A lot has happened in the past 300 years. The United States of American was founded. A man walked on the moon. A terrorist strike on Sept. 11, 2001, changed the world. And through it all, Presbyterians have been there every step of the way. They were signers of the Declaration of Independence, an astronaut on Apollo 11 (Buzz Aldrin) and experienced loss when the country was attacked.

The Presbyterian Church has also experienced many ups and downs in the past three centuries. Among the highlights was the creation of the first General Assembly, which was held in Philadelphia in 1789. The first foreign missionary sailed to Liberia in 1833. The largest American Presbyterian denominations – the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) – reunited after 122 years, forming the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1983.

The history of the Presbyterian Church got its start in Philadelphia where the first presbytery and synod were formed. The first presbytery was organized in 1705. According to the "Historical Sketch of the Synod of Philadelphia," a presbytery meeting including seven ministers from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware was held on Oct. 27, 1706. Initially called the "General Presbytery," it quickly grew in size, and on Sept. 21, 1716, it decided to break into four presbyteries and create a "General Synod." Consisting of 17 ministers and a territory from Long Island to Virginia, the first synod met for the initial time on Sept. 17, 1717 in Philadelphia, and included 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 of Philadelphia in 1745, creating the "new side" Synod of New York and the "old side" Synod of Philadelphia. Thirteen years later the synods mended their ways and rejoined forces to create the Synod of New York and Philadelphia even though the new side outnumbered the old side by more than a 3:1 margin. In 1788, a General Assembly was established and it met for the first time at First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia a year later. Formed at that first General Assembly where the Synods of Philadelphia, New York/New Jersey, Virginia and the Carolinas, which encompassed 16 presbyteries and an estimated membership of 18,000.

Prior to that in 1732, the Presbytery of Donegal was formed and it included Lancaster County and "as far west as settlers cared to go." After the old side/new side controversy was settled in 1758, the Presbytery of Donegal was dissolved. All the churches on the west side of the Susquehanna River were placed into the new Presbytery of Carlisle in 1765. By 1794, the Presbytery of Huntingdon was formed out of the Presbytery of Carlisle, and in 1811, the Presbytery of Northumberland was in place. By this time, there were also presbyteries named Philadelphia First, Philadelphia Second and Philadelphia Third.

Seven "new school" presbyteries – including Philadelphia Second, Philadelphia Third, Carlisle, Huntingdon and Northumberland – were set off from the Synod of Philadelphia to create the Synod of Pennsylvania in 1838. This synod stretched to the western part of the state until 1843 when the Synod of West Pennsylvania was formed, encompassing the Presbyteries of Erie, Meadville and Pittsburgh. A Synod of Pittsburgh had been formed in 1802 by the union of the Presbyteries of Erie, Ohio and Redstone.

Meanwhile, the Synods of Pennsylvania and Philadelphia shared some of the same boundaries, "but the latter body grew to be unwieldy, and was materially changed," as it reads in the "Historical Sketch of the Synod of Philadelphia." Eventually a split occurred in Philadelphia and in 1854 the Synod of Baltimore was formed, which included many presbyteries from the Synod of Philadelphia. In 1870, a reunion of the old school and new school sides met and new synod boundaries were established. Four synods in Pennsylvania were created (Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Erie and Pittsburgh), while the Synod of Baltimore included churches in West Virginia and four synods in Ohio (Cleveland, Toledo, Cincinnati and Columbus) comprised that state. (At this meeting, there were 34 synods created, stretching as far as the Synod of the Pacific – a region west of the Rocky Mountains.)

In 1882, the Synod of Pennsylvania was formed from the four synods that had encompassed the state, and the synod's geographical boundaries remained constant for a lengthy period of time. In 1973, the General Assembly created "regional" synods, and the Synods of Pennsylvania and West Virginia were formed 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. The current boundaries were established after the reunion of northern and southern Presbyterians in 1983, when the Presbytery of Greenbrier – formerly part of the southern church – was united with the Presbytery of West Virginia and became part of the Synod of the Trinity.

The Synod today covers all of Pennsylvania, all of West Virginia except for the eastern panhandle and the counties of eastern Ohio (with West Virginia's northern panhandle) generally known as the Upper Ohio Valley.

Currently, 16 presbyteries make up the Synod of the Trinity, and these "mid council offices" serve 1,094 churches and 160,509 Presbyterians, making the Synod of the Trinity not only the oldest but also one of the largest in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).