

Candlelight at Christ Church

Songs and Stories of a Civil War Hospital

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
30 Chambersburg Street • Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325
717-334-5212 www.christgettysburg.org

I. Church History. Originally named *Christ's Church*, Christ Lutheran Church was founded 1836. It is the third of three Lutheran institutions started in Gettysburg by Samuel Simon Schmucker and colleagues. These forward-thinking Lutherans also founded the Seminary in 1826, and Gettysburg College – originally named *Pennsylvania College* – in 1832.

Christ Lutheran was founded for two primary reasons. First, it was created so Lutherans, especially Seminary and College faculties and students, could worship in English. In 1836, there was already a Lutheran presence in Gettysburg, but worship services were conducted primarily in German. Second, in addition to offering worship services in English, Christ Lutheran was created to serve as the main assembly hall for the Lutheran Seminary and Gettysburg College. Often called *The College Church*, it hosted numerous graduation ceremonies and similar large gatherings from 1836 until the 1940's.

Built in 1835-1836, the church has undergone significant change in only one area – the south end of the building was extended to accommodate the current chancel. Today, Christ Lutheran still has its original foundation, brick walls, front pillars, bell tower, bell, floor joists, rafters, and beams. The original, plain glass windows were destroyed during the Battle, and were later replaced with stained glass.

This program is supported in part by the Adams County Arts Council's STAR Grant Program, which is funded by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Adams County, and the Borough of Gettysburg.

II. Christ Lutheran As A Civil War Hospital. Immediately after fighting began northwest of Gettysburg early on July 1, 1863, Union officers designated Christ Lutheran as a hospital, and it served as an active hospital until August 15, 1863.

Although officially a Union hospital, during the Battle and for several days thereafter, it treated Confederate soldiers also. At its peak, the Christ Lutheran hospital accommodated about 150 wounded soldiers. By August 3, 1863, it still had 78 patients, all Union soldiers.

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Mary McAllister, a neighbor who helped open and establish Christ Lutheran Church as a hospital, recalled that first day: *“Every pew was full; some sitting, some lying, some leaning on others.”*

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In his book, *A Vast Sea Of Misery*, Gregory Coco devoted two full pages to the hospital at Christ Lutheran. The following passages are from Coco’s book:

“One of the most aesthetically pleasing and stately public buildings anywhere in the Gettysburg area, is this church, located on the south side of Chambersburg Street. It may be the only church in the town that outwardly appears as it did in July of 1863. Adams County is fortunate to have it standing mostly unchanged. ...This was probably the first public building in the town of Gettysburg to be commandeered as a hospital by Union soldiers.

“...Charles McCurdy recalled: ‘Two doors below our house, the College Lutheran Church was filled with the wounded. The auditorium of the church was on the second floor and the wounded had to be carried up a long flight of stairs from the street. Surgeons were at work under very rude conditions. ...The Church yard was strewn with arms and legs that had been amputated and thrown out the windows....’”

“Melvin Walker, 13th Massachusetts Infantry, pinpointed where these operations were performed: *‘I was taken to a large church on Chambersburg Street where our division hospital had been established on the ground floor. The large vestry was fast filling.... An operating table was placed in an anteroom off the Main hall and here our surgeon worked with knife and saw without rest or sleep, almost without food, for 36 hours before the first round had been made....*

After the surgeon’s work was done, we had no care save such as a few less seriously wounded comrades could give.... The first night 23 dead were carried from our room....’”

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In her book, *Letters Of A Civil War Nurse*, Henrietta Jacquette quotes one of her letters from Gettysburg, dated July 7, 1863: “...*I would get on first rate if they would not ask me to write to their wives; that I cannot do without crying....*”

III. Candlelight At Christ Church. *Candlelight At Christ Church – Songs and Stories of A Civil War Hospital* seeks to tell the authentic history of a Civil War hospital in its original setting – Christ Lutheran Church. *Candlelight* performances began in 1999, and has been presented 8-10 times annually since then, except for 2004 when the church was undergoing restoration and renovation. To date, more than 8,500 people have attended *Candlelight At Christ Church*.

The regular *Candlelight* evening begins at 7:30 P.M. with music on the church steps [weather permitting]. The main program in the church nave begins at 8:00 P.M. and includes: a violin prelude, a brief church history, accounts of Chaplain Howell’s death and a woman’s miraculous escape into the bell tower, first-hand accounts told by a wounded soldier and a compassionate nurse, Civil War poetry by Walt Whitman, passages from Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, and authentic Civil War music performed by local musicians including songs with audience participation.

Candlelight Schedule. In 2009, *Candlelight* will be presented on ten Saturday evenings: April 18, June 20 and 27, July 4, 11, 18 and 25, August 1 and 8, and December 12. *Candlelight* will be presented also on Friday evening, November 20, 2009.

CD Recording Available. A professionally produced recording of the *Candlelight* program is available for purchase. The CD contains additional musical pieces not included in regular, live performances.

Additional Information. For more information about *Candlelight At Christ Church*, please visit our website www.christgettysburg.org.

Donations are gratefully accepted, and will be used to sustain future *Candlelight at Christ Church* programs.

Boxes for free-will donations are located near the entrance & exit.

What They Say About *Candlelight At Christ Church*. Two of 101 comments received in 2008.

Visitor from Baltimore, Maryland: *“This is our first night in Gettysburg. This program is excellent: music, speakers, historic accuracy, stories of real people, simplistic presentation – all together, a great introduction for us. ...you have set the stage of history for us to relive and better appreciate. Thank you!”*

Visitor from Athens, Georgia: *“This week begins a week of touring. ...what a sensitive and wonderful way to start an experience I have awaited for years. A wonderful cultural, historical and spiritual program! Thank you!”*

An Invitation. *We invite all to worship with us in this historic setting. Our regular Sunday worship service – led by the Reverend Stephen R. Herr, Pastor – begins at 10:30 A.M.*