

Martin Luther Lutheran Church  
Canton, Ohio  
History

The Rev. George M. Schmucker began his work on April 1, 1893. He preached his first sermon in the Jerusalem Church on April 16, 1893. Sunday School began on April 23, 1893.

The organizational meeting was held on June 16, 1893 and they resolved that the name of the congregation would be Martin Luther Church. Articles of Incorporation were filed on June 24, 1893. On June 26<sup>th</sup> the congregation voted to purchase a lot on North Cherry Ave. for \$1,400. The cornerstone was laid on Sunday, August 6, 1893. The church was dedicated November 26, 1893 and that same that same evening Rev. George Schmucker was installed as the pastor of the congregation.

By 1900 the church directory listed 426 members. Due to rapid growth, the church building on Cherry Street could no longer house the congregation. In 1919 a lot on Walnut Ave. was purchased for \$16,500. Work began in April 1920 and the cornerstone was laid on June 6<sup>th</sup>. The new church was dedicated Sunday, May 22, 1921.

In January, 1925 a group of church members organized Bethel Lutheran Church. On February 2, 1926 the founding pastor George Schmucker died suddenly. He served the congregation for 33 years. The Rev. Oscar Mees was installed on November 21, 1926.

In 1934 begin its long standing radio ministry that was broadcast by WADC from the church. In the fall of 1937 two church services were offered for the first time. The congregation voted to purchase the apartment building on the north side of the church for \$18,000 on August 8, 1937. It was renovated and used as a Sunday School Annex. In early 1948 Pastor Mees accepted a call in Coral Gables, Florida. He served MLLC for 21 years.

The Rev. Otto Fangmeyer accepted a call to be our third pastor and was installed June 1948. Martin Luther Church supported a new congregation with financial support and a nucleus of interested members. In 1954 Good Shepherd Lutheran Church was organized. That same year ground was broken for a Sunday School expansion. The cost was \$106,000.

In March, 1958 Pastor Fangmeyer received a call and departed for Beatrice, Nebraska. The Rev. Arthur Kettner was installed on January 11, 1959. A Senior Citizen Day Center became a reality April 28, 1964. Pastor Kettner accepted a call in April, 1965 and departed for Port Malibar, Florida. Martin Luther called Pastor Maurice Gold and he was installed on July 11, 1965.

In 1966 Pastor Gold created a radio program called "Conversation" aired Sunday mornings on WHBC-AM. Pastor Maurice Gold accepted a call in Warren, Ohio in December, 1972. Pastor Frank Mack, who had been serving as assistant pastor since 1968 took over as our senior pastor and served until December 31, 1973.

The Dr. C. King Bradow was installed as pastor on June 2, 1974. There were 929 confirmed members in October 1974. A new Head Start Child Development Center began using the building. On June 25, 1976 Pastor Bradow accepted a call to Dayton, Ohio. On January 9, 1977, the Rev. Eric Kampfe was installed as pastor of Martin Luther Church.

In 1979 the pipe organ was rebuilt and enlarged. In 1980 the congregation sponsored a refugee family. The Hunger Task Force was organized and Martin Luther Church became one of the distribution sites in May of 1981. Pastor Eric Kampfe resigned his call on December 31, 1981. Pastor Luther Oberdorfer was called on August 21, 1983 and served until his untimely death on March 28, 1985.

Pastor Maurice Gold returned to the church as the pastor on August 21, 1985. Pastor Gold began a Stephen Ministry program and many lay ministers were trained to assist with pastoral ministry of the church. In 1987 the church became one of the sites for the Family Literacy program of Canton City Schools. Pastor Gold resigned his call on April 14, 1991. Pastor Ron Orovitz came to Martin Luther Church from Holland, Ohio. He became the 10<sup>th</sup> pastor. Pastor Orovitz served for five years before accepting a call in another synod. The Rev. Dr. Larry Houff was the next pastor and served for 8 years before he accepted a one-year call to Holden Village after which he returned to northern Ohio to live in retirement. Pastor Timothy Muse began serving the church in 2008.

The 1980's and beyond saw many changes made. The office was remodeled and computers became part of the tools on hand to do the church's publishing work and record keeping. New Kitchenettes were installed in the Sunday School Annex to support fellowship activities in different areas of the building. A new sign was placed in front of the church honoring Harold Kugler and his thoughtfulness in leaving a major bequest to the church. The congregation became involved with "Yankee Peddler, Stewardship Brunches, the Wednesday noon lunch program, Layettes for new born infants, Alternative worship services, Job Seeking Support Groups, the Foot pantry and clothing closet, Parenting Classes, Support Groups for Care Givers, and the "Football Hall of Fame Festival Tail-Gate Parties." We started our Joy Team (Praise Team).

As we moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our congregation was aging, membership was declining, and we found it increasingly difficult to maintain the large facility and to faithfully fulfill the mission of the church. In 2009 we merged with Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

