

## History

# Highlights in the History of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church

1876	<b>February 24</b>	A small group organized "St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation"
	<b>May 7</b>	The cornerstone for the first church building was laid and the building was completed that year at a cost of \$600. There were about 20 charter members.
1907	<b>November 7</b>	The first "Ladies' Aid" was organized with 11 members (known as the Sewing Circle). Monthly dues were 10 cents. In addition to making quilts and robes for the local hospital and starting a flower fund, they also donated their meager funds to missions in Canada and India.
1913	<b>October 30</b>	The Rev. Milton Bieber, a field missionary, was elected president and basic church records were established.

1914	<b>January 18 to September 16</b>	Rev. Bieber served as Pastor and organized the first Sunday School (10 pupils), the Women's Missionary Society, the Luther League, and, affiliated St. Matthew's with the Synod of Central Canada. Electric lights were installed. The first constitution and by-laws were adopted unanimously at the first annual meeting held on June 7
	<b>November 7</b>	The first Reformation Service was held.
1915	<b>March</b>	The Welland and Humberstone congregation united into one parish, sharing pastor, alternating services. This arrangement lasted until 1926, when St. Matthew's became a separate parish.
1918	<b>October 13 to November 3</b>	The church was closed due to a ban on public meetings because of the Spanish Influenza epidemic.
1926	<b>October 1</b>	The Rev. S. W. Gartung began a ten-year ministry that laid the foundation for the St. Matthew's we know today.

	<b>November 21</b>	The 50th Anniversary was celebrated. Confirmed membership was 47. St. Matthew's is still dependent on the Board of American Missions for support.
1927		Plans were made for a new church building, since the fifty-year church building required a great deal of upgrading.
1928	<b>August 19</b>	The cornerstone was laid for the new church building.
	<b>December 2</b>	The Dedication Ceremony for the new church building was held. The former building was moved to the back of the lot and eventually moved, in 1930, to the corner of East Main and Empire Streets, where it is still in use today as a commercial site.
1930's		Known as the "Dirty Thirties" proved also to be difficult years for St. Matthew's. The church struggled under reduced Mission Board support, and survived with loans, cashed-in life insurance policies and contributions from groups within the church.

1939 – 1945		The WWII years. Twenty-six members served in the Armed Forces. One gave his life – John Sibbett – who was killed in action on July 25, 1944.
1942	<b>December 6</b>	A new parsonage was purchased on Kent Street. Previously, the pastors had to rent their housing. The first occupant was Rev. Fred Mueller.
1948	<b>January 25</b>	A new Keats Pipe Organ was purchased and installed for the sum of \$3,745. It's dedication read, "In honour of the men and women of St. Matthew's who served in WWII and in loving memory of John Sibbett, who gave his life on July 25, 1944."
1951	<b>April</b>	St. Matthew's was finally debt-free!! A new goal was set – the provision of a new Parish Hall. Under the leadership of the Rev. Carl Cronmiller, subsequent plans included an enlarged nave, chancel, and Sunday School space.

1958	<b>November 30</b>	Re-dedication of the church sanctuary and dedication of the new Christian Education Centre, under the leadership of Rev. Richard Tubbe.
1965	<b>July 25</b>	The Rev. & Mrs. Lindeman were the first occupants in the new parsonage on Griffith Street. The former parsonage on Kent Street was removed to make room for a parking lot.
1968	<b>March 31</b>	A new memorial pipe organ was dedicated. It was specially built for St. Matthew's by the Walcker Organ Company of Germany at a cost of \$20,000. It is a mechanical action or "tracker" type, considered a true classic. The organist and choir director was Mr. Walter Thornton.

1976	<b>Centennial Year</b>	Six special services were led by Rev. Paul Burgoyne throughout the year to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of St. Matthew's.
1977	<b>January 30</b>	The Blizzard of '77 caused the postponement of the Annual Meeting (St. Matthew's 101st) for the first time.
1979	<b>June 17</b>	The "Burning of the Mortgage" ceremonies were held to celebrate the debt retirement on the Christian Education Centre.
1982	<b>September 19</b>	The Rev. Keith Crouse, installed as pastor, began his fourteen year ministry. He introduced several new initiatives: a five-year Renewal Programme, based on Bible Study; the establishment of an Endowment Fund; and a youth-oriented Canoe-tripping Programme.

1986	<b>January 1</b>	The Eastern Canada Synod severed ties with the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and merged with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada (ELCIC), resulting in an independent, nationwide Canadian Church, of which St. Matthew's is now a member in the Eastern Synod.
1997	<b>June 22</b>	The Rev. Kevin McLeod installed as pastor.
2001		125th Anniversary of St. Matthew's Church.
2003	<b>June 8</b>	The Rev. Jukka Saarinen installed as pastor.
2020	<b>February 1</b>	Shared Ministry begins with First Lutheran, Pt. Colborne
	<b>March 15</b>	In-person worship suspended due to Cover-19 pandemic lockdown until September 13
	<b>December 24</b>	In-person worship suspended again until further notice due to lockdown