



Archives

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WILKINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
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Pittsburgh Urban Christian School (PUCS) celebrates its 40th Anniversary!



PUCS is located in the former Calvary Lutheran Church at the corner of Center Street and South Avenue in Wilkinsburg. It includes the educational wing which extends toward Ross Avenue. In recent years the campus was enlarged with the purchase of the vacant Boys & Girls Club on South Avenue.

The two images below show the May 21, 2022 grand 40th celebration, held under a tent in the Ferguson Playground. Alumni, teachers, donors and founders celebrated 40 years of teaching children. See the featured [documentary](#) which explains the amazing 40 year journey of PUCS.



Left image shows the 1981 PUCS class of boys and girls in kindergarten.

Right image shows the kindergarten class of 2022, along with their teachers.





Pittsburgh Urban Christian School Celebrates 40 Years of Integrated, Urban Education

This unique Christian school reflected on its past, present, and future, while raising funds for capital and operating expenses.

WILKINSBURG, Pennsylvania (Wed., June 15) – On Saturday, May 21, 2022, [Pittsburgh Urban Christian School \(PUCS\)](#) hosted its 40th Anniversary Celebration under a large tent at Ferguson Park in Wilkinsburg, PA. This celebration served as an opportunity for founders, alumni, teachers, families, and donors to come together to reflect on PUCS' past and present, while fundraising for and dreaming about the school's future.

The event's program opened with the [documentary](#) of PUCS' history, created by local videographer and friend of PUCS, Daymon Long. Presenters at the dinner included Jonathan C. Ray, PUCS' Executive Director, Carlos T. Carter, President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh who grew up in Wilkinsburg, and four PUCS alumni: Zack Shell, Hannah Williams, Crystal Fornauf, and Erin Brim-Simpson. Dr. Terry Thomas, Professor of Biblical Studies at Geneva College and one of the founders of PUCS (who also grew up in Wilkinsburg), served as the event's MC. Overall, the 40th Anniversary Celebration raised over \$78,000 to be used for capital projects and general operating expenses.

In 1981, PUCS was started by a small group of individuals who envisioned a place where children from all over the city could learn, discover, and explore side-by-side, guided by the principle that all of life is rooted in Christ the Redeemer who is the integrator of our lives. After attending some local education conferences that really inspired them, Bill and Joan Painter, Barry and Diane Balliet, Bob and Christy Wauzzinski, Tom and Janice McWhertor, and others in their networks began meeting to dream about this unique school. Hear more of their stories in the 40th Anniversary documentary, linked above.

Serving a diverse group of students in an urban setting has always been an intentional part of PUCS' mission. The first kindergarten class of just five students laid the foundation for the elementary and middle school that developed in the following decades. Today, PUCS enrolls 152 students in grades Pre-K-8th grade, and over 40% of the student body are students of color and 14% are residents of Wilkinsburg.

"We are so grateful that we had this chance to celebrate God's faithfulness over the last 40 years," says Executive Director, Jonathan C. Ray. "At the event, one PUCS alum commented that it reminded him that his PUCS community is still here. And that's our goal, to be more than just a school. Educating students is so important, but providing a community where they feel loved and celebrated for who they are... that's what really makes this place special."

About Pittsburgh Urban Christian School: PUCS is a unique, PreK-8 Christian school located in Wilkinsburg, PA whose curriculum emphasizes play and exploration and encourages students to make connections between subjects. PUCS' mission is to equip students to thrive academically, emotionally, and spiritually, in order to serve others. Visit www.pucs.org to learn more.

Summer at the Station is a series of festive events at the historic Wilkinsburg Train Station. These celebrations are co-hosted by the Equity /Impact Center and the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation.

These free gatherings celebrate summer, Wilkinsburg organizations, businesses, music and food, all while connecting community groups with each other. There are two more of these events this summer from 3:00-6:00 Saturday, July 16 and August 27.

Many organizations have tables of information, including the Historical Society. Musical performances are on both levels, with the upper level featuring Barrels to Beethoven, the Solomon family musicians with their handcrafted steelpan drums.



Affirming Our Collective Stake in Safeguarding Sacred Places -
written by Diane Cohen and Robert Jaeger for Historic Preservation News

Let's face it: Historic church and synagogue buildings nationwide are under extreme duress. Many congregations have fewer members and financial resources than before and yet are faced with the growing need for social services and the maintenance of large and complex structures. In recent years most communities have experienced the dissolution of congregations. The most widely publicized changes have occurred in the Roman Catholic Church; many churches parishes have been closed in Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia over the last several decades. Preservationists recognize that historic religious buildings are among the most highly visible, beautifully crafted, and culturally significant buildings in the community. We have grown more aware of how most congregations struggle to care for these properties. So often, however, we assume that a Methodist Church, for example, is used for worship and other activities of interest only to Methodists. For preservationists to persuade society as a whole to support the survival of religious properties, we need to explain why a Presbyterian – or those from myriad other religions – would support that Methodist church's efforts to restore its stained-glass windows.

The answer to this question grows clearer when we look at what is happening within the walls of our religious properties. Consider First Unitarian Church in Oakland, California, which is working closely with a Center for Urban Family Life to restore the Richardsonian Romanesque church so that it may house a range of daycare and other services. Working with organizations like the center to keep older churches and synagogues open and active should be natural for preservationists once we realize, for example, that one out of three children in daycare programs nationwide are housed in religious buildings. Or consider Christ and Saint Stephen's church in New York City – a church that makes its circa 1880 building available to small music groups in need of intimate and affordable space for rehearsals and concerts. A cultural leader in Washington D.C., has described religious properties that provide such spaces as a "spawning ground of artistic vitality."

By nurturing people who live or work nearby, sacred places help stabilize their communities. These buildings encourage the lively use and preservation of our neighborhoods. Many community leaders are, however, unaware of this. And so, when a congregation like the Cathedral of the Assumption in Louisville -with exemplary energy, leadership, and planning – gains public support for the restoration and creative use of its buildings, preservationists should take notice.

Not all efforts to restore and make good use of sacred places are on such a grand scale. In Philadelphia, an interfaith coalition of three congregations is raising funds for the preservation of their historic buildings, guided by Partners for Sacred Places and local preservationists. Other congregations are combining their preservation plans with new community development initiatives that rehabilitate residential and commercial properties. The very presence of an older religious building in a transitional neighborhood may encourage the congregations far-flung membership to remain interested in its surroundings. For instance, Madison Ave., Presbyterian Church in Baltimore has collaborated with preservationist and community leaders to rehabilitate nearby apartment buildings in tandem with the churches restoration.

Preservationist should work closely with congregations, denominational organizations, and civic and philanthropic leaders to make the case for our collective stake in the survival of

sacred places. If we allow America's historic religious properties to decline and disappear, we will lose much more than the rich soulful story they tell. We will lose those rare, affordable, welcoming places that are generating new energies and resources to meet the larger challenges faced by America's communities.

Diane Cohen and A. Robert Jaeger are the codirectors of Partners for Sacred Places, the national, nonsectarian organization for the stewardship and active use of older and historic religious properties.

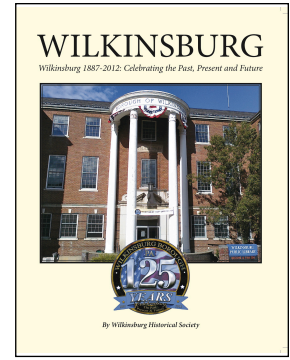
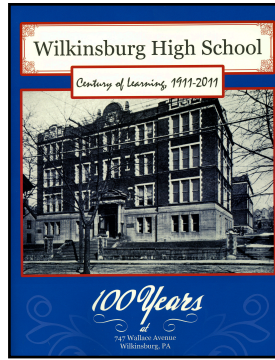
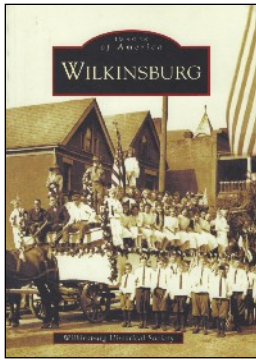
Wilkinsburg Historical Society added: Once known as the “City of Churches” the community of Wilkinsburg has benefitted from the enormous contributions of the churches. Wilkinsburg still has nearly thirty active churches and a few that are currently vacant. Some architecturally significant religious structures have been reimagined for a new purpose. Discussions are ongoing with congregations and their leaders regarding the maintenance, repair and future of these beautiful buildings.



Left to right, the former United Brethren Church at the corner of Coal St. and South Avenue, formerly Church of Christ Scientist on Graham Blvd is now the Wilkinsburg Arts and Culture at Eastridge. Wilkinsburg Baptist, (later known as Dunamis Baptist) on Wallace Avenue at Center Street is not currently used.



(L to R) Former Mulberry Presbyterian Church at 710 Mulberry Street in Wilkinsburg is under renovation to be the Center for Civic Arts. Visit <https://civicarts211.wixsite.com/website-1> Right image is the Arc of the Covenant Church at 901 Rebecca Avenue at Coal Street. This unique church is currently not being used, services are held in the annex building.



These are the three books that the **Wilkinsburg Historical Society** wrote and published during the past twelve years. They help to promote and preserve the history of Wilkinsburg and raise funds for the various projects of the Society. All three books are still available to purchase from the Society. Another way to support the activities of the Historical Society.

On the far left is ***“Images of America - Wilkinsburg”***, a 128 page soft-bound book printed by the Arcadia Publishing Company. It includes over 220 black and white photos depicting the history of our town from the early land patents in the late 1700s up to the 75th celebration of Wilkinsburg in 1962. The book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$20.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The middle book above is ***“Wilkinsburg High School - Century of Learning 1911-2011”***. This book chronicles the history of the local high school from its early start in the late 1880s, the creation of the magnificent structure in 1910, and each decade since with highlights of the events that were important in the lives of the students and the Wilkinsburg community. For over 100 years the Wilkinsburg High School served the Borough of Wilkinsburg students and this book has several hundred photos showing much of this important history. This *Century of Learning* book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$15.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The book on the far right is ***“Wilkinsburg - 1887-2012, Celebrating the Past, Present and Future”***. This book was produced by the Historical Society in 2012 to recognize the 125th anniversary of Wilkinsburg’s incorporation as a Borough. This soft-bound book has 196 pages and includes chapters on the history of Wilkinsburg, the celebrations from the past, information about Wilkinsburg’s government, and all the events that occurred during the 125th celebration. There are several chapters about the clubs and organizations in Wilkinsburg as well as the churches and worship centers in the Borough. The “future of Wilkinsburg” section recognizes advertisers and sponsors who helped to fund the creation and printing of the book. This book, originally \$15.00, is now available for \$10.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

<p>Make check or money order payable to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society Orders can be mailed to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O.Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235</p>			
Images of America - Wilkinsburg	(\$20.00 + \$3.00) = \$23.00	Quantity _____	Total _____
Century of Learning 1911-2011	(\$15.00 + \$3.00) = \$18.00	Quantity _____	Total _____
Wilkinsburg 1887-2012	(\$10.00 + \$3.00) = \$13.00	Quantity _____	Total _____
Name _____		Address _____	
City _____	State _____	Zip _____	



Don't miss out on **The Wilkinsburg Sun**, a free monthly community newsletter published by the volunteer Wilkinsburg Community Newsletter Board, with the support of the Wilkinsburg Borough, the Wilkinsburg School District, the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation.

The Sun accepts submitted articles provided they are related to Wilkinsburg and are civic-minded.

<https://wilkinsburgsun.wordpress.com>

Sign up to receive The Sun by email at:

<http://eepurl.com/v0iBP> and friend The Sun on Facebook.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society has a website, to share more information about the history of Wilkinsburg. wilkinsburghistory.wordpress.com

Mailing address: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O. Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

The "Archives" Historical Society newsletter is published monthly, March through November.

We do not publish the Archives during the three Winter months of December, January and February.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society yearly dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society are:

\$20.00 INDIVIDUAL Member, \$35.00 FAMILY Membership

\$10.00 STUDENT or ASSOCIATE Members Please keep your membership dues up to date.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society - Membership application
Help promote the valuable history of Wilkinsburg.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

E-mail address _____

() \$20 Individual membership

() \$35 Family membership

() \$10 Student or associate membership

() \$_____ Additional donation

Please make check payable to: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society**

PO Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Anytime is a good time to pay your dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society. We have many preservation projects going on, and providing displays for Wilkinsburg events. Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your membership dues. Please use the address on the form, our PO box.