



St. Matthew's Church recently held a pot luck luncheon to celebrate the church's 125th anniversary, one of many activities planned throughout the year. Front row, from the left: Donna Rosbak, chair of the church council, Sid Crow, church historian, Marianne Christoff, chair of St. Matthews Church 125th anniversary, Toni Tirabassi, Niagara Centre M.P. Back row, from left: Cindy Forster, mayor, Susan Johnson, assistant to the Bishop for the Eastern Synod of the Lutheran Church of Canada and Rev. Kevin McCloud of St. Matthews Church./STAFF PHOTO ALLAN BENNER

St. Matthew's celebrates rich 125-year history

By ALLAN BENNER

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It was 1876 when the foundation was laid for St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. A group of 12 determined Lutherans led by Rev. Frederick Ebinger spent \$75 to purchase the property at 59 Griffith St. on Feb. 24 that year.

A small church, which currently sits at the corner of East Main and Empire Streets was home to the growing congregation until 1926 when construction of the current building began.

The church's historian Sid Crow spent two years researching the history of the church, which turns 125 years old this year.

During his research, Crow learned just how determined the church founders were.

"The deed to the property is very unique," he said in an interview. "It has provisions that this lot can never be sold.

"Right on that deed it says if this church goes out of business the property reverts to the next closest Lutheran Church which would be Port Colborne."

The deed also states that only clergy from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Canada can

preach at the church, he said.

"They tied it up tight back then."

Crow compiled that research into a book called *History of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church* and copies of it have been distributed to the congregation and to the Welland Public Library.

That history is also something the church will be spending much of the year celebrating.

Mary Anne Christoff, chairman of the 125th anniversary committee, is leading the celebrations.

"Our theme is Celebrating God's Love," she said during a pot luck luncheon Sunday - one of the many anniversary celebrations being held throughout the year. "This is a very blessed congregation. We have wonderful people, very friendly kind people who have done a lot for the community as well as in the church."

Upcoming events include sending Easter baskets to sick people and shut ins on April 14, a Spring Lunch and Pie Social on May 6, Art on the Sidewalk on May 27, a church picnic on June 10, a strawberry social planned for June 22, the Family Fun Mini Putt and barbecue on July 15, a golf tournament in August, and banquets and fun activities throughout the year.