

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. PHILIP LUTHERAN CHURCH, MYRTLE BEACH



**1955-1956** – In the early summer, the Home Mission Board of the South Carolina Lutheran Synod called Mr. George Rushe, a rising senior at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, to go to the coastal resort town of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, to conduct services during the summer months. This was done, not only to provide Lutheran services for the summer vacationers, but also with the anticipation of surveying the field for a possible mission. During the summer, services were held, and it was established that this non-Lutheran area had possibilities as a mission site.

At the end of the summer, Mr. Rushe returned to the Seminary. In October of 1955, having been approved by the Board of American Missions of the ULCA, the Rev. William F. Wingard was called to be the mission developer. Pastor Wingard entered the field on November 1, 1955, and on May 20, 1956, the congregation was organized with 66 confirmed members. In that same year, a parsonage was completed at a cost of \$15,000 as the congregation assumed the responsibility of housing the mission developer. Shortly following the organization of the congregation, Rev. Wingard was called as Pastor of the congregation.

For three years, services were held in the old Myrtle Beach High School.  
A shopping center now stands where the school once did.

**1958** – As the congregation grew, a Capital Funds Building Campaign was conducted. On December 21, 1958, the first service was held in the new church building at 6200 North Kings Highway. This first unit of construction, where we still worship, is a brick structure contemporary to the era, which was built at a cost of \$103,000, and included 8 classrooms, pastor's study, kitchen, rest rooms, utility room, storage area, and a chapel with a seating capacity of 290.

**1966** – The second unit of the physical plant was constructed. The educational hallway was completed at a cost of \$44,000.

**1970s** – St. Philip grew to over 500 baptized members, but growth slowed due to the close proximity of other Lutheran congregations. The population in the immediate area become older, and more retirees joined the church.

Much work was done on the buildings and grounds in the 1970s. The period of 1976-77 saw extensive renovation to the sanctuary, with carpet, pews, stained glass, and other updates. St. Philip also built a new Fellowship Hall.

**1978** – Cynthia H. Moore, Certified Lay Professional, joined the staff of St. Philip as Secretary, substitute organist, and even substitute preacher on occasion.

**1980s** – In 1981, a carillon (bell chimes) was installed. Extensive work was done to the grounds in 1982. The offices were renovated in 1983, and a computer system was installed in 1985.

**1983** – Rev. W. Richard Albert joined St. Philip as Associate Pastor.

**1987** – In May, Rev. W.F. Wingard, who served the congregation from its organization in 1956, retired. Rev. Dick Albert accepted the call of Senior Pastor, as he had previously been called as an Associate. In October 1987, Irvin R. Dohner, a Certified Lay Professional, was called as Director of Music and Christian Education.

**1989** – The last major addition to our church was the Rogers Oxford 925 Electronic/Pipe Combination Organ, installed in late 1989 at a cost of \$130,000.

**1991** – Rev. Dick Albert accepted a call to Transfiguration Lutheran Church in Cayce, SC. Rev. Harry Robinson served as Interim Pastor.

**1992** – Rev. Dennis L. Setzer and his wife, Jeanne, accepted the call to become the third Pastor on July 6. The church purchased two additional lots on the corner of 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North and Kings Hwy at a cost of \$165,000 to meet the needs of the church.

**1993** – St. Philip received a gift of \$100,000 from the Haloin estate. The congregation established an Endowment Fund with income from this fund used only for benevolent ministries outside the congregation.

**Mid to Late 1990s** – In 1994, Wayne Agee was called as Director of Music. In 1995, Janet Nelson was called as Director of Children’s Choirs, and Faith Lapham was called as Director of Youth and Christian Education. In 1997, Grace Doyle accepted the position of Organist and Director of Music, and Mary Thompkins was hired as our Youth Director and Youth Choir Director.

**2000** – Construction of the Youth Room was completed through the generous gift of Betty Graham. A Columbarium was purchased and placed on the front lawn and is used to hold the cremains of members and their immediate families.

**2001** – Rev. Don Cherney was called as Visitation and Pulpit Supply Pastor, Libby Hicks was hired as Organist, and Tom Hanlon was hired as Choir Director and Guitarist.

**2002** – The bathrooms outside the sanctuary were renovated and brought up to state building codes.

**2003** – The Social Ministry Committee inaugurated the Prayer Shawl Ministry. Women of the church volunteer to knit a shawl that is to be given to one of our sick or homebound members.

The congregation was involved in many ecumenical and community activities – some from their beginning. We have cooperated in Mobile Meals, Campground Ministry, and Helping Hand. We also participated with the Grand Strand Pastoral Counseling Center, Associated Charities, and Community Volunteer Services. Support was also provided for a missionary. Some of these ministries we are still involved with today.

**2006** – In May, we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Rev. Dick Albert officiating, Rev. W.F. Wingard assisting with communion, and Rev. Dennis Setzer assisting with the service. Pastor Setzer was admitted to the hospital in July. Due to serious health issues, Pastor Setzer resigned on December 10, 2006. Rev. Thomas BeMiller filled in as interim Pastor.

**2008** – In July, Rev. Henry M. Moody, Jr., along with his wife, Patricia, was called to be Senior Pastor of St. Philip. In September of the same year, Linda K. Hendricks was hired as Parish Secretary. Mary L. Thompkins served as the Youth Director and Children’s Choir Director. Haddie M. Richardson remains as the church Sexton.

**2009** – In February, Diane Munch Calvert was hired to be the church Organist and Adult Choir Director. The founding Pastor, Rev. W.F. Wingard, passed away on August 24, 2009.

**2010** – The organ was rededicated in honor of Irv Dohner as a surprise to him in honor of his many years in the ministry. It was a well-deserved tribute to a wonderful servant of God who has had a tremendous impact on the life of St. Philip's congregation.

**2013** – On March 31, Rev. Hank Moody retired after 5 years serving as Pastor of St. Philip. On April 6, Rev. Caldwell 'Cobby' Day became the Interim Pastor of St. Philip. Pastor Cobby remained as Interim until he and his wife, Terry, moved to Virginia on October 20. Rev. Timothy Bryson began serving as the next Interim Pastor of St. Philip on October 26, 2013. He and his wife, Thelma, remained until February 2014.

**2014** – Rev. Jason Lee, his wife Dana, and their two children, Jonah, and Anna, moved to Myrtle Beach in February of 2014. Pastor Lee began at St. Philip on February 3. A Service of Installation for Pastor Lee was held on Sunday, March 30 at the 10:00 a.m. service. Assistant to the Bishop Ginny Aebischer was the presiding minister for the service.

**2018** – Arthur M. Ghere was hired in the summer as St. Philip's Director of Music & Organist.

**2020** – Jennifer Loeswick was hired as the Director of the Preschool in March of 2020.

On March 15, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Philip closed its doors to in-person gatherings. But through the generosity of the congregation and the blessings of God's grace and Spirit, the congregation was able to strongly continue its mission and ministry, including adding an online streaming option.

**2021** – As we celebrate the past 65 years of ministry, we continue to be blessed and called by God. St. Philip will continue to look to the future, anticipating what the Lord has in store for us.