

Chestnut Level Presbyterian Church

Celebrating 300 Years

Rooted in Faith - Branching to the Future

On the 250th anniversary of our church, Dr. G. Aubrey Young delivered a sermon, "History, Heritage, and Hope." A few words from his research fit well here. He wrote, "If the Reformed faith was born when Martin Luther nailed his thesis on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, then the church at Chestnut Level is more than half as old as Protestantism." Measured in terms of our own denomination's history in America, this church was founded only five years after the organization of the first Presbytery, and 78 years before the first General Assembly. Even more remarkable is the fact that this congregation was organized 21 years before George Washington was born. Our congregation has now been in existence for 300 years.

How long is 300 years?

Chestnut Level was a church before America was a nation. Consider therefore, what this congregation has been witness to, and has participated in, across the years. It endured the early stages of colonization in a forest wilderness. It passed through oppression, depression, revolution, panic and more wars than we want to count. In the course of time, it saw a few English colonies, scattered along the eastern seaboard, develop into a great and independent nation. It had a part in the beginning and development of representative government. It hailed the Declaration of Independence, helped ratify the Constitution, and welcomed George Washington as the first President. It witnessed the rise of political parties, abolition of slavery, and the coming of the New Deal. Then came the nuclear age, the establishment of the U.N., and election of John F. Kennedy as President. Our church watched as a man first walked on the moon. Witnessed also was the tragedy of the Challenger, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. We have accepted the modern conveniences brought to us by the age of technology. We stood strong with our nation through the tragic events of 9/11. Yes, 300 years from our founding, much has changed in the church and the world. But, through it all, during good times and bad, Chestnut Level has maintained a Christian witness in that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached faithfully for three centuries.

Our Heritage - Our History

Originally from the Lowlands of Scotland, our forefathers here at Chestnut Level Presbyterian Church traced their religious roots back to John Knox. Knox was a follower of John Calvin, who we call the father of Presbyterianism. Staunchly anti-Catholic, these Lowlander Presbyterians resisted the efforts of Mary, Queen of the Scots, to undo the reformation back in Scotland. Later they became willing shock troops in the tragic attempt to rescue Northern Ireland from Catholic influence. Poverty was rampant at this time in Scotland, and many Scottish Presbyterians, seeking a better life, migrated to the Northern Ulster Counties of Ireland at King James I of England's urging. Although no Irish blood ran through their veins, these Scots became known as the Scotch-Irish. Considered trespassers by the Irish-Catholics, as well as second-class citizens by the Anglicans for not adopting the Church of England, the Scotch-Irish were forbidden to construct Presbyterian churches and forced to tithe to the Church of England. The Scotch-Irish also faced political and economic discrimination, and these factors all led to their fierce desire to come to America.

The Scotch-Irish immigration began in the early 1700's, and by the time of the American Revolution, 250,000 Scotch-Irish had landed in America. Most of these immigrants settled on the banks of the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers. William Penn's religious tolerance, along with the rich farmland, drew the settlers to Pennsylvania. The Scotch-Irish created churches wherever they settled and the founding dates for the oldest churches in the Donegal Presbytery reflect the pattern of Presbyterian migration. Only three churches, Chestnut Level, Donegal, and Middle Octorara, were charter members of the Donegal Presbytery in 1732. Used as a military tool by the pacifist Quakers, some Scots were eventually diverted to the Drumore area, where there was a dispute over the Maryland-Pennsylvania border. Because of the Scots' anti-Catholic stance, they were an eager and effective force defending Pennsylvania's border from Maryland's Roman Catholic-affiliated government. We would note here that Chestnut Level's ancestors, specifically, had landed in New Castle Delaware and then settled in Southern Lancaster County in 1711. That year the first congregation of Chestnut Level Church was established. In 1715, a log structure was supposedly built in the midst of a grove of chestnut trees in Centerville, near what is known as the Morrison Cemetery. If indeed this was the first building, a second building, also log, was constructed in 1729 at the site of the old cemetery at the foot of the hill just south of our present church. The third house of worship (the one we worship in today), was completed in either 1765 or about 1776. In 1765, William P. Ritchie had deeded one and a half acres and twenty perches to the church for ten pounds (\$28.00) along with the following stipulations:

- A gallery must be provided in the church for Ritchie's slaves.
- Ritchie or any male member of his family should not pay pew rent.
- Ritchie must be given permission to bury his dead in the cemetery, provided that they die in "these parts."

The uncertainty of the year of completion of the church is due to claims that construction began in 1765 but may not have been finished until the men fighting in the Revolutionary War returned home to roof it in 1776.

The original church structure, built from field stones and oak and chestnut logs under the guidance of Thomas Clark, Patrick Harra, and Moses Irwin, has seen many physical changes since its erection. The original building had an arched ceiling, box pews, and the pulpit to the west with the entrance to the east. When the pulpit moved to the north side, the east entrance became a window, making five windows to the east and only four to the west. The new entrance was now in the south, with two doors. Still later, the pulpit was moved to the south and the two doors were sealed off. One large door was then built into the north end, along with a vestibule and gallery. The summer of 1882 saw the installation of stained-glass windows, including a memorial window in the west for Lindley Rutter. Walls were furred and frescoed, the roof was re-slatted, and new chandeliers were hung, all for a grand total of \$3,300. In 1893, the bell was placed in the new tower, and the church was again repainted and re-frescoed. 1893 also saw the installation of new steam heat, paid for by Mrs. Janet McCullough. In 1914, in addition to new carpet, chandeliers, and painting, a new wainscot and the current oak pews and pulpit furniture were added to the church. Electric lights replaced those chandeliers in 1922, with the present light fixtures being hung in 1941, the same year the electronic Hammond organ was installed. 1960 saw a new Baldwin organ, along with more parking spaces, a native stone bulletin board next to the church, and some interior re-decoration that included the hanging of the velvet dossal behind the pulpit. A new manse was also constructed in 1960, with stone provided by the men of the congregation and slate from old buildings for the roof.

Academy and Church House

In 1852 Mr. Philip W. Housekeeper sold us a plot of ground (across the road) for six dollars, for the Chestnut Level Academy. Largely through the efforts of Lindley Rutter, a 40-year pastor of this congregation, the Academy was built with the community paying for its erection.

The Academy was a two-story brick structure with a wide porch across the front and it stood next to a home on the corner. Tuition cost was ten dollars and boarding for a week cost two dollars. Classes such as Algebra, Greek, Rhetoric, History, and Composition were held on the second floor, while the first floor was used for meetings and Sunday school classes. The Academy was attended by such notable men as the Hon. J. Hay Brown (Judge of the Supreme Court), Hon. W. U. Hensel (Attorney General), Drs. John and Harry Durn, and Robert Risk (a columnist for the Lancaster Newspaper). The illustrious James Menaul, a graduate of Princeton Seminary, was at one time principal of the Academy before founding the Menaul Missions School in New Mexico under the Presbyterian Home Missions Board. Rev. Ross Ramsey was the first teacher. He was succeeded by Mr. James Doran, during whose administration a dormitory for the Academy was built. (Later this structure was to become known as the Church House.) An unpaid debt necessitated the property being sold at sheriff's sale in 1859. But the new owner, Mr. Sanders McCullough, gave the property back to the church in 1863. In the early 1900s, free public high schools came into being and the Academy was closed. (Note: Drumore High School graduated its first class in 1906.) Thomas Nichalson was the last teacher serving the Academy. The Academy was razed in 1923 and the materials were used to build what was to become the auditorium for the Church House. The cost was \$4,000.

In the will of Mr. Thomas R. Ankrim, \$1,506.43 was given to the church for the purpose of "fitting out" the auditorium. It was given in memory of his wife, and it would be known as the Zella Wentz Ankrim Memorial Room. As a result, the auditorium received a bronze memorial tablet, 160 permanent seats, 50 folding chairs, linoleum covering for the floor, carpet covering for the platform, new lighting fixtures, stained window glass, screens for the windows, refinishing of wainscoting and refinishing of platform furniture.

Conference

The Church House was used during 1900-1951 for the housing of delegates attending the Westminster Bible Conference. This conference started as a three-day retreat for ministers of Presbytery, but eventually became a week-long conference for young people. In 1899 our then pastor, Dr. John Galbreath, along with three other spiritual leaders from our Presbytery, attended the seventeenth annual session of the General Conference for Christian Workers directed by Dwight L. Moody. They came home from that conference with the idea of organizing a conference of their own. The Westminster Bible Conference was immediately organized with Chestnut Level extending a cordial invitation to the Presbytery to have the Conference on our grounds. "The accommodations will not be luxurious," warned the Committee, "but we hope comfortable and without risk to persons in ordinary health." The Church House was offered to accommodate all who attended. Records tell us that "trains arriving at Peach Bottom and Quarryville were met morning and evening." The Committee earnestly hoped that members of Presbytery "would give up these three days, and spend them in this quiet place," for rest, prayer, Bible study and Christian fellowship. Those who drove by buggy "will have their horses cared for during the time of the Conference."

The first Conference, with seventeen ministers registered, was quite successful. It was held May 29 to 31 of 1900. Many people were present from congregations as far away as York County, as well as from Chestnut Level. This first year only ministers had been invited, but on the final evening, the ministers, in evaluating the Conference, decided to enlarge its scope by encouraging ruling elders and young people to attend in the future. Records seem to show that since its inception this Bible Conference was designed to attract and train the youth of the Presbytery as much as any conference of the present day.

The entire expense of the Conference was met by offerings or by subscriptions of those who attended. The Sanctuary, Church House, and grounds were used free of charge, and the congregation offered the same for future conferences. Accommodations were made to house 100 people in the Church House. Ample space was also provided on the church grounds where delegates could pitch their tents. In early years, ladies of the church took up carpets and cleaned, and took linens and counterpanes home for laundering. But for future conferences, members of the congregation decided to no longer provide bedding for the sleeping areas in the Church House or tents, and it was decided to obtain the services of a caterer who would furnish meals in the "spacious dining rooms" at a moderate cost. These dining rooms were on the main floor of the Church House with the kitchen in the basement so that all meals and dishes had to be carried up

and down the stairs. In the records of 1910, it states that Leander Waters was to be employed for three and a half days of service for \$1.00 per day. Also in 1910, \$10.00 was given to Miss Alice Ankrum (who, along with her brother, lived in the Church House as a sexton) for "inconveniences she suffers in the Church House during Conference and other times." Hired help did the scrubbing, whitewashing, dishes, and cleaned and filled lamps.

In later years, delegates ranging in age from 14 to 23 years attended the Bible Conference. Women of the church cleaned, furnished rooms, and served meals for the young people. Delegates attending paid \$16.00 for the week and provided their own bed linens. Girls were housed in the Church House while boys slept in the barn at the old manse described in the next paragraph.

Manse

In 1868 the congregation purchased property from Rebecca Rogers to serve as a manse for the minister. This property was located across the street from the church on River Road. It wasn't until almost a century later, in 1960, during the ministry of Rev. Dunham, the congregation decided to build a new manse. It was a rancher constructed of local stone, and located to the east of the church. The manse was a labor of love by the whole congregation. The stone was salvaged by the men of the church from the Lester Landis farm, (which had been procured by the State to create Susquehanna State Park.) The purchase price of the stone was \$1.00. Don Risk was contracted along with his sons Paul and Dick to build the manse. Paul Risk designed the building and completed most of the work. Church elder George Brinton donated slate for the roof from one of his unused barns. Elder Leroy Andrews, of Andrews Excavating, Co., did the excavating. Sam and Bob Powl donated the plumbing and heating systems, and the women of the congregation provided food and refreshments to all of the hardworking men. The women also cleaned the manse upon completion, and the congregation all pitched in to help the Dunham family move in.

Rev. William J. Netting was the last pastor to live in the manse. In June 2001 the building was converted into office space for the Church. On June 9, 2002, it was renamed "The Dunham House" in a dedication service accompanied by an open house.

Cemeteries

As for the church cemeteries, the original burial ground was located at the corner of River and Slate Hill Roads about a fifth of a mile east of the current sanctuary. It was used by the congregation for the first 125 years of its existence.

At a little over half an acre, it is enclosed by a stone wall with slate coping and a small iron gate. On one of the concrete posts supporting the gate is lettering stating the founding date as 1725. The deed recorded in the archives of the Lancaster County Court House indicates that the congregation probably merely held "squatter's rights" to the land up until 1765. The first internment of about 300 burials was that of Elizabeth Shaw, wife of William McPherson, who died at the age of 36 in 1726. Upkeep of the old cemetery has included resetting of the tombstones in the early 1930's. During this time, William Frederick Worner, the librarian of the Lancaster County Historical Association, surveyed the tombstone inscriptions and presented the names and dates in a handwritten book to the Church in 1939. The book is kept in the Church archives. Major wall repairs were completed in 1984.

By the 1840's, space was becoming an issue in the old cemetery and steps were taken to secure a larger burial ground. To meet this need, a deed dated March 20, 1849 and recorded at the Lancaster County Court House marked the purchase of nearly 2 acres from the William Rodgers farm adjacent to the present church building. In April of 1910 another acre was purchased again from the Rodgers farm and in 1923 Chestnut Level Presbyterian Church Cemetery was granted a charter under the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Chestnut Level Cemetery Association now had its own board, consisting of three Trustees of the Church and four additional congregation members. In 1941 the cemetery trustees bought another small piece of land to complete a rectangle plot of three acres. In 1953 a purchase-lease agreement was drawn up with the then-owners of the Rodgers farm, Graybill and Alvin Wenger. An additional 3.2 acres were purchased but were to be farmed until the church needed the burial space. This completed what is the congregation's current cemetery, a place where those of us who have passed on are honored and remembered.

Holtwood Church

The Holtwood Presbyterian Church united with Chestnut Level's congregation in 1969. This was precipitated by the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company's decision to close the Holtwood Village. The church was dismantled and the stained glass windows as well as the slate roof were carefully removed and stored until the early 1970's when the congregation of Chestnut Level decided to build an addition to the south side of the church. This addition included a pastor's study, restrooms and a large meeting area, that became know as the church lounge. Paul Risk Associates designed the addition and incorporated Holtwood's beautiful stained glass memorial windows and slate. The stone for the addition was given to the church by the Lehman family of the Holtwood area. It had been a stone fence row on their farm. Making use of the

old to provide the new has become something of a tradition with Chestnut Level Church.

Life in the Church

Our Church continues to grow in mission outreach to the community. The Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts are sponsored by the church and hold their meetings on the grounds. CLAMS (Chestnut Level Arts and Music) events are popular in the community, and our church sends out both youth and adult mission teams. Young and old alike participate in annual activities such as the Chicken and Waffle Supper, Savor the Seasons, Men's Banquet, Ladies Fellowship Dinner, Christmas caroling and the Mother's Day Youth Auction, to weekly events like Sunday School for all ages and youth groups. These activities of the Church serve to bring the Church together even more so as a whole.

Jacob's Ladder Nursery School began as sister-in-laws Dee Henry and Melanie Henry's dream to provide a foundation of Christian education to preschoolers in the community. In the fall of 1994 the school opened in the Church House, promoting the message of Jesus in an environment designed to help children develop social, academic, motor, creative expression, and language skills. The number of students has increased to the point where the school currently has five teachers and five teacher aides, under director Joan Cutler.

The Wednesday Night Alive program grows out of our tradition of reserving Wednesday nights for the rehearsals of Chestnut Level's various choirs. Now, Wednesday evenings for our congregation includes a meal, Bible studies, discipleship opportunities, parenting classes, and other activities in addition to the choir rehearsals. The mission statement for Wednesday Night Alive is as follows: "Wednesday Night Alive exists to create an intergenerational community that develops lasting relationships and fosters a Christ-centered faith".

Chestnut Level Sunday School is an important reinforcement of Christian education for our congregation. Classes for all ages are held Sunday mornings in between services. In the early 1900's, opening exercises were led by Irena Penny on violin and J. Edgar Brown on coronet. In the 21st century, a similar practice occurs with our Praise Team. Something that has changed is the number of officers who keep our Sunday School running. During the 1920's, there were the positions of superintendent, secretary, treasurer, pianist, chorister, (all of which had assistants), and mission, temperance, and home department superintendents. Sunday School was only held from April to December up until 1939.

The Choir has played an integral part in worship at Chestnut Level since the early 1900's. The bell tower room was the choir loft at one time, but in 1908 the Session began to take steps to accommodate the choir in the front of the sanctuary. In 1948 during Rev. Carroll's ministry, Mrs. Carroll organized a Jr. Choir. Music continues to be an important part of vibrant worship with adult choirs, children choirs, bell choirs for adults and children, and the Praise Team. Today you continue to see family names from previous generations still active in the music program of the church.

Family Life Center

In October 2005, the congregation initiated a Capital Campaign and Building committee to pursue the funding and construction of a new Family Life Center (FLC). The reason behind this project was the deterioration of the over 150 year old Church House. The Church House was not handicapped accessible, required excessive annual maintenance, demanded major repairs, and lacked the sufficient space for current and future needs. The much-used kitchen and its appliances were worn and outdated as well. A survey was given to the congregation and all organizations involved, requesting help in understanding their needs and requirements for the new building. To gain additional insight, eight local churches that had completed similar projects were visited. Paul Risk Associates was selected to construct the building, and Lewis & Associates was selected to draft the building plan. The design was created with a mind to compliment the aesthetics of the older buildings that would be surrounding it.

The congregation was informed monthly of the planning progress, and the project was presented to the congregation for its first consideration in February 2007. The congregation approved the concept that March. A year later, in March 2008, the finalized FLC project was presented to the congregation together with a financing plan for the estimated \$3.1 million cost. Sunday June 1, 2008, the ground-breaking ceremony was held and construction began the following day. The location of the Family Life Center allowed the Church House to remain until the completion of the new facility, in March 2009. The previous month, a floor-signing on the sub-floor was held for the congregation.

The new FLC contains pieces of the old Church House. The old Academy's brass bell, two stained glass windows from the Church House auditorium, and two of the Church House's porch posts are items incorporated into the FLC. Immediately after the move into the FLC, saleable items were removed from the Church House, and in June 2009 an auction was held for those items along with other things made and donated by congregation

members. Several Amish neighbors were given permission to salvage usable items, and once done, almost everything was gone but the four walls. Not only did the removed materials extend their usefulness, but it also saved the congregation great expense. The cost of the Family Life Center is steadily being paid off by our congregation through the Capital Campaign.

What was a dream and then a vision became a reality. Our building committee, our finance committee, and all others who directly or indirectly contributed and continue to support this project, should harbor a great deal of joy and satisfaction upon its completion. Even more gratifying than the construction of the new building was the way our congregation supported this tremendous undertaking. Our much-needed new Family Life Center is utilized daily and will serve our Church and community well for generations to come.

Ministers

Our congregation would certainly not have experienced such rich growth and development without the ministers that have led our Church. From the Rev. John Thompson all the way up to our current Rev. Dr. Michael Wilson, these esteemed men have done a great service to our Church and our Lord by leading Chestnut Level Presbyterian Church over a span of three centuries.

1732-1744 Rev. John Thompson
1747-1752 Rev. David Thorn
1752-1769 Rev. Samson Smith
1771-1801 Rev. James Latta, D.D.
1804-18-8 Rev. Charles Cummings
1810-1826 Rev. Francis Latta
1832-1834 Rev. John Patton
1835-1875 Rev. Lindley C. Rutter
1875-1901 Rev. John Galbreath, D.D.
1902-1911 Rev. Dewin Curtis
1912-1920 Rev. Arthur Northwood, D.D.
1920-1931 Rev. William J. G. Carruthers
1931-1936 Rev. Franklin Dryness
1937-1941 Rev. G. Aubrey Young
1942-1948 Rev. James Carroll
1949-1952 Rev. George Carson D.D.
1954-1900 Rev. Richard E. Dunham, Jr.
1990-1991 Interim-Rev. John H. Houdeshel
1991-1999 Rev. Dr. William J. Netting
2000-2001 Interim Rev. Richard McClain
2001-present- Rev. Dr. Michael R. Wilson

So far as can be ascertained, Rev. John Thompson was the first pastor of the congregation. He began his work here in 1732, the same year Donegal Presbytery was organized. This pastor also served in the South intermittently while serving Chestnut Level. In 1743 he was sent to "back parts of Virginia" and in 1744 was dismissed from his duties at Chestnut Level. There seems to be no existing record of the work of Rev. David Thorn who served from 1747 to 1752. Rev. Samson Smith was the pastor when the present sanctuary was erected. Earlier Rev. Thompson had proposed to Donegal Presbytery the erection of a seminary for training pastors. The Synod of Pennsylvania finally took this up and in 1755 the seminary was built here with Rev. Smith in charge. For a while Chestnut Level was the center of theological education for the Presbyterian denomination in the colonies. Then the Synod withdrew its support in favor of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton Seminary. Perhaps the most well-known of our ministers, Rev. James Latta, D.D., was pastor from 1771-1801. He was a Chaplain during the Revolutionary War, and opened the Latta School here for the education of young men in our community. Latta previously graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, part of its first graduating class in 1757.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, from 1804 to 1808, Rev. Charles Cummings served at Chestnut Level. At the same time he served the Little Britain congregation, spending one-third time at Little Britain and two-thirds time at Chestnut Level. 1810 to 1826 saw the service of a familiar face, Rev. Francis Latta. Several years after Dr. James Latta retired and following Rev. Cumming's pastorate, Latta's son, Francis, accepted the call of the congregation and also continued operating the famous Latta School. For six years (between 1826 and 1832) the church seems to have depended mainly on supply ministers, although in 1828, Chestnut Level and Little Britain asked Presbytery for permission to employ Licentiate William Annan, of the Presbytery of Baltimore. Permission was granted but we have no further record concerning Mr. Annan except that he was ordained in 1829. From 1832 to 1834 Rev. John Patton carried on the practice of serving both Chestnut Level and Little Britain.

Rev. Lindley C. Rutter was the last pastor to serve both churches. He began his ministry in 1835. However, in October, 1856, the Chestnut Level congregation presented a petition to Presbytery, meeting at Chestnut Level, asking if they might have his services every Lord's Day. In 1859, Rev. Rutter offered his resignation to Little Britain so as to devote full time to Chestnut Level. He served this church 40 years (until 1875), and was largely instrumental in establishing the Academy. Rev. Rutter was an eloquent preacher and a tireless worker, preaching at several out-stations on the Sabbath afternoon, including Mt. Nebo. A beautiful memorial window can be seen in the west wall of this church as a tribute to this fine man. Rev. John

Galbreath, D. D. (served 1875 to 1901) also did a great deal of preaching at outposts on Sabbath afternoons. The Cherry Hill Chapel was built during his ministry in 1899. It's been recorded that there was a great outpouring of the Spirit on the church during his ministry, notably in 1900 when 146 members were received. Largely by his efforts the Westminster Bible Conference was founded. After leaving Chestnut Level he taught at Lincoln University. In 1919 he died in New Jersey and was buried here.

Rev. Edwin Curtis was the first new pastor of the twentieth century, serving from 1902 to 1911. He continued the work of his predecessors at the outposts and made them feeders to the church. 1912 to 1920 saw the service of Rev. Arthur Northwood, D. D., who also kept up the work of the outposts often preaching three times on the Sabbath. 1920 to 1931 were the years of service by Wm. J. G. Carruthers. During his ministry the Academy building was razed (in 1923) and materials were used in the erection of an auditorium for the Church House. Rev. Franklin Dyrness was our minister from 1931 to 1936 and he later served as Administrator of the Quarryville Presbyterian Home. Rev. G. Aubrey Young left the ministry after his 1937 to 1941 service at Chestnut Level and worked in racial relations in Madison, Wisconsin. Rev. James Carroll served from 1942 to 1948, and it was during his time at Chestnut Level that he and his wife started the Junior Choir. Members from the congregation hand made all the junior choir gowns from bright blue fabric with large white collars and big black bow ties. Rev. Carroll called the choir his "Bluebirds".

Rev. George Carson, D. D. was our minister from 1949 to 1952. He was followed by Rev. Richard E. Dunham Jr. who served from 1954 to 1990, (the second longest tenure in the history of our church). Rev. Dunham had served during World War II in the U.S. Army's 83rd Infantry Division. He was decorated with the Purple Heart medal for injuries in two separate campaigns, first in France and again in Belgium. It was during his recovery from battlefield wounds that he found his calling to the Christian ministry. He served many years in various Presbytery leadership positions including the General Council, Ministerial Relations, the Executive committee, Commissioner to two General Assemblies, and Stated Clerk. He was honored also by being named our "Pastor Emeritus."

Interim Pastor, Rev. John H. Houdeshel, served at Chestnut Level during the Desert Storm military operation in Kuwait, from 1990 to 1991. At worship during that time he led the congregation every Sunday in song and prayer for all members and friends involved. Rev. Dr. William J. Netting was then called to be our pastor in 1991. During his ministry membership grew, and the Jacob's Ladder Pre-School and Chestnut Level Arts and Music programs were inaugurated. Also, the new entrance to the church was constructed. In 1999, he retired after 8 years of service.

Since his retirement he served as Interim Pastor for 5 different churches in the Donegal Presbytery and was elected to be the Stated Clerk of Donegal Presbytery, a position he still holds in 2011. Rev. Richard McClain served as Interim Pastor for Chestnut Level from 2000 to 2001. In 2001, our present minister is Rev. Michael R. Wilson, Th. M. was called by the congregation to be our pastor. In February, the Wilson family moved to this area and Dr. Wilson began his ministry with Chestnut Level. Worship attendance grew and in 2005 a second worship service was added to accommodate worshipers. Dr. Wilson's ministry has been marked by his concern for the dynamic preaching of the Gospel, the care and nurture of the members of the congregation, and the entire congregation's spiritual growth.

Rooted in Faith Branching to the Future

We have been good stewards for our church. Whatever else we carry forward as a congregation from our common past, our sanctuary is certainly our most conspicuous inheritance. Here we gather week after week for worship. Here we offer our services of worship, our friendship and help to each other and our outreach in mission to others. Yet as beautiful as our old stone walls may be, this 300 year old congregation is composed of "living stones." These people have given themselves to the God who has called them to a ministry of compassion and concern. Through their hearts and lives the kingdom of God has been built in this place. We thank God that we are in a living Church, dedicated to its continuance in a growing community. As we look toward the future, we are eager to see what God has in store for us and all the ways that we will celebrate God in worship, honor our Savior, prepare ourselves for service, proclaim his message, and care for one another. The ministry of this congregation has demonstrated and proclaimed the Gospel for 300 years. We look forward to what God is going to do through us and among us in the next 300.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed their time, talent, and energy in compiling the information for this booklet. A special thanks to Linda Herr and Jo Anne Weiler. We hope that in these pages you may get a glimpse of the journey Chestnut Level has taken through three centuries.

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