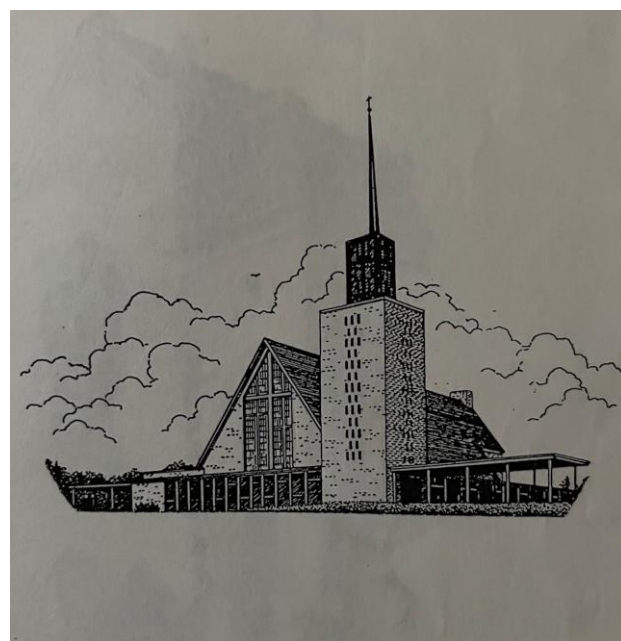
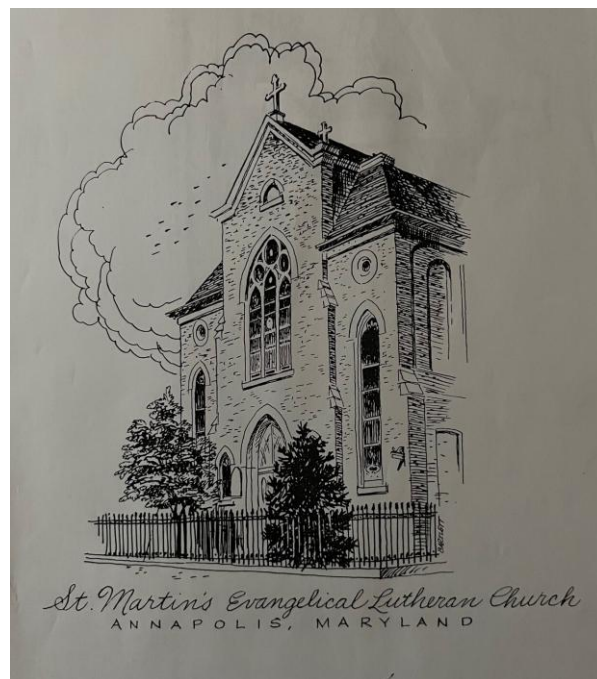


THE HISTORY OF
SAINT MARTIN'S
EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH
1874 ~ 2024



Dear Celebrants of the St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church Sesquicentennial:

St. Martin's has a very old, rich history. As we celebrate our 150th year in Annapolis, Maryland, the congregants of the early days provide a peek into that history.

The following pages are a reproduction of the lovingly compiled first 100 years of life in this church. Histories were offered at St. Martin's 75th and 100th Anniversaries. After its start in 1874, celebrations were held in 1949 for our 75th year, 1974 for our 100th birthday, and in 1998 for our 125th year. There does not seem to be an historical account produced for the 125th year so material for the last 50 years was taken from Synod records, accounts from those members in attendance in those years, and church records, then added at the end of the older histories.

Please enjoy reading about life in both the early years and our recent past. Reading about all the Pastors and members that have given their time, talent, and resources to St. Martin's gives us a view of life as it was. The ups and downs of the church have led the way to the life we now live in our rich church life. Enjoy.

Looking forward to the next 25 years.

The 150th Centennial Committee of 2024:

Molly Michaelson, Council President

Barbara Freeman, Altar Guild

Patsy Mattingley, Worship and Music

Marlys Sandve McDevitt, Stewardship

Cathy Jones, Liturgical Arts

Gary Beecher, Liturgical Arts

Sara Wetz, Communications

Laura Albanese, Youth Ministry

Pastor Jim Cobb, Interim Minister

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF ST. MARTIN'S FIRST 150 YEARS:

1874 St. Martin's was conceived at a meeting of German businessmen and farmers and the Rev. Ernest Ide at a meeting at the Kaiser House on April 6th, 1874.

St. Martin's German Evangelical Lutheran Church purchased a church building lot on Francis St. from Mr. John Lewis and Laura C.R. Tydings for \$1200.

1875 Cornerstone was laid. A \$10,000 debt was carried by the congregation.

1876 During this period, St. Martin's had trouble getting pastors. The Evangelical and Reformed Church of Baltimore came to their aid and supplied pastors. As a result St. Martin's became affiliated with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, although it considered itself Lutheran. This was the basis of the confusion that caused much pain to the congregation in the 1870's.

1902 Fire destroyed the interior of the brick structure, including the living area for Pastor Weishaar, who resided on the first floor. After the fire, the first-floor area was transformed into a large Sunday School room and a parsonage was built next door.

1914 German was replaced by English as the language for church service, catechetical instruction and Bible teaching.

1918 Electric lights were installed throughout the building. A Moeller pipe organ was purchased through the efforts of Pastor Haas for \$1500.

1925 An annex providing a church office, kitchen and primary department facility was dedicated. A new heating system was installed.

1940 In the 1940-50's St. Martin's ministered to anywhere from 10-60 midshipmen at one time. These parties of midshipmen would march to and from church in formation. The last pews on both sides would be reserved for them.

1949 The 75th Anniversary of St. Martin's was celebrated with a new worship center in the refinished church school room.

1953 A parsonage was purchased on Cherry Grove Avenue. The old parsonage was utilized as a Sunday church school facility and parish house. A new organ was purchased, early service added to the Sunday program, and the nave repainted. All

debts were liquidated, and expansion funds were being accumulated. A building lot was purchased on Spa Road and Hilltop Lane.

1960 The Evangelical and Reformed denominations, with which St. Martin's was affiliated, was merging with the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches, to be called "The United Church of Christ". Many members felt the new church was too liberal, and after much discussion the congregation voted to sever their relations with the Evangelical and Reformed Church and apply for affiliation with the Maryland Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America (UCLA). A court suit was filed by the minority of church members but was upheld by the Circuit and State Court of Appeals.

1962 Cornerstone was laid at Spa Road location, December 1962.
Building on Francis Street was sold.

1963 St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church (LCA) building on Spa Road was dedicated March 12, 1963.
April 28, 1963, first service in the new building.
St. Martin's Parochial School started a pre-school. Over the years, a K-8th program would be added.

1973 The church membership continued to grow in its new space. An addition of a Chapel (now the music room), art room, second floor of the school, new kitchen and full-size gym with a stage was constructed.

1974 100th Anniversary Celebration
Established Meals on Wheels
School hired first principal
School added 6th grade
The current Boy Scout troop began to meet at the church in the late '70's.

1978 The church had 1756 baptized members, 1194 confirmed members, 788 active members and 718 communing members.

1987 St. Martin's became part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, January 1, 1987.

1984 St. Martin's purchased an adjoining 1.6 acres.

1988 St. Martin's celebrated 25 years on the site. The \$600,000 mortgage was burned. Asbestos was removed from the building.

1989 St. Martin's and five other Annapolis congregations formed Annapolis Area Ministries, Inc., which later became the Light House Homeless Prevention Support Center.

1991 A new Moeller organ installed.
Church School added aftercare programming for students.

1994 Church School expanded to 7th grade.

1995 Church School expanded to 8th grade.

1997 A groundbreaking ceremony for a 2nd addition was held on March 23rd. The new addition consisted of a fellowship wing, creation of the courtyard, and extended the school to include new classrooms and a media center. The addition was dedicated on November 23rd, 1997.

1999 St. Martin's celebrated its 125th Anniversary.

2003/2004 A group from St. Martin's established a new congregation at Joy Reigns in Edgewater.

2009/2010 18 rain gardens were added to the grounds with a grant from the Spa Creek Conservancy.

2011 Once again, controversy split the congregation. Following the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2009 to allow congregations to call gay and lesbian clergy, the congregation discussed leaving the ELCA. After two votes, those wanting to stay in the ELCA prevailed. The split in the church led to a loss of 2/3 of the church's membership. The congregation reverted to one Sunday service at 10:00.

2012 Renovation of St. Martin's sanctuary began.

2013 With a larger membership, St. Martin's again offered two Sunday services, 8:00 and 10:00.

2018 Sanctuary roof was replaced.

2018/2020/2022 3 Columbarium walls and the Peace Garden were added in front of the narthex.

2020 Steeple was raised to add AT&T cell tower.

2020 Global pandemic forced the cancellation of in-person church services. Services were held through pre-recorded streaming on You Tube.

2021 Live services returned on Easter Sunday, 2021, complimented by the live, on-line YouTube streaming option.

2021 The lounge was remodeled to make it a more functional space.

2021 The church continues to be a place for community activities. Pedal Power Kids meets in the parking lot, Bay Winds Community Concert Band meets in the gym weekly, AA meetings and Scouts, among other organizations also use the facilities.

2022 An AV deck was installed in the back of the sanctuary.

2024 St. Martin's celebrates its 150th Anniversary. There are 246 active/communing members, 547 confirmed members, and 588 Baptized members.

2024 St. Martin's School is pre-kindergarten through 8th grade and has 122 students and 23 teachers.

The pastors of St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church:

Rev. Ernest Ide -----	1874-76
Rev. Martin Kratt -----	1876-79
Rev. H. Niewchner -----	1879-80
Rev. Paul Werber -----	1880-84
Rev. L. Mohr -----	1884-85
Rev. Daniel Lochner -----	1886-87
Rev. Paul A. Menzel -----	1887-89
Rev. Karl Kissling -----	1889-91
Rev. Emil Reh -----	1891-93
Rev. Karl Bersch -----	1893-97
Rev. R. Stave -----	1897-98
Rev. J.A. Weishaar -----	1898-1903
Rev. Karl Buff -----	1903-05
Rev. G. Ronte -----	1906-08
Rev. F.H. Klemme -----	1908-10
Rev. Conrad Sprenger -----	1911-13
Rev. Carl Hass -----	1914-18
Rev. Graeper-----	1919-27
Rev. Louis Landgrebe -----	1929-30
Rev. Walter Vogelmann -----	1930-32
Rev. Samuel Schick -----	1932-34
Rev. Harry Yaggi -----	1936-43
Rev. John Schauer, Jr. -----	1943-45
Rev. Homer Koch, Jr. -----	1945-53
Rev. Clyde F. Straub -----	1953-68
Rev. Robert D. Hyson -----	1968-75
Rev. James G. Cobb (Assoc. Pastor)-----	1973-74
Rev. Fred R. Seibel III (Vice Pastor)-----	1975-76
Rev. Ralph F. Smith (Intern, Assoc. Pastor)-----	1975-81
Rev. Ray E. Blanset -----	1976-91
Rev. Richard Graham (Assoc. Pastor)-----	1982-87
Rev. Mark A. Huffman -----	1989-92
Rev. Kenan Habetler (Asst. to Pastor)-----	1990-2011
Rev. Jim Davis (Interim)-----	1992-93
Rev. Gerald A. Miller -----	1993-2011
Rev. Ann Rowe Church (Assoc. Pastor)-----	1995-99

Rev. Nicki Parrish (Assoc. Pastor)-----	1999-2003
Rev. Jens Bargmann (Assoc. Pastor)-----	2004-07
Paula Thistle (Minister of Word & Service)-----	2008-2011
Rev. Mary B. Miller-Zurell (Interim Pastor)-----	2011-13
Rev. David G. Oravec -----	2013-24
Paula Thistle (Deacon) -----	2017-present
Rev. James G. Cobb (Interim Pastor) -----	2024
Rev. Judith Cobb (Interim Pastor) -----	2024
Rev. Micah Krey -----	2024-present



St. Martin's today

THE HISTORY OF ST. MARTIN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

(reprinting of Histories written for the 100th and 125th Anniversaries)

ST. MARTIN'S BEGINS – 1874 - 1918

St. Martin's was conceived on April 6, 1874, by some German businessmen and farmers that had settled in the Annapolis area. The Rev. Ernest Ide, a Lutheran circuit rider, became aware of their presence when he accidentally met a Mr. Christian Boessel and asked if the German people here would favor a Sunday Church service in their native tongue. Prior to this time, most of the German residents had worshipped with the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Boessel called a meeting of his German acquaintances to consider the matter.

The meeting was held on April 6, 1874, in the "Kaiser House" on the corner of Main Street and Church Circle. This house was owned by Henry Kaiser and was used as a restaurant, tavern, and general meeting place for townspeople and midshipmen. A board was elected consisting of seven men: Fred Vollmer, M.R. Casler, H. Kaiser, A. Heise, Martin M. Smith, George Dressel and George Herald. They decided to invite Pastor Ide to conduct Sunday Services in the German language.

Interest in this was high and the little group got off to a fast start. They met again on April 18 and voted to purchase a church building lot on Francis Street from Mr. Tydings for the sum of \$1200. Pastor Ide, who was also shepherding people in Laurel and Ellicott City, accepted the invitation to serve the Annapolis area as often as he could.

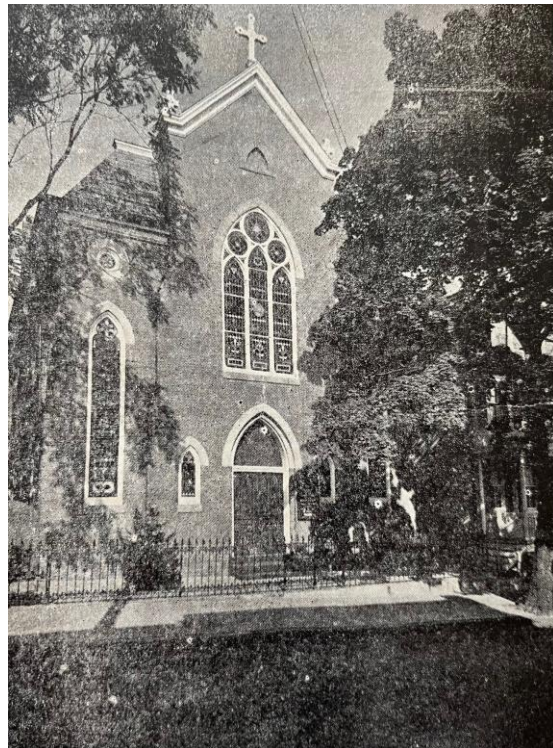
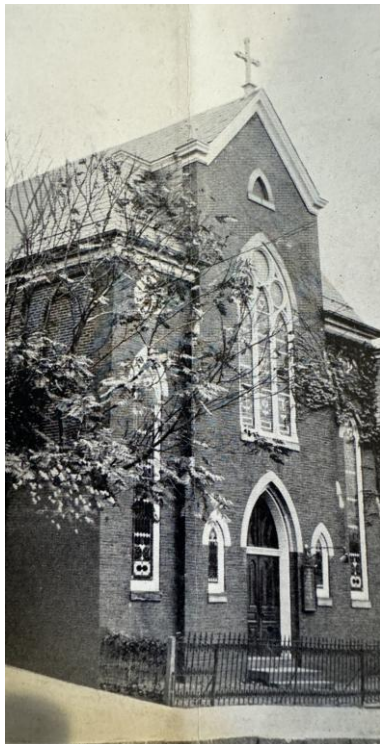
The first services were held in the Annapolis Court House and sometimes in the Opera House which was then on Conduit Street. The congregation had about twenty families when it was incorporated on June 20, 1874, as St. Martin's German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Annapolis, Maryland.

Turning to the Capital Gazette, there is an article on June 16, 1874 showing something of the initiative of the new congregation.

"The Festival given at the Assembly Room on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday last, to aid in the collection of funds to build the German Lutheran Church in this city, was very well attended. The contributions were very handsome."



The Frances Street Church (second building up, right bottom corner)



A Sunday Church School was started immediately with about thirty children enrolled. A building project was launched in the first year and the cornerstone of the church was laid June 7, 1875. It was an imposing edifice when compared to the small church buildings of that day, and a \$10,000 debt was carried by the congregation. The present parochial school is not the first in St. Martin's history. In October of its founding year, a special school was opened by the church for assistance in the German language.

The pastor now made his home in Annapolis and gave the congregation good leadership in its formative days. His salary was fixed at \$330 annually. The fact that the pastor was Lutheran, plus the people's own background, gave the congregation a desire to seek affiliation with a Lutheran denomination. Consequently, Pastor Ide submitted an application for St. Martin's membership to the Committee on Admissions of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland. Accompanying the request was a copy of St. Martin's constitution and a request by the Church Council for the installation of the Rev. Ernest Ide as pastor. The Synod approved both requests at its Annual Convention held at Grafton, West Virginia, October 6-9, 1875.

After serving St. Martin's for about a year, Pastor Ide accepted a call to another area. During the time of pastoral vacancy that followed, the Annapolis Church came to the attention of Rev. Ed Huber of Baltimore, who became a kind of godfather to the congregation. He was a pastor of the Evangelical Synod of North America, a church body which stemmed from the 1817 union of Lutheran and Reformed congregations in East Germany. Many of the Lutheran clergymen involved in this union preferred to call themselves Lutherans rather than Evangelicals and the Rev. Huber evidently was in this category. He helped the little congregation find pseudo-Lutheran pastors from the Evangelical denomination to which he belonged, and the Annapolis Church was eventually assimilated into the Atlantic District of the Evangelical Synod of North America. However, St. Martin's retained its Lutheran identity because its people believed themselves to be Lutheran and adjudged their pastors as Lutherans. How the congregation's membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland was dissolved is a mystery. The Synodical minutes simply omit references to Annapolis after 1877, and there is no record of the congregation formally uniting with any other denomination.

This was the humble yet courageous beginning of a German Lutheran Congregation in Annapolis. The fact that the people believed themselves to be Lutherans, called themselves and their church Lutheran, and yet maintained an affiliation with the Evangelical Synod of North American was a source of confusion which eventually motivated the congregation to reunite with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland.

During the early years the Service, Catechetical instruction and Bible teachings were in the Mother Tongue. It was not until the First World War that the German language was supplanted by English. Language had been a barrier to the growth of St. Martin's and now the church would no longer lose its children to the English-speaking churches. The way was open for a larger and more cosmopolitan membership.

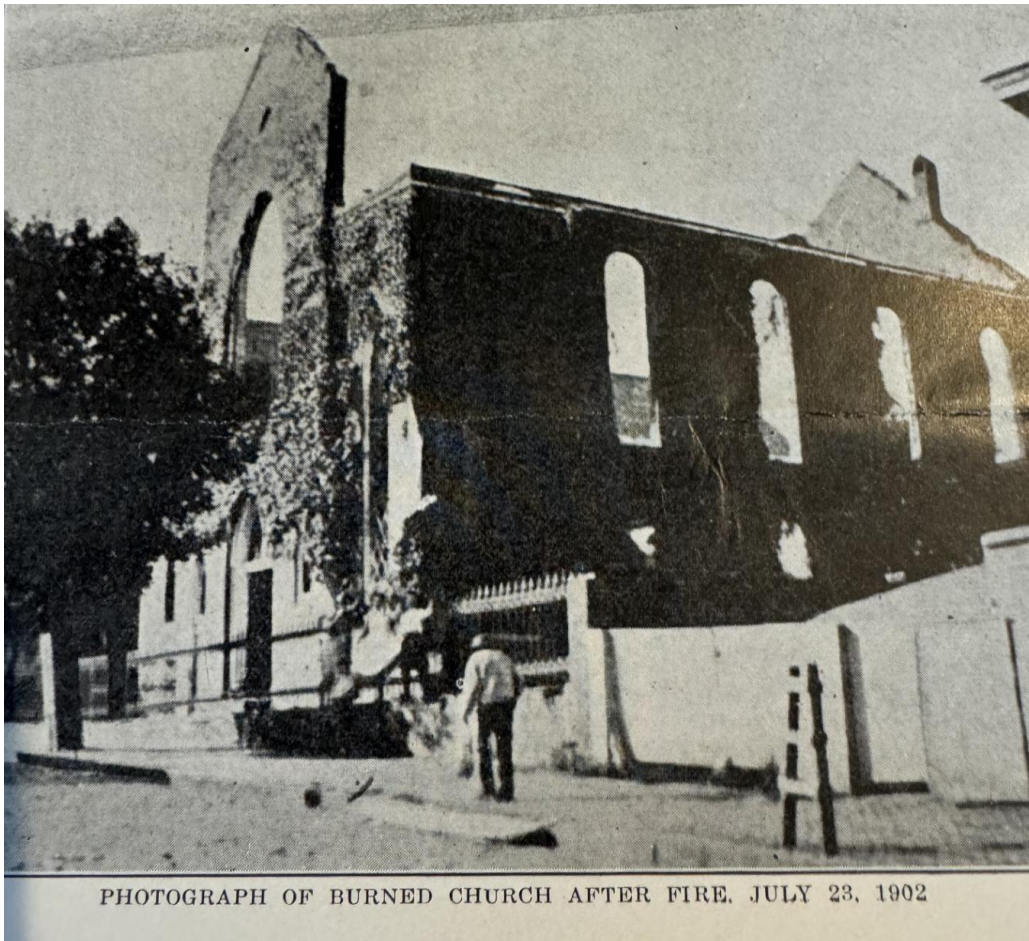
However, the membership did not grow fast. One can only guess the reason. Perhaps the conservative members and many short pastorates stymied growth. The pastors were paid small salaries, and they brought their programs before frugal and unyielding Church Councils. No less than 17 pastors served between 1874 and 1918. Many for no more than one year.



Downtown Annapolis, early 1900s. Francis St. church and parsonage just to right of Capital building.

One day during the pastorate of Rev. J.A. Weishaar, sudden and unexpected hardship came to both pastor and people. July 23, 1902, the fire bells rang in Annapolis. The cry was soon heard, "The German Lutheran Church is on fire." The interior of the brick structure was a total loss. The pastor had lost his earthly possessions too, for in those days three rooms on the first floor of the Church had constituted the living quarters of the minister and his family.

Using the original walls, the church building was soon restored. A step forward was made in that the first floor was transformed into a large Sunday School room and a parsonage was erected adjacent to the church.





Pastor Yaggi and the junior choir

THE MIDDLE YEARS -1918 - 1968

By 1918 the Church Council had twelve men and electric lights were installed throughout the building. A Moeller pipe organ was purchased through the efforts of Pastor Haas for \$1500. He secured a grant of \$750 from the Carnegie Corp. and Councilman Martin Smith gave an equal amount to make the purchase possible. We can also gain some insight into the financial picture of the time from the record that the salary of the minister was raised from \$60 to \$70 a month during the pastorate of Rev. G.F. Hahn.

Rev. F.H. Graeper, 1919-27, who had a productive pastorate, was minister at the time of the 50th Anniversary. An annex providing a Church office, kitchen, and primary department facility was dedicated. A new heating plant was also installed.

At our 100th Anniversary, former Pastor Landgrebe has written of his remembrances in this congregation:

“Dear Pastor Hyson and the Members of St. Martin’s Church:

A flood of memories and a recollection of many blessings that came to us in our first pastorate at St. Martin’s Lutheran Church...My bride and I came down from New Haven and Chicago and were immediately captivated by the beauty of the Severn River country and the warm friendliness of the people. The parsonage on Francis Street had just been completely renovated and redecorated in a glistening white stucco. Even the coal furnace in the basement had been repaired so that it worked pretty well. Uncle Willie Hambrook slyly and lovingly hung small caches of steak on the side door to complement our salary of \$1500 annually. In the town and across the estuary at Eastport homes were opened and hospitality was warm and generous. I remember how in my first service the heater in the floor of the Chancel sent up such a draft of warm air to envelope the little preacher. Well, it was a great place to start a ministry of almost fifty years that closed at the Church of the Letterhead where I served as a pastor on two occasions or periods separated by eight years. We are now in retirement at Leisure World in Orange County in California but still active in interim and supply work. I am happy to hear all the fine reports of your lively congregation. Pastor Landgrebe”

The 75th Anniversary of St. Martin’s was celebrated in April 1949. The Rev. Homer W. Koch, pastor at that time, had led the congregation in a remodeling program and the new worship center in the refinished Church School room was dedicated. Pastor Koch was a forceful preacher and excellent attendance indicated how the people received his message.

St. Martin’s always had a Midshipman Church Party from the Naval Academy. During this ministry the party grew to include 64 Midshipmen who regularly attended the Sunday Service.

In January 1953, the congregation called the Rev. Clyde F. Straub to its pastorate for the expressed purpose of giving guidance to an expansion program. A rapid succession of events began to take place. The membership, which in 1952 was 221 confirmed, began to increase at a steady pace. June 1953 a parsonage was purchased on Cherry Grove Avenue and the old parsonage was then utilized as a Sunday Church school facility and Parish House. July 1953, a building site composed of seven acres of land on Spa Road and Hilltop Lane was purchased. Shortly after, a new organ was secured, and an early Service was added to the Sunday program with a Junior Choir augmenting the music. The nave was repainted, and new hymnals graced the pews. July 1958, all debts were liquidated,

and some expansion funds were being accumulated. St. Martin's was now ready to launch a full-fledged building fund drive.

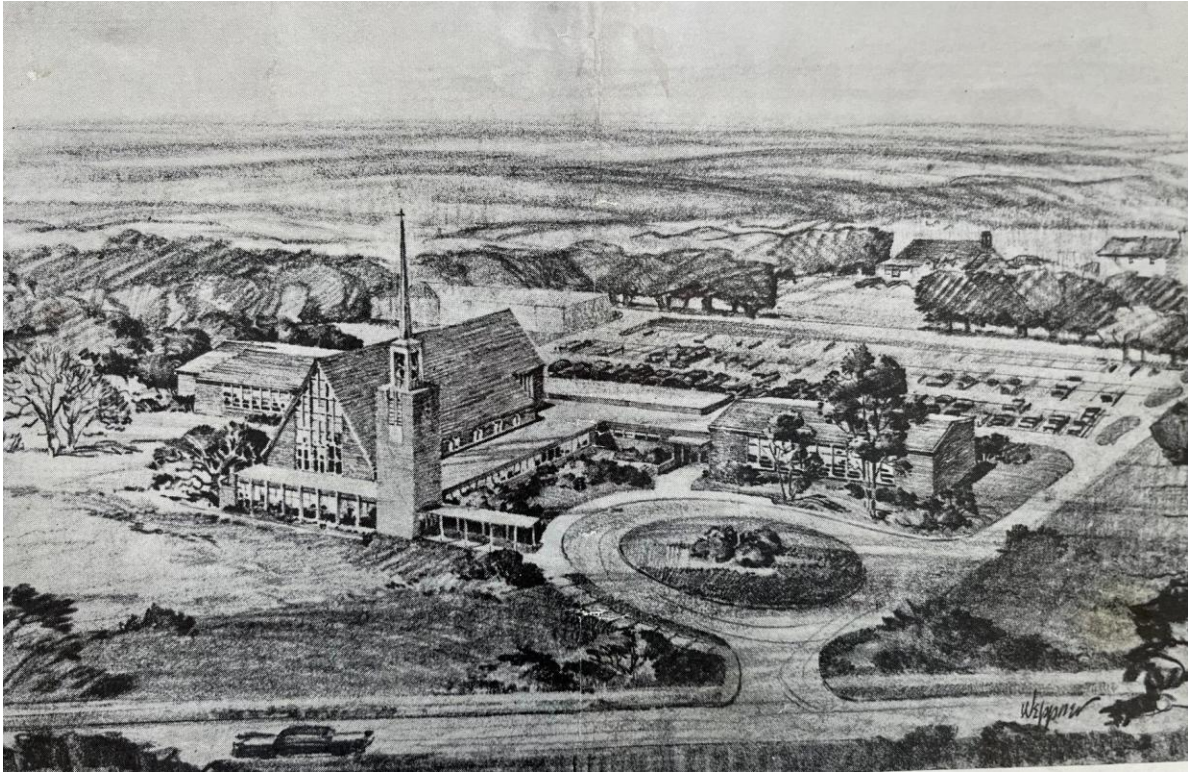
A contract toward this end was signed with Ketchum, Inc. in July 1958. The result of this campaign was very successful and in August 1958, the Ronald S. Senseman Architectural Firm was retained to plan a new church building.

About this time the Evangelical and Reformed denomination, with which St. Martin's was affiliated, was in the final stage of union with the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches. The new denomination was to be called, "The United Church of Christ."

Most of St. Martin's people were apprehensive of the proposed union for doctrinal reasons. The Church Council, aware of the pulse of the congregation, decided to bring the matter out into the open and let the congregation decide its future denominational affiliation. Consequently, after being informed in the doctrinal area, the congregation met March 15, 1960, and voted overwhelmingly to sever relations with the Evangelical and Reformed denomination and apply for affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland.

A court suit was filed by a small minority in an effort to prevent withdrawal from the Evangelical and Reformed denomination and to secure the Church property. However, both the Circuit and State Court of Appeals upheld the decision of the majority, and the congregation was free to chart its future.

Pastor Straub, for doctrinal reasons, chose to become a Lutheran Pastor, and May 25, 1960, he was received into the ministerium of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland, of the United Lutheran Church in America. One year later the congregation was received into the same denomination.



A Shovelful Of Faith

Members of the congregation of St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church, founded in 1874 as the German Lutheran Church of Annapolis, participate in ground-breaking ceremonies at the site of a proposed new church at Spa Rd. and Hill top Lane. Joining in the rainy Sunday ceremony were, left to right, Frank E.

Clarke, chairman, finance committee; Mrs. H. M. Tongue, Jr., oldest active member of the church, and W. Rosser Brinkley, chairman of the building committee and chairman of the church. Architectural estimates for the new church are set at \$225,000.

(Photo by W. S. Jones)

The building project now moved rapidly. W. Rosser Brinkley accepted Chairmanship of the Building Committee, and a contract was signed in the spring of 1962 with Carl Gonnsen and Son for a new church building. Construction was begun and one year later, May 12, 1963, the edifice was dedicated.

[Information from Grant Searfoss:

The land was owned by my wife Katie's great grandfather and family. In 1955 the Church Board officially confirmed they would like to use the land and it was given to them for \$10. Based on some other legacy documents, I believe the property was officially transferred on 09/29/55. The parcel given to St. Martins was about 6.95 acres.

I also looked through county records. It appears the City of Annapolis donated 0.05 acres on the southwest corner of the church in 1969. In 1970 the State Roads Commission of Maryland commandeered land to expand Spa Road. In 1971 two more parcels were given to the church from private owners. I don't know the size of them, but the total area of St. Martins is now 9.348 acres.]





A NEW CENTURY AT ST. MARTIN'S – 1968 - 1974

The pastorate of Rev. Straub was the longest in the history of St. Martin's. He left in May of 1968 to accept the call of the Mission Board to New Orleans. The congregation was vacant until September of that year when Rev. Robert Hyson began his ministry at St. Martin's, having been called to the congregation from a parish in Western Maryland.

A new parsonage was purchased in the spring of 1971 at 306 Meares Court in Heritage. The property on South Cherry Grove was sold and a committee under the chairmanship of Lewis Riley recommended the purchase of the Heritage home for \$36,000.

The parochial school was expanded at this time. A school that numbered 38 in 1968-69 had 194 students in 1974. Grade one was added in 1970 with Mrs. Nora Garman as the teacher and seven students. Grades have been added each year and the school has increasingly won the respect of the Annapolis community for its fine education in a Christian surrounding. In 1974 the school added its first Teacher-Principal, Mrs. V. Joan Conrad. Prior to this time the Pastor served as the principal. The staff at this time was 16.

After several years of discussion and study, the Council appointed a Building Committee to work toward the needed addition to the church for educational and fellowship purposes. A Centennial Construction Campaign was held under the auspices of Ketchum, Inc. with Mr. Will Black as Chairman. A three-year commitment of \$250,000 was pledged by the members and friends of the

congregation. Mr. Dean Rodgers was appointed Chairman of the Building committee and a contract for \$584,000 was signed with Charles J. Cirelli Company of Baltimore for the construction. The cornerstone was placed on May 20, 1973, with the Rev. Dr. Paul Orso, President of the Maryland Synod as the guest preacher. The new facility added much needed Sunday and Parochial School rooms, a large modern kitchen, restrooms, a music room (now the art room) and a Fellowship Hall (now the gymnasium) with a full-size basketball court.



In June of 1973, the first ordained staff assistant was called. The Rev. James G. Cobb became the Assistant Pastor of St. Martin's and served for one year before he accepted a pastorate in the Virginia Synod. The congregation then looked for an Intern from Gettysburg Seminary to serve as the Staff Assistant.

In October of 1974, the congregation became one of the three sponsors of the Meals on Wheels Programs for the Annapolis area. In cooperation with Lutheran Social Services of Maryland and a group of community organizations, meals are

prepared in our kitchen and taken daily by a staff of 100 volunteers to shut-ins in the area. Mrs. Eleanor Greenley served as Chairperson for this new venture.

Other activities of the church at this time include monthly meetings by the Lutheran Church Women, including a retreat. The Altar Guild is responsible for the care of the altar and the Communion Services. The youth are involved in the Luther League that meets bi-weekly. Four choirs complement the music program under the leadership of our Director of Music, Mrs. Mary Gabriel. The Sunday School, with an enrollment of 250, has long been the vehicle of Christian Education for all ages. Two social groups are the Couples Club 2x2's and the Retirees. Both meet monthly. There is also a Scouting program with Cubs, Brownies, Webelos, Cadette Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, all holding weekly meetings and sponsored by St. Martin's. Another social ministry venture are the "Crownsville" groups that provide a monthly "day away" for patients of the State Hospital. The Anne Arundel County Literacy Council also began at St. Martin's and involves volunteers teaching reading to both young people and adults on a one-to-one basis.

For the year 1973, St. Martin's statistically reported the following: Baptized members – 1552; Confirmed members – 988; and Communing members – 691.

As quoted at the 75th Anniversary:

"...the past 75 years is more than a beginning: it is a challenge. It must challenge us to work at the continued progress of externals, yes: for that is life as God has ordained it. At the same time let us hope and pray that we and those who follow us here shall spell out the history of our next 75 years, over and above and under the externals, with as much sacrifice, courage and faithfulness to Jesus Christ as our forebears have shown forth."

As quoted at the 100th Anniversary:

"The future looks bright for this congregation as it continues to witness in the Annapolis community. With an ever-expanding program and with increased participation on the part of the membership, St. Martin's can be a vital force in the presentation of the Gospel's message. We are the family of God and as such, must continue to work together in the building of God's Kingdom."



Groundbreaking for the first addition.

A NEW ERA: 1975 - 2025

After 7 years at St. Martin's, and overseeing a large expansion program, Pastor Hyson accepted a call to Trinity Lutheran in Lansdale, PA.

In 1976, the Rev. Ray Blansett accepted a call to St. Martin's and would serve until 1991. Rev. Ralph Smith, Richard Graham, and Mark Huffman served as associate pastors during this time. Membership continued to grow, and the Church School added after-care. In 1988 St. Martin's celebrated 25 years at the site and ceremonially burned the \$600,000 mortgage papers.



Pastor Richard Graham and Pastor Ray Blansett

In 1993 the Rev. Gerald Miller became the senior pastor at St. Martin's. In the late '90's the church again needed additional space. The church school had expanded to 8th grade and more room was needed for church gatherings. In March of 1997, a ground-breaking ceremony was held for a second addition. A large fellowship wing, additional classrooms and a media center were added. The new addition was dedicated on November 23rd.

The Rev. Ann Rowe Church, Nikki Parrish, and Jens Bargman, served as associate pastors during this time.



Groundbreaking for Fellowship wing and new classrooms. 1997



In 1999 St. Martin's celebrated its 125th anniversary. From the founding 20 families, St. Martin's had grown to over 1,000 members. It was a spiritual home and active partner to its Annapolis neighbors. Meals on Wheels and other community services used its facilities. The anniversary year included a banquet at the church and a large Oktoberfest, complete with a polka band, German food, flea market, and dunk tank.



KENNETH K. LAM: SUN STAFF

Thanksgiving

Members of St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Annapolis hold a ceremony and prayer liturgy to mark the church's 125th anniversary. Margaret Stallings, 77, who was baptized at the church in 1921, points out landmarks to the Rev. Gerald Miller, who led the service. About 30 church members gathered for the ceremony yesterday near the Naval Academy.

Once again, decisions by the larger church would have a drastic effect on the congregation. The 2009 decision by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America to allow congregations to call and ordain gay and lesbian clergy who were in committed monogamous relationships would eventually split the congregation. On January 31, 2011, after months of discussions and a previous vote, the congregation voted on whether to leave the ELCA. The decision to leave ELCA needed a 2/3 majority to pass and failed by 3 votes. Pastor Miller resigned on March 1, 2011, and established a new congregation, Annapolis Evangelical Lutheran Church. Nearly 2/3 of the congregation left St. Martin's. Prior to the vote, the congregation had a baptized membership of over 1,000.

The months that followed were a time of reflection and spiritual regrowth for the members of St. Martin's. Under the leadership of interim minister, Rev. Mary Miller-Zurrell, the congregation found a new sense of mission and commitment to being a welcoming place for all. A new mission statement was adopted by the congregation: "Welcoming all and growing together to share God's love and serve Christ with energy and joy."

Despite losing a large portion of its membership, the congregation remained active in its outreach ministry and began to attract new members. The two Sunday services were consolidated into one 10:00 a.m. service with a fellowship time in the narthex afterwards.



In 2012, a renovation of St. Martin's sanctuary was begun. The goal was to modernize the space and make it more flexible for concerts, etc. The new design brought the altar closer to the congregation. The platform that held the original altar was removed to create only two levels with a side ramp for improved accessibility. The original marble altar was placed in the courtyard, and a new wooden altar was dedicated. The old pulpit and lectern were removed and replaced with a movable pulpit. New communion rails were installed. Choir pews were replaced with chairs. The front pews on either side of the sanctuary were shortened to allow for more handicap access. New blue carpeting was installed, and the interior was painted.



In 2013, St. Martin's called the Rev. David Oravec as senior pastor. Pastor Oravec's ministry re-energized the congregation and St. Martin's saw an increase in growth and enthusiasm. With a larger congregation, St. Martin's returned to offering two services each Sunday, one at 8:00 a.m. and the other still at 10:00 a.m.

In 2018, construction of a Columbarium and Peace Garden was begun in front of the narthex. The project was completed in 2023 with 3 columbarium walls.

Pastor Dave simultaneously was a Captain in the US Navy Reserve Chaplain Corps, with monthly drills and 2-week annual training assignments. He was recalled to active duty from February to December 2019 and served in Djibouti as the Director of Religious Affairs for the Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa, providing care and leadership in 8 African nations. Rev Bill Gilroy, a retired Lutheran pastor in the St Martin's congregation (who is also a retired Captain in the Navy Reserves), was designated by the Bishop to be St Martin's pastor during his absence.

The 2020 global pandemic again brought change to St. Martin's. Fortunately, the church had begun recording services for shut-ins before the pandemic began. In April of 2020, with a dedicated group of volunteers, the church began recording the services for streaming on Sunday mornings. The church would not return to permanent live services until spring of 2021.

In June of 2024, Pastor Dave retired from the ministry. In an interesting bookmark for the last 50 years, Rev. James Cobb had been the Associate Pastor and attended services with his wife, Judy, during our 100th Anniversary. Pastors Jim and Judy Cobb were our interim pastors for our 150th Anniversary following Pastor Dave's retirement.

On November 17th, 2024, the Rev. Micah Krey began his ministry at St. Martin's as Senior Pastor.

St. Martin's 150-year history has been full of transformation and growth. Through the grace of God, it has been a congregation of great resiliency and great faith. Over the years it has survived a devastating fire, a change in location, a global pandemic, and 2 large upheavals of the congregation. The church is also a reflection of changes in the role that denominational churches play in the life of the United States today. The enrollment of members in the church has slowed along with the growth of the school.

While some of the previous activities of the church have disappeared or changed, St. Martin's is still a vibrant place to be. According to the Synod, St. Martin's is one of the top 5 churches in the Annapolis area in size. There is opportunity for members to participate in a variety of church ministries: Sunday School for all ages, Men's Bible Study, Mid-Day Bible Study, Choir, Quilters, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Garden Glub, Joyful Hearts, Ladies Book Club, Innies & Outie meal groups, clothes sorting for the Lutheran Mission Society, preparing meals for the Lighthouse Shelter, and food packing events, to name a few. The building is still used for many community activities, including Meals on Wheels, Boy Scouts, AA meetings, blood drives, the Lighthouse Shelter Pumpkin Patch, and the Bay Winds Concert Band. Members are still engaged in outreach and caring for each other. They are committed to "sharing God's love and serving Christ with energy and joy."

INSTALLING THE NEXT 150 YEARS



Installation of Pastor Micah Krey and Music Minister Adedotun Olayemi with Pastor Sarah Krey and Bishop Bill Gohl. February 2, 2025



Local pastors at the Installation service.