

1863

1956

St. Peter's History

ST. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation is the oldest distinctively Lutheran congregation in the city of Kitchener, now in its 94th year of existence. Lutherans had settled in this community, then known as Berlin, as early as 1825. When the church did not follow them, many became indifferent in their faith. Others were ministered to by a Reformed preacher from Prussia, whose rationalistic theology, however, became increasingly offensive to those who were true Lutherans at heart.

In November 1862 the Rev. C. F. A. Kaessman, a pastor of the Pittsburg Synod serving a Lutheran congregation at Sebastopol, upon request of the Lutherans in Berlin, organized a Lutheran Sunday School. His labours were so successful that within two months St. Peter's congregation was organized, on January 1, 1863. Plans were made almost immediately for the erection of a church building. By July 19, 1863, the new church home was ready for dedication and with thanksgiving and rejoicing Berlin Lutherans entered their own house of worship.

Due to the great influx of Lutherans in those years, the congregation soon outgrew the comparatively new church. In 1877 the original building was removed to make way for the present edifice which was dedicated on October 6th, 1878.

St. Peter's congregation has been served by seven pastors: C. F. A. Kaessmann to 1869; H. Sagehorn to 1877; C. G. Manz to 1881; R. von Pirch to 1905; F. E. Oberlander to 1914; H. A. Sperling to 1940 and by the present pastors, the Rev. Albert W. Lotz since 1940 and the Rev. Henry F. Nuhn since 1954.

The work of St. Peter's congregation has been richly and abundantly blessed by the Heavenly Father, and at the present time St. Peter's is the largest Lutheran congregation in Canada, numbering a baptized membership of 3,396 souls. Five services are conducted each Sunday, including a service of Holy Communion at 8:30 a.m., services at 9:30 and 11:00 a.m., and Vespers at 7:00 p.m. A service in the German language is conducted in the Upper Parish Hall each Lord's Day at 11:00 a.m. Services in the Estonian language are also held periodically. The congregation has been a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Canada since 1940. All synodical and church-at-large quotas have been fully met or exceeded for many years, and all giving has been voluntary with all forms of commercialism abolished since 1940.

The members of St. Peter's are expectantly awaiting the centennial year of 1963, at which time major changes are contemplated for the church edifice.