

## St. Peter Lutheran Church-Riley celebrates 150th anniversary in 2019

If you're not familiar with the history of St. Peter Lutheran Church-Riley, you may wonder why the congregation's forefathers and mothers chose a spot on Church Road near Dexter Trail - that's not exactly on the beaten path. Why did German Lutheran immigrants set down roots in Clinton County's Riley, Bengal and Dallas Townships in the early 1850s? Why didn't they choose a location closer to established villages like DeWitt and Westphalia?

Part of the answer is simple. It actually was close to "a beaten path," just a stone's throw from Dexter Trail. Native American guides had used the trail for years, helping immigrants on their journey northwest from Detroit to their future homes in settlements like Westphalia, Muir, Ionia and far-away Grand Rapids. In 1833, Judge Samuel Dexter and his family were among those traveling on what became known as Dexter Trail. His son, Riley Dexter, died in 1834 after contracting scarlet fever, and was buried beside the trail about a mile north of St. Peter's present day location. He was the first Caucasian child buried in Clinton County.

Similar tidbits of St. Peter's history are part of slide presentations that took congregation members and guests "back in time," beginning with the establishment of our congregation in 1869, through 2019. These presentations were shown following selected worship services throughout the year, and are available for you to view or download here:

[Our History, Chapter 1: 1869-1900](#)

[Our History, Chapter 2: 1900-1940](#)

[Our History, Chapter 3: 1940-1969](#)

[Our History, Chapter 4: 1969-2012](#)

[Our History, Chapter 5: 2012-2019](#)

Special service dates during our anniversary year included:

- March 17<sup>th</sup>: Michigan District President Rev. David Meier. Worship began at 10 a.m., followed by a pot-luck lunch at St. Peter Fellowship Center that included tasting - and voting on - chili and cornbread at the annual St. Peter Chili Cook-off.
- April 28<sup>th</sup>: "Heritage Sunday" worship service with guest Pastor David Speerbrecker, followed by a pot-luck dinner in the Fellowship Hall.
- June 23<sup>rd</sup>: Worship service with Pastor Mark Werner, and St. Peter's Annual Hog Roast, with special activities for youth and adults.
- Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>: Worship with guest Pastor Jeffrey Heimsoth, followed by a catered dinner in the Fellowship Center.

As we look back on these 150 years, we realize how bountifully God has showered His manifold blessings upon us. The promise which Jesus gave to His disciples shortly before His crucifixion is also ours today...“My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.”

Soli Deo Gloria – to God alone be the glory.