

1858 ✙ 1983



St. Matthew's Trinity
Lutheran Parish
Hoboken



125th Jubilee

ST. MATTHEW'S-TRINITY LUTHERAN PARISH

Hoboken, New Jersey

125 YEARS OF HISTORY

1858- 1983

1856 A Missions Committee is organized by St. Matthaus Kirche, Manhattan, a member of the United Lutheran Congregations in New York. The Ministerium of New York designates Pastor C. Wossidlo as missionary for this committee.

Pastor Wossidlo comes to Hoboken to look for Lutherans among the 5,000 inhabitants of this "Little Germany" across the Hudson.

1857 Pastor Wossidlo reports only 16 communicants after his first year of mission work, and they are "mostly women."

1858 Pastor Wossidlo - and the women - gathers a sufficient number of men to organize a congregation, and 48 persons begin to worship in German at the Odd Fellows Hall. St. Matthaus of New York contributes \$300 a year to cover rent, \$5 a month for a "melodion", and \$3 a month for the janitor. The pastor's salary is a princely \$30 a month. The congregation decides to contribute \$3 to the New York Synod for the year.

The first church council members:

Pastor Wossidlo, President
H. Brumlen, Elder
G. Ahrens, Trustee
L. Korbett, Trustee

H. Grapan, Secretary
F. F. Campen, Elder
H. Huster, Trustee

1859 A Sunday School is begun with 18 children and grows to 42 within a month.

Pastor Wossidlo's Sundays are more than full as he preaches not only in Hoboken, but at two mission congregations in Jersey City - St. Matthew's downtown and St. John's on the hill.

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Within the next few years, a major goal of the little congregation became the acquisition of a church building. The usual source of a church's income in those times came from pew rentals, and without its own building, this income was sorely lacking. There were a few successful businessmen among the members, but most worked as clerks or domestics for wages of \$3 or \$5 a month.

Finally, in 1863, one member, Cord Moller declared in a council meeting that he could raise \$1,000 by himself. The other council members urged him to do so and began to take courage themselves.

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1864 The congregation incorporates and buys a vacant church building on Third and Washington Streets in the heart of the city (today the site of MacDonald's). A Constitution and Bylaws following those of St. Mat-
thaus, New York, are adopted. With pew rentals, the income of the church grows to over \$1,000 per year.

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Within the next decade, the tide of immigrants moving into Hoboken swelled, and soon the little church building became too small. Pastor Wassidlo had grown old and tired. He wrote to a friend in Germany, "You would not know our city. We have grown to 12,000 people, the streets are crowded and noisy. Where are the quiet and the dignified ways of former days? Life is no longer pleasant here." In 1874, the faithful old pastor was called to his heavenly home, mourned and missed by the congregation he had founded and steered through the difficult early years.

The second pastor of St. Matthew's stayed only a few years. Called from Wittmund in Ostfriesland, Germany, he found it impossible to adapt to the very different kind of expectations that a congregation in America had of its pastor, so after a few short years he returned to Germany.

With the next minister, Pastor Eirich, the wave of growth returned. He attempted to introduce English services but failed. The influx of Germans was still strong, and most of the older people could not see why their children should not continue to speak German. Following the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, immigration once again began to increase. The great steamships of the German Lloyd and Hapag shipping lines brought thousands of Germans to Hoboken.

By this time, many of the older Germans had become prosperous business people and property owners. They decided that they needed a larger church, a proper church, with a steeple and a bell. They purchased a prime piece of real estate on the corner of Eighth and Hudson, 60' x 110', for \$14,000, and, for \$50,000, built the church and parsonage we know today.

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1877 The congregation of St. Matthew's bids farewell to their old building at Third and Washington and walks in procession to their new home at Eighth and Hudson.

1890 In April, 21 men and women meet at 310 Bloomfield Street to discuss the possibility of forming a Scandinavian Lutheran congregation. Only German is spoken in the existing Lutheran congregations, and when Scandinavian pastors are needed, they must travel all the way from Brooklyn.

In July, the Scandinavian Evangelical Trinity Lutheran Church, a member of the Synod of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, is organized and begins to meet in the St. Matthew's church building. Members elected to serve on the Board of Trustees are:

Tobias Haavardsen, Chairman
Thord Einarsen, Secretary
A. J. Sjostrom
Thomas Mikkelsen
Ludvig Hansen

Anton Olsen, Treasurer
Theodore Andersen
John Brown
Hans Hansen

From the minutes of the St. Matthew's Board meeting, September 2, 1890:
"It was decided to grant the request of a Swedish (sic) congregation to use the Sunday School Hall one evening a week and to charge \$1.50 for the gaslight used."

In November, Pastor Sigvard Gramstad becomes the first resident pastor. He is succeeded by Pastor Carl Schive in 1892, who is shared with a sister congregation, Trinity in Jersey City.

In December, Pastor Richter begins his ministry as the fourth pastor of St. Matthew's. The congregation, the Sunday School, the Ladies' Aid Society continue to grow and flourish.

1893 The Scandinavian Church, composed entirely of small wage earners, buys a 25' x 100' lot on the corner of Ninth and Clinton Streets for \$1,550 and constructs a modest building without a foundation for \$950. The following winter, a parsonage is built for \$2,200. Many of the members of Scandinavian Trinity donate materials and their labor to keep down costs.

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Pastor Schive resigned from Trinity in 1895, and the church was served by Pastor Christian Hovde for a year until Pastor Olaf Amdalsrud was called in 1896. He was succeeded by Pastor Hans Gundersen in 1898, who served the congregation for fourteen years. In 1912, he resigned to become Institutional Missionary in Greater New York, and the pastorate was again assumed by Pastor Amdalsrud.

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1900 Holy Trinity English Evangelical Lutheran Church is organized with 86 charter members. Members elected to serve on the board of elders and deacons are:

Christian Sinn
August Kall
Charles Koster
William Gutheil
Henry Klussman
J. C. Hinrichs

Charles Fraser
Eugene Gardner
Peter Kessler
Henry Brummer
George Von Dreele

The congregation meets in rented quarters at 904 Garden Street, led by Pastor H. C. Fulz from the Board of Home Missions of the United Lutheran Synod.

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1901 The basement of the Scandinavian Trinity building at Ninth and Clinton, is built, and the original frame structure is placed over it.

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Men who put in the long hours of a six-day week came down after work to dig the foundation, and sons able to handle a shovel were pressed into service after school. In 1913, after long and careful deliberation, the little congregation decided to build its present sanctuary. Thord Einarsen was chosen to supervise the construction, and for weeks services were conducted in the old church while the the new brick walls rose outside. Again, costs were kept down because members donated their time and labor. The beautiful altar and pulpit of Trinity were lovingly hand-crafted by Robert Einarsen, father of our present members, Evelyn Carlsen, Ellwood Einarsen, and Alice Vanderheyden.

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Meanwhile, at St. Matthew's, some of the older families had begun the move to the suburbs, although there always seemed to be others to take their place. These early years of the Twentieth Century brought prosperity and peace, and the rumblings in Europe were scarcely noticed. Pastor Richter decided to travel to Germany for a vacation and was in that country when World War I broke out. He returned a broken man, unable to resume his duties as pastor.

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1915 Pastor Hermann Brueckner is called as pastor of St. Matthew's.

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Little did the members of St. Matthew's suspect that Pastor Brueckner would stay at St. Matthew's for more than forty years. With his coming, English-speaking worship services and an English Sunday School were finally begun. The active membership once again began to increase.

Perhaps the darkest hour of the congregation came when the United States declared war against Germany. On Good Friday, Pastor Brueckner was taken and held as an enemy alien for five months, but the congregation stood by him until he was permitted to return.

Many sons of both St. Matthew's and of Trinity marched off to war, but finally it was over, and the bells of Hoboken's churches proclaimed peace.

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1925 Pastor Christian Davick is called as pastor of Trinity. English is used in Sunday School and English worship services are introduced.

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Like Pastor Brueckner at St. Matthew's, Pastor Davick's ministry at Trinity was the longest in that congregation's history and lasted until his death in 1947. His wife, Gertrude, was an accomplished pianist and played an important role in the musical efforts of the congregation. For many years after her husband's death, she was a resident of the Eger Lutheran Home on Staten Island, where she was often visited by members of Trinity.

The use of English had been an important factor in the growth of Holy Trinity English Lutheran Church. When, for their own survival, St. Matthew's and Trinity included this language in addition to German and Norwegian, the opportunity for acquiring new members from the younger generation of these two congregations no longer existed, and Holy Trinity's congregation began to decline.

Pastor Charles McDaniel had served this congregation for 35 years. In 1903 the congregation had purchased a lot on the northwest corner of Tenth and Garden Streets, and in 1910 constructed the church basement. Unfortunately, financial difficulties and a bank failure prevented Holy Trinity from ever completing their church building.

Finally, the Board of Home Missions proposed that Holy Trinity merge with St. Matthew's. This would have meant the end of Pastor McDaniel's ministry in Hoboken, but the congregation was not yet ready to give up its own identity.

However, in 1947 the situation had become so desperate that the pastor, Walter Pura, urged the congregation to consider a merger with either Bethany Lutheran Church of North Bergen or the Scandinavian Lutheran Church of Hoboken.

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1948 Holy Trinity English Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church merge to become Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Engebret Midboe, Pastor. In 1951, Pastor Midboe resigns to become a chaplain in the United States Army. He is succeeded by Pastor Richard Nybro, who also leaves for the chaplaincy in 1957.

1957 Pastor William F. Schafer, Jr., is installed as pastor of St. Matthew's. Pastor Gerald Gundersen is installed as pastor of Trinity.

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In 1957 many people thought Hoboken was heading "downhill." The housing stock was old, and much of it was deteriorating. Industry was leaving, and jobs were vanishing. The once-thriving waterfront was headed for decline. New people moving into the city were, for the most part, low income families, attracted by the low rents in Hoboken and its nearness to New York.

Over the years, the sons and daughters of the original German and Norwegian immigrants moved to the suburbs. The ethnic make-up of Hoboken had changed radically. People of Italian and Hispanic backgrounds now predominated. Very few of the newer people moving into Hoboken were traditional Lutherans.

The memberships of both St. Matthew's and of Trinity were dwindling. Pastor Schafer and Pastor Gundersen began to knock on doors in an attempt to reach new people. The two congregations drew closer together, often joining in mutual Bible study.

In 1961, following what had become something of a tradition for Trinity pastors, Pastor Gundersen resigned to enter the Army chaplaincy. He was succeeded by Pastor Arnold Nicholson. Cooperative efforts between the two congregations and with St. John's Lutheran Church, Third and Bloomfield, continued to increase with joint lecture series, Reformation Services, and teacher training sessions.

In 1964, Pastor Schafer resigned, and, after a search that led all the way to Minneapolis, Pastor Carlton Franzen was found and accepted a call to St. Matthew's. The people of Trinity and of St. Matthew's by this time were becoming good friends, sharing many activities together. Then in 1969, Pastor Nicholson accepted a call in Pittsburgh, and Trinity was once again faced with a vacancy.

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1969 St. Matthew's-Trinity Lutheran Parish is born.

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Since the two congregations had grown so close, when Pastor Nicholson resigned, rather than call another pastor for Trinity, they decided to become one. For some years, half the church council members were to be former members of Trinity, and half former members of St. Matthew's. Worship services alternated between the two buildings. There was a sense of new life in the congregation.

Soon the building on Eighth and Washington was purchased and renovated. This provided low-rent housing for people from the community and for members of the congregation. The former laundramat on the first floor became a center for youth. There were after-school and summer programs for children and teenagers. A day care center was started in Trinity's basement. Both church buildings hummed with activity seven days a week.

New staff persons were added to help with all the new activity: John Ostensen as Director of Music and Youth Ministry, Carol Bowe and Irma Watler as Parish Workers, Verna Meckes as an AIDS (Associate in Diaconal Service) volunteer, Dottie Costello as church secretary.

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1972 Pastor Franzen accepts a call to Lutheran Social Services of New Jersey and is succeeded by Pastor Leland LaBar.

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Although St. Matthew's-Trinity had become well known in the community as an active and thriving church, the church council believed that its ministry with older persons needed to be strengthened. This was an area where Pastor LaBar was skilled, and he soon found a special place in the hearts of many senior citizens. Grace LaBar also served faithfully as director of the day care center.

Over the next several years, all of the additional staff of the congregation left for a variety of reasons. Without them, many of the programs, particularly those involving children and youth, were unable to continue. Although its senior citizen ministry was thriving, St. Matthew's-Trinity once again found itself with diminished activity and a decreasing membership.

When Pastor LaBar resigned in 1981, the church council took a serious look at the future of the congregation. Bishop Herluf Jensen of the LCA's New Jersey Synod met with the council and asked Pastor Paul Hagedorn to serve as vice-pastor during the search process. At that time Pastor Hagedorn was living in neighboring Jersey City and working as the Division for Mission in North America's deployed staff person in New Jersey.

Before very long it became very apparent that the members of St. Matthew's-Trinity thought that Pastor Hagedorn would be ideal as their pastor. Not too many months later Pastor Hagedorn decided that he wanted to return to the parish ministry as pastor of St. Matthew's-Trinity. And the most recent chapter in the life of our congregation began.

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1981 Pastor Paul A. Hagedorn is installed as pastor of St. Matthew's-Trinity Lutheran Parish.

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The last several years have been among the most exciting in our 125-year history. More than 100 new members have been received. Sunday worship attendance has more than doubled and keeps on growing. There's an active Sunday School. There are new opportunities for worship and learning and service.

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1983 Pastor Heidi Neumark is installed as assistant pastor of St. Matthew's-Trinity Lutheran Parish.

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As our first woman pastor, Pastor Neumark has added another dimension to our ministry. She is serving as a part of the LCA's Urban Residency program and will be with us only through early 1984. With Pastor Hagedorn, she has played an important part in this most recent chapter of our congregation's life.

We've come a long way since 1858. The Lutheran Church is no longer an immigrant church, identified only with Scandinavians and Germans. Today the Lutheran Church is a church for all the people of God in whatever place the church happens to be. St. Matthew's-Trinity happens to be in Hoboken, and that is a blessing indeed. For here in this small city, there is a richness and a diversity of people found in very few places.

Today, in our congregation, there are still Germans and Norwegians; but there are also persons whose heritages reflect a wide variety of cultures and countries - China, India, Italy, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Ecuador, Argentina, Yugoslavia, Africa, different regions of the United States. We range in age from just a few weeks to nearly ninety. Some of us have been members most of our lives, and some of us are relative newcomers. Together, we're the people of St. Matthew's-Trinity. Together, we look to our future.

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HAPPY ANNIVERSARY ST. MATTHEW'S-TRINITY

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OUR PASTORS

St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church

C. Wossidlo	1858-1874
Pr. Hafermann	1874-1880
F. Eirich	1880-1890
A. Richter	1890-1914
Hermann Brueckner	1915-1956
William F. Schafer, Jr.	1957-1964
Carlton E. Franzen	1964-1969

Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church

Sigvard Gramstad	1890-1892
Carl Schive	1892-1895
Christian Hovde	1895-1896
Olaf Amdalsrud	1896-1898
Hans M. Gundersen	1898-1912
Olaf Amdalsrud	1912-1919
P. A. Kittilsby	1919-1920
A. O. Bjerke	1920-1925
C. A. Davick	1925-1947

Holy Trinity English Evangelical Lutheran Church

H. C. Fulz	1900
G. F. Behringer	1901-1902
Charles T. McDaniel	1903-1938
Karl A. Eberhardt	1939-1942
Walter S. Pura	1942-1947

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Engebret Midboe	1949-1951
Richard Nybro	1952-1957
Gerald M. Gundersen	1957-1961
Arnold Nicholson	1961-1969

St. Matthew's-Trinity Lutheran Parish

Carlton E. Franzen	1969-1972
Leland LaBar	1972-1981
Paul A. Hagedorn	1981-
Heidi B. Neumark	1983-

CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS - 1983

Pastor Paul A. Hagedorn
Pastor Heidi B. Neumark
Nancy Jermakian, President
Ellwood R. Einarsen, Vice President
Ann B. Gehler, Secretary
Dorothy Philipp, Treasurer
Jennifer Warren, Financial Secretary
Corlelda Burrell

Charles Carlsen
Marie Jensen
Kevin Kooker
Alfred Poletti
Charles Rajakumar
Dorothea Spreen
Carol Dyson, Youth member

A Grace After the Banquet

FERN: God, our Father, our Mother, our Source, our Sustainer, our Beginning and our End, we thank you for the many gifts you have showered on our community. We thank you especially that you have gathered us this day and in this place to celebrate the fact that you have called us together to be your people.

BETTY: In every time and in every place you have brought people together in your name. Long ago, you called the children enslaved in Egypt to leave their bondage and cross over the waters to freedom in the land you had promised. Later still you called missionaries out of Jerusalem and sent them throughout the world to proclaim your salvation in Jesus Christ. And through the ages, whenever people have come to a new place, you have gathered them into a church, a community devoted to your praise and service.

KEVIN: Today especially, we have gathered to pray and celebrate, to eat and to drink together, and to remember that you have called us to be your people here in this place and time. We thank you for our history as a people, and as a parish. We thank you for bringing us to this day.

Hymn: Faith of Our Fathers

Faith of our mothers, living still
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword.
Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word.
Faith of our mothers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death.

JONATHAN: In 1856, St. Matthew's church in New York City reached out across the Hudson river to found a community of faith here in Hoboken. This was our beginning as a family. We thank you that these people had the vision and the courage to make a place for those of us who were to come after them.

NORINE: In 1890, you gathered people together to form Trinity Church. In 1969, these churches joined to form one family. We are that family. We thank you for the grace that has brought us together.

Faith of our fathers! We will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife;
Proclaim thee, too, as love knows how,
By saving word and faithful life.
Faith of our fathers, living faith,
We will be true to thee till death.

My Church, My Church, My Dear Old Church

1. My Church, my Church, my dear old Church! My fathers' and my own!
On Prophets and Apostles built, And Christ the corner stone!
All else beside, by storm or tide, May yet be overthrown;
But not my Church, my dear old Church, My fathers' and my own!
2. My Church, my Church, my dear old Church! I love her ancient name;
And God forbid, a child of hers Should ever do her shame.
Her mother care, I'll ever share; Her child I am alone,
Till He who gave me to her arms Shall call me to His own.
3. My Church, my Church, I love my Church! For she doth lead me on
She speaks, she breathes, she teaches not, But from His written Word.
And if her voice bids me rejoice, From all my sins released;
'Tis thro' th' atoning sacrifice, And Jesus is the Priest.
4. My Church, my Church, I love my Church! For she doth lead me on
To Zion's Palace Beautiful, Where Christ the Lord hath gone.
From all below, she bids me go, To Him, the Life, the Way,
The Truth to guide my erring feet From darkness into day.

We Are The Church

Chorus: I am the Church! You are the Church! We are the Church together!
All who follow Jesus all around the world! Yes, we're the Church together!

1. The Church is not a building, The Church is not a steeple,
The Church is not a resting place, The Church is a people! (Chorus)
 2. We're many kinds of people, With many kinds of faces,
All colours and all ages too, From all times and places. (Chorus)
 3. And when the people gather, There's singing and there's praying,
There's laughing and there's crying sometimes, All of it saying: (Chorus)
 4. I count if I am ninety, or nine or just a baby,
There's one thing I am sure about and I don't mean maybe: (Chorus)
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