

Gloria Dei History Article

We Are Still Worshipping Here

By Beth Johnson

This congregation has a rich history, but our place of worship has its origin in a lowly block house. Three hundred thirty years ago in 1677 worshipers came to a block house not far from where the current church stands to hear the first Christian sermon preached. It happened on the First Sunday after Trinity, eight weeks after Easter, and was delivered by Reverend Jacob Fabritius.

Rev. Fabritius was called from New York to assist with the ministerial duties of growing population in Wicacao, what is now Philadelphia, Wilmington and New Castle, Delaware, and Salem, New Jersey. One reason he was pressed into service in this area was that he was able to officiate in many languages. He was born in Germany. Others have said that he was born in Poland. The first sermon was preached in Swedish, although he mainly preached in Dutch. The Dutch had disbanded the colony in 1655, but the Swedes knew the Dutch language.

Fabritius became blind five years later, but continued to preach for nine more years. He lived in Kensington, which at the time was north of Philadelphia and traveled by canoe to Wicacao, Wilmington, and even as far away as Maryland. Fabritius continued to care for his congregation, despite the failings of his own body as he aged. When he walked, a person went in front of him with a staff. Many of the church leaders of the time considered Fabritius to be an admirable and blessed preacher. Charles Springer, a leader in the early Swedish church, said "He is also an admirable preacher, but, God's blessing on him, he is so aged, and has lost his sight for so long a time, yet he is one who has taught us God's pure and true word, and administered the holy sacraments among us."

