

## Churchill Community Church, a place of faith and worship since 1838

Established in 1838, Churchill Community Church has been through a number of changes and challenges, often testing its faith, over the course of 185 years.

The church was originally known as 'Swackhamers', named for Jacob Swackhamer at whose farm they met for bible reading and spontaneous preaching. The men built the church with hand-hewn pine timbers and donated lumber. It was built across the road from the school on Lot 32, Concession 3, on land sold by Jacob Snyder. The first minister was Rev. Hiram Denny.

Throughout the early years of Churchill Church, it struggled to meet expenses and maintain a consistent membership. The decline in numbers at Churchill was due to some of the congregation relocating to Acton for employment, subsequently constructing a new church in the village.

As with most rural churches, attendance continued to shrink by the turn of the 20th century. However, after the closure of churches in neighbouring communities, attendance at Churchill swelled, saving it from a similar fate.

By 1925, the congregation voted unanimously to join the United Church of Canada. Churchill was served from Glen Williams for several years and then by the minister at Ballinafad. In 1953, an addition was built and a full basement was constructed under the church. In 1966, Churchill separated from Ballinafad and relied upon Acton for the services of its minister.

While the physical building of the church had increased, the issue of low membership reemerged, which led the Halton Presbytery to close Churchill in 1968. A total of 25 members were then transferred to Trinity United.

Interestingly, the closure of Churchill revealed a key detail, overlooked in 1925, that the actual property was still deeded by four trustees and did not belong to the United Church.

A determined group at Churchill applied for a charter and registered as Churchill Community Church.

According to Churchill's current minister, Rev. John Bedell, there are two people who were key in guiding the church through the turbulent time after becoming an independent church.

"There are really two people who should be named. One, the Reverend Bob Hyde who, in 1968, was contemplating ministry and was very much a friend of Churchill. He was in training with United Church at the time but he helped, for one year, tremendously in setting the tone for Churchill Community Church. He worked through some of the relationships with the United Church, which, at the time, were not very good. There was a lot of anger and angst with both parties and he was able to calm those waters... The second person was the Reverend Emrys Jenkins and he ministered at Churchill for 29 years until he passed away on Thanksgiving 2008. He worked hard to have Churchill as part of the ministerial of Acton. He was great friends with Father Mark and Father Bob of the Catholic Church, and it was those three people who started the walk of the cross, the sunrise service for Easter, the unity service—the opportunities to come together as Christian folk and respecting each one's form of worship and personal denominational beliefs."

Following the death of Rev. Jenkins, Rev. Bedell, who had been supplying as minister, took over full ministerial duties and continues to carry on Jenkins' legacy.

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