

OLD ZION'S TRUMPET

...Blow ye the trumpet in Zion...

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STRAWBERRY SOCIAL STARTS SUMMER



Old Zion Church, Reifsnyder Road, Brickerville will celebrate the start of the summer season with the 46th annual Strawberry Social on **Saturday, June 8 from 3:30-6:30 pm** (rain or shine). A dessert plate will be filled with local strawberries, your choice of cakes, with vanilla ice cream topped with whipped cream. This dessert includes a drink and is \$6.00.

Chicken corn soup for \$4.00 will also be served. All proceeds support the maintenance and preservation of Old Zion Church, the cemetery, and the grounds for today and tomorrow.

Please bring a blanket or folding chair to set up on the church lawn with picnic trays to carry or hold food. Food and drink are not permitted in the church.

The hillside at Old Zion Church usually includes a breeze overlooking the lovely Brubaker Valley below. Take time to visit the cemetery, which dates to the time of the Revolutionary War, and take a walking tour through the church completed in 1813 to learn about Old Zion's history from Old Zion Board members. Start summer with us and be part of a most delicious, old-fashioned summer celebration. www.oldzionchurch.org

CEMETERY PLOTS

Old Zion's cemetery, which has been in existence since Revolutionary times, is not just a resting place for our predecessors. Contemporary burials continue to take place here. An Old Zion burial plot cost \$500.00.



Old Zion's Board ensures perpetual care. Cemetery upkeep is a fixed line item at each Old Zion Board meeting.

THE HARVEST HOME TRADITION

By Mike Weber



The theme for Old Zion's Annual Anniversary Service this year is "Harvest Home." The service will be held at Old Zion at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 8, 2024. For the last several hundred years, Protestant churches have celebrated and given thanks to God for abundant harvests. In many rural churches, whose congregations were comprised of farm families and members supporting agricultural businesses, the Harvest Home celebration was a highlight of each year. The photo above features the decorations from a 1905 Harvest Home celebration at Bethany Church in Ephrata. In Exodus 34: 22, God told the Israelites "And thou shalt observe the feast of the first fruits of wheat harvest." Many Reformed, Lutheran, Brethren, and Mennonite congregations praised and thanked God in Harvest Home worship services that coincided with the gathering in of the harvest between late Summer and early Fall.

The exhausting labor of the harvest and the comfort of knowing that the year's crops were safely stored prompted celebration and

thanksgiving. Harvest Home celebrations may have evolved from earlier pagan celebrations, such as the Roman harvest festivals. These celebrations merged with ancient Celtic and Saxon rituals that involved harvest dances and suppers marking the conclusion of the annual grain harvest. Old liturgies of Reformed and Lutheran churches included services of Thanksgiving for the harvest. German immigrants to Pennsylvania brought the Harvest Home tradition to the American Colonies in the 18th Century. The term "Harvest Home" evolved from the German *Erntdankfest* or *Erntfest* (harvest thanks festival) or *Erntfersammlung* (harvest gathering). The earliest accounts of Harvest Home worship services in Reformed and Lutheran Churches date to the 1830s.

The early liturgies included a special day of Thanksgiving worship, typically during a weekday. Grains ripened in succession from rye in early July, wheat and oats in early August, and corn in September and October. With the wheat harvest in early August, Harvest Home worship services were often held in August, but they could be held at any time from July through mid-October.



Eventually, the mid-week worship services shifted to Sunday morning worship services for most Reformed, Lutheran, and Mennonite congregations.

The worship services often began with the of the 1858 hymn *Harvest Home*:

Come Ye Thankful People Come

Raise the song of Harvest Home

All is safely gathered in,

Ere the winter storms begin

Other worship services featured the song *The God of Harvest Praise*, written by James Montgomery in 1840:

*The God of harvest praise;
Hands, hearts, and voices raise
With one accord;
From field to garner throng,
Bearing your sheaves along;
And in your harvest song,
Bless ye the Lord. Amen.*

The preparations for the worship often included the lavish decoration of the altar at the front of the church with the yields of the harvest, including abundant vegetables, fruits, and grains. Some Mennonite congregations avoided the visual displays of abundance. By the early 20th Century, some harvest displays were supplemented by including canned goods, sugar, and other staples. Given the meager wages of many pastors, they often received the harvest bounty after worship was concluded. This practice, however, placed a heavy burden on the ministers' wives to store and preserve this bounty for the coming winter, in addition to their other responsibilities. In the 19th Century, the harvest bounty was contributed to orphanages and elderly members. More recently, the harvest bounty has been contributed to food pantries, soup kitchens, and other social services.

The Harvest Home worship services were separate and distinct from the Thanksgiving

services that were held after President Lincoln established Thanksgiving Day in 1863. Thanksgiving Day came too late in the harvest season. Some congregations initially resisted the celebration of Thanksgiving on the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day. Harvest Home celebrations were also different than the annual day of thanksgiving and prayer called *Betdaag*. Unlike Harvest Home, *Betdaag* has been subsumed into Thanksgiving worship services. Come join us for Old Zion's Harvest Home celebration on September 8!

SEBASTIAN ROYER – THE MAN WHO ANCHORED OLD ZION CHURCH

By Mike Weber

Many people contribute to the founding of a congregation. Their identities, however, may slip away over time, especially for a church as old as Old Zion. One thing that we know for certain is that Sebastian Royer provided the land on which the church was built. The congregation existed before the first church building was constructed on the southeastern corner of the property in 1748. Members likely gathered in homes and barns for worship and fellowship, as was customary at the time, before they acquired property and constructed the church. In 1747 Sebastian Royer transferred to Peter Becker, Wendel Laber, Jacob Hagy, and Tillman Shitz about two and a half acres to help foster Old Zion Church.

Sebastian Royer, or Röyer as he sometimes used, was born in 1676 and raised near the villages of Haßloch and Böhl-Iggelheim in the Rheinland-Pfalz region in the western

portion of what is today Germany. Some accounts indicate that his parents and family emigrated to the Palatinate after fleeing as Huguenot refugees from France, where the Calvinists were being persecuted. He married Agnes Flockirth in 1707 and had eight children before he and his family emigrated to the American Colonies sometime before 1727. Their ninth child, Catharine, was born in Lancaster County in 1728. Sebastian became a naturalized citizen of Pennsylvania in 1729.

After arriving in Pennsylvania, he quickly established himself as a prosperous farmer, land owner, and supporter of the church. By 1743, Sebastian had acquired nearly 300 acres of land in Warwick Township. On September 21, 1747, he sold or donated about 2 ½ acres of land to the trustees of Zion German Reformed Church. This church became known as Reyer's Church in honor of Sebastian Röyer, who provided the land to help anchor the church. Royer family history indicates that Sebastian lived in a house in the ravine below "Reyer's Church." He also sold or donated another parcel of land for Emmanuel Lutheran Church located nearby and adjacent to his property. Churches and cemeteries were built on both parcels.



Mrs. Agnes Royer had a German Reformed background, whereas Sebastian was a member of the Lutheran tradition.

He reportedly served as a deacon at the Lutheran Church in Brickerville. In 1754, he transferred his land in Warwick Township to his son Samuel. Sebastian died in 1758 and his will was dated August 3, 1758. He is buried in the cemetery at the United Lutheran Church in Brickerville. During the last couple of years, several descendants of Sebastian Royer contacted the Old Zion Board. We are indebted to Sebastian Royer and his family for the role that they played in helping to anchor Old Zion Church.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Old Zion Church Board of Directors welcomed two new members recently. They are both interested in history and preservation and bring new perspectives and skill background to the board.

Jim Bubb is a multidisciplinary designer and owns Bubb Design. He has been head of design and project manager for Elizabeth Furnace restoration and renovation.

Steve Focht has worked in the science field as a science educator and safety professional for local industry. In his free time, he provides technical and audio support for his home church.

We are excited to have Jim and Steve join the board and appreciate their willingness to dedicate time in volunteering on the board.