

OLD ZION GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH  
BRICKERVILLE, PA

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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**Don't Join the Cloister**

"Don't Join the Cloister" is the theme for the 2021 Old Zion Reformed Church Anniversary Service to be held on Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m.

The theme is taken from the religious controversy in the 1730's with the establishment of the Cloister in Ephrata. Peter Miller (John Peter Mueller) was a German Reformed minister who emigrated from Germany to Pennsylvania in 1730. After briefly serving congregations in southeastern Pennsylvania, Miller moved to the Conestoga Valley in Lancaster County. He served the churches of White Oak (later known as Reyers, then Zion), Seltenreich (East Earl) and Muddy Creek (where several baptisms by him are recorded in the Lutheran record).

Miller showed an inclination to the Seventh Day Dunkers (Baptists) and soon was recruited by their leader, Conrad Beisel, to join their movement. John Phillip Boehm, the founder and leader of the German Reformed church, warned the German Reformed folk about this "false spirit." Boehm would write, "but the misguided and simple-minded people clung to him, until finally the deception... came to light and this Miller went over publicly to the evil sect of the Seventh Day Tumplers and was baptized in Tumpler fashion (by triune immersion) at Conestoga in the month of April, 1735."

When Miller left the Reformed Church he took with him about ten families, Lutheran and Reformed, who followed his example. Adding insult to injury, to make his exit from the Reformed Church as dramatic as possible, Peter Miller, Conrad Weiser and two other men had a book burning. They burnt the Reformed Catechism, the Lutheran Catechism, in all thirty six books, in derision and disparagement.

The Old Zion Anniversary Service will reenact how the churches might have responded to this controversy. Our guest preacher will be Rev. Bruce Farrell, pastor of Zion Goshert's Reformed Church, United Church of Christ, in Mt. Zion, PA. Rev. Farrell will play the part of John Phillip Boehm, founder of the Reformed Church. His sermon title will be "Don't Join the Cloister."

Rev. William LaSalle, retired pastor of Bethany UCC, Ephrata and a member of Old Zion's Board of Directors, will play the part of John Conrad Tempelman, who took over the pastoral leadership at White Oak (Old Zion) after Miller's departure.

The premise for this historical presentation will be that Tempelman has invited Boehm to come and speak to the Reformed folk and members of other churches who were concerned about what was happening in their churches.

The worship service will include music and hymns from the time period with soloist Amanda Mrenna and J. P. Welliver on Old Zion's pump organ.

All are welcome to attend this meaningful mid-September service to learn more about the church's history and worship customs, and to socialize informally over lemonade and cookies following the service. Please join us!

The Anniversary Service this year will be the first event held at Old Zion since closing down because of Covid-19. Following CDC recommendations, guests are required to wear masks regardless of vaccination status.

[Old Zion German Reformed Church is located near Brickerville at 187 Reifsnyder Rd, Lititz, PA.]