



Ben Salem

United Church of Christ

Church Profile – Spring 2010

Ben Salem Church

Andreas Pennsylvania

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Ben Salem (In the Beginning)

In the late 1700's a small band of immigrants wandered north into the wilderness of inland Pennsylvania. Still speaking in their native tongue of Palatinate Germany, they met in their homes to share in fellowship and God's word. In 1797, Ben Salem was officially founded with the construction of their first sanctuary, a 30 foot X 45 foot log church. This building would meet the needs of two congregations of the German Reformed and Lutheran denominations until a new brick sanctuary was built in 1855. Working together, these two congregations would coexist peacefully for 189 years, at which point the decision was made to consolidate under the United Church of Christ.

Since our humble beginnings, much has changed. However, the pioneering spirit of our ancestors can still be seen in our recent additions of the bell choir, contemporary worship service and the construction of the current sanctuary in 2002. Forty pastors have blessed our sanctuary through ten generations of parishioners. Number Forty-one will lead us into the next two centuries.

The Local Community

Ben Salem is located near the border separating Carbon and Schuylkill Counties. Below are a few statistics from Carbon County.

Population Density: 166 people per square mile

2008 Cost of Living Index: 87.6 (US Average is 100)

Ethnicity: White (97%), Hispanic (1.5%), Black (0.6%)

Median age: 38 years

Average wage (2003): \$24,181

Occupations:

22% manufacturing

19.5% Education, health and social services

12.1% Retail trade

Ben Salem is located in a rural area of northeastern Pennsylvania. Woods and farmland are the most common sights with an occasional small town or development spotting the countryside. Most of us do not expect many changes to the community however proximity to the populous Lehigh Valley is causing moderate residential growth. The problems we face in the community are those of other communities across the country: Crime, while not common, does happen, and drugs and alcohol concern many in the congregation. Another concern is the recession and its effect on jobs and the well-being of the affected individuals. There is also a general concern by many regarding declining moral values and the need to provide safe opportunities for children.

Ben Salem Demographics

Age

<u>7</u>	% ages 0-5
<u>14</u>	% ages 6-18
<u>20</u>	% ages 19-34
<u>15</u>	% ages 35-49
<u>19</u>	% ages 50-64
<u>11</u>	% ages 65-74
<u>14</u>	% ages 75+

Marital Status

<u>14.2</u>	% Couple with children at home
<u>38.3</u>	% Couple without children
<u>43.0</u>	% Single
<u>4.5</u>	% Single parent

Employment

<u>42</u>	% Employed
<u>8</u>	% Unemployed
<u>50</u>	% Retired

Level of Education

<u>7</u>	% Completed less than H.S.
<u>33</u>	% High school graduate
<u>20</u>	% Some college / voc. school
<u>23</u>	% College graduate
<u>16</u>	% Graduate school

Occupation

<u>11</u>	% Business
<u>4</u>	% Clerical
<u>4</u>	% Farmer
<u>12</u>	% Laborer/Manufacturing
<u>29</u>	% Professional
<u>0</u>	% Student
<u>9</u>	% Tradesman
<u>31</u>	% Other (Commonly retired)

Ben Salem Statistics

	Last Year	5 Years Ago	10 Years Ago
Number of church members	507	595	609
Average attendance at worship	202	217	238
Average participation of children/youth in C.E.	20	50	60
Average weekly participation in adult education	37	53	65
Number of members who are ordained clergy	1	0	0

Facilities



Ben Salem Church is located in southern Carbon County, approximately 25 Miles Northwest of Allentown PA. It is located in a rural area, surrounded by farmland.





Wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Our narthex was purposely designed oversized to provide space for Sunday morning fellowship.





The sanctuary was thoughtfully designed to bring everyone closer together. At full capacity, it holds 400+ parishioners.

Four banks of pews arranged in a curve ensure that everyone can fully experience the service. The balcony provides space for expansion.





The back yard is usually under careful inspection from the local cattle herd. They come by on Sundays for the music.

One of several classrooms used for weekly Sunday School.





The social hall can accommodate 120 people per seating. It is located nearby in a separate building.





Former members who left the church for a better place.

Our Faith Stance

At the current time, Ben Salem is a moderately conservative congregation. As our membership grows, we continue to evolve toward thinking that is more liberal.

Worship and Music



Worship services are held on Sunday mornings.

Contemporary - 8:15 AM
Sunday School - 9:30 AM
Traditional - 10:30AM

Services are scheduled by the worship committee with input from the pastor and music group leaders.

Members appreciate a relaxed and understandable preaching style that speaks to us today. A clear presentation that is Bible based is desired. We use the 1941 edition of "The Hymnal" and "The Celebration Hymnal."



Communion takes place the first Sunday of the month in both services. Throughout the year, we also have special services such as the Blue Christmas Service (for those who lost loved ones), Thanksgiving Eve, Christmas Eve and Lenten Services. Lenten Services are held in conjunction with three other local churches.



The contemporary service is led by the pastor and our praise band, Daybreak.



The traditional service is led by the pastor and includes music by the Senior Choir.



The Hand Bell and Cherub Choirs often participate in the traditional service.

Organization

Standing Committees:

Stewardship and Finance - Prepare the annual budget and make recommendations. Committee uses innovative methods to increase personal giving.

Memorial - Coordinate the purchase of items for the church and church grounds using monies received into the Memorial Fund.

Mission - Actively seeks mission projects and challenges the congregation to meet goals both locally and worldwide.

Worship and Music - In consultation with the pastor prepare and schedule services of worship and coordinate the music program of the church.

Archives - Collect and preserve historical information and documents.

Christian Education - Oversee all activities within the educational program of the church.

Property - Oversee maintenance of all church properties.

Human Resources - Newly formed committee responsible for creating job descriptions for staff, ensuring that annual job appraisals for staff are completed.

Long Range Planning - Establish goals and objectives for the church on an annual basis.

Church Furnishings - Specify and purchase furnishings for church facilities.

Membership and Church Growth - Attract new persons to Ben Salem Church, develop hospitality to ensure that visitors are made to feel welcome, help to assimilate new members, and create new methods of enriching the spiritual life of members.

Usher - Extend hospitality to guests and members.

Other Committees, Groups and Services within Ben Salem

Church:

Altar Guild - Maintain and change paraments according to seasonal schedule. Clean and polish brass appointments and refill candles.

Blanket Makers - Craft knotted quilts for the needy and sew quilts for fundraisers.

Called to Care - Assist pastor in home and hospital visitation to the sick and others in need.

Food Bank - Distribute food items to needy individuals in the church and community on a monthly and emergency basis.

Fund Raisers - Establish and schedule fund raising activities and events.

Prayer Shawl Ministry - Using the Holy Trinity as the basis for each stitch, the group knits or crochets shawls with love and prayers to be distributed to those in need of comfort and consolation.

Thursday Morning Bible Study Group - Study God's Word using the Bible and other faith-based books as resources.

United Church Women - Fellowship group which meets monthly and includes worship, relevant speakers, special events and refreshments.

Youth Group - Provides opportunities for recreation and service to the church and community.

Pastoral Relations - Elders and Pastor meet quarterly to discuss concerns of the church.

Cemetery Association - Look after the interests of the cemeteries belonging to Ben Salem United Church of Christ.

Policy - Meets as necessary to update church policy.

Additional organized groups include:

Sunday Coffee Hour, Funeral Dinners, Newsletter Assembly, Vacation Bible School, Greeter Program and Lector Program.

Fellowship



Our kitchen is always a hub of activity.



Olympic Day is an opportunity for all members to share in games of skill and to have fun and fellowship.



Our multi-purpose Social Hall is often the scene of congregational activities.

Missions



Ben Salem's mission program is extremely successful and continues to support people in need.

Special offerings received in 2008

OCWM	\$9,488.90
OGHS	\$899.86
NIN	\$605.00
Strengthen the Church	\$379.00
Christmas Fund	\$127.00

In addition to UCC sponsored programs, in 2008 the Ben Salem Mission Committee promoted many special projects, including:

Hunger Relief projects	\$2,886.69
Love Offerings for individuals in the community	\$2,669.00
All Kids can Learn International	\$750.00
Crop Walk	\$634.00

We actively participate in family oriented mission projects. Each year our congregation looks forward to Operation Christmas Child through Samaritan's Purse. This is a way for us to get involved in a hands-on project. We also support two children from India, through The Global Ministries Child Sponsorship Program. In 2006, a group from Ben Salem traveled to Florida to repair homes that were damaged during the hurricane season. Those who could not go provided financial support.

Community Mission Activities:

- Food bank
- Prayer shawl project
- Love offerings
- Blanket makers
- Blood drive
- Prison ministry
- Serving in soup kitchen

Ecumenical & Wider Church Connections

Ben Salem U.C.C. maintains a covenantal relationship with the Penn Northeast Conference and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ. As a local church, we look to the Conference for identification of mission points, youth and Christian education resources and special assistance such as a pastoral search. In covenant we see fit to respond to the five all church offerings as well as being in attendance at Annual Meetings and other conference events.

Ben Salem United Church of Christ would expect the pastor to connect with the Penn Northeast Conference by serving on committees, attending meetings and other events, keeping the lines of communication open and educating local church members regarding the United Church of Christ.

Ben Salem is part of what we refer to as the “Mahoning Charge.” In the past we shared clergy in both the German Reformed and Lutheran traditions. We still maintain friendly ties with these other churches.

Our Strengths

Based on the results of our church’s congregational survey when asked, “What are Ben Salem’s strengths?” Friendliness and fellowship were given the highest number of responses (21%). Strong church leadership and dedicated hardworking members were the next highest number of responses (13%), followed by our music groups (11%) and missions (8%)

Our Vision of the Future Driven from the Past

The members of Ben Salem United Church of Christ take pride in our past history. Our experiences have shaped us to become better Christians and stewards of this world. Two major events have had a profound spiritual effect on the current generations at Ben Salem. The first is the consolidation of the German Reformed and Lutheran congregations. We honor Reverend Paul Cope, our first pastor of the consolidated church, for his ability to help shape us into the strong congregation we are today. His influence and that of our next pastor, Reverend Jeffery Kistler, laid the groundwork for the second major event, the move to our current sanctuary. This was an emotional event for many as we decommissioned the 1855 sanctuary and moved in procession to the new one. Years have passed, but to most of us, it feels like it happened only yesterday.

History shows that when our congregation sets its mind to something - it happens! When our standing committees identify projects, members always step forward to accept the tasks of leadership. The pastor is encouraged to participate in the planning process as well. When the time is right, we will kick off "Phase II" of our building project, which will incorporate our social hall and additional classrooms into our new worship facility.

Ben Salem's members are unique in their ability to face challenges of the present and future in a changing world, while still holding onto values of our past. We are called to be a light in this world, and to preach and teach God's Word, so that our lives may reflect Him and bring glory to His name. In a world of declining moral values, it is our responsibility at Ben Salem to be an example to the community. We wish to encourage people to accept the gift of salvation and make it part of their everyday lives. We endeavor to involve the youth of our community by providing a place to live, learn and play with the support that only Christ can provide. We seek to honor our older adults by providing ministries that serve both their spiritual and temporal needs. With God's help, we intend to keep Christian faith and Christian values first in the hearts of our community.

Pastoral Expectations

Leadership Expectations

The following attributes were selected by the congregation from the list of 45 items that represent a range of qualities in the ministry of the church.

Ben Salem needs a person who...

- is an effective preacher/speaker
- makes pastoral calls on people in hospitals and nursing homes and those confined to their homes
- is a compassionate and caring person
- is a person of faith
- is effective in working with children
- is effective in working with youth
- encourages people to relate their faith to their daily lives
- is effective in planning and leading worship
- ministers effectively to people in crises
- builds a sense of fellowship among the people with whom he/she works
- maintains confidentiality
- helps people develop their spiritual life

Ben Salem is very well organized, with strong lay-leadership, and therefore many of the decision-making and administrative functions are carried out by the parishioners. This provides a unique opportunity for the pastor to focus on the spiritual needs of the congregation. The numerous committees welcome the input of the pastor but also understand that the size of our organization is such that the pastor cannot attend every meeting of each group. We are seeking an eloquent speaker, well versed in the Bible, with an historical understanding of the scriptures, as well as, an appreciation for their implications in the modern world. We expect our pastor to be a person of faith, who can minister with Christian compassion, visit the sick and homebound, and care for the spiritual needs of those in crisis. Our pastor will enable us to move into the future, providing religious guidance for new programs for children, youth and adults. These ministries are a high priority for the congregation at this time. The church board will provide support and guidance.

Pastor's Package for Year 2010

We are offering a flexible salary package with compensation and benefits within the range specified by the Penn Northeast Conference guidelines.

Conclusion

As is evident from the profile you have just read, Ben Salem UCC is the church you should consider leading. Our congregation experiences a rich spirit of fellowship driven by the influences of a Strong Leadership and supported by Dedicated and Hard-working Members. Music in all forms plays a very important role in our worship services. The enthusiasm of our Missions committee has spilled over into the congregation creating a highly successful outreach program.

Our next Pastor should have a very congenial personality and have the ability to promote the talents of a strong lay leadership. This individual should be able to marshal the energies of a hard-working membership for the purpose of fulfilling Ben Salem's Mission of experiencing our God – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in our fellowship, worship, and service to others.

We look forward to having the opportunity to give you further details about our friendly and enthusiastic church family. Please see our contact information below or visit our website at www.bensalemucc.com

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This document has been prepared and submitted by the Ben Salem
Pastoral Search Committee.