

Evening Herald/Robert N. Kyler



CULC building committee

Throughout this month, Christ United Lutheran Church, Gordon, Lavelle and Ashland R.D., is taking part in a capital fund appeal to raise money for a new, centrally located building two miles west of Gordon along Airport Road. Church officials said members of the congregation "are being challenged to prayerfully consider how they can help this vision become bricks and mortar." The cost of the proposed building is an estimated \$513,000. To help in the effort, the congregation has enlisted the services of the Lutheran Laity Movement for Stewardship. The congregation currently worships in three separate church buildings in Gordon, Lavelle and Ashland R.D. and it hopes the fund appeal will make the vision of one centrally located worship facility a reality. Building committee members discussing the effort here include (first row, from left) Elmer Miller, Evelyn McDonald, Ruth Wolfgang, Carla Mae Carl; (second row) Pastor Peggy Sue Pfeffer, Donna Scheuren, Judy Stepullitis, Connie Welker, Malcolm Boyer; (third row) Paula Chuplis, James Berner, Carl Johnson, Pastor Jay Serafin, Lester Maurer.



Sign marks site for new worship center

Members of Christ United Lutheran Church with chapels in Lavelle, Ashland R.D. and Gordon, erect a sign recently on the seven-acre site of a proposed central worship center, located at the old Gordon Airport. Under the direction of a representative of the Lutheran Laity Movement, a finance drive entitled, "Share the Vision" in June raised more than \$180,000 in cash and pledges. Ground-

breaking is expected to take place early next year. The design will provide seating for 250 worshippers. On hand for erection of the sign here are (from left) Jerome Stanitis, Les Maurer, Bob Carl, Carl Johnson, Ralph Johnson, Pastor Jay Serafin, Elmer Miller, Malcolm Boyer, Jim Berner, Ed Stepulitis Jr. and Forrest Shadle.

Groundbreaking set for house of worship

GORDON — At a site set among cornfields, ground for the new worship center for Christ's United Lutheran Church will be broken on Saturday, April 11, at 2 p.m., church officials announced.

The seven-acre plot was once part of the old airport two miles west of Gordon. The public is invited to the ceremony which will be attended by officials of the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod, clergy and laypeople of the Schuylkill Mission District and local clergy and friends of the congregation.

A PICNIC-STYLE luncheon will be offered to members of Christ's United at noon. The opportunity will be provided for people to tour the site and note the work done to prepare for construction of the \$700,000 building.

Christ's United Lutheran Church has a unique history in the area, officials said. A shortage of pastors and the rising cost of operation in the middle 1960s compelled the neighboring Lutheran churches to consider some form of cooperative ministry. Good Shepherd, Ashland; Saint Paul's, Gordon; Saint Peter's,

Lavelle; Saint John's, Ashland, R.D.; and Zion, Girardville, two of which had no pastor at the time, joined and became Christ's United.

Two ordained pastors and an intern, who served as part of his training for a year, provided the leadership for a viable Lutheran presence in the area. Worship was conducted in the five chapels with the pastors and the intern alternating. For a period the needs of the members were met but there was always the feeling that the "United" in their name was not a reality.

IN 1977 GOOD Sheperd left CULC to go on its own and call a pastor, as did Zion in 1990. The remaining chapels continued with an aging congregation always on the brink of financial crisis.

At the annual congregational meeting in 1988 a plea was made to consider building a centrally-located worship center where the congregation could really be "one." A church and community self-study was made and, based on the expected growth of northern Schuylkill County in the late '80s and into the '90s, the proposal seemed feasible. Synod officials encouraged and

assisted in making initial plans, according to information supplied by church officials.

A page in "Ministry Memos," the church newsletter, called "Building Blocks," kept the idea before the congregation. Capitalizing on the film, "Field of Dreams," the publicity committee fueled the dreams of those who felt building a new church structure was a real possibility.

A site at the old Gordon airport was purchased, a proposed design was prepared by the synod architect, and the Lutheran Laity Movement was engaged to help raise the funds necessary. A logo was developed and the project was launched. A three-year pledge plan was adopted and a sizeable amount has been realized in the past nine months.

Construction will get underway as soon as weather permits, with completion expected late in the fall.

DUE TO SOGGY conditions at the site, those attending the groundbreaking ceremony are being advised to wear appropriate footwear and to take care in parking vehicles to avoid getting stuck in the soft berm.

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**G**ROUNDBREAKING:

Principal figures on hand for Saturday's groundbreaking ceremony for a new Christ United Lutheran Church near Gordon are (from left) Bishop Harold S. Weiss, Rev. Jay Serafin, contractor Harold Blacker, church council Vice President Malcolm Boyer, council Secretary Donna Scheuren, building committee Chairperson Forrest Shadle, committee members Roger Neumeister, Hiram "Tom" Green and architect Wayne Ratten. The new church will be located on the site of the former Gordon airport, two miles west of Gordon.

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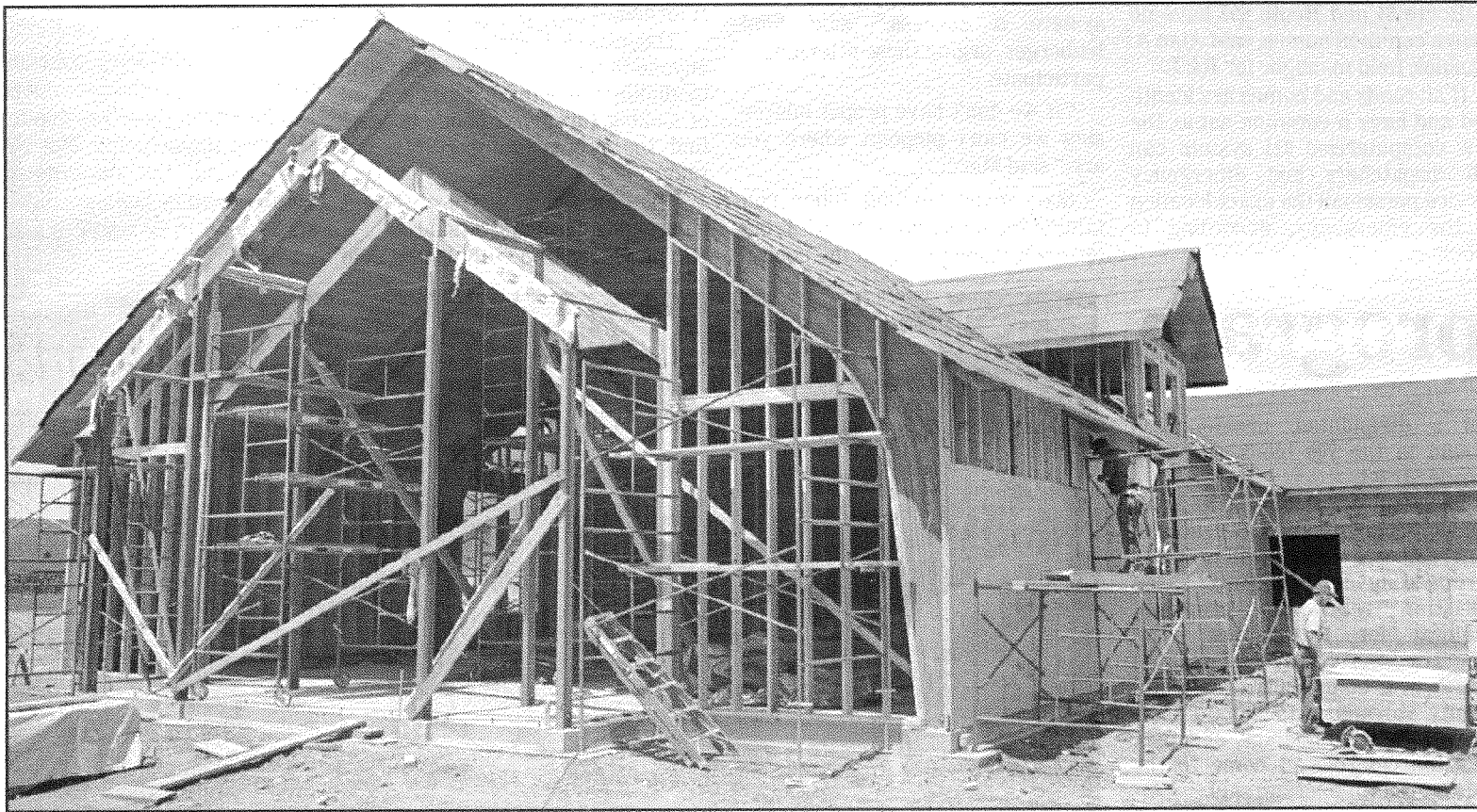


New church is taking shape

The region's newest house of worship, Christ United Lutheran Church located on the site for the former Gordon Airport along Route 4004, approximately two miles west of Gordon, is taking shape

as crews install roofing material. The church unites two Gordon area congregations.

Evening Herald/Robert N. Kyle



Andy Matsko/The REPUBLICAN

Construction work is progressing on the new Christ Lutheran Church near Gordon.

Church building taking shape

Members hope it is ready for Christmas

By Peter Bortner

The REPUBLICAN

GORDON — Two northern Schuylkill County Lutheran congregations, along with some members of two others, are building a new sanctuary they hope to have ready for a Christmas service.

Christ United Lutheran Church will soon stand on Airport Road approximately one mile west of Gordon in Barry Township near the airport, according to Elmer Miller, a member of Christ United Lutheran's church council.

The church has resulted from the combination of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Lavelle, and St. John's Lutheran Church, Barry Township. Additionally, several former members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Gordon, and Zion's Lutheran Church, Girardville, have joined the new congregation, according to Miller.

The church is under the leadership of the Rev. Joseph A. Serafin, who had pastored both St. Peter's and St. John's.

"People are going to miss their old buildings, but everybody's excited about the new building and the chance to worship together," Rev. Serafin said.

Construction of the new sanctuary started in the spring and is well on its way to comple-

tion, Miller said.

Rev. Serafin estimated the cost of the new church would be more than \$70,000.

The congregation hopes to spend the holiday season in the new building, Miller said.

"They're aiming for Thanksgiving or Christmas that we would have our first service inside the church," Miller said.

On Sunday, some members of the congregation held their first worship service under the roof, Rev. Serafin said.

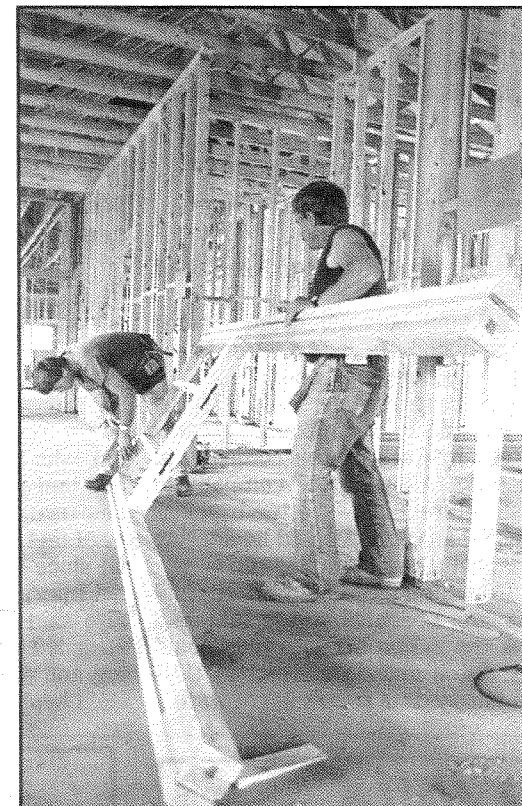
Formation of the new church was dictated by economics, according to Miller.

St. Paul's and Zion's had been parties to the discussion about forming the new church but decided not to join it, Miller said.

Rev. Serafin said the new church would allow members of the two churches, which are actually part of one large congregation, to get to know one another.

St. Paul's, Zion's, St. John's, St. Peter's and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Ashland joined together as one congregation Jan. 1, 1969, he said. The individual churches were called chapels.

Good Shepherd left the other four churches in the late 1970s, Rev. Serafin said. Zion went on its own three years ago and St. Paul's left this year, he said.



Robert Carl of Ashland, left, and Carl Sell of Mooresburg, put an studs for inside walls.