

## Churches in the Shenandoah Valley

St Matthew Lutheran Church  
208 Sand Ridge Rd  
Woodstock, VA 22660



### A brief History

From an old history of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, we note the following. "According to the opinion of the oldest citizens in this neighborhood, The Lutheran Church was planted in this section of Shenandoah County, Virginia, about the year 1806. The first united effort on the part of the citizens of this neighborhood was to erect a schoolhouse near the village of Saumsville. The schoolhouse was known as Bordens School. In the neighborhood were Lutherans who thought it necessary to have regular worship services, and the schoolhouse offered facilities for such services. As a result of the effort of the Lutheran People, the Rev. J. N. Schmucker came to minister to them. Services were held in the schoolhouse for about seven years."

Church website: [www.user.shentel.net/cbarden/stmatthewtomsbrook/](http://www.user.shentel.net/cbarden/stmatthewtomsbrook/)  
Telephone: (540) 436-8143

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The infant church began to grow. The need for better facilities in the field of education was recognized and steps were taken to build another school. It was thought wise to locate this school near the village of Mt. Olive. Interested parties began the construction and it was soon completed. It was given the name Hottle-Keller School. A feature of the new school was an apartment for use by the school teacher. The Rev. J. N. Schmucker continued to serve as Pastor. By this time the German Reformed were using the school for Divine services.

As time rolled on Hottle-Keller School became inadequate for the growing congregations as well as for educational purposes. It was decided that a church should be built. As a result, the schoolhouse was moved and a church erected on the site. In 1824 Friedens Church was built and occupied by the Lutheran and German Reformed Congregations. The Rev. J. N. Schmucker served as pastor of the Lutheran Congregation until about the year 1849. He was succeeded by the Rev. Socrates Henkel, who began his ministry in July 1849.

Meanwhile, another Union Church had been built near the village of Toms Brook. The Lutheran and German Reformed erected a small log church which bore the name Brook Union Church. In 1852 Rev. Henkel began his ministry in this congregation also. He was succeeded as pastor of Friedens congregation by the Rev. Joel Swartz, a son of one of the first families of the congregation. He served about one year, and was succeeded by the Rev. John H. Hunton of New Market. This pastor served the congregation until the year 1861. The next pastor was the Rev. Henry Wetzel who served until 1874.

By this time Friedens Church had grown old and uncomfortable and in some respects entirely dilapidated. Both the Lutheran and German Reformed Congregations decided to erect their own house of worship, and as a result the old Friedens property was sold on the 14th of April 1877. The purchase price was \$81.00. The fixtures brought \$22.42 and the proceeds were divided as follows: St. John's Reformed Church, \$51.72; St. Matthew Lutheran Church, \$25.85; and St. Peter's Lutheran, \$25.85. Thus came to an end the short but eventful history of Friedens Church.

In 1873 a lot was secured from John T. Hottel and Ann Hottel, his wife, by the Lutheran Congregation and a new church was begun. It was located about one half mile south of old Friedens, on a high ridge commonly known as Sand Ridge. The new church was built by the members of the Lutheran Congregation who were without a pastor at this time. It was a neat well planned church 33 by 43 feet. It was erected as an unfailing evidence of the esteem which things Sacred and Divine are held by those who contributed toward its erection. It was known as St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church. The dedication took place on the first Sunday in August 1875.

The Rev. John N. Stirewalt was called as the first pastor and preached his first sermon on the first Sunday in May 1875. In September 1875 the congregation was received into the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod. The Rev. J. Paul Stirewalt became pastor in 1876. The congregation entertained the Virginia Special Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod on May 20, 1876, and again in 1878. In 1882 Pastor Stirewalt resigned and for over four years the congregation remained vacant. However supply pastors were called upon for services. In 1886 a call was extended to the Rev. P. C. Wike of Conover, N.C., who accepted and began his work in

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June of the same year. It is interesting to note that Pastor Wike was not ordained until the spring of 1877. On December 13, 1891. Pastor Wike served until the summer of 1899 During the pastorate of M. A. Ashby, (1919 - 1922) the congregation dissolved its relationship with the other congregations in the parish which included St. Stephens, Mt. Calvary, and St. David Lutheran Churches and the Tennessee Synod. On March 11, 1919, St. Matthew voted to be served by the same pastor as St. Peter's in Toms Brook and to become a part of the Virginia Synod. The Rev. George S. Bearden was the first pastor of the new Toms Brook Parish and began his ministry in September 1922. He resigned in August 1925.. In a letter to the church in 1984, Pastor Shumate (1930 - 1937) recalled that the first building program began in the Great Depression. He stated that the chestnut oak joist, 8" x 10" and 14 feet long came from the woods of Arthur Ludwig. The price was \$12 per 1000 board feet. "The work was done because of the prayers, gifts, and labor of all the people." In the Bible phrase, "Everyone had a mind to work." During this time the Sunday School rooms were built and dedicated. During the tenure of Rev. J. A. Keisler, Jr., as pastor, (1937 - 1942) the Parish School hymnals were purchased (the old blue books) and the Sunday School rooms were equipped with tables and chairs. During Rev. George S. Bowden's time ((1947-1950), a parsonage was purchased jointly by both congregations of the Parish, representing an investment at that time of about \$9,000.00.

The 75th anniversary of the church was held on the first Sunday in June of 1950. A. R. Shumate preached at the morning service and W. C. Huddle preached at the afternoon service. Attorney William Logan addressed the Sunday School. A picnic dinner was held at noon serving around 200 people.

The church celebrated its centennial in 1975 with five former pastors in attendance. A covered dish dinner with over 175 in attendance was held.

During Rev. [James E. Baseler's](#) pastorate (1976-1981) the church began using the Lutheran Book of Worship, exchanging the Service Book and Hymnal (red book) for the "green book." With his musical ability, Pastor Baseler helped the congregation learn the new liturgy.

On July 18, 1982, the congregation voted to build the Parish Hall consisting of an area for Sunday School classes, a new kitchen, basement, and indoor plumbing. Much of the labor was provided by the members. It was dedicated in September of 1984 with four former pastors in attendance.

During the pastorate of Jeffrey D. May (1984-1987), the ceiling in the church sanctuary was lowered and the outbuilding was renovated. Pastor May was the last pastor of Toms Brook Lutheran Parish consisting of St. Matthew and St. Peter Lutheran Churches.

In 1988, St. Matthew voted to form the Mt. Olive Lutheran Parish with St. Stephens Lutheran Church west of Strasburg, located on the Back Road. Pastor James R. Daley became the first pastor of the new parish in 1988 and served until 1994.

In 1999, a 40' x 24' picnic shelter was built at a cost of \$9,975. New (WOY) hymnals were purchased.

A variety of physical improvements and gifts have been made to St. Matthew since 2000. A good many were given in memory of some of our dearly departed members or were made using funds from bequests given to our church.

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On June 17, 2012, Jonathan and Deanna Boynton became pastors of the newly formed North Mountain Parish, which is comprised of St. Matthew, St. Peter, and St. Stephen churches.

**In reading through church records, some interesting information was discovered that we would like to share:**

### **SEWING SOCIETY**

St. Matthew had a Sewing Society which was organized in 1889 with 22 members. This must have been a forerunner of the current ladies group. This group had a constitution and an initiation fee of 2 cents. The goal of the group was to raise money to assist the church in various ways. They met regularly and made and sold napkin rings, sofa pillows, muffs, pincushions, aprons, handkerchiefs, niches, splashers, bonnets, mitts, and quilts. They charged 30 cents for bonnets and 35 cents for aprons.

On May 4, 1895, the group discussed pulpit furniture, and on November 8, 1895, they paid \$20.57 to Alexander and McQuay for altar and pulpit chairs. On September 4, 1897, the group voted to buy a bookcase and corner cupboard for Rev. P. C. Wike to use at the parsonage for \$8.50. In February 1951, the council of the church recommended that this corner cupboard be sold. The Sewing Society raised \$9.85 for having dinner at sale of Noah Swartz, deceased.

### **PARSONAGE**

Elijah and Magdalena Rosenberger sold St. Matthew a house to be used as a parsonage in January of 1891 for \$105.00. The house is located across US Route 11 from the Toms Brook Handy Mart. The deed is recorded in the Clerk's Office in Deed Book 34, page 406. When Marshall Mauney was pastor, the parsonage was rented out while he lived there, as he was single. This house was sold in 1946. St. Matthew and St. Peter purchased a house in Toms Brook, which stands beside the current Fire Department for \$10,000 in 1948 from Earl R. and Ruth Miley. This house was sold in 1984 for \$35,000.00. In May of 1984, a parsonage was bought in Brook Village, Toms Brook, for \$58,000. The half interest was sold to St. Peter in 1988 for \$30,000.00. In 1989, a parsonage was bought with St. Stephens at the corner of Mt. Hebron Road and Back Road for \$95,000.00.

**CHURCH PROPERTY** By deed dated December 8, 1873, John T. Hottel and his wife Ann conveyed a tract of land to the church for \$35, which said deed is recorded in the Clerk's Office in Deed Book 22, page 24. A tract of land containing 1/2 acre was purchased for \$100.00 from Charles J. Conner and Clara E. Conner, by deed dated April 1, 1929, and recorded in Deed Book 103, page 176.

A tract of land containing 0.5299 acre was purchased from Robert J. Conner et. al. for \$200 by deed dated September 19, 1956, and recorded in Deed Book 187, page 60.

**CLOCK** The old clock on the wall of the church was presented to St. Matthew on August 15, 1896, by Joseph T. Kronk and wife. The clock still keeps time.

**CHURCH BELL** According to one "of the oldest members of the church", the current church bell was installed in 1936 or 1937. It took one day for the bell to be placed in operation. Very often the bell was tolled when a member of the church died, one toll for every year of the person's age.

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**CHOIR ROBES** In October of 1942, choir "gowns" were purchased by individuals in the church. In May of 1977, 14 choir robes were purchased for \$700.00. Three more were purchased in 1978.

**FRIEDENS MEMORIAL** Members of St. John Reformed at Harrisville, St. Peter, and St. Matthew placed a memorial at the site of the old Friedens Church on March 4, 1946.

**CHURCH ORGAN** The first organ the church ever had was purchased in 1955. This Hammond organ was replaced with a new Allen organ in 2004.

**COLLECTION PLATES AND ALTAR ORNAMENTS** The collection plates were purchased in 1945, and the other altar ornaments were engraved in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1945 for \$10.50.

**COMMUNION** Communion cards were first printed in 1944.

Communion was held every quarter until September 1969, when communion began to be held on the first Sunday of the month. An extra communion tray and 36 glasses were purchased in 1956. In April 1989, plastic communion cups began being used.

**BROTHERHOOD** The Lutheran Brotherhood, a mens' organization was organized in 1948 and met monthly. It's first project, the building of a sidewalk and planting of shrubbery, was completed in 1949. In 1953, the Brotherhood members raised "broom corn" in their individual gardens and sold brooms made from this corn. Willie Beydler made these brooms for the group. The group became inactive in 1961.

**CHURCH WINDOW** The window above the altar was installed in 1973 and cost \$250. The window was given by Josephine Swartz Puelle in memory of "Josie" Swartz. During a terrible wind storm in 1975, part of the church roof blew off and broke one of the stained glass windows in the church.

**CHURCH SIDING** Vinyl siding was installed covering the original wood siding in 1989. This project took several years to complete as part of the church was covered as funds were available. It was noted that the church was painted in 1942 for \$40.00.

**CHURCH HEAT** The church was originally heated with wood. Stoves were in the back of the church. Wood was kept in a shed on the church grounds. A coal furnace heated the church fired, more often than not, by Carl Connor, Sr. The coal was also kept in a shed on the grounds. A new furnace was installed in the 1950's for \$375. This furnace was later converted to gas and new ducts replaced the big one in the back of the church that would blow a lady's dress out while the heat was on if she would walk across it.

**CHURCH OUTBUILDINGS** The old outside toilets, woodshed, and other old buildings were torn down in the 1960's, and in 1968, the church built two new outside toilets and combination utility building. The toilets were covered over and the outbuilding enlarged after the new addition was completed in 1985.

**CHURCH FIRSTS** Bulletins were first printed in 1939. The church phone was installed in 1990, as was the handicap ramp. Locks were placed on the church doors in 1944.

*Submitted by Clara Barden, June 2012*