

St. Mark's – 150 years

“As we look into the past, we are grateful to our [ancestors] for their initiative in building a place of worship. Prayer, hard work, and a lot of faith are always the basic ingredients of a new venture in His name. As we recall the history of our church, our hearts are filled with memories of all the men, women and children who served our church with the sweat of their brows, the toil of their hands, and above all, the prayers and hopes of their hearts.”
- Pastor Orval Jansen at St. Mark's 100th anniversary celebration

Our history goes back to July 28th, 1876, when a public meeting was held to discuss starting a Lutheran congregation in Wellesley. A church was organized and a name was chosen; it was the beginning of ***The Evangelical Lutheran United St. Paul's Church*** (our original name).

A frame church building was built on property purchased from John Zoeger for \$105; cemetery land was also purchased for \$25. Our church began with a roster of 44 members.

In 1888, a 70-foot steeple was added to the church, and a bell was purchased. Soon after, the Ladies Aid had an addition built on to the church to be used for Sunday school and confirmation classes. In 1903 the first pipe organ was purchased for the church at a cost of \$575. (The organ would be rebuilt in 1968 at a cost of \$3,300.)

In 1916 coloured windows were installed (these coloured windows were later used in the basement of the new church and are the same-coloured windows you see in our

basement today). 1916 also saw the addition of electric lights in the church, which cost the church an additional 86 cents a month for “light service”.

During 1925 and '26, many discussions were held regarding whether the old church should be renovated, or a new church should be built. It was finally agreed to leave the decision until after the church's 50th anniversary. That anniversary service was held on September 5th, 1926. 2 weeks later, a building committee was elected and they decided that “each farmer should deliver a wagon load of stones for free, before the first of March, to be used for the new church.” In June of 1927 a cornerstone for the new church was laid, and by August that year the brick work was completed. The new church, which is the main part of our current building, was dedicated on November 6th, 1927. The total cost of the new church was \$18,000. 3 services were held each Sunday – in the morning, afternoon and evening.

In 1938, a parsonage was bought in Wellesley for \$2,850; Pastor William Nolting was the first pastor to live in it.

Improvements to the church continued over the next 25 years, including the addition of a coal furnace and a bathroom. The church tower was lowered, the Sunday school rooms were renovated, and the outside bulletin board was erected.

In 1957 the church's name was officially changed from St. Paul's to ***St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church***.

During the 70's, the basement of the church was renovated, and carpeting was laid in the narthex and the church sanctuary. A 100th anniversary celebration was held

in 1976; at that time, the baptized membership at St. Mark's was 304 members.

In the 1990's, repairs to the bell tower needed to be made. The congregation decided to lower the bell tower and add an expansion to the church to provide additional space and greater accessibility. The expansion included a larger narthex, a Pastor's office, two wheelchair accessible washrooms, a hydraulic lift, a new kitchen and a meeting room. A ground-breaking service for the project was held in September of 1997, and 10 months later, the build was completed.

While projects continue at St. Mark's to keep our church building in good repair, it is St. Mark's core foundation of faith and love that has sustained us as a Caring Community for 150 years.

To quote Pastor Jansen from our 100th celebration:

"You have placed special emphasis on the importance of missions and have willingly shared your material and spiritual blessings with those in need, both at home and abroad. Now as we look ahead, I pray that you will continue in the faith and determination of your fathers [and mothers], always putting God [first] in your homes and your church, and striving at all times to do [God's] will."