

**A History of
Bethlehem Presbyterian Church
Pittstown, NJ**

1730-2011



“House of Bread”

BETHLEHEM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

At Grandin, New Jersey

Some of its history since its organization in 1730
through 1980
By Reba H. Bloom

Updated in 2005 for the
275th Anniversary
of the Church's Founding

Updated in 2011 for the
140th Anniversary
of the Dedication of the Church Building

PREFACE

June 12, 2011

On this 140th anniversary of the dedication of the present church building we will see a Bible from the 1871 dedication which was presented to the Sabbath School, along with other historic items; view a DVD of a trek up into the bell tower, dedicate a plaque in the Memorial Garden and take a historic tour of the old walled cemetery.

Within the sanctuary walls tears of joy and grief were shed, peals of laughter and sighs of sadness were heard. Gospel music vibrated through us and majestic organ music was played to glorify God. The Word of God was proclaimed. People received the gift of Grace and Holy Communion and felt the Peace that passes all understanding.

We pause to think of all those who have entered this building on their faith journey, and the spiritual foundation upon which we continue to build.

This church history has been edited to include some information from years past, revised, as well as updated to the present by Marilyn Ford and Colleen Duerr.

With thanks to Shirley Albright, Frederick Black, Charles Eichlin, Chip Paillex, Ruth and Jack Rinehart, Mary Ellen Soldavin, Ginny Straub and Alicia Tamilio.

FOREWORD

By Reba Bloom, 1980

The history of Bethlehem Presbyterian Church became meaningful to me as I walked through the Old Graveyard whose stone wall enclosure was built in 1793 by Jacob Anderson, a Captain in the Revolution, and President of the Board of Trustees from 1802 to 1824.

Within these walls are the graves of those families who have served the church, either as an officer or as a faithful member e.g., the Bonnells, Dunhams, Johnsons, Rodenbaughs and Wyckoffs. When the Old Graveyard had no more room, later generations of these families were buried in the cemetery opposite the church building.

Most of today's churches have no graveyards nearby in which to trace the history of their members, as does Bethlehem Presbyterian Church at Grandin.

The Bethlehem congregations have a heritage in the Old Graveyard to preserve and protect, for those who are buried there cherished their Church, House of Bread to them.

I gratefully acknowledge the help I have received from:

Rev. Frederick Black, pastor of Bethlehem United Presbyterian Church
Mrs. Helen Frazee and Mrs. Elizabeth Wettstein, members of the church
Rev. John F. Lohr, pastor of Alexandria First Presbyterian Church
Mrs. Jacqueline Jones and Mrs. Mary Richter, Grandin Library
Mrs. Margo Siegel and Mr. Floyd Saums, Hunterdon County Library
Mr. Norman Wittwer, Hunterdon County Historical Society
Miss Virginia Everitt, Hunterdon County Hall of Records
Mrs. Nora Robinson, Presbyterian Historical Society Library
in Philadelphia

History of Bethlehem United Presbyterian Church
At Grandin, NJ

1730 ~ 1802

When some of the early settlers of Bethlehem Township, who had been meeting for worship, came together in 1730 to organize a Presbyterian Church, they named it Bethlehem, which in Hebrew means House of Bread. Since that time and through the years, the congregation of this Church, which is located between Clinton and Pittstown, has met to receive the spiritual food of life through our Lord, Jesus Christ, by hearing the preaching of the Word and by partaking, of the bread and wine of Holy Communion. ¹

At this time, people of different church denominations had been immigrating to this country from Europe. Many of the Scotch-Irish, as well as Scots, Dutch and English had found their way to Hunterdon County and had settled into this area. Due to the few churches and the distance to travel, members of different denominations would choose to attend a church near them whose doctrine was similar to theirs. Consequently, the Bethlehem congregation was probably made up of Scotch-Irish, Scots, Dutch and some English. ²

Bethlehem's first Meeting House is said to have been built of logs, erected in the northeast section of the old graveyard, located within the boundaries of the West Jersey Land Society's Great Tract of Hunterdon County. The road leading to it was most likely a rough wagon road made from an old Indian trail. It was not until 1762 that the Road Commissioners of the Township "thought it proper to lay a 2 rod road beginning at Samuel Johnson's Furnace and passing the Frame Meeting House...." ³

Bethlehem Church at the time of its organization would have been under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Philadelphia and the Minutes of this Presbytery from 1716-1733 have been lost. The earliest Session Records of Bethlehem were begun in 1769. If there were any records before this they have never been found.

In the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, 1736, Bethlehem is noted as having a "vacancy". The need for a pastor also related to another Presbyterian congregation which was closely associated with Bethlehem and later was organized as the Kingwood Presbyterian Church.

The 1730's and 1740's was a period of the Great Awakening, a time of revivals and evangelism in many of the churches. The call for ministers was so great the Supplies and Missionaries were assigned by the Presbytery to more than one congregation with at least a day's journey, sometimes more, between churches.

Such was the mission given to Francis McHenry, from Ireland, and Hugh Carlisle, from either Scotland or Ireland, in 1737, when they were directed by the Presbytery to supply the vacancies in Hunterdon County, which included the Amwell congregations of Bethlehem. ⁴

Rev. James McCrea, who founded the Lamington Presbyterian Church in 1741, and whose daughter, Mary, married John Hanna, also was a Supply to the Bethlehem congregations during 1736 and 1737.

The two congregations of Bethlehem were put under the jurisdiction of the New Brunswick Presbytery when it was set off from the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1738. In 1745, the New Brunswick Presbytery divided the two congregations, designating the Bethlehem Church as Upper Bethlehem and its associate church as the Lower Bethlehem. ⁵

Supply ministers continued giving some of their time to each congregation until 1747, when Bethlehem, and the other congregation, now organized as the Kingwood Church requested that Rev. Thomas Lewis be sent to them as their resident minister.

On October 27th, 1747, Mr. Lewis was installed as resident pastor to both congregations. He was directed by the Presbytery to divide his time equally between the two.

The next year, Rev. Lewis reported to a friend that "there had been a remarkable conviction prevailing in this place since December 1748.....about forty under some concern, a considerable number under strong convictions, and some hopefully converted." ⁶

While Rev. Lewis was pastor at Bethlehem Church, three brothers, Andrew, Thomas and William Fleming (sometimes spelled Fleeming in the Church Records) came to the township in 1751. They brought their membership certificates from the Presbyterian Church in Cookestown, Ireland and were received as members at Bethlehem Church. ⁷ The baptisms of Andrew's four children and the two children

of Thomas are recorded in the Bethlehem Session book of 1769. William, Andrew's son is buried in the old graveyard at Bethlehem Church.

Two other immigrants who came from Ireland and became active members at Bethlehem Church were Charles Stewart and Andrew Foster.

Charles Stewart, who married Mary Oakley Johnston, the daughter of Judge Samuel Johnston of Sidney, later became a Colonel and Commissary General of Issue in the Revolution. The marriage of Martha, the daughter of Charles and Mary Stewart, to John Willson is recorded in the 1769 Session Book.

Andrew Foster was a blacksmith who owned 40 acres of land near the Church. His six children are listed by name and date of birth in the 1769 Session Book. One son, Thomas, was given a "grant and lean", about 1815 by the Trustees of the Church, to live in a house, belonging to the Bethlehem congregation, for five years at a rent of \$5.00 a year. He was also to take charge of keeping up the Meeting House and the grave yard and "cutting the barriers" away from the graveyard gates.

When Rev. Lewis resigned his pastorate of the two churches in 1756, Upper Bethlehem again turned to Supplies. Among these, was John Hanna who had been giving some of his time to the Church at Kingwood and the Log Meeting House at Alexandria, now Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church.

Upper Bethlehem sent out a call for John Hanna to become their resident minister. On April 29th, 1761, he was ordained in the Frame Meeting House, erected in 1760 to replace the old Log Church.

For the next fourteen years, Rev. Hanna ministered to the spiritual needs of three congregations whose members were concerned, not only about Britain's oppressive tax laws, but were fearful that the Church of England was trying to become the State Church.

The concern about taxations was reflected in the decision by the people of Bethlehem Township to have the Town Clerk, Francis McShane, a member of the Bethlehem Church, choose three men to represent them at a meeting of the Sons of Liberty in 1766, at Ringoes. The three men chosen were John Rockhill, David Reynolds, and Abraham Bonnell. 8

In their fear of a State Church being established, the congregation of Bethlehem joined other churches in supporting the Continental Congress. This request for support from the churches was made in a pastoral letter dated 1774, from a committee headed by Rev. John Witherspoon, addressed to all Presbyterians in the Middle Colonies. 9

Bethlehem Church was represented at the Provincial Congress in May and August 1775, when two of its members, Charles Stewart and Abraham Bonnell served as delegates.

When they returned from this Congress, Charles Stewart called a meeting at Abraham Bonnell's Tavern to organize the Second Regiment, Hunterdon County Militia. Those from Bethlehem Church elected as officers were:

Charles Stewart, Colonel	Abraham Bonnell, Lt. Col.
Cornelius Carhart, Major	Adam Hope, Capt.
Jacob Johnson, Capt.	

Other members who served in the Revolution were Jacob Anderson, Capt. George Beavers, Lt., Nehemiah Dunham, Pvt., Commissary Dept., Christy Little and John Wilson, Pvts. Samuel Stout, Pvt. was a prisoner of war from August 27th to November 24th, 1776.

When the war ended, those members who had served in the army returned home and again became active members in Bethlehem Church under the guidance of Rev. John Hanna.

The tradition for raising money for the pastor's salary and other expenses of the Church was according to a fixed rate for pews or seats assessed to the members who could afford to pay.

The Meeting House was divided into quarters: North, East, South and West. There was one Trustee for each quarter, responsible for collecting from the members whose pews were located in that quarter. He then turned the collection over to the President of the Trustees who paid the pastor's salary and other church expenses.

A "Copy of the Rates fixed on the Pews or Seats in Bethlehem Meeting House as

they stood charged in the Year 1772 viz. South West Quarter...” signed by Nehemia Dunham, a Trustee, is in the Collection of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia. Some of the names listed on this document are:

Adam Hope	Joseph Stout	William Flemen
Elias Wyckoff	Andrew Foster	Thomas Flemen
Thomas Lake		

Charles Stewart was President of the Trustees in this year.

Another document from the above Collection is Certificate of Incorporation of Trustees of the Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem, dated March 1788. This Certificate was required by the State Legislature from every Church or Religious Society. The Signatures on this are:

Charles Stewart	Joseph Sinclear	William Maxwell
George Rea	Elias Wyckoff	Marshall Hull
Thomas Low (or Lake)		

Not only members of the congregation gave to Bethlehem Church but also non-members.

John Crawford, a neighbor and a communicant at the St. Tomas Episcopal Church, gave land to the Church as did John Chamberlain, a neighbor and a Baptist.

John Stevens, an Episcopalian, who lived near Lebanon and who served as President of the Convention in 1787 to ratify the Constitution, gave generously in land and money. ¹⁰

Listings of the pews or seats rates assigned by quarters to the Trustees for Bethlehem Church and for Kingwood, sometimes referred to by John Hanna as Mount Bethel, the Church Bethel or the Church called Bethel, can be seen in:

“The Session Book for the Congregation belonging to the Frame Meeting House in Bethlehem Township made in the year of our Lord one thousand seventeen and sixty nine in which is recorded all the Marriages and Children's names that are Baptized, with their age from their birth from January the 1st 1769.”

Rev. John Hanna had been pastor at the Frame Meeting House, Kingwood (Mount Bethel) and the Log Meeting House in Alexandria for forty years, when he died, November 1801 at age 70.

He had preached the Word, counseled, given Holy Communion, baptized, married and cared for three congregations during the troubled times that led to the revolution, through the war years into the adjustment period, to the turn of the century.

1801 ~ 1901

In the Session Book of 1769, begun by Rev. Hanna and continued by Rev. Hunt, this entry was made:

“The 20th April 1802, Cornelius Carhart, Peter Striker, Philip Dills, Henry Rodenbock and Jacob Anderson was elected to be Trustees for the Corporation of Bethlehem Congregation at the Frame Meeting House by a Plurality of Votes and was sworn into office and when met to do Business Jacob Anderson was elected by said Trustees to be their President of Said Corporation.

The same day the Congregation made a Call for Rev. Holloway W. Hunt to be Present at Cranberry, the 26th Instant. Signed by Daniel Hunt and James Dunham, the two Elders of said Congregation and the above mentioned Trustees, with a view to get said Holloway W. Hunt to be the minister of said Congregation...”

Holloway Whitfield Hunt, who was sponsored by the Bethlehem congregation while preparing to become a minister, now became pastor for the Old Frame Meeting House, Kingwood known as the old Stone Meeting House, and the New Frame Meeting House in Alexandria.

When the Newton Presbytery was set off from the Presbytery of New Brunswick in 1817, Rev. Hunt attended the meeting in Mansfield, New Jersey. At this time, Bethlehem Church and the other two churches were put under the jurisdiction of the Newton Presbytery.

By 1830, the Old Frame Meeting House was in need of repairs. The Congregation met on March 22, 1830, to decide whether to make the repairs or to build a new Meeting House. A decision was made to build a stone church and to purchase one acre of land from William Boss at the north east end of the graveyard.

Aaron Van Syckle, Baltis Stiger, Esq., and Henry Rodenbaugh were appointed to close the land purchase.

Charles Carhart, John Grandine, John Woolverton and Garrett Conover were chosen, each to carry the following Subscription to members of the Congregation:

“that all who had Desire to build a new Presbyterian Church to worship God in, agreeable to the dictates of their Conscience might subscribe their (sic) to with a willing Heart whatever sums they saw fit”.

When the Congregation met on April 15th, 1830, and heard the report that one acre of land had been purchased for \$120.00 and that the Subscription totaled \$1800.00, they agreed that a new stone church should be erected outside the graveyard on the South corner of the land purchased.

Philip Dilts was appointed Superintendent of Building and the four Trustees on the Building Commission were:

Joseph Boss John Bird John Kinney Charles Bonnell

The progress of the building program is described in the Old Session Book:

“Agreeable to the above, Preparations were made, and materials brought on the Ground so speedily that on the third Day of June they Commenced Building by laying the first corner stone of the foundation in the Presence of a number of Spectators, the Rev. Holloway W. Hunt being Present, made an address on the Occasion, and by the Perseverance and good Economy of the Superintendent, the church was in such a state of forwardness that on the Thirty First Day of October, the first Sermon was preached within the walls by the Pastor from the 122 Psalm,

1st verse 'I was glad when they said unto me let us go into the House of the Lord', And by some time in the following winter the carpenters completed all their labor and in July following the masons came and finished the pointing and plastering so that by the first Day of August, 1831, the Church was finished..."

The total amount of the bill for labor and materials for the new building came to \$2700.00.

A further entry read:

"Mrs. Hunt, Consort of the Rev. Holloway W. Hunt by consent of the Trustees has had the Church Handsomely and Decently Painted at her own expense, the cost where of Amounts to about Fifty Dollars for which the Trustees Returns Thanks in behalf of the congregation".

At the same time that the New Stone Church was being built, a Presbyterian church was being erected in Clinton, as those Presbyterians living in or near Clinton wished to have their own Meeting House in the Village.

Among those who met to make the decision to build were three brothers, Asa Clarkson Dunham, Nehemiah Dunham and Azariah Whitfield Dunham. They were the sons of James Dunham and grandsons of Nehemiah Dunham, both of whom had been Ruling Elders at Bethlehem Church. ¹¹

For several years the Newton Presbytery had been questioning the Annual Reports from Bethlehem Church in regard to the Session's leniency in its disciplinary action of several of its members, also, Rev. Hunt's rejection of Presbyterian doctrine.

The Westminster Catechism had been replaced at the Bethlehem and Alexandria Churches by the "Ecclesiastical and Historical Catechism for Children and Youth" by Holloway W. Hunt, A.M., Minister of the Gospel, Bethlehem, New Jersey. Printed by George Sherman, Trenton, 1831.

Differences between Bethlehem Church and the Newton Presbytery continued until December 6th, 1837, when the Bethlehem congregation and Rev. Hunt declined the

jurisdiction of the Presbytery.

On January 29th, 1838, by Public notice from the pulpit the members of the Church met as the Independent Congregation of Bethlehem.

Dissatisfaction with independence grew in the Bethlehem and Alexandria congregations. Kingwood congregation was no longer associated with Bethlehem as it had called its own pastor in 1825.

Two years after withdrawing from the Presbytery of Newton and with the membership at a standstill, Rev. Hunt with Peter Sigler, L.N. Boeman, Daniel Carhart and Jonathan Pickel, the Commissioners from Bethlehem and Alexandria congregations, went to Philadelphia and made application to come under the jurisdiction of the 3rd Presbytery of Philadelphia. These two churches were received by this Presbytery on the 15th of April 1840.

Rev. Holloway W. Hunt resigned as pastor in 1842 at age 72.

For the next two years, Rev. Robert W. Landis was invited to preach as a Stated Supply. After a revival of ten days in October and November in 1842, with Rev. Landis as preacher, the Session received 215 members on examination.

The Alexandria Church so long associated with the Bethlehem Church called its own minister in 1843.

Rev. Landis was installed as pastor of Bethlehem Church in April 1844. During his seven years at Bethlehem, he preached the themes of temperance and giving to missions. He resigned in 1849 as pastor, when charges by some members of the congregation were brought against his character. To refute these charges he wrote a book Bethlehem Church and Its Pastor, published in New York in 1851 at his expense. ¹²

Bethlehem congregation, after having a Supply for three months, asked Rev. Joseph G. Williamson to preach. The Church called him and he was ordained and installed as its pastor on January 5th, 1850. The Ruling Elders at this time were Jacob S. Johnson, Benjamin Fritts, William S. Wyckoff and Joseph King.

Rev. Holloway Whitfield Hunt, who had served Bethlehem congregation as pastor for forty years, 1802-1842, died January 11th, 1849. "The funeral was preached at his late residence by Rev. Jacob Kirkpatrick, D. D., from Daniel XII:3"

'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament;
and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.'"

Special meeting or revivals, lasting from 4 to 10 weeks at a time, were held during the years 1850-1886 at Bethlehem Church. Rev. Williamson preached at most of these services. When persons presented themselves for church membership, Rev. Williamson and the Elders would examine each as to their "piety and fitness". The total number received as members from 1850 to 1886 was 431.

Rev. Williamson in his sermon on his 40th anniversary of installation spoke about these meetings in relation to the history of Bethlehem Church:

"One marked feature of our history, however, calls for special notice; I refer to the revivals of religion with which God has favored us at sundry times. The history of our church is to a great extent the history of revivals..."

The only mention of the War between the States was made in the address of Rev. John Ewing, a former pastor of the Clinton Presbyterian Church, on Mr. Williamson's fortieth anniversary of installation. He said:

"When the late war broke out Brother Williamson was one of the first to lift up his voice in defense of the government."

Several Civil War veterans who were members of the Bethlehem Church are buried in its graveyard. ¹³

With an increasing membership and not being able to enlarge the Old Stone Church satisfactorily, the congregation, in 1868, was canvassed for a new building.

\$15,000.00 was subscribed and the Old Stone Church was torn down. A new frame building was erected in its place with some of the stones from the old church used in

its foundation.

The corner stone of the new church was laid on August 4, 1870, with ceremonies. Guests from other churches who took part were the “Rev. Messrs. Ewing, Searles, Mott, Kugler, Stidd and Conkling.”

In the same year, Bethlehem Church came under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Elizabeth.

The new church building of the Bethlehem congregation was dedicated on June 13th, 1871. Miss Margaret (Maggie) Hoyt, who joined the church in November 1850, presented a large King James Version Bible to the Sabbath School on that day of dedication. An entry in the Session Book on that date reads:

“...the sermon was preached by Rev. J. L. Withrow of Philadelphia. Rev. G. S. Mott of Flemington, Rev. Messrs. Ewing and Searles (M.E.) of Clinton and Doolittle (Reformed) of Stanton, also took part.”

Henry Race, M.D. was elected an Elder in this year. He served as Clerk of the Session for 27 years. He was not only a doctor, but a writer of the history of the area, who contributed articles to *The Jerseyman*: a magazine of local history: edited and published by H. E. Deats.

On December 1st, 1877, after a series of revival meetings, 85 young people presented themselves as candidates to become church members. Elder Race at next Session meeting moved that due to the number of young persons admitted as members that:

“A list be made of those living in the vicinity of each of the elders whose special duty it shall be to exercise supervision over them and try to secure their connection with and attendance on the regular exercises of some Bible Classes.”

The programs of Bethlehem Church which were supported by its members were mentioned in the tribute to a Ruling Elder on his death:

“Elder William S. Wyckoff d. May 28, 1884 united with Bethlehem

in 1843. Elected Elder in 1854. He was an earnest, active and efficient laborer in the Master's vineyard, faithful to every obligation of duty and unfaltering in his zeal for the prosperity of the church and conversion of souls.

He was a diligent Sabbath School worker, a steadfast friend and liberal contributor to the Bible Society and to the Home and Foreign Missions an ardent supporter of the Temperance cause. In social and private life he was amiable, affectionate and exemplary and was much beloved and esteemed."

At a congregational meeting in April 1886, the members voted that a relief fund be set up for the congregation's poor. Mary V. Humphrey was appointed to take charge of this fund.

1889 was the 40th anniversary year of Rev. Williamson's installation as pastor. On August 7th, there was a "Grand Celebration" at the Church. Two life size crayon portraits of Rev. Williamson, one in 1850 and one contemporary, were presented to him. These can be seen at the church today, as can the booklet published with the sermon by Rev. Williamson, and with the addresses by the guest speakers. The guests were Rev. H.D. Sassaman of the Alexandria Church, so long associated with Bethlehem, Henry Race, M.D., Elder of the Church, Rev. G. S. Mott, pastor of the Flemington Presbyterian Church, Rev. I. A. Blauvelt and Rev. John Ewing, both former pastors of the Clinton Presbyterian Church. T. Edgar Hunt, M.D., grandson of Rev. Holloway W. Hunt, Rev. Wm E. Davis, pastor of the Reformed Church, Lebanon and Rev. P.A.H. Klein, pastor of the Baptist Church, Clinton.

In 1891 an organ fund was established and \$500 had been raised for it by and entertainment at the church. By 1895 with enough money "raised by the ladies", an organ was built and installed by the Hook and Hastings Co., of Kendal Green, Mass.

On the evening of January 28th, 1896, at 7 o'clock, an organ recital was held at the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church. The concert was conducted by Mr. Frederick Maxon, organist of the Congregational Church, 18th and Green Streets, Philadelphia. He was assisted by Miss Mary Frace, violinist, and Miss Kate Hoffman, organist, and by the Church choir. 14

To pump the organ, Clarence Hann was paid \$12.00 a year in 1897 and 1898.

Rev. Williamson's 50th year as pastor of Bethlehem Church was recognized with commemorative services held on August 23, 1899. In his sermon, Rev. Williamson mentioned reasons he had remained in one church so long. In his words some of the reasons were: "When the Lord wants a man to stay long in a Presbyterian Church, he gives him good Elders...the Trustees were always anxious to see the books balanced and accounts closed...the congregation made suitable provision for (his) need...success in winning souls to Christ by revivals...much owed to the Sabbath school...much owed to the women of the church, an inspiration and help...preaching as Paul said, 'Preach thou the things which become sound doctrine'". 15

The next year, 1900, Rev. Williamson retired as pastor. What could have been said of Rev. Williamson when he died in 1906, was said of him by Rev. John Ewing in his address at the 50th year commemorative services in 1899:

"He has preached the Gospel for half a century in the same church. He has had the joy of seeing the children whom he baptized dedicate themselves to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has united them in marriage and has seen them ripen for glory. He has rejoiced with them in their joy and comforted them in their sorrow..."

1901 ~ 1928

The next year after Rev. Williamson retired Rev. Thomas Chalmers was appointed as a Stated Supply at Bethlehem Church, until Rev. Albert E. Weston was installed in November 1901. Rev. Weston served as pastor until July 1902.

On June 4, 1903, Rev. Henry McGilvray became pastor. The Elders at this time, whose number had been increased from 3 to 5 were:

George K. Shrope	Theodore McPherson
Howard S. Alpaugh	George Frace
William W. Hummer	

The Trustees in 1904 appointed a committee to select a site for a new parsonage. They recommended that an acre of land owned by Mr. Leigh, north of the lane to his

farm, be purchased for \$200.00.

The building Committee Members, Rev. McGilvray, George Frace, Theodore McPherson, William T. Stires and P.H. Anderson selected C.G. Poggi as the architect. By December 1904 the new parsonage was built.

The congregation was saddened in 1915 by the drowning of Cecil, son of Rev. and Mrs. McGilvray, in the river at Clinton.

Some of the programs supported by the congregation while Rev. McGilvray was pastor were:

Home Missions, Foreign Missions, Sunday School Work, Relief Fund, Colleges, Temperance, American Bible Society, and the General Assembly.

For twenty-four years Rev. McGilvray had served as pastor at Bethlehem Church, from 1903 through the World War I years until he presented his resignation to the Session on November 10, 1927.

Technological and scientific progress and World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars brought more changes to everyday life, customs and traditions, in the years following World War I, than had ever been experienced during the years of the first four ministers of Bethlehem Church.

From 1928 on the pastorates at Bethlehem Church were brief compared to those of Rev. Hanna, Rev. Hunt and Rev. Williamson. As in the past, each Supply or fulltime minister brought spiritual guidance and sustenance to the Bethlehem congregation.

1928 ~ 1929

Charles Dickey was appointed student Supply for one year. The congregation approved the Session recommendation that the Envelope System for pledges replaced the pew rents as of July 1st, 1928.

1930 ~ 1935

Rev. M. E. McPhail was installed on May 13, 1930. On June 22, 1930 Bethlehem Church celebrated its **200th Anniversary**.

The George Washington Bicentennial Exercises, sponsored by the Col. Lowery Chapter of the DAR were held at the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church on May 22, 1932. A bronze marker on the grave of Col. Charles Stewart, Commissary General of Issues 1777-1783, was unveiled by Charles Stewart Lare and Mrs. Pauline Probasco, his descendants.

A congregational meeting was held on December 3, 1932 to elect Trustees for the Old Burial Ground at Grandin and to have it incorporated. Those elected were:

George M. Robinson, Pres.
Lloyd LaRue, Treas.
Leland Deats, Vic Pres.
Charles P. Young, Secretary
Josephine C. Bonnell, Corres. Sec.

1935 ~ 1941

Rev. Roland D. Driscoll, a Supply for the Bethlehem congregation for one year, was installed as its pastor October 25, 1939.

The first World Wide Communion Sunday to be observed at Church was held October 1st, 1939.

The first Board of Deacons was elected on November 20, 1939. The four deacons were:

John Carpenter	John Rinehart
John Frazee	Donald McCutcheon

The Board of Trustees was increased from 5 to 10 in April 1940.

On September 7, 1941, the congregation approved the request of Rev. Driscoll that he be given a year's leave of absence to serve as chaplain in the U.S. Navy.

1943 ~ 1944

Rev. Donald R. Fletcher served as temporary Supply until he was ordained May 25, 1943.

The Elders were increased from 4 to 6 in July 1943.

1944 ~ 1945

Rev. Ward Bjerke was approved as acting pastor for one year.

The Apostles Creed to be said by the congregation every Sunday was approved by the Session.

The dissolution of pastoral relationship between Bethlehem Presbyterian Church and Lt. Cmdr. Roland Driscoll was approved August 10, 1945.

1946 ~ 1949

Rev. Vernon Hoover, acting minister, was installed as pastor on June 9, 1946.

A Memorial Fund was established April 23, 1946 in memory of Edward Frank Greer, the only person from the Bethlehem congregation to give his life in World War II.

Bethlehem Presbyterian Church became a member of the Hunterdon Council of Churches, October 1946.

1949 ~ 1951

Rev. John Crew Tyler, a student Supply became the next pastor, to serve one year.

On December 4, 1949, the Bethlehem Choral Society presented the Christmas part of “The Messiah” by Handel, under the direction of Charles W. Lowe, the Church Organist.

1951 ~ 1954

Rev. Walter G. Hards was appointed as Stated Supply. In 1952, the congregation approved plans for a new manse and accepted the offer of land on which it would be built from John Frazee.

On September 29, 1954, the Joint Board recommended securing a fulltime minister with national Mission Aid.

At some point during the 1950s’s a major change was made to the building by installing indoor plumbing. The drilling of a well was donated by Albert and Evelyn Lawson which made the plumbing possible. The church now had indoor bathrooms and a full service kitchen. No longer would water have to be brought to church dinners from the home of dairymen in their milk cans.

1955 ~ 1959

Rev. Robert B. Sheldon, recently graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary, was installed as pastor on June 28, 1955. He and his family were the first to live in the new manse. The Bethlehem congregation celebrated the **225th Anniversary** of the Church’s organization on October 23, 1955.

A recommendation to renovate the interior of the church was approved on April 26, 1957. The committee members in charge of renovation were:

Mr. Hugh McCutcheon, Chairman

Mr. Bertram Milligan, Ass't. Chairman
Mrs. Ruth S. Carpenter, Sec.
Miss Helen Haver, Ass't. Sec.
Mr. Albert Lawson

In June 1958, plans to build a Christian Education Building were approved and it was voted to have the Wells Fund Raising Organization conduct a campaign to raise funds for both the C. E. Building and the interior renovation.

This renovation included the replacement of the dark-wood chancel area (including pulpit and lectern) with white painted wood and dark trim handcrafted by Jesse Eichlin and Lou Case. Church volunteers stripped the dark stain off the pews which were then painted white with some dark trim remaining. The choir area was relocated to the corner, left of the pulpit. The sanctuary walls were painted a solid color, covering the trompe l'oeil effect. An interior stairway was removed on the Race Street side of the building which had come up from the kitchen into the narthex. The present wider interior stairway was constructed on the north side of the building, coming up from Fellowship Hall into the narthex.

In September 1958, the publishing of a church newsletter was approved. The name suggested for it by Herbert Schneider was "The Bethlehem Star".

On Palm Sunday 1959, Rev. Theodore Rath, former pastor at Clinton Presbyterian Church, preached the sermon at the service of re-dedication of the Sanctuary. In the announcements, in the Church Bulletin, the Renovation Committee was thanked "for their sacrificial loyalty and devotion to the work...their interest and concern for every detail is reflected now in the beauty of this House of Worship".

The plans for the C. E. Building were submitted by the Building Committee, John Frazee, Chairman, Arthur Bennett and Calvin Wettstein, and approved in November 1959.

1960 ~ 1969

In April 1960, the congregation approved the petition to be sent to the Presbytery requesting that the name of the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church be changed to Bethlehem United Presbyterian Church. This action was due to the union of the

Presbyterian Church N.A. and the United Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

The Bethlehem congregation in May 1960 approved the calling of Rev. Alick M. Kennedy as their next pastor and on September 11, 1960 he was installed as pastor. He served as moderator of the Presbytery of Elizabeth from 1962-1963.

The completed Christian Education Building, the construction of which was approved in 1959, was dedicated on February 25, 1962. The following visitors and church members took part in the service:

Rev. Thomas L. Thorne, pastor Clinton UPC
Rev. Robert B. Sheldon, former pastor
Nicholas J. Burggraaf, Moderator of Synod of N.J.
William Wesley Bennett, Soloist
John Frazee, Chairman, Building Committee
Andrew Droppa, Pres., Board of Trustees
Calvin Wettstein, Sunday School Superintendent

In the 1960's, the Bethlehem congregation began to elect women as church officers. The first woman to serve on the Board of Deacons was Mrs. Doris Arnesen, elected to fill an unexpired term in 1962. The following year Mrs. Elizabeth Wettstein was elected to the Board of Trustees as the first woman in that office. Mrs. Helen Frazee was the first woman elected as an Elder in January 1965.

After J. Arthur Rinehart retired as Clerk of Session in January 1965, having served for 22 years, James Bowers was elected Clerk of the Session and served until January 1980.

In May 1965, the congregation approved a motion that combined worship services of the Bethlehem congregation and the Quakertown Methodist congregation be held during the months of July and August.

When Mrs. Ruth Graff, who had been organist for 14 years, retired in 1965, Mr. Robert Roesch and Mrs. Patricia Roesch were appointed Directors of the Music Program.

The "Covenant of Open Occupancy" to welcome new neighbors regardless of creed, national origin or race was approved by the congregation in November 1967.

A decision was made by the Session in 1967 to employ a student from the Princeton Theological Seminary to assist in the work with the youth of the church. As a result of this action David Drain, a Student Assistant, was employed from September 1967 to September 1968, and Bruce Schundler, another Student Assistant, was employed from September 1968 to May 1970.

1970 ~ 1979

After Rev. Kennedy left the church as its pastor in October 1969, Rev. Abram Pepling served as interim pastor and Rev. Kent Kinney, pastor of the Clinton UPC, as Moderator of the Session. In June 1970, Rev. Frederick L. Black was called to be pastor of Bethlehem United Presbyterian Church and was installed on June 21st.

A Unicameral Board for the Church, which places the spiritual and corporate authority in one Board, had been under study since 1968. On November 4, 1970, the congregation met as a corporation, and a motion was passed that the congregation of the Bethlehem United Presbyterian Church adopted a Unicameral Board.

The old pipe organ, which had been installed in 1896 after being examined professionally, was considered to be in need of too extensive a repair. The Organ Committee then recommended that a Rogers Electric Organ be purchased as a replacement. This recommendation met with congregational approval in November 1971.

The Vietnam War, the third war since 1941 and one which had caused controversy and dissent, came to an end in 1973. The Bethlehem congregation observed the war's end with the other churches of the community with an Ecumenical Community Service of Thanksgiving for Peace which was held at the Church on January 28, 1973. The sermon was given by Rev. Edward Morris of the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church of Clinton. The other pastors who participated were Rev. Karl Hann of the Cherryville Baptist, Rev. Kent Kinney of the Clinton United Presbyterian Church and Rev. Frederick Black.

The following RESOLUTION was adopted at Grandin, March 20, 1973:

“Whereas, Captain Joseph Milligan, United States Air Force, has

been a Prisoner of War for almost six years and
Whereas he has been in the minds of his countrymen during this time, and
Whereas he has been constantly in the hearts and prayers of this
congregation and
Whereas, his parents and family, by their spirit and faith, have uplifted
the spirits of this congregation,
Therefore, the Session of Bethlehem United Presbyterian Church sets
aside Sunday March 25, 1973, as a special day of welcome and rejoicing
by the members and friends of the congregation for his homecoming, and
the Session expresses in this resolution their great joy and their deep
gratitude to Almighty God for his safe return and decree that this resolution
be inscribed in the official minutes and that copies be given him and his
family.”

The text of the sermon, by Rev. Black, on that Sunday was “Rejoice in the Lord
always; Again I will say, Rejoice”. (Philippians 4:4)

In the early 1970s the church demonstrated its interest in Mission work. High
school youth participated in a Health Fair project in upstate New York, first under
the umbrella of our Presbytery, followed by a second trip under the leadership of
Rev. Black and his wife, Phyllis. Additionally a trip was made to Zanesville, Ohio.
On each trip the leaders successfully recruited medical professionals to accompany
them who would provide health services to those in need.

In the spring of 1979, the Bethlehem congregation pledged over \$16,000 to “The
Major Mission Fund. This pledge was dedicated as a 250th Birthday gift from the
Bethlehem congregation to the United Presbyterian Church and its mission world
wide.

To begin the **250th Anniversary** celebration of the church’s organization, the
Anniversary Committee planned a recognition of the congregation’s long term
members at the worship service on Sunday, December 9th, 1979. After the worship
service, the 12 of the 26 long term members who attended a luncheon in their honor
and shared reminiscences were:

J. Arthur Rinehart	1915
Russell Piell	1916
George Groom	1922
Lawrence Mitchell	1924
Emma Probasco Eynon	1929

Helen Rinehart Frazee	1929
Minga Arnesen	1929
Joanne Mitchel Esty	1937
Kenneth Rice	1937
Emma Wetzel	1937
Dorothy Potts Steele	1941

Miss Emma Williamson, granddaughter of Rev. Williamson, came as a guest with her niece, Mrs. Eynon. Miss Williamson, age 94, also had memories to share, such as visiting Rev. Williamson's family in Sidney and riding in a surrey with the fringe on top.

Mr. J. Arthur Rinehart recalled that there were three sheds along the road in the rear of the church building, which were partitioned off for members' horses; that before 1920 a Delco plant with 16 batteries and run by gasoline lighted the church.

Others remembered the pews which were rented annually and were numbered with white china shields, and that Mr. Potts would take his watch and hold it up if the minister was preaching overtime.

In closing this history of Bethlehem United Presbyterian Church from 1730 through 1979, a quotation by Rev. J. G. Williamson seems appropriate:

“...God's love in the past leads us to hope that those who hunger for the bread of life may still find this church to be a Bethlehem, a House of Bread. This will depend largely upon you who have received this sacred trust from hands long since cold in death. Teach your children to love the church as you have loved it and love it still....” ¹⁶

This ends the original history by Reba Bloom. The edits and updates through 2005 were originally done by Ginny Straub, Charles Thorne and Jack Rinehart.

1980 ~ 1989

Seminary student Pam McShane was hired to serve the Church with her primary responsibility being ministry with Senior Highs. Her title was Student Assistant.

The **250th Anniversary** celebration began in January with a balloon release by the children of the congregation. Balloons contained information about the anniversary. A community night and covered dish supper was held in February. Homecoming Sunday was June 22nd. Former pastors present were Reverend & Mrs. McPhail from Houston, Texas; Reverend & Mrs. Vernon Hoover from Columbia, PA; Reverend & Mrs. Alick Kennedy from Pittsburgh, PA; Reverend Robert Sheldon from Berkeley Heights, NJ and former Student Assistants Dr. & Mrs. David Drain, Bristol, PA and Reverend & Mrs. Bruce Schundler, Peapack, NJ. Reverends Hoover, Schundler, McPhail and Kennedy participated in the 11 o'clock service. A buffet luncheon followed. An afternoon program, in which all of the former pastors participated, featured the first performance of a cantata by Robert Roesch, church organist.

An Anniversary Dinner was held on Saturday, October 25, 1980 at the Clinton Fire House. Elder William Merten was the master of ceremonies.

In 1982 Jennifer Warren was hired as a Student Assistant to work with the young people. Steve Stell was hired to work with young adults in 1984. His title was Student Assistant and he served the Church until 1989.

Rev. Fred Black served the Presbytery of Elizabeth first as Vice-Moderator in 1984, then as Moderator.

In 1987 the Session appointed a "Sanctuary Refurbishing Committee" to explore the redecorating of the Church sanctuary. Sanctuary renovations began in 1989. The project included relocating the organ and the north-facing choir to the right of the lectern, from the left corner. The choir area was lofted on a series of steps and now faces the congregation. Walls, pews, pulpit and lectern were painted, and flooring was refinished. The arch that had served as a backdrop to the communion table was replaced by a rectangular wooden façade running the width of the chancel area, with a hanging curtain as a backdrop to the table.

During this time, Worship was held in Fellowship Hall. The congregation returned to the newly refurbished Sanctuary on Palm Sunday.

Irene Gerhartz was hired as Music Director in 1989 and served our church for the next five and one-half years.

1990 ~ 1999

In 1990 Bethlehem Presbyterian Church joined the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) of Hunterdon County as a charter member church. This would become a prime, hands-on mission project of the church. IHN was founded by Karen Olsen of Summit, NJ. Participating congregations provide housing, meals, fellowship and a safe place to homeless families in transition. The Sunday School rooms are converted to bedrooms for the weekly stay. Dinners and fellowship are volunteered by members of the congregation.

Nancy Heimsch served as Director of Christian Education from September 1991 to March 1992.

The Fellowship Hall was completely renovated by Bertram Milligan in memory of Emma Milligan to be a living memorial. Dedication of the Hall was held on March 1, 1992.

New Revised Standard Version Bibles were placed in the pews and the pulpit in 1992.

Mike Arace carved Christian Symbols for the sanctuary: the hanging fish, the dove, and on the pulpit and lectern the IHS and the Cross and Crown.

On November 8, 1992, a Baldwin Baby Grand piano was dedicated in Memory of Todd James Eschbach. The piano given by his parents, Jim and Darla, sister Tara and wife Beverly, was a reminder of Todd's love of family, friends, and the joy of music.

In December of 1992 candelabra were dedicated in memory of George Groom by his family.

In 1993, Lois Randolph was hired as Christian Education Director.

Beginning in April 1993 an 8:15 am informal service was begun. The idea was evaluated during the summer and it was deemed a success. The Presbyterian Hymnal replaced the The Hymnbook in the pews. Handbells and Choir Chimes were given in memory of Todd Eschbach by his maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. R. Roeger.

In the early 1990s Rev. Black was part of a small group from our Presbytery which travelled to the Dominican Republic. On this trip mutual interest developed between Bethlehem Presbyterian Church and the Villa Consuelo Church in Santo Domingo, part of the Iglesia Evangelica Dominicana (IED) denomination, with the intent of future visits, reciprocal support and mutual conversation.

In the summer of 1993 several individuals from our church participated in a Presbytery-sponsored trip to Santo Domingo. Our church members worked side by side with local people on a clinic near Villa Consuelo, painted classrooms together in the church school, taught together at summer Bible School and attended worship together. In 1999 Rev. Black and six church members made the first trip to Villa Consuelo sponsored by our church. The following year a second church-sponsored trip took place. Each time relationships were cemented and work and worship experiences were shared. Those from our church shared that they received more in return than they had given. On numerous occasions letters were sent between Bethlehem Presbyterian and Villa Consuelo. The pastor of Villa Consuelo was also able to travel to our church as well as churches within our Presbytery.

In 1997 Elder Michael Young was chosen to become Vice-Moderator of the Presbytery of Elizabeth and served as Moderator from 1998-1999. Alan Ford was nominated as an Elder Commissioner from Elizabeth Presbytery to the General Assembly in Syracuse, NY in June.

A special meeting of the congregation and corporation was held on Sunday, June 28, 1998, to present significant aspects of a building project. The basic idea was to construct a two story building to connect the church and the Christian Education Building. Endowment Funds and anticipated pledge commitments would finance the cost, initially estimated to be \$500,000-\$600,000.

In 1999 a congregational dinner was held at the Hunterdon Hills Playhouse in January to celebrate Bethlehem Presbyterian Church's past, present, and future. Historical displays, a magic show and the revelation of the cornerstone contents from the Christian Education Building, were featured events.

Sunday, May 22 was the "Ceremonial Ground Breaking" for the addition. A pancake and sausage breakfast was followed by a ceremony with Rev. Frederick Black and former Rev. Alick Kennedy (emeritus) giving brief messages. McEwan Mandell played "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes.

During 1999 Elder Joan Mathews served on the Presbytery Committee on Ministry,

Elder Roy Silvester was on the Leadership Development Committee, and Elder Alan Ford served on the Congregational Strategy and Resources Unit for the Presbytery of Elizabeth.

2000 ~ 2005

In 2000 construction began on the two story addition which would connect the Sanctuary with the Christian Education building. Our commitment to the Interfaith Hospitality Program was taken into account as the plans contained a full kitchen and shower and laundry facilities, which are very rare for a host church. During the period of construction a trailer on the property housed the church office and the nursery while Sunday School was held nearby at the Franklin Township School. On September 8, 2002, the new facilities were dedicated. Former Pastor Alick Kennedy was a guest speaker and the chancel choir and Appalachian Brass Quintet provided music. The new cornerstone and a copper box with memorabilia and artifacts from this era were put in place.

September 11, 2001 was a tragic day for our country and had a profound effect upon our church community. That evening Rev. Black conducted a service in our sanctuary. A service of Remembrance on the 1st anniversary of that day included the chancel choir and a bagpiper.

In 2002 Wonjae Choi was hired as part-time Director of Christian Education. As her responsibilities broadened her position became full time and her title was updated to Minister of Mission and Education.

Chip Paillex answered a plea for excess fresh produce from The Flemington Area Food Pantry in 2002 and shortly thereafter responded with the "Grow-a-Row" program. In 2003 this became a Mission Project of the church. Vegetable gardens were planted, tended and harvested on land provided by Peaceful Valley Orchards and the Etter family. In just two years over 14,000 pounds of food was harvested and donated to local food pantries. Grow-a-Row (now America's Grow-a-Row) has grown exponentially due to expanded volunteer opportunities which include gleaning excess produce at local farms and "not quite retail perfect produce" at two local grocery stores. In 2010 America's Grow-a-Row hit a major milestone by purchasing a 138 acre farm in Alexandria. By the end of 2010 over 1 million pounds of fresh produce had been donated to those in need all across New Jersey.

In June of 2003 an outdoor worship service was held at Voorhees State Park followed by a picnic and outdoor activities. This event has continued more recently at Finn Road Park.

Rev. Black sent a letter to each church member announcing his anticipated retirement at the end of 2003. He had served as an ordained pastor for 40 years - 33 of them at Bethlehem Presbyterian Church. A gala celebration dinner was held at the Hunterdon Hills Playhouse on November 21, 2003. Good wishes, cards, and letters from members of the church and community were assembled in a memory book.

On February 1, 2004 Rev. Cynthia Strickland was welcomed by the congregation as Interim Minister.

An extensive congregational survey provided the information needed for the Mission Study named "CROSSROADS". Over eighty adult members were assembled into groups which met about six times to interpret and discuss the survey. A Vision Statement was developed and priorities were incorporated into the Mission Study Report.

A Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) was elected by the congregation in June

2004. In September 2005, after prayerful consideration of potential candidates, they recommended that Rev. Michael Burkley of Niagara Falls, NY be called as Pastor, Head of Staff. The congregation voted to extend him a call beginning November 1, 2005.

A Music Director Search Committee was formed due to the resignation of Jim O'Neil in July 2004 after 9 years as Music Director. Jeanne Paek filled the position in November 2004.

In January 2005 Wonjae Choi submitted her resignation. We celebrated her ministry, which had re-invigorated youth programs, at a farewell brunch in Fellowship Hall with the presentation of cards and a memory book.

In May 2005 Laura Jacobson became a part-time temporary Youth Director. A search committee was formed to find a full-time Director of Christian Education and Youth.

On May 8th, we bade farewell to our Director of Music, Jeanne Paek. The position was filled in June when we welcomed Richard Morgan into that position.

Elder Alan Ford was chosen as Vice Moderator of the Elizabeth Presbytery in June 2005 and was installed as Moderator in June 2006. Our choir provided music at his installation service and our women's group hosted his installation dinner.

The year 2005 marked the **275th Anniversary** of the church's founding. Several celebrations were held throughout the year. More than 100 members and friends attended a dinner at the Mountain View Chalet on April 8th and were entertained by a program about the church's history. The Sunday School's theme for the anniversary year was "God Knows Us All By Name" and to illustrate this the children decorated silhouettes which were hung together around the sanctuary.

The Fellowship and Evangelism Commission sponsored an evening concert in our sanctuary by the Harlem Gospel Choir. A large contingent of church volunteers rallied around this exciting event. The September "standing room only" concert was truly a great success in that it brought together our congregation with the community in a spiritually uplifting way.

A special Worship Service was held on October 16th. Former Bethlehem pastors Black, Kennedy and Fletcher participated in an inspirational service. Rev. Bruce Schundler, who was once a Student Assistant, also participated. After a luncheon, the Memorial Garden was dedicated, funded in part by a seed matching gift from the Frankenbach family.

Earlier in the year, members were asked to contribute to a special 275th Anniversary offering. These funds were used to purchase a granite cross set in the center of the Memorial Garden and also to renovate the sanctuary.

2006 ~ 2011

The renovation of the Sanctuary began in early 2006 and continued into 2007. Projects included painting the interior of the sanctuary, installing new lighting and carpeting in the narthex, reframing historic portraits and pictures, and installing woodwork and molding, especially around the chancel area. The balcony was also restored by re-installing pews, installing a brass handrail and uncovering stained glass to make it visible from the interior. Custom storage closets were built in the balcony, to hold church banners on rods which were created and crafted by Lauren Haggerty.

Angela Townsend was hired as Director of Christian Education in June 2006.

Rev. Michael Burkley's pastorate ended in February 2007. Warm wishes were extended to him and his family at a gathering in Fellowship Hall.

In June of 2007 Rev. Paul Rack became our Interim Minister. A Transition Committee, which had been formed two months earlier, surveyed the congregation and developed focus group questions. The focus groups began in January of 2008, with about 100 members of the congregation contributing to the sessions.

The Transition Committee, with the support of the congregation, also felt it important and relevant to re-write our church's Mission Statement, which is:

*Be a community of faithful believers who love the
Lord Jesus Christ and endeavor to live our lives as examples of that love.
Live with deep commitment to serving those in need
in our community and throughout the world
by generously sharing our time, talents, and resources.
Glorify God and grow in our faith through:
uplifting worship, generous fellowship,
and enthusiastic learning inspired by scripture.
Warmly welcome others to join us in our faith journey.*

Alicia Tamilio was hired as Director of Christian Education in April 2008 and two months later we welcomed Helene Cantilina as our Music Director.

In 2009 the church's 38-year old Rodgers electronic organ was replaced with a Walker Technical Company digital instrument. The Rodgers organ console was refinished and new keyboards and pullout stops were installed. The new controls provide sound combinations equivalent to 3,600 pipes. The new organ is capable of downloading additional sounds into its memory. New directional speakers were installed in both the front and rear balcony of the sanctuary to take advantage of the room's wonderful acoustics. Richard Morgan, former Director of Music, was the project's organ consultant. He also played the dedication concert on October 4, 2009. Opening and closing prayers were delivered by the Rev. Paul Rack and Rev. Frederick L. Black, Pastor Emeritus; respectively.

A Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) was formed in the summer of 2008. The PNC used the new Mission Study as a guide in the search process. Having several very strong candidates in front of them and guided by prayer and the Holy Spirit, the PNC recommended that the congregation extend a call to Rev. Laurie Sponaugle of Pittsburgh, Pa. to fill the position of Pastor, Head of Staff. We welcomed her into our church family when she began her ministry with us on December 29, 2009.

The Clinton YMCA pre-school relocated to our site in September 2010. This program serves as a wonderful outreach opportunity as we welcome children and families into previously unused church school space on weekdays.

A bronze “In Memoriam” plaque for the Memorial Garden, which helps us to remember loved ones, was installed on the memorial stone in the garden in the spring of 2011. A flower garden was designed and planted at the entrance.

Local artist Joan Hierholzer Bennett was commissioned by our congregation in October 2010 to paint a portrait of Rev. Frederick Black, Pastor Emeritus. The portrait was dedicated on May 1, 2011 at a special ceremony in the sanctuary attended by the artist, and Rev. Black and his family. The portrait now hangs in the narthex.

From those initial forays into Mission work, it continues to be a strong focus, with our youth participating in trips to: Ministry in the North Country (MINC) in upper New York State, Habitat for Humanity (West Virginia), Broad Street Ministries in Philadelphia, and the Heifer Learning Center at Overlook Farm in Rutland, Massachusetts. Local mission work includes strong participation in America’s Grow-a-Row and an Explorers Youth Group making teddy bears for Anderson House. Other mission work by the church at large includes: Networkers making malaria nets, knitting blankets for various women’s/family organizations, continued active involvement with IHN as a host church, and most recently a local Womens Build Day with Habitat for Humanity.

On this occasion of the 140th anniversary of the dedication of our church building we reflect that as we live out our commitment to Christ it occurs not just within our church walls but also beyond, into the local community and far reaches, feeling God’s abiding presence with us on our journey.

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APPENDIX

Members of the Frame Meeting House in Bethlehem Township not only served their Church but served as responsible members in the township government and in the Continental Army during the American Revolution.

Bethlehem Township Officials

1762 ~ Town Clerk, Joseph Beavers

1764 ~ Overseer of the Poor, Joseph Beavers

1769 ~ Freeholder, Thomas Lake (Elder)
Town Clerk, Francis McShane (Elder)

1776 ~ Freeholder, Cornelius Carhart (Elder)
Assessor, Abraham Bonnell (Elder)
Overseers of Roads, Cornelius Heggerman, Francis McShane

1795 ~ Judge of Elections, Elias Wikoff (Trustee)
Delegate to 4th Congress of U. S. , Charles Stewart (Trustee)

Those who served in the Continental Army and who are buried in
The Old Graveyard at Bethlehem Church

Mathias Able, Pvt.	Leonard Martin, Teamster
Jacob Anderson, Capt.	Hugh Runyan, Ass't Quarter
George Beavers, Lt.	Charles Stewart, Col.,
Abraham Bonnell, Lt. Col.	Commissary Gen. of Issue
John Bray, Ass't Commiss. Hosp.	
Cornelius Carhart, Maj.	Samuel Stout, Pvt.
Nehemiah Dunham, Pvt.	Robert Taylor, Pvt.
Adam Hope, Capt.	James Wilson, Pvt.
Jacob Johnson, Capt.	John Wilson, Pvt.
Robert Johnson, Pvt.	Robert Wilson, Pvt.
Samuel Leigh, Pvt.	Peter Young, Capt.
Christy Little, Pvt.	