

## Churches in the Shenandoah Valley

### St. James Lutheran Church Cedar Creek Rd, Zepp, Strasburg, VA 22657



#### A brief History

A ministerial student, W.G. Keil, held meetings in private homes in the Zepp area for the purpose of organizing a Lutheran congregation, while he was on assignment at St. Paul's Lutheran Church at Strasburg where he served as pastor from 1822 until 1827. He travelled on horseback to serve the Cedar Creek Lutheran Church at Zepp. Indications are that he was successful in this project and the early communion records for September 10, 1822 show approximately 30 confirmed members. By December 12, 1824, 50 members were present for the Communion Service

Church website:  
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A church building was started in the early 1820's, with the local residents donating labor and material and a log church was constructed on the land where the cemetery is today, and across the creek from where the current church stands. The church was also known as Mt. Pleasant Church, although some say that the original name was the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cedar Creek.

Sunday services were conducted regularly from late spring to the early winter, and services in January to March were dependent on the weather as it was necessary to ford Cedar Creek to get to the church. The one room church was used by all accounts until the 1841 when the services were moved to the Lochmiller meeting house.

A new church – at the current location – was built in 1884 and dedicated in 1885, with the first pastor to preach in the new building being Rev. William Jacob Smith. He was installed as Pastor of the Gravel Springs Parish on April 5, 1885, at St. James Lutheran Church. During his 26 years as minister of the Gravel Springs Parish, Rev. Smith travelled approximately 400 miles per month on horseback or buggy. The pastorate was approximately 35 miles long from one end to the other and he rarely missed an appointment. He died in February 1911.

The Gravel Springs Parish included the churches of Bethel, St. James, St. Johns, Fremont and Gravel Springs (the latter three churches being in Frederick County).

In December 1871, the Gravel Springs Parish purchased 18 acres on what is now Back Mountain Road, (Route 600) for a parsonage and each church contributed money. The first minister to occupy the parsonage was Pastor Elias H. Jones (1874 – 1880). A new parsonage at Albin was used in the mid thirties until 1964 when the Bethel Lutheran Church at Albin became an independent congregation and needed the parsonage there, so Mr and Mrs Thomas Rosenberger donated land for a new parsonage for the remaining churches in the parish, and a parsonage was constructed at 2142 Back Mountain Road in 1965.

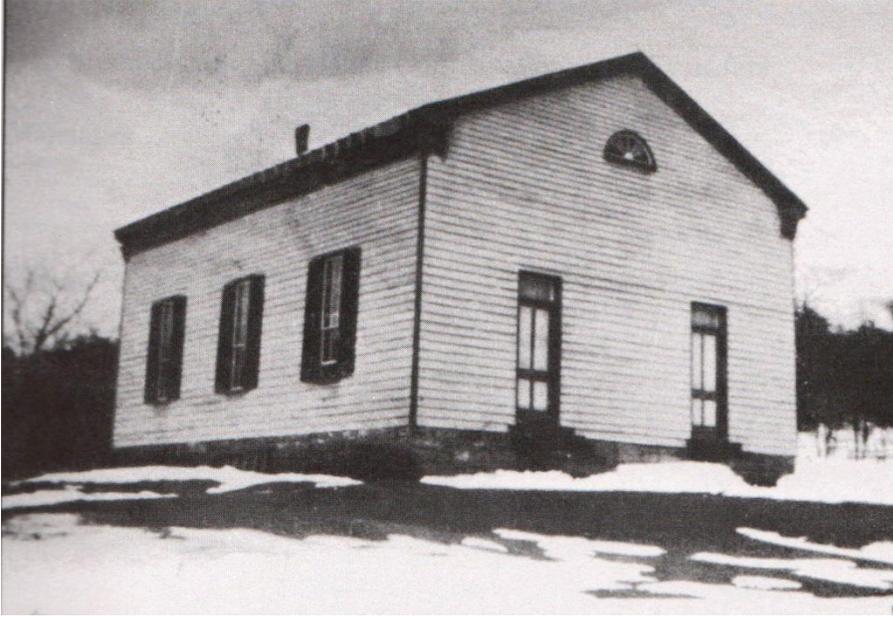
Due to declining membership, the Virginia Synod of the ECLA placed St. James Lutheran Church in Chapel status effective January 1, 1989 – which means that worship services are not held regularly and a Lutheran Pastor is not assigned to service the congregation.

The Annual Homecoming was started in 1950 and continues today in the month of July with a Pastor being invited to conduct the service.

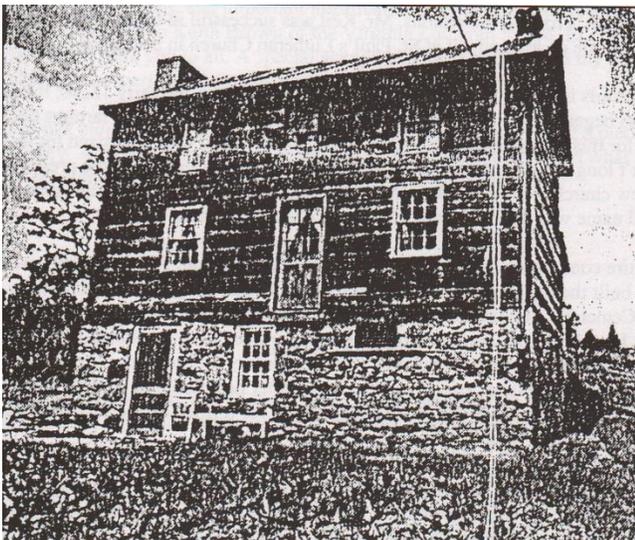
*Condensed by Philip Crown from the book "St. James Lutheran Church, (Zepp, Va), past and Present" by David Brill, courtesy of Mary Lou Lineweaver Thompson*

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## Churches in the Shenandoah Valley



*St James Lutheran 1885*



*Lochmiller House*



*1965 Parsonage*

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