend Ann Schmid, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, McMurray, PA.

June 26, 2016

The congregation of Shepherd of the Hills voted to move its worship site back to the location where it first began in 2004. Worship will take place at Will O' the Wisp, Sundays at 4:00 PM. It was felt that the previous site at Sand Flat Plaza (previously known as the Zip-Eez complex), being two miles south of the lake, was not conducive to attracting visitors and vacationers. When located at the lake, annual visitor count in 2009 was 560 / in 2010 the visitor count was 526... as compared to 202 visitors in 2014 and 291 visitors in 2015.

February 28, 2017

Just after 9:00 pm on February 28, 2017 the owner of Will-O-Wisp notified Pastor Rick Egtvedt, unbeknownst to him, that a large amount of video and arcade equipment had been moved into our previous worship space by a new tenant. Having previously received notice that we might not be able to continue worshipping at the Will-O-Wisp through Easter, council had previously decided to develop an emergency fallback option. Following discussions with Pastor Jonathan Moon and approval by the McHenry United Methodist Church Council, we decided their location would provide a viable temporary option in case of the loss of Will-o-Wisp. After talking to our President and Worship & Music Chair, the decision was made to move our worship location starting the next evening (Ash Wednesday).

June 25, 2017

The congregation of Shepherd of the Hills has appreciated the generous hospitality and welcoming arms of our "full communion partner", the McHenry United Methodist Church, on Mosser Road in McHenry. After temporarily worshipping there for four months, the congregations moved forward to formalizing the relationship, to establish 477 Mosser Road, McHenry, as its newly established worship location.

September 10, 2017

Shepherd of the Hills has been graciously welcomed by Father Doug Kenney and the congregation of St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church, to begin worshipping in their beautiful 'St. Peter at the Lake Center' at

1140 Mosser Road, McHenry, MD. The Catholic service is held there on Saturdays only, from Labor Day to Memorial Day... opening the opportunity for Shepherd of the Hills to hold Sunday morning services at 10:00 a.m. During the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day), Shepherd of the Hills will hold worship at an earlier time to accommodate the Catholic Mass on Sundays at 11:00.

Beth Johnson

June 7, 2009

Most Recently Revised February 8, 2018

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

2015 - Present

Reverend Richard T. Egtvedt, Full-Time Pastor, Mission Developer
February 1, 2015 - Call extended
February 14, 2015 - Ordination and Installation

2007-2014

Reverend Donald R. Thomas, Part-Time Pastor
November 11, 2007 - Installation and Commissioning
December 31, 2014 - Retirement

2005-2007

The Reverend Claude L. Villemaire, Mission Developer, 2005-2007

February, 2007 to April, 2007:

The Reverend Alex Black (retired Bishop, residing in Fairmont, WV) - Supply Pastor
The Reverend Randy Nairn (Accident Evangelical Lutheran Parish) - Interim Pastor

April, 2007 to September, 2007:

The Reverend Donald R. Thomas - Interim Pastor

During the months of February - September 2007,

These individuals helped to lead us in Sunday morning worship.
Thank you!

Rev. Roland Nairn, Accident Evangelical Lutheran Parish, Accident, MD, Past Interim Pastor
Rev. Alex Black, retired Bishop, Past Supply Pastor
Rev. Donald Thomas, Interim Pastor (April - September)
Rev. Wolfgang Herz-Lane, Mission Director
Rev. Dr. Ralph W. Dunkin, Bishop of the West Virginia- Western Maryland Synod, ELCA
Rev. Matthew Riegel, Lutheran Campus Minister, West Virginia University
Rev. Sarah Lee Faulkner, Church of the Covenant, Grafton, WV
Rev. Ron Fearer, Retired
Mr. Lowell Leitzell, lay minister
The Rev. David Luecke, Retired
Rev. Kathleen Reed, Director of Development, Gettysburg Seminary

2004-2005

During our developmental period (July 4, 2004 through August, 2005) guest pastors from Western Maryland and West Virginia generously led Shepherd of the Hills in worship.

The Rev. Torben G. Aarsand, On-Leave-From Call; Exec. Director of Aarsand Family Foundation
The Rev. Theodore Bessey, Holy Trinity, Elkins, WV

The Rev. Larry Cantu, Grace Lutheran Church, Petersburg, WV
The Rev. James L. Caton, II, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Clarksburg, WV
The Rev. Dr. Ralph W. Dunkin, Bishop of the West Virginia- Western Maryland Synod, ELCA
The Rev. David Luecke - Retired, he lives in Waynesboro, VA
The Rev. Roland Nairn, Accident Evangelical Lutheran Parish, Accident, MD
The Rev. Robert Newpher - Stewardship Specialist for the three western synods of Region 8, ELCA
The Rev. Keith Pittsnogle, St. John Red House, Red House, MD
The Rev. Matthew Riegel, Lutheran Campus Minister, West Virginia University
The Rev. David Rockwood, Grace Lutheran Church, Fairmont, WV
The Rev. Allen Schwarz, St. John's Lutheran Church, Davis, WV
The Rev. Frederick A. Soltow, St. Peter, Shepherdstown, and St. James, Uvilla, WV