

Getting To Know the Lutheran Church

1913

ST. MARKS
KITCHENER

2013

Part I

Perhaps you can recall the ditty (that includes hand gestures), "here is the church, here is the steeple, open the doors and see all the people!" Our present building is a familiar Kitchener landmark yet how much do you know about 'the building' of St. Mark's?

In 1938, at the dedication service of the cornerstone it was said that we are, "... situated between an institution of education,

and an institute of mercy which will always be a reminder of the threefold purpose of the church... the work is not for today and tomorrow, but as well for the people who come after." On behalf of today's faith community - "the people who come

after" - we are pleased to have this opportunity to share our beginnings. It's an exciting time for our congregation because we have begun counting down to our 100th Anniversary in 2013. As reported in the Kitchener Daily Record, "An overflow congregation of more than 1,000 people waited outside at

Green and King Street while H.J. Ball, building

contractor, handed the key to the edifice to Rev. Albert G. Jacobi, Pastor, who opened the doors" - on Sunday, February 5, 1939. Everyone filed into the new building for the first time for the afternoon dedication service - the beginning of St. Mark's. A member, Valentine Berlet worked for Ball Brothers. Today his family take great pride (as did he) that as a bricklayer/stone mason, **he helped construct the walls of St. Mark's and the stone pillars at the entrances to Victoria Park.**

Photo of completed St. Mark's that appeared in the Kitchener Daily Record on Monday, February 6th, 1939. Note the trolley wires that ran along King Street.

But wait, this account describes a new beginning as St. Mark's Lutheran Church not its origin. Let's take a trip to Queen Street, North where St. Mark's began in 1913 as First English Lutheran Church, Berlin.

There were only ten cities in all of Ontario in 1912. In June, the newly incorporated City of Berlin was added to this list. It's no secret that the identity of the community continued to be complex. Still, there was a growing segment of the population - a new generation of Canadians who desired English to be the dominant language. The seeds that would enable Lutherans to worship in English had taken root and were sprouting. The basis of First English Lutheran Church was laid on Sunday, June 16, 1912 when field missionary Rev. M.J. Bieber, held services in Concordia Hall. Organization of the congregation culminated with the formal founding on Sunday, February 2, 1913 with 87 charter members being received. On March 23, 1913, less than 2 months after official organization, First English Lutheran negotiated with St. Matthew's Lutheran to purchase their building agreeing to pay

\$14,000 and in the same year called their first Pastor, Rev. H.J. Behrens. This building was located on Queen Street, North - across from St. Peter's Lutheran Church. It was the original office for the Township of Waterloo (1848) then used by Peter Eby as a print shop for local German newspapers. He sold it to Trinity Methodist (today's Trinity United Church, Frederick Street) who converted it into a church. In fact, their altar is used today in St. Mark's sanctuary. After moving into the new church, St. Mark's rented the Queen Street building to the Red Cross. One of our older members recalls



In 1938, house purchased at 825 King Street by First English Lutheran Church preparing to be demolished for the new church.



St Mark's near completion. Notice the lawn sign still indicating the congregation as First English Lutheran and that worship services were at KCI.

preparing bandages as a young girl as World War II loomed. The building was eventually sold to the Kitchener Public Library in 1948 and demolished in 1958. In 1918, Rev. Jacob Maurer took charge of First English Lutheran with 400 members and a Sunday school role of over 300. During the Great Depression, Rev. Dr. Maurer in 1931 sparked discussions to plan for a new church: "Our church has grown from a mere handful to a mighty hand. Shall the future spell a story of like progress? The answer depends upon the members of the present. Will they

First English Lutheran Church circa 1913 - Queen Street North, now the area of the Commerce Court building.



Photo of the construction by Ball Brothers. Notice the Waterloo PUC tower in the background.



measure up to their opportunity?" Still, his words ring true today as churches face challenges with the fast pace of change and global economic uncertainties. Fast forward - under the leadership of Rev. Dr. A.G. Jacobi these words became a reality in eight short years. Imagine the resolve and commitment when people were recovering from The Depression and preparing for World War II. On the hill at the corners of King and Green Streets, a house was purchased and demolished to make way for the new church. During this time, worship and other activities were held at K.C.I. A new financial debt in a new neighbourhood was a bold beginning in 1938. Our next article will focus on St. Mark's involvement within the neighbourhood and community as the people who come after.

INVITATION

Please join us on Sunday, February 5, 2012 at 10:15 for worship with a light lunch to follow. We will be commemorating and celebrating 73 years (to the day) that St. Mark's officially became your neighbour. As always, we welcome all with doors wide open!