

Walnut Hill Church – history and present life

Walnut Hill's story began in the early days of the settling of Lexington. In **1785**, the Rev. James Crawford built a small log church on land provided by Levi Todd and gathered a nucleus of congregants from the surrounding farms. They were all within range of walking or riding horseback to the church over the rough paths and across the fields. Within two decades, they were ready for a more permanent building. In **1801** the stone sanctuary was built.

The congregation flourished throughout the 19th century. By the mid 20th century the congregation had declined and finally closed its doors in 1953. Two decades later, neighbors and other interested persons formed a committee to renovate the building and resume services of worship. Many persons, adults and youth, offered their resources, time, and energy to bring Walnut Hill back to life. In **1975**, the sanctuary was rededicated and services resumed.

A new congregation was gathered with a particularly **ecumenical mission and charter**. In 1976, the new Walnut Hill Church called its first pastor, the Rev. Dr. John C. Cavendish, a clergy of the Episcopal Church. Dr. Cavendish served Walnut Hill for 24 years until his retirement in 2000. After an interim period, the congregation moved to call a second pastor, the Rev. Dr. Michael L. Ward. Throughout these years since 1976, music leadership has been provided by Dr. Angela Hurley.

Since its renewal, Walnut Hill Church has seen a variety of special occasions and developments, including celebrations of the bicentennials of the original congregation (1985) and the sanctuary (2001). **Trinity Hall**, an education and fellowship building, was built and dedicated in 1985. **The Walnut Hill Day School**, independently owned and operated, opened in 1986.

Today, Walnut Hill Church continues its ecumenical mission. Regular **Worship** services are conducted each Sunday morning at **11am**. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is administered on the first Sunday of each month. Special occasions of worship occur around holidays and other significant times. The **choir** sings on the first Sunday of the month, providing music leadership for the service of Holy Communion. **Nursery care** is provided on Sunday mornings for children through age five. **Sunday School** is offered during the worship hour for older children and youth. Lauren Fouts, Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministry, plans and leads our Sunday School lessons. Occasional Sunday afternoon activities for children and youth, and **studies for adults** are offered throughout the year.

A special Walnut Hill tradition is a time of **fellowship and refreshments** in Trinity Hall after the worship service. Visitors, members, and friends are encouraged to linger and deepen acquaintance with each other.

The Women's Guild meets for fellowship and study on the second Monday of each month (September – May), as well as for luncheons during the Christmas season and in June of each year.

Congregational **potluck picnics** are held in Trinity Hall immediately after worship on the third Sunday of September, the first Sunday of December, and the third Sunday of May.

Walnut Hill has lately undertaken an initiative to develop **mission partnerships**. Currently we maintain mission partnerships with the Athens-Chilesburg Elementary School, the Nathaniel United Methodist Mission, and Dr. Carol Spears (medical missionary in Kenya). Other mission opportunities are addressed as they arise.

Part of the renovation of Walnut Hill Church included the re-opening of the **Walnut Hill Cemetery** available as a burying ground for members and friends of the congregation. Walnut Hill has long been a wonderful place for **weddings**. The sanctuary continues to be available in this way for members and friends of the congregation as well as for others in the community with sponsorship by a member or friend of the church.

All activities of the Walnut Hill Church are **open to visitors**. Some who come to Walnut Hill choose to become members. Others retain their membership in home congregations and participate with us as friends.

For more information regarding Walnut Hill's life and ministry, see the church website (www.walnuthillchurchky.org) or call the church office (263-5304).