

A  
HISTORY  
OF  
IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED  
CHURCH,  
SHILLINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA.

Robert Irwin Rhoads.

1955

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A  
HISTORY  
OF  
IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED  
CHURCH  
SHILLINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

Prepared By

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A Thesis

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Lancaster, Pennsylvania  
-1955-

Approved by:

David Dunn  
Professor

This Work is Dedicated

to

My Wife

Lois Christine Gromis Rhoads

who is my inspiration in

life and work

and to

My Parents

Thomas William and Ruth Anne Irwin Rhoads

who have lived the last few

chapters of this work



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## PREFACE

The name Immanuel means "God With Us". We, who are members of Immanuel Church, share in the rich heritage of the name. Upon us rests the responsibility of living that we may be worthy of such a name. To us it gives the challenge to make our Church and even ourselves the dwelling place of the most high God and the Father of our Lord our Heavenly Father.

In the tracing of the history of Immanuel Church down through the years it has been evident that God works in and through individuals who are whole-heartedly dedicated to His purpose and will. That God has been with us is sure; that He will continue to be with us is our earnest prayer.

It was with humility and deep reverence that I examined the records of Immanuel Church, for in so doing I reached into places that have lain deep within the hearts of many. It is my one regret that I could not mention every act and every person of the church. Because of this I

feel that this story is far from complete.

When recording the history of a church we feel much older than we really are, because our life is projected back over the successive events of the past. We grow rich in experience upon recalling the happenings which have prospered a church and community. We are grateful for the past, not only for the great accomplishments, but for the mistakes and failures as well. From past errors we learn what is best for today and for the years to come. We thank the Lord for those soldiers of the Cross who have gone on before us and have lived the history that is recorded in this thesis. They have planted, now we must water, and God will give the increase.

I am grateful to the following persons for their assistance in preparing this history: to the secretaries of the consistory for the minutes they have recorded, to my pastor and father, Rev. T. W. Rhoads, for the information, recollections and material he gathered, to Mr. Charles J. Hemmig for his unselfish giving of his time and

energy, so that this work might be more accurately recorded; to Mr. Earl Guldin for his painstaking search for records, to Dr. David Dunn for his help and patience in supervising the writing of this thesis, to Mrs. William O. Matz for the careful typing of it, and to all others who have in any way given help.

This story of Immanuel Church is told up to April, 1955, and it is my earnest hope that someone will preserve for the sons and daughters of this church a record of the Christian growth that is to follow.

Robert I. Rhoads

West Lawn, Pennsylvania  
April, 1955.



HISTORY OF  
IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED  
CHURCH

SHILLINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

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CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SHILLINGTON,  
PENNSYLVANIA.

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The surroundings of the village of Shillington, wherein Immanuel Church is located, are magnificent beyond description. With the beautiful farms in the immediate vicinity, the rolling landscape both East and West, terminating in the mountains overshadowing the City of Reading, on the North, and the forests of Angelica and Cedar Top on the Southeast, combine to make the village one of the most picturesque in Berks County. Once the home of the "red men of the forest", the land on which this town is located, now cultivated by only a few farmers, was regarded by our early ancestors as a suitable place for habitation. Hence, as early as about 1733, or about two hundred twenty-one years ago, the first

settlements began to be made. Since the Indians who roamed over these parts did not stress the cultivation of the soil, but lived chiefly by hunting and fishing, the land was in a wild state. The early settlers, however, came from Holland and the Palatinate, where they had been taught from youth the importance of the cultivation of the soil. So the wigwam was soon replaced by the log cabin, and the land overgrown with brush became fields of corn and wheat.

Immediately after William Penn had obtained his charter for the province from King Charles II in 1681, and had begun his administration of its various affairs, he negotiated with the Indians for the purchase of their lands. He regarded them as the rightful owners of the territory by virtue of their possession. Among the many purchases made by the Penns at this time was the 600-acre tract which comprises much of the present town of Shillington. The patents for this land, which was probably bought from the Schuylkill Indians, were later granted by the Penns as follows: To Jacob Weiss in 1733; to Thomas Jones in 1734; to John



Davis in 1734; and to Michael Ruth in 1736. Thus these men became the first land-owners in Shillington.

Thomas Mifflin, a Major General of the Continental Army, Representative of Berks County in the Continental Congress in 1782, President of the Supreme Executive Council from 1788 to 1790, and Governor of Pennsylvania from 1790 to 1799, purchased land from David Jones in 1761. A part of these 238 acres of land he called the "Angelica Farm". Here he lived from 1774 until 1794 in what was known as the "Mifflin Mansion", now known as the old County Home Farm. Here such notables as John Penn were warmly entertained. There is also a reasonable suspicion that the plot to overthrow General Washington as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, known as the "Conway Cabal", had its beginning in this "Mifflin Mansion". Much of the land that was known as the "Angelica Farm", later the "Poor House", was recently sold to Marshall Hughes, building contractor, and now proudly holds the name Mifflin Park, being named for the original owner. The School District has also recently taken the



name "Governor Mifflin Joint School District", composed of the neighboring communities of Gouglersville, Mohnton, Grill, Angelica, Cedar Top, Kenhorst and Shillington.

On July 7, 1761, George Riehm purchased of Thomas Jones 164 acres of land and of Jacob Weiss 104 acres in 1771. He was the innkeeper at what was later called the "Three-Mile House" as early as 1762, and after his death his son George took over. He, in turn, gave the ownership to his son Edward, who ran the business until 1809, when it was purchased by Valentine Straub. The latter, who was one of the largest landowners in Cumru Township, had married the daughter of George Riehm in 1777 and lived in the home which they built at No. 16 Philadelphia Avenue, the present home of the Fred Gehrets. This is the oldest house in Shillington.

To the Straubs was born a daughter, Hannah, who grew up to marry Jacob Shilling. He lived in the old homestead of the Straubs, and conducted the tavern on the corner of Lancaster Avenue and Liberty Streets, which later became known far and wide as the "Three Mile House", because it was

exactly three miles distant from Penn Square in Reading. This hotel property was built by George Riehm in 1761. It was a two-story stone building on the pike from Reading to Lancaster. Horse-racing took place between the County Lane and the Three-Mile House every two weeks as far back as 1850, and was continued until 1876, when Aaron Einstein, who was then proprietor of the hotel, built the "Three-Mile House Track". This track consisted of 25 box stalls when built and later grew to at least sixty. It was here that some of the country's best horses were raced and trained.

In 1819, a son was born to Jacob Shilling and his wife Hannah, whom they named Samuel. He was a farmer most of his life, tax collector for Cumru Township for 15 years, and on August 22, 1860, made his first survey of the town. It was probably due to his survey and to his owning so much of the land that the early fathers decided to name the town after him. He died on March 29, 1891, and was buried at Yocum's Church, of which he was a member.

Moving now from the east side of the town,



that owned by the Mifflins and the Straub-Shilling families, to the south side of Lancaster Avenue and the west side of New Holland Avenue, we find that Christian Miller purchased from Valentine Eckert and Jacob Kauffman, sons-in-law of Michael Ruth, 215 acres in 1786. This area was known as the Jonathan Miller farm, as this man was born and raised here. On a part of this farm, now close to the borough's southern line, on Wyomissing Avenue, was the Christian Miller cemetery. However, when the road, now Wyomissing Avenue, was laid through this cemetery, cement slabs were placed over the graves to protect the bodies. A marker on the curb still shows the location of those buried there. Part of this section later came to be known as "Edison".

On the extreme west boundary of the town was Allendale, or what was the William P. High farm. This too was purchased from George Riehm and Valentine Straub. A clover mill was located on this farm near the creek, and was used for sixty years by farmers of the surrounding district, who came there to have their clover seed cleaned.



The earliest attraction in the town, as we have seen, was the "Three-Mile House" and the "Three-Mile House Track", but even earlier than these attractions was the "Grist Mill", which was built in 1733, and was the property of Isaac Weiss. Farmers from far and wide brought their grain to this mill. The mill was owned consecutively by the following: Isaac Weiss, George Reihm, Valentine Straub, Joseph Hemmig and Joseph Huyett, who built one of the finest grist mills in the county. It was later sold to Benneville H. Hemmig, who sold to E. D. Brown & Sons. The present owner is F. M. Brown & Sons, who now own other mills in neighboring communities.

By the middle of the nineteenth century all of the land had been cleared and was being cultivated. With the building of the Grist Mill and other smaller industries, such as wheelwright shops, butcher shops, a stone quarry and, later, a hat factory, built by George Hendel, people began moving into the town. Many acres of farm land were sold to contractors who built homes for the incoming people who found jobs in the town or

in nearby Reading. With the increase in population, schools and churches had to be established. The first school house was located on the grounds where the old stone quarry once stood, about a block west of the present western borough line. The nearest school house to this one was three miles west in Sinking Spring. Families using this school were the Gernants, Huyetts, Ruths, Gauls, Millers, Bodys, Hemmigs, Straubs, Shillings, Beidlers and Hills. Not all of these families lived in what is now the Borough of Shillington, many had to walk a great distance to school. Many of the descendants of these families are still living in the borough today. Among the teachers who taught in this school were John Adams, Joseph Holly, Nathan Wamsher, William Hemmig, Sebastian Hornberger, John Spayd, Samuel Leshner and Adam Ross.

In 1860 Jonathan Miller and Jonathan Ruth, the earliest recorded school directors, built the school house on the grounds where the present grade school building is located. This ground was purchased from Jonathan Miller. It was probably in this one room school house that the first Sunday



School meetings were held and plans for organizing a congregation were begun. Finding this old building to be inadequate for the needs of the growing community, it was razed, and in 1901 the four front rooms of a new grade school building were erected on Lancaster Avenue at the cost of \$8,000. The rear addition of eight rooms was built in 1913 at a cost of \$25,000. In 1909 there were 200 school children enrolled. In this same year the first meeting of the school board was held, with the following members: William A. Miller, President; Charles M. Yetter, Secretary; Harry G. Hain, Treasurer; and William Dankle, Levi Lausch and William Fichthorn, members.

In 1926 the handsome new High School building was completed on East Lancaster Avenue at the cost of \$120,000. This building was built to accommodate grades seven through twelve, with classrooms, cafeteria, shops, gymnasium, locker rooms and laboratories. For many years students came from Adamstown, a distance of three miles, via school bus to attend the high school. Likewise many students commuted from the nearby communities

of Grill, Angelica, Cedar Top, Gougliersville, Kenhorst and a few from Lincoln Park and Montrose. Since 1909 the following have been School Principals: 1909 to 1911, M. E. Reifsnyder; 1911-1919, Howard Yeager; 1919-1920, Howard Snyder; 1920-1952, Charles J. Hemmig, who had previously taught school in the Borough as assistant principal in 1917. After thirty-two years of fruitful service and devoted leadership, Mr. Hemmig was retired and the present principal, H. L. Hendricks, was elected to the supervising principalship. The present high school principal is Luther A. Weik, and the elementary school principal is Raymond W. Dickenson.

In 1953 the School Board of Shillington and the School Boards of the other schools in Cumru Township voted to merge into one school district, comprising the school districts of Shillington, Angelica, Mohnton, Gougliersville, Grill and Kenhorst, under the new name "The Governor Mifflin Joint School District". The two largest school systems in the merger were Shillington and Mohnton where respectively the Senior High and the Junior



High are located.

In 1891 the trolley line was built and opened from Reading to Shillington by the Reading & Southwestern Company. The town was now growing to the size where some form of government was needed. On August 18, 1908, the town of Shillington became the borough of Shillington. A special election was held on September 1, 1908, and the following councilmen were elected for the period before the spring election: George E. Shupp, A. Harry Boyer, Martin H. Fritz, Albert Tobias, James Fry, Oswin Kroyer and John Strunk. The first burgess elected at this meeting was Adam Rollman. The first meeting of council was held in the office of the Shillington Hosiery Mill on September 3, 1908. The regular meetings were held in the hall of the Fire Company, which met at that time in Leininger's Hall on South Wyomissing Avenue. Later the meetings were held in the Speedway office, Lancaster and Liberty Streets, from 1912 to 1924, when they moved to the fire hall on Sterley Street.

On May 7, 1931, the borough council decided

that a new and modern building to house the borough offices should be erected. This dream came true and on June 26, 1932, the new "Town Hall" was dedicated with impressive ceremonies. The total acreage of the borough is now 503 acres, 36.85 perches. Since 1935 it has owned its own water company, which also serves Mohnton and the Lincoln Park area. A Municipal Authority was created in 1947 for the purpose of obtaining sanitary sewers. The work on this sewer project is now in progress. In June of 1952 the borough council passed a zoning ordinance regulating building in Shillington. Since the incorporation of the borough, the annexation of considerable portions of the County Home Farm, including the new developments of Lynoak and Lyncrest, has more than doubled the area of Shillington.

Since its organization the borough of Shillington has steadily grown in population and area, and, although it is predominantly a residential area, there are many thriving industries to be found, chiefly hosiery. There have been several hosiery mills in town. The leading industry



is "The Fairy Silk Mills", established at the turn of the twentieth century. It has employed the largest number of people in the borough.

Years ago the town of Shillington was well known in this section for its fine bands. The first band that was organized outside the City of Reading in Berks County was the Cumru Band, named after the township. It was organized in 1858 and Benneville H. Miller was the first leader. Rehearsals were held at the home of Jonathan Miller, for a number of years at the Three-Mile House, then in Mohnton, and later in various halls in Shillington.

Outstanding among the leaders and organizers of this band were Benneville Hemmig and Daniel H. Miller, who became members in the late '60s. In 1874 it was known as the Prairie Band. Later in the '70s the name was changed to Hemmig's Cornet Band. However, the name which is still used today is the Winona Band. Other leaders of this band are the late Howard Hartman, William Miller and H. R. Carl who have in turn helped the band to make a name for itself throughout this

section of the country, playing at many festivals and carnivals.

The Shillington Bank was chartered September 9, 1921, and opened for business September 17, 1921, at the corner of South Sterley Street and Lancaster Avenue. However, the bank closed its doors during the depression, and the building is now the State Store. Since that time the town has been without a bank, but in 1953 a branch of the Peoples Trust Company of the Reading Area has been opened at the intersection of Lancaster Avenue and Liberty Street, to serve the banking needs of the people.

#### ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE BOROUGH

The following is a list of the many organizations that are presently meeting within the borough, together with their dates of charter. These organizations perform many civic services for the borough and, by and large, have contributed greatly to the life and growth of the people. The history of each one of these organizations would be very interesting, but for our present



purpose we shall have to be satisfied with naming them.

American Legion, Reber-Moore Post No. 635 of Shillington - Chartered March 13, 1931. Named after the two men from Shillington who gave their lives in World War I.

American Legion Auxiliary, Reber-Moore Post 635 - Organized September 1930.

Ancient And Illustrious Order Knights of Malta No. 609 - Organized September, 1922.

Clover Park Athletic Association - Organized June 6, 1911.

Dorothy L. Dix Council No. 172, Sons and Daughters of Liberty - Instituted April 11, 1911.

Greater Shillington League - Organized in 1947, chartered July 10, 1950.

Keystone Fire Company No. 1 of Shillington - William W. Wunder of Reading assisted in organizing the fire company, and on May 1, 1907, a charter was granted. Meetings were held at Leininger's Hall from 1907 to 1916. The present fire house and hall were built in 1923 at a cost of approximately \$30,000. The first fire apparatus

was presented by the Washington Fire Company of Reading -- this was a hose carrier. The next addition was a Ford Howe Pumper and, later, a 750 gallon Seagrave Pumper was used for many years. At the present the company is one of the best equipped companies in this area, having two pumpers.

Ladies Auxiliary of Keystone Fire Co. No. 1 of Shillington - Organized July 19, 1924; reorganized August 18, 1943.

Lions Club of Shillington - Incorporated in January of 1944.

Men's Democratic Club of Shillington - Organized in 1938.

Republican Club of Shillington - Organized June 5, 1945.

Rotary Club of Shillington - Received its charter as a corporate body on June 30, 1952, at a dinner meeting in Gregg Post, American Legion, Reading.

Shillington Athletic Association - Chartered 1947.

Shillington Community Association - Organized in 1942.

Shillington Council No. 186, O. of I. A., Inc. -



Organized 1904.

Shillington High Boosters Club - Organized in 1948.

Shillington Lodge No. 1175, Independent Order of Odd Fellows - Organized January 17, 1911.

Barbara Fritchie Rebekah Lodge No. 138 - Organized October 22, 1938.

Shillington Parent Teacher's Association - Organized in 1926.

Shillington School Music Association - Organized June 17, 1952.

Shillington Women's Democratic Club - Organized July 1952.

Special Police of Shillington - Organized as Auxiliary Police in 1942, then sworn in as Special Police in 1946, with 36 members.

The Shillington 50-Year Club - Organized February 12, 1952. The club is composed of men and women who have lived in Shillington for a period of 50 years or more.

Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary - Memorial Post No. 6076 - Organized in 1947.

Women's Club of Shillington - Organized and federated in 1938.

Junior Women's Club of Shillington - Organized and federated in 1939.

With this list of organizations within the borough we have come to the close of the first chapter in this brief sketch of historical development. It is not necessary to tell the reader that much has been omitted from this sketch. However, it is the writer's wish that that which is presented may serve as a "door" through which we may pass on our way to a better understanding of the historical development of the Immanuel Church.

Contemporary with the building of a Reformed Congregation within the Borough of Shillington other great forces were at work. These forces were later to give birth to the other religious denominations within the community. Hence we shall now turn our attention to these other religious denominations and how they grew and "waxed strong".



## CHAPTER TWO

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS REPRESENTED IN  
SHILLINGTON TODAY

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THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Closely connected with the history of the Reformed Church is that of the Lutheran Church, which had its beginning at the same time. For many years the people of Shillington had to journey to nearby communities for religious worship; there was no church in the community until 1876. Most of the people in the community at that time were either Lutheran or Reformed.

Probably, with the construction of a small school house near the present site of the grade school, the people realized that now it would be possible to have some type of organization for religious purposes. No longer would they have to travel to Goughersville, Grill or one of the churches of their denomination in another community. Hence it was in this small building that the foundation was laid for both Lutheran and Reformed congregations.

The earliest record of a Lutheran pastor in Shillington was the pastorate of Rev. Zenas H. Gable, who was educated in the common schools and in Gettysburg College. He was graduated from there in 1868. He was ordained on June 10, 1868. He came to Reading August 17, 1873, and took charge of the following congregations, which he faithfully served until his death: St. John's of Gibraltar; St. Mark's of Birdsboro; St. James of Geigertown; Allegheny of Alleghenyville; Wyomissing of Goughersville; and Robeson of Plowville. Rev. Mr. Gable was a very industrious and ambitious man. He built new churches in each one of his parishes during his pastorate.

Quoted The people of Shillington prevailed upon Rev. Mr. Gable to help to organize a congregation in the town. Rev. Mr. Gable agreed to do so and was very instrumental in the erection of Immanuel Union Church in 1874. It was here that he conducted his first services in 1874 and served faithfully until 1880.

tion. Rev. Z. H. Gable served the congregation until 1880 at which time the Union services were



discontinued. The reason for this no one actually knows to this day. Some say it was due to financial difficulty that the Reformed members were having, others say it was due to the fact that the church went bankrupt. Nevertheless, the Lutheran congregation was without a church and any form of organization until 1900. It was on January 14, 1900, according to the earliest record, that the Lutherans resumed their services. These services were conducted regularly every Lord's Day in a large room on the second floor of Wetze's Store, now called Bohn's restaurant. A store box was substituted for a pulpit and benches without backs served as pews. These services were conducted by Rev. M. H. Stettler who served the congregation for one year.

Rev. Mr. Stettler was succeeded by Rev. F. F. Buermeyer, D.D., who was called in 1901 by the Home Mission Board of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania to meet with the remaining Lutheran congregation to bring about a better form of organization. At that time there were twenty-two members meeting in the public meeting hall called

Leiningers on South Wyomissing Avenue.

The ground where the first Lutheran Church was built was donated by Dr. and Mrs. J. B. Sterley. Dr. Sterley and Mr. William Eltz had earlier purchased the Jonathan Miller farm and divided it into many building lots. This section of the town they called "Edison".

On July 13, 1902, the cornerstone of the new edifice, located on West Broad Street, was laid. On August 11, 1902, the charter was approved and the congregation was incorporated under the title of "Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Edison". The church was completed and dedicated on May 10, 1903. The congregation was served by Rev. Mr. Buermeyer, 1902-1909, Rev. J. H. Neiman, 1910-1913; Rev. R. W. Hufford, D.D., 1913-1919; Rev. Corson C. Snyder, 1919-1924.

On June 8, 1924, the present pastor, the Rev. Victor A. Kroninger, was installed. Under Rev. Mr. Kroninger's hand the church had grown too large for the building and it was found necessary to begin a building program to either enlarge the present church or build a new and more adequate



structure. The latter was decided upon by the congregation and plans were begun. Land was secured on Liberty Street and the new edifice began to take shape. On Sunday, July 22, 1928, the cornerstone of the \$100,000. edifice was laid. On March 17, 1929, the congregation held an impressive dedication service in the new building.

For many years after the old church was abandoned for worship purposes it still served the community as a place of recreation, but soon the church fathers recognized the fact that it should be sold. The transaction was made and the old church on Broad Street was sold to the Pilgrim Holiness congregation.

For many years the congregation saw the need to purchase the adjoining lot to be used at some future date for an educational building. In November, 1944, this lot was bought at the price of \$2,000. It was in January, 1952, at the annual congregational meeting, that the people again took up the cause of a new educational building and it was decided to appoint a committee to raise \$60,000. for this new educational unit.

In April, 1950, at a special congregational meeting Mrs. Irene L. Artz was called as a full-time parish worker. Mrs. Artz has served the church and the community faithfully and has added much in substance and time to the founding of a solid Christian education system in this church.

At the present time the congregation consists of a communing membership of 850, a large Ladies' Aid and Women's Missionary Society, a Men's Brotherhood, a Luther League, a Children of the Church group, and a Senior Choir under the capable leadership of Miss Corinne Eckert.

Much of the success of the work of the church is the result of the hard painstaking work of its present pastor, Rev. Mr. Kroninger, who is now entering his thirty-first year as its pastor. The parsonage family consists of Rev. and Mrs. Kroninger and two sons, Victor, Jr. and Gerald, and one daughter, Anna.

#### SAINT LUKE'S EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

During the years 1901 and 1902, the question of establishing a Mission in Edison, now a part of



Shillington, became a growing concern due to the many Evangelical folk who lived here and others who were moving to the town. On the evening of Christmas, 1903, at a meeting held in Zion United Evangelical Church of Mohnton, the matter was discussed and favorably received. A building committee was appointed. This committee consisted of the following: Rev. W. J. Edelman, at the time pastor of the Mohnton Church, Chairman; George Leininger, C. E. Collier, Albert Tobias, George Trout and George Hendel.

As a result of a canvass in the community, about 40 people, most of them members of the Mohnton church, expressed a desire to form the first congregation. The erection of the building was begun in June, 1904. The Rev. H. J. O. Rinker was appointed to take charge of the Mission as its pastor in 1905.

Mr. George Hendel, owner of a large hat factory on the outskirts of the town, expressed a great desire in the formation of the new congregation and he offered the large shipping room of his factory for worship services. The group met

in this room for about four months. On March 14, 1905, the church was organized with a membership of 54 persons. At that time the Sunday School numbered about 100 members and the Ladies' Aid Society had about 72 members. The church was dedicated June 18, 1905, by Bishop W. F. Heil, with the pastor, the Rev. Mr. Rinker, arranging the service.

The pastors who have served here are as follows: The Revs. Rinker, C. S. Haman, C. E. Hess, J. F. Gross, S. H. Heckler, I. E. Johnson, C. H. Seidel, G. H. R. Dellecker, J. R. Wasser and H. A. Gerhart. The Rev. Chreighton Christman is the present pastor.

The church has enjoyed a steady growth under the pastors who have been assigned here, with improvements being made all the time. The large Sunday School annex was built in 1932 at an approximate cost of \$40,000., so that the building is among those having the finest facilities for public gatherings in the community. The membership at the present time is 415.



PILGRAM HOLINESS CHURCH

What today is known in Shillington as the Pilgram Holiness Church on the corner of Broad and Church Streets, was at one time known as Grace Lutheran Church. This building was built in 1902, and as the congregation of Grace Lutheran Church had grown and needed a new church building it was put up for sale. At the time there was no one to buy the church. However, there was a group of people from Shillington and the surrounding towns who wished to use the building for the purpose of holding worship services therein. Hence, the official board of the Lutheran Church agreed to allow these people to hold their services there for a small rental fee.

In 1936 the small congregation decided to buy the property; money was borrowed and the group united with the Pilgrim Holiness Church. At the time of reorganization there were twelve members. The district superintendent at that time was the Rev. R. G. Flexon of Allentown, where the district parsonage was located.

The church has since purchased a parsonage

alongside the church. The congregation has grown and God has blessed it down through the years. At the present time the pastor serving the church is the Rev. Harry J. Daniels, who resides in the parsonage at 137 West Broad Street. Rev. Mr. Daniels recently has come to the church from Sunbury, Pennsylvania.

#### ST. JOHN BAPTIST de LA SALLE PARISH

The parish was established by His Eminence, the late Cardinal D. J. Dougherty, Archbishop of Philadelphia, on October 4, 1948, and the Rev. John J. Hasson was appointed its first pastor. Until October 23, 1950, Father Hasson guided the destinies of this parish, and under his guidance it increased in numbers and the groundwork for a permanent Church, School, Rectory and Convent was accomplished. Unfortunately, ill health forced his resignation, and the present pastor, the Rev. Henry D. McPeak, was appointed as his successor.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated for the first time in Shillington on Sunday, October 24, 1948, by Father Hasson and was served by Richard Thren. About 200 people attended this



mass in the Community Center. Here Holy Mass was said every Sunday until October, 1949. However, in March of 1949, the property at 332 East Walnut Street was secured by Father Hasson, and used for both a Church and a Rectory. The living room was converted into a Chapel to seat 110 people. Daily and Sunday Masses were held on this site.

On February 2, 1952, a factory building at Wyomissing Avenue and Walnut Street was purchased from Fedden Brothers, Inc. of New York, who were in the hosiery business for many years, and is in the process of being converted into a church to seat 350 people, and a school composed of eight large classrooms, teachers' restroom, two offices and a kindergarten. The Sisters of Mercy from Merion will have charge of the school and will reside in what is now the church and rectory. The parish is growing rapidly and at present has more than 420 families and 1150 souls. Its boundaries include Mohnton, Lincoln Park, Montrose, Brookline, Kenhorst, Ridge Park, Grill, Cumru

Township, Sinking Spring R. D. 1 and 2, Mohnton  
R. D. 1 and 2, Vinemont, Gouglersville, Adamstown  
and a part of Brecknock Township.



## CHAPTER THREE

THE FOUNDING OF IMMANUEL REFORMED  
CHURCH

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Among the earliest and most potent influences that bound the various neighborhoods of settlers of this section -- and in fact of all the parts of the county -- together was Religion. In some respects, however, the differing tenets of faith may have had a tendency to keep communities apart, separating them into zealous religious factions. They did not indeed war against each other, yet there was an aloofness that prevented their most intimate social and community fellowship.

The migration of the German hosts to Pennsylvania took place when the religious agitations in Germany and other Protestant countries of Europe was at their height. The post-Reformation leaven was working in all interior Europe. New phases of religious faith, emphasizing doctrine, inner experiences, spiritual visions and mental states, forms of service and administration of the sacraments, or modes of dress and severance from

the affairs of this secular world, divided Protestant Christendom into factions of sharp distinction. New leaders along these lines had arisen, and these, by strong emphasis upon their points of difference from other Protestants, gathered about them followings that broke up the Christian forces into different sectarian camps, whose cleavage from each other was sharp. Thus there were Mennonites, Moravians, Dunkers, Schwenkfeldians and Quakers beside the orthodox followers of Luther and Zwingli.

All of these were transplanted to America -- mostly into Pennsylvania -- in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Here they had free reign for the propagation and development of their ideas. By magnifying their points of difference, these various religious denominations grew into distinct communities, keeping themselves isolated religiously, whatever intercourse they may have had with one another commercially and politically.

Now this very divisive force also tended to weld together more closely those of the same



camps. Wherever there was settled a neighborhood of one and the same faith, or of closely allied faith and form of worship, as was the case in the small town of Shillington, this religious faith was a mighty centripetal force to bind and hold such communities together. In Shillington there settled, almost exclusively, the followers of the two great leaders of the Reformation period -- the Lutherans and the German Reformed -- who were known by others as "church people" to distinguish them from the "meeting house folk" of other cults.

These people had a devotion to the Church which bound them together. They could worship without a church building or a pastor. Their homes or school houses could serve temporarily as a sanctuary, and a chosen elder or teacher could serve in the place of a pastor to read and study the scriptures. So closely alike were these "church people" that many times, in fact in more cases than not, they shared the same facilities for worship, thus uniting to form "union churches". These churches were a familiar sight in the area around Shillington. The churches in Grill, to the

east, in Gougliersville to the south, in Sinking Spring, to the west, and many more to the north were all "union churches".

This interesting phenomenon in American church life, the "union church", is a product of the movement to unite the Lutheran and Reformed Churches into one body. In the latter part of the Eighteenth Century there was a period of unusual cooperation between these two groups. In Germany it led to the "Prussian Union" of the two groups into the state church. However, in only one instance was the consummation of a union further than the union of two congregations to meet in the same building. This took place in Lexington, South Carolina, where the Corpus Evangelicum was formed by the union of the two elements in a very limited area. This union only lasted until the death of the pastor under whose direction it was begun.

It is a well established fact among the older residents of the town of Shillington that the present "Reformed" Church had its beginning in the old school house, then located near the



present site of the Elementary School House on Lancaster Avenue. Probably due to the fact that a large number of "Churchfolk" found it necessary to leave the town to attend worship services, it was agreed upon by all to form a Sunday School in the old school house. There are no records available to describe the nature of these early meetings, but it is evident from the work that followed that the group had great plans for the future. It was in this school house that the "Reformed" and "Lutheran" people first became inspired to work toward the building of a church of their own. These Sunday School sessions were probably held around the year 1870.

Much of the early history of this church will be lost forever, for there are very few written records remaining. However, from various deeds recorded in the Berks County Court House can be found information that alluded to various events. The first of these deeds records the sale of the land as follows:

"This indenture made the twenty-second day of May in the year of our Lord, 1874, between

Jonathan Miller of Cumru Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, and Kesiah, (x), (her mark), his wife, of the one part, and Harrison Althouse, elder, and Abraham Matz and Benneville M. Gaul, deacons, of the German Reformed Congregation, of the village of Shillington, and Daniel Eshelman, elder, and Frederick Bechtel and George Kauffman, deacons, of the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, of the same place - for \$500."

As was stated earlier, Jonathan Miller owned much of this land, which was, at one time, part of his farm, and was called "Edison". From this document we now learn that the congregations were called "German Reformed" and "Evangelical Lutheran", names which are subject to change quite often in the course of this history. It is also evident that the "Union Sunday School" was becoming more and more interested in the building of a church.

Contemporary with the ambitious planning on the part of the Sunday School, there moved to the town of Shillington a licensed minister by the name of Martin Luther Fritch, who was to play a very important part in the early history of the church. Mr. Fritch was a graduate of Ursinus College and probably of Ursinus School of Theology, but the years are unknown. For some



time he had been supplying the church at Blandon, which was then a small congregation and could not afford a full-time pastor.

At this time the congregations at "Gouglers" Church, now "Wyomissing" Church in Gouglersville, Allegheny Church, and "Forest" Church, now called "Plow" or St. John's Church in Robeson Township, petitioned the Lebanon Classis to send licentiate M. L. Fritch to be their pastor. On motion by these churches, the Classis of Lebanon appointed a committee to repair to Allegheny Church to ordain and install Mr. M. L. Fritch. The following is the report of that trip:

"On Saturday 28, June 1873, the committee repaired to Allegheny Church and found a large audience assembled in the House of God. The President of Classis preached the sermon, after which licentiate M. L. Fritch was solemnly ordained to the office of the Holy Ministry, by the laying on of hands. The audience was not only large, but also very attentive throughout."

Respectfully submitted,  
C. H. Lurhan, chairman."

Thus the Rev. M. L. Fritch became the pastor of these three churches in the neighboring communities, while all this time he was living in

his home at the southeast corner of Lancaster Avenue and South Miller Street in Shillington. Thus, the people of Shillington probably prevailed upon him to help them organize a church out of the present Sunday School. It is also very probable that the Lutheran members of that Sunday School were prevailing upon Rev. Z. H. Gable, who was then pastor of St. John's, Gibraltar, St. Mark's, Birdsboro, St. James, Geigertown, Allegheny, Alleghenyville, Wyomissing, Goughersville, and "Forest" Church, Plowville, to give them help. However, from the records that are available there is no mention at all of the Lutheran branch of the congregation. It is believed that they were active in name only.

On the 10th of June in the year 1874, there was held a meeting to draw up a constitution for the congregation. This is the earliest document recorded in the history of the church. The full title is as follows: "Constitution of the Immanuel's Reformed Church of Shillington, Pa.-1874". Throughout this constitution there is reference to the governing laws of the Reformed Church in



the United States and no mention whatsoever of the "Lutheran" side of the congregation. It is also mentioned herein that the consistory shall meet for the purpose of transacting business and hearing the treasurer's report every New Year's Day. This constitution is signed by Rev. M. L. Fritch, pastor. It was during the next few months that the church was built at a cost unknown. It is a matter of speculation as to who constituted the building committee, but in all probability it was the following men:

Harrison S. Althouse	Daniel Matz
Fred R. Bechtel	Joseph Huyett
John Fromm	Jesse Matz

These are the men who were instrumental in the financial arrangements throughout the pages of the early history. The church was dedicated on the 15th of November, 1874. According to an early record the following ministers were present on the Reformed side: Rev. Dr. McCauley, Rev. Dr. J. H. A. Bomberger, Rev. Mr. Shoemaker and Rev. Mr. J. Fuendling. There is no record as to the ministers

present on the Lutheran side, and so, again, we may speculate that the Rev. Z. H. Gable was present.

The congregation at this time was largely made up of the former members of the Union Sunday School who were not able nor willing to contribute to the necessary financial needs of the church. There was also a great deal of bickering between the two differing branches, and thus there followed many years of hardship for the church. Evidence of the poor contributing power of the people may be seen in the early treasurer's book. The first regular service was held on November 29th in the year 1874, at which time there was a total collection of \$.79. The first communion was held on December 13th of the same year, at which time there was a record collection of \$11.75. According to the treasurer's book, services were held every Sunday for a while and then every other Sunday with some during the week. There is no mention of any salary being paid to Rev. Mr. Fritch at this time; however, there is



mention that a "missionary lecture" was held on February 21, 1875, and the preacher, Rev. Mr. Fuendling, received the entire collection of \$4.52. A certain Rev. Mr. Albright also preached on two occasions, receiving \$2.42 and \$.65.

On the 7th day of February, 1875, an election was held for organist by the congregation, and Benjamin Hemmig was unanimously elected. The record does not state as to who the other officers were. There was also no record of an organ being purchased, and therefore that will have to remain a mystery.

On April 1, 1875, a certain Mr. Frederick R. Bechtel and his wife, Esther, received a portion of land along the Welsh Mountain Road, which is now New Holland Avenue, from the estate of Christian Hessler, and which they, in turn, granted and conveyed unto Emmanuel Evangelical Reformed and Lutheran Church of Shillington. This plot is now known as the Fairview Cemetery and is owned by the Reformed Church. It is also interesting to note the change of the church's name in this document.

"Emmanuel" changes to "Immanuel" from one document to another.

The first baptisms recorded by Rev. Mr. Fritch are those of the twin daughters of Jeremiah and Mary Hill. The girls were born March 1, 1874, and were baptized May 24, 1874. Also recorded on that page was the baptism of Catharine, daughter of Johnathan and Catharine Miller, who was baptized April 3, 1875. These are the only records of baptisms by Rev. Mr. Fritch that remain.

The first catechetical class confirmed in the Shillington Church by Rev. M. L. Fritch is listed by him as the following:

Obadiah M. Wanner	Franklin J. Matz
Chas. H. Stamm	Martin Van Buren Hummel
John Wm. Fries	Henry Gouse
Gotlieb Gouse	Cassie W. Miller
Mary Mohn	Amelia Stamm
Susan H. Bossler	Amelia H. Whitmoyer
Sarah Ann Trout	Ellen Rebecca Whitmoyer

This class was confirmed by Rev. Mr. Fritch on the fourth of April, 1875, and he adds this notation to the list of names: "Very interesting class". A second class was confirmed by Rev. Mr. Fritch on the 29th of April, 1876. The following are



named as members of that class:

Joseph Matz	Mary Elizabeth Soetzler
William E. Seidel	Samuel Arnold
Emma Matz	Mary Ann Deckart
Henry S. Hill	

On March 16, 1876, the first mortgage of \$2,181.28 is recorded against Immanuel Reformed and Evangelical Lutheran Church. The church was mortgaged by Harrison S. Althouse, Jesse Matz, Benneville M. Gaul, Joseph Huyett and Abraham Matz. It is evident by this time that the members of the Sunday School and now members of the Church could not raise the money to keep the church. It is also evident from this document that the Lutheran side of the Union Church was still active.

According to the treasurer's report, worship services were being held every Sunday, regardless of the financial break-down of the church. However, in view of the amount obtained by way of the "penny collections", it would require some time until they became debt free as a congregation.

At a regular congregational and consistory meeting held in the Immanuel's Church, March 27, 1880. The meeting was called to order by the Pres't of the consistory, and opened by prayer. The

On June 22, 1878, the church and all property belonging to the church were put up for sale by the High Sheriff of Berks County, Alfred C. Kemp. The property was then conveyed unto Jesse Matz, Abraham Matz, Harrison S. Althouse and Benneville M. Gaul. The price was not stated.

On July 27th of that same year, Harrison Althouse brought suit against the church for the money they owed to him.

The membership of the church, at the time of the first communion, was nineteen members, and had grown to eighty by the end of 1879.

The last regular service was held on March 14, 1880, at which time it was decided to reorganize the congregation and consistory. A meeting was then called for March 27th of that same year. The following is a written statement of that meeting:

"Agreement Between The Congregation and Harrison Althouse, Abraham Matz, Jesse Matz and Ben Gaul, All of Cumru.

"At a regular congregational and Consistorial meeting held in the Immanuel's Church, March 27, 1880. The meeting was called to order by the Pres't of the consistory, and opened by prayer. The



following business was transacted between the consistory and the above named persons--  
 Harrison Althouse, Ben Gaul, Abraham Matz and Jesse Matz proposed to sell the church cemetery and all improvements belonging to it, to the Immanuel's Reformed Congregation (and to be used only by said denomination) for sixteen hundred dollars - On the following terms - (1st) The congregation is to have Eight years time to make the last payment. (2nd) The congregation is to pay no interest, (3rd) The congregation is to pay two hundred dollars annually on the first day of April, (4th) The first payment of two hundred dollars is to be paid on the first day of April 1881. (5th) If said payments are not met the agreement is to be null and void.

The new members of (signed) Consistory as of

H. S. Althouse M. L. Fritch

B. M. Gaul Geo. G. Ruth

A. Matz W. P. High, deacon

Jesse Matz W. V. Mohn, deacon

Franklin P. Mohn."

Now the church was reorganized, and with a new spirit hoped to move ahead unhindered. (Note that in this document the church's name is spelled Immanuel's.) Also note that at this time the church is only named as being "Reformed"; evidently the Lutherans had broken away by this time. There are some reports that the Lutherans broke away as early as 1878 at which time the church was "Sheriffed".

On April 10th in the year 1880, a new charter was drawn up and filed in the Court House at Reading. In the copy of that charter, which is recorded in the minutes of the meeting, the title given to the church is spelled "Emmanuel's Reformed Church"; however, in the provisions of that same charter the name is spelled "Immanuel's Reformed Church". The charter was approved on the 21st day of May, A. D. 1880.

The new members of the consistory as of this reorganization were the following:

M. L. Fritch, pastor	W. P. High, deacon
Geo. G. Ruth, elder	W. V. Mohn, deacon
F. P. Mohn, deacon	

Following this agreement, the members of the church subscribed to the following contract by signing their names and the amount they pledged to pay:

"We the undersigned agree to pay the sum opposite our names for cancelling the debt now resting on the Immanuel's Church, Shillington. The amount subscribed shall be in eight equal payments not to exceed the amount subscribed or the whole can be paid at once if the party desires. The first payment is to be made on April 1, 1881."

his last salary on the 29th of March, 1883, from



The treasurer's report notes that there were just a few payments made during the year and so a new contract was drawn up on June 19, 1882. This contract stated that there would be a reduction of four hundred dollars from the original sixteen hundred dollars, providing the church ever remained a "Reformed Church". It also made the new provision that the Sunday School was under the jurisdiction of the church and its consistory, and that amounts of one hundred and fifty dollars was to be paid in eight installments.

Again there were only a few payments made on this debt by the congregation, and on April 12, 1884, and December 2, 1884, there were mortgages filed against the church for \$1,600. and \$1,000. respectively.

These were years of many trials and tribulations for Immanuel Church. There is no accurate record as to how long Rev. Mr. Fritch served these people as their pastor. From the treasurer's records we learn that Rev. Mr. Fritch received his last salary on the 29th of March, 1883, from

Immanuel Church. There is also a note in the "Records of Attendance" that Rev. Mr. Fritch was present and accounted for until May 22, 1884. The last class for Confirmation by Rev. Mr. Fritch was the class confirmed on the 24th of May, 1883. The following were members of that class:

John Y. Matz	George W. Matz
Katie High	Hannah High
Annie Wisner	

There was a notation made after this class roll by Rev. Mr. Fritch which said, "Very interesting class".

This brings to a close the pastorate of Rev. Martin Luther Fritch at Immanuel Church. However, Rev. Mr. Fritch continued to serve Gougler's, Allegheny and Plow churches. He remained in this capacity until 1889, when the Rev. J. V. George took his place as their pastor.

Although Rev. Mr. Fritch no longer served the Shillington Church, he did, however, keep his residence at Shillington, and his wife and family became loyal members of the Shillington Church.

It may well be said that much of the ground-



work was laid by Rev. Mr. Fritch. Although the church did have its financial difficulties, Rev. Mr. Fritch continued to preach the Gospel and shepherd the sheep as best he knew how. Rev. Mr. Fritch died at the early age of 47 at the end of the nineteenth century somewhere in Philadelphia.

At the close of Rev. Mr. Fritch's pastorate there was a membership of approximately thirty-three females and thirty-three males.

The curtain slowly descends at the end of this period of history, leaving the members of Immanuel Church in a state of confusion and bewilderment, for they not only are burdened with a large debt, but now they have no pastor as well.

During these early years there were many men and women who found it in their hearts to build a community, and a church within that community, regardless of the many barriers that blocked their every move. Thus, it would seem worth our while to mention some of these men whose activities had a bearing -- directly or indirectly -- on the founding and growth of the church. The

following is a list of these men and the work for which they are best remembered:

Jesse Matz was a farmer. He was also very interested in community affairs. He was one of the builders and founders of Immanuel Church. He also held township offices for a number of years. One of his sons, Franklin P. Matz, became one of the leading mathematicians of the country.

Abraham Matz was a farmer. He too was very interested in community affairs and a founder of Immanuel Church.

Benneville M. Gaul was another builder and founder of Immanuel Church. He too was a farmer and a member of the Cumru Band for many years.

Harrison Althouse was another builder and founder of the Immanuel Church.

James G. Lash purchased the Samuel Shilling home and carried on the butchering business for many years. A street in the borough is named for him.

Jacob Potteiger, one of the largest drovers and cattle dealers in Berks County, carried on his business in this town for thirty years.



Conrad Y. Beidler, a farmer, who at one time owned the High farm and was a part owner of the Three-Mile House property, was the father of Mrs. Wm. High. He was also very active in civic affairs.

William Shultz had a wheelwright shop on what is now Philadelphia Avenue.

Wilson Sweitzer, one of the proprietors of the Three-Mile House, was connected with the iron ore business. He was later elected prison inspector for the county.

William P. High lived on the Allendale farm and was at that time one of the best known men in town, for he served for many years as school director.

Owen P. Deeds was a very well known veterinary surgeon and dentist. He was also a horse trainer and active in the horse business.

Samuel Shilling, the founder of the town, was still living at this time and served for many years as tax collector.

Ephriam Shilling was a well known wheelwright and lived on the farm adjoining the county farm.

daughter, Miss Rhoda Yohn, was the superintendent

Howard M. Shilling was a school teacher, florist, a member of the Cumru Band, a Spanish War Veteran and active in lodge and church work. It is said that he received more Sunday School attendance badges than any other person in the town and vicinity.

Frederick E. Shilling was an iron worker, first president of the Keystone Fire Company, president of the borough council, and for years a teacher of the Bible Class in Immanuel Sunday School.

George W. Shilling was an iron worker.

William Albright was elected Sheriff of Berks County while residing in Shillington.

Moses Bickel was employed at the County Home as carpenter and blacksmith for thirty years and was prominent in community affairs.

William Spires was at that time a retired boatman.

James Trout was for fifty years active in the stone quarry business.

Rev. Henry V. Mohn was a retired United Brethern minister and a Civil War veteran. His family have been faithful members of Immanuel Church. His daughter, Miss Rhoda Mohn, was the superintendent



of the Primary Department for many years.

Adam Rollman, who was the first burgess when the community was organized as a borough, was active in the butcher business for about forty years. He was also postmaster for a number of years.

John G. Body, deputy steward of the County Home, carpenter, supervisor of Cumru Township for many years, was active as postmaster, a member of the town council and was very active in church work.

Charles S. Hill, Civil War veteran and salesman, was superintendent of Immanuel Sunday School for many years.

William Ficthorn was a hatter and one of the early members of the Cumru Band.

Mary Deeds, later the wife of Adam Rollman, was postmistress from the time of the establishment of the borough until 1892, a period of eight years.

Howard L. Hartman was a cigar manufacturer. His business was located on Philadelphia Avenue, where he employed about a dozen hands. He was burgess and active in community affairs. He was widely

Albert Tobias was the first superintendent of the

known as a band leader. He was very active in Immanuel Sunday School work.

Benneville H. Hemmig was a famous band leader, having led the Cumru Band at the age of sixteen. Later he led the Hemmig's Cornet Band, which is now the Winona Band. He was the first organist at Immanuel Church, Shillington, and served in the same capacity at Yocum's Church in Grill.

Gottlieb Gouse, butcher and gardener at the County Home, was the first barber located here.

Christian Koller, James Fry and Hiram Kegerise were among the earliest employees at the Hendel Hat Factory.

Samuel Bitting, a supervisor of Cumru Township, was for thirty years bar-tender at the Three Mile House.

Charles Bossler, constable of Cumru Township, was a supervisor of the township, and later a constable of the Borough.

Henry S. Gring was a farmer, later connected with the lumber business, and still later the Reading Eagle.

Albert Tobias was the first superintendent of the



Hendel Hat factory.

John Gring was an implement dealer and well  
driller.

William V. Mohn was a hatter, a cigar maker,  
janitor of the schools, superintendent of the  
infant department of Immanuel Reformed Sunday  
School, also the Church's sexton for many years  
and was one of the best baritone players in the  
county.

Frank P. Mohn was a hatter and blacksmith.

William A. Miller was a cigar maker, butcher,  
storekeeper, member of the Winona Band for  
twenty years and its leader for twenty years and  
served faithfully as superintendent of Immanuel's  
Sunday School for thirty-three years. He is the  
oldest living member of the church at this writing.

Jacob H. Matz was for forty years a butcher and  
for many years a laborer.

William Marks was a laborer and an iron-worker.

Jacob Hoffert was a laborer and a florist's  
helper.

Luke M. Deeds was a driver of race horses and  
land for the Immanuel Church for the Lutherans.

staged many chariot races in the borough. He was later a florist.

David C. Bohn was a laborer, farmer and later the bank watchman.

William H. Bohn was an ice dealer, a butcher, a storekeeper and a restaurant owner.

John M. Wertz was a blacksmith and a machine worker.

Richard G. Body was a farmer and a member of the Cumru Band.

John Fromm was a cobbler and a member of the building committee of Immanuel Church.

William Kring was a farmer and a lumber dealer.

Amos Kurtz was a farmer and a yoeman.

Joseph Huyett was a miller and a member of the building committee of Immanuel Church.

Cyrus H. Hemmig was a cigar salesman and a member of the Cumru Band.

Daniel Miller was a farmer and later a cigar manufacturer.

Daniel Eshelman was a farmer and yoeman. He was also a member of the first committee to purchase land for the Immanuel Church for the Lutherans.



James Barton was an iron worker.

Irvin Bitting was a butcher, a cigar maker and a councilman for years.

Augustus G. Body was one of the organizers of the Cumru Band and later elected Justice of the Peace of the borough.

Edward Fritz was a carpenter and contractor for many years.

William Wagner was a painting contractor.

George Matz was a carpenter and very active in Immanuel Church.

Dr. Leonard G. Hain was the first doctor to locate in the borough in 1893.

Although these men and women now "rest from their labors", the work which they did, whether great or small, shall never be forgotten and their "works do follow them".

The church records report no more than this fragmentary information concerning Rev. E. Kishler, but we learn from the Register of Lebanon Classis that he served various pastorates at

## CHAPTER FOUR

THE PASTORATE OF REVEREND WILLIAM  
J. KERSHNER

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The years between the resignation or withdrawal of Rev. M. L. Fritch and the beginning pastorate of Rev. William J. Kershner are years that are covered with the haze of lost minutes, inaccurate dating and failure to record the important events of that period. Hence we can only surmise much of the following material.

From an entry in the treasurer's book, dated March 14, 1886, we find that the sum of thirty dollars was paid to a Rev. H. Mishler. We may deduce from this that Rev. Mr. Mishler had preached there for at least a year, which could mean from 1884 to 1885. This deduction was made from the fact that \$30. was the average yearly salary for preaching at that time.

The church records report no more than this fragmentary information concerning Rev. H. Mishler, but we learn from the Minutes of Lebanon Classis that he served various pastorates at



Hamilton, Pa., Pine Grove, Pa., and later at Fritztown, Pa. It may well have been during his pastorate at Fritztown that he supplied Immanuel Church, which is only a few miles away. We can only guess.

While the congregation at Shillington was struggling under the weighty burden of mortgages and supply preachers, there were other happenings within the county that would later have a direct bearing on Immanuel Church.

On June 11, 1883, Rev. William F. P. Davis passed away. Rev. Mr. Davis, before his death, was pastor of Hain's Church, Wernersville, Yocum's Church, Grill, and St. John's Church, Sinking Spring. His death left these churches without a pastor.

On August 6, 1883, Lebanon Classis advised the congregation of Kissinger's Church, Sinking Spring, to detach itself from the Sinking Spring Charge and join with the new Reformed interests, about to be organized on North Ninth Street, Reading. The "interests" they had in mind were,

in all probability, the new congregation of St. Stephan's Church, Reading.

It was also at this time that the Classis advised the Yocum's congregation to detach itself from the Sinking Spring Charge and join with the forces of St. John's Church, Reading, with a view to making that church self-supporting.

The final order, issued at that time by the Classis, was an order that Hain's congregation and St. John's congregation should constitute the Sinking Spring Charge.

What happened in the next few years to Kissinger's Church and the Yocum's Church will ever remain a matter for speculation, but on May 30, 1885, the Lebanon Classis instructed a committee to install the Rev. William J. Kershner as pastor of the Sinking Spring Charge, which was, at that time, only Hain's and St. John's Churches.

At the same meeting of Classis the congregations of Shillington and Kissinger's were advised to join together and select a young man for their pastor. This never happened.



By this time the people in Shillington had heard of this new pastor coming so close to their church and therefore prevailed upon him to serve them. In all probability this was in the winter of 1884 and 1885.

In the meantime Lebanon Classis was still pushing the project of joining Kissinger's Church and Immanuel Church with other congregations as self-supporting charges. Against this idea both Kissinger's and Immanuel's congregations rebelled, and appealed to the Classis to cease such action. Thus it was on May 29, 1885, that Classis resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to take into consideration the state of things in the Yocum Charge, as it was then called. This charge consisted of Yocum's, Immanuel and Kissinger's. After a lengthy discussion the Committee of the Whole "rose and left the subject in the hands of the Committee on Reconstruction", where it died a natural death and was never discussed as planned.

On June 1, 1885, the Committee on Reconstruction of Lebanon Classis did resolve the

following: "That in view of the fact that Rev. William J. Kershner has already a large charge with abundance of material, and in view of the fact that he cannot possibly supply the three neighboring congregations of Yocum's, Kissinger's and Shillington, the Classis is constraining to withhold its consent from the contemplated arrangement between Rev. W. J. Kershner and Yocum's Charge, and Brother Kershner shall discontinue his labors in those congregations without delay." Following this resolution there is no further notice to Rev. Mr. Kershner and no further remarks by the Committee on Reconstruction. Thus we may assume that Rev. Mr. Kershner continued his labors with Yocum's Church and with the Shillington Church and did not "cease" as he was instructed to do. It is fortunate for the Immanuel congregation that he did not obey the recommendation of the Classis at that time, but sought to labor where he felt God had called him. There followed from this venture a long and fruitful pastorate among the people at Immanuel Church.



At the beginning of Rev. Mr. Kershner's pastorate the church consisted of only one room with the most rustic equipment, the congregation was not organized and there was a heavy indebtedness hanging over its head. It is quite apparent from the treasurer's records that Rev. Mr. Kershner's ability as an administrator and organizer was outstanding. Within a period of several years after he began his pastorate all the previous debts incurred had been paid in full and the church membership had grown by leaps and bounds.

Along with the growth of the church, the Sunday School was also developing into one of the finest rural Sunday Schools in the county. We have seen the important part that the Union Sunday School played in shaping the destiny of the church from its founding. It must also be said that many of the Sunday School leaders later became the "pillars" of the church. Much of the needed equipment for the church was purchased by the Sunday School. It is reported in the early minutes that

the Sunday School furnished the first carpeting in the church and the first hymnbooks.

Although the records of the Sunday School were very accurately kept and still remain in a readable condition, it is impossible to record at this time all the interesting historical facts.

The earliest records still in existence are recorded in a minute book with the following title:

"The Property  
of  
The Golden Rule Union  
Sunday School of the Immanuel  
Church of Shillington  
Berks County  
Penna March 5th 1887  
In the year of Our  
Lord Jesus Christ A.D."

Hiram Wm Bickel

Book  
No. 2

Secretary

The order of service and minutes were recorded as follows:

"Shillington Minutes of the Golden Rule Union  
Feb 27, 87 Sunday School of the immanuel  
church

Our school was opened singing on pages 80x51x44  
Out of the book of Gates of Praise. The  
Apostles Creed was Repeated by the School Read-  
ing lesson Matt 20 chapter 1 x 37.  
Officers present 4 Teachers 6 visitors not any.  
Grils 16 Boys 12 Total 34 Colection 20 cents



weather-stormy-the school was closed by repeating the Lord's Prayer and singing on Pages 46 x 56 x 63 Gates of Praise. Sunday School next Sunday in the afternoon at one o'clock P.M., before Church, Church at two o'clock.

H. Wm Bickel - Sec.

We departed in peace and harmony."

This is an example of the well kept records of the Sunday School. The records begin, however, with the book marked "No. 2". It would be very interesting to be able to read the book marked "No. 1", but that has been lost.

It is evident from the records that the order of service for the Sunday School was fairly routine. Every week there would be the same service recorded. There were also special services and teacher-officers meetings, held for the purpose of planning sessions and entertainment affairs. The Sunday School held many affairs for the community in these early days, such as picnics on the Fourth of July, Christmas Eve entertainments and New Year's Eve celebrations. In fact Immanuel Church may well have been the only source for good entertainment in the town at that time. Many of these entertainments were held in the

"Three-Mile House Park", very near to the present site of the Lutheran Church.

The records are very accurate for all the Sunday School activities through the years, telling the attendance and names of each member, the weather and the lessons for the day.

Superintendents of the Sunday School during the pastorate of Rev. Mr. Kershner were: Frederick R. Bechtel, Frank Stoudt, Charles S. Hill, H. R. Carl, William A. Miller, Milton Artz and Charles J. Hemmig.

Among the many gifts presented to the Church by the Sunday School was the bell now hanging in the tower. The following is the inscription on that bell:

"This was presented by the Union Sunday School to Immanuel Church of Shillington, Pa. Aug. 1, 1889."

Mc Shane Bell Foundry  
Baltimore, Md. 1889.

The bell was probably installed on the roof of the main building, for at that time there was no tower in which it could hang. When the tower was erected the bell was then removed to its



present location where it is still calling worshipers to Church School and Worship.

From this inscription on the bell and several records which refer to the Sunday School as a "Union" Sunday School, we may assume that the Lutherans were still attending. It was probably a "Union" School until about 1890, when the Lutherans dropped away, taking a few of the Reformed people with them to make preparations for their own church building at the turn of the century. This is verified by those persons still living today who recall these events as they were told them.

Until the year 1894, Rev. Mr. Kershner's salary was \$40.00 per year. In August of 1894 the Consistory began the use of the "Pfarrer's Geld" or "Preacher's Pay" for meeting the pastor's salary. It is interesting to note that as a result of this new system the money that was received to pay the minister was always double the amount that he actually received, e.g., if the "Pfarrer's Geld" collection was \$99.00, the pastor would

receive a yearly salary of only \$50.00. This system continued to be in effect until 1915, at which time the "Pfarrer's Geld" amounted to \$358.83, whereas the actual paid salary was only \$150.00 per year. No doubt the consistory felt it was too much to pay the minister the full amount realized by this collection, despite the fact that it was the amount the congregation felt he deserved. The new term for such collections was "church dues", which would take in a "multitude" of expenses and at the same time hide the amount that was to be paid for the minister.

Another interesting note in the treasurer's records is the payment of \$4.00 to the Sexton, George Matz, for the "ringing of the bell" for one year.

Until the end of the nineteenth century the interior of the church was furnished with only the bare necessities. There were benches for pews, a "pot belly" stove, coal oil lamps. The walls were rough, and the other fixtures were rustic and crude. In 1898, the church people saw their need for an



edifice that would be more conducive to worship. The interior of the building was therefore remodeled and the walls frescoed. The cost of this operation was \$650.00.

There is no record concerning the type of organ that had been in use in the church since its founding. This will have to remain among the dark pages of history. However, it was felt for some time that the organ that was being used was too poor to meet the needs and wants of the congregation. So a meeting of the members of the church was called by Rev. Mr. Kershner after the worship service on Sunday evening, January 17, 1892.

At that meeting Benneville H. Hemmig, organist, was nominated for president and elected by acclamation. The president called the meeting to order and called upon the members to ascertain the sentiment relative to the purchasing of a new organ. The meeting was adjourned to meet on January 25, 1892, at seven o'clock P. M. The following is an account of that meeting:

"Immanuel Church, Shillington, January  
25, 1892

The meeting was opened with singing and prayer.

Mr. B. H. Hemmig, Pres, in the chair, by the president's instruction it proceeded to organization.

On motion Mr. W. P. High was nominated for V. President, elected by acclamation.

On motion Rev. W. J. Kershner was nominated for Secretary, elected by acclamation.

On motion Mr. J. G. Body was nominated for Treasurer, elected by acclamation.

On motion it was agreed that this society should be known by the name of: "The Church Aid Society."

On motion the minimum fee was agreed upon to be 5 cents, per member.

On motion it was decided to hold a "Fast-Nacht Sociable on Tues., evening March 1, 1892 at 7 P.M. admission to be ten cents."

Thus the work of the society began. The society held many "Sociables" and festivals. Their biggest affair was a "Town Fair", which was to be held on May 28, 1892, and run until June 11, 1892, on the school grounds.

The remainder of the Society's work and meetings consisted of planning for this big event, the "Town Fair". The Winona Band was hired at the cost of \$10.00 per evening, or \$100.00 per season. The highlight of this "Fair" was to be a "Razzel Dazzel" and a "Caple Rope". Tickets for admission were sold, posters made, stands built and all other incidental matters were taken care



of by the Society. The "Fair" was held and a large profit was realized. At the first meeting following the "Fair" the Society held a discussion on the difference between a "cabinet" and a "pipe" organ. They voted to buy the "pipe" organ at a cost of \$300.00.

On June 3, 1893, the organ was properly dedicated at services held in the church. The following is an account of that service:

"June 3, 1893. The music was furnished by Prof. O. H. Unger and choir; a number of anthems were sung and several Violin and Violin Selo (Violincello) solos were rendered by O. H. Unger and Solomon Unger. Rev. J. V. George delivered an address on Music. Collection \$6.15.

June 4, 1893. The dedication Sermon was preached by the pastor, Rev. Kerschner. The music was rendered by the Sunday School. Collection \$3.57.

Sunday afternoon, Prof. Thos. H. Krick delivered an address on Music. The choir furnished the music. Collection \$11.54.

Saturday Evening. Music by the Immanuel Ref. Chr. Choir. The dedication by the pastor, assisted by Thomas H. Krick. The organ was dedicated in the name of the Society and the Sunday School. Collection \$5.21. M. L. Fritch organist. B. H. Hemmig leader. The decorations were fine doing credit to the ladies."

One of Mr. Hemmig's students of the organ.

Following these dedication services the Society decided to change the purpose of their meeting to that of a more literary character, so as to make the meetings more interesting. This was done and within a few months the Society was discontinued for lack of participating members.

The organist for the church from its beginning until the turn of the century was Benneville Hemmig, father of Charles J. Hemmig, retired Supervising Principal of Shillington Schools. Mr. Hemmig also served Yocum's Church, Grill, as organist from January, 1875, and continued in this capacity until December 1902. Mr. Hemmig was one of the outstanding musicians of the county in his day. He was cornet soloist for the Ringgold Band of Reading, leader of the Winona Band, leader of his own Cornet Band and his own orchestra.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Hemmig, William Miller, Howard Hartman and William Mohn comprised a quartette that was well known for singing at funerals.

One of Mr. Hemmig's students of the organ,



Mr. M. L. Fritch, son of the first pastor of Immanuel Church, became his successor at the keyboard around 1898 and served in this capacity until 1934.

In 1903 there was a need for a new Sexton at Immanuel Church. The church was quite fortunate to secure W. V. Mohn for that position as he lived next door to the church. Mr. Mohn served in this capacity for many years doing many tasks beyond those required of him.

In 1907 the first missionary collection was taken. It is evident that the church people are now beginning to look beyond themselves to recognize the needs of the world.

Worshipping by coal-oil or kerosene lamps until April of 1907, the people saw the need for electric lights to be installed. One morning after the worship service in that same month there was a special collection taken for these new fixtures. That collection amounted to \$99.42. The lights were then installed at a cost of \$119.48.

The year 1908 was a big year of growth for Immanuel Church. By this time the Sunday School had grown too large for the present building. The infants had no classroom and the adults were being taught with their children.

Evidently the church could accommodate its worshipers, but they too felt the need for an enlarged edifice and a more worshipful sanctuary. Thus it was at this time, 1908, that the church received a new front in order to accommodate the infant school and the Bible Class. At that same time a tower was erected at a total cost of \$3,475.00.

The building committee for this project consisted of the following men: John Y. Matz, Howard Ruth and Enos B. Messner.

The following is an account of the dedication of that new addition and the laying of the cornerstone from the September 12, 1908 issue of the "Reading Weekly Eagle":

"IMMANUEL REFORMED CHURCH, SHILLINGTON,

LAYS CORNERSTONE OF ENLARGED EDIFICE



Rev. W. J. Kershner, Pastor, Assisted by  
Rev. A. V. Casselman, of Reading - In-  
teresting Exercises in Connection with  
the Event - Handsome House of Worship.

In the presence of a large audience the  
cornerstone of Immanuel Reformed Church,  
Shillington, was laid Sunday afternoon.

The congregation is not erecting a new  
edifice, but renovating and extending the  
old. While the improvements are going on  
services are held in the church.

Prior to the cornerstone laying services  
were conducted in the church by Rev. W. J.  
Kershner and Rev. A. V. Casselman, pastor  
of Calvary Reformed Church, Reading.

The services were opened with an anthem by  
the choir, led by W. A. Miller, while Prof.  
M. L. Fritch presided at the organ.

Rev. Kershner, the pastor of the congrega-  
tion, conducted the opening service. The  
congregation sang "Rock of Ages". Rev.  
Kershner read the 122d Psalm and Rev. Cassel-  
man offered prayer, after which all joined in  
the hymn "I Love To Tell The Story".

#### Rev. Casselman's Sermon

The sermon was delivered by Rev. Casselman,  
who chose for his text Joshua 4:6: "What mean  
ye by these stones?".

The speaker explained the connection in  
which these words were used when the children  
of Israel, after passing over the Jordan into  
promised land, erected a monument as a memorial  
of God's goodness. It was then said that their  
children would ask: "What mean ye by these  
stones?".

The speaker continued: Suppose, when this  
service is over, your children should ask: "What  
do you lay this cornerstone for?". What would  
be your answer? Why do we lay corner stones?  
In connection with the laying of the stone we  
hold a little service, but is that all it means?

If the corner of the building gives way it  
is bad for the building. The masonry of the

corner of the building is hard to put together and keep together. If the foundation of a building is poor the whole building is poor. Consequently ever since men put up buildings they talked about the importance of the cornerstone and were very careful about it. In Egypt you will find buildings that have stood for 7000 or 8000 years that have cornerstones as large as this church and seven feet square.

Everything done in the church is symbolic of something far better. The bread and the wine in communion and the water in baptism are symbols of something far better.

The cornerstone is a symbol of Jesus Christ--"Other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid". Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of His church. He is not the only stone in the corner, but He is the chief one.

The cornerstone binds the building together. What binds us together as Christians? We are bound together by our mutual love in Christ.

#### Articles Deposited in the Stone

Now we put something into the stone. First, we put a Bible into it. This book tells us about Jesus Christ. As the building is held together at the corner by a stone, so the first thing in the church is the Bible. You can have a church without pews and without an organ. In fact, you can get along without everything else excepting the Bible. The stone, therefore, symbolizes the binding force of the Bible.

Bread and Wine are placed into the stone. A church without a communion is a poor church. "I am the Bread of Life. He that eateth of this Bread and drinketh of this cup hath everlasting life." What is the church for except to prepare its members for eternal life?

We put into the stone a book containing the forms of worship. Forms of some kind are necessary. As long as we are in the bodies

selves to God.



we must have some kind of forms. If the stone represents Christ our worship of Him must have some form.

Then we place a hymnbook into the stone. When we reach heaven we are going to sing. John, in his revelation, saw every tribe and nation and they were singing.

The constitution and the charter of the church are placed into the stone. As the stone holds together the corner so this constitution and charter hold the congregation together.

Copies of the church papers are deposited and Why? Because we want to symbolize the fact that the congregation is not so selfish that it thinks it is the only congregation in the Reformed Church or in the world. We want to know what Reformed people are doing elsewhere.

The Reading papers, too, are deposited in the stone. What do these have to do with the church? They are not religious papers. Well, any church that does not expect to have a definite influence on the community had better tear down its building. We want to know what happens, what people are thinking about. The papers symbolize the fact that the church aims to influence every one who comes in contact with it, the same as the secular papers influence people and make us known to each other.

#### What Coins Signify

Coins of this year are placed into the stone. Do you think a church can be run without money? Money is said to be the root of all evil, but it can also be the root of all types of good. What is money? If we have earned it, it is so much of ourselves. If I earn a days wages, it represents so much of my life. It is a day of myself. If I lay that upon the altar, I have given God a part of myself. The aim of the church is to lead men to give themselves to God.

The cornerstone, therefore, symbolizes Jesus Christ - His work in the world, His power, His influence, His kingdom.

Rev. Kershner offered prayer after which he announced that an opportunity would be given for everyone to pass by the cornerstone and deposit an offering. Each person depositing 50 cents or more had the privilege of having his name placed upon a paper which will be deposited in the stone.

The services in the church were concluded by singing "O Lord of Hosts".

#### Rev. Kershner Lays Stone

The congregation then passed to the outside, where Revs. Kershner and Casselman conducted the service prescribed by the Reformed ritual for such occasions. The act of laying the stone was performed by Rev. Kershner.

Immanuel Church was erected in 1874. The same stone which occupied the corner of the old edifice was used in the new. Six feet will be added to the front of the church and when all alterations have been completed the building will be one of the neatest country churches in the county.

In addition to the articles named by Rev. Casselman, a Reformed Church almanac and some old coins, taken from the cornerstone when it was opened, were deposited."

With the completion of the newly renovated church there came a new spirit into the life and membership of Immanuel Church. The building was now one of the finest in the county and the people were quite proud of it.

The first class for confirmation, following



the renovation of the church, were the following:

Mary Mabel Artz	Mamie Wieder
Sallie Mabel Behler	Jeremiah A. Bossler
Katie Alice Gaul	Charles Henry Gaul
Millie Minerva Keffer	James Gring
Laura Minerva Matz	Charles Joseph Hemmig
Edna Florence Moyer	Raymond L. Krick
Bessie Lovina Thomas	Henry T. Matz
Bertha Florence Wentzel	Charles Calvin Shell
Stella Irene Wentzel	Adam William Staudt

This class was confirmed by Rev. Mr. Kershner on Saturday evening, April 3, 1909.

In 1910 a building fund was begun. Also in this year a new "Aid Society" was begun and the proceeds from their work were turned over to the church. This amounted to several hundred dollars.

At a special service held in Immanuel Church the members honored Rev. Mr. Kershner upon the Thirtieth Anniversary of his ordination. This celebration took place in October, 1910.

For many years the present organ had served the congregation faithfully, but with the newly renovated church, the growing congregation, the larger church attendance and the dilapidated organ, the congregation saw the need for a new organ.

organ rather than repair the old one. There were

In 1914 the congregation purchased an Austin organ. Due to the size of the electric the blowers needed to furnish this organ with air, an extension was built on to the church of within several feet. This new addition was built in the rear of the church and beneath the level of the church. At the time when this new addition was joined to the building there was no basement to the church, but it was so constructed that if a basement were built in the future this new addition would be part of that basement. The cost of this addition was \$2,800.00. Land was purchased on

At the same time the new addition was built to house the mechanism for operating the organ it was decided to purchase a steam heating unit for the church at a cost of \$600.00. This unit was also housed in the new addition.

During the next few years there was a steady growth in membership at Immanuel Church. It was during these years that a "Ladies Sewing Circle", a "Ladies Bible Class" and a "Men's Bible Class" were begun.



During the years of World War I there were many men leaving from Immanuel Church to fight for their country. Several of the members of the church, as well as Rev. Mr. Kershner, gave unselfishly of their time to patriotic services within the community. At the end of the war, Immanuel Church gave generously to the War Relief Fund and later to the Japanese War Relief Fund.

It is interesting to note at this point that, according to the Treasurer's records, a large percentage of the church's finances were gained from the proceeds of the cemetery. It was during these years that more land was purchased on New Holland Avenue for use by the church as a cemetery. In all probability the church recognized the cemetery as not only a beautiful and peaceful spot for those who had been laid to rest, but as a bountiful source of income also.

It was also about this time that the sexton, W. V. Mohn, resigned after many years of faithful service to the church. Martin Stoudt was elected to fill the vacancy and did so for many years.

By 1923 the Sunday School and the Church attendance had grown beyond the bounds of the walls; something had to be done. The consistory, after a lengthy debate, voted to have a basement excavated beneath the church. This was done to make additional room for the Sunday School. Later that year it was decided to remodel the main auditorium at the same time that the basement was being excavated.

According to the earliest minutes, still intact, the basement was completed by November of 1924. On November 18, 1924, a special meeting of the consistory was held to make arrangements for the dedicatory services for the new basement. It was decided to have the dedication services on the 2nd, 4th and 7th of December, 1924. Rev. E. B. Messner was selected to be the speaker for Sunday night. When the basement was finished it was furnished with class dividers, chairs, tables, fixtures and necessary equipment for the kitchen, and all other furnishings needed to make this room



complete. The total expense for this basement was \$11,456.09. The following is an itemized list of the receipts:

Mortgage on church	\$2,567.92
Building Fund from S. S.	1,677.95
Church Treasury	1,588.78
Subscriptions	1,213.50
Ladies Aid Society	1,000.00
Cemetery Fund	300.00
Infant School	134.81
Live Wire Class	100.00
Count On Me Class	100.00
Lumber and Material Sold	<u>1700.00</u>
	11,456.09

It is worth while to note at this point that the loan previously mentioned was just one of the many such loans given by John Y. Matz. Throughout the pages of this history there is recorded many occasions when the church needed money for a special cause and received it from Mr. Matz. However, Mr. Matz always charged 6% interest on every loan, which seemed to some people to be a too high rate of interest to charge one's own church. Those who complained about this rate of interest never knew that Mr. Matz unselfishly returned this interest and more to the work of the church.

By the end of the year 1925 the remodeling of the church was completed and plans were made for the dedication of the remodeled auditorium and the basement under one title - the Dedication of Immanuel Reformed Church. This dedication took place on January 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th and 9th, 1926.

The program was to be the last dedication service attended by Rev. Mr. Kershner and serves as a fitting tribute to the fine work he did while pastor of Immanuel Church.

The consistory at this time was as follows:  
Elders - Wellington Krick, Harrison Foreman, William Fichthorn, Oscar White; Deacons - Walter Wentzel, Frank Reigel, Earl Ruth, Clarence Wentzel; Trustees - J. Y. Matz, Howard Ruth and George Matz.

The choir at this time was as follows:  
Sopranos - Alverda Ruth, Elsie Hain, Kathryn Barthold, Florence Hartz, Edna Roland, Laura Roland, Emma Rittenhouse, Ruth Ganster, Margaret Kegerise, Ruth Weaver, Marguerite Frankhouser,



Esther Kolb; Altos - Thelma Arnold, Mrs. Mary Hollenbach, Mrs. Thelma Kachel, Mary Dunkelberger; Tenors - Lewis Willis, William Bitting, Luther Weiss, Norman Heister, Walter Strause, Calvin Hemmig; Basses - Herman Miller, Prof. Charles Hemmig, Daniel Fitterling, Robert Hummel, Arthur Neatock, William Rees and Edwin Becker. Ruth,

Edward The officers of the Sunday School for this year were as follows: President, Daniel Fitterling; Vice President, Floyd Mosser; Advisory Superintendent, Charles J. Hemmig; Associate Superintendents, W. E. Parson, Robert Fister; Treasurer, J. Y. Matz; Secretary, Anna Matz; Assistant Secretary, Kenneth Eberly; Pianist, Priscilla Ruth; Assistant Pianist, Florence Hartz; Librarian, Clarence Wentzel, Assistant Librarians, Margaret Kegerise, Dorothy Arnold; Deacons, Fern Von Neida, Carrie Mohn; Assistant Deacons, Mae Sterner and Dorothy Weinhold.

The teachers and leaders of the Sunday School were as follows: Adult Bible Class, Paul B. Horning; Live Wire Class, Charles J. Hemmig;

Young Ladies Bible Class, Henry B. Matz; Young Peoples Department, Superintendent, Fannie Holl; Assistant Superintendent, Daniel Fitterling; Teachers, Stella Wentzel, Mrs. C. J. Hemmig, Alice Lorah, Martha Artz, Susan Artz, Fannie Holl, Bertha Dunkelberger, Mary Dunkelberger, J. V. Matz, Howard Shilling, Fred Gehret, Earl Ruth, Edward Dunkelberger, Frank Reigel; Temperance, Mrs. Howard Shilling; Missionary, Paul B. Horning; Junior Department, Superintendent, Mrs. Clarence Wentzel; Teachers, Grace Boone, Mrs. H. Shilling, Elsie Hain, Mrs. Irvin Bitler, Gertrude Dunkelberger, Kathryn Long, Catherine Ziegler, Thelma Arnold; Primary Department, Superintendent, Olive Burkhardt; Teachers, Kathryn Barthold, Alverda Ruth, Ruth Weaver, Marguerite Frankhouser, Florence Hartz, Anna Smith; Cradle Roll, Kathryn Barthold; Home Department, Mrs. Charles Mosser; Orchestra and Song Leader, Howard L. Hartman.

The dedication service, held at 10:00 A.M., Sunday, January 3, was featured by the following soloists: A. S. Neatock, Miss Emma Rittenhouse, Kroninger and Rev. I. E. Johnson, brought their



Miss Esther Kolb and Miss Edna Roland. Rev. H. Y. Stoner delivered the sermon.

The service at 2:00 P. M., the same day, included a few selections by a quartette - Ralph Hemmig, Herman Miller, Samuel Neatock and Lewis Miller, a solo by Herman Miller and a violin solo by Leroy Conrad. The address was given by Rev. Thomas W. Dickert, D.D., of Reading, and remarks were given by the former Sunday School Superintendents, Milton Artz, William Miller and Jacob Hemmig.

The service that same evening consisted of music furnished by the combined choirs of Hain's Church and Immanuel Church, solos by Miss Venedi Heinbach, duet by Walter Strause and Arthur Neatock, and the sermon by Rev. I. M. Beaver of Reading.

On Tuesday evening, Rev. Elmer Coblentz, of Second Church, Reading, was the speaker, and on Wednesday evening the Rev. John F. Moyer gave the sermon. On Thursday evening the pastors of the other churches in Shillington, Rev. Victor Kroninger and Rev. I. E. Johnson, brought their

greetings.

On Saturday evening Preparatory and Confirmation Services were held and this was followed by the Holy Communion Service on Sunday. The following are the names of the members of that confirmation class that had the distinction of being the first class to be confirmed in the newly remodeled church, and, regretfully, the last class to be confirmed by the Rev. Mr. Kershner.

Dorothy Mae Arnold	Luke W. Fisher
Helen Marguerite Coldren	Clinton F. Flickinger
Mary Catherine Dunkelberger	George R. Hain
Marguerite Frankhouser	Arthur Keffer
Elsie Elizabeth Hain	Charles Keffer
Margerite Sarah Lutz	John Keffer
Helen M. Snyder	Harold C. Marks
Sadie Evelyn Stitzer	Berton Lee Shonour
Annie Mae Sweitzer	Harold C. Steffey
Kathryn N. White	James Weiss
Ray Barthold	John S. Weiss
John Conrad	
Kenneth Edwin Eberly	
Carl B. Eshelman	

The following also attended the class

Earl Sweitzer	Margarite Kegerise
Herman Lutz	Mamie Bixler
Leroy Von Neida	Miriam Bright

When the church was remodeled at this time many changes were made to the main auditorium. The partition around the room under the balcony was



at this time that the Sunday school of Immanuel Church celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, and the choir pews were arranged to face each other on either side of the chancel, rather than behind the pulpit facing the congregation, a chancel railing was installed, and all new furniture for the sanctuary and the nave was installed. Many of the old pews were sold at this time, but a few of these still remain and may be found on the church balcony. The cost of this furniture amounted to \$4,100.00.

Rev. Mr. Kershner died September 20, 1926. The total cost of the remodeling of the main auditorium was \$7,885.00. The total cost of the basement was \$11,456.00. After paying as many bills as it could, the church borrowed the remainder from the Shillington Bank. The total indebtedness of the church thus amounted to \$6,503.00 at the close of Rev. Mr. Kershner's pastorate.

On June 27, 1926, at a special service for the Knights of Malta in Immanuel Church, the Rev. Mr. Kershner descended from that pulpit for the last time. The next day, after a funeral, he returned home exhausted and retired to bed. It was

at this time that the Sunday School of Immanuel Church celebrated its Fiftieth Anniversary, and the last formal action taken by the consistory while Rev. Mr. Kershner was pastor was a note of congratulations to the Sunday School on its anniversary.

During the illness of Rev. Mr. Kershner the consistory voted to call Mr. Van Devere to supply and preach until further arrangements could be made.

Rev. Mr. Kershner died September 20, 1926. Flowers were sent to the funeral and a note of sympathy was sent to the bereaved family by the consistory. Thus we come to the end of a long and fruitful pastorate of a man who was loved and honored by his congregations and a host of friends. Through Rev. Mr. Kershner's efforts Immanuel Church had grown spiritually, physically, financially and in increased membership. It may truly be said, "Well done good and faithful servant".



## CHAPTER FIVE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF REVEREND  
WILLIAM J. KERSHNER

William J. Kershner was born February 3, 1852, at the Kershner homestead in Perry Township, near Hamburg, Pennsylvania. He was a son of Jacob and Mary (nee Lavenberg) Kershner. He attended the public schools of Perry Township and Leesport. At the age of fourteen he was confirmed at Zion's Reformed Church, Windsor Castle, Pennsylvania, by Rev. Sassaman Herman. His father moved to Tuscarora, Schuylkill County, but William remained with his grandfather on the old homestead, helping on the farm. He attended the Keystone State Normal School at Kutztown, taught three school terms, including one term at Blandon. He attended Ursinus College for two years, then entered Franklin and Marshall College, graduating in 1877. He then entered the Theological Seminary at Lancaster, graduating in 1880, with the degree of A.M. conferred on him. In June, 1880, he was licensed to preach by Lehigh Classis and ordained

pastor of Christ Church, Allentown, to succeed Rev. J. Fitzinger. He served Christ Church until 1883, when the Sinking Spring charge called him to fill the vacancy created by the death of Rev. Wm. F. P. Davis.

On March 27, 1883, he married Emma Gordon Weiser, daughter of Ferdinand and Fredericka (nee Schimpf) Weiser, of Allentown. Rev. Dr. Samuel J. Wagner officiated at the ceremony. This union was blessed with two children, H. Harold and Florence E., married to John W. Forry, a Reading lawyer. Mrs. Kershner died July 25, 1919. Rev. Mr. Kershner married a second time Mary G. Hain, a daughter of Peter Laucks and Sue (nee Overholtzer) Hain, on June 25, 1921. Rev. Dr. C. E. Creitz officiated at the ceremony.

Accepting the call of the Sinking Spring charge in 1883, Rev. Mr. Kershner moved to Reading. According to the minutes of the Lebanon Classis he was instructed to find a suitable dwelling in the Sinking Spring area, but he chose to live in Reading. It was with great joy that Rev. Mr.



Kershner entered upon his new labors, for he was a native of this area and knew these people and their problems well. The charge, one of the largest in the denomination, was reduced in 1885 from four congregations, which Rev. Mr. Davis had, to two congregations. In 1887 two congregations, Immanuel, Shillington, and Christ, Grill, were added from the Allegheny charge. This charge was greatly reduced in membership from his former charge and had two struggling congregations as well. Undaunted by these changes and conditions, Rev. Mr. Kershner set about his new work with the Christian spirit that marked all his work. *Perks County* Rev. Mr. Kershner lived as he preached. This resulted in increased attendance at all his churches. People followed him from one church to another. He often remarked that he would have liked to preach the same sermon at two different churches, but seeing in the present audience people from a previous audience he could not, with justice to them or satisfaction to himself, deliver the same sermon. Plain, unassuming, punctual in all appointments, he never but once in over 45

years missed a church service, and that through an unavoidable accident. He labored untiringly for all and no call, whether day or night, was unanswered. He firmly believed the Sabbath should be without gainful employment and in fulfillment of this he never had catechetical lectures on Sunday or studied his sermons on this day. It was this intense sincerity that rewarded Rev. Mr. Kershner's efforts and made the Sinking Spring charge one of the most outstanding in the Reformed Church; and, numerically and in its spirit, the greatest rural charge in the denomination.

at 10: Rev. Mr. Kershner was chaplain of the Berks County Almshouse and the Berks County Prison for a number of years. He was a director of the Wernersville National Bank from the time it was organized, and a charter member of the Isaac Hiester Lodge No. 660, Free and Accepted Masons.

~~exhaust~~ Rev. Kershner, in his long career, baptized 4,732 people, confirmed 3,901, conducted 2,983 funerals, administered the communion to 131,791, preached 6,680 sermons, had 2,870 catechetical



lectures, raised \$61,456. for benevolences, \$237,250. for congregational purposes, and \$17,410.52 for the Forward Movement, a total of \$316,116.52.

The last services Rev. Mr. Kershner held in his respective churches were special services fitly concluding a lifelong devoted service to his people. They were the Chautauqua Service in the Wernersville Auditorium, June 20, 1926, at 10:00 A. M., the special service at Hain's Church for the Odd Fellows at 2:00 P. M., June 20, 1926, the special service at Sinking Spring on June 27, at 10:00 A. M., when notes representing \$10,000. indebtedness were burned, and at 7:30 P. M. on that same day a special service for the Knights of Malta at Immanuel Church, Shillington. His last public appearance was on June 28, 1926, at the funeral of Catherine Spatz. He returned home exhausted, went to bed and after an illness of three months died September 20, 1926. The funeral was held at Hain's Church on Saturday, September 26, from the C. Norman Lamm funeral parlor. Music

at the funeral was furnished by the combined choirs of his four churches. Rev. Dr. J. V. George, Rev. M. L. Herbein and Rev. Edwin S. Leinbach were the officiating clergymen. Rev. Mr. Leinbach delivered the funeral sermon based on II Corinthians 2: 14, Moffatt's translation.

Rev. Mr. Kershner was buried on a lot given by Hain's Church, the church which he served so faithfully for forty-three years, and which was closely connected with his family from its earliest records. The old Conrad Kershner home nearby is still standing and was one of the places where church meetings were held two centuries ago. The funeral of Rev. Mr. Kershner was said to have been the largest ever held at Hain's Church. It was attended by forty ministers and several hundred people. He will always be remembered for his loyal unselfish service to his Church and for the great work he did to establish God's Kingdom here on earth.

John S. Shillington, St. John's, Shillington, Reformed Church, No representative was present from Larist, Yocum's. The representatives of St. John's, Hain's, informed the committee that their congre-



## CHAPTER SIX

THE PASTORATE OF REVEREND  
 THOMAS W. RHOADS AT IMMANUEL  
 REFORMED CHURCH  
 (1927 - 1934)

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The death of the beloved Rev. Mr. Kershner left a vacancy in both the hearts of the congregations and in the pulpits of these four churches: Hain's, Wernersville; Yocum's, Grill; St. John's, Sinking Spring; and Immanuel, Shillington. By this time the charge had become so large that it was decided, by Lebanon Classis, to divide it into smaller units that would be able to support a pastor. The following is the notice of this action taken from the Lebanon Classis Minutes of December 30, 1926:

"2. Under item 2 the committee presented the following report, which was adopted, and its provisions likewise were directed to go into effect on January 1, 1927.  
 Brethern:

On Thursday evening, Dec. 2, in the Sinking Spring Bank Building, your Committee on Reconstruction met with the representatives of St. John's, Hains; St. John's, Sinking Spring; and Immanuel, Shillington, Reformed Churches. No representative was present from Christ, Yocum's. The representatives of St. John's, Hain's, informed the committee that their congre-

gation had voted unanimously to unite with Christ, Yocum's. This meant a new line-up. After the committee had gone into careful consideration of the whole question it concluded to recommended to Classis the following:

1. That St. John's, Hain's and Christ, Yocum's be formed into a new charge to be known as Hain's charge.

2. That St. John's, Sinking Spring, and Immanuel, Shillington, be formed into a charge to be known as the Sinking Spring charge."

There follows this item no written record concerning the actual decision of the Classis. However, we may assume that the recommendations were adopted. This meant that St. John's, Hain's, and Christ, Yocum's, were combined into one charge and that St. John's, Sinking Spring, and Immanuel, Shillington, were combined into the other charge. Geographically this meant that the pastor of Hain's Church would have to cross the parish boundaries of Sinking Spring and Shillington to reach his other church at Yocum's in Grill. The main reason for dividing the charge as they did at this time was that Hain's, a large and financially sound church, was coupled with Yocum's, a smaller and struggling



church, while St. John's, Sinking Spring, was larger and stronger than Immanuel, Shillington.

During the closing weeks of 1926 and the opening weeks of 1927, St. John's and Immanuel received approximately forty names of ministers who were applicants for the charge. None of these men were selected.

On February 20, 1927, the Rev. Thomas W. Rhoads, then Pastor of the East Petersburg-Eden Charge, Lancaster County, preached his trial sermon at Sinking Spring in the morning and at Shillington in the evening. The members of the various supply committees decided not to hold an election after these services as was their custom, due to the inclement weather, and the typhoid fever quarantine, which limited the number of worshipers that day. Instead, they invited Rev. Mr. Rhoads to return on March 13, 1927. This he did and shortly thereafter was recommended by the Pulpit Supply Committee to the Consistory.

On March 20, 1927, the election was held and Rev. Thomas W. Rhoads was elected to be the new

pastor at St. John's and Immanuel Churches.

The Pulpit Supply Committee was then discharged with a vote of thanks for a difficult task well done. The members of that committee were as follows: From St. John's: David Sharman, Sr., Charles V. R. Evans, Charles W. Krick, William Eckenroad and George Reber. From Immanuel Church there is no record of an actual committee but the members of the consistory at that time were: William Fichthorn, Harrison Foreman, Oscar White, Wellington Krick, Elders; George Matz, Howard Ruth, J. Y. Matz, Trustees; Edward Dunkelberger, Harvey Holl, Deacons; Walter Wentzel, Frank Reigel, Assistant Deacons.

The Committee for Rev. Mr. Rhoads' Installation was then appointed by the Lebanon Classis. The following is that Committee's report:

"Dear Brethren,

Your committee appointed to install the Rev. Thomas W. Rhoads as the pastor of Sinking Spring charge, begs to report that its very pleasant and solemn duty was attended to on the evening of the twenty-first of April, in Immanuel Reformed Church, Shillington, Pa. Members and friends from Sinking Spring



and other places filled the church to its utmost capacity.

Dr. W. F. More of Bethany Orphan's Home and Dr. J. Lewis Fluck of Myerstown had charge of the installation. The sermon was preached by Rev. Edwin S. Leinbach, of Robeson, Pa., on "The Qualities of a True Minister of the Gospel".

The Rev. Thomas W. Rhoads began to serve this charge on the first of May, 1927, and has served faithfully and diligently ever since.

At the first meeting of the consistory which Rev. Mr. Rhoads attended it was decided to elect new officers for the remainder of that year. The following were elected: President, Rev. Mr. Rhoads; Vice-President, Frank Reigel; Secretary, Howard Ruth; Financial Secretary, Harrison Foreman; Treasurer, John Y. Matz.

The new pastor, with an unerring instinct, took up the reigns of his new charge. The first action taken by the consistory and its new pastor was the purchase of the Mohn property which had stood for so many years adjacent to the church at the corner of New Holland Avenue and Washington Streets. The cost of this property was \$2,050., and settlement was to be made by July 20. The

house was later torn down and the land graded. This wise move greatly beautified the church property.

The summer months passed rapidly with Rev. Mr. Rhoads granted two weeks for his vacation. The fall program began with vigor. The Sunday School class taught by Mr. H. B. Matz presented the church with an outdoor bulletin board, the Ladies Aid Society held a banquet for the members of the choir in appreciation of their faithful service in the past, and gas was installed in the kitchen to ease the work of the ladies when they served their meals.

The consistory accepted the pastor's suggestion at this time to begin the publishing of a parish news-letter. This paper was to be published bi-monthly in the interest of the Sinking Spring - Shillington Charge, and was named "The Pastor's Assistant". This paper has been published ever since, bearing the news of the church, number of baptisms, weddings, funerals, pastoral calls and special services.



By the end of Rev. Mr. Rhoads' first year at Immanuel Church, the church was in a fine spiritual condition and growing steadily, reflecting the untiring ambitious efforts of the new pastor, in recognition of which the Consistory, on unanimous vote, increased his salary from \$1,000. to \$1,200. per year, to begin June 1, 1928. This was joyously and graciously received by Rev. Mr. Rhoads at his first congregational meeting held in Immanuel Church March 22.

During these first years of his pastorate, Rev. Mr. Rhoads and his family lived in a rented home in Sinking Spring. To several interested members of Immanuel Church this seemed to be an unsatisfactory condition for which they sought a remedy. At the December consistory meeting in 1928, the building of a parsonage was briefly discussed. The trustees were then instructed to look for a lot or house suitable for a parsonage. Meanwhile the congregation at St. John's was busy looking for a house suitable for a parsonage with the hope of keeping their pastor in their town.

The trustees then began to make a diligent search for suitable lots and houses. Reaching their decision they called a congregational meeting for January 21, 1929. At this meeting the trustees reported a lot at Chestnut and Broad Streets in what was then called Shillington Heights. A motion was made by Mr. Paul Horning, and seconded by Mr. Howard Shilling, that the church build a parsonage. The results of that voting were 38 "yes" and 3 "no" for a parsonage. Mr. Howard Shilling then made a motion that the trustees purchase the property at Chestnut and Broad Streets. This motion was seconded and unanimously favored. Here we must pause to give credit where credit had long been due. It was unknown to many people for many years who the generous benefactor was who graciously donated the property for the parsonage. This remained a secret in respect to the wishes to Mr. John Y. Matz, the benefactor, who so greatly loved his church and respected his new pastor that he desired to give so generous a gift to the work of the kingdom.



first Now having received the land, the consistory contracted Mr. Alvin Huyett, a member of the church and a builder, to do the work on the "day work plan". also present at this meeting

and The members of the church building committee were Walter Wentzel, Paul Leid and Clint Flickinger, Sr., George Matz, William Ruth, a Clarence Wentzel and John Y. Matz. Mr. Matz was elected chairman of the committee. League, the

parson The next few months saw the work of the parsonage progressing rapidly. During this time the members of the congregation were solicited for contributions to defray the cost of the parsonage. With the spirit of achievement prevailing throughout the work of this great venture, a large percentage of the total cost of the parsonage was raised by the end of July when the parsonage was completed. The total cost was about \$13,500., and much of the building material was donated by local businesses. having

made The parsonage, one of the most beautiful and spacious of its kind in this area, received its

first tenants on August 1, 1929. The following week the consistory met for its monthly meeting for the first time in the parsonage. The building committee was also present at this meeting and was discharged with a vote of thanks for its untiring efforts.

This most eventful year was brought to a fitting climax by the beginning of the Christmas Dawn services in charge of the Men's League, the purchase of altar covers and the presentation of these to the church by the Junior Christian Endeavor Society, and the large financial contribution by the Ladies Aid Society.

The new year began with the congregational meeting well attended. It seemed a great new spirit to go forward had spread through the congregation. The pastor then gave his report for the year. He reported the parish was in vigorous health and asked for the congregation's continued help and enthusiasm. He also reported having made 1,024 calls to members, 50 baptisms, 20 weddings, 29 funerals, 147 sermons preached and



55 new members received.

The following years were lean years for Immanuel Church. The church, as well as its members, felt the pinching claws of the monster depression tighten about them. In spite of the unemployment and low economic conditions, Immanuel Church held its own, even surging ahead at times, as was the case when the first "Every Member Canvass" was begun in 1931.

During 1930 the Men's League of the church took it upon themselves to sponsor a Boy Scout Troop. The consistory also opened the church doors to the Camp Fire Girls for a place of meeting.

Trying to shed a ray of light in a darkened world, the consistory decided to have the walls of the church painted, the floors sanded and varnished and a few other minor improvements made to the church during these years. The cemetery also received a face lifting at this time. New shrubbery was planted, retainer walls and an entrance arch were built, and a driveway

through the cemetery was laid.

Realizing the inadequacy of the present system of receiving the church's finances, the consistory discussed the use of church envelopes. It was then decided to purchase the "duplex" envelopes. This system has been in effect ever since.

The year 1931 was brought to a close on December 31 at which time the congregation held its annual meeting. At this meeting the report of the Sunday School was given by Miss Anna Matz, the report of the Ladies Aid Society was given by Miss Mary Huyett. Miss Rhoda Mohn gave the report of the Junior Christian Endeavor Society. Mr. Robert Ennis gave the report of the Boy Scout Troop and Miss Bertha Wentzel gave her report on the newly organized Women's Missionary Society. The members of this society were interested in the pursuits of missionary education in the Reformed Church. The society studied the church's mission work among the Winnebago Indians of Wisconsin and missionary work in China.



Mrs. Clarence Wentzel, Superintendent of the Junior Department of the Sunday School, gave her report on the work done by the juniors in their new Sunday School building. This new building was a portable building acquired from the Shillington Schools for the purpose of meeting the overcrowded conditions in the main Sunday School building. The Men's League excavated the cellar which housed the heating system and was used as their meeting room. This building proved to be a great help in alleviating the crowded Sunday School condition. The Sunday School paid most of the expenses of this project; however, in 1933, the Sunday School found it difficult to meet the payments on their note and asked the Church to help. This was done and the building was debt free.

The year 1932 was another trying year for Immanuel Church, but with determination the Church held to its course, making a few improvements to the parsonage, gaining a few members, paying all bills and installing a blower system in the church.

The death of Mr. William Fichthorn began the year 1933 on a somber note. Mr. Fichthorn was a confirmed member of Immanuel Church and served as elder of the church for many years, giving faithfully of his time and strength as best he knew how.

The main order of business for the year was the removal of the dead trees in front of the church and the subsequent planting of new ones. The total cost of this project was \$33.

During the closing months of this year there had been many complaints against the organist, Mr. Martin Fritch. Whether these complaints were well grounded or not is not a matter for discussion in this paper. Hearing these complaints and realizing the unhappy situation that had developed, Mr. Fritch presented his resignation at the beginning of the next year.

At the next meeting two names were presented, Mr. Evans and Mr. Unger being the two chosen. After the vote was taken, Mr. Ray C. Evans was



declared elected as the new organist. He was officially hired on May 2, 1934, and served in this capacity for many years until he resigned due to illness.

Regardless of the fact that Mr. Fritch resigned, feeling very much hurt about the complaints made against him, he continued to give instructions at the piano and on the string instruments for many years. It would be well if we would mention a brief sketch of his life at this point.

Mr. Fritch was born on November 10, 1876. He is the son of the first pastor of Immanuel Church, Rev. Martin Luther Fritch and Amanda (nee Helman) Fritch. He was born and raised in Shillington, where he attended the public schools for two years. He later entered Stewart Academy at Reading and was graduated in 1892. He then entered Ursinus College. Here some of his classmates were Rev. I Calvin Fisher, D.D., Rev. Frank Fisher, D.D. and Rev. Wallace Wotring, D.D.

Mr. Fritch married Helen B. Krick. He

later took teaching courses at Comb's Conservatory of Music in Philadelphia, where he studied under such great men as Hugh A. Clark and Michael Kegerise.

At the beginning of his music career he studied pipe organ under Prof. Carl A. Wonneberger, organist at St. John's Lutheran Church, Reading, and Prof. E. A. Berg, organist of Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading.

At Ursinus College he studied under Daniel Woods, organist at the Arch Street Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

Mr. Fritch was in charge of music in the Shillington Schools for six years. He was organist at Immanuel Church for forty-two years and also at Hain's Church, Wernersville, for many years.

Mr. Fritch taught the following people at the pipe organ: Mr. Paul Esterly, who became the organist at the Chicago Congregational Church and assistant teacher of pipe organ at the Chicago College of Music; Mr. Norman Heister, who



who became organist at the Alsace Reformed Church; Miss Grace Roland, organist at the Park Evangelical Church, Reading; Miss Blanch Hemmig, organist of Grace Lutheran Church, Shillington; Mr. Ernest Artz, organist at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Reading; Mr. Leon Moyer, organist at Shalter's Church; and Mr. Charles Schmehl, organist at Bern Church, Reading.

He is still living and very active at this writing.

On June 26, 1934, in Cleveland, Ohio, the Reformed Church in the United States and the Evangelical Synod of North America were united to form our present Evangelical and Reformed Church.

Although this merger had no present effect upon Immanuel Church, it was regarded by the majority of its members as a forward step to which they could look with pride. Therefore, we shall conclude this chapter at this point and begin the next one with the new church title,

even though Immanuel Church has never changed its original name.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PASTORATE OF THE REVEREND THOMAS  
W. RHOADS AT IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL AND  
REFORMED CHURCH  
(1934 - 1955)

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The remainder of the year 1934 was occupied with great anticipation as the congregation looked forward to the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of Immanuel Church. Plans were discussed and a program was agreed upon. This anniversary program was to be held the entire week of October 21 - 28. The following is the list of events on that program:

- October 21 - Visiting minister.
- October 22 - Rev. Mr. Dellecker and Choir from the Evangelical Church of Shillington.
- October 23 - Rev. Mr. Kroninger and Choir from the Lutheran Church of Shillington.
- October 24 - Program in charge of the Immanuel Sunday School.
- October 25 - Program in charge of the various organizations of the church.
- October 26 - A night of music.
- October 27 - Preparatory Service.
- October 28 - Fall Communion.

According to the consistorial records this program was well attended and was a huge success.

The year was closed with a musical program by

the choir on Christmas Eve. This program was the first of its kind at Immanuel Church, featuring the choir and accompaniment by a string ensemble. Mr. Evans, organist, instituted this practice for the Christmas Eve service and continued the same through the years.

With the improved economic conditions that accompanied the dawn of 1935, Immanuel Church achieved a more optimistic outlook. A new heating system was then installed in the Junior Department building at the cost of \$118.

The practice of serving Communion at the altar had been continued for sixty years, but, recently, with the larger attendance, it was felt that a more efficient system should be used. With a great deal of patience the consistory began to educate the people toward pew communion. Hearing many and varied opinions, the consistory decided to hold both an altar and a pew communion until all would agree upon the more efficient system of pew communion. Thus, at the spring communion that year, both pew and altar communion were



served.

Serving the communion in the pew meant a great deal of work to place communion racks in the pews. This work was done by Mr. Walter Wentzel, a carpenter and consistoryman. Pew communion also necessitated communion cups and serving plates. These were purchased during the course of the years.

The remainder of the year 1935 was filled with eager plans for this new method of communion. During the course of making these new plans, the consistory discussed the type of worship that they had. It was decided to keep the low liturgical form to which they were accustomed.

The year 1935 brought many improvements to Immanuel Church. A guard rail was installed around the balcony, pavement was laid along the Washington Street side of the church property and paid for by the Ladies Aid Society, and a new system of wiring was installed on the church lawn for use during festivals.

Also during the year additional communion

trays were furnished by the confirmation class, a box was placed in the vestibule for the depositing of church envelopes and new cabinets were made for the kitchen.

During the fall of this year the consistory decided to use the weekly duplex envelopes and sent a letter with each box of envelopes explaining the needs of the church. Enclosed with this letter was a copy of the new budget and a statement as to the average amount suggested for each member to give to the work of the church.

This program, designed to increase the funds received for the church, proved to be beneficial. However, the consistory felt that the church was paying its indebtedness too slowly. Hence a new method to raise additional funds was discussed. This new method was called the "penny-a-meal" campaign and was begun at the beginning of the new year.

By the end of the year 1936 the church indebtedness of \$6,000. had been reduced to \$4,500.

At the congregational meeting held on the



last Sunday of December the pastor explained the meaning of the merger to the people, showing them what a great step the church has taken. He also explained the need for the church's name to be changed as well as the changes necessary in the various organizations of the church.

Following the pastor's report of the state of the church, he emphasized the need for cooperation on the part of each member to work with his greater vigor and a renewed spirit toward the liquidation of the church debt and to support with equal vigor the total program of Immanuel Church. Since only a few members desired altar communion, the consistory decided in 1937 to hold pew communion only. This suggestion met only the slightest opposition and soon the pew communion had a firm hold on the members.

The Junior Christian Endeavor Society presented the church with palms for the communion service -- a practice they continued for many years.

The Adult Bible Class presented the church with two candelabra and the Confirmation Class of that year presented the church with an engraved offering plate.

On May 2, 1937, special services were held to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the pastorate of Rev. Mr. Rhoads at Immanuel Church.

Since the death of Mr. Martin Stoudt, who had served the church so faithfully as sexton, his wife had carried on his duties. The consistory, feeling that it was no job for a woman, in spite of the fact that Mrs. Stoudt was doing an exceptional job, decided to look for a male applicant to fill the position.

At a special consistory meeting, called after the worship service on May 30, Mr. Walter Linderman was hired as sexton at the salary of \$200. per year.

The highlight of church improvement during the year was the conversion of the settee, used in the chancel for so many years, into two chancel chairs, to be placed on either side of



the altar. Mr. Homer Levan was the instigator of this project, hence he was asked to contact the DeLong Furniture Company to make the necessary changes at a cost not to exceed \$70. This was done and the following organizations purchased the chairs: the Young Ladies Bible Class, taught by Mr. Francis Mills, and the Bee Square Class, taught by Mr. Claude Walter.

The year 1937 was the most remarkable year for the raising of finances, reflecting much credit on the generosity of the members and the administrative abilities of the minister. Through the "penny-a-meal" campaign \$1,672.49 had been received, to be used toward the liquidation of the church indebtedness. Donations by the various organizations and church offerings brought the amount paid to this fund to \$3,000. for the year. This reduced the church debt to \$1,500.

Because of the new arrangements made by the placing of the two chancel chairs on either side of the altar, it was agreed by the consistory to raise the altar and to beautify it as best they

grant them the necessary help when needed.

could. Rev. Mr. Rhoads then appointed Mr. Alvin Huyett, Mr. Homer Levan and Mr. Walter Wentzel to make the necessary changes. By February the changes had been made and the results were a beautiful altar, with magnificently hand-carved words "Holy, Holy, Holy" adorning the gradine.

With the increase both in the cost of living and in the financial contributions to the work of the church, the consistory voted to increase the pastor's salary from \$1200 to \$1380. per year.

During the year Rev. Mr. Rhoads was greatly honored by being chosen a delegate from Reading Synod to the General Synod and to a conference at Harrisburg.

For many years the Men's League of the church had sponsored the Boy Scout Troop, affiliated with the church. Having found that the League could no longer continue their sponsorship, the consistory decided to take it upon themselves to do so. This was done and a Troop Committee was organized to supervise the organization and to grant them the necessary help when needed.



Rev. Mr. Rhoads was also granted permission by the consistory to act as chairman of the Missionary Conference to be held at Ursinus College during the summer.

The balance of the year 1938 was filled with great anticipation for the members of Immanuel Church. It was the general feeling among the people that the church indebtedness which had been hanging over their heads for so long might be paid in full by the end of the year. The evidence of this feeling was noted in the Spring Communion attendance, for 507 members communed at this time, making this the largest communion ever administered at Immanuel Church or by Rev. Mr. Rhoads to this date.

The summer months passed rapidly with the instituting of early morning worship services, the raising of the cross upon the altar, and the supply preaching of Rev. William Snyder, moving the church ever closer to the full payment of their indebtedness.

It was agreed by the consistory to hold the

Fall Communion on Sunday, October 9, at 10:15 A. M., and at 7:15 P. M. It was also stated that every effort should be put forth to pay the church indebtedness by this time.

With the feeling of working toward a deadline and a goal, the members increased their giving and by the time the fall communion service was at hand the church debt had been paid in full. Rev. Mr. Rhoads was then asked to secure a speaker for the Note Burning Service to be held on Sunday, October 23, at 10:15 A. M. Rev. C. E. Creitz, D.D., of Easton, was the speaker at this very impressive ceremony. The choirs rendered special numbers and the church was beautifully decorated with flowers.

At the end of this busy and prosperous year, with the church debt paid in full, as well as current salaries and bills, and with the apportionment fully met, the balance in the treasury was exactly \$115.51. All this throws a great deal of credit upon the people of Immanuel Church and their shepherd, both working together with a fine



spirit, under the guidance of the Almighty, toward the day when God's Kingdom will come on earth.

The new year of 1939 was greeted with a continued enthusiastic spirit and not with the relaxed feelings, often expected to follow such a busy and eventful year. Immediately the consistory set about various improvements to the church, the Junior Department building and the parsonage. The Ladies Bible Class and the Bee Square Class had raised enough money to purchase two pews to be placed in the choir loft. The Confirmation Class of that year purchased a new vestment for the pastor.

By May of this year this spirit was beginning to wane slightly. Thus the motion to begin a new Church Building Program was met with mixed emotions, some feeling the time was ripe and others not willing to tackle such a large project so soon after paying the long lingering church debt. However, the majority of the consistory agreed with the pastor and a new church

building committee was organized. The members of this committee were as follows: Messrs. Homer Levan, Alvin Huyett, Frank Boyer, Walter Wentzel, John Doutrich, Charles Good, Paul Leid, C. S. Flickinger, Stanley Raudenbush, Russell Emes, Dawson Muth, Adam O. Huntzinger, Dr. L. R. Rothermel, Miss Emma Mohn and Miss Bertha Wentzel.

This committee then received various church plans and after studying them gave their report to the consistory. They were then asked to study the various methods of raising money for this program. The best method presented was to place small wooden churches to be used as banks in every member's home. This plan was carried through for several years and proved to be a slow, but very helpful, means of raising funds.

Contemporary with these new church building plans, improvements were continually being made to the church. It was during this year 1939, that the interior of the church was completely painted. The contract for this job went to H. R. Monyer at his low bid of \$280. The interior of the



Junior Department Building was also painted at this time. It is interesting to note that many persons felt there should be some artistic paintings placed on the walls between the arches in the front of the church, but after the committee contacted Mr. Goho, an artist, they decided against this move.

During the year 1940 the Adult Bible Class of the Sunday School purchased chimes to be placed in the organ. These chimes were dedicated at the Sunday service, September 22, at 10:15 A. M.

For the first six years after the merger of 1934, Immanuel Church was referred to as Immanuel Reformed Church. Hence the consistory thought it about time they change the name to its proper title, that of Immanuel Evangelical and Reformed Church. A committee was appointed to see about the necessary changes to the charter. For some unknown reason the charter was never changed, although from that time forward the church used its new name.

At the close of the year there was a balance  
bring comfort to the many who were buffeted by

in the Building Fund of \$1,893.19, showing that great strides were taken during the year toward this project.

The end of the year 1941 found the country involved in a World War, the effects of which were felt by all at Immanuel Church. In spite of the many young members of the church leaving for service with the armed forces, there was an increased enrollment of new members in the church. Also during the year Rev. Mr. Rhoads confirmed 51, his largest class to date.

During the years of trials and tribulations brought on by the war, Immanuel Church pitched in to do its patriotic share by sending New Testaments to all the boys in the service and by contributing generously to the War Bond drives.

Rev. Mr. Rhoads was selected to be chairman of the Civilian Defense program of the Borough of Shillington during these years, a task which he graciously accepted as his small part in bringing a lasting peace to the world. He also found time to write cheering notes to all the servicemen and bring comfort to the many who were buffeted by



by the storm of war at home.

To add to the sadness already in the world, the Church received the news that one of its most loyal and faithful members, a great leader with a generous heart, Mr. John Y. Matz, had passed away on July 6th. On July 7th, a special meeting of the consistory was held and the following resolutions were adopted:

We, the consistory of Immanuel Evangelical and Reformed Church, realize that, in the translation of John Y. Matz from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant, we have lost a faithful member, and the community a most useful citizen. We, the consistory, shall ever revere his memory, for his consecrated life and his ardent devotion to his church which he served so faithfully for more than fifty years, having served as treasurer of the church for a period of forty one years.

We admire his loyalty to the Church School which he served as an officer and teacher for many years and later as a member of the Adult Bible Class.

His perseverance, kindness and consecration have been indelibly impressed on the memories and hearts of the members of the congregation who deeply mourn their loss and sympathize with the family in their bereavement.

Therefore with Christian fortitude we look to God, ever remembering that without the will of our Heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from our head, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord.

So in humble submission we bow our heads and say with the Master, "Thy will be done."

Resolved, That the Consistory visit Kindt

Memorial Home in a body on the evening prior to the funeral and procure a suitable token in recognition of his faithful service to the church.

RESOLVED, That a copy of the proceeding be transmitted to his family and the same be spread on the minutes of the Church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Consistory.

Following this meeting, Mr. Adam Huntzinger, who was then serving as secretary to the Consistory, resigned his position to become the new church treasurer. Mr. Guy Bierman was elected to succeed him.

During the Fall of that year Rev. Mr. Rhoads was given permission to join with the other two ministers in the town, Rev. Mr. Kroninger and Rev. Mr. Wasser, for the purpose of taking a religious survey of the borough. Fifty members from Immanuel Church were selected to serve as canvassers. The survey proved to be an arduous task, but quite worth the effort.

The church year was closed with the report of the pastor as follows: 32 baptisms, 31 weddings, 51 funerals, 78 new members, 1310 pastoral calls and a religious survey taken. Rev. Mr. Rhoads



thanked all the members of the church for their hearty cooperation in his work and the work of the church.

The highlight of the building program of the church during these war years was the construction of a study for the pastor on the third floor of the parsonage. This room, which was previously an attic, was divided into two storage closets and a large room for the study proper. When finished it provided adequate space for all the pastor's books, cabinets, desks and working tables.

During this year, 1942, the pastor's salary was increased to \$1500 per year, new cabinets were purchased for the choir gowns, Christmas gifts were sent to the servicemen, and a cabinet was installed for the communion trays.

By the close of the year it was reported that the balance in the Building Fund amounted to \$10,025. Rev. Mr. Rhoads also reported having received 102 new members and that at the present there were sixty men and women in the service from Immanuel Church.

At the close of the year Mr. Harold F. Linderman, who had served the church so faithfully for many years as sexton, resigned and Mr. William A. Miller, one of the church's oldest members and a leader in the church school for many years, became the new church sexton.

By 1943 there were eighty-three men and women in the Armed Forces from Immanuel Church and all were receiving their special gifts and a New Testament along with the church news from time to time, via the "Pastor's Assistant".

In the course of the year a special banquet was held in honor of the members of the choir for their faithful service in the past. Approximately forty-six persons attended.

At the congregational meeting held on the 10th of January, 1944, Rev. Mr. Rhoads made the following report for the previous year: 57 baptisms, 27 weddings, 50 funerals, 1064 pastoral calls, 104 new members. He also reported that there were 129 men in the service at present. By this time the Church Building Fund amounted to \$15,000, most of



which had been turned into Defense Bonds.

The new year was begun on a very sad note. It was reported that out of the 135 men and women in the Armed Forces who were members of the church there had been no gold stars placed on the service flag, but at the first consistory meeting in March it was announced that, due to the death of Mr. William Seltzer, a member of the church, the first gold star would be placed on the flag. Services for Mr. Seltzer were held in Immanuel Church.

During the year Mr. Blaine Fister, a member of the church, and now a student for the ministry at Lancaster Seminary, assisted the pastor at the Holy Communion services.

The year ended with the pastor announcing that a total of 151 new members were added to the church rolls during the year, 589 members communed at the last Communion, 162 men and women were in the Armed Forces, and that a Christmas greeting with names and addresses of the service personnel had been sent to the men and women in the Service.

The following is a copy of the greeting sent to them by the pastor:

"Dear Friends in Military Service:

Some good old fashioned customs  
Go out of style, no doubt;  
But sending Christmas greetings  
We couldn't do without.  
And so the custom lingers,-  
Let us hope it always will-  
For the same old fashioned friendship  
Prompts the same old greetings still.

The glory of Christmas lies in the fact that our thoughts turn away from ourselves, and cluster about our friends, our faith and our Heavenly Father. We, pastor and members of the churches of Shillington - Sinking Spring Charge, therefore, join with that host of friends who are sending greetings to you. We wish for you a Christmastide of joy, peace and victory, made glad by the gifts of love and friendship, and deepened by the sweet memory of God's great Gift to us. May the Christ of Bethlehem be you constant companion, the source of your inspiration, and the strength and song of your hope. We wish for you a real Bethlehem experience: that the love of Christ may be in your heart and surround you. We hope that the day will soon come when the song of the heavenly host shall become a reality, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The old year is dying, The New Year dawns. We want you to dream of great things for yourself, for your church and for the world. A year seems a long time as we look forward. The future very uncertain. But today, at least, is ours. Each day's work, faithfully done, means something accomplished at the end of the year that is worthwhile. Do your work today and leave tomorrow in the hands of God.



'For Yesterday is but a Dream,  
 And Tomorrow is only a vision;  
 But Today well-lived makes  
 Every yesterday a Dream of Happiness,  
 And every Tomorrow a Vision of Hope,  
 Look well, therefore, to this Day!'

And so, during this Christmastide and coming  
 New Year may God bless us every one."

Such letters, filled with hope and encourage-  
 ment, were sent to many of the service men and  
 women during the duration of the war, endearing  
 the church and its pastor to each one's heart.

The Church Building Fund had been growing  
 steadily for the past six years and it had occurred  
 to the members that it would be wise to select a  
 suitable plot of ground on which to build, far in  
 advance of the actual date of building. However,  
 it was not until the April 9th meeting of consistory  
 in the year 1945, that there was any consistorial  
 discussion on this subject. At that time, the  
 following was recorded:

"A discussion was held on securing a site  
 for the new church. Mr. Flickinger suggested  
 the possibility of securing a plot from the  
 County on the southeast corner of Lancaster  
 Avenue and Waverly Streets. No action was  
 taken."

At a later meeting that year another discussion was

held on this subject and the motion was made to appoint the trustees and Mr. L. Fisher as a committee to investigate the issue of securing that plot of ground. This committee reported that in summer that they had contacted the County Commissioners about the purchase of this plot and were informed that the church would get first bid on the land providing the Government did not purchase the same for the purposes of a military hospital. Since no further action could be taken at that time, the issue was dropped and the committee was discharged with a vote of thanks.

A highlight of the year 1945 was the graduation of Mr. Blaine Fister, a son of the congregation, from Lancaster Seminary, Lancaster, Pa. On July 9, 1945, at the regular congregational meeting the pastor announced that Mr. Blaine Fister had secured a position as assistant Pastor in Salem Church in Rochester, New York, and that he would like to be ordained in Immanuel Church. On the third Sunday in October Mr. Fister was ordained as the first son of the church to become a minister of the



Gospel; Rev. Mr. Rhoads was the presiding minister and the Rev. Dr. Lawrence Bair preached the sermon. The church was beautifully decorated and many church members and friends of Mr. Fister were in attendance.

By the end of the year 1945 the church was found to be in the best state of affairs since its founding; there had been a great increase in the membership and in contributions. All of this pointed to the outstanding work done by the pastor. In recognition of his work the following was spread on the minutes of the congregational meeting held on January 13, 1946:

"Mr. Dawson Muth offered a resolution and it was seconded by Mr. Johe, as follows: Be it resolved that the congregation as a whole express its gratitude and appreciation for the outstanding and untiring work of our pastor in both the church and the community."

During the year 1946 the church made various improvements to the church parsonage, the confirmation class donated a communion bread tray to the church, and the lighting system within the church was improved.

In the fall of the year the consistory again

debated the issue of securing an appropriate site for the new church building. Since word was received to the effect that the Government no longer had intentions of building a military hospital on the county-owned land, it was decided that the consistory would meet at the site for purposes of staking off the necessary land they desired. Hence on Tuesday, September 17th, at 6:30 o'clock in the evening, they met at the corner of Waverly and Lancaster Avenues for this purpose. Following this meeting the consistory sent a letter to the County Commissioners requesting an appraisal of this land.

On Tuesday, October 22nd, the trustees met with the County Commissioners in reference to the securing of this proposed site. The Commissioners reported they were having the land appraised. The consistory then appointed Mr. C. Flickinger, Mr. William O. Matz and the pastor to meet with Mr. S. B. Klopp, a local realtor, for the purposes of making their own appraisal of the land. This was done by the close of the year.



The year 1947 saw the return of many of the men and women in the Armed Forces and a new spirit seemed to prevail within the church. The highlight of the year was the celebration of Rev. Mr. Rhoads' twentieth anniversary as pastor of Immanuel Church.

The celebration of this anniversary took place on Sunday, May 4, at 7:15 P. M. The Rev. Dr. Charles E. Schaeffer was the guest speaker. The following was taken from the review of Rev. Mr. Rhoads' pastorate:

"When Rev. Rhoads assumed the pastorate, Immanuel Church had a membership of 300. The present membership is 900. He has received 640 by confirmation and 370 by transfer and re-profession of faith. He has officiated at 864 baptisms, 525 weddings, 701 funerals and has made 16,850 pastoral calls. He has preached 2,247 sermons and delivered 320 addresses before civic, fraternal and religious groups. .... These are some of the visible accomplishments of his pastorate, but of far greater importance are the invisible accomplishments as spiritual leader of this congregation.

.... His spiritual advice and comfort have touched the hearts of each one of us at some time or other. His kindness and generosity are reflected and shared by all who cross his path.

.... On this twentieth anniversary of our pastor, we all join with the Master in saying, "Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant."

The members of this anniversary committee were Mr. Homer Levan, Mr. Claude Walter, Mr. Adam Huntzinger and Miss Emma Mohn.

By the close of the year it was reported that the balance in the Church Building Fund was more than \$35,000.

After a great deal of discussion concerning the various proposed sites for the new church, the consistory decided to offer the County Commissioners the sum of \$15,000 for a plot of ground, consisting of three acres with a four hundred foot frontage at the corner of Spruce Street and Lancaster Avenue. This action was taken at the November meeting of consistory in 1948.

At the congregational meeting, held on January 9, 1949, the Women's Guild reported having given \$1100 to the Church Building Fund during the past year and the Men's League reported that they purchased a bronze plaque to be placed in the church vestibule in honor of the four men who gave their lives during World War II.

This congregational meeting proved to be a very



important meeting. It was during this meeting that the congregation voted on the proposed land purchase for the new church building. This vote also meant that the congregation would have to decide whether or not they wanted to build a new church or make additions to the present building. The outcome of the election was 156 votes to build a new church and offer the County Commissioners \$15,000 for the plot of ground in question, and 38 against such action. The County Commissioners were then notified of the proposed bid.

As a consequence of the action taken by the consistory and the congregation, several members of the church would not accept the action and therefore felt they should transfer their membership elsewhere. The actual loss in membership suffered by the church was only one family. Regretting the small dissension that occurred, but with increased vigor, the church moved rapidly into the new year with their hopes of a new and more adequate edifice soon to become a reality. Much of the early part of the year 1949 en-

tailed discussion pertaining to the church site, which by this time had been annexed to the Borough of Shillington. The Commissioners had reported that they felt that they would be unable to sell the land at this time.

Noted events during the year were the election of Mr. Ralph Frymoyer to the office in charge of all matters concerning the cemetery and the resignation of Mr. William A. Miller as church sexton. It may also be noted that it was during this year that the church kitchen received a much needed painting and many repairs to accommodate the needs of those organizations using it.

By the end of the year there was a total of \$54,050. in the Church Building Fund. This amount had been received over the past decade.

The year and decade closed with the church well within its budget. The church was engaged in an active program to build a new edifice, all organizations were functioning smoothly, and the pastor too found a great new spirit prevailing; a spirit that spurred both congregation and pastor



to march on triumphantly into the future with the fervent prayer that the God who directed them in the past would be ever present to direct them in the future.

It is necessary that the detailed account of this study end with the close of this decade. For details of the years following the turn of the half century mark, consult the well prepared minutes of the consistory. For purposes of further study we shall continue with the illumination of only the most important highlights, remembering that all work toward the building of God's Kingdom on Earth is precious and of the utmost value.

During the year 1950 there was much discussion of the purchasing of a suitable site for the new church; committees were appointed to study the various procedures connected with building, and the following voting was conducted at a special congregational meeting held after the regular church service on September 24th:

"Shall the Church Council make the following offer to the County Commissioners for the purchase of a site for the future erection of a new church building -

- a) A tract of land on Lancaster Avenue, Shillington, in the vicinity of Wheatland Avenue, approximately 200 feet in front and 300 feet deep at \$75.00 per front foot.
- b) A tract of land at Lancaster Avenue and Spruce Streets, of a similar size, at \$60.00 per front foot?"

The results of this balloting were 143 in favor of this motion and 24 against the same. Thus the above motion was passed and the same would be offered to the County Commissioners. However, this proposal and others offered to the Commissioners during the year were all turned down, pending further study and consideration.

An amount of \$11,000 was added to the building fund during the year, bringing the balance in this fund to \$65,000.

A total of 74 new members were added to the church rolls during the year, bringing the total membership of the church to 1100.

On two occasions during 1951 offers were made to the County Commissioners for the purchase of the much debated church site along Lancaster Avenue and both offers were rejected. With the possible purchase of the previously proposed site



and the increased traffic on Lancaster Avenue, the committee had tentatively made a survey of a building site on Spruce Street, approximately 800 feet south of Lancaster Avenue. A portion of land, surveyed by Mr. William Swartz as 4.86 acres, valued at \$5,000, was then sought for purchase by the consistory. The County Commissioners authorized their solicitor to present a petition for the approval of the sale and a hearing date had been set, but a new board of County Commissioners took office and requested the Court for a continuance to give them an opportunity to study the matter to see whether they would approve the sale. The Court so ordered and the issue was again delayed until the next year.

Ever since 1934 Mr. Ray C. Evans had served faithfully and unselfishly as organist and choir director, but, due to his recent illness, he found it necessary to submit his resignation. This was sadly accepted by the consistory who, in turn, honored him with a special gift for his many years of service. Mr. Carl Seltzer, then organist at

St. John's Church, Sinking Spring, was elected to succeed him. With this position came the responsibility of directing both a senior and a junior choir, a task which Mr. Seltzer graciously accepted.

The close of the year saw the balance in the Church Building Fund grown to \$73,050.

The year 1952 was the most eventful year for Immanuel Church since its founding. The highlight of the year was the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of Rev. Mr. Rhoads' pastorate at Immanuel Church, held in May. Details of this affair will be discussed in the chapter dealing with his life.

Following a considerable amount of negotiations by the site committee with the County Commissioners, the committee was informed that the land which the church desired would be put up for public auction and be sold to the highest bidder. Undaunted by this action, the consistory appointed Mr. Arthur Neatock, a local realtor and a member of the church, to act on behalf of the church at this



auction. A bid of \$9,000 was placed by Mr. Neatock at this auction, but was not accepted, due to the fact that the entire tract of land under question was purchased by a local builder and realtor, Mr. Marshall Hughes.

Following the sale of the land to Mr. Hughes, the committee negotiated an option for the same desired tract of land. On December 17, 1952, the desired and much debated plot of ground was purchased from Mr. Hughes. This plot of land consisted of five acres on the site at which Spruce Street and Waverly Street meet. At last the ground had been bought; it then remained for the congregation to give the necessary spiritual and financial backing needed to build the new church.

This year seemed to be a most successful year for the church in the matter of the purchasing of land. A section of between five and six acres was purchased by the church for the purpose of additional cemetery space. It may also be noted, in connection with the cemetery, that since its establishment seventy-five years ago, there have

been more than 800 burials within its walls.

By the end of the year there had been circulating a great deal of sentiment concerning the possible division of the Sinking Spring - Shillington Charge into separate self-supporting parishes. There was no immediate action taken concerning this division. However, with such an action pending and with increased work resting upon his shoulders, Mr. Carl Seltzer, the organist at both churches, resigned to become the organist at St. John's alone. The consistory accepted his resignation with regret and proceeded to seek possible applicants for the position. Mrs. Mildred Gabriel Moyer was elected.

The purchase of the church site for \$9,000 and of the cemetery site for \$3,800 reduced the Building Fund to \$68,550 as of the close of the year.

For several years the congregation of Immanuel Church had desired to end the existing charge relationship with Sinking Spring Church. They felt that they were financially able to support a full



time pastor who would in turn be able to give more of his time to their work. During the month of February, 1953, the consistory petitioned the Reading Synod to take the necessary action to so divide the Charge. In a struggle to acquire suitable Contemporary with the plans of the Shillington Church, the Sinking Spring Church likewise took action in order to secure the services of their pastor, Rev. Mr. Rhoads. After much deliberate and difficult consideration, Rev. Mr. Rhoads advised the consistory of St. John's Church that he would accept the offer made him by Immanuel Church, Shillington. The division of the Charge took effect on the first of July that year. Having finally secured the desired church site and a pastor who would now be able to devote all of his time to Immanuel Church, the consistory set about making great strides toward the new church. However, such plans were soon spoiled by the announcement that the Governor Mifflin School District desired to use the land on which the church site was located for the erection of a new

school building. This meant, of course, that the church would have to start from the beginning in search of another suitable plot.

At the present writing, Immanuel Church is once more involved in a struggle to acquire suitable land, having sold their plot to the Governor Mifflin School District for \$16,000. This writer feels certain that within a few months a location, agreeable to all, will be purchased and the long awaited dream of a new and adequate edifice will become a reality for the people of Immanuel Evangelical and Reformed Church, Shillington, Pennsylvania.

All Immanuel Church goes forward with the fervent prayer that the God who prospered its past will pilot it triumphantly into a great future. That He will do so is a certainty; for leaders, members and pastor are loyally united in one Great Cause.

"With God as our strength, there can be no end but victory, triumph!"



Fraternity and a CHAPTER EIGHT Student Army  
 Training Corps A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF the college.  
THE REV. THOMAS WILLIAM RHODES  
 In the Fall of 1916, Mr. Rhodes enrolled in

Thomas William Rhoads was born May 29, 1899, at Reamstown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Cloyd Rhoads, who still reside in the old homestead at Reamstown. At the time of his birth his father was actively engaged in the bakery business; a business that supplied a large part of that territory with baked goods for many years. He was baptized by Rev. Jairus A. Wickert and confirmed by Rev. W. D. Marburger. He attended Reamstown public schools, where his teacher was Mr. Emerson Johe, who is now a member of his parish. Leaving the Reamstown schools after his sophomore year in high school, he entered the Ephrata High School and was graduated in 1916. During this time he had been superintendent of the Salem Reformed Church Sunday School. He then entered Franklin and Marshall College in the Fall of 1916. During his college days he was a member of the Phi Kappa Tau national social

fraternity and a member of the Student Army Training Corps then affiliated with the college.

In the Fall of 1920, Mr. Rhoads enrolled in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He pursued his studies there with the same industry and vigor that was characteristic of him during his undergraduate days at Franklin and Marshall. Having been a day student at Franklin and Marshall for a long duration and realizing that he had been missing much of the fellowship, he entered whole-heartedly into the life about the Seminary. In recognition of his ability to win friends, his classmates elected him president of the senior class. His high scholarship is attested by the fact that he was selected to represent the Department of New Testament Science as a Commencement speaker. He was graduated from the Seminary in May, 1923.

During Mr. Rhoads' Seminary days he became quite interested in tennis -- a sport he learned to play well. He often regrets that he does not have more time for this recreation. Also during his



Seminary days he did supply preaching at our parish, Reformed Church in Manchester, Maryland, which often necessitated traveling by "horse and buggy" and street car.

The summer after graduation from the Seminary, Mr. Rhoads became the Assistant Pastor to Rev. Dr. Gustave A. Poetter, pastor of St. Mark's Reformed Church, Reading, Pennsylvania, where he conducted the first Daily Vacation Bible School in the church's history.

Desiring to work toward his Master's Degree, Mr. Rhoads entered Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, New York, in the summer of 1923. However, having enrolled in the schools, he decided to take those courses that he felt would be most helpful to him in the pastoral ministry. Having taken courses in speech and homiletics he ended his post-graduate course in the Spring of 1924.

On June 1, 1924, Mr. Rhoads was ordained and installed in the East Petersburg Reformed Church, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The East Peters-

burg-Eden Charge was Rev. Mr. Rhoads' first parish. On June 12, only eleven days after he was accepted ordained, he married Ruth Anne Irwin, the daughter of Ralph Dudley and Nora Grace Irwin of Lancaster. Mrs. Rhoads was born July 15, 1904, in Lancaster, attended the public schools there and was graduated in 1921. She then entered Millersville State Normal School and taught eight grades in the one-room school house in Silver Springs, Lancaster County, until her marriage. On July 31, 1926, the Rhoads' home was blessed with a daughter, who was named Elizabeth Anne. She attended the Shillington Schools and was graduated in 1944, at which time she entered West Chester State Teachers College, graduating in 1947. After teaching Elementary School for several years she married John R. Roberts, a graduate of Kings Point Merchant Marine Academy and Drexel Institute of Technology, and at present a chemical engineer for Quelcor Corporation, of Chester, Pennsylvania. The Roberts reside in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania, with their son, John H., who has just recently



celebrated his second birthday.

On May 1, 1927, Reverend Mr. Rhoads accepted the Call to the Shillington-Sinking Spring Charge. For the first two years of this pastorate the Rhoads family lived at 50 Woodrow Avenue, Sinking Spring. In 1929, Immanuel Church, Shillington, built a new \$13,500 parsonage at 140 Chestnut Street, Shillington, which was to become the new home of the Rhoads family. On June 7, 1930, the new parsonage was blessed with its first birth, when a son was born to the Rhoads family, who was named Robert Irwin. He attended the Shillington Schools and was graduated in 1948, at which time he entered Franklin and Marshall College, graduating in 1952. He then entered the Lancaster Seminary and at the present hopes to be graduated on May 18, ordained at Immanuel Church on June 5, and to enter the United States Army Chaplains Corps on June 27, 1955. He was married on August 28, 1953, to Lois Christine Gromis of Reading. She is a graduate of the Reading Schools and Kutztown State Teachers College. At present she is a sixth

grade teacher in the Reading School System. They reside in West Lawn, Pennsylvania.

On March 13, 1933, the Rhoads family was blessed with a second daughter, who was named Barbara Ruth. She, too, entered the Shillington Schools, was graduated in 1951, at which time she entered West Chester State Teachers College. She will be graduated in May of this year and married to Mr. Lee Schaebler in June. Mr. Schaebler is at present a sophomore at Jefferson Medical School, Philadelphia.

During Rev. Mr. Rhoads' pastorate at St. John's Church, Sinking Spring, the congregation paid in full debts amounting to \$75,000, and added four hundred members to its rolls. In 1953 the Charge was divided and Rev. Mr. Rhoads resigned as minister to the Sinking Spring congregation. In recognition of faithful and diligent service to that parish for more than twenty-five years, the congregation held a farewell party at which time Rev. and Mrs. Rhoads were honored for their labors and devotion.



When Rev. Mr. Rhoads began his pastorate at Immanuel Church, Shillington, the membership was 300. At present the membership is 1200. During his pastorate at this church the congregation paid their church debt of two thousand dollars, which was due on the mortgage, one of \$7,000 incurred in renovation of the church, another of \$13,500 for the parsonage, one of several thousand dollars for a new church school building, and at present have a total of \$115,000 in their Building Fund.

Besides being an excellent administrator, Rev. Mr. Rhoads' ability as preacher and pastor have endeared him to the hearts of all those who come in contact with him. At several morning worship services people have been turned away due to the lack of space and Rev. Mr. Rhoads' excellent ability as a preacher. As an orator, Rev. Mr. Rhoads is respected by the entire community of Shillington and neighboring towns. He speaks to civic, educational and professional groups, and everywhere is held in the highest esteem. It is

impossible to enumerate the places at which he has delivered sermons and speeches.

Rev. Mr. Rhoads is vitally interested in all community affairs. He is a member of the Lions International Club of Shillington, a member of the Reading Y. M. C. A., past president of the Reading Ministerial Association, a member of the Board of the Recreation Center of Shillington, and past chairman of the Civilian Defense Board of Shillington. He also broadcasts frequently over the local radio networks.

Rev. Mr. Rhoads has also served his church-at-large faithfully. He represented Lebanon Classis at the General Synods held in Cleveland in 1934, St. Louis in 1936 and Columbus in 1938. He also served as chairman of Missionary Conferences at Ursinus College in 1938 and 1939. He has also served as president of Lebanon Classis and has been roll clerk of the Reading Synod for the past ten years. At the present he is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Phoebe Home for the Aged at Allentown, Pennsylvania.



On Sunday, May 4, 1952, Rev. and Mrs. Rhoads were honored by both of their churches at a twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of their pastorate at the Sinking Spring-Shillington Charge. Rev. Allan S. Meck, D.D., LL.D., was the guest preacher. Both churches showered their beloved pastor and his wife with rich gifts in appreciation of their kindness and sympathies, for their joys and sorrows that they shared with them over the past years. The following is a quotation from the anniversary program:

"His spiritual advice and comfort have touched the hearts of each one of us at some time or other. His kindliness and generosity are reflected and shared by all who cross his path.

On this twenty-fifth anniversary of our pastor, we all join with the Master in saying, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'."

Rev. Mr. Rhoads reads extensively, having a library of several thousand books, most of which are books of sermons. His chief athletic hobby is tennis, which he thoroughly enjoys but finds little time to play. His favorite sport is baseball, which he no longer plays but follows with a great enthusiasm. He has a great appreciation for

poetry which is often discernible in his sermons. His favorite form of relaxation is to wade upstream, rod and reel in hand, to catch the "big ones".

Rev. Mr. Rhoads' personality, revealing itself in his utter sincerity, deep Christian humility, untiring industry and warm congeniality, endears him to the hearts of all with whom he comes in contact. During his pastorate at the Sinking Spring Charge he compiled the following outstanding record: Baptisms, 1410; Funerals, 990; Weddings, 854; Confirmations, 1520; and made approximately 28,400 pastoral calls.

May God grant him continued strength, power and wisdom to carry on in the high calling of God to which he has responded with his whole heart and soul and mind; and may his life of service to God and man achieve its highest rewards!

William Bentley	127-130, 144, 145
Berney Bell	132-137
Charles Kilmaker	138-137
John Deutrich	138-145
Charles Good	138-145
Hubert Ennis	138
Paul Lied	138-143
Wm. Huntsinger	140-148
Lorenzo Fisher	141-150



A P P E N D I X

The following have served Immanuel Reformed Church in the named capacity. The dates of service follow each name. The writer wishes to state that the accuracy of this list is not above reproach. The writer also wishes to thank Mr. William O. Matz for compiling much of this material.

TRUSTEES

George Matz	'27-'38
John Y. Matz	'27-'41
William Ruth	'27-'34
Alvin Huyett	'35-'53
Frank Boyer	'39-'41
Dawson Muth	'42-'53
Clint Flickinger	'42-'54
Earl Guldin	'53-'55
George Eckenroth	'53-'55
D. Luther Hartz	'55

ELDERS

William Fichthorn	'27-'37
Harrison Foreman	'27-'35
Earl Ruth	'27-'35
Walter Wentzel	'27-'40, '44, '45
Harvey Holl	'32-'37
Charles Ellmaker	'32-'37
John Dautrich	'35-'46
Charles Good	'38-'45
Robert Ennis	'38
Paul Lied	'39-'43
Adam Huntzinger	'40-'49
Lorenzo Fisher	'41-'50

TRUSTEES (Con't.)

Dawson Muth	'41
Henry Lorah	'46, '47
Homer Levan	'47, '48
Claude Walter	'48-'53
Charles Stamm	'49-'55
G. Daniel Hoffman	'49-'50
William Matz	'51-'55
Frank Jenkins	'51-'54
Warren Miller	'54-'55
Russell Berger	'55

DEACONS

Edward Dunkelberger	'27-'29
Harvey Holl	'27-'29
George Hain	'27-'29
Charles Ellmaker	'27-'29, '31
Arlan Mosser	'27-'29
Paul Lied	'27-'33
Charles Keffer	'31-'32
Lloyd Matz	'31-'32
Clint Flickinger, Jr.	'32-'34
John Dautrich	'32-'34
Charles Good	'33-'37
Robert Ennis	'33-'37
Adam Huntzinger	'34-'39
Claude Walter	'34-'45
Lorenzo Fisher	'35-'40
Homer Levan	'35-'46
Eugene Fosnacht	'36-'38
Henry Lorah	'36-'38
Guy Bierman	'39-'50
Harold Keiser	'39-'41
J. Blaine Fister	'40
Frank Jenkins	'41-'50
David Burkhart	'41-'45
William Matz	'42, '48-'50
Charles Stamm	'42-'48
G. Daniel Hoffman	'46-'48
Ralph Deisher	'46-'48, '54-'55
David Peters	'47-'53



DEACONS (Con't.)

Russell Berger	'48-'54
Robert Moyer	'49-'51
Warren Miller	'49-'53
Lee Seibert	'49-'53
Goodwill MacFadyen	'51-'54
Leroy Conrad	'51-'54
J. Stanley Ruoff	'51-'54
Donald Werner	'52-'53
Leonard Shearer	'54-'55
J. Woodrow Savage	'54-'55
Jack Gounder	'54-'55
Paul Kalbach	'55
Marvin Conrad	'55
Lester Breining	'55

ORGANISTS

Benneville Hemmig	'74-'97
Martin L. Fritch	'97-'34
Ray C. Evans	'34-'51
Carl Seltzer	'51-'52
Mildred G. Moyer	'52-

SEXTONS

(not recorded)	'74-'91	
Sarah Body	'91-'95	
Eva Body	'95-'97	
George Matz	'97-'02	
William V. Mohn	'02-'19	
Harrison Foreman	'19-'21	
Martin Stoudt	'21-'33)	years are
Mrs. Martin Stoudt	'33-'37)	debatable
Walter Linderman	'37-'42	
William A. Miller	'42-'49	
Harvey Clouser	'49-'50	
Ernest Stefanucci	'50-'51	
John Zechman	'51 (served several months)	
Charles Matz	'51-'53	
Earl Guldin	'53-	

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The German Reformed Church Messenger

The Reformed Church Messenger

The Pastor's Assistant, published by the  
consistory, edited by the pastor.