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"Doings" of the Advent Historical Society

Stay In Touch With Us

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Advent Historical Society Board of Directors, 2020

Front, L to R: Judy Hefty, Charlotte Watson, Carolyn Hedges, Dorothy Ogden
Back, L to R: Don Wesley, Sarah Hedges, Karen Reese, Barbara Franco
(not pictured: Terren Smith)

Our New Board Members

- Sarah Hedges, Chair of the Communications Committee and webmaster of the Advent Historical Society website and Facebook page, is a learning designer and curriculum developer for an online university.
- Karen Reese is Assistant Director of Stewardship at Penn State's College of Engineering.
- Terren Smith is a volunteer at the Troy Heritage Museum and a Civil War reenactor associated with the 4th United States Light Artillery.

Board President Welcome

Dear Friends of the Advent Historical Society:

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter, which will enable us to stay in touch with all those who are connected to the Advent Church and Cemetery. Thank you to all who have contributed this year to help maintain this very special place and its history. It has been a year of many changes for our organization and even bigger changes all around the world as we face the dangers of an unchecked COVID-19 virus. Due to the uncertainty about what levels of precautionary measures will be in place, we have decided to cancel plans for this year's annual Memorial Day hymn sing in the church, held in conjunction with the Advent Cemetery Memorial Day services. We hope to see many of you at next year's event.

On March 14, 2020, the board held its annual business meeting, and we were pleased to welcome new board members Sarah Hedges, Karen Reese, and Terren Smith. Each of them brings expertise and experience that will help us plan for the future of the organization. During the afternoon of our board meeting, we engaged in a strategic planning session with the addition of Paul Deering, from the Advent Cemetery Association, and Richard Wade, of the Centre County Genealogical Society.

With their participation, we had a lively discussion about the organization's strengths and weaknesses and the potential for future opportunities. We also considered a number of responses from our fall mailing indicating interest in the history of the Advent Church through genealogy, family history, or local history.

The board drafted the following broad goals for further development, with specific action steps noted, as part of a 5-year plan to bring us to the 275th anniversary of the church in 2024.

- I. **Communications:** Increase the visibility of the Advent Historical Society through consistent messaging.
- II. **Historical Interpretation:** Develop a comprehensive interpretive plan for the Advent Historical Society.
- III. **Partnerships:** Develop and expand partnership opportunities with other organizations that can be mutually beneficial.
- IV. **Financial Sustainability:** Insure long-term sustainability through increased fundraising and financial stewardship.
- V. **Organizational Development:** Develop the capacity of the organization and board to operate effectively.

I hope you will join us in helping to make this plan a reality as we continue to develop new ideas and sustainable ways to make the Advent Historical Society more accessible and relevant to all.

—Barbara Franco, President



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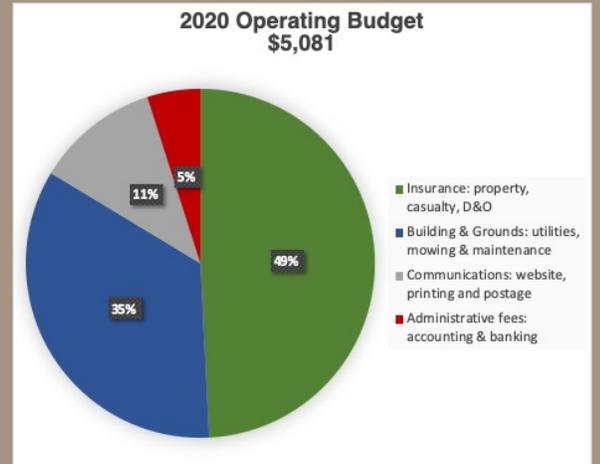
L to R: Paul Deering; Barbara Franco, President; Richard Wade

Treasurer's Report

The Advent Historical Society received more than \$6,700 in charitable contributions in response to our 2019 Annual Appeal. The Board of Directors thanks all those who responded and who assisted in updating our mailing list, which has grown to more than 125 addresses. The Society operates on a limited budget and relies on the time and talents of the Board of Directors and Committee members to manage the property and maintain the historic church building. As indicated in our 2020 Operating Budget, our insurance costs and building and grounds expenses account for most of the annual budget.

Since the 1986-88 restoration of the historic church, the Board of Directors has maintained the building through annual repairs. With careful stewardship of the annual income from donations, the Board has been able to anticipate major projects such as a new metal roof, several exterior and interior painting projects each decade. More recently, they have added storage and museum buildings to enhance the presentation of local history information.

In 2019, the Society established a Communications Committee to launch our first website, establish e-mail and Facebook accounts, and develop a database of supporters to sustain the Advent Historical Society into the future.



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History Committee Update

—Contributed by Jerry Hedges

The Civil War was a watershed event in the history of the United States, the effects of which are still felt to this day. This 4-year struggle demanded huge resources of men and material from both sides, and by some estimates, 700,000 soldiers and possibly as many civilians died. Boggs Township and the incorporated borough of Milesburg were deeply involved in the eventual success of the Union cause. Starting in April 1861, with President Lincoln's first call for volunteers, local men stepped forward to serve, and they continued to do so up to the end in April 1865. Local industries tooled up to provide material for the war, and contributed to the huge growth of America's industrial might.

The Advent Church building was less than 15 years old in 1861, and the graveyard up the hill behind it consisted only of what is now Section One, to the left of the road as one looks up the hill. Eventually, 76 men who had served in the Union Army would be buried in that graveyard, most in Section One and a few in Section Two. All but three have identifiable graves, marked with headstones, and usually with the distinctive G.A.R. badge. Many were buried soon after the



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war, and the final one not until 1936. In addition, there are a number of local men who also served and who would have been buried in the Advent Cemetery with their families had they survived the war; some were buried on battlefields near where they fell, some died in army hospitals, struck down by diseases, which killed approximately the same number of soldiers as those actually killed in battle, and some died in horrible circumstances in Confederate prison camps like Andersonville, in Georgia.

Each of these men has a story that could be told. Most were volunteers, and many served in units with friends and relatives. Pictured here is Nathaniel Beerly (sometimes spelled Bierly) and his headstone. Beerly served for 3 years as a musician with Company B of the 148th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. He shares the stone with his parents, while his brother Mesulam, a private in the same company, is buried in the Fredericksburg National Cemetery, having died of typhoid fever in Falmouth, VA, on 8 February 1863. Nathaniel Beerly joined



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the Union Army at the age of 17, served as Justice of the Peace in Boggs Twp. after the war, and died in 1902.

It is entirely appropriate to remember those who served, as we do every Memorial Day. Many now living in Boggs Township and Milesburg have ancestors who served, and it remains a source of pride for them to so recognize those men and honor their service and sacrifice.

In Memoriam

This issue of the newsletter is dedicated in memory of Sue Wesley, with thanks for her decades of delicious pies without number and her faithful support of the Advent Historical Society. The family of Sue Wesley thanks the many friends and family who sent memorial gifts to the Advent Historical Society in her honor.



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