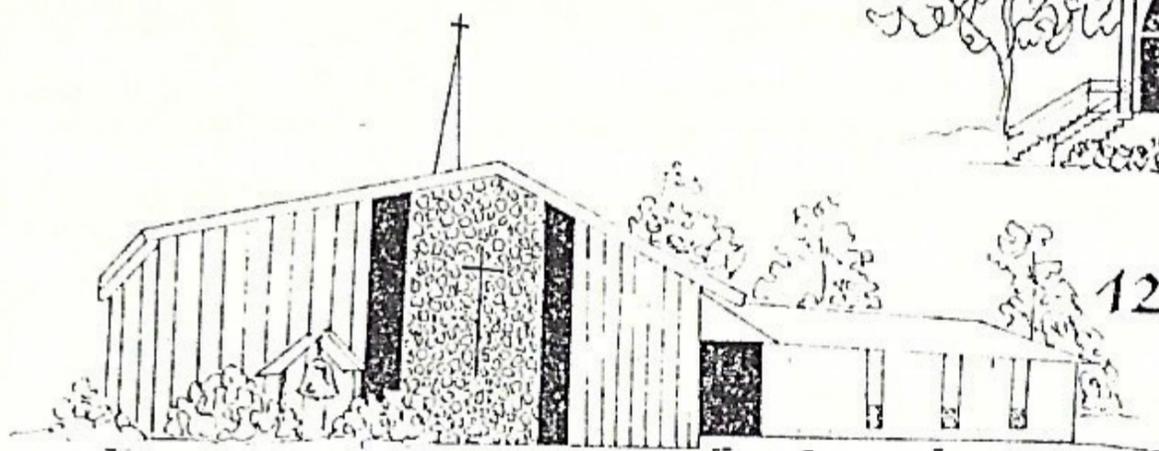
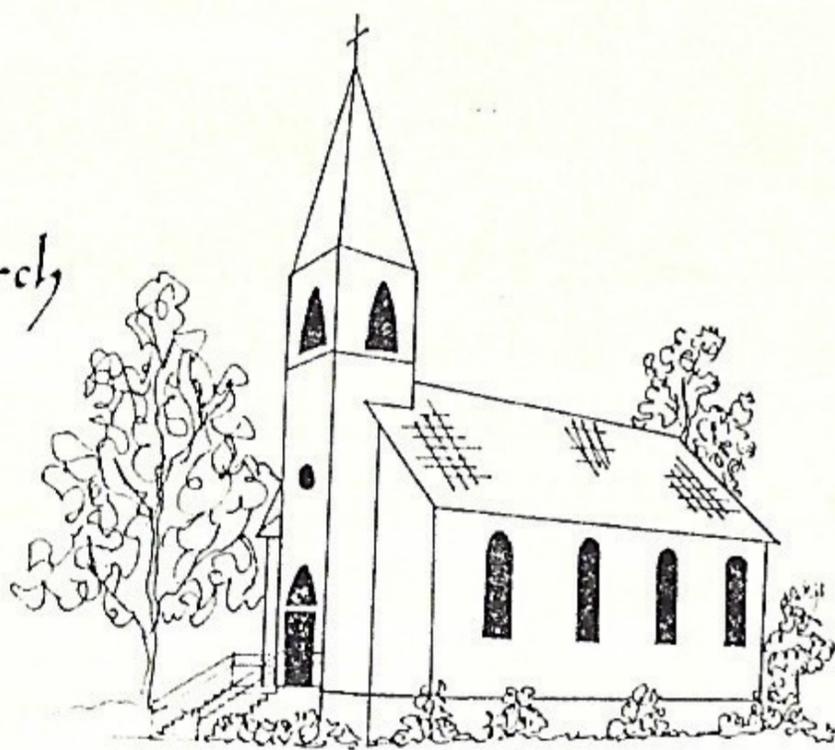


*St. Matthew's  
Evangelical Lutheran Church*

Pound, Wisconsin



*125th Anniversary*

Founded 1877

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS  
LIVING STILL

A BRIEF HISTORY OF 125 YEARS  
OF ST. MATTHEW EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH  
TOWN OF BEAVER, WISCONSIN

*Faith of our Fathers Living Still*  
*125 Years at St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran Church*  
*Town of Beaver, Wisconsin*

*Preface*

St. Matthew congregation arrives at the milestone of 125 years with a special distinction. The descendants of some of the same people who were led by God to establish the church so long ago still gather to worship at the same location and still hear the same Gospel of Christ. For example, how happy August and Rosa Seils would have been to know that 125 years after they hosted worship services in their home their great grandson, Rev. John Zeitler, would preach the sermon for the anniversary service.

As this brief history of the congregation reveals there are other families who also hosted such services before a church building was erected and their descendants also gather regularly to worship at the corner of Highway 64 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Road. It has become rare in our society for people to remain so rooted. Even more rare is it for a church to remain so long rooted in the truth and purity of God's Word. How we praise God that the faith of our fathers is living still!

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### *Two Who Wrote about the Early Days*

*We have written accounts of the history of St. Matthew by Fred Seils and his niece, Caroline Pelot. Fred wrote his on June 22, 1977 and Caroline in the winter of 200. What follows in the next two sections is a weaving together of their recollections:*

Fred Seils recalls, "When my mother came to this area, she insisted that they get a pastor from the Wisconsin Synod, so they got one from Peshtigo.<sup>1</sup> At first the services were held in homes, and later were held in the old school house. The present location would be at the end of Ted Martz's driveway.<sup>2</sup> After that, services were held in a school house where the old Fairfield school now stands. That building was moved away for a cheese factory and was later destroyed by fire."

Caroline Pelot writes concerning those who opened their homes for worship, "My grandparents, August and Rosa Seils were one of the first holding services in their home on Highway 64, a half mile west of the present St. Matthew's church. Other families

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Adolph Toepel and Rev. Hillemann served them.

<sup>2</sup> This is now where Rick and Ruth List live. Rick is the current president of St. Matthew congregation.

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doing the same were Herman Martz (Maerz), Thomas Rhode, Charles Risner, Fred Hanneman, August Bauman and George Guenther."

Fred continues the story, "About 1897 or 1898 the congregation decided to build a church across from the cemetery. Charles Laabs donated one acre of land at the present church site. Then they went to Tom Maloney at Pound and he drew up the plan for the church building. The basement was dug out. High wheeled wagons drawn by horses were used to haul stones and water. All members helped and worked ten hours a day, six days a week. Robert Penkowski and George Dixon were the chief masons. At one point, a portion of one wall fell in after it was completed and had to be done over again. That was some mess to work with again.

Next was the laying of the corner stone. Three pastors and all the members took part in the services on a Sunday afternoon. I still have the hammer that was used to make three taps on the cover when it was closed and mortared shut."

According to Caroline's research it took some time to get the church project going since, "It was resolved to build the church on October 11, 1891."

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Those notes also indicate that the building was to be 30 feet wide, 50 feet long and 18 feet high.

Fred's account continues, "Six carpenters came from Marinette to construct the upper portion of the building. They stayed and ate meals at the August Seils home, sleeping in the granary, as there were already ten around the table from our own family. Finally, the new church was completed. At the entrance were wooden steps leading from three sides. The lot around the building was all sand and hard to walk on. There were no trees or grass around. A fence was built all around the lot, with one gate to walk in and one to drive through.

The altar was just plain with a large picture of the "Last Supper" on the back of it. The pews were hauled from Marinette with horses on a hayrack. While hauling them here, the wagon hit the Peshtigo River bridge, cracking one pew quite badly.

On Dedication Sunday, a service was first held at the school, after which all members walked to the new church for the dedication service. All neighboring church members and friends were present for the occasion which was in 1899.

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In 1905 the Young People's Society donated the bell. It was pulled up into the belfry by thirty men using a hay rope."

*Winter Worship in the Horse and Buggy Days*

The church building was a great blessing and assured area residents the congregation meant to be about the Lord's work. Fred relates, "Services were held every two weeks from 10:00 A.M. until 12:00 noon on Sundays. The sermon was usually about one hour long."

Caroline recalls what it was like to worship on winter days, "In the cold wintry weather my father hitched up the team of horses to the big sled. He drove and the family bundled up sitting on board seats. We covered ourselves with a big buffalo robe. We heated bricks and put them on the floor to keep our feet warm. The horses were tied up in the long shed during services.

During services men sat on the west side of the church. Women and children on the east. Women always wore hats and never discarded their coats. At

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first the church was heated only with a pot belly stove in the middle of the west side of the church - Brrrrr!

I remember the tall Christmas tree - a square wooden frame around the tree with one foot candles. Two men carefully watched so the lighted candles would not catch fire to the branches.

I remember the collection bag (*clinaboidle*) on a long pole which was passed for the collection. Dues were one dollar a month. Children dropped in usually pennies or at most a nickel.

On Ascension Day in June 1916 lightning struck the building doing considerable damage to the steeple and roof."

Caroline also found something about Ladies Aid, "Rev. Fuhlbrigg - pastor. Ladies Aid met the last Thursday of each month at the homes of each member. The first meeting was November, 1935 with 21 members. 10 cents dues was paid by each member whether present or not. The lady who serves need not pay that month."

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*Parish Hall*

Congregations generally begin to feel the need for a meeting place other than the church proper when groups such as Ladies Aid become established. Anniversary celebrations are also customarily a time for building projects. So it is that as the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Matthew was contemplated the need for a parish hall was discussed. Pastor Pingel, who was then serving St. Matthew, also saw that Christian education would be better served with such a building. One other factor has also been hinted at - a dart ball league had been formed among the Wisconsin Synod churches in the area. A suitable parish hall would serve many purposes!

Thus in the spring of 1952 a parish hall was built some distance to the east of the church building. Pastor Pingel writes in the anniversary program, "Almost all of the work was done by the members, who worked with zeal to practically complete the building, have it paid for, and dedicated by time of this celebration. Much of the material used in building was also donated by the members." John Zeitler recalls being there as a young boy and how the farmers all

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brought cement blocks with them that were used as the walls. The camaraderie these men had in working together left an impression on him.

The parish hall served all the purposes hoped for and more in the years that followed. But there was one use no one ever envisioned - it needed to be used for a time as a house of worship. That difficult time came when fire struck and with it a test of the congregation's resolve to continue as a congregation.

*St. Matthew Congregation Tested in 1975*

About 1:30 p.m. on February 9, 1975 Leonard Yoap was driving by and saw smoke coming out of the church. He turned in the alarm on that bitter cold day and some furnishings and other items were saved, but the 75 year old building was destroyed. Defective wiring or chimney problems were suspected as possible causes. What to do next was the big question. There was talk of disbanding the congregation since members could transfer to other nearby WELS churches. But there was a stronger spirit of desire to rebuild.

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Ground breaking for the present church building was August 3, 1975. With the aid of loaned pews from St. John's Lutheran Church of Grover, worship services were held in the parish hall from the time of the fire until completion of the new church.

The first service in the newly completed church building was February 8, 1976 - a day less than one year after the originally building was destroyed by fire. Dedication services were held April 25, 1976. Pastor Carl Voss was the guest preacher at the 10:30 A.M. service, and Pastor Louis Pingel presided at the 3:00 P.M. service.

The building is 40 feet by 63 feet by 12 feet high, of steel frame construction built on a floating concrete slab. Panels of Georgia cork stone accent the steel exterior. Simplicity is carried out throughout the interior design with drywall, complimented by paneling in the chancel area. The floors are carpeted throughout. Padded pews in the nave, seat 160, with space available to accommodate 200.

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### *New Fellowship Hall*

The parish hall built in 1952 was showing signs of decay by 1980. The flooring was soft in places and the updraft furnace resulted in warm air circulating in the upper part of the room, but not the lower. The biggest drawback was the lack of plumbing. So during the pastorate of Rev. David Hein it was decided to build a new fellowship hall that would be attached directly to the church building. Pastor Hein took a call to serve another congregation before the project got started, but did come back to preach for its dedication.

The contractor for the building was Roy Gove, a member of the congregation at that time. Del Kienitz, also a member, worked with Roy. The total cost of over \$26,000 was raised through donations from members. No borrowing was necessary. The dedication ceremony was held on December 14, 1986.

### *Dual Parish History*

St. Matthew's congregation was founded in 1877, incorporated in 1885, and joined the Wisconsin Synod

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in 1886. The congregation has always shared a pastor with a neighboring congregation.

- From 1881 to 1918, the congregation was together with St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church of Grover.
- The with the coming of Rev. William Wojahn to Coleman, St. Matthew's formed a dual parish with Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church of Coleman from 1918 until 1958.
- The dual parish arrangement then was taken up with Grace Ev. Lutheran Church of Crivitz with the installation of Pastor Edward Stelter of Crivitz on April 13, 1958 and continues to this day.

### *Pastors who have served St. Matthew:*

1877 – 1881 Rev. Adolf Toepel and Rev. Hilliman  
 1881 – 1888 Rev. Anton Pieper  
 1889 – 1898 Rev. Christ Gevers  
 1898 – 1907 Rev. Martin Kionka  
 1907 – 1918 Rev. C. C. Kleinlein  
 1918 – 1930 Rev. William Wojahn  
 1930 – 1949 Rev. William Fuhlbrigge  
 1950 – 1958 Rev. Louis Pingel

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- 1958 – 1960 Rev. Edward Stelter  
 1960 – 1969 Rev. E. Kitzerow  
 1969 – 1980 Rev. William Besler  
 1980 – 1984 Rev. David Hein  
 1985 – Rev. Mark Hannemann  
 2001 – Rev. James Wuebben (assistant)

In the past 125 years there have been a total of 558 baptisms, 533 confirmations, 137 marriages, and 188 funerals. The congregation presently numbers 201 baptized souls and 154 communicant members.

*Postscript*

We give thanks to God for sustaining St. Matthew congregation for 125 years with his undeserved love. He has shown his power in making the humble efforts of his servants effective. Christ crucified and risen for lost sinners was the focus of the faith of our fathers and that focus is living still among us. May that always be so.

– Pastor Mark E. Hannemann  
 July, 2002