

300 years of dedication to the region

Today, we celebrate the creation and organization of the first synod in the United States, which met for the initial time at First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia on Sept. 17, 1717. Consisting of 17 ministers and a territory from Long Island to Virginia, the meeting consisted of presbyteries from Philadelphia, New Castle, Snow Hill and Long Island. However, the Presbytery of Snow Hill was never formed, and those churches were absorbed by New Castle.



A difference in theology split the Synod in 1745 before it reunited into the Synod of New York and Philadelphia. By 1882, the Synod of Pennsylvania was formed from four synods that had encompassed the state. In 1973, the General Assembly created "regional" synods, and the Synods of Pennsylvania and West Virginia were merged to become the Synod of Pennsylvania-West Virginia (which also included a small portion of eastern Ohio). The name Synod of the Trinity was later chosen to replace the unwieldy geographic title.

Celebrate with us

And enter drawing for \$500 mission/ministry grant!

As part of the Synod's 300th anniversary celebration on Sept. 17, we invite you to share a video or picture(s) showing how you honored our special day. It can be a video of the congregation reading the liturgy, or maybe it's a photo of a special cake designed in the Synod's honor. It could be a video of a Sunday school class singing "Happy Birthday" or a photo of them holding up a birthday message.

Those photos and videos can be posted to the church's Facebook and Twitter pages using [#SynodTrinity300](#) that will allow us to find them, or they can be emailed to mgivler@syntrinity.org for us to share. A presentation will be created using those photos and videos that will be unveiled at the Synod Assembly meeting in October.

Three participating congregations will be randomly selected from among those who post or email to receive \$500 each, an award that will help start or support a ministry of that congregation.

A Litany of Celebration based on Psalm 145:1-7, in honor of the Synod of the Trinity's 300th Anniversary – Sept. 17, 2017

Leader: We will extol you, our God and King, and bless your name for ever and ever.

People: We celebrate this day, so long ago, on which we were called to serve you in new ways!

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; God's greatness is unsearchable.

A day on which we were challenged to become new, that Your church and its witness might grow.

One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

Through the years You have changed and challenged us, pursued and pushed us to live out Your hope in the world,

On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, we will meditate.

Reminding us always to seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness above our own desires.

The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and we will declare your greatness.

Still today, you call us through the present age and into tomorrow with eyes fixed on Jesus, voices sharing Your grace, and hands and feet engaging the world with Your justice and mercy.

Together, we shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. Amen and Amen!

Early Presbyterians in America were Psalm singers. Remember that early tradition by including in worship *The Doxology* (tune: *Old Hundredth*) or *Peoples, Clap Your Hands!* (tune: *Genevan 47*) or another Psalm that uses a tune from John Calvin's Genevan Psalter.



The Synod celebrates with

Presbytery of Philadelphia

The Presbytery of Philadelphia began when “the Presbytery,” the only general meeting of American Presbyterians, voted on Sept. 21, 1716 to divide into four “subordinate meetings” and reconstitute itself as an annual general synod. Six out of 17 ministers were assigned to the new presbytery.

The sheer size of the area under its supervision — originally all of South Jersey and southeastern Pennsylvania — meant that the presbytery had only such authority over its churches as the congregations were willing to give it. Eventually, Philadelphia organized several new congregations in Lehigh, Bucks and Montgomery Counties, but in 1800 only four Presbyterian congregations existed in a city of 70,000.

Before the Civil War, Presbyterians founded congregations by “cloning.” A church would subsidize a worshipping community in a new area and send some of its elders to form a new session. By 1850, there were 37 churches in a city of 400,000. The presbytery divided itself twice in this period to accommodate this growth.

After 1867, five Presbyteries of Philadelphia reorganized into three and entered their most ambitious era of expansion. Together they founded major charitable institutions, including Presbyterian Hospital (1871), Presbyterian Orphanage (1874), Presbyterian Home for Widows (1876), Berean Institute (1899) and the Philadelphia School for Christian Workers (1907).

In 1943, after more than 20 years of negotiation, the presbytery merged to form a “metropolitan presbytery” — 176 churches with roughly 100,000 communicants covering Philadelphia and most of Montgomery, Bucks and Delaware Counties. Now, in the 21st century, the Presbytery of Philadelphia has reinvented itself as a decentralized mission support movement, concentrating its energies on its congregations’ local initiatives, on innovative ministries, on repurposing old buildings and on new worshipping communities.



The Synod celebrates with

Board of Pensions

The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is celebrating 300 years of care for ministers and other church workers. It traces its roots to the Fund for Pious Uses, established by Presbyterians in Philadelphia in 1717.

In the early 18th century, hundreds of Presbyterian Scots in Ulster, chafing under religious oppression and struggling with economic hardship, boarded ships bound for the American colonies. Most of them disembarked in Philadelphia. “How many poor souls are scattered to and fro in this wilderness, under awful danger of perishing for lack of vision,” the General Synod exclaimed in a letter to the Presbytery of Dublin in 1718.



The Synod, the first in the colonies, sought contributions to its fund for “pious uses,” which it had established a year earlier to support ministers among people of great “paucity and poverty.”

The Synod noted in 1757 that families of “great and good men ... (were) very much pinched and distressed by want and poverty.” And, as presbyteries formed throughout the 18th century, they established funds of their own to care for the families of pastors.

In the 19th century, funding of this particular benevolence remained largely a Synod function. Faithful church leaders recognized additional needs of disabled pastors who could not earn sufficient income to care for their families.

By 1983, when the northern and southern branches of the church reunited as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the concept of care had moved from simple relief to retirement support, including pension plans and medical benefits for pastors and other employees.

Today, the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) represents the incorporation and expansion of benefits provided by the Presbyterian Church in the United States and United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America at the time of reunion. Designers of the plan rooted it in the belief that burdens are to be shared, that Scripture guides us to love and care for one another.