


History of St. Matthew Lutheran Church

5315 Main St, Houston TX 77004

IT WAS IN CAPERNAUM, the capital of Galilee, on the borders of Lake Tiberius after Jesus had healed the man sick of the palsy that He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of customs, collecting taxes. Jesus found him busy with his work and said as He passed by "Follow Me." Matthew immediately arose and followed Christ. To follow Jesus meant financial loss for Matthew, yet it meant infinite spiritual gain.

Charter members chose "St. Matthew's" (later changed to St. Matthew) as the name for the church on January 24, 1926. Our members have accepted the invitation of Jesus to Matthew in His Words "Follow Me."

The following paragraphs are written - "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." Psalm 78:6-7.

<p>In the spring of 1925, a religious census made in Southwest Houston by the Houston Lutheran Missionary Society indicated a need for the creation of another Missouri Synod Lutheran Church.</p>	 <p>Rev. R.A. Jesse</p>	<p>As our Lord's life on Earth began humbly in a stable, so did St. Matthew's Lutheran Church begin humbly in a tent pitched in Southwest Houston.</p>
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The Texas District, recognizing this need and the opportunity it afforded, called Candidate R. A. Jesse to begin missionary work in Houston starting in September, 1925.

A tent was rented and erected at the corner of Westheimer and Ralph. Bench pews were constructed and installed. Houston ministers conducted nightly mission services for two weeks, and Rev. R. A. Jesse was installed as pastor of the congregation-to-be at a service conducted on the afternoon of Sunday, October 18.

The first meeting of the Sunday School and the first service to be conducted by Pastor Jesse were scheduled for October 25, 1925, but they were postponed, because a rain-storm swept into Houston that Saturday evening with high winds which leveled the mission's tent. The first meeting was held the following Sunday in the auditorium of Woodrow Wilson School, at Yupon and Michigan Streets, with 18 persons in attendance. Mr. A. H. Kelinske was chosen to serve as St. Matthew's first Sunday School Superintendent, an office which he was to hold 17 years.

A decision to organize the mission was reached during the first week of January, 1926, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. B. A. Lottman, 1714 California Avenue. By January 24, 23 interested Lutherans had obtained releases from their former congregations - notably Trinity Lutheran Church, and they met on that date in the home of Mr. and Mrs. O. J. Lottman, at 1320 Hawthorne. Charter members were: Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Domaschk, Mrs. Louise Lottman, Miss Anna Hansen, Mr. and Mrs. O. J. Lottman, Mr. Frank Hansen, Mrs. J. W. Metzler, Miss Leona Hansen, Mr. J. W. Metzler, Jr., Mr. and

Mrs. L. P. Hansen, Miss Lillian Metzler, Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Kelinske, Mr. J. H. Myers, Mr. and Mrs. B. A. Lottman, Mrs. John Shudde, and Mr. E. J. Lottman.

Until this time, the mission had been known simply as "The Southside Lutheran Mission." In selecting a permanent name for the congregation, the Voter's Assembly spent a great deal of time at the meeting of January 24, 1926, as recorded in the minutes:

"Motion was made and seconded that the name of the church be St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church. Upon vote this motion did not carry. Motion was made and seconded that the name of the church be St. Luke's Ev. Lutheran Church. Upon vote this motion did not carry. Motion made and seconded that our church be named Mt. Calvery Ev. Lutheran Church. Upon vote the motion did not carry. Motion was made and seconded to name our church Bethany Ev. Lutheran Church. Upon vote this motion did not carry. Motion was made and seconded that we again vote on the same St. Matthew's Ev Lutheran Church. Motion carried. Motion was made and seconded that name of St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church be unanimously adopted."

Also at this meeting the congregation elected its first officers: Mr. J. H. Myers as president of the congregation; Mr. B. A. Lottman, Secretary-Treasurer; and Mr. A. B. Domaschk, Mr. O. J. Lottman, and Mr. William Schleier, Elders. The Elders were empowered to serve as the Board of Trustees and as the Finance Committee. In April, the offices of Secretary and Treasurer were separated, and Mr. William Schleier was elected Secretary, while Mr. Lottman remained Treasurer and was made a member of the Finance Committee.

The Ladies' Circle was organized a few days prior to the church's organizational meeting. On January 21, six ladies met at the home of Mr. J. W. Metzler, Sr. They named Mrs. Metzler as the group's first president; Mrs. Alfred Lehmann as vice-president; Mrs. Louise Lottman, secretary; and Mrs. B.A. Lottman, treasurer, and the new organization voted to assess each member the sum of 25 cents per month for dues.

Pastor Jesse's first baptism at St. Matthew's was recorded February 7, 1926, when he baptized Bertha Krebs. In April, 1926, the congregation began searching for property to acquire as the site for a permanent home. Mr. B. E. Moerbe and Mr. M. H. James narrowed the consideration to three sites, then to two - a location at Hazard and Westheimer and one at Ralph and Westheimer. Negotiations for the Hazard-Westheimer property fell through, and on May 7 the congregation voted to purchase the property facing 100 feet south on Westheimer Road and 150 feet east on Ralph Street for the total sum of \$7,000 from Mr. Minor Stewart.

Though the congregation continued to conduct services in Woodrow Wilson School, plans were being made for the construction of a permanent church building. On April 19, 1927, the Voter's Assembly appointed a Special Building Committee to remove from the Elders the burden of planning the construction. Members of the Committee included Mr. John Tomfohrde, Mr. B. E. Moerbe, Mr. William Schleier, and Mr. A. H. Kelinske, with Mr. J. H. Myers serving as an honorary member. Mr. O. J. Lottman and Mr. E. J. Lottman were asked to serve as an Advisory Committee. By August, the Special Building Committee had plans drawn by Mr. Fred W. Heidbreder and had accepted bids. The low bid of \$13,000 was made by Dahl Construction Company.

Construction was completed late in February, 1928, and with Dr. J. W. Behnken of Trinity Lutheran delivering the sermon, dedicatory services were conducted Sunday, March 11. The Houston Times' All -Church Press described the church in this manner:

The church is of red brick with white stone trimmings. The length of the structure on the inside is 65 feet, and the height, in the center, about 24 feet.

The nave, or auditorium is 43 x 25. The chancel measures 12 x 12, with an arch 21 ½ feet high.



At the rear of the church, above the entrance, is a balcony for organ and choir. The building also includes, besides a vestry and mother's room, two small rooms to which no definite uses have yet been assigned. The seating capacity is at present about 120.

At first, Pastor Jesse, a bachelor when he arrived in Houston, lived in the home of members of the congregation. But early in 1926 the congregation rented a parsonage and began making plans to purchase a home for the Pastor. However, the parsonage on Mt. Vernon was not purchased until 1936, at a cost less than \$5,000.

Because the original church building had little space suitable for conducting Sunday school classes and meetings of the various organizations which were being formed, the congregation began feeling the need for a Parish Hall. Since the budget would not allow contracting for additional construction, members decided to build a structure by themselves. With materials costing a little more than \$500, volunteer workers completed the construction in short order.

At a meeting in the home of Mr. O. J. Lottman on February 5, 1932, the St. Matthew's Men's Club was organized "to be instrumental in furthering the work of the church." Mr. A. G.

Seelke was the club's first president, and Dr. O. E. Ranfranz was the first secretary-treasurer. The organization affiliated with the National Lutheran Laymen's League in February, 1943. Since that time and up to the present time this Club has actively supported the District and National program of the L. L. L. Its members have been in positions of leadership not only in the local zone but also on the District level.

The Sewing Circle was organized April 12, 1934, at the home of Mrs. John Shudde. Mrs. Walter A. Rachuig and Mrs. E. Hecker served as presidents during the Circle's first year. For all these years the ladies with their needles have supported charitable institutions locally and beyond.

On Sunday, January 25, 1936, the members of St. Matthew's commemorated the tenth anniversary of the church's founding. A special festival service was conducted by Pastor Jesse at 2:30 p.m. Following the services, the Ladies' Circle sponsored an open house in the Parish Hall and presented an exhibit of mementoes of the church's first ten years. When the National Lutheran Women's Missionary League was organized this Circle became a member and has through the years been an effective auxiliary of the church.

By its tenth anniversary the congregation had grown to 102 communicants with 25 voters. And during the ten years, the congregation had raised a total of \$30,403 - \$28,209.02 for St. Matthew's, and \$2,193.98 for outside purposes.

Although accurate records are not now available, there are indications that there was a Young People's Organization at St. Matthew's prior to 1937. Early during 1937, the Junior-Senior Walther League was organized, and the group affiliated with the International Walther League on June 19 of that year. Officers' were George Fegter, presidents: Charlotte Lehmann, secretary; and Walter Rachuig, treasurer.

On September 13, 1939, a small group of young people met in the parsonage with the Pastor to discuss organizing a Junior Walther League. A constitution was adopted, Frances Tomlin was elected president, and Alleyne Geyer was elected secretary-treasurer, thus separating the Walther League into two groups. The Youth Program in our church has been at a high level for many years, participating in District and National projects.

Pastor Jesse served St. Matthew's from its beginning until the fall of 1937, when he accepted the call of Trinity Lutheran Church of East S. Louis, Illinois. In collaboration with the Mission Board, the congregation then called the Reverend W. W. Stratman of Zion Lutheran Church of Alamo, Texas. At services conducted on the afternoon of December 5, Rev. Stratman was installed as Pastor of St. Matthew's by the Reverend W. E. Dorre, who was assisted by the Lutheran pastors of Houston.

<p>Dr. Martin Luther wrote, "Next to the Word of God, music is one of the greatest powers for the good on earth. Especially in the House of God, it prepares the heart and mind for worship and gives the Gospel a proper setting".</p>		<p>Heeding these words, St. Matthew's organized its Choir in 1938. Mr. Herman Silwedel served as the first Choir Director and remained Organist until 1962, when he was transferred by his employer to San Francisco.</p>
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The congregation recognized his 24 years of service by presenting him with an engraved watch and a purse at a farewell party in the Parish Hall on May 14, 1962.

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Through the blessings of Almighty God, the congregation grew to such proportions that by 1938 chairs were being used in the church aisles, and the small, unfinished balcony was being filled for services. Having served the St. Matthew's congregation well during the congregation's infancy, the chapel on Westheimer was no longer adequate. It became evident that expansion or relocation was imperative.

About this time the attention of the congregation was drawn to a vacant church in the 5300 block of Main "Boulevard". Constructed by Congregationalists who were unable to meet their financial obligations, the church building was the property of the Hermann Hospital Estate. Having been vacant several years, the church was falling into disrepair...weeds had overtaken the lawn and grown as high as a man's waist, and vandals had removed pipes and parts from the organ.



But the property on Main had many advantages, including a beautiful setting, a fine building, and a desirable location - all of which the St. Matthew's membership felt could be used to the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom.

However, many members felt that taking on such a large financial obligation might prove to be too great for the small congregation. Finally, six voting members and 15 communicant members who were living in St. Matthew's parish but were members of Trinity Congregation decided to transfer their membership to St. Matthew's, and this move helped materially in deciding the question.

In the regular congregational meeting of March, 1938, the congregation declared its self-sustentation, for until this time St. Matthew's had remained a mission congregation. Gradually the details of property purchase were worked out, and during the latter part of April, 1938, the beautiful church and the block of land at 5300 Main became the property of St. Matthew's Congregation at a cost of \$60,000. Of the total cost, \$10,000 was borrowed from members and paid in cash to the Hermann Estate. The balance of \$50,000 was to be paid at a rate of \$1,000 per year for 50 years at 5 per cent interest. Effective June 13, 1939, the estate lowered the interest rate to 4 per cent, where it remained until the note was paid off in 1942.

During the next few months, the entire church was renovated. The interior was repainted, the organ was rebuilt, a balcony was constructed: restrooms were relocated, the room beneath the tower was enclosed, the chancel was enlarged, the communion rail and altar were installed, the aisles and chancel were carpeted, and the church grounds were plowed, leveled and sodded.

<p>In a vesper service conducted on the new lawn of the new church on June 26, 1938, the cornerstone of the original St. Matthew's Church was transferred to the newly-acquired building and placed in the wall of the tower.</p>		<p>Following a farewell service, Pastor delivering the sermon, at the original church on the morning of July 10, he and members of the Church Council transferred the Bible and sacred vessels to the 5300 Main church.</p>
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That afternoon the Reverend R.A. Jesse, first pastor of the congregation, delivered the dedicatory sermon and the church was officially dedicated by Pastor Stratman.



Rev. W.W. Stratman

Although the new church provided additional pews and allowed members to worship in a more spacious sanctuary, once again the need for a Parish Hall was felt. Sunday School classes were conducted in various parts of the church,

the ladies' organizations and Walther Leagues met as best they could in an anteroom, and the Men's Club continued to meet in the old Parish Hall at 1658 Westheimer for a time and then in home of club members. All in all, it was not a satisfactory situation.



But because of the heavy obligations acquired along with the new property, the congregation postponed the consideration of building a Parish Hall until sometime in 1939. Minutes of the Voter's Assembly record that when the Parish Hall was discussed then, a decision on location and type of construction could not be reached. The entire matter was dropped for two years.

By this time - in 1941 - the need for the Parish Hall had become so great that there could be no further delay. A Building Committee was appointed, composed of W. M. Woltman, Chairman; W. E. Becker, A.G. Seelke, E. J. Lottman, O.B. Bailey, W.A. Rachuig, Dr. O. E. Ranfranz, A. H. Schubert, B. M. Woltman, O. J. Lottman and W. W. Stratman. Mr. Bailey Swensen and Mr. A. Bertelson, both members of the congregation, were engaged as architect and contractor. A structure 40 x 80 feet made of brick to match the church was build at a cost of about \$25,000 of which \$10,000 was raised by the congregation. The building was dedicated in February, 1942, with Pastor Stratman delivering the dedicatory sermon.

In a written appeal to the Voters' Assembly in the fall of 1943, the Pastor emphasized the need for and the feasibility of having a Christian Day School at St. Matthew's. Action on the proposal to establish a school was tabled for four months, and then a resolution was passed to begin a school in September, 1944 for the benefit of the children of the congregation and as a missionary agency.

Miss Selma Streufert was hired as the first teacher of the school, and Mary Louis Clem was the first child to enroll when registration began in September, 1945. A total of 11 children in grades 1 - 5 enrolled by the first day of school, including seven from the congregation: Mary Louise Clem, Carolyn Jutzi, Mary Lou Jutzi, Richard Silwedel, Kent Whisman, Jimmy Blocher, and Albert Roos.

The original plans to enlarge the school from year to year was carried out. During 1946, the sixth grade and the kindergarten were added. Mr. Walter Harting, a vicar from Concordia Seminary, was secured to teach grades 4 - 6. Miss Esther Bodling became the teacher for grades 1 - 3, and Miss Ruby Peiman was the kindergarten teacher and also served as church secretary in the afternoon, becoming St. Matthew's first hired secretary. A few weeks before the opening of school for the second year, several thousand leaflets giving information on the school were distributed throughout the parish, and enrollment jumped to 54.

To assist the congregation and the school in the St. Matthew's education program, a Parent-Teachers' Association was organized in March, 1946. Officers included Mrs. J.D. Upchurch, president; Mrs. W. J. Woltman, vice-president; Miss Esther Bodling, secretary; and Mrs. M. Kieschnick, treasurer. One of the first major projects undertaken by the organization was the establishment of a cafeteria for the school children. In 1965 the name of the organization was changed to "St. Matthew's Lutheran School Parent-Teacher League."

With the addition of the seventh grade in 1947, the school's enrollment continued its climb to 77. In the spring of 1948, the congregation extended a call to H. W. Osthoff of New Braunfels. Accepting the call, Mr. Osthoff arrived in

June to teach grades 5 - 8 and to assume duties as principal of St. Matthew's School. Mr. Virgil Meyer, a student at Concordia Seminary, came to teach grades 3 - 4, and enrollment reached 100. To accommodate the growing school, the congregation purchased an Army surplus barracks building in the summer of 1948 which provided space for two classrooms at a cost of \$4,750. Formerly in use by First Presbyterian Church, the building was moved across Main and positioned on the southeast corner of the St. Matthew's property.

To keep abreast with the times, the congregation air conditioned the church as it existed in the spring of 1950 at a cost of \$10,000. Records indicate the investment was a wise one since the church attendance during the summer of 1950 surpassed that of previous summers.

Responding to an invitation of 30 business and professional women who were not members of any of the organizations of St. Matthew's, about 15 ladies met with the Pastor at the parsonage in February, 1950, to discuss the advisability of beginning a new organization which would serve the business and professional women of the congregation. The suggestion was accepted enthusiastically, and those interested met in the Parish Hall on March 16 to draft a constitution for an organization which was named "The Priscilla Guild." First officers of the organization were Dorothy Kleinhans, president; Marguerite Birkman, vice-president; Bertha Faber, secretary; and Paula Welgehausen, treasurer. Objectives of the Guild are "To foster Christian fellowship among its members; to help in the promotion of worthy endeavors of the congregation; to increase in knowledge through educational features."

In May, 1951, the congregation purchased a new parsonage at 3815 Durness in the Braes Heights Addition, for a little less than \$20,000. The original parsonage at 3910 Mt. Vernon, purchased for less than \$5,000 in 1936, was sold in September, 1951, for \$13,500.

St. Matthew's Scouting program was organized in 1950 when the Cub Scout Pack 295 was organized in September of that year by St. Matthew's P.T.L. with Mr. Henry W. Osthoff serving as the first Cub Master. The Boy Scout Troop 295 was organized October, 1952, by the Men's Club, until 1957, when St. Matthew's became the sponsor. Mr. E. J. Ford was the first Scout Master.

This interesting item was included in the minutes of a voters' meeting in September, 1952. "Resolved to employ Mrs. Stratman as Pastor's secretary for \$100 a month for 10 months of the year." During this same month, the Texas District was searching for a coordinator of Student Work in Texas who would "also serve as Student Pastor at "The University of Texas, besides beginning a 'Chair of Religion' at the University." The District issued a call to Pastor Stratman to accept the new position, but the Pastor acceded to the unanimous vote of the congregation and declined the call.

The Couples Club was organized June 10, 1953, with sixteen couples. The first officers elected were president, Mr. Bill Busse; vice-president, Mrs. Mary Lee Kretzschmar; secretary, Mrs. Zelda Allen; and treasurer, Mr. Carl Krause. The object of this organization is to further Christian fellowship and foster the betterment of the church.

There had been a growing tendency to call upon the devoted women of the congregation to take care of the altar and everything pertaining to the chancel, the paraments, vestments, flowers, candles, communion ware, etc. May 11, 1954, the Altar Guild was organized and has since that time very efficiently carried out all of the above mentioned work. Mrs. William Hafner was elected as the first Directress.

The congregation began considering another building expansion program in 1953. In February, 1954, the Voter's Assembly voted to begin such a program and appointed a Building Committee whose members were Mr. O. J. Lottman, Mr. B. M. Woltman, Mr. J. H. Kern, Mr. E. B. Fontenot, Mr. A. Bertelsen, Mr. G. P. Kretzschmar, Dr. Hardy Kemp, and Pastor Stratman.

Included in this program were the construction of the school wing which provided six classrooms, the extension of the Parish Hall north toward Oakdale Street, which created room for a Sunday School office, a school Principals' office, a second-floor conference room, and a library, also upstairs. The Parish Hall was completely renovated to provide facilities for the school cafeteria. A two-story addition behind the church provided facilities for Sunday school rooms, a

nursery, four rest rooms, and a church office. The outstanding gift of this building program was the Chapel, given by the Lottman family, which cost \$25,000 and seated 70 people. The Chapel was connected to the addition behind the church, and beautiful Club rooms, elegantly furnished in French provincial décor, were constructed on the second floor, above the Chapel. A cloister connected the school wing with the church, and another cloister was constructed in an "L" shape along the south side of the church and beside the Chapel entrance. Mr. E. B. Fontenot provided funds for planting a garden between the school and church.

After so many years of "making do" with physical plants which were being constantly outgrown by the mushrooming congregation of St. Matthew's, the members of the church, after this building program at last had adequate and beautiful quarters. Every area was constructed and furnished to meet the needs and desires of the groups which would be using them - the school, the Sunday School, the offices, and the Club Rooms. Without boasting, the congregation could declare its Chapel one of Houston's finest, and its value to the church has been weekly demonstrated as it has provided the proper setting for hundreds of meetings, Adult Information Class instruction, Bible Class sessions, weddings, baptisms and adult confirmations.

Dedication of the new facilities was conducted September 25, 1955, with The Rev. W. W. Stratman, Pastor, officiating. With these new facilities our beloved church continued to prosper under the blessings of God. The largest number of accessions on Sunday was recorded in 1956, when 42 communicants were added to St. Matthew's membership on Palm Sunday. These included 8 junior confirmands, 15 adult confirmands, and 19 by transfer and profession of faith.

The year 1957 was the beginning of a period in St. Matthew's history when the congregation experienced a great turnover in membership. "Transfers out" often totaled 70 to 90 communicants annually, and it was a struggle to maintain memberships at the same level.

At the March 10, 1958 meeting of the Voter's Assembly, Mr. Henry Osthoff, St. Matthew's School Principal, unexpectedly tendered his resignation effective June 15. The voters accepted his resignation with regret and began the process of calling a new Principal. Mr. E. B. Schaefer of Overland Missouri accepted the congregation's call and arrived in Houston during August, 1958. Besides being the principal of the school, under his capable leadership he had developed two fine choirs; the Children's Choir and the Adult Choir. Mr. Norris Patschke, a candidate, accepted the call to fill a teaching vacancy created when Mr. Ebert Jordan resigned, and Mr. Patschke remained at St. Matthew's Lutheran School until 1962, when he accepted a call to Grace Lutheran School in Dallas. Candidate Jerry Wolf accepted the call to teach first and sixth grades beginning in the fall of 1962, and he remains at the school after declining a call to St. Paul Lutheran School, Wilson Texas, in 1966, at the request of the congregation.

During 1959, the congregation began the practice of granting \$100 scholarships to students studying for the preaching or teaching ministries, and this practice is being continued.

In January, 1962, Pastor Stratman received a call to begin a hospital captaincy in Dallas and Fort Worth. Although he wished to accept this call, he yielded to the wishes of the congregation and remained at St. Matthew's.

To recognize Pastor Stratman's 25 years of devoted service to God and to the St. Matthew's congregation during his Houston ministry, the Voter's Assembly passed a resolution in September, 1962, appointing a special committee "to plan an appropriate celebration of Pastor Stratman's twenty-fifth anniversary with this congregation." Members of the committee were congregation M. A. Lehmann, and Chairmen of the Elders, trustees, School Board, Ladies' Circle, Sewing Circle, and Priscilla Guild.

The celebration took the form of a special evening serviced followed by a social hour in the Parish Hall. The Reverend A. Jesse, President of the Texas District, was guest speaker at the services, which were conducted on December 9, 1962. During the social hour, President Maurice Lehmann, acting on behalf of the congregation, presented the Stratmans with the deed to the parsonage at 3815 Durness.

St. Matthew's was one of the first congregations to participate in the Savings Stamp Plan of the Church Extension Fund of the Texas District. Official participation in the plan began May 20, 1963.

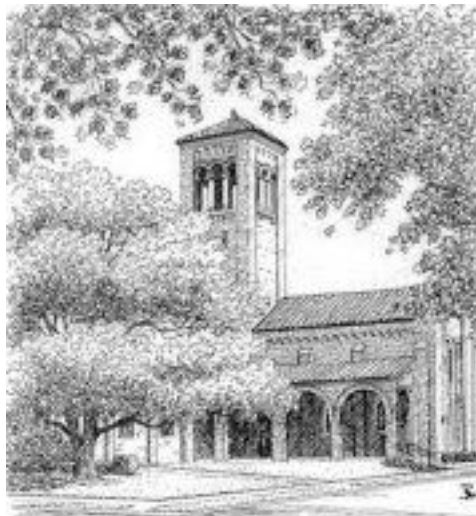
A residence for St. Matthew's school teachers at 1710 Oakdale, acquired in 1948, was sold by the congregation in September 1963 for \$8,900. At this time the congregation decided to purchase a new school bus for the sum of \$5,500. For several years the congregation operated two school buses, but in September, 1963, a smaller vehicle designed to carry 12 passengers, was acquired to replace one of the buses.

In the fall of 1964 the congregation began planning in earnest a building program which was completed in April, 1967. Relocation was seriously considered in 1964, but this action was rejected. After the decision was made to add to the existing building, a building committee was appointed, consisting of: M. A. Lehmann, Chairman; John Lottman, John Meyer, Martin Kieschnick, George King, A. Bertelsen, E. B. Schaefer, and W. W. Stratman.

The committee presented three building proposals to the congregation. For more than a year the membership debated the various proposals, including one which included complete renovation of the sanctuary with an extension toward Main Street opening toward a patio the north, the construction of a gymnasium on the second floor extending over the parking area from the existing Parish Hall, the installation of an elevator, and the construction of a new Club Room on the north side of the church. At one time a resolution was passed to embark on a program of this nature at a cost of \$380,000.

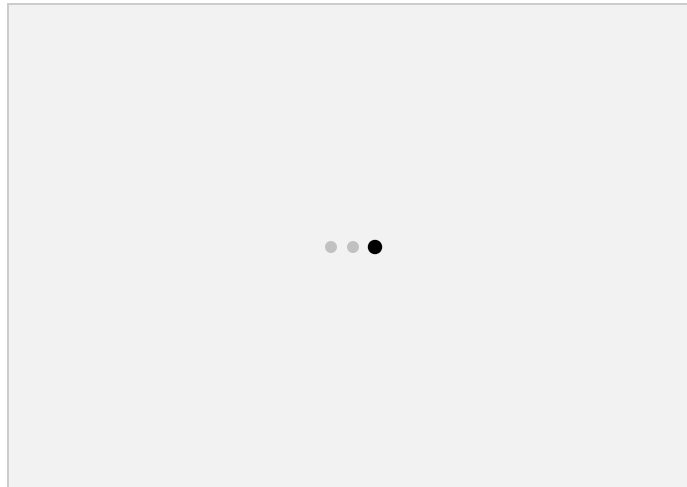
But the problem of financing the construction helped settle the matter, and the congregation voted to limit the expenditure to \$250,000 and confine the program to the church proper. Members pledged \$65,000 over a period of three years, and special gifts and memorials in excess of \$55,000.00.

The result of the latest expansion program is a truly beautiful House of Worship, rich in symbolism, conducive to worship, and built to the glory of our Adorable Savior. May St. Matthew's Lutheran Church always be a spiritual lighthouse, revealing to sinners the only entrance to the harbor of peace. Through the preaching of the pure Word of God and the administration of the sacraments, our church will continue to be a vestibule leading redeemed souls on to the blessedness and joy of the mansions which are eternal.



40th Anniversary

SAINT MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH
FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY



5315 Main Boulevard
Houston, Texas
1966

(Note that in 1966, Main Street was classified as a Boulevard!)

The following are excerpts from the
St. Matthew Lutheran Church Fortieth Anniversary Program.

"Whenever a Christian congregation observes an anniversary, that is history.
Such an event, however, will not be recorded on the page of world history.
It is God who marks such milestones.

Truly, St. Matthew is observing her fortieth anniversary in a period that is significant and portentous. There is a surge, a swell, a billowing, a ferment, a very tidal wave of hatred, wars and rumors of World War II all around the world today. There is worldliness, materialism, liberalism, communism all about us.

But God's bells all chime in tune. There is a divine concatenation of events, because the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. It is therefore not a coincidence that St. Matthew's fortieth anniversary falls in times like these. Congregation and pastor feel that the hour has struck for an unusual forward movement.

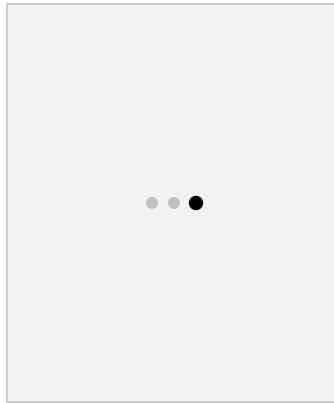
Throughout the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod there is a stir and concern to continue to preach the pure message of Christ and Him crucified in all Christian love and greater fervency, without fear or favor. There is a great expectancy, based on Christ's promise, of adding many unsaved souls to His Church here and in many lands. Great preparations are made for the return of the Lord Jesus unto Judgment.

We celebrate this anniversary without fanfare, in the name of the Prince of Peace, and we clasp hands with those who are still with us - who worked so faithfully for Christ and with Christ from St. Matthew's very beginning - in fellowship of

consecrated services unto the Lord. "

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St. Matthew's 40th Anniversary



Congregational Prayer:

***"Let us ever walk with Jesus,
Follow His example pure,
Flee the world, which would deceive us
And to sin our souls allure.
Ever in His footsteps treading,
Body here, yet soul above,
Full of faith and hope and love,
Let us do the Father's bidding.
Faithful Lord, abide with me;
Savior, lead, I follow Thee."***