

HISTORY MINUTE

Presented by Edward Spannus

November 22, 2015



Dr. William Wade and Our 185th Anniversary Celebration

On November 22, 1949, our acting pastor, Dr. William Wade, called a special meeting of the church council to ask the council to approve plans for the celebration of our 185th anniversary. According to the council minutes, Dr. Wade spoke at length about the history of this congregation, wanting people to appreciate it; as he said: “There is such a thing as living in the presence of something exceptional and extraordinary without real appreciation of it. Living near something of rare, historical importance and seeing it constantly, may cause one to consider and evaluate it lightly.” Dr. Wade also said he hoped that the church’s debt from the recent renovation program could be paid off by the time of the anniversary celebration.

Dr. Wade did not come here to be our pastor. He came here to retire from the ministry, having most recently served in Baltimore, and he had also served as president (or bishop) of the Maryland Synod. After retirement, he and his wife settled here, and became active members.

Dr. Wade was not unfamiliar with New Jerusalem. He was friends with the Toblers, and also with Reverend Asa Richards (whom we will talk about next week), and had married Pastor Richard’s daughter.

After Pastor Tobler resigned in late 1946, our next pastor was Reverend William Janson, who served her for exactly three years, having come right out of Gettysburg Seminary. Janson resigned in May, 1949, having been accepted to graduate school at Columbia University in New York, to study at Union Seminary there. Dr. Wade agreed to serve as acting pastor while a search was underway for a new pastor.

Under Pastor Janson, plans had begun for major upgrading of the church building in 1948. A new, oil-fired heating system was installed, and the restrooms were installed downstairs, along with the necessary plumbing and electrical work. (And that nothing would go to waste, the

council donated one of the old outdoor toilets to Bethel, and the other to Union Cemetery.) The cost was over \$13,000, which was paid off by the end of 1949, in accordance with Dr. Wade's proposal. Also, the baptismal font was installed in November 1949.

But that wasn't all. In February of 1950—less than five months before the anniversary celebration—the council recommended a complete redecoration of the sanctuary, including replastering the walls, repainting and refinishing the woodwork and pews, caulking the windows, new carpeting in the sanctuary, chancel, and narthex, and new light fixtures¹, plus a new organ, the Wurlitzer electric that stood in the left-side choir loft. And a new choir loft—on the right side—which entailed removing some of the pews in the front on that side. It was all done, and paid for, in time for the anniversary celebration on June 25, 1950. Five hundred people were present for the morning service, and the sermon was given by Dr. Frank Fife, the president of the Maryland Synod. And the first real history of New Jerusalem, written by Dr. Wade, was published for the occasion at the insistence of the Council.

Dr. Wade resigned as Acting Pastor in September, in part to put more pressure on the Synod to help find a permanent pastor. In a letter, Mr. Emory Frye, council secretary, expressed his view that the Synod had been dragging its feet on the matter—and by the end of the year, Reerend Yingling had been accepted the call from New Jerusalem; he served until 1954, to be followed by Pastor Kretsinger.

In his later history, Pastor Kretsinger noted that Dr. Wade had only served here for sixteen months, but it was “a most active 16 months for an ‘Acting’ Pastor.” Pastor Kretsinger added that, “The Sanctuary of New Jerusalem is brought to its present simple beauty through his efforts in partnership with the congregation.”

The sanctuary of 1950—adding the baptismal font and the second choir loft to the altar-centered configuration established in 1932—is essentially what we see today, the only significant addition being the free-standing altar, added in 1997.²

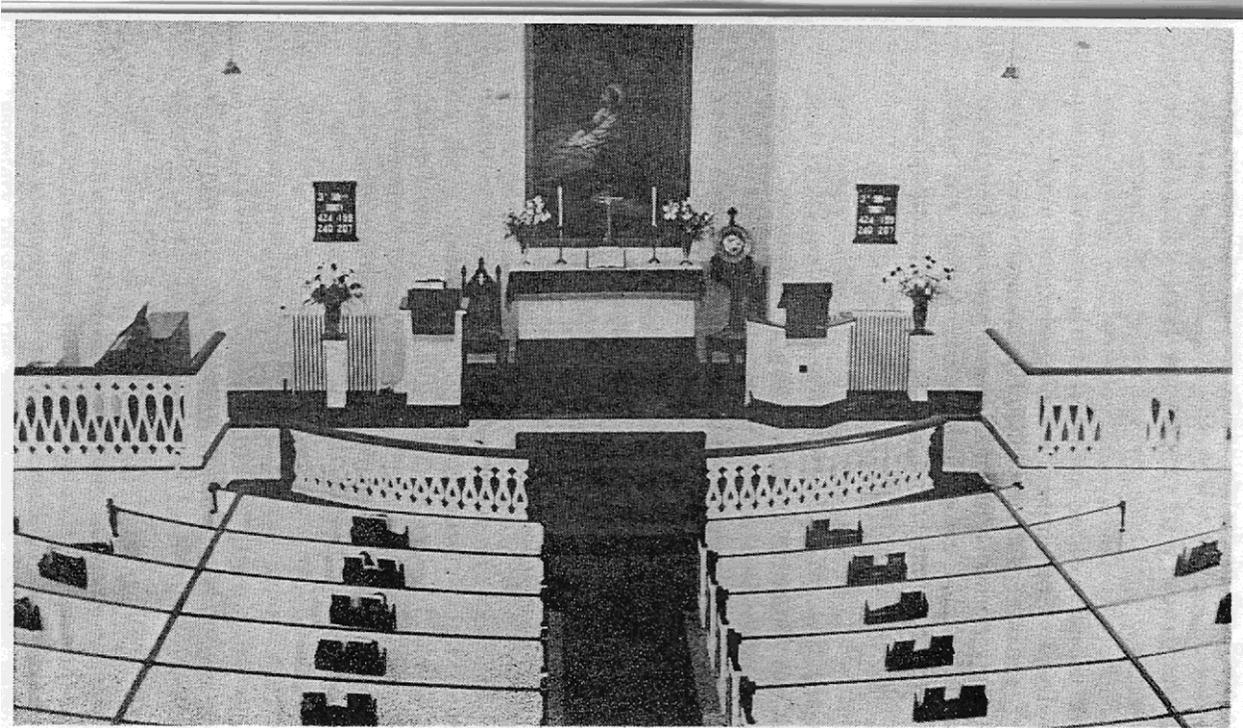
1. Those were not the light fixtures we have now, which were put in later.

2. Some more pews were removed later, so that the communion rail could be moved back, making space for the free-standing altar.

References:

M.W. Kretsinger's *People of God, Vol II*, p. 25

Church Council Minutes and Secretary's correspondences.



Sanctuary after 1950 remodeling.